

Children's Rights in Moldova: From Their Own Perspective



2025

**Report to inform the Committee on the Rights of the
Child List of Issues Prior to Reporting**

by Children's Platform from Moldova

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I. INTRODUCTION



1. What is Children's Platform



The Children's Platform was initiated in 2017 by children who had previously participated in Moldova's reporting to the CRC Committee, aiming to maintain and broaden child involvement through digital media. Supported by the Child Rights Information Center, the Platform became a safe, enabling and inclusive space (online and offline) for children to explore their rights, set priorities, and lead monitoring and advocacy based on CRC recommendations.

Between 2017 and 2025, over 150 children formed the core group, while more than 3000 were consulted in the development of reports that informed advocacy. Many others engaged through the Platform's social media channels - Instagram and TikTok. Girls and boys who led the work of the Platform came from different parts of Moldova, urban and rural areas, and were typically between 12 and 17 years old. Some members were from Transnistria, some refugees from Ukraine, and some were members of the LGBTQI+ community.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Since 2017, the Children's Platform has focused on key child rights themes as selected by children through collaborative monitoring, awareness-raising and advocacy:

● **Since 2018 - Toilets in Schools**

The Platform has developed a report, followed by the "Greetings from My School" campaign and a round table with national and local authorities. Children continued to raise awareness of this issue in subsequent years, contributing to increased budget allocations and greater public attention, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

● **Since 2018 - Child Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs)**

In collaboration with other children's groups linked to the Alliance of Active NGOs in the field of Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF) Moldova, Platform members contributed to the children's submission to the CRC Committee's 2018 Day of General Discussion. This topic became central to the Platform's work, with continued advocacy, including during Moldova's 3rd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and engagement with the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders (SRHRD). These efforts led to increased recognition of CHRDs by the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights and inclusion of related provisions in **Moldova's 2023 Law on Children's Rights**.

● **Since 2019 - Student Councils**

The Platform has developed an interactive game along with a report and held a round table with relevant authorities to discuss key recommendations and promote meaningful student participation in decision-making. Several children's recommendations were reflected in the

2023 Regulations for Student Councils issued by the Ministry of Education, as well as in development of other representative structures for child participation, such as the Ombuds Children's Councils.

● **Since 2021 – Sexuality Education**

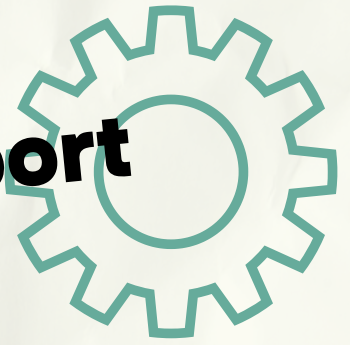
A report and accompanying online campaign #întrebămeexperta initiated a dialogue with decision-makers on this sensitive topic in Moldova. Building on this, the Platform continued exploring specific aspects of comprehensive sexuality education.

o The report on Emotional Intimacy was published in 2024 and discussed in two dedicated round tables with important decision-makers, including the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights and UNFPA. An online campaign was launched to further raise awareness of this important but still neglected topic.

● Based on ongoing advocacy of the Platform and its supporters, it is expected that specific elements of comprehensive sexuality education will be integrated into the national school curriculum by the end of 2025. The Platform also contributed to the **Council of Europe (CoE)** consultations to inform Guidance on comprehensive sexuality education published in 2025.



2. Methodology for the development of this report



This 2025 report builds on children's reports developed by the Platform since 2017, highlighting current priorities in Moldova for the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It was developed by a newly formed group of Platform members aged 12 to 16 from urban and rural areas across Moldova. While some had prior experience in similar initiatives, for most it was their first time engaging with children's rights as human rights defenders. To ensure their meaningful participation, a series of in-person workshops has been organized since May 2025. These workshops included group-building activities, focused on developing inclusive working methods and creating a safe and enabling space for mutual exchange and learning. Given the limited human rights education in Moldova, considerable time was dedicated to learning about the Convention on the Rights of the Child, reporting and previous recommendations of the CRC Committee.

"I learned new things about the articles of the Convention. We worked in a friendly atmosphere and the day flew by. After studying the Convention, I realised that all rights are truly interrelated, that is, interdependent." **(Member of PC_2025)**

"Now I know more about the UN and the Committee." **(Member of PC_2025)**



However, the group devoted most of their efforts to reviewing and updating existing information and reports about the situation of children's rights in Moldova.

"I was impressed by the reports prepared by the Platform members so far. I realised that we are going through similar experiences, because little has changed over the years."

(Member of PC_2025)

Most of the issues raised in earlier children's reports are still relevant, and the group's updates help understand how these issues affect children in Moldova today. New topics raised by the group included education rights, protection from violence, climate change impact on children's rights and how children use artificial intelligence. Themes such as the lack of respect for children's views, experiences of violence, safety concerns, and the role of child human rights defenders are reflected throughout the report, highlighting key areas of children's advocacy.

To make sure that the report includes voices of typically excluded children, two focus groups were conducted - one with Roma children (12 girls and 11 boys, age range: 13-17) and another with refugee children from Ukraine (9 girls and 7 boys, age range: 7-13). Insights from LGBTQI+ children were collected through an online survey that was distributed by current Platform members in their peer groups during June/July. 5 people responded - 3 girls and 2 boys, age range: 12-16.

The group was supported by Child Rights Information Center (CRIC) Moldova staff, including 2 young adult facilitators - former Platform members - who helped summarize the earlier reports and develop child-friendly materials and methods of work.

"The information is conveyed to us in an interesting way, and I like that."

(Member of PC_2025)

The facilitators drafted this report. It was validated by children before submitting to the CRC Committee. The group will continue its involvement in the next phases of the CRC reporting cycle.



II. GENERAL PRINCIPLES



1. Respect for Children's Views

1.1. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN FAMILY DECISION-MAKING



Children believe that the decisions they can make independently are directly related to their age at the time of the decision. When they are young, their choices are limited by the adults around them, as adults make these decisions for them. However, as they grow older, children develop the ability to change some of the decisions made by adults on their behalf, for example, they can change their religion.

„When I was little, my parents made decisions for me, but as I get older, I can make my own decisions.” (PC_2025)

Sometimes, when they make decisions for themselves, they have to “negotiate” with their parents so that they accept their decision or help them implement it.

„I negotiate, I give arguments why it is important to me, especially if money is needed to implement the decision.” (PC_2025)

In the family, some decisions are discussed with the children, while others are imposed without discussion. Some children noted that they cannot influence where the family lives, its financial situation, or living expenses.

„I don't decide where we live, how the family budget is allocated, or how bills are paid.” (PC_2025)

However, when it comes to everyday decisions that directly affect their lives, some older children said that their parents consult with them and respect their personal choices.

„I choose what to eat, how to decorate my room, what clothes to wear, and how to spend my free time.” (PC_2025)

„I help choose furniture and decorate my room.” (PC_2025)

1.2. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING: THROUGH STUDENT COUNCILS

Student councils remain underdeveloped as a mechanism through which children can influence decision-making in school. In 2025, children report the same problems as in 2019, the main ones being:



Composition of the student council

Most often, student councils are made up of children who have high grades, “exemplary” behaviour, or are actively involved in various activities at school or outside of school. Usually, these students are class leaders.

„The council consists of students with high grade point averages.” (Report_opinion_2019)

„The student council includes children whose parents are teachers, children with grades of 9 and above, or teachers’ favourites.” (PC_2025)

„In 5th grade, a candidate is chosen to be part of the council, and they remain a member until 9th grade.” (PC_2025)

Transparency in the election of members to the student council

In many schools, elections are held only for the position of student council president, but not for the selection of other team members. However, there are situations where elections are merely a formality, and the student council president is appointed by teachers rather than by the students.

