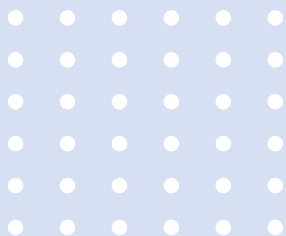


NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORT

ASSESSING EXISTING SERVICES, NEEDS, ACCESS BARRIERS,
COORDINATION MECHANISMS, SUSTAINABILITY AND CROSS-CUTTING
ISSUES TO INFORM DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL
SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW OR AT RISK,
PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, AND INDIVIDUALS
RELEASED FROM DETENTION





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INTRODUCTION

The Initial Analysis Report has been developed to support the design of an intervention under Lot 1 of the EU call for proposals on strengthening the role of civil society organisations (CSOs) in social cohesion and improving social services for vulnerable groups in the Republic of Moldova. In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR), the analysis covers children in conflict with the law or at risk, persons experiencing homelessness, and individuals released from detention, with a focus on existing services, gaps, access barriers, coordination, sustainability, and cross-cutting issues.

From a national perspective, this analysis should be understood against a backdrop of high social vulnerability¹. In 2024, the absolute poverty rate in the Republic of Moldova stood at 33.6%, reaching 42.9% in rural areas, compared to 21.6% in urban areas. The average monthly disposable income per person was MDL 5,283.8; however, significant rural–urban disparities persist: MDL 6,716.7 (approximately EUR 350) in urban areas versus MDL 4,179.9 (approximately EUR 217) in rural areas. These disparities are critical for understanding the pressure on vulnerable households and unequal access to services.



¹ https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/aspecte_nivelul_trai/Publicatia_CBGC_editia_2025.pdf

CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

The social context in the Republic of Moldova demonstrates that the vulnerability of children and socially excluded adults is not marginal, but systemic. According to official data², by the end of 2024 approximately 7.9 thousand children were registered as being at risk, of whom 272 were children with disabilities. The majority fell within the 7–15 age group, indicating that social and family-related risks tend to accumulate particularly during the schooling years. At the same time, data on children in conflict with the law confirm that the phenomenon remains significant. In 2024, a total of 493 offences were committed by or involved minors, representing 2.0% of all recorded offences, while the total number of minors who committed offences reached 802. In the same year, 281 minors were convicted at first instance, and 2 minors were held in detention, including pre-trial detention³. These figures reflect the presence of cumulative vulnerabilities affecting both children and adults within the target groups, including poverty (particularly in rural areas), lack of parental supervision, migration, disability, mental health challenges, and labour market exclusion. For individuals exiting coercive systems or experiencing homelessness, these vulnerabilities tend to overlap and reinforce one another, underscoring the need for integrated and multidimensional interventions. At the same time, the Republic of Moldova is undergoing an accelerated process of alignment with the European Union, in which strengthening the social sector and ensuring the active involvement of civil society organisations are strategic priorities. In this context, the development of effective, accessible, and sustainable social services for vulnerable groups becomes essential.

In line with the objectives set out in the Terms of Reference, this analytical exercise aims to:

- identify gaps and needs in service provision for:
- children in conflict with the law or at risk;
- persons experiencing homelessness;
- individuals released from detention;
- map existing services and providers (public and private);
- analyse barriers to access and the sustainability of services;
- explore the link between detention and homelessness;
- assess coordination and collaboration mechanisms among relevant stakeholders.

² https://statistica.gov.md/en/the-situation-of-children-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2024-9578_61802.html

³ https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Copiii_Moldovei/Analiza_săraciei_copii_2024_eng.pdf

METHODOLOGY AND DATA LIMITATIONS

The present analysis is based on a mixed-methods approach, using data triangulation to ensure the consistency and robustness of findings. Secondary sources were combined with primary data collected through stakeholder consultations, in order to provide an integrated perspective on the social services system for the targeted vulnerable groups.

- **Desk Review** enabled an in-depth understanding of the legal and institutional framework, identification of key trends, and the development of an overall picture of existing services, gaps, and systemic needs. This phase included a systematic review of relevant national and international documents, in particular:
 - ✓ national policies and strategies in the fields of child protection, social inclusion, and justice;
 - ✓ institutional reports from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the National Bureau of Statistics, the National Probation Inspectorate, and the National Administration of Penitentiaries;
 - ✓ studies and assessments conducted by international organisations (e.g. UNICEF) and other development partners;
 - ✓ official statistical data and thematic analyses.
- **Stakeholder consultations** constituted the core of primary data collection and were conducted through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Participants were selected using a purposive sampling approach to ensure representation of key stakeholder groups across sectors. These included:
 - ✓ central public authorities (e.g. ministries and national institutions);
 - ✓ local public authorities and decentralised services (ATAS, STAS, and local specialists);
 - ✓ institutions within the justice and probation systems;
 - ✓ civil society organisations (CSOs) and national networks;
 - ✓ social service providers;
 - ✓ development partners;
 - ✓ frontline actors (e.g. teachers, school managers).

A total of 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of public institutions and civil society organisations, ensuring both institutional diversity and cross-sectoral representation. The sample covered central-level institutions in Chişinău as well as multiple districts (Hînceşti, Orhei, Făleşti, Soroca, Nisporeni, Edineţ, Şoldăneşti), allowing for the identification of territorial disparities, service availability gaps, and differences in implementation practices. In addition, one focus group discussion was conducted with 14 frontline practitioners, including teachers and school counsellors working directly with children at risk. This provided critical insights into early identification of vulnerabilities, referral mechanisms, inter-institutional coordination, and practical barriers faced at community level.

Data triangulation was applied systematically to validate and strengthen findings by comparing documentary evidence with empirical data. This approach enabled the identification of both convergences and discrepancies across sources and supported the formulation of robust, evidence-based conclusions relevant for intervention design.

DATA AND ANALYSIS LIMITATIONS

- Administrative data are fragmented and not fully harmonised across institutions, which may generate discrepancies between sources and limit the ability to obtain a comprehensive national-level picture. In addition, data quality varies depending on institutional capacity at the local level.
- For certain target groups, particularly persons experiencing homelessness, data are limited or insufficiently developed, making it difficult to estimate the true scale of the phenomenon and the coverage of services.
- Access to beneficiaries was also limited; therefore, the analysis relies primarily on the perspectives of institutions and service providers.
- The mapping of existing services is not exhaustive, and some services—particularly informal or small-scale initiatives—may not have been identified. Furthermore, the limited timeframe of the exercise required rapid data collection, which may have affected the level of detail of the analysis, especially in relation to comprehensive service mapping.

Findings were complemented with qualitative insights obtained through stakeholder consultations, allowing for a more accurate reflection of field realities and beneficiary pathways. Nevertheless, certain analytical dimensions—particularly the relationship between detention and homelessness—require further in-depth investigation. Despite these limitations, the use of multiple data sources and triangulation methods has enabled the formulation of findings that are robust, relevant, and fit for informing the design of targeted and integrated interventions.

MAPPING OF SERVICES AND STAKEHOLDERS

The social services system in the Republic of Moldova is organised across multiple levels (central, district, and local) and involves a combination of public actors, civil society organisations (CSOs), and development partners. While the institutional framework is relatively well-defined, available data indicate uneven service coverage and significant gaps for certain target groups.

CHILDREN IN CONFLICT WITH THE LAW OR AT RISK

Actors and roles:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) – policy coordination and regulation;
- Local Public Authorities (LPAs) / ATAS / STAS – identification, assessment, and case management;
- Guardianship authorities – child protection and decision-making regarding interventions;
- National Probation Inspectorate (NPI) – monitoring of minors in conflict with the law and implementation of non-custodial measures;
- Ministry of Education and Research – psycho-pedagogical services and educational support;
- CSOs – specialised services, prevention, and reintegration.

Existing services:

- primary social assistance and case management;
- family support services and prevention of family separation;
- psychological counselling and psycho-pedagogical services;
- probation and reintegration programmes;
- educational and community-based interventions (limited in coverage).

Coverage and beneficiaries: At the end of 2024, approximately 7.9 thousand children were registered as being at risk, indicating a significant caseload managed by the system⁴. At the same time, 802 minors were involved in committing offences, of whom 281 were convicted, reflecting the need for reintegration services. Data from the National Probation Inspectorate indicate that minors under probation supervision benefit from a range of reintegration-oriented interventions, including psychological counselling, educational support, vocational guidance, and facilitated access to social and educational services. In 2024, minors participated in cognitive-behavioural probation programmes and received services such as individual counselling, support for continuing education, and information on vocational training opportunities. However, available data show that effective access to socio-economic integration services remains limited. For example, only a small number of minors benefited from free vocational training courses, and the number of those who secured employment remains marginal compared to the total number of beneficiaries. At the same time, interventions

⁴ https://statistica.gov.md/en/the-situation-of-children-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2024-9578_61802.html

tend to focus more on information provision and counselling rather than on actively facilitating labour market integration. This discrepancy suggests a gap between the identified needs of minors—particularly in terms of skills development and professional integration—and the actual availability of accessible services. Contributing factors include the limited availability of tailored training programmes, barriers to labour market access, and the absence of integrated post-intervention support mechanisms. As a result, although the probation service framework includes relevant reintegration components, its impact is constrained by the limited coverage of active employment and training services, as well as by the lack of clear and sustained pathways towards socio-professional integration⁵. Service coverage presents several important gaps. Interventions are primarily focused on already identified cases, while early prevention remains limited. At the same time, there are significant disparities between urban and rural areas, with services being less accessible in rural settings, where vulnerability is higher. For example, over 46% of children in rural areas live in poverty, indicating a higher need for services in these regions. In addition, the lack of integrated services that combine social, educational, and justice-sector interventions reduces the effectiveness of the system's response and limits its impact on beneficiaries.

PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Actors and roles:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and Local Public Authorities (LPAs) – organisation and financing of social services;
- Temporary placement centres – provision of shelter and basic services;
- CSOs and faith-based organisations – complementary services;
- Police and emergency services – ad hoc interventions.

Existing services:

- temporary shelters (night centres);
- basic services (food, hygiene, social assistance);
- limited reintegration support (counselling, social guidance).

Coverage and beneficiaries. The analysis of available data highlights a major structural gap in the coverage of services for persons experiencing homelessness in the Republic of Moldova. Currently, there are no consolidated official data at national level on the total number of homeless persons, which significantly limits the ability of authorities to assess the real scale of the phenomenon, plan adequate interventions, and monitor service coverage. This limitation is also confirmed by independent assessments of the social protection system, which underline data fragmentation and insufficiency in vulnerable sectors⁶. In the absence of a national registry system, it is not possible to estimate the proportion of homeless persons benefiting from services, indicating a systemic issue in data-based planning and monitoring. From a funding perspective, budget data confirm the existence of a dedicated line for homelessness protection within the social assistance system; however, allocation levels remain

⁵ <https://probatie.gov.md/files/getfile/5884>

⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/6536/file/Final%20Evaluation%20Report%20Child%20Protection%20Strategy%202014-2020.pdf>

relatively low. According to the 2024 performance report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the subprogramme “Protection of Homeless Persons” (code 00325) had executed expenditures of approximately MDL 3.5 million ($\approx$ EUR 182,500), lower than the planned allocation of around MDL 4.6 million ($\approx$ EUR 240,000)⁷. In comparison, other specialised social services receive significantly higher funding. For instance, over MDL 10 million ($\approx$ EUR 521,000) were allocated to rehabilitation centres for victims of domestic violence—approximately three times more than for homelessness services⁸. This disparity suggests that services for homeless persons have limited capacity for development and expansion, both in terms of infrastructure (number of centres and available places) and the range of services provided. Moreover, the relatively low level of funding indicates that interventions are primarily focused on meeting basic needs (temporary shelter, minimum services), without enabling the development of comprehensive social and economic reintegration programmes. As a result, existing funding is not proportionate to the complexity of beneficiaries’ needs, which require not only emergency support but also medium- and long-term interventions (stable housing, access to employment, psycho-social support). Consequently, current resources contribute to maintaining a reactive intervention model, rather than enabling sustainable social inclusion solutions. In practice, services for homeless persons are concentrated mainly in urban areas, particularly in Chişinău and other district centres, where temporary shelters and emergency services operate. This geographical distribution results in limited or non-existent coverage in rural areas, where access to services is significantly lower. In this context, CSOs and non-governmental actors play a critical complementary role, providing additional and flexible support. However, their reliance on external funding and the lack of integration into the public system affect the sustainability and predictability of interventions.

CHILDREN / YOUNG PEOPLE RELEASED FROM DETENTION

Actors and roles

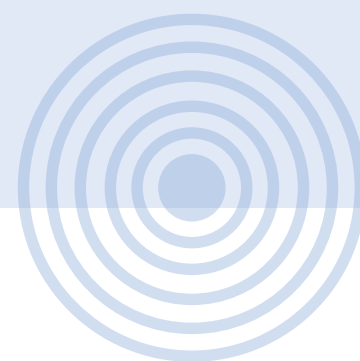
- National Administration of Penitentiaries (NAP) – pre-release preparation;
- National Probation Inspectorate – monitoring and post-release support;
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and Local Public Authorities (LPAs) – social services and community support;
- National Employment Agency (ANOFM) – employment services;
- CSOs – psycho-social support and reintegration.

Existing services

- social assessment and pre-release preparation;
- psychological and social counselling;
- support for obtaining identity documents;
- probation services;
- limited access to employment and vocational training.

⁷ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Raport-de-performanta-2.pdf>

⁸ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Raport-de-performanta-2.pdf>



Coverage and beneficiaries. Data from the National Administration of Penitentiaries (NAP) highlight the complexity of needs among persons deprived of liberty and the resulting pressure on reintegration services. In 2024, a total of 4,808 initial social assessments were conducted, identifying key vulnerabilities affecting reintegration into the community. These assessments indicate that a significant proportion of detainees face multiple vulnerabilities, including:

- lack of identity documents or expired documents;
- lack of housing or absence of a housing solution upon release;
- absence of family and social support networks;
- substance abuse (alcohol, drugs) and mental health issues.

In parallel, 2,819 individuals were classified as belonging to risk groups, indicating a high number of beneficiaries with complex needs and an increased risk of difficulties in the reintegration process. These data demonstrate that beneficiaries are not dealing with isolated issues, but rather with cumulative vulnerabilities that require integrated and sustained interventions. In the absence of adequate transition services, these vulnerabilities can lead to social marginalisation and recidivism. Despite the existence of basic services, the analysis highlights several structural gaps in service coverage for persons released from detention. First, there is no integrated transition mechanism between the penitentiary system and the community⁹. While interventions exist during detention and probation services are available post-release, these are not consistently linked into a continuous support pathway. Second, access to housing and employment after release remains limited. The lack of a stable address and difficulties in accessing the labour market significantly reduce the chances of sustainable reintegration. Furthermore, coordination between key institutions (NAP, probation services, social services, local authorities, ANOFM) is insufficiently developed, leading to fragmented interventions and a lack of continuity in the support provided to beneficiaries.

⁹ <https://anp.gov.md/sites/default/files/DPAM/Bilant%2C%20rapoarte%20analitice/BILANT%202024.pdf>

ROLE OF CSO_s AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

Civil society organisations (CSOs) play a critical role in complementing and expanding social services in the Republic of Moldova, particularly in areas where public interventions are limited or insufficiently developed. They contribute both to the direct provision of services and to policy development, as well as to strengthening system capacities. CSOs are particularly active in the following areas:

- provision of specialised services for vulnerable children and families (e.g. prevention of family separation, family support, community-based services);
- implementation of reintegration programmes for persons in conflict with the law, including minors and individuals released from detention;
- interventions targeting victims of violence, trafficking in persons, and other marginalised groups;
- development and piloting of innovative service models, some of which are later partially adopted by the public system.

Despite the significant contribution of CSOs and development partners, the analysis highlights several structural limitations:

- *Dependence on external funding*: most innovative and specialised services rely on external grants, affecting their continuity and sustainability;
- *Limited integration into the public system*: services developed by CSOs are not always systematically taken over and financed by the state;
- *Uneven coverage*: interventions are often concentrated in specific regions or implemented as pilot projects;
- *Lack of stable financing mechanisms*: there are insufficient instruments for contracting or sustainably co-financing services provided by CSOs.

Mapping of actors, services, and coverage

Actor / Organisation	Type of Actor	Main Services	Target Group	Coverage
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection	Central public authority	Social policies, service financing, system coordination	Vulnerable groups	National
Local Public Authorities (LPAs) / ATAS / STAS	Local authorities	Case management, primary social assistance	Children at risk, vulnerable families	National (weaker in rural areas)
National Probation Inspectorate	Public institution	Counselling, reintegration, probation programmes	Minors and adults in conflict with the law	National
National Administration of Penitentiaries	Public institution	Social assessment, pre-release preparation	Persons deprived of liberty	National
National Employment Agency (ANOFM)	Public institution	Job mediation, vocational training, active labour market measures	Unemployed persons, including vulnerable groups	National
Ministry of Education and Research	Central public authority	Education policies, psycho-pedagogical services	Children, students at risk	National
Psycho-pedagogical services / school psychologists	Public service providers	Psychological counselling, prevention, educational support	Children at risk	National (more developed in urban areas)
General Police Inspectorate	Public institution	Crime prevention, interventions in risk situations	Minors, vulnerable persons	National
National Coordination Council for the Reintegration of Persons Released from Detention	Interinstitutional mechanism	Coordination of reintegration policies	Persons released from detention	National
Mental health centres	Public service providers	Community-based mental health services	Vulnerable persons, including ex-detainees	National (limited coverage)
Shelters for homeless persons	Service providers (public/NGO)	Temporary shelter, basic services	Persons experiencing homelessness	Predominantly urban
Alliance of NGOs active in Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF)	NGO network	Advocacy, policy development, sector coordination	Children and vulnerable families	National
Partnerships for Every Child (P4EC)	NGO	Prevention of family separation, community services	Children at risk, vulnerable families	National (project-based/local)
Terre des Hommes Moldova	NGO	Juvenile justice, delinquency prevention, reintegration	Children in conflict with the law	National (project-based)
Caritas Moldova	NGO	Social services, support for vulnerable persons	Persons experiencing homelessness, vulnerable groups	Predominantly urban
La Strada Moldova	NGO	Services for victims (violence, trafficking), counselling	Women, children, victims of violence	National
Pro-Edu-Start	NGO	Educational services and support for vulnerable youth	Children and youth at risk	Local/national
Child Helpline (116 111)	Service provider	Counselling, case reporting	Children at risk	National
UNICEF Moldova	Development partner	Reforms, service financing, technical support	Children, vulnerable families	National
European Union (EU)	Donor	Funding social programmes, CSO support	Vulnerable groups	National
UNODC	Development partner	Justice and reintegration programmes	Persons in conflict with the law	Regional/national
People in Need (PIN)	International NGO	CSO funding, service development	Vulnerable groups	National

BENEFICIARY PROFILE

Profile of children in conflict with the law or at risk

Children in conflict with the law or at risk in the Republic of Moldova represent a group characterised by a **cumulative set of social, family, and individual vulnerabilities**. This group includes both children who have already come into contact with the criminal justice system and those who display antisocial behaviours or are exposed to significant risk factors that may lead to involvement in criminal activities. In this context, the phenomenon cannot be analysed solely from a legal perspective, but must be understood as the outcome of broader social and family dynamics. According to UNICEF data, approximately **4,000 children come into contact with the justice system annually**, either as suspects, defendants, or beneficiaries of protection measures¹⁰. This figure reflects not only the incidence of juvenile delinquency, but also the existence of a substantial number of vulnerable children requiring preventive interventions and specialised support.

From a demographic perspective, the majority of children in conflict with the law are adolescents aged **14 to 17**¹¹, corresponding to a developmental stage marked by major transitions, emotional instability, and increased peer influence. While boys remain predominant, recent trends indicate a gradual increase in the involvement of girls, suggesting a shift in the beneficiary profile.

The socio-family profile of these children is consistently shaped by major risk factors. **Parental migration** is one of the most significant determinants, with many children left in the care of grandparents or extended family members, often in conditions of limited supervision and significant generational gaps. At the same time, family environments are frequently characterised by poverty, instability, domestic violence, or neglect, all of which contribute to the development of risk behaviours and reduce the child's capacity for positive social integration¹².

From an educational perspective, children in conflict with the law or at risk often follow **fragmented educational pathways**. They frequently experience absenteeism, low academic performance, and, in many cases, school dropout. Their relationship with educational institutions is often strained, and schools do not always function effectively as protective or preventive environments. Studies conducted in the Republic of Moldova show that **disengagement from the education system is a key factor** in the trajectory leading to antisocial behaviour and subsequent contact with the justice system¹³.

From a psychological and behavioural standpoint, these children are often affected by **traumatic experiences, emotional difficulties, and a lack of effective self-regulation mechanisms**. Exposure to violence—whether within the family or the community—is a major determinant, directly correlated with the development of aggressive or deviant behaviours. In addition, **peer group influence plays a critical role**, with many antisocial behaviours being adopted within high-risk peer environments¹⁴.

¹⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/child-protection/justice-children>

¹¹ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/8361/file/Situation%20Analysis%20of%20children%20and%20adolescents%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Moldova%21.pdf>

¹² <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/child-protection>

¹³ https://tdh-moldova.org/ro/raportul_profil_copii_aflati_in_conflict_cu_legea

¹⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/ending-violence-against-children>

The typology of behaviours and offences committed by children indicates a predominance of **non-violent acts**, such as theft or hooliganism. These are generally opportunistic behaviours, shaped by context and social environment rather than by structured criminal intent. This reality highlights that juvenile delinquency in Moldova is largely a manifestation of vulnerability rather than organised criminality.

The Ombudsperson's report on **Penitentiary No. 10 Goian** further confirms that minors in detention present **complex and multidimensional needs**, including psychological, educational, and social support¹⁵. The analysis of risk factors points to a combination of **individual, family, community, and systemic determinants**, including adolescence-related vulnerabilities, emotional difficulties, parental migration, neglect, peer influence, and the lack of preventive services and early interventions. Overall, existing assessments emphasise the need to develop **integrated prevention and intervention systems**, capable of addressing these factors in a coordinated and holistic manner.

Profile of children experiencing homelessness / street situations

In practice, the profile of homeless children is more commonly described through the concept of **"children in street situations"**, which includes both children who live on the streets and those who spend significant periods of time there, repeatedly run away from home or care placements, and maintain unstable contact with services and responsible adults. The Ombudsperson for Children's Rights highlights that this group is **highly heterogeneous**, varying in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, health status, substance use (alcohol/drugs), duration of street experience, and relationship with family and institutions¹⁶.

An important characteristic of this profile is the **very early onset of contact with the street**. A qualitative study conducted by Terre des Hommes shows that, for some children, initial street experiences occur at extremely young ages—as **early as 3–4 years old**—before the phenomenon is effectively identified or addressed by families or services. The same study indicates that many children repeatedly run away from home or residential care and develop a **long-term relationship with street life**¹⁷.

From a family and social perspective, children in street situations frequently come from environments marked by **neglect, violence, poverty, parental migration, conflictual family relationships, and limited supervision**. UNICEF's analysis of the situation of children and adolescents in Moldova notes that poverty, inequalities, family separation, and limited access to services disproportionately affect the most vulnerable groups, including children in street situations, for whom **significant data gaps also persist**¹⁸.

The **educational profile** of these children is typically characterised by absenteeism, disengagement from school, dropout, or highly unstable participation. The Ombudsperson's report¹⁹ emphasises that the situation of children in street contexts is linked to **multiple forms of exclusion** and precarious access to protection, education, healthcare, and social services. Previous intersectoral as-

¹⁵ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/raport-penitenciarul-nr.10-goian-din-cadrul-administratiei-nationale-a-penitenciarelor-la-07-iulie-2023.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/thematic-report-respect-for-the-rights-of-children-in-street-situations.pdf>

¹⁷ https://tdh-moldova.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/children_in_street_situations_en_2096737_1.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/8361/file/Situation%20Analysis%20of%20children%20and%20adolescents%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Moldova%21.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/thematic-report-respect-for-the-rights-of-children-in-street-situations.pdf>

assessments have shown that these children are often **insufficiently covered by standard protection mechanisms**.

From a behavioural and health perspective, children in street situations frequently experience **trauma, survival behaviours, exposure to violence, risk of exploitation, substance use, and repeated contact with police or other authorities**. This reflects a profile of **complex vulnerability**, extending far beyond the lack of stable housing. Territorially, the phenomenon is more visible in **urban areas**, particularly in Chişinău, where street outreach services are available. However, studies and public reports suggest that the phenomenon is **under-identified outside urban centres**. Moreover, the absence of a sufficiently clear operational definition and the lack of systematic data make it difficult to accurately estimate its scale.

From an analytical perspective, a homeless child or a child in a street situation can be understood as a child or adolescent experiencing **severe and cumulative exclusion**, where the lack of stable housing intersects with family, educational, emotional, and institutional vulnerabilities. This profile clearly indicates the need for **integrated, proximity-based interventions**, including case management, family support, and access to mental health, education, and protection services—rather than isolated or emergency-only responses.

Profile of children / young people released from detention

Available public data in the Republic of Moldova are more consistent for persons released from detention in general than for minors specifically; however, they allow for the delineation of a clear profile of the vulnerabilities and risks associated with the reintegration process. Persons released from detention frequently face stigma and discrimination, alongside structural social challenges, including lack of employment, housing, health insurance, and stable access to services. According to the United Nations in Moldova, in the absence of adequate interventions in these areas, social reintegration remains fragile, and the risk of re-entry into the penitentiary system is high²⁰. The scale of the phenomenon is also reflected in the annual flow of released persons. In 2023, **1,916 individuals were released from detention** in the Republic of Moldova, according to the annual report of the Council for the Prevention of Torture / National Preventive Mechanism. This volume indicates significant pressure on the reintegration system and on available community-based services²¹.

From a recidivism perspective, available studies and data suggest that the **lack of effective post-release support directly contributes to reoffending and re-incarceration**²². Media analyses and sectoral evaluations indicate that a substantial proportion of released individuals return to the penitentiary system, highlighting the limitations of current reintegration mechanisms.

²⁰ <https://moldova.un.org/en/259917-reintegration-persons-released-prison-society-republic-moldova>

²¹ <https://ombudsman.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/annual-activity-report-of-the-council-for-the-prevention-of-torture-national-preventive-mechanism-2023.pdf>

²² <https://newsmaker.md/ro/minori-dupa-gratii-in-ce-conditii-stau-detinutii-din-penitenciarul-nr-10-goian-si-de-ce-mai-mult-de-jumatate-revin-in-inchisoare>

In terms of needs, analyses on the community reintegration of persons released from detention identify **six key intervention areas**:

- family support;
- housing and financial assistance;
- access to social and healthcare services;
- services addressing addictions and behavioural change;
- employment support;
- post-release monitoring and support.

These dimensions highlight that reintegration is a **complex process requiring coordinated and multi-disciplinary interventions**²³. For children and young people released from detention, vulnerabilities are further amplified. Evaluations of the juvenile justice reform in the Republic of Moldova indicate that **aftercare services remain limited**, while reintegration support—particularly in terms of access to education and employment—is insufficiently developed²⁴. Reintegration is further hindered by **disruption of educational pathways**, difficulties in re-entering the school system, and **community-level stigma**. The European Commission’s report on the Republic of Moldova confirms the existence of a separate detention system for minors but also highlights persistent challenges related to their post-release reintegration.

At the institutional level, the Republic of Moldova has a **post-penitentiary probation framework** aimed at supporting individuals in adapting to community life after release. However, international assessments indicate that probation and reintegration services remain **underdeveloped, fragmented, and territorially uneven, limiting the effectiveness of interventions**. In addition, findings from the Ombudsperson’s report on Penitentiary No. 10 Goian highlight that interventions during detention are not always sufficient to adequately prepare minors for reintegration, particularly in terms of psychosocial and educational support. This, in turn, affects the continuity and effectiveness of post-release interventions. Overall, the profile of children and young people released from detention can be described as situated at the intersection of **social vulnerability, stigma, and high risk of exclusion**. For this group, these challenges are further compounded by disrupted education, limited family support, and the lack of continuity between detention, probation, and community-based services.

²³ https://mptf.undp.org/sites/default/files/documents/2024-05/2023_moldova_2030_sdg_tf_ii_annual_consolidated_progress_report_05312024.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.coram.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Reform-of-the-Juvenile-Justice-System-in-Moldova-Final-Evaluation.pdf>

KEY FINDINGS

The system of services for children in conflict with the law or at risk, persons experiencing homelessness, and young people released from detention is characterised by a relatively well-defined institutional framework, but **fragmented functioning and uneven service coverage**. At the institutional level, responsibilities are distributed among the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, local public authorities (through ATAS/STAS), the National Probation Inspectorate, the National Administration of Penitentiaries, the education system, and, complementarily, civil society organisations. While this framework theoretically enables coverage of the main stages of intervention—from identification and monitoring to reintegration—data analysis shows that these components are **not integrated into a functional pathway for beneficiaries**.

For children in conflict with the law or at risk, existing services include primary social assistance, case management, psychological counselling, psycho-pedagogical services, and probation programmes. **By the end of 2024, approximately 7.9 thousand children were registered as at risk**, and the probation system worked with minors engaged in reintegration programmes, including counselling and vocational guidance²⁵. However, the data reveal a **significant gap between available services and socio-economic integration outcomes**. Access to vocational training and employment remains limited, and interventions focus predominantly on counselling and information, without effective mechanisms for labour market insertion.

For persons experiencing homelessness, services are primarily centred on **emergency responses**—temporary shelters and basic services (food, hygiene, social assistance). The analysis highlights the absence of consolidated national data on the scale of the phenomenon, which limits service planning and evaluation. At the same time, **public funding remains low**: in 2024, approximately MDL 3.5 million were allocated for the protection of homeless persons, significantly less than for other specialised social services²⁶. This **funding structure reflects a predominantly reactive intervention model**, focused on crisis management rather than the development of medium- and long-term reintegration services, such as supported housing or socio-professional integration.

For persons released from detention, data from the National Administration of Penitentiaries show that in 2024, 4,808 initial social assessments were conducted and 2,819 individuals were classified as belonging to risk groups, reflecting the complexity of reintegration needs²⁷. Existing services include pre-release preparation, psychological counselling, support for obtaining identity documents, and probation-based monitoring. However, the analysis highlights the **absence of an integrated transition mechanism between the penitentiary system and the community**. Access to housing and employment remains limited, and coordination among relevant institutions is insufficient, leading to discontinuities in beneficiary support.

²⁵ https://statistica.gov.md/en/the-situation-of-children-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-2024-9578_61802.html
<https://probatie.gov.md/files/getfile/5884>

²⁶ <https://social.gov.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Raport-de-performanta-2.pdf>

²⁷ <https://anp.gov.md/sites/default/files/DPAM/Bilant%2C%20rapoarte%20analitice/BILANT%202024.pdf>

Overall, the mapping of services highlights five major systemic dysfunctions:

- **Fragmentation of interventions** – services exist but are not integrated into a coherent cross-sectoral pathway (social, education, health, justice);
- **Lack of specialised services** – interventions are predominantly generalist and insufficiently tailored to complex needs;
- **Absence of transition services** – lack of aftercare mechanisms, temporary housing, and post-service accompaniment;
- **Territorial inequalities** – services are concentrated in urban areas, while needs are higher in rural settings;
- **Dependence on ad hoc interventions** – innovative services are often developed by CSOs but are not systemically integrated or sustainable.

The analysis shows that the current system is **functional at the level of administrative case management**, but insufficiently developed in terms of rehabilitation- and reintegration-oriented interventions. Existing mechanisms ensure identification and monitoring of beneficiaries, but are not supported by therapeutic, behavioural, or life-skills interventions, limiting the real impact of services.

The **lack of specialised services** represents the main systemic vulnerability. In the absence of dedicated interventions, beneficiaries are integrated into general services that are not adapted to their needs, reducing effectiveness and complicating the management of complex cases. This reflects the absence of a coherent national model for behavioural rehabilitation.

Reintegration—particularly post-detention—is **insufficiently supported and lacks continuity**. There are no functional pathways ensuring transition from detention or social services into community integration, and post-service support is limited or absent. As a result, beneficiaries face significant barriers to social and labour market integration, while the risk of recidivism and exclusion remains high. This reflects a **structural break in the intervention chain**.

Fragmentation across sectors is another major limitation. Although multiple institutions are involved, interinstitutional coordination remains largely formal, and interventions are not integrated into a coherent and continuous response. The lack of clearly defined responsibilities and the limited functionality of referral mechanisms reduce effectiveness and hinder the development of clear beneficiary pathways. System capacity is further affected by **shortages of human resources and specialised competencies**, particularly in psychological and behavioural interventions. The lack of psychologists, staff overload, and absence of standardised tools limit service quality and the ability to manage complex cases, especially in rural areas.

The **mental health component is insufficiently integrated into the system's response**. Existing interventions are predominantly medical and reactive, not specifically adapted to children with deviant behaviour, and poorly connected with social and educational services. This separation reduces the system's ability to address the root causes of risk behaviours. Stigma and underreporting further affect both access to services and system performance. Cases are often hidden or incompletely reported, limiting early intervention and distorting the systemic understanding of the phenomenon.

The **lack of integrated and interoperable data** reduces the capacity for strategic planning. There are no consolidated records on beneficiaries, reintegration outcomes, or recidivism, and decisions are made based on fragmented information, limiting evidence-based interventions. These deficiencies are exacerbated by territorial disparities and socio-economic factors. Rural areas are characterised by limited access to services and specialists, while high levels of poverty, parental migration, and lack of family support increase vulnerability and the emergence of risk behaviours. At the same time, there are significant gaps in service coverage and integration. Interventions are not organised into a coherent “**prevention – intervention – reintegration**” pathway, and for certain groups—such as persons experiencing homelessness—even basic data required for planning are missing. Fragmentation of both data and services limits the system’s ability to respond effectively to beneficiaries’ needs.

Administrative and documentation barriers represent an additional obstacle to reintegration. The lack of identity documents, a stable address, or social networks directly affects access to services, housing, and employment, perpetuating the risk of exclusion. Institutional capacity is also constrained by financial and organisational limitations. Resources allocated to certain specialised services are insufficient relative to the complexity of needs, while challenges in staff recruitment and training affect both implementation and sustainability. Despite these constraints, there are relevant initiatives and practices developed by public institutions and civil society organisations. However, these remain fragmented, dependent on external funding, and insufficiently integrated into the public system, limiting their scalability and sustainability at national level.

The analysis shows that civil society organisations occupy a **critical space within the social system**, particularly in areas where public services are insufficient or absent. CSOs are among the few actors capable of delivering flexible, beneficiary-centred, and context-adapted interventions, including work with complex behaviours and social reintegration. At the same time, the number of organisations working directly with children in conflict with the law and young people released from detention remains limited, and their capacity is constrained by funding, territorial coverage, and insufficient integration into the public system. Interviews confirm that **few NGOs are active in this field**, and collaboration with public authorities is often ad hoc and project-based.

In this context, CSOs should not be treated merely as complementary providers, but as **key system actors**, capable of:

- developing and piloting specialised services;
- ensuring continuity of interventions within communities;
- connecting beneficiaries to multiple services;
- introducing innovative and scalable models.

REINTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT

The triangulated analysis of data highlights the existence of institutional efforts to link reintegration processes with labour market integration; however, this connection remains **limited in coverage and insufficiently consolidated at the systemic level**. Official data from the National Probation Inspectorate for 2024 indicate **low participation of minors in employment-related measures**, with only 12 beneficiaries attending vocational training courses and 3 individuals securing employment, while 29 were merely informed about job opportunities. These figures reveal a **significant gap between existing interventions and actual socio-professional integration outcomes**. This trend is further confirmed by qualitative data from interviews, which show that beneficiaries face **major challenges in accessing and maintaining employment**. A critical factor identified is the reluctance of employers to hire individuals with a history of detention, significantly limiting real integration opportunities—even in cases where beneficiaries have acquired qualifications or skills during detention or through support programmes. Within the penitentiary system, educational and vocational programmes, as well as activities aimed at preparing individuals for professional integration, are in place. However, these are predominantly focused on the **period of detention** and are not linked to functional mechanisms for tracking beneficiaries' trajectories after release. The absence of a post-detention monitoring system limits impact evaluation and reduces the effectiveness of the transition towards sustainable employment.

Another important finding highlighted in interviews with the probation system is the **extremely low uptake of state-provided post-detention support programmes**. Although an assisted support service for reintegration exists, it is voluntary and accessed annually by a very small number of beneficiaries—estimated at only 1–3 individuals. This low participation rate reflects both limitations in the programme's attractiveness and accessibility, as well as the absence of proactive mechanisms to integrate beneficiaries into structured reintegration pathways. Overall, the analysis shows that while elements of support for reintegration and employment do exist, they are **not integrated into a coherent intervention chain** capable of ensuring the transition from detention or social services to sustainable employment. The lack of continuity, combined with labour market barriers and the limited utilisation of existing programmes, disproportionately affects individuals with multiple vulnerabilities—including those without identity documents, stable housing, or family support—thereby maintaining a **high risk of social exclusion and recidivism**.

SUSTAINABILITY AND SYSTEMIC CHALLENGES

The analysis highlights that, although the policy framework and ongoing reforms in child protection and social services are being strengthened, their implementation remains **incomplete and uneven**. The lack of full operationalisation of recent reforms creates uncertainty regarding service financing, the clear definition of the basic service package, and institutional responsibilities. In practice, this results in a system that operates predominantly at the level of **basic social interventions**, without consistent development of specialised services and reintegration mechanisms.

The pressure on the system is significant. In 2024, probation services managed **over 7,400 individuals under supervision**, with an annual inflow of nearly 10,000 new cases, according to the annual report of the National Probation Inspectorate²⁸. At the same time, approximately **7,900 children were identified as being at risk** at the national level, the majority from rural areas, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics²⁹. The increasing number of offences committed by minors further confirms the pressure on the system and the need for more effective interventions³⁰.

A critical issue consistently highlighted in interviews is the **lack of clear and applicable procedures for managing complex cases**. Frontline professionals report real challenges in intervention in the absence of operational guidelines, leading to inconsistent approaches, reliance on individual experience, and, in some cases, reluctance to assume responsibility in sensitive cases. Sustainability is further constrained by the absence of a **functional data system**. The lack of integrated mechanisms for collecting and analysing data on beneficiaries, reintegration outcomes, and intervention results reduces the capacity for strategic planning and impact evaluation.

Another major structural factor is the **dependence on external projects** and the limited capacity of the civil society sector. The number of organisations working directly with children in conflict with the law and young people post-detention is small, and the services developed remain fragmented and difficult to scale. In the absence of mechanisms for integration and public funding, these interventions are not institutionalised and cannot ensure continuity. At the same time, public institutions lack sufficient resources and competencies to compensate for these gaps. The shortage of specialists trained to work with complex behaviours, insufficient practical training, and the absence of standardised methodologies limit both the effectiveness of interventions and the system's capacity to respond to complex cases.

²⁸ <https://probatune.gov.md/files/getfile/5884>

²⁹ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copiilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9578_61802.html

³⁰ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/nivelul-infractionalitatii-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9478_61676.html

CROSS-CUTTING ASPECTS

The analysis highlights significant disparities between rural and urban areas, which directly influence both levels of vulnerability and access to services. Official data show that **approximately 7.9 thousand children were in situations of risk in 2024**, the **majority coming from rural areas**, where households with children are more frequently exposed to poverty and precarious living conditions³¹.

These findings are confirmed by interview data, which indicate that a high proportion of beneficiaries originate from rural areas, where access to services is limited due to the lack of specialists and infrastructure. In many communities, there are no psychologists or specialised services, and interventions are limited to monitoring and basic social support.

Territorial disparities affect both **access and quality of services**. Urban areas benefit from a higher concentration of resources but also face increased pressure on services, while in rural areas institutional capacity is limited, constraining both intervention scope and continuity. Data also indicate the presence of **multiple and interconnected vulnerabilities**. In 2024, 272 children in risk situations had disabilities, and at the beginning of 2025, over 11.4 thousand children with disabilities were receiving state social benefits³². Beyond these figures, the analysis highlights the lack of disaggregated data to fully understand the intersection between disability, poverty, and place of residence. Interviews confirm that vulnerabilities do not act in isolation but accumulate: children from rural areas, those from families affected by migration or poverty, and those with disabilities are exposed to higher risks of exclusion and marginalisation. There are also **gender-related differences** in vulnerability patterns: boys are more frequently involved in delinquent behaviours, while children with disabilities are more exposed to neglect and exclusion. In the absence of an intersectional analysis, interventions remain generalised and insufficiently adapted to beneficiaries' actual needs. The lack of **comparable and interoperable data** represents one of the most consistent systemic challenges identified. Currently, information on beneficiaries, reintegration pathways, and intervention outcomes is fragmented across different systems (social, educational, penitentiary, probation) and does not allow for integrated analysis.

Interviews highlight the absence of key data, such as educational reintegration after detention, recidivism rates, or the effectiveness of interventions. The lack of interoperability makes it difficult to track beneficiary pathways and identify points of breakdown in intervention. Monitoring remains predominantly administrative and does not reflect actual outcomes. Underreporting of cases and discrepancies between official data and field realities further limit planning capacity and service development. As a result, interventions remain reactive, and public policies cannot be grounded in solid evidence.

³¹ https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2024-9578_61802.html

³² https://statistica.gov.md/en/the-situation-of-children-in-the-republic-of-moldova-in-9578_61802.html

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals a clear need for **systemic intervention** in the field of services for children in conflict with the law or at risk, for young people released from detention, and—closely linked—for persons experiencing severe forms of exclusion, including homelessness. Available data and stakeholder consultations show that these groups do not face isolated vulnerabilities, but rather **accumulations of social, economic, family, and institutional risks**, which reinforce one another and significantly reduce the chances of sustainable social integration.

For children in conflict with the law or at risk, vulnerability is closely linked to poverty, parental migration, lack of supervision, dysfunctional family relationships, insufficient emotional support, and difficulties in educational and social integration. For young people released from detention, these vulnerabilities are further aggravated by lack of housing, barriers to employment, absence of continuous support, and stigma. For persons experiencing homelessness, the issue is compounded by low visibility in public data and the absence of clear support and reintegration pathways.

From a strategic perspective, the system does not fail due to a lack of institutions, mechanisms, or initiatives, but because these are **not connected into a coherent response**. At a formal level, identification, monitoring, referral structures, and certain sectoral services exist; however, in practice, interventions do not translate into a real pathway of prevention, rehabilitation, and reintegration. Monitoring remains largely administrative, specialised services are lacking or insufficient, and transition periods—particularly after detention or exit from services—remain poorly covered. In other words, the system manages cases but does not sufficiently transform beneficiaries' life trajectories. The structural bottlenecks identified are consistent across all interviews:

- lack of specialised services and a clear intervention model for children with behavioural issues and post-detention youth;
- fragmentation between the social, education, health, and justice sectors, which operate in parallel rather than in an integrated manner;
- limited institutional capacity, including shortages of specialists, insufficient practical training, lack of methodologies and clear procedures, and staff overload;
- absence of integrated data systems and results-oriented monitoring, weakening planning, coordination, and impact evaluation;
- fragile reintegration, particularly for individuals leaving detention without sustained community support.

These challenges are further compounded by stigma, especially within schools, communities, and the labour market, which reduces real access to opportunities even when interventions exist.

The analysis also shows that these bottlenecks are more severe in rural areas, where needs are higher but services and specialists are fewer. At the same time, vulnerabilities are cumulative: poverty, migration, lack of family support, disability, educational difficulties, and social exclusion overlap rather than occur separately.

For this reason, sectoral or isolated responses are insufficient. There is a need for an approach that treats these vulnerabilities as part of a **continuum of risk and exclusion**. In this context, the added value of intervention is clear: not only expanding services, but **correcting how the system functions**. There is a clear space for interventions that connect existing components, build real support pathways, and introduce results-oriented practices.

The role of civil society organisations is essential in this transformation. The analysis shows that CSOs are among the few actors capable of delivering flexible, beneficiary-centred interventions adapted to local realities. However, the number of organisations working directly with these groups remains limited, and their capacity is constrained by funding, coverage, and insufficient integration into the public system. This combination creates both a vulnerability and a strategic opportunity: investing in **CSOs can generate a disproportionately high impact on the quality and accessibility of services**. Within this framework, the intervention of People in Need (PIN) can be positioned as a **systemic intervention**, rather than a project-based one. PIN can act as a facilitator between community and institutional levels by:

- developing integrated service models that combine social, psychological, educational, and reintegration support;
- strengthening coordination mechanisms among stakeholders;
- creating concrete solutions for transition periods, including aftercare, mentoring, and socio-professional integration;
- strengthening the capacity of CSOs and frontline professionals through methodologies, training, and functional partnerships with public authorities.





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