

# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

JOINT EVALUATION OF THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE  
EDUCATION PROGRAMME 2011 – 2020



---

VOLUME I: REPORT

2019

## Authors:

*Laura Trofin* (Team Leader),

*Anatol Gremalschi, Viorica Cojocaru* – Key experts on behalf of the Institute of Public Policy Moldova

*Irina Lonean, Simona Velea, Mădălina Lefter, Vasile Strat* – Evaluation experts on behalf of QURES Quality Research and Support

Submitted to the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture and UNICEF Moldova Country Office on 25 September 2019.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This *Joint Evaluation of the Programme for Development of Inclusive Education 2011 – 2020 in the Republic of Moldova, including application of child-friendly school standards*, implemented in the period May to December 2019 could only be successful thanks to the support of many people. We would like to extend our gratitude to the staff and leadership of UNICEF and of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR) who have been supportive and cooperative throughout the entire process of this evaluation. We particularly appreciate the openness of MoECR leadership and staff, as well as of development partners and authorities at local level to discuss, comment and follow up on the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation.

The support of Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services (PAS), of local authorities including the Departments of Social Assistance, of the district offices of education (OLSDE) has made it possible to conduct all research activities in a timely and efficient way, particularly the preparation and implementation of the field visits.

We appreciate the interest and cooperation of the funding development partners, i.e. Lumos, CCF Moldova, Kultur Kontakt, Keystone, Parteneriate pentru fiecare copil, Pas cu Pas, FCPS, Verbina, as well of OHCHR, in the results of this evaluation and throughout the process and are thankful for their participation in the interviews and validation workshop. The UNICEF education section staff and leadership has supported the evaluation in all its research activities and was always available to tirelessly respond to our many questions. A special word of gratitude goes to the UNICEF team and particularly to Mrs. Elena Laur, Mrs. Liudmila Lefter and Mrs. Larisa Vartosu, as well as the MoECR management team and leadership, especially to Mrs. Viorica Mart, Mr. Valentin Crudu and Mrs. Virginia Rusnac.

And finally, and most importantly, this evaluation could not have been done without the cooperation of a large number and wide range of respondents: further than the MoECR representatives, we are grateful for the availability and information provided by teachers, assistant teachers, parents and children in the six districts visited during field work. The willingness of all these people to make time, despite their often very busy schedules, was essential to finalizing the evaluation.

 Laura Trofin  
 Anatol Gremalschi  
 Viorica Cojocaru  
 Irina Lonean  
 Simona Velea  
 Mădălina Lefter  
 Vasile Strat

## CONTENTS

List of Acronyms .....	4
Executive summary .....	5
I. INTRODUCTION .....	13
II. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION .....	19
III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY .....	20
IV. ETHICAL ISSUES .....	25
V. RELEVANCE - KEY FINDINGS .....	28
VI. EFFECTIVENESS - KEY FINDINGS .....	40
VII. EFFICIENCY - KEY FINDINGS .....	57
VIII. IMPACT - KEY FINDINGS .....	72
IX. SUSTAINABILITY -KEY FINDINGS .....	80
X. COVERAGE - KEY FINDINGS .....	85
XI. COORDINATION B - KEY FINDINGS .....	87
XII. AREAS AND MEANS OF COOPERATION WITH OTHER UN AGENCIES AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS .....	92
XIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	96

## List of figures

Figure 1. The theory of change (ToC) of the Programme for Development of Inclusive Education 2011 – 2020 for Development of Inclusive Education 2011 – 2020 .....	19
Figure 2. Total number of kindergartens benefitting from spaces adapted for children with disabilities .....	45
Figure 3. Evolution 2013 - 2018.....	45
Figure 4. Support teaching staff .....	48
Figure 5. Evolution of the average cost for inclusive education/child with SEN as recorded by PAS/CRAP .....	61
Figure 6. Districts evolution .....	75
Figure 7. Dynamics of behavioural and mental disorders as well as congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal anomalies .....	75
Figure 8. Total number of children with SEN in general education.....	76

## List of tables

Table 1. Correlation between the general and specific objectives of the Inclusive Education Development Programme in the Republic of Moldova 2011-2020 .....	36
Table 2. Level of target subgroups coverage with activities, actions and services .....	38
Table 3. Use of resources by district .....	64
Table 4. Percentage of expenses for the salary of support teachers from the budget for inclusive education .....	65
Table 5. Risks and factors affecting sustainability.....	84

## List of Acronyms

ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
CCESR	County Centre for Educational Support and Resources
CCS	Community Consultative Structure
CRAP	Republican Centre for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance
DBR	Desk Based Research
DiD	Difference-in-Differences
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
GoM	Government of Moldova
HIC	Helping Invisible Children
IE	Inclusive Education
IE	Inclusive Education
IR	Inception Report
MoECR	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OLSDE	Local specialised body in the area of education
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAS	Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TAU	Territorial Administrative Unit
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of References
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## Executive summary

This Evaluation Report presents the outcomes of the "Joint evaluation of the implementation of the Programme for development of inclusive education 2011 - 2020, including application of child-friendly school's standards", conducted between May and October 2019 in the Republic of Moldova, at the initiative of UNICEF.

The Programme for Development of Inclusive Education 2011 – 2020 aimed to contribute to ensuring equal opportunities and the access to quality education for every child, young person, adult, at all levels and steps of the education system, by achieving a set of general and specific objectives.




The final beneficiaries of the Programme are all children regardless of the material status of the family, the place of residence, ethnicity, spoken language, sex, age, political or religious affiliation, health status and learning characteristics. The development and promotion of inclusive education involves some other categories of beneficiaries, too, that further extends the target group of the interventions planned/implemented under the Programme to families/parents; teachers/education staff; specialists in related fields; central and local public authorities and the community/society.

The budget of the Programme consists of allocations from the state and local budget and important contributions from non-governmental organizations that have supported the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research implementation of the two Action Plans for the implementation of the Programme.

In line with the Terms of Reference, the purpose of the assignment is to provide technical assistance and to support the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) to conduct an independent evaluation of the implementation of the Programme for Development of Inclusive Education 2011-2020.




The objective of the evaluation is to have a measurement of the results achieved, determine the bottlenecks and barriers and identify best ways for further promotion of the child rights to education in the context of broad education sector reform and implementation of the inclusive education beyond the Programme.

The evaluation focused primarily on:




-  The effectiveness and impact of the Programme – including the differences the Programme generated in the life of school children;
-  The process: best practices, lessons learned generating bottlenecks and barriers in the implementation process;
-  The sustainability of the Programme in the larger context of reforms in the education sector in Moldova.

The methodology was defined in line with the evaluation criteria and questions, for which judgment criteria / approaches of the analysis were developed, indicators were selected and the related data sources identified and specified in an evaluation matrix.

The following methods were used to carry out the evaluation:

-  Desk-based analysis, used extensively, taking into account the multitude of sociological studies carried out regularly, until 2019, including those that analysed aspects relevant to all criteria, in particular for efficiency and impact criteria;
-  Analysis of the available quantitative data, provided by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and the Ministry of Finance;
-  Interviews at national and local level;



-  Focus groups with professionals and pupils from schools;
-  Case study (for triangulation and inter-regional comparison based on interviews and focus groups conducted at district level) in Cahul, Basarabeasca, Drochia, Ialoveni, Hâncești, Nisporeni and Chisinau districts;
-  A panel of experts was organised together with a workshop to validate the results of the evaluation.

The main limitation encountered in the evaluation process derives from the lack of a monitoring system and indicators related to the programme. For the indicators for which data were identified, these were collected and analysed by the current report. The qualitative indicators were analysed based on the data collected through interviews, focus groups and documents. The evaluation team tried to reconstruct the sets of data from SAP monitoring reports, but this was possible to a limited extent and it was time consuming. The data available allowed a limited breakdown by gender. This was done in all cases where disaggregated data were identified.

## Key findings and conclusions

### Relevance

The Programme for development of inclusive education (2011-2019) is consistent with international and European strategies and other programmes in the field of education, including the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 (Sustainable Development Objective 4 "Guaranteeing a quality education and promoting long-life learning opportunities for all"). The programme aligns the strategic and policy framework of the Republic of Moldova with the general tendency at international and European level to move from parallel educational systems (mass-education and special education) to a single inclusive educational system, which gives everyone access to education adapted to specific needs. The Programme supports the achievement of the objectives of education reform in the Republic of Moldova, its objectives are congruent and complementary to those of other reform measures.

The logic of intervention of the programme was described in a less explicit way in the planning phase; the general and specific objectives, as well as the actions and services have been listed in the programme, without presenting how each action or service should contribute to the achievement of each specific objective. However, the internal coherence of the Programme is generally adequate, considering that the reconstructed logic of intervention reveals that activities and / or actions and sub-actions have been planned to achieve all the specific objectives. However, in the absence of coverage of marginalized or disadvantaged groups of children and young people by specific activities (in the action plans developed and/or adopted), some expected changes cannot be achieved exclusively under the Programme, namely equal and universal access to education; observance of child rights and the principle of equal opportunities; ensuring universal educational and social inclusion. At the same time, the expected economic changes can only be achieved indirectly through the envisaged actions (and in the absence of other actions planned and carried out in related sectors).

The activities implemented have a high relevance for the target groups envisaged (decision makers, teachers, specialists, children). There is a continuous need for repetition and / or intensification of certain activities, especially in terms of training of teachers and school management; ensuring the implementation of the programme in early education and at vocational and technical education level; ensuring the right to inclusive education for all categories of children at risk; development of methodologies, tools and competences regarding the integration in education of children with severe disabilities as well as in terms of the activities developed with parents of children with SEN and of typical children.

## Effectiveness

Progress has been made in reaching most of the specific objectives of the programme, but in the next period the uniform progress of the reform at district level should be a priority (without, of course, ignoring the specificity of each district).