„A student is promoted to the position of student council president without fair elections.” (PC_2025)

„Teachers nominate certain students for positions or events without consulting the students and without holding a competition.” (PC_2025)

„If teachers believe that a child chosen by the students is not worthy of the position of president, they put pressure on him/her, saying that it will be difficult with such a big responsibility.” (PC_2025)

Although, according to school rules, the creation and functioning of student councils is mandatory, in some schools, this does not happen. Council meetings are organised formally, often scheduled at hours when commuting students cannot remain after lessons to participate in the meetings.

„Our council exists only on paper, but it is not very involved in the lives of students.” (PC_2025)

„The student council does not have enough space and freedom to organise anything.” (PC_2025)

„Some students cannot stay after school for meetings, but the meetings are rarely held anyway.” (PC_2025)

Transparency in the election of members to the student council

Most children noted that the most frequent events organised by their school council are cultural and artistic/festive events, namely themed evenings, dance evenings, concerts, etc. Many girls and boys also frequently mentioned charity events. (Report_opinion_2019).

„Useless activities were organised, for example, poetry recitals.” (PC_2025)

„My school also organises poetry recitals.” (PC_2025)

Many children are unaware of the role of student councils and believe that the student council fulfils its function of consulting students' views on school life when it consults with them on how to organise cultural activities. (Report_opinion_2019)

Consulting students' opinions by student councils

So far, consulting children's opinions on issues of importance to them has been sporadic. At the same time, children are not informed about the results of the consultations and how their opinions have influenced the decisions made. There are situations when children are reprimanded for their answers during consultations. As a result, children are not motivated to participate in open consultations and do not feel safe to express their opinion on a school issue.

„We were asked what we don't like about school, and I said that I don't like nepotism. Then the headmistress found out what I had said and told me off.” (PC_2025)

„The students do not approach the student council. The administration does not listen to them anyway and doesn't care to know the students' opinions.” (PC_2025)

„These are tokenistic consultations.” (PC_2025)

Transparency in decision-making

In most institutions, the participation of student council members lacks transparency. Children are rarely informed about the results following the submission of certain proposals from student councils to the administration. At the same time, the school

administration also does not inform students about the decisions made after considering the proposals from students.

„Neither the members of the council nor other students are informed by the administration whether it is possible to implement certain proposals put forward by the student council.”
(PC_2025)

According to the Regulations on the Organisation and Functioning of the Student Council, a representative of the council must be delegated to attend meetings of the Board of Administration. Although this does happen, their participation is mostly formal. When a student puts forward proposals, they are not taken seriously, even when discussing and planning the school budget. Thus, few school councils have budgets allocated for their work.

„A student participates in the Board of Administration, but the students' opinion is not taken into account, they being told “you are small” and “adults know better”.” (PC_2025)

1.3. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL DECISION-MAKING: CHOOSING ELECTIVE COURSES



Although by law, children have the right to freely choose elective courses, this is not the case in practice. Children are rarely asked which elective courses they want to study, or the administration offers a predetermined list. There are cases when children study the same subject for several years in a row, either because the school does not have teachers trained in certain elective courses or because it needs to ensure sufficient working hours for the teachers already employed. In some cases, children's choices are influenced by the teachers of subjects that conclude with an exam, in order to allocate more time to exam preparation.

„We wanted to study English, but due to lack of a teacher, the administration did not allow us. There was only one teacher for the whole school.” (PC_2025)

„In our school, the teacher with whom we did the elective course in previous years writes the request and we just sign it. Thus, several years in a row we take the same elective course.”
(PC_2025)

„The teacher forced us to take an elective in a subject that concludes with exams. He told us, „If you want to do well in your exams, you have to take this subject”. This is also a form of manipulation on the part of the teacher.” (PC_2025)

1.4. CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC POLICIES AND LAWS

In 2024, the Children's Platform participated in the development of a toolkit on children's participation in lawmaking, which was presented at a parliamentary session to a group of female MPs and the Children's Ombudsperson. The toolkit contains specific recommendations for authorities on how to involve children at all stages of lawmaking that directly affect them.



Important steps have been taken in recognising children's participation in decision-making through children's cooperation with the Children's Ombudsperson, which helps to identify more opportunities for children's voices to be heard in policy decision-making processes. However, such opportunities are still few – important aspects of children's lives, such as education, health or safety, have not been addressed so far. Children's participation remains dependent on civil society support and is seen as a welcome bonus rather than a necessary part of the process.

For example, children were consulted in the process of developing the latest National Child Protection Strategy, but not in the process of adopting the new Child Rights Law.

Moreover, consultation processes remain limited in terms of the basic requirements for meaningful child participation (CRC GC 12): the number of children involved is small, participation is not inclusive, there are no child-friendly materials, little time for consultation is planned. Children do not receive any feedback on how their views have been taken into account.

„I participated in the National Forum on Child Rights and presented on how children's rights are respected. We made recommendations to the authorities, but have not yet received any feedback.” (PC_SRHRD_2022)





„There are no child-friendly laws.” (PC_SRHRD_2022)

„School rules are drawn up by adults and I find it difficult to understand what it says.” (PC_SRHRD_2022)

These barriers prevent children from participating meaningfully and they are highly demotivated.

„Many young people give up their ideas because they are not taken seriously, they don't get any response from the authorities or school administration.” (PC_SRHRD_2022)

In conclusion, children's participation in policy and law-making in Moldova is at an early stage. Many representatives of the country's authorities and institutions do not have a clear understanding of why children's voices matter and how children can be engaged in a respectful, safe, inclusive and truly meaningful way.

2. Non-discrimination



2.1. EXPERIENCES OF ROMA CHILDREN

Focus group participants reported that very few Roma children attend school regularly and complete the compulsory cycle of lower secondary education. Some children, especially girls, have never attended school at all, some attend school for only a few years, and others enrol in school much later than the age of 7, (when schooling begins) Children

state that most parents and authoritative adults in the Roma community send children to school only to learn to read and write, not to learn something more in-depth or to build a career. They see education or gaining professional qualifications not as a necessity but as a waste of time. They often drop out of school to become financially independent as soon as possible.



„My parents sent me to school late. If you are older than the rest of your classmates, you feel embarrassed and don't want to go there anymore.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„I don't see the point of finishing grade 9, I'm not going to go to university anyway. I have to figure out how to earn money for my family.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„We just need basic knowledge and to know how to find our way in order to make money. They don't teach that in school. This is what the older members of the family, relatives, etc., teach you.” (Roma_FG_2025)

At the same time, according to children, few parents are prepared to properly raise, care for, and educate their children. Many of them do not know how to give their children the support they need to develop their abilities and give them too many responsibilities. They don't take their children's emotions and experiences seriously and encourage them to cope on their own to prove that they can be independent and courageous.

„When we move, my parents don't care about my school. They don't think about what I'll be doing while they're at work. They have other concerns, they have more important things to deal with.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„Parents don't understand why school would be important to us. They tell me that studying is pointless, that a diploma is worthless.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„My parents let me decide, if I want, whether or not to go to school today. They won't deal with the problems I have with teachers. My parents tell me: if you don't like it, just don't go. And nothing will happen, no one will scold me for it.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„Many parents don't know what to do with their children, they don't know how to educate them and send them to school. But when you go to school, you are told that you should already have learned good manners and proper behaviour at home. ”(Roma_FG_2025)

A lot of children who attended or attend school believe that some teachers are very strict and are violent with children: they shout, exert psychological pressure, hit them, make them carry things, force them to clean up/wash up after everyone, etc. At the same time, many Roma children have felt discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity or

the language they speak, being excluded from student councils and other activities that take place in educational institutions. All this makes children refuse to go to school or participate in events and only attend the classes they like or where they feel safe. They want only qualified people who are trained to work with children to teach at school.

„Teachers get tired and often lash out at children because they don't like children.”

(Roma_FG_2025)



„I remember one case when a teacher went up to a child and hit him on the head.”

(Roma_FG_2025)

„I have never heard of a student council in our school.” **(Roma_FG_2025)**

„We are given less attention. Some teachers openly tell us, “You won't do well in school because you're Roma”. Very few people appreciate that you go to school even if you are Roma.” **(Roma_FG_2025)**

„Some classmates bully children because they come from the Roma community. With me they behaved well, but with two of my classmates they behaved very badly, calling them offensive words and labelling them. The teachers do nothing about it.” **(Roma_FG_2025)**

Roma communities often live separately from others. Even in towns with developed infrastructure, Roma communities are excluded and do not have access to basic services. Participants in the focus groups shared that the infrastructure in their neighbourhood is very poorly developed, which hinders children's access to education, healthcare, leisure activities, and other local services that could facilitate their social integration.

Children told us that: they do not have public transport, the roads are in very poor

condition, there are no schools or kindergartens nearby, households often experience power outages, and there is no water supply or sewerage system. In addition, garbage collection services have not removed garbage from the region for years, so some neighbourhoods are in a deplorable sanitary condition.

„We have problems with garbage collection. The garbage collection services do not reach us up here on the hill, because there is no access road, so the garbage is left uncollected for years. There are areas that are in very poor condition, totally unsanitary, and there is no desire to go for a walk or do anything outside, because it doesn't feel safe.” (Roma_FG_2025)

Most young people do not see employment prospects in their local area due to stereotypes and myths circulating in society about them. Many choose to emigrate after reaching adulthood to find more opportunities for jobs that are better paid. At the same time, children do not feel safe on the streets of their locality and do not trust government institutions. Almost daily, they face discrimination and violence because they are Roma.

„We have a bad reputation. No one will hire us, even though some of us are pursuing an education. Everything is expensive, that's why we emigrate to Europe or Russia.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„A group of boys shouted after a girl: “Ewww” (meaning contempt). They commented on the colour of her skin, the way she was dressed and how she looked.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„On public transport, two boys were saying that Roma people steal, beg, and don't want to work. That really hurt me.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„Sometimes you go to a shop and you immediately feel that someone is watching you, people think that you want to steal something.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„Even on the internet there are a lot of jokes about Roma people.” (Roma_FG_2025)

Children do not know who or where to turn to for help in difficult situations, nor do they believe that anyone will help them. Few children feel they can turn to parents or other adults, they are more likely to seek advice from friends or find solutions on their own.

„Over time, we have developed a sense of self-irony. And so, those who tease us are quicker to leave us alone.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„I don't see the point in going up to my parents and sharing something, because people don't change from that anyway.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„We handle conflicts ourselves or call friends. In some cases we resort to harsher methods (meaning “fighting”). Jokes don't always work.” (Roma_FG_2025)

„The police do not do their job, they violate your rights.” (Roma_FG_2025)

Usually, when children fall ill, **parents turn to doctors only in serious cases (infections, fractures).** This is due to **distrust in the professionalism of medical personnel**, but also because they prefer to treat themselves, using traditional methods passed down from generation to generation, widely practised in Roma communities.

„Parents know how to cure us on their own. We have an unwritten rule – we don’t go to the doctor unless there is a serious problem.” (Roma_FG_2025)

Some young people do not go to polyclinics and hospitals because they are afraid that they will be refused a doctor’s consultation because they are Roma. At the same time, girls in particular feel shame and discomfort when they are asked to undress for an examination (e.g. gynaecological). Children do not want strangers to see, touch and/or perform certain medical procedures on their bodies (injections, ultrasounds, interventions, etc.).

2.2. EXPERIENCES OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEE CHILDREN IN MOLDOVA



Most teachers shout at children, humiliate them, call them names, and some even go so far as to beat children. Therefore, children enjoy attending only those classes where teachers are understanding, where the lessons are fun, where they are not bored, where they are allowed to go out during breaks to play and run around.

„Teachers are always shouting at us—either because you read a word wrong, because you didn’t hear something properly, or because you made a mistake in your notebook. They shout at every mistake we make. Teachers are bad, with a few exceptions.” (Refugees_FG_2025)

During breaks between classes, children are forced to do their homework, or the lesson is extended. As a result, children do not have time to eat, go to the toilet or stretch a little between lessons.

„We have lessons all the time, we don’t have breaks in order to prevent us from going outside or running in the corridors. The teacher wants to see us in the classroom. We don’t have time for anything during breaks.” (Refugees_FG_2025)

Some teachers assign certain children the responsibility of maintaining order in the classroom and discipline among their classmates, which can expose them to certain risks and sometimes leads to conflicts between children.

„If the teacher leaves the classroom, a student is appointed to record who is being disruptive, and then that student provides the teacher with a list of children who behaved poorly. Usually, the class monitor does this.” (Refugees_FG_2025)

Some children feel they are treated differently by some teachers because they do not know Romanian. They receive more assignments in Romanian and in the extended lessons programme.

„I find it difficult to learn Romanian, I can't speak Romanian, I don't understand the language, but the teacher treats me badly because of this. With the other classmates, she used to talk normally, but with me, it was like she hated me and gave me more homework to do, specifically because I am Ukrainian.” (Refugees_FG_2025)



2.3. EXPERIENCES OF LGBTQI+ CHILDREN


Right to education

Children from the LGBTQI+ community go to school, study, and do activities with other children, but unlike other children, they are treated differently by adults working in schools.



Most teachers show ignorance and even aggression towards LGBTQI+ children. For example, teachers ignore them in class, deliberately exclude them from certain activities, make insulting remarks about them, humiliate them and sometimes even abuse them. They do not intervene or offer support when LGBTQI+ children are at risk of physical and emotional violence from other children.

Often, these children feel misunderstood and marginalised by other children, being ridiculed for the way they look or dress.



„The attitude of children and other school staff towards children from the LGBTQI+ community is outrageous. They are humiliated, abused, discriminated against and marginalised.”
(Child LGBTQI+ _2025)

Protection against violence

Children from the LGBTQIA+ community experience abuse and neglect on an almost daily basis. They report that they are often subjected to various forms of violence: they are teased, sworn at, bullied, isolated, and threatened by those around them.

Violence against LGBTQ+ children occurs at home, in institutions and on the street, but very rarely does anyone intervene to protect them. Most of them grow up in fear and constantly worry about the reaction of those who find out about their sexual orientation because it makes them the target of bullying and they can easily be insulted and/or beaten.

„There is much talk about protection, but in reality, not all children are protected, especially us. People turn a blind eye and say “it’s none of my business”, and when you report something, action is not always taken.” **(Child LGBTQI+ _2025)**

Because society is intolerant to diversity and aggressive towards members of the LGBTQI+ community, children cannot talk openly about their needs and rarely share how they feel about their bodies and their belonging to a particular group. As a result, children’s emotional state suffers greatly, they are self-isolate, suffer alone, in silence, not knowing where and to whom to turn for help. There are cases of depression and suicide among LGBTQI+ children.

„People don’t respect you. There are many cases of ridicule, humiliation and unwanted touching. Be it in school or in the community, it is impossible to avoid contempt and harassment from others.” **(Child LGBTQI+ _2025)**

Children say they face the same difficulties and risks online. They receive a lot of mean, humiliating comments and notice incitements to hatred from some users towards the LGBTQI+ community.

„Children from the LGBTQI+ community are not safe in Moldova. At any moment, they can be verbally or physically abused on the street, at school and even in the family. These children live in fear. And online is no safer. Mean comments and threats do not go away, they keep coming and coming.” **(Child LGBTQI+ _2025)**

Right to opinion

More often than not, LGBTQI+ children's opinions are not taken into account, even if they are sometimes consulted together with other children. They are not safe to express their opinions, because if their opinions happen to differ from the majority, they are ridiculed and mocked. If in a group of people, it is not known that a child is gay or lesbian, their opinions are listened to and can be implemented, but as soon as the others find out about their sexual orientation, the group starts to judge them and their opinion ceases to matter.

„Children from the LGBTQI+ community are not taken seriously at all. No one listens to what they have to say. They're told, “Shut up, who are you to comment? You're going to hell anyway.”” (Child LGBTQI+_2025)



„If you represent the LGBTQI+ community and openly tell others how you feel or who you are, many people judge you, laugh at you or even berate you. That's not freedom of opinion, that's fear. It's hard to be honest when you know people won't accept you.” (Child LGBTQI+_2025)

Right to healthcare

In general, medical services are accessible and free for children, but there is a lot of discrimination against LGBTQI+ groups in health care facilities. During the consultation, some doctors comment on the fact that the patient is part of the LGBTQI+ community, shaming them and making bad jokes based on various prejudices. Also, some doctors demonstrate an attitude of distrust and belittling, hinting that children deliberately decide to declare themselves as LGBTQI+ as a gesture of rebellion, as a form of attracting attention from others, and that these thoughts/emotions/behaviours of children are fleeting and exist only in their heads and not in reality. As a consequence, children find it difficult to seek

medical help, especially psychological help, knowing that they will often have to explain themselves and feel ashamed because of who they are.

„Some doctors don't listen, are not patient and treat you superficially. If you're a more emotional person, it's even harder. Not everyone understands depression, anxiety or that you need psychological support.” (Child LGBTQI+_2025)

„With mental health it's even more complicated. You are often told it's all in your head, whether it's about sexual orientation or mental illness/disorder. People make fun of you, asserting that your 'rebellion' will soon pass.” (Child LGBTQI+_2025)

Doctors are not prepared to freely address and discuss gender identity issues with patients in a positive manner. Many of them choose to remain silent and pretend that they are unaware that the child is part of the LGBTQI+ community, although this aspect needs to be taken into account in order to ensure individualised and quality services. Children also told about cases when a doctor refused medical care based on personal principles because of the child patient's non-traditional sexual orientation.

„There is an attitude of disgust towards LGBTQI+ children.” (Child LGBTQI+_2025)

„The doctor may refuse to see you, or, during the examination, may deliberately make nasty remarks to make you feel uncomfortable.” (Child LGBTQI+_2025)

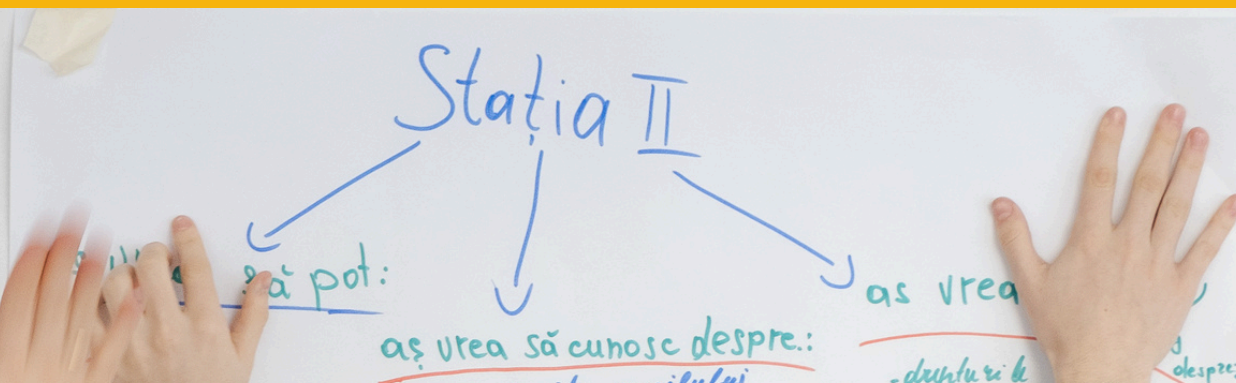
Other rights

In schools, institutions, transgender and non-binary children are called and treated according to the name and gender as listed in their official documents, not according to their gender identity, so children feel intimidated and disrespected.

Children from the LGBTQI+ community often have their right to privacy, intimacy and equality violated. Their lives are criticised, including on the Internet, they are almost constantly accused of violating the moral standards imposed by society, and their social integration is quite limited.

„If you are different – more sensitive, not like the “norm” in society, or you are part of the LGBTQI+ community, you don't have the rights that are spelled out on paper, the reality is much harsher.” (Child LGBTQI+_2025)

„You don't have the right to privacy, you have to hide, because if you don't, people accuse you and put you on social media.” (Child LGBTQI+_2025)



III. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS



1. The situation of child human rights defenders



Based on a long-term advocacy of the Children's Platform, ever since the 2018 Day of General Discussion, child human rights defenders (CHRDs) are gaining recognition in Moldova and relevant provisions have been included in Moldova's 2023 Law on Children's Rights.

However, children are not aware of any concrete actions taken by the Government to implement these provisions so far.

Issues that children raised through the Universal Periodic Review and with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders remain the same.

CHILDREN WHO ARE STANDING UP AS CHILD HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ARE EITHER...

...ignored or not taken seriously by authorities

„This is based on Stereotypes that young people/teenagers are not able to understand and express themselves [when it comes to human rights issues or decision-making processes.]”

(UPR Factsheet PC 2021)

...dismissed as 'provocateurs'

„Children who complain, when their rights are violated, are considered uneducated.”
(Submission PC APSCF 2018)



„A participant in a Fridays for Future protest told us “This topic is treated superficially in the media. Nothing is said about the reaction of the authorities. Nor about the document we attached to the e-mail [as invitation]. And at the end, people in front of the TV see our protest like any other protest and some outraged young people.”

(UPR Factsheet PC 2021)

...threatened and punished - especially in schools

„After the strike, the administration of a school from which several children came to strike gathered everyone from the school to threaten to expel the children who participated in the strike during school. They threatened with expelling or not admitting to the final exam.”

(UPR Factsheet PC 2021)

„Teachers punished the whole class, and this ruined my relationships with colleagues.”

(DGD Submission PC APSCF 2018)

„If you want to say something [critical] to the teacher, then your grades drop.”

(DGD Submission PC APSCF 2018)

...they often suffer from verbal and sometimes physical violence

If you are involved in defending rights, the adults at school change their attitude and become more aggressive towards you. You are bullied, threatened and abused. Children have been abused for standing up for certain rights.

„A group of child human rights defenders announced their assembly at the local public authorities, as according to the rules, but “No policeman was there to provide safety and security during the protest. A drunken man attacked a young man, and a woman swore at us. It was very humiliating.” **(UPR Factsheet PC 2021)**



**...their identities publicly exposed by authorities,
placing them at risk of harm**

„After an investigation by the National Student Council, there was an inspection at the school. The administration blamed the student who represents the school in the National Student Council for this inspection.” (Report SRHRD PC 2022)

CHRDs who are standing up for the rights of LGBTQI+ report increased risks of harm, including harassment, discrimination, and stigmatization.

„We can't talk freely about LGBTQI+ in schools, in the community, because as a LGBTQI+ rights defender you are assumed to be a member of the LGBTQI+ community, and because in our country this is a taboo, you are subjected to bullying, online and offline, including by school staff. And those around you interfere in your private life without permission.”
(UPR Factsheet PC 2021)

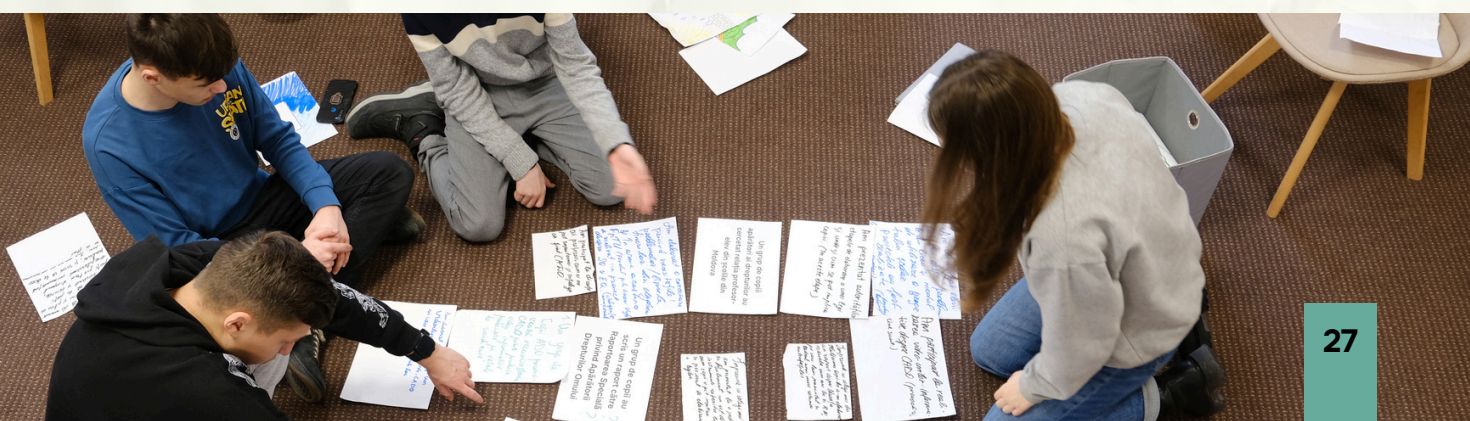
CHRDs who experience negative consequences as a result of their activism rarely seek support or protection. While some are aware of existing child protection systems, many lack trust that these mechanisms can offer any or - adequate - support (more over they are afraid that this might make things even worse). Others report having no knowledge of any protection structures specific to human rights defenders.

Access to justice is usually absent from both formal and informal human rights education. In schools, children may learn about their rights in theory, but they are often left without guidance on what to do—or where to turn—when those rights are violated.

„In school, we talk about activism, civic involvement, but the school does not support us to participate... On the contrary, they stop us, marginalize us, set limits...”
(UPR Factsheet PC 2021)

„When they do not take us seriously and not inform us, they limit possibilities for action and expressing our opinions. If they would take us seriously, they would inform us and enable us to engage.” (UPR Factsheet PC 2021)

Finally, as part of the 3rd UPR cycle, in 2022, Moldova was recommended and accepted to develop a comprehensive Law on Human Rights Defenders. The Platform advocated for the inclusion of CHRDs rights in this law, with support from the Ombudsperson for Children's Rights and civil society. However, children are not aware of any progress in this matter



**IV. PROTECTION
FROM ALL FORMS
OF VIOLENCE**



1. Physical and emotional violence against children



Most often violence is used as a form of education or discipline by teachers. Children report that they are often subjected to violence from teachers, including hitting them with a pointer or other objects, pulling their hair, hitting them on the head, and other forms of physical aggression.

„Girls have their hair pulled by teachers.” (PC_2025)

„Teachers hit boys most often with a pointer and pinch girls with their nails.” (PC_2025)

„The teacher hit a student's head on the blackboard because the student didn't know the answer.” (PC_2025)

„The teacher hits us with a pointer, especially the boys for being naughty.” (PC_2025)

„The teacher smashed the blackboard against one student's head and broke the ruler against another's back, dragged children by their ears all the way to the principal's office, even though the children did nothing wrong.” (PC_2025)



Teachers' violent behaviour affects children physically and emotionally. Some children tell their parents about what happens to them at school, but adults tend to blame the children for the abuse they have suffered. Thus, some parents support violence as a form of education and discipline. Only in serious cases of abuse do parents report it to the school administration.

„Even if we tell parents, teachers keep telling them that “children are disobedient and do not study well””. (PC_2025)

„A teacher beat a boy in front of the class until he wet himself. The parents came to the school, then the teacher more or less calmed down.” (PC_2025)

In addition to physical violence, children often report being insulted, shouted at and subjected to destructive criticism from teachers.

„Sometimes we are told that we will amount to nothing, that we won't be able to achieve anything. It destroys your dreams and destroys you psychologically.” (PC_2025)

2. Sexual violence against children



Some teachers, mostly men but also women, touch children, give them unpleasant looks, and ask uncomfortable questions. This makes it uncomfortable for some children to attend classes taught by these teachers.

There are cases when children report such behaviours to the school administration or the education department, but no action is taken. Moreover, children said that in such cases they are not taken seriously, and in other situations, adults ask for numerous explanations and evidence. Thus, children no longer have the confidence to report any form of abuse.

„The sport teacher was touching girls, and no action was taken. He continues to teach at the school despite the fact that a complaint has been filed.” (PC_2025)

„Teachers tell obscene jokes and compliments of a sexual nature to female students, there have even been invitations to go out alone, go for a smoke, etc.” (PC_2025)

„The guitar teacher asked me if I watch porn or if I like drinking alcohol.” (PC_2025)

„The violin teacher, the new one, touched a girl, undressed her. She would tell him she was going to inform the parents, and he would reply that she was provoking him with her outfit, and then she would be quiet. He was fired.” (PC_2025)

Girls from low-income families are more likely to be exposed to sexual abuse, being manipulated with financial rewards.

„The children’s dance instructor goes abroad with the children, and in the village, they say that he sleeps in bed with the girls, touches them. And the excuse is that he takes them abroad so that they see the world.” (PC_2025)

„The watchman of the culture house pays money to girls who are more vulnerable in exchange for sex and then humiliates them and brags about it to the whole village.” (PC_2025)

3. Violence against children online



Teachers avoid discussing online violence openly and consistently. This is because they are not well prepared, they do not have enough information and fear that they will not be able to answer children’s questions. Some teachers consider that this is not part of school programme - it is not included in any subject. Some teachers do not realize the dangers and believe that children will know how to use technologies safely.
(PC_Lanzarote_raport_2018)

„Some parents encourage us to talk about it at school. And at school they tell us to talk about it with our parents at home or elsewhere.” (PC_2025)

„When we have difficulties online and we ask the teacher what to do, she says, “You know what to do”, because she herself doesn’t know what to do.” (PC_2025)

„We asked for a lesson on the subject to learn more about it, but although the administration promised to organise one, it never happened.” (PC_2025)

„In our school they don't talk about it much, very superficially. Police officers are the ones who talk about internet safety and touch upon this topic.” (PC_2025)



To a small extent, children are taught to report incidents of online abuse. But, teachers often blame and accuse children or parents for abusive situations that occur and become public, using phrases such as “she asked for it”, “it’s her own fault”, “serves you right for taking that picture.” In addition, some teachers advise children to tell only their parents about the incident and not to seek professional help, as this would give a bad image to the school or class. (PC_Lanzarote_report_2018)

„Children don't know where to report such cases.” (PC_2025)

„We are accused of writing to them. A man was sending nude pictures to my friend and asked her for pictures too.” (PC_2025)



V. RIGHT TO HEALTH



1. Lack of access to and quality of health services, including mental health services

Lack of access to health services

Not all villages have medical staff; the same doctors serve several localities or only work in district centres. As a result, children often do not have access to medical assistance in more urgent cases. The lack of medical staff is an issue in schools and kindergartens.

„There is a shortage of medical staff in the villages, there are no family doctors, and people need to go to the district centre” (PC_2025)

„A child was not given proper medical assistance, and their life was put at risk.”

„In rural areas, access to health services is limited. Children do not have access to necessary medicines and specialist doctors.” (PC_2025)

„The local kindergarten does not have a full-time doctor for children; he only comes for an hour. The same doctor works at the school, at the kindergarten, and at the placement centre.” (PC_2025)

The quality of health services

In some cases, the diagnosis or treatment given by doctors does not match the symptoms described by children during consultations. The medical staff do not listen to patients' symptoms or take them seriously. Many girls reported experiencing such situations and spoke of the frustration of not being believed when they knew there was something wrong.



„A girl went to the doctor and complained about a health problem. He told her that it was due to her age and that it would get better. Then, whenever she asked again, she received the same recommendations.” (PC_2025)

„There is no sufficiently trained medical staff in schools, which violates children's right to health.” (PC_2025)

„When I had an eye check as a child, they did not notice I had a visual impairment, and as I grew older, it got worse.” (PC_2025)

„The school nurse works from 9 am to 12 pm. The doctor suggests Noşpa and Valeriana (types of medicines) for all health problems, or tells us: 'You can endure it; there is nothing I can do for you.’ (PC_2025)

„When we have our period and go to seek an exemption from sports class, the doctor does not believe us when we say we feel unwell.” (PC_2025)

Mental Health

Not all educational institutions have a school psychologist. In schools where there is a psychologist, several difficulties prevent many children from seeking help: children do not trust speaking to the psychologist because confidentiality is not respected; the school psychologist is not available throughout the school day; and there are stereotypes or jokes, such as the idea that children who see the psychologist have mental problems.

„The psychologist cannot see the child at just any time (at a time that is convenient for the child) I have to inform the class master and the parents. It is hard to reach out to a psychologist on your own. They work with children who have certain difficulties and is not available to all the children.” (PC_2025)

„If someone sees a psychologist, everyone knows about this. Sometimes, the teacher comes into the classroom and tells everyone about the problems of the student who went to the psychologist.” (PC_2025)

„If you go to a psychologist, people make jokes that you are sick and think that you're not okay. To avoid these jokes, you stop seeing the psychologist.” (PC_2025)

„The class master, the history teacher, the student council coordinator, and the psychologist are not very trustworthy; if you tell one of them, the whole school will know.” (PC_2025)

There is a lack of trust among children in discussing emotions both with parents and with teachers. Children avoid talking about feelings, relationships with peers, and love, because adults are not open to discuss, they do not understand or lack the skills to address these topics openly and respectfully. (Raport_PC_IE_2024)

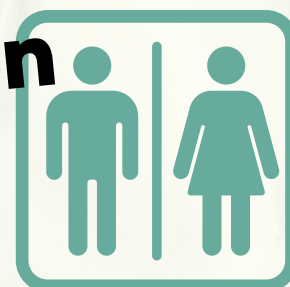
For this reason, many children choose to **talk about their emotional problems with Chat GPT**. They feel that they receive a quick and supportive response, without being judged.



„Chat GPT is programmed to answer – “I'm sorry that this happened to you”, when you tell it about something bad.” (PC_2025)

These experiences highlight the aspects that are missing in the psychological support children receive from professionals. AI provides what children expect from a professional: immediate and timely emotional support, validation of their feelings, confidentiality, and so on. Moreover, this raises questions about how children are guided to use AI tools safely and responsibly.

2. Hygiene and sanitation conditions in schools



Since 2017, children in the Republic of Moldova, at the initiative of the Children's Platform, have campaigned for improvements to school toilets. Although the Government has increased funding (including in response to the Covid-19 pandemic), children across the country – especially in rural areas – report that problems still persist in 2025.

National regulations and international standards are not observed in relation to school toilets.

Toilets are not accessible

Although some schools have toilets both inside and outside the school building, children say that sometimes the indoor toilets are closed, and children have to use the outdoor ones. The indoor toilets are open only when there are “inspections or seminars”. (PC_raport_2018)

Sometimes, the boys’ toilets are located outside the school while the girls’ toilets are inside. In many cases, the boys’ toilets are closed as a punishment, and the boys are forced to use the toilets in the schoolyard. (PC_raport_2018)

„Boys do not use the toilets inside, they use the outdoor ones instead.” (PC_2025)

„The toilets are renovated, but they are locked and children use the outdoor ones.” (PC_2025)

„When boys misbehave, the adults lock their toilets and send them outside.” (PC_2025)

The distance between the school and the toilet is quite large, and in winter it is quite difficult to get there.

There is no drinking water, toilet paper, or soap

Three-quarters of children say that there is never any toilet paper in the school toilets, and that the bad smell persists. Even though 90% of children say there are sinks where they can wash their hands, 70% of children say that there is almost never any soap at the sink. (PC_raport_2018)

Access to drinking water at school is difficult for 43% of respondents; 27% do not have drinking water at school, while 15% say it is only sometimes available. (PC_raport_2018)

„We need to bring water from home or go and buy it at the store.” (PC_2025)

„At least the younger children still have some tea at the canteen. The older ones must buy it.” (PC_2025)

„We don’t have a toilet inside the school; the toilet is outside. The toilet is dirty and it smells bad.” (PC_2025)

Toilets are not safe

Children do not feel safe and do not have privacy when using the toilet: most of the time, the doors are transparent, have no lock or have a broken lock. In some cubicles, the windows are too large, so other people can see the children using the toilet. Sometimes, the girls’ toilet is not properly separated from the boys’ toilet, as the wall between them is incomplete. It is also common for strangers to use the toilets, especially when they are outside. Because of this, children are afraid to use the toilets due to the risk of abuse. Furthermore, there are numerous cases of children using tobacco and alcohol in the toilets, even though it is prohibited.

„The toilets are not safe – there is very little space in the cubicle, the hole is large, the door doesn't lock, there are no windows for ventilation, and everything can be seen through the window.” (PC_2025)

„There are not enough cubicles; one is filled with cleaning supplies, so it cannot be used.” (PC_2025)

„The toilets are very damaged, with no doors, no taps, the walls are drawn, and the smell is unbearable.” (PC_2025)

„Sometimes they are open, sometimes closed; we are raising money to renovate them, but we cannot use them properly. There is no hot water, no toilet paper, no soap, and the sewerage system gets blocked quickly.” (PC_2025)

The complaints and requests from the children to change the situation are not listened to by the school administration

Children alert the administration and teachers about situations where their safety has been violated or about the condition of the toilets, but most of the time, adults do not react.

„The teachers do not want to listen to us and say that these are our problems. The sewerage gets blocked every day, it smells bad, so when I need to use the toilet, I go home because I live nearby.” (PC_2025)

„We wanted to cover the large window in the cubicle, but the school administration does not allow it.” (PC_2025)

„The space between the floor and the door is too large, and the door is not high enough, so boys can film the girls. The cubicles are shared, and the headmistress does not want to take action, saying it is normal.” (PC_2025)

Toilets are neither adapted to children's needs, nor respect girls' rights

The teachers' toilets have soap, toilet paper, running water at the tap and a sink, and privacy. In some schools, the teachers' toilet is inside the building, while the children's toilet is outside.

A box for menstrual hygiene products has been piloted in girls' toilets in some schools. However, girls reported that when the products in the box ran out, they were not restocked, or the supplies were moved to the school medical staff, where girls do not always have access.



Salutări din școala mea



„There is a menstrual pad dispenser, but it is empty. Trainings on how to use the dispensers were conducted, but the instructions are not followed in all schools; only in schools with renovated toilets.” (PC_2025)

3. Sexuality education in schools



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), comprehensive sexual health is a state of emotional, mental and social well-being related to sexuality. (WHO, 2006) Comprehensive sexuality education includes five aspects: sensuality, emotional intimacy, gender identity, reproductive health, and protection against sexual abuse.

Since 2020, the Children's Platform has researched how sexuality education is conducted in schools and has promoted a set of recommendations on how it could be done differently.

According to long-term research and monitoring carried out by children, sexuality education topics are covered only sporadically in 8th and 9th grades, during Biology, Personal Development, or Health Education classes. Usually, the physiological changes

that occur during puberty and the prevention of teenage pregnancy are the topics covered during these classes. However, the physiological and emotional changes that children experience begin much earlier, as early as 4th grade, and the lack of age-appropriate sexuality education can affect their balanced development.

„In the 9th grade the school curriculum contains one chapter and three topics: sexually transmitted infections (STIs), pregnancy, and reproductive health.” (PC_2025)

„These topics are not covered in all schools; selections are made based on gender. Moreover, the only topic discussed with older girls in 8th and 9th grades is the contraceptive methods.” (PC_2025)

Reproductive health conversations are often segregated by gender, or more frequently, held only with girls. This approach disproportionately burdens girls with the responsibility of delaying sexual activity and preventing teenage pregnancy.

„Discussions are only about what happens to girls’ bodies, not boys’ bodies.” (PC_2025)

„Once, during a lesson, they discussed about puberty with the girls, but not with the boys.” (PC_2025)

„Be careful not to get pregnant – this is the main message conveyed by adults. The responsibility is placed on girls.” (PC_2025)

Furthermore, many parents consulted by children note that children's biological sexual development now begins much earlier than in previous generations, and sexuality education must adapt to keep pace with this new biological rhythm.
(Report_PC_sexuality_ed._2021)


At the same time, adolescents also think about emotional aspects, which are not addressed in the school currently. They want to discuss other risks, such as sexual abuse, discrimination, and violence, and consider these important topics when discussing sexuality education. (Report_PC_sexuality_ed._2021).

„We read about this online; it’s hard to inform yourself, you can’t talk about it at home or at school.” (PC_2025)

Children’s discussions with teachers show that many teachers are aware of their essential role in sexuality education and are willing to take it on. However, they mention the lack of appropriate professional and personal training: they do not have enough information, there is not enough time allocated in the schedule, and they do not know how to adapt the content to suit the age group of their children.

During the discussions with children, authorities such as the Ministry of Education and Research expressed their commitment to working together with the Ministry of Health to include some elements of comprehensive sexuality education in certain school subjects. However, certain essential topics for children, such as gender identity, emotional intimacy,

the prevention of sexual abuse, and sensuality, remain taboo topics and are seen as politically sensitive, as decision-makers seem to prioritize their political standing and image over children's rights. There is also a lack of collaboration and a passing of responsibility between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education and Research, which pertains to guaranteeing the right to education and information regarding sexuality education.



EDUCATIA
SEXUALA
UN DREPT
NU O
RUSINE

A person with long dark hair, wearing a black jacket, is holding a green protest sign. The sign has white, hand-painted text that reads 'EDUCATIA SEXUALA UN DREPT NU O RUSINE'. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people at what appears to be a protest or demonstration.

VI. CHILD RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT



1. Environmental issues

CO₂

Discussions with children show that the degree of awareness of environmental issues is low. This is a result of insufficient discussions in families, schools, and public spaces about how environmental problems specifically affect children.. However, children report a number of environmental issues that directly affect their health, safety, and quality of life. These issues are:

Reduced access to drinking water

„When it rains, waste ends up in underground waters and wells are contaminated.” (PC_2025)

„A teacher said that the pipes run through the cemetery and harmful substances reach the water. ” (PC_2025)

„In an area of the village there is no running water and people only use water from wells, without taps.” (PC_2025)



Pollution and waste management

In some cases, the diagnosis or treatment given by doctors does not match the symptoms described by children during consultations. The medical staff do not listen to patients' symptoms or take them seriously. Many girls reported experiencing such situations and spoke of the frustration of not being believed when they knew there was something wrong.

„Garbage is thrown in unauthorized places, where it decomposes and smells bad, especially during summer.” (PC_2025)

„Waste is not sorted, even where there are separate bins.” (PC_2025)

„Sometimes waste fires break out.” (PC_2025)

„We breathe the air that comes from the garbage and risk getting ill.” (PC_2025)

Quality of food

„The drought affects the harvest, bread gets more expensive, and food is less plentiful and less healthy.” (PC_2025)

Increase in temperatures

„It is hot in class and hard to focus, and some teachers do not allow us to drink water during lessons.” (PC_2025)

„„When you see me drinking water, then you should drink too” – the teacher tells us.” (PC_2025)

„Trees are being cut down, there is no shade, and we risk sunstroke.” (PC_2025)

„Children no longer play outside, because of the unbearable heat and lack of green spaces.” (PC_2025)

„The treatment plant is outdated – there is a bad smell, children go to school there, and it is impossible to breathe.” (PC_2025)

Extreme weather events (heavy rainfall, floods, or drought)

„Floods happened and I could not get to school.” (PC_2025)

„Without water, we cannot take care of our personal hygiene; we do not have enough water during droughts.” (PC_2025)



2. Environmental education in schools



In some schools, elective courses on environmental education, clean-up projects or activities are organised. However, in many cases, environmental education is lacking or is only addressed superficially at Biology or Geography classes. During the existing classes, global environmental issues are theoretically covered, such as: global warming, glacier melting, or ocean pollution. These discussions are not related to the national or local context, so many children do not fully understand the impact of climate change on their environment and lives, nor are they encouraged to consider or apply solutions that are sustainable and impactful.

Some children are aware of environmental issues but do not know what actions to take. At the same time, parents and teachers are not able/prepared to answer their questions and support them in their reflections and action.

„I had an optional course, but the teacher does not think it is important.” (PC_2025)

„We clean only during themed days – we rake the ground or paint benches.” (PC_2025)

When the "Fridays for Future" movement was at its peak, children and young people in Moldova became very actively involved – two groups were formed in the two largest cities in the country. Furthermore, some members of the Platform joined this movement.

One of the groups took this opportunity to check whether the local action plans included measures to combat climate change and took steps to make sure the local authorities met their obligations.

The groups emphasised the need for more effective environmental education in the education system.



VII. RIGHT TO EDUCATION



1. Informal fees



Although the Government is obliged to ensure that all children have the right to free education, there are still informal fees in educational institutions for teaching materials, repair works, decorations, gifts, Teacher's Day, the graduation ball, etc.

„A student was not invited to the graduation ball because he could not pay for the yearbook and other contributions.” (PC_2025)

„They collect money for Teacher's Day – they have collected from all the children in the school.” (PC_2025)

„For repair works, sofas, holidays, ceremony for the first and last day of school, gifts for the winter holidays, for children in need, Secret Santa for Christmas, alumni meetings, New Year, birthdays for children, graduation.” (PC_2025)

„We have a robotics club and if we ask for money for maintenance, we are told there is no money, but they had the money for an interactive whiteboard, even though we needed it more.” (PC_2025)



„The Romanian language teacher made us collect money, without telling us what it was for, and the teacher didn't buy anything, yet we still gave the money.” (PC_2025)

Children who cannot contribute financially are often discriminated against and stigmatised, including by teachers. To protect them, some classmates choose either to cover their contribution or to hide who hasn't paid. These situations lead to misunderstandings among classmates. In some cases, students who have not contributed financially are excluded from activities or school events.

„Children who do not give money are discriminated against, called names, and abused; sometimes we hide the identity of those who haven't contributed.” (PC_2025)

„Some children don't have money and have given up on having a graduation ball, and everyone says to them, “You really don't have 10 lei to contribute?”” (PC_2025)

„We give money for them, but when they do have the money, they don't return it to the classmates who covered for them.” (PC_2025)

2. Transport



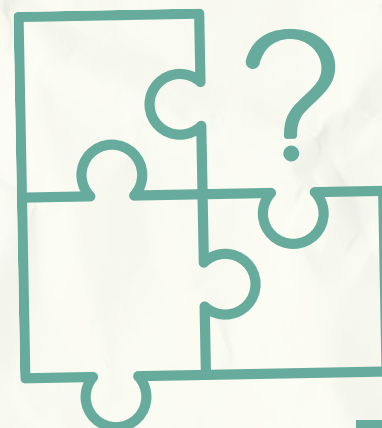
Often, the transport schedule is not adapted to the children's schedule. Children have to go home by public transport, especially when they have many classes or extracurricular activities.

„The public bus does not wait and does not take children to school; school transport is inaccessible, children miss their activities, the transport is not organised efficiently.” (PC_2025)

„Children who arrive at the station late because of their lessons have no way to get home.” (PC_2025)

3. Shortage of teachers

Due to low salaries, there aren't enough teachers in schools, and young teachers aren't interested in coming to work in schools. The shortage of teachers affects the quality of education, as the same teachers often have to teach several courses, particularly modern or optional ones.



„Many teachers are passed the retirement age, they struggle to adapt as everything changes so quickly, which is difficult. There aren't enough teachers, and students are not enrolling in pedagogical faculties.”

3.1 OVERCROWDED CLASSES

Also, the classes are overcrowded with children, with up to 36 students, which affects the learning process. Teachers tend to work with the same students, which puts pressure on them to learn all the information and damages their relationships with other classmates. There also aren't enough classrooms; children attend classes in the hallways and/or study in two shifts.

„Classrooms are overcrowded and we have to study in two shifts. There are classes taking place in the hallways. We don't even have space in the hallways, as there are 36, 32, and 28 students per class.” (PC_2025)

„Teachers pick a student to focus on, encouraging and giving them lots of opportunities, but the classmates don't accept them; everyone hates them, they end up isolated, and have bad relationships within the class.” (PC_2025)

„The student is afraid of losing their good grade; this is unhealthy and puts personal pressure on themselves. They are tired, unable to manage physically or mentally, which affects their relationship with the other students.” (PC_2025)

„Some children get used to the idea that someone else does everything, and that person always has to succeed – as if that's the whole point of education.” (PC_2025)

3.2 OUTDATED TEACHING METHODS

During the pandemic, some classrooms were endowed with interactive whiteboards and TVs. At the same time, a series of training sessions were organised to help teachers use them during lessons. However, teachers find it difficult to use technologies. Some admit this, while others say they don't know how to do it or simply refuse to.

There are positive examples where interactive methods are used, such as PowerPoint presentations, interactive applications (Kahoot), case studies, and practical activities in pairs or small groups, but these are used occasionally, mainly by young teachers. Most of the time, such methods are used during Education for Society or Personal Development classes.

„Case studies, especially in Education for Society and Personal Development classes: methods of working with desk mates; use of PowerPoint; applications and websites – Kahoot, as well as practical and creative activities.” (PC_2025)

„Topics covered in Education for Society classes are interesting; we use modern methods like case studies and work in groups during every lesson. The working methods are different from those used in other classes.” (PC_2025)

*„It's easier for older teachers to read from a book than to create a PowerPoint presentation.”
(PC_2025)*



„During the classes of Education for Society and Personal Development, we have time for games, and it's more interesting.” (PC_2025)

Often, lessons are based on traditional methods, focused on writing and reading, and on the mechanical memorisation of the content from books, which does not develop children's critical thinking. Moreover, teachers ask children to study the topic individually and to solve the tasks or to ask questions, without the topic having been explained to them.

„They don't teach us to think logically; instead, we learn to repeat, like parrots what is written in the textbook – as is often said, we simply learn by rote.” (PC_2025)

„Children learn on their own from textbooks; the teacher tells us: “learn on your own this topic. If you have questions, ask me.” (PC_2025)

The participants noted that there are differences among teachers regarding their openness to using the teaching methods. Some use technologies in the teaching process, while others, often the older ones, are more reluctant and compare with the learning methods of previous generations. Some teachers use interactive methods only occasionally, mainly during open-door lessons.

„Some teachers conduct interesting lessons, they use technologies, and it is easy to learn the topic with them, but others do not do this. They know how to do it, but say that they don't.”
(PC_2025)

„Some teachers use interactive methods rarely, only during public lessons. (PC_2025)

„Teachers who do not want to use technologies tell us: In our time, we learned without this, and your parents did as well; they managed to learn, and so will you.” (PC_2025)

Children are more motivated to learn the topics that teachers relate to practice and everyday life. This happens rarely and depends on the initiative of each teacher.

„Everything that teachers say and do is theoretical; they don't show us how we will need that knowledge in everyday life.” (PC_2025)

4. Manuals, equipment



Textbooks are outdated. Children must rent them, even though they don't use them as they are not in line with the current school curriculum.

„The textbooks have not been updated for 15 years.” (PC_2025)

„At the beginning of the year, I buy the textbooks; they are old and I put them in the cupboard at home, I don't use them.” (PC_2025)

„We pay to rent the textbooks.” (PC_2025)

Even if some schools have equipment and laboratories for Chemistry, Physics, and Biology classes, they are very rarely used.

„The laboratories are fully equipped, but the teachers do not use them during lessons.”
(PC_2025)

„We do not have enough of the necessary equipment.” (PC_2025)

*„For Chemistry, we only had the essentials, but the stock has been replenished recently.”
(PC_2025)*

The participants mentioned that the school program is too overloaded, a point also made by their teachers. Also, sudden changes in the curriculum cause confusion among children and uncertainty regarding the topics for the graduation exams.

„The school curriculum is overloaded and difficult; even the teachers tell us, "it's too much for us."” (PC_2025)

*„We were told that the curriculum for the baccalaureate exam would be based on certain textbooks, but later we were informed that it would change suddenly, and that is really bad.”
(PC_2025)*

„If the curriculum reform is designed in such a way that those who have studied under the old program can take their exams according to that old system, a gradual transition should be made.” (PC_2025)

„Some children find it difficult to keep up with the school curriculum.” (PC_2025)

5. School programme



Personal Development and Education for Society classes are often treated superficially in schools, being replaced by other activities considered more important, such as preparation for exam subjects. This reduces the time when children can discuss about themselves, about their relationships with others, or about issues relevant to their emotional development.

„We are supposed to have Personal Development classes with our class master, but instead we have Romanian language classes, and at the end of the semester we are asked to tick off that we have done our homework.” (PC_2025)

„Our class master is a Mathematics teacher and we have Mathematics instead of Personal Development, but it's too much.” (PC_2025)

„Until 9th grade, we did Mathematics instead of Personal Development, or we were preparing for graduation day, etc.” (PC_2025)

The topics covered during the classes of Education for Society are non-discrimination, career guidance, puberty, and sexually transmitted infections. At the same time, some children mentioned being told that they had no other rights apart from the right to life, which suggests that the teachers have a limited and mistaken understanding of children's rights and human rights.

„Up to 5th grade, we had a textbook for Education for Society, but not afterwards. We learned about non-discrimination and interculturalism.” (PC_2025)

„Regarding how we develop, Education for Society is more about career development.” (PC_2025)

„The teacher says that Personal Development is important – we speak about how we behave in situations of conflict, we make tests about professions, we speak about how to better understand the personality.” (PC_2025)

„As regards puberty and sexually transmitted infections – each lesson was half Biology and half Education for Society.” (PC_2025)

„The teacher said that we had no other rights except the right to life, etc.” (PC_2025)

„Children may know their rights, but adults in school do not create conditions in which children can exercise their rights – moreover, they rather violate children's rights.” (UPR Factsheet PC 2021)



6. Breaks



Often, children are kept in classrooms during breaks, with teachers saying, “the bell for the break is for teachers, and the bell for classes is for students”. Thus, children do not have the opportunity to rest between classes or satisfy their personal needs, such as going to the toilet, eating, or drinking water.

As a result, children need to use the toilet during lessons, but teachers do not allow them. This restriction affects students’ ability to focus in class and their well-being. Moreover, these unwritten rules are applied differently, depending on behaviour or academic success. At the same time, the girls said they were particularly affected by these restrictions, especially during period days, when they need to use the toilet more frequently.

„The teachers keep us in the classroom during breaks, telling us “the bell rings for teachers, not for students”. They keep us in the classroom and tell us that students don’t have breaks. Sometimes students are allowed to go to the toilet, but I am not.” (PC_2025)



„Teachers do not allow us to go to the bathroom, especially the girls. It is known that girls need to go to the toilet more often during their period, yet we are reproached for not having gone during the break.” (PC_2025)

„During breaks, we are kept back by teachers and do not manage to go to the toilet.” (PC_2025)

„Children who do better in classes are allowed out – they are favoured, while those who are cheekier are not allowed to go out.” (PC_2025)

„Teachers say, “Couldn’t you go during the break? Can’t you hold on a little?” or “What are you, a little child?” even though during the break we were kept behind in the previous class.” (PC_2025)