The existing legislation in the field of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova is largely comprehensive and basically represents one of the main results achieved through the implementation of the Programme, a success factor that has decisively contributed to the progress made on the inclusion of children with SEN in mass-education.

The existing methodological framework for the inclusion of all children is largely known by teachers, support staff and pre-primary teachers (at least in inclusive schools, but not only), and PAS and numerous NGOs involved have made a decisive contribution in this regard. A number of specific methodologies, in Romanian and/or in Russian, are needed for sub-groups of children with SEN (with intellectual and sensory disabilities, with spectrum autistic disorders, with learning difficulties, with migrant parents, and other vulnerable groups set forth in the Programme). A general challenge at the system level is the lack of teaching aids for the implementation of the IEP, for different subjects, and for different types of children with SEN, including for children with visual impairments.

Educational institutions, at all levels, are only partially prepared to facilitate the access of children with disabilities (especially motor skills disorders, hearing and visual impairment), through access infrastructure. The identified solutions (such as the Unit for Inclusive Education in Ialoveni) are successfully meeting the challenges raised by the accessibility of learning spaces especially for children with severe and associated psychomotor disabilities, but these must be thought out and implemented together with the existing RCIE, in order to ensure the efficiency of the financial sources involved.

Resource centres for inclusive education have generally shown their usefulness, but their effectiveness is affected, in some cases, by the lack of adequate space, by the insufficient number of support teaching staff and by some tendencies to work with children with SEN only at the centre, contributing to the segregation from common children.

The support teaching staff plays a key role in the inclusive education process, especially in the absence of the personal assistant or considering the latter's lack of involvement in the education process. In general, the number of STS is considered insufficient to achieve inclusive education in an effective manner and there are districts where the STS work with a well above average number of children with SEN. In addition, the small salary package and the fact that the STS position is not a distinct professional category causes their rather high fluctuation.

In general, the members of staff involved in inclusive education at all levels have participated in several trainings, initially through the involvement of NGOs in the field, and subsequently through various actions organized by PAS. The training activities are considered effective and the practice gained has improved the teaching staff competences to a relatively adequate level. At this point additional basic training is required for less experienced or newly employed members of staff. In addition, there is a need much more applied, practical training, but also specific and in-depth training to work with children with severe disabilities, hearing and vision impairments, ASD, behavioural disorders and other special needs).

In this context, the Republican Centre and Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services is a reference point for all the actors involved, although its capacity is, to a certain extent, insufficient, in terms of human resources. However, and without presenting an element of novelty, the number of specialists within PAS varies from district to district, without necessarily being aligned with the number and needs of children identified with SEN or the number of educational units in the covered geographical area. The high workload of PAS in many districts raises challenges in terms of the sufficient support offered to the educational



units, but also to parents, in identifying children with SEN, in evaluating and re-evaluating them, in implementing the IEP and in providing services directly to the child.

The evaluation finds that at this stage of the Programme implementation, both at the level of educational units (especially in general education) and at the level of PAS, a sufficient level of knowledge has been reached that will allow, progressively, the consolidation of inclusive education. This process could consider providing more services to children with SEN at school and community level especially as there is still an insufficient number of psychologists, psychologist-teachers and especially speech therapists and physiotherapists in most districts.

### Efficiency

Based on the available data, the evaluation concludes that, on the whole, the interventions for inclusive education were cost effective considering the costs incurred for the budget for the Republic of Moldova. A large number of activities, especially activities of increasing the capacity of teachers, trainings, study visits, development of methodologies, were carried out by civil society partners, with budget attracted and managed by these partner organizations, without affecting the state budget.

The budget allocations and the expenses actually incurred for inclusive education increased from 2015 to 2018. However, the differences between average costs / child between the levels of education, especially their decrease for the primary level, confirm that the financial allocations for inclusive education did not increase at the same rate as the number of children in the target group (children with SEN) after special and auxiliary schools were closed down and the programme was extended to all levels of education.

The level of the additional cost incurred by the educational system for integrating each child with SEN in mass-education is much lower than the costs incurred in the residential system, so the development of IE has led to a considerable saving of the state budget. As such, the savings generated by closing down special and auxiliary schools could be redirected to inclusive education, especially given that, the current funding model for inclusive education causes inequalities between districts (larger amounts available for smaller numbers of children with SEN where there is a large number of pupils), it does not cover the real needs in the districts with a large number of children with SEN and contributes to obtaining non-unitary results.

Given that human resources are considered insufficient on several levels (particularly in the case of STS, PAS and CRAP staff) and considering their workload in relation to the number of children with SEN and the educational institutions in the covered territory (in many districts), the evaluation considers that, in general, they have been used efficiently. For the efficient use of material resources, more efforts could have been made for the systematic centralization of the teaching aids identified and developed by the champion schools, teachers, STS and PAS and their widespread distribution for use throughout the system.

The less developed system of managing and monitoring the implementation of the Inclusive Education Development Programme, represents a weakness. The programme itself (Chapter VIII) does not clearly stipulate the institutions responsible for its management, but only the establishment of a consultative body for national coordination. Chapter XIV, "Evaluation and reporting procedures" clearly stipulates that the Ministry of Education is responsible for the evaluation process of the programme's implementation but does not make an adequate differentiation between monitoring and evaluation.

In this context, the Programme was implemented both through the efforts of the MoECR, but especially through the involvement of NGOs in the field, based on the needs identified on-site and not as a result of comprehensive plans, whose monitoring should have systematically identified the progress made and the next steps necessary to achieve the objectives. The monitoring system, as well as the indicators system, correspond to a very small extent to the

internationally accepted quality requirements. Progress reports were not elaborated and the MoECR Activity Reports include incomplete information compared to the planned actions. A positive aspect is the effort made by PAS and CRAP for collecting, processing and reporting data.

## Impact

Despite the incompleteness of the measures implemented and the delays recorded, the process of developing inclusive education has made significant progress in terms of reaching the general objectives of the programme. The educational environment has become more friendly and accessible, but this evolution is more obvious in the case of general education, on which the reform was focused until recent years and in the districts that have benefited from the support of NGOs in the field. Building on an inclusive society culture is a goal that can be achieved on long term and that depends on other factors, beyond the control of the Programme or of MoECR.

The evaluation has found positive developments among children with SEN, but also among their typical colleagues. Children with SEN have made friends among their colleagues, have been supported by them and in many cases they feel equal. The work based on the modified curriculum has determined the achievement of some results in terms of progress in learning. However, progress is more obvious in school units where inclusive education models have been piloted, supported more by NGOs, and both school management, teachers and children alike have gained experience working with children with SEN.

In this context, the inclusion of children with severe disabilities faces challenges largely due to insufficient training at the level of education institutions and teachers, the extra time needed to work with these children, and, to some extent, the reluctance of parents to integrate their children in school. The situation may be improved by equipping and training the educational units and teachers, as well as by providing specialized services, but a major contribution in this regard could be the availability of the personal assistance service for all children with severe disabilities and its involvement in teaching activities (in school).

The attitude of parents of typical children regarding the enrolment of children with SEN in mass-education schools has also improved, although their reluctance is only partially removed and still high regarding children with mental disabilities and those with emotional-affective and behavioural disorders. Research in the field of education (PISA, TIMSS, etc.) has highlighted the important role of parents in education. Thus, information campaigns targeting the general public can be useful for influencing parents' attitudes toward inclusive education and the education and the rights of every child.

The evaluation has found positive changes in the attitude towards the inclusion process, both at the level of teachers, as well as at the level of school management and at the OLSDE level. An important contribution in this regard is made by the District Plans of Inclusive Education, existing in most districts and implemented at least partially. However, the situation differs from district to district and from school to school, depending on the exposure to children with SEN (in schools with fewer children with SEN and less contact with them a general positive trend has not yet emerged) and the undertaken activities (in the districts and schools supported by NGOs the progress is more obvious, some of them becoming champions of inclusive education). In line with the progress of the reform, the situation is good in primary schools and satisfying in kindergartens. In secondary schools the process takes place more difficultly.

## Sustainability

The Programme for Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova 2011-2020 is sustainable on the whole, but it is not sustainable unconditionally. The regulatory and the institutional framework in place, as well as the district plans for inclusive education,

the school's strategic management plans, as well as the experience gained, have an important contribution in this regard.

The evaluation has found that the irreversibility of education development is not entirely certain. Despite the progress made, a critical mass of trained, informed and aware persons in terms of inclusive education has not yet been created in all districts, especially among parents and society at large. Thus it is necessary to limit the fluctuation of staff, to continue the training and information activities, and, implicitly, to identify the necessary financial resources, so as to ensure the sustainability of all the other results of the programme. Sustainability risks are largely identified with the inclusion of children with severe disabilities, including hearing or vision impairments, for which the system on the whole is less prepared.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the results already achieved on long-term, the continuity of the educational process must be ensured after the graduation of the 9th grade, as well as the implementation of employment policies, the development of the social economy policies and housing policies for young people who come from vulnerable families, from special / residential institutions and / or with disabilities.

### Other aspects

The evaluation has found that most of the children in the social-vulnerable and at-risk group, including children with parents working abroad, do not represent the direct target of inclusive education services, even if they, according to the Programme, are among the target group. In reality, they join the groups of children with SEN and are provided with services only if they develop a mental or physical impairment or a learning disability over time. Given that the collected records indicate an increased effectiveness of preventive and early intervention, PAS and STS do not have currently the capacity to cover the large number of children at risk.

The mechanisms of cross-sector coordination and cooperation are underdeveloped. Especially at local level, there is good cooperation between the educational and social systems, but additional measures are needed to align the medical system with the principles of inclusive education.

The Programme is complementary to other initiatives of the donor institutions and has made efficient use of their efforts so that inclusion becomes a key message for society. Inclusive education is a broad commitment made by organizations active in the field of education and protection of the rights of the child and donor institutions.

UNICEF has acted as a catalyst of the interventions and efforts to implement the Programme. UNICEF is a strategic partner for education reform, with a clear vision on the process of inclusive education.

### Key recommendations

The recommendations made are based on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation, following the triangulation of data collected and analysed including by consulting all key stakeholders interviewed during the on-site research phase.

The preliminary recommendations were shared and discussed with UNICEF and a large number of the stakeholders involved at national and local level, during the validation workshop organized on October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2019 but also during the National Conference organised by UNICEF Moldova on 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2019. Following the discussions in the validation workshop the recommendations have been further clustered, clarified and prioritized.

The recommendations are mainly addressed to the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture, responsible for implementing inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova, but also to other relevant Ministries that can contribute in this regard, as well as to local authorities, which play an important role in the planning of available resources.

#### ***Future strategical approach***

1. *In the planning phase of the future inclusive education programme, all the activities necessary in order to achieve the expected results should be identified. The identified activities should cover the specific needs of all target groups referred to in the context of inclusive education, as identified in Article 58 of the Programme.*
2. *The future development strategies, at national level and in the field of "Education", should be consistent with the objectives of the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", by planning the activities necessary to ensure both the relevance and quality of studies but also the access of all children to education.*

#### ***Quality and impact of inclusive education***

3. *It is necessary to develop and apply a methodology of evaluation and quality assurance of inclusive education services, in line with the quality standards in the field of education.*
4. *It is recommended to strengthen cooperation between the fields of education, social and health in order to ensure access to an inclusive education and to facilitate early intervention.*

#### ***Resources necessary for the implementation of inclusive education***

7. *It is necessary to resize the number of specialists employed with PAS in each district according to the number of children with SEN and their needs.*
8. *In order to provide specialized assistance services (psychologist, speech therapist, kinesiotherapy specialist) according to the needs of children with SEN, it is recommended to create mobile teams within PAS.*
9. *It is necessary to strengthen the position of support teachers in the context of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova.*
10. *Carry out an analysis of the training needs for each category of staff involved in the management and provision of inclusive education services (MoECR, CRAP, PAS staff, support teachers, teachers and management), to highlight the areas which require an improvement of their capacity, different from district to district, and based on which future training and support activities are to be planned and implemented.*
11. *It is necessary to carry out as soon as possible an analysis of the needs that will identify, based on the number of children with SEN managed by PASs, the necessary assistive technologies, teaching supports and other materials / games in the existing Resource Centres for Inclusive Education, as well as to identify the educational units where the establishment of RCIEs is necessary.*
12. *In order to provide quickly and efficiently teachers and RCIEs with teaching materials / supports, it is necessary to centralize the materials already identified and developed by champion schools, teachers, STS and PAS and to set up an online "resource base", at the disposal of the staff involved in the implementation of inclusive education.*
13. *In addition, depending on the results of the analysis provided for under recommendation 11, it is necessary to develop additional teaching aids for specific categories of SEN, mainly for children with intellectual and sensory disabilities, with autism spectrum disorders, learning difficulties.*

#### ***Sustainability/financial resources***

14. *Develop and implement another methodology for financing inclusive education, by establishing the adjustment coefficients of the financing formula per child, calculated on the basis of quantifying the additional needs of different types of children with SEN.*

15. *A needs analysis shall be carried out as soon as possible, likely to identify, based on the number of children with SEN managed by PASs and the plans aiming at further implementing the de-institutionalization process, what type of access infrastructure is needed, in which schools, from which districts.*

16. *Develop actions / financing programs to stimulate the development of social enterprises which will employ children with SEN, graduates of a form of education.*

***The management, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme/interventions in the field of inclusive education***

17. *Improve the current and future management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation system of the Programme, by:*

- *Clearly assigning the body responsible for managing the implementation of the programme, implicitly for its monitoring and evaluation.*

- *Developing the procedures for managing, monitoring, reporting and evaluating the Programme, which shall establish the role and responsibilities of each institution involved (MoECR, other ministries, CRAP, PAS).*

- *Defining a system of quality indicators, which will include indicators of all types (output, result, impact) properly formulated and quantified (baselines and targets). Identifying the data source of each indicator and developing data collection, processing and reporting procedures. If indicators-related data are available in other institutions (e.g. Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection or at the level of the local / district authorities) it is necessary to sign data transfer protocols, in compliance with the legal provisions in force regarding personal data protection.*

- *Preparing annual monitoring reports, highlighting the progress made in implementing the actions provided by both the Programme and the action plans, by all the actors involved, including the NGOs in the field.*

# I. INTRODUCTION

This document represents the Evaluation Report presenting the outcomes of the "Joint evaluation of the implementation of the Programme for development of inclusive education 2011 - 2020, including application of child-friendly school's standards".

This consolidated version of the Evaluation report takes into consideration the results of the panel of experts and of the workshop for validating the evaluation results, as well as the opinions of all interested stakeholders involved.

## Object of the evaluation

The object of the evaluation consists in the *Programme for Development of Inclusive Education 2011 – 2020*, implemented in the Republic of Moldova during 2011-2019.

The implementation of the *Programme for Development of Inclusive Education 2011 – 2020* aimed to contribute to achieving the priority mission of education, to ensuring equal opportunities and the access to quality education for every child, young person, adult, at all levels and steps of the education system, by achieving a set of general and specific objectives.

The programme builds the regulatory framework to ensure the appropriate conditions for setting up a friendly and accessible educational environment, capable of meeting all children's needs. In addition, it establishes the responsibilities of central and local authorities and educational institutions in promoting inclusion.

The programme is still being implemented (as it covers the time period 2011-2020), a process organized in 3 stages:

1. 2011 - 2012: Developing the regulatory framework for inclusive education.
2. 2013-2016: Piloting of inclusive education models.
3. 2017-2020: The widespread implementation of this Programme

**The (final) beneficiaries** of the Programme (i.e. the right holders) are all children regardless of the material status of the family, the place of residence, ethnicity, spoken language, sex, age, political or religious affiliation, health status, learning characteristics, criminal history, including:

- orphaned children, abandoned, deprived of parental care,
- children from disadvantaged families,
- institutionalized children,
- children, young people and adults with disabilities,
- children of the street,
- children and young people in conflict with the law,
- trafficked children and young people,
- children and youth subjected to violence,
- children and young people who consume drugs, alcohol, other toxic substances,
- children affected by HIV/AIDS,
- children with chronic somatic diseases,
- children and young people with mental disorders, behaviour or emotional deviations, other pathological conditions,
- children with learning difficulties and communication difficulties,
- gifted children and young people,
- children and young people, victims of labour exploitation,
- children of national minorities, religious or linguistic groups,
- children of refugees or children of internally displaced persons.



According to the Programme, the beneficiaries of inclusive education can be also *other categories of children, young people and adults* who, for various reasons, are marginalized or excluded in the process of attending and implementing an education programme.





The development and promotion of inclusive education also has effects on some categories of indirect beneficiaries, *which further extends the target group of the interventions planned/implemented under the Programme to the following duty bearers<sup>1</sup>:*

- families/parents;
- teachers/ education staff;
- specialists in related fields;
- central and local public authorities;
- the community/society.

In order to evaluate the results of the implementation of this Programme, the following (result) indicators were set to the Programme development and *taken into consideration by the evaluation methodology*:

- a. The alignment of national legislation with international policies in the field of inclusive education.
- b. Increasing the rate of inclusion in pre-school and general education of children with special educational needs.
- c. Decreasing the number of children in residential education and integrating them into general education;
- d. Increasing the degree of correlation between educational technologies, curricula, teaching materials, etc. with the level of development of the child and the different learning needs.
- e. Increasing the degree school environment adjustment to the specific needs of children with special educational needs;
- f. The existence of a number of teachers initially and continuously trained in the field of inclusive education.
- g. Increasing the efficiency of the use of resources in the educational system.
- h. Establishing a number of national and international partnerships in the development and promotion of inclusive education.
- i. Increasing the awareness of public opinion on inclusive education.


The **stakeholders and principal duty bearers** of the Programme are the following:


-  The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research - the institution responsible for the implementation of the Programme, as well as for the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the action plans for the period 2015-2017 and 2018-2020 for the implementation of the Inclusive Education Development Programme in the Republic of Moldova for 2011-2020.
-  The Republican Centre for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance - the structure that provides methodological assistance to Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services, local public administration authorities, the child's family, or other structures involved in the process to implement recommendations on intervention measures and support services for educational inclusion.
-  Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services - the mission is to ensure the right to quality education for all children and support services as required.
-  OLSDI - Local Authority for Education - an institution responsible for designing, organizing, coordinating, evaluating and monitoring the functioning of the educational system in public institutions of pre-school education (crèche, community

---

<sup>1</sup> The central and local public authorities are principal duty bearers, while the remaining categories are moral duty bearer.

centre of early education) in public pre-school education institutions (kindergartens, community centre of early education), in extra-school institutions at local, district, municipal level, TAU Gagauzia(except extra-school institutions within other subdivisions of the respective local public administration authorities), in primary, gymnasium, lyceum and special (education public institutions (district / municipal / TAU Gagauzia), as well as in the private institutions of the respective types (hereinafter - educational institutions within the respective administrative-territorial unit), from the perspective to the implementation of the state policy in the field of education.

 UNICEF Moldova - supports the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research in implementing inclusive education policies to support an inclusive education system at all levels (tertiary duty bearer).

 NGOs – actively involved in the Programme implementation (tertiary duty bearers).

## **The budget of the Programme**

The budget of the Inclusive Education Development Programme for 2011-2020, implemented in the Republic of Moldova during 2011-2019, is allocated both from the state budget, local budget and contributions from non-governmental organizations, which support the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research implementation of the two Action Plans for the implementation of the Programme.

UNICEF is the agency that coordinates the Global Partnership for Education in the Republic of Moldova and a strategic partner for education reform in the Republic of Moldova, with a clear vision on the development of the inclusive education process. UNICEF has consistently supported the Government and civil society from Moldova in the process of implementing the "Education 2020" Strategy. Thus, the programme of cooperation between UNICEF and the Republic of Moldova (2013-2017) has resulted in significant improvements regarding the participation of children in early education, inclusive education, deinstitutionalization or child health care. UNICEF has supported the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova in promoting and implementing the child-friendly school pattern - a friendly school being the one that ensures a safe, protective and healthy physical and social environment, inclusion, effectiveness, equity and sensitivity to gender dimension, family and community involvement.

## **The context of the intervention**

In line with the international policies, the Republic of Moldova has taken steps to orientate the educational system towards common values, promoted through the statements and recommendations of the United Nations Organisation (as a member of this organization since 1992), of the Council of Europe (as a member state of the Council since 1995) and of the European Union (the partnership and cooperation treaty since 1994, followed by other official forms of collaboration, the last being the Association Agenda 2017-2019). The legislation and policies of the Republic of Moldova include provisions and measures for the promotion of inclusive education.

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees the right to education of all persons and, in particular, the right to education of persons with special needs or who are in vulnerable situations.

In 2003, the Government of the Republic of Moldova adopted the national strategy "Education for all" in order to expand access to education and ensure its quality, to promote policies for the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mass education and

support measures to this end. In 2010, *the Strategy on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities*, 2010-2013, was adopted by Law no. 169, providing the adjustment of educational programmes to the special needs of children with disabilities, the diversification of inclusive education services and the improvement of quality of educational services for children and young people with disabilities.

*The Programme for development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova 2011-2020*, approved by *Government Decision no. 523/2011*, describes the conceptual framework of inclusive education, analyses the situation in that period and sets forth structures, models of cooperation, types of services, stakeholders' roles, as well as the regulatory acts necessary for implementation.

In this context, *The New Education Code* (2014) defines inclusive education as an "educational process that responds to children's diversity and individual developmental needs and offers opportunities and equal chances to benefit from the fundamental human rights to quality development and education in common environments of learning" (art. 3). The Code guarantees, among the principles governing the educational system, equity, non-discrimination and social inclusion (art. 5). The law regulates inclusive education and provides that it shall be organized in general educational institutions, including special educational institutions, or home-schooling, the form of inclusion being determined according to the particularities of each individual, following periodic evaluations.

The educational policy document entitled the *Strategy on Education development for 2014-2020 "Education 2020"* describes the vision of a quality educational system that is accessible for all and relevant both for society and economy. To this end, one of the targets is to increase the access of children with special educational needs to mass education by at least 10% every year. The strategy identifies the following barriers to inclusive education: the lack of the necessary conditions for the integration of these children (well trained teachers, infrastructure and adapted teaching aids) and the resistance to change shown by some school managers, teachers and parents (p. 17). The document reiterates the role of information campaigns at the level of parents, educational institutions and other stakeholders, including the general public, for raising awareness on the need to ensure equal opportunities for quality education to all children. It also provides the assurance of adequate and sufficient material conditions and the reorganization of support measures for appropriate psycho-pedagogical assistance, accessible to all children with special educational needs (centres, support teachers, psychologist, social worker, etc.).

Directly related to the development of inclusive education, the *Strategy on Child Protection for 2014-2020* proposes measures for the continuous reduction of the number of children in residential care, some of them aimed at developing inclusive education and improving the support services.

In addition to the efforts of the authorities, international organizations and non-governmental organizations active in the field of education have supported the development of inclusive education, in particular through training activities provided for teachers and other categories of staff involved in inclusive education, through the development of the capacity of psycho-pedagogical assistance services, through different pilot projects or initiatives that tested certain intervention measures, by developing adequate teaching resources or by providing social and psycho-pedagogical assistance services (PAS).

Although there has been significant progress over the last decade, at the outset of the evaluation there were still priority areas for improvement. For example, the Council of

Europe<sup>2</sup> recommends punctual improvements of the legislation or regulatory documents, the continuation of training provided to teaching and auxiliary staff, as well as the access of children and young people with disabilities to the educational system - physical access (elevators with platform, ramps, suitable pieces of furniture , adapted transportation) and administration and examination procedures.

The 2018 UNICEF study “Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Education” as of 2018 found that over the years, slight improvement tendencies had been attested, expressed as an increased proportion of respondents who have accepted that these children should be included in mass institutions and the decrease of those likely to opt for placing the children with SEN in residential institutions. However, the public perceptions regarding the inclusion of children with SEN and/or disabilities still remain predominantly exclusive, and the majority of the respondents stick to the opinion that these children need to be taken care of inside the family or in special institutions<sup>3</sup>.

### **The logic of the intervention of the Programme for development of inclusive education 2011-2020**

Reconstructing the logic of the intervention of the programme was a serious challenge for this evaluation. This was analysed during the evaluation, and the expert team drafted a series of recommendations for improving future planning processes.

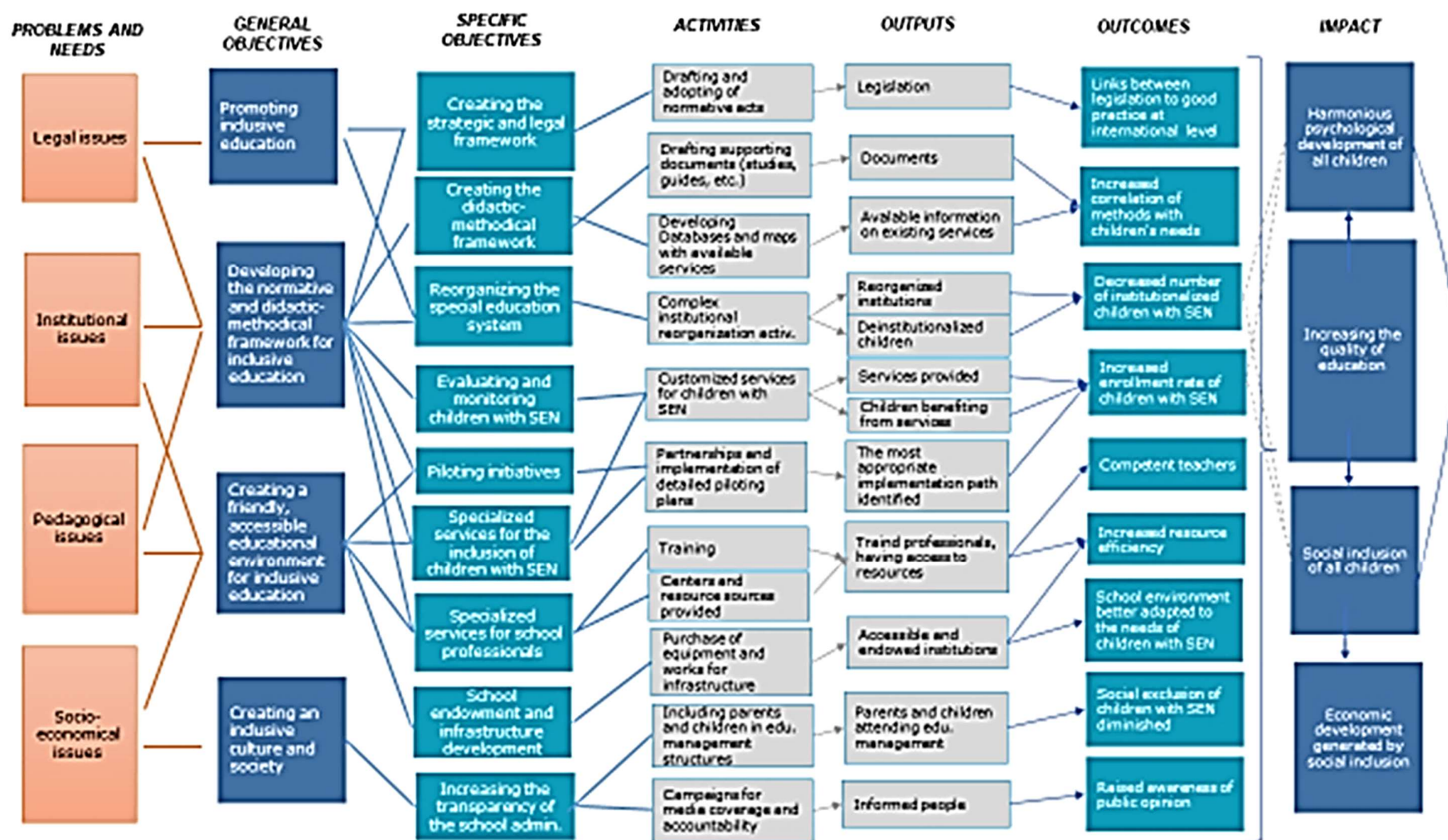
The figure below shows the logic of the intervention of the programme in a synthesized form. Its detailed presentation can be found in Annex 2.

---

<sup>2</sup> In “Study on inclusive education in Europe and in the Republic of Moldova: resonable adaptation, acces to education and non-discrimination” 2018

<sup>3</sup> UNICEF "The inclusion of children with disabilities in education" as of 2018.

Figure 1. The theory of change (ToC) of the Programme for Development of Inclusive Education 2011 – 2020.



## II. PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE EVALUATION




### Evaluation purpose

In line with the Terms of Reference (ToR) <sup>4</sup>, “the purpose of the assignment is to provide technical assistance and to support the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) to conduct an independent evaluation of the implementation of the *Programme for Development of Inclusive Education 2011-2020*”.





### Evaluation objectives

The objective of the evaluation is “to have a proper measurement of the results achieved, determine the bottlenecks and barriers and identify best ways for further promotion of the child rights to education in the context of broad education sector reform and implementation of the inclusive education beyond the Programme, which will end in 2020.”

In other words, the evaluation will focus primarily on:

-  The effectiveness and impact of the Programme – including the differences the Programme generated in the life of school children.
-  The process: best practices, lessons learned generating bottlenecks and barriers, in order to better understand how the outputs and outcomes have been achieved and what actions/components of the Programme and how (based on what approaches) should the Programme be continued
-  The sustainability of the Programme in the larger context of reforms in the education sector in Moldova and taking into account the background of Moldavian society and socio-economic development

Having in mind the purpose, the scope, the envisage usage, the focus of the evaluation and the principles mentioned above, the evaluation will independently:

-  Assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and to the extent possible, impact of the implementation of the Programme in terms of pedagogical, psychological, social and economic aspects, both on individual and society levels
-  Identify and document lessons learned and good practices in relation to implementation, management, and monitoring of planned actions to achieve the results, as well as coordination among all involved actors;
-  Assess whether application of child-friendly school standards contributed to the inclusiveness of children in needs and suggest what adjustments may need to be made going forward to respond to emerging challenges faced by children and their families to enjoy access to quality education;
-  Provide recommendations to guide and inform the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research on further adjustment of the educational system to make it more inclusive, based on the lessons learnt, good practices and reported latest trends for development of inclusive education and regional and global levels.









Following the purpose and scope of the evaluation, the use of the evaluation is manifold:

-  informing the Government of the Republic of Moldova - Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and UNICEF Moldova on the actions needed for the

---

<sup>4</sup> See Annex 1.



- continuation of Programme implementation at national level, including the coordination needed among all involved actors
-  informing the Government of the Republic of Moldova - Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and UNICEF Moldova on best practices to be continued and scaled up
-  informing the Government of the Republic of Moldova - Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and UNICEF Moldova on lessons learned, bottlenecks and limitations that need to be overcome and methods that worked for this end
-  informing the Government of the Republic of Moldova - Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and UNICEF Moldova on the central and local capacity to continue the scaling up of the Programme
-  informing the promoters of the programme (Government of Moldova, UNICEF Moldova) on these effects and results / outcomes, their relevance and sustainability
-  informing the donors of the Programme on the results/ outcomes, their relevance and sustainability
-  informing the beneficiaries and the public on the performance of the Programme and its impact
-  informing the Government of the Republic of Moldova - Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and UNICEF Moldova on the actions needed for increased effectiveness and impact of the Programme *and prepare the future strategies in the field of inclusive education, as discussed during the KoM*
-  recommending monitoring tools and strategies in order to register continuous and future results of the Programme

## Evaluation scope

The scope of the evaluation is national – concerning the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova – and covers the period 2011-2018, as well as recent developments, occurring in 2019. A sample of sub-national level interventions is considered to assess piloting and capacity building related efforts, in the framework of the case study described in the next sections.

The status of inclusive education was analysed in all districts of the Republic of Moldova, based on extensive desk-based research and data analysis (the same aspects were assessed for all districts). The data made available, either by the National Statistics Office or by the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture, was explored at district level and differences at this level were in all cases highlighted. The case study provided information *generalizable* at programme and thus at national level, on the context of the intervention, mechanisms which influence the change and impact registered.

## III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The evaluation methodology was applied in line with the approach developed in the Inception Report, and the Terms of Reference (included in Annex 1).

The evaluation criteria considered are in line with those developed and applied by the OECD / DAC. They consist in relevant evaluation questions, as follows:

**Relevance** - To what extent are the objectives of the Programme still valid and up to date to the national and international contexts? Are the objectives of the Programme in line with the

overall goal? Are implemented activities and outputs in line with the intended impacts and effects?

***Effectiveness*** - To what extent were the objectives (general and specific), activities and expected results at output and outcome levels achieved / are likely to be achieved? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

***Efficiency*** - Were activities and interventions cost-efficient? Were they implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives? Were objectives (general and specific), activities and expected results at output and outcome levels achieved on time? Are the resources (money, human resources, facilities/ capital assets) efficient enough? How well has the implementation of activities been managed? What management and monitoring tools have been used and what tools could have been used?

***Sustainability*** – Were the achieved results and targets sustainable? Is sustainability ensured through implementation of the Programme? What were the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of results at output and outcome levels?

***Impact*** criteria should be considered, and the following question answered: To what extent the implementation of the Programme had and can further impact on the access, quality and relevance of inclusive education services for the rights holders? What has happened because of the implementation of the Programme and what is the real difference made to the rights holders? How many children have been benefiting from the Programme?




***Coverage***: Was representativeness of coverage ensured by the activities and interventions? Have vulnerable children and their families been reached, including children left behind by migrant parents, poor and marginalised children?

***Coordination***: What was the role of the MECR, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Finances, as well as of other ministries, LPAs, CSOs, community and other key actors in the design, coordination, implementation and monitoring of the Programme? What was the role and comparative advantage of UNICEF?

***Coherence***: What were the areas and ways of cooperation with other UN agencies and development partners regarding implementation of the Programme? Was there coherence across interventions supported by different agencies?

The methodology was defined in line with the evaluation criteria and questions, for which judgment criteria / approaches of the analysis were developed, indicators were selected and the related data sources identified. The specification of the evaluation criteria and questions and the indicators used is presented in detail in the evaluation matrix, fully included in Annex 3.

The evaluation used a mix of methods, as follows:

-  The use of both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection and analysis.
-  The use of triangulation to validate the findings, including the triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data collected, but also the triangulation of the data and information of the same method type: the data and information collected in the interviews and focus groups, as well as the survey data will be triangulated for evaluation, and analysis of all available secondary data;
-  For the evaluation of the impact, the main theory-based evaluation method (case study) was used for triangulation.

The following methods were used to carry out the evaluation:


- 🔍 Desk-based analysis, used extensively, taking into account the multitude of sociological studies carried out regularly, until 2019, including those that analysed aspects relevant to all criteria, in particular for efficiency and impact criteria (the list of documents consulted is included in Annex 4);
- 🔍 Analysis at national and district level of the available quantitative data, provided by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of the Republic of Moldova, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and the Ministry of Finance:
  - Number of kindergartens in the Republic of Moldova 2013-2018
  - Number of kindergartens and schools in the Republic of Moldova benefitting of support staff
  - Number of kindergartens and schools in the Republic of Moldova benefitting of spaces designed for disabled children
  - Number of disabled children attending kindergartens and schools in the Republic of Moldova – per age category
  - Number RCIE and support teachers at district level
  - Number of teaching staff in the Republic of Moldova, per year, and district
  - Number of specialists per education level
  - Number of children with SEN, by sub-categories and districts
  - Children aged under 18 years, with the disability recognized for the first time by causes of disability, 2000-2017.
  - Children with disability under 18 years, at the observation (end-year) per 1000 children of respective age, in territorial aspect, 2008-2017
  - Children with disability aged under 18 years, at the observation (end-year) by causes of disability, 2000-2017
- 🔍 Interviews at national and local level with all representative stakeholders of the programme, in line with the denominators inserted in the evaluation matrix (as shown in the table below - interview guidelines and the persons interviewed are included in Annex 5)
- 🔍 Focus groups with professionals and pupils from schools, in line with the denominators inserted in the evaluation matrix (as shown in the table below - interview guidelines and the persons interviewed are included in Annex 6)
- 🔍 Case study (for triangulation and inter-regional comparison based on interviews and focus groups conducted at district level) in Cahul, Basarabeasca, Drochia, Ialoveni, Hâncești, Nisporeni and Chisinau districts (case study design and reports are included in annex 7, details regarding the selection of districts and schools / kindergartens are presented below)
- 🔍 An experts panel to validate the theory of change and the results obtained, especially regarding the criteria of effectiveness and impact (the topics discussed, the participants and the results of the panel are included in Annex 8)
- 🔍 A workshop to validate the results of the evaluation (the topics discussed, the participants and the results of the panel are included in annex 9)

The panel of experts and the validation workshop were organized together for ensuring transparency and communication between the two target groups.

On the whole, the following have been achieved:

Method \ Level	Interviews	Focus groups (FG)	Case studies	Group Methods
<b>National Level</b>	19 interviews at national level with UNICEF, central state authorities and other stakeholders			Experts Panel Workshop for results validation
<b>District level</b>	28 interviews at district level: 4 interviews in each of			

	the 6 districts visited and Chişinău, with: PAS, Representatives of local public authorities, District/municipality directorates of education and District/municipality social protection directorates.			
<b>School level</b>		14 FG with professionals / teachers (one in each school/kindergarten visited)	14 case studies on schools and kindergartens visited (7 reports at district level)	
<b>Beneficiary level</b>		14 FG with beneficiary children/adolescents (in each school visited)*		

 Focus groups with children at kindergarten level were not organized.

### Case studies

The multiple case study carried out in the framework of this evaluation is of exploratory nature<sup>5</sup>, describing contexts and implementation mechanisms and assessing the changes and impact that occurred as a result of actions implemented under the umbrella of the Programme. The case study provides information about reasons for success, challenges and drawbacks of the Programme implementation and aspects to be further explored in future studies. As a key method for theory-based evaluations, the case study also provides evidences also for the effectiveness and impact of the programme as a whole.

The “case” to be analysed in the framework of the study is the “school”. The following schools are selected for the case study, based on a set of comprehensive criteria developed and included in the first column of the table below:

Criteria	Selected districts/schools
1. District with a high and low development level (as wealth determines access and participation in education).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chişinău – (1) “Pro success” High-school, (2) Mihai Viteazu High-school, (3) Kindergarten 225</li> <li>District 1 – Basarabeasca: (4) Abaclia High-school, (5) Iordanovca Kindergarten</li> <li>District 2 – Ialoveni: (6) P. Stefanuca High-school</li> <li>District 3 – Drochia: (7) Pelinia High-school, (8) Sofia Kindergarten</li> </ul>
2. Districts with a high and a low number of children with SEN / including disabilities	
3. Districts with a high and a low number of children still in residential care	
4. Districts with PAS well-endowed with human resources etc. and less developed PAS	
5. Schools that have benefited in the past of interventions and schools	

<sup>5</sup> For the classification of case studies used for the purpose of this evaluation see GAO, Case studies evaluation ([https://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/10\\_1\\_9.pdf](https://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/10_1_9.pdf)) and Robert K. Yin. (2014). Case Study Research Design and Methods (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 282 pages.

<b>which have benefited less of Inclusive Education (IE) interventions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District 4 – Hincești, (9) Bozieni High-school, (10) Bozieni Kindergarten,</li> <li>• District 5 – Cahul, (11) Dimitrie Cantemir Gymnasium, (12) Colibas Kindergarten, (13) Colibaș High-school</li> <li>• District 6 – Nisporeni, (14) Vulcanesti High-school, (15) Vulcănești Kindergarten</li> </ul>
6. Dimension of school as per numbers of students and teachers (smaller and larger schools)	
7. School performance (schools with good and not as good results at child level)	
8. Schools with high and low share of students with special needs or from vulnerable groups	
9. Rural – urban representation: 60% of schools in rural areas and 40% in urban areas, including Chișinău	
10. Educational level representation (early education and primary and secondary level)	
11. Schools with teaching in Russian language	

The criteria established for the selected districts and schools were elaborated on the basis of the research carried out within the desk-based research carried out for the Initial Report, in order to ensure:

1. Impartiality and generalization of results at national level.
2. An approach of good / not as good cases (see GAO manual, page 34) in order to select cases, to see differences in implementation, outputs and outcomes and to find explanations for these differences, to draw conclusions and form recommendations for future interventions.

## Limitations

The main limitation encountered in the evaluation process derives from the lack of a monitoring system and indicators related to the programme. The programme establishes a number of 10 performance indicators, of which 6 are qualitative ones. The indicators were not quantified, their baseline values and targets were not set and they were not monitored. For the indicators for which data were identified, these were collected and analysed by the current report. The qualitative indicators were analysed based on the data collected through interviews, focus groups and documents. The quantitative data made available to the evaluation team, regarding the activity of the PAS, were incomplete for the general education level (2013-2016) and for both levels (including preschool) the collection of data differed from one year to another. Only a limited number of data were available in complete time series for 2013-2018. As such, longitudinal and district level analyses could be performed for a limited number of indicators. The evaluation team tried to reconstruct the sets of data from SAP monitoring reports, but this was possible to a limited extent and it was time consuming.

The programme is implemented with the significant contribution of NGOs in the field. No quantitative data were available regarding these contributions (financial input, output). The analysis was based on the large volume of qualitative information presented in different studies conducted by them and UNICEF.










In addition, quantitative data on teaching staff training were not made available to evaluators. Thus, the analysis was based on the secondary quantitative data identified in different documents and on the primary qualitative data collected.

The data available allowed a limited breakdown by gender. Gender-related analyses were carried out in all cases where disaggregated data was identified.

## IV. ETHICAL ISSUES

Along the data collection, analysis and reporting, in order to ensure the integrity of evaluation, special attention was paid by evaluators towards respecting the ethical standards of UNICEF, as presented in the “Procedure on Ethical Standards in Data Collection, Evaluation and Research” (April 2015), particularly as concerns: the harms and benefits, informed consent, privacy and confidentiality, payment and compensation, conflict of interests.

The evaluation team acted with integrity and honesty in their relationship with all stakeholders and respected the ethical principles of the UNEG Code of Conduct for evaluation in the UN system.<sup>6</sup>:

-  The data collection tools were sent to the local ethics council for being reviewed, as well as to UNICEF representatives, so as to ensure the quality review of all results.
-  The team was sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs.
-  The team protected the anonymity and confidentiality of personal information. All participants were informed about the context and purpose of the evaluation, as well as about the confidentiality of the information revealed. No participant was involved in the evaluation exercise without their consent or their tutor's consent.
-  The participants in the evaluation activities were selected on the basis of the evaluation methodology and the necessary data and not on discriminatory / bias criteria.
-  The evaluation activities were carried out in spaces that facilitate the participation of the selected participants and ensure the confidentiality of the information.
-  There were used only documents and information provided exclusively for the tasks related to the Terms of Reference.
-  Regarding the development of the research tools, it was taken into account the formulation of questions and phrases that could not harm the participants in the study, or other categories of people.
-  After the interview, participants were provided the contact details of the study coordinator / team leader for any subsequent questions or complaints / fears, further information about the project and its results.
-  The findings of the report regarding individual children / carers or individual institutions were not shared with the media.

### Intention of evaluation (utility and necessity)

The rationale for conducting this evaluation has been clarified at the outset. The evaluators are fully aware that this summative evaluation is conducted with the clear intention to use its results in informing decisions and actions and with the purpose to make relevant and timely contribution to the development of the framework in the field of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova.

### Obligations of evaluators

- **Independence of judgement** - the evaluation findings and recommendations are independently presented.
- **Impartiality** - the evaluators operated in an impartial and unbiased manner at all stages of the evaluation. They collected diverse perspectives on the subject under evaluation and presented impartial and unbiased opinions on the modelling project strengths and weaknesses. The conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation were discussed within the evaluation team ensuring that the

---


<sup>6</sup> UNEG Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system  
<http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100>





individual opinions of the evaluators are balanced and the result of the evolution is not affected by personal bias.


- **Credibility** - all experts part of the team are highly qualified professionals, able to carry out the assigned tasks within the timeframe set up while maintaining a qualitative standard for deliverables.
- **Conflict of interest** is avoided so that the credibility of the evaluation process is not undermined. None of the proposed evaluators are in conflict of interest as they were not involved in the implementation, design or previous evaluation of the project.

### **Honesty, integrity and accountability**


 **Honesty and Integrity** – all evaluators are professionals and showed honesty and integrity in their behaviour. They presented accurately the data collected and findings as well as the limitations and uncertainties in data interpretation and where the risk of bias arises, they honestly declared it and measures to ensure the impartiality were taken.


 **Competence** – all experts part of the team are highly qualified professionals able to carry out the assigned tasks


 **Accountability** – The evaluators are aware that they are accountable for the completion of the agreed evaluation deliverables within the timeframe and budget agreed, while operating in a cost-effective manner.

 **Obligation to participants** – The evaluators respected and protect the rights and welfare of human subjects and communities, in line with the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights conventions. Evaluators committed themselves to respecting differences in culture, local customs, religious beliefs and practices, personal interaction, gender roles, disability, age and ethnicity, while using evaluation instruments appropriate to the cultural setting. Evaluators ensured that all participants were treated as autonomous agents, free to choose whether to participate in the evaluation, while ensuring that the relatively powerless are represented. Participation of children in the project activities aiming at data collection was made based on prior (oral) consent of parents. The information on project objective was presented by using an easy understandable language (as more than one third of parents have a low level of education). As explained above, these evaluators were aware of and complied with the UNICEF “Procedure on Ethical Standards in Data Collection, Evaluation and Research” governing the interviews with children. The ethical review undertaken for the current report is inserted in Annex 14.


The recruitment of stakeholders from the relevant institutions will be made following their informed consent to participate in the evaluation exercise. Participation in the evaluation will be voluntarily and no reference will be made on the names of respondents.

 **Confidentiality** - Evaluators will respect people’s right to provide information in confidence and make participants to interviews, focus-groups and surveys aware of the scope and limits of confidentiality, while ensuring that sensitive information cannot be traced to its source.


 **Avoidance of harm** - Evaluators will seek to minimise any risks and harms to, and burdens on, the participants in the evaluation, without compromising the integrity of the evaluation findings.

 **Evaluation process transparency** – The evaluators will clearly communicate to stakeholders the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the intended use of findings. Also, the evaluators will ensure that all stakeholders have a clear understanding of the questions addressed and any other documents they are coming in contact with. The evaluation report will be written in such a way to

make the link between evidence, findings, conclusions and recommendations transparent, persuasive and proportionate to the body of evidence collected.

 **Accessibility of those affected by evaluation** – The evaluators will provide information regarding the evaluation process in accord to the contractual provisions agreed with UNICEF. The evaluation report will be made public by UNICEF after the finalization of the evaluation process.

### **The result of the evaluation**

 **Accuracy, completeness and reliability of report** - Evaluators will ensure that the evaluation report and any other presentations are accurate, complete and reliable. Evaluators will explicitly justify judgements, findings and conclusions and show their underlying rationale, so that stakeholders are in a position to assess them.

### **Quality assurance**

UNICEF facilitated external ethics review of Inception Report/ Data collection tools and Final Draft of Evaluation Report (by the National Ethics Committee<sup>7</sup> - see annex 14).

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://old2.ms.gov.md/?q=comitetul-national-etica>

## V. RELEVANCE - KEY FINDINGS

**External coherence - the extent to which the objectives of the Programme are still in line with and adapted to the national and international context**

*The Programme for development of inclusive education and the international strategies and programmes in the field of education*

The programme developed is in line with international strategies and programmes in the field of education. This represented an important stage in the evolution of society mindset and of the way of approaching people with special needs in the Republic of Moldova.

Globally, inclusive education has become an integrative concept and a priority direction for educational policies, in close connection with the notion of *education for all*<sup>8</sup>, with a growing concern for *human rights*, *social justice* and *acceptance of diversity*.

The United Nations and its agencies have played a major role in promoting human rights and social inclusion. *Salamanca Statement* and the Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994)<sup>9</sup> advocated for the inclusion of children with disabilities in mass education. *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* was adopted in 2006 and ratified by 177 economies committing themselves to developing an inclusive educational system. The UN agencies have developed specific programmes in the field of education for all, girls' education, child-friendly school, early education, access to health services, promotion of the rights of under-represented groups in the wider framework set by the The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) etc. However, the Programme does not specifically refer to girls, as particular sub-target group.

At European level, the *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* prohibits any form of discrimination. The specific provisions refer to the implementation of the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and to the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of nationality, sex, sexual orientation, religious belief, age and disability in the field of employment. The field of education is less regulated at the level of the European Union, compared to the field of employment, but there are statements that offer general guidelines regarding the education of children with disabilities. The Commission's communication on improving skills for the 21st century<sup>10</sup> underlined the need for new policies to encourage inclusion in mass education. The strategic framework "Education and Training 2020" aims, among its objectives, to promote equity, social inclusion and active citizenship. These issues are identified as priorities of EU cooperation programmes in the field of vocational education and training. A study prepared at the request of the European Commission<sup>11</sup>, in 2013, reveals a general political

---

<sup>8</sup> The conference "Education for All" of ministers of education (Jomtien, 1990) highlighted the limits of access to education of disadvantaged students, including people with disabilities, people affected by poverty or marginalized due to culture, ethnicity, geographical location or other reasons. The World Education Forum organized in Dakar, in 2000, expressed once again the international commitment to provide primary education for all children by 2015.

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF)

<sup>10</sup> Improving competences for the 21st Century: an Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools, 2008 (COM/2008/0425 final)

<sup>11</sup> Support for children with special educational needs, European Commission, 2013, <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ret=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=2ahUKEwjHsP34g9>

consensus on the importance of inclusive education and ensuring the rights of children with special educational needs to education in mass education, not in a segregated system of special education. The Commission communication on the European Strategy on Disability (2010-2020) <sup>12</sup> reaffirms the importance of education and training also for this vulnerable category. In 2017, the *European Pillar of Social Rights* was defined through a set of 20 principles for ensuring the rights of citizens. The first principle affirms the right of each person to quality, inclusive education, throughout their lives, to acquire skills that allow social participation and good management of transitions in the labour market. A European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education works as an independent organization that supports collaboration between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the ministries of education in 31 EU countries or in countries in the process of accession to EU.

The Council of Europe - an international organization made up of 47 Member States, has also played a significant role in promoting human rights and combating all forms of discrimination through mandatory and non-binding instruments (the European Convention on Human Rights, the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities, the Charter on education for democratic citizenship and human rights, the European Social Charter - which mentions the right to education for all, with special attention given to persons belonging to vulnerable groups, such as minority groups, refugees and asylum seekers, hospitalized children, teenage mothers, children with disabilities, etc.).

In this context, the general tendency is to move from parallel educational systems (mass education and special education), to a unique inclusive educational system, which gives everyone access to education appropriate to their specific needs. Also, international policies in the field of education have as common features: the universal access to education, inclusion, the quality of education services and their relevance.

The Programme for development of inclusive education was based on an analysis of the current situation both at the level of global policies and trends, as well as in terms of the education situation in the Republic of Moldova, which ensured a good coherence with the relevant international objectives. Coherence is also supported by:

- the common values promoted by these trends and reflected in the Programme: respect for human rights, diversity, cohesion, equal opportunities, non-discrimination, tolerance;
- approaching inclusive education in a broad sense and aiming at different categories of target groups; it is clearly stated that the Programme refers to any person marginalized or excluded in the process of joining and carrying out an education programme.

The protection and promotion of the rights of the child are also stated, on the one hand, in the Association Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union and the European Community of Atomic Energy and their member states, on the other hand. The Association Agreement (2014) between the European Union, its Member States and the Republic of Moldova concerns the modernization of education and training systems, improving the quality, relevance and access to them (art. 123), and the Association Programme 2017-2019 includes measures to increase the level of inclusion of education

---

rkAhVRKuwKHQLpAD4QFjABegQIABAC&url=https%3A%2F%2Fec.europa.eu%2Fsocial%2FBlobServlet%3FdocId%3D15993%26langId%3Den&usg=AOvVaw25acuG\_0bs7G7FVYRNnN4N

<sup>12</sup> European Disability Strategy 2010–2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe, 2010 (COM(2010) 636 final)

and training, the labour market and society in general.

The programme continues to be very relevant, in terms of the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", especially the Sustainable Development Objective 4 "Guaranteeing a quality education and promoting long-life learning opportunities for all". The sustainable development objective 4 aims to ensure access to all levels of education and training, including to children in vulnerable situations. Thus, it becomes necessary for the following strategies developed in the Republic of Moldova, including the National Development Strategy 2030, to consider this goal, and not just to ensure the relevance and quality of studies in order for a better correlation between the education system and the labour market.<sup>13</sup>

### *The Programme for development of inclusive education and other national policies in the field of education*

The programme is in line with the national policies in the field of education, which are largely in line with the international policies. The programme was based on an analysis of the education situation in terms of inclusion, identifying examples of good practices / models of inclusive education that could be used and extended. At cross-sector level, inclusive education is supported by regulatory acts and strategies in related fields.

The Republic of Moldova has taken steps to direct the educational system towards the common values, promoted by the declarations and recommendations of the United Nations (as it has been a member of this organization since 1992), the Council of Europe (as member of the Council since 1995) and the European Union (by the Partnership and cooperation Agreement in force since 1998, followed by other official forms of collaboration, including the Association Agreement signed in 2014).

The *Constitution of the Republic of Moldova* guarantees the right to education of all persons and, in particular, the right to education of persons with special needs or who are in vulnerable situations.

In 2003, the Government of the Republic of Moldova adopted the National Strategy "Education for All" in order to extend the access to education and to foster its quality, to promote policies for the inclusion of children with special educational needs in mass education and to create support measures in this respect. In 2006, with the support of the World Bank, two broad programmes were launched: *Education for All - Quick Action Initiative* and *Quality Education in the Rural Area of Moldova*, which aimed at the rehabilitation and endowment of pre-school and school institutions and other measures aimed at fostering the quality of education. 1190 schools benefitted of equity grants.

The new Education Code<sup>14</sup>, adopted in 2014, reiterated the concern for inclusive education, defined as an "educational process that responds to children's diversity and individual developmental needs and provides equal chances and opportunities to benefit from the fundamental human rights to quality development and education in common learning environments" (art. 3). Although the definition refers to learning in common environments, the regulatory act still leaves the possibility of separate educational systems, specifying that inclusive education is organized in general education institutions, including in special education institutions, or through home-schooling, the form of inclusion being determined according to the particularities of each person, following periodic evaluations. In full accordance with the Programme for development of inclusive

---

<sup>13</sup> As currently available, "The interim evaluation Report of the Education Development Strategy for 2014-2020" Education-2020" (page 12) but also the Interim Evaluation of the NDS Moldova 2020 (page 11).

<sup>14</sup> <http://lex.justice.md/md/355156/>

education, the Education Code asserts among the principles governing the educational system equity, non-discrimination and social inclusion (art. 5).

The educational policy document entitled *Education Strategy for 2014-2020 "Education 2020"*<sup>15</sup> describes the vision of an educational system that should be of quality, universally accessible and relevant to society and economy. To this end, one of the goals is to increase the access of children with special educational needs to mass education by at least 10% every year. The strategy identifies the obstacles in the process of inclusive education: the lack of the necessary conditions for the integration of these children (trained teachers, infrastructure and adapted teaching aids), as well as the resistance to change expressed by some school managers, teachers and parents. The document reaffirms the role of information campaigns at the level of parents, educational institutions and other stakeholders, including those addressed to the general public, to increase the awareness of the need to ensure equal opportunities for quality education to all children. It also provides the ensurance of the necessary material conditions and the reorganization of the support modalities for adequate and accessible psycho-pedagogical assistance to all children with special educational needs (centres, support teachers, psychologists, social workers, etc.).

At cross-sector level, *inclusive education is supported by regulatory acts and strategies in related fields*. The adjustment of educational curricula to the special needs of children with disabilities, diversification of inclusive education services and improvement of the quality of educational services for children and young people with disabilities were provided by Law no. 169/2010, which adopted the *Strategy on social inclusion of people with disabilities, 2010 -2013*<sup>16</sup>. Two years later, the rights of persons with disabilities were reaffirmed by Law no. 60/2012 on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities. These regulations aimed to guarantee the possibility of participation in all areas of life without discrimination, on equal terms with the other members of society, based on observing the fundamental rights and freedoms of the individual (art. 1). To this end, the Ministry of Education and the authorities of the local public administration shall ensure favourable conditions for the access of children with disabilities to early education and rehabilitation services (art. 28). *The law provides support measures for students with disabilities - support teachers, personal assistants, other support services and/or with reasonable adjustments, social scholarships, in line with the legislation in force.*

*The Child Protection Strategy for 2014-2020*<sup>17</sup> proposes measures to continuously reduce the number of children in residential care, some of which are aimed at developing inclusive education and making efficient use of support services. *The measures plan for 2016-2020 connects the implementation of this strategy to the implementation of the Programme for development of inclusive education*, so that strengthening the inclusive character of education shall implicitly lead to better development conditions for children.

### *The Programme and the education reform in the Republic of Moldova*

The Programme for development of inclusive education supports the achievement of the objectives of the education reform in the Republic of Moldova, its objectives are congruent and complementary to those of other reform measures. The programme contributes: through the modern regulatory framework, which reflects the global trends and recent developments in the field of education; by facilitating access to education and professional training for all; by developing the capacity of institutions and individuals to provide

<sup>15</sup> [https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/1\\_strategia\\_educatia-2020\\_3.pdf](https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/1_strategia_educatia-2020_3.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=336276&lang=1>

<sup>17</sup> <http://lex.justice.md/md/353459/>



quality education, tailored to the needs of each child and, in the long term, through the promotion of an inclusive culture and society.

Like other educational systems in the world, education in Moldova is in a continuous process of updating and adapting to social, economic and technological developments. During the reference period of the Programme, the reform of the educational system was influenced / guided by several large programmes and projects.

The Moldova 2020 Strategy, adopted in 2012, identifies education as one of the 4 critical areas (alongside roads, access to finance and the business environment) and proposes, as a first objective, "the connection of the educational system to the demands of the labour market, in order to increase the productivity of the workforce and to increase the employment rate in economy". In this respect, the efforts are directed towards increasing the relevance of education and training, both in terms of beneficiaries' needs as well as in terms of the demands / expectations of the labour market. Access to education, quality and flexibility of education services are preconditions for improving the preparation of graduates for professional integration. The strategy proposes a set of indicators, whose monitoring was, however, difficult, due to the lack of data at the level of the responsible institution (Ministry of Education Culture and Research - MECR)<sup>18</sup>.

The programme contributes to the effective application of quality standards for primary and secondary educational institutions in terms of the child-friendly school, approved by the Order of the Minister of Education no. 970/2013. They are structured on five dimensions resulting from the concept of the friendly school: (1) health, safety and protection, (2) democratic participation, (3) inclusion, (4) educational efficiency, (5) gender sensitivity. Thus, the standards create the premises for the promotion of defining elements for quality inclusive education: educational institutions provide access to every child, regardless of their nationality, gender, origin and social status, health condition, political or religious affiliation and create optimal conditions for achieving and developing their own potential in the educational process. The rights of the child govern the relationship with the children and guarantee a friendly environment.

The Programme for development of inclusive education supports the achievement of objective set forth by the Moldova 2020 Strategy, by facilitating the access to education and professional training for everybody and by developing the capacity of institutions and teaching staff to adapt the teaching-learning process to the specific of each student. Efforts have been made to perform the initial and life-long training of teachers and to develop pilot experiences in accessible and inclusive schools, in particular with the help of international organizations such as UNICEF or the World Bank and civil society organizations such as Lumos, CCF Moldova, Kultur Kontakt, Keystone, Partnerships for Every Child, Pas cu Pas (Step by Step), FCPS etc. The development of the competences of the teaching staff was targeted both in the initial training (a university course<sup>19</sup> entitled "Inclusive education" was developed and approved as part of the core curriculum for the psycho-pedagogical module for the training of all teachers in pre-university education), as well as in the long-life training, through numerous courses and seminars, but also through developed methodological resources.

Without being directly connected as component parts of the Programme, the projects of the civil society organizations were guided by the key messages, priorities and action plans of the MECR, the principles and values transmitted with a view to developing inclusive education in Moldova. The programme had the merit of placing inclusive education as a

---

<sup>18</sup> The annual monitoring reports indicate the lack of adequate statistical data.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.wearelumos.org/moldova/media-centre/news/inclusive-education-course/>

priority on the decision-makers' agenda and at the same time influencing the priorities of donor institutions.

### Internal coherence - alignment between the objectives of the Programme and its general goals, as well as between activities, outputs and expected impact

Generally, the implementation activities foreseen (also those included in the 2019-2020 Action Plan) are relevant and, to a large extent, sufficient to reach all specific objectives. Although reconstructing the logic of intervention of the Programme was a challenge, the evaluation finds an adequate coherence between the specific objectives set by the programme and its general objectives. Partly in line with the implementation stages of the programme and the needs generated by the deinstitutionalization process, the activities implemented before 2018 focused on creating the public policy, regulatory, institutional and methodological framework and increasing the capacity of schools to work with children with SEN, especially with those with disabilities. The other target groups mentioned by the programme have been little or not at all taken into consideration when planning activities and their importance in implementation is of recent occurrence. The evaluation has identified relevant activities that would be useful to support the process of inclusive education development, but these activities were either not completed at all or not completed in time.

#### *Analysis of the logic of intervention based on the documents of the programme*

The programme starts with a very comprehensive analysis of the situation of children in the Republic of Moldova and of the condition of the educational system and presents four categories of problems and needs identified in the pre-university educational system in 2011 in terms of its level and its capacity of integrating all children: regulatory, institutional, pedagogical and socio-economic factors.

According to Government Decision (GD) no. 523/2011 on the approval of the Programme for development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova 2011-2020, *4 general objectives of the programme* have been established in order to solve the problems and meet the needs. The 4 general objectives were planned to be achieved by reaching 20 specific objectives. External funds, as well as budget funds, are mobilized to solve the problems and reach the objectives. Within the Action Plans, elements of institutional construction and training are planned for the professionals in the educational system that will become in turn resources for the subsequent implementation of the programme. The programme describes the process of implementation at central level and at the level of educational institution, proposing a series of specific or general activities, carried out at central level or at the level of educational institutions, in order to reach the objectives and also a series of services provided at central, district and community level. Overall, 48 activities and services are listed in the programme documents, these being subsequently implemented in real actions within the 3-year action plans. The action plans set forth output indicators (immediate achievement), which represent clear clues to the type of expected output, directly connected to the planned sub-actions. Regarding the impact of the programme, it is anticipated through changes (results) at pedagogical, psychological, social and economic level, but the action plans do not include the medium term results (outcomes) likely to complete the relationship, specific to the theory of change, between the actions taken that lead to outputs (outputs) and their longer-term impact.

*On the other hand, both the table below and table 10.1 in Annex 10 are depicting an exercise of reconstructing the logic of intervention of the programme performed by the expert team for this evaluation. After reconstruction, the logic of the intervention has an average internal coherence. Although there is coherence between the activities planned in the programme and the actions in the action plan, the same coherence between the specific and operational objectives (in the action plans) cannot be observed. Although the latter cover a large number of actions, they are practically wider than the specific objectives, which does not support a well-planned, systematic implementation of the programme. Theoretically, the operational objectives should be narrower and more practical than the specific objectives, but in the case of the programme subject to evaluation they are not narrower, although they are quite specific.*

*Thus, the logic of intervention of the programme is not explicit and considerable effort was required for its reconstruction. The general and specific objectives, as well as the actions and services are listed in the programme, without presenting how each action or service contributes to the achievement of every specific objective. The lack of this explicit link in the programme can lead to the situation where no activities are planned at all or not enough activities are planned to meet some of the objectives. Moreover, at the level of action plans, the connection between the objectives expressed in the plan, considered as operational objectives, and the specific objectives worked out in the programme, is not explicitly achieved. And in this case, there is a risk of not planning enough actions to achieve some of the objectives. It is also unclear to what extent the activities and services in the programme are implemented, as long as they do not have a correspondent in the actions and sub-actions in the action plans. Particularly within the programme, but also in the action plans from a first phase, the actions and the sub-actions are not always expressed in a tangible manner<sup>20</sup>.*

#### ***Analysis of the logic of intervention after its reconstruction***

On the other hand, the reconstruction of the logic of intervention of the programme presented in table 10.1 of Annex 10 was accomplished by placing (a) each specific objective, (b) the objectives in the action plans (operational objectives), (c) the activities and services mentioned in the programme (d) the actions and sub-actions in the action plans in a systematic way, in direct connection with each other. After completing this exercise, it can be noticed *that activities and / or actions and sub-actions have been planned in order to achieve all the specific objectives*. However, in order to meet the objective of developing/ implementing the flexible evaluation system, no tangible action was planned in the action plans in terms of inclusive education (but one action was provided in the Programme). On the other hand, although the issue of reorganization of the special educational system and especially of the residential institutions subordinated to the MECR is not referred to as such in the programme, it is noted that this objective has been carefully considered in the action plans, leading to the fulfilment of all the related objectives of reorganizing the school system, especially the residential institutions subordinated to the MECR.

*Therefore, on the whole, implementation activities were envisaged for the fulfilment of all the specific objectives, with one exception, namely the objective regarding the flexible evaluation system<sup>21</sup>. Also, the outputs, directly related to the sub-actions planned in the action plans, are relevant for the specific objectives.*

---

<sup>20</sup> As confirmed by the intermediate evaluation of the Strategy „Education 2020”.

<sup>21</sup> Although no actions needed to achieve this objective were provided, especially in the 2015-2017 Action Plan, measures have been taken to this end. Specific regulations and procedures have been established regarding the evaluation of children with SEN at the completion of the education levels, by means of the Guideline on the specific procedures for examining students with SEN, MoECR

*As for the coherence of the long-term results / the expected impact on objectives, the expected pedagogical and psychological changes are directly and obviously related to the achievement of the general and specific objectives, as shown in the table below and their coherence with these goals is unquestionable.*

However, one cannot find mentioned in the objectives and therefore there are no planned actions that will lead to some social changes such as reducing / eliminating violence in educational institutions and in society and alleviating the phenomenon of population migration. These are formulated as expected results in Chapter XI of the Programme but they can only be achieved indirectly in the absence of dedicated activities.

On the other hand, a number of social changes cannot be achieved under the programme, given that a few marginalized or disadvantaged groups of children and young people have been dealt with in a limited and indirect way or have not been targeted at all (as shown in Table 2 below). As such, the following expected changes cannot be achieved solely through the implementation of the programme, due to the restricted target groups directly aimed at by the programme: equal and universal access to education; the observance of the child's rights and the principle of equal opportunities; ensuring the educational and social inclusion of all persons.

*Also, in addition to making the use of resources more efficient in the educational system, all other expected economic changes (according to paragraph 86 of the Programme) can only be achieved indirectly, as they are not immediately related to the achievement of the objectives set by the programme and for which there were activities, services, actions and sub-actions planned as shown in table 10.1 in Annex 10. As such, it can be said that the expected impact of the programme is excessively ambitious, especially in the time frame taken into consideration.*

*Table 1. Correlation between the general and specific objectives of the Inclusive Education Development Programme in the Republic of Moldova 2011-2020*

GENERAL OBJECTIVE	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE	EXPECTED RESULTS
<b>1. Promoting inclusive education as an educational priority in order to avoid exclusion and / or marginalization of children, young people and adults, in line with regulatory factors</b>	1. drafting and promoting policies for implementing inclusive education in the national educational system	Changing the ways of approaching children, the relationships between the participants in education, the attitude of teachers Ensuring the efficient use of resources in the educational system
	2. developing cross-sector strategies to promote inclusive education	
	3. reviewing and developing the appropriate financing mechanisms	
	4. monitoring the process of implementing inclusive practices in the educational system	
<b>2. Developing the regulatory and didactic-methodical framework for promoting and ensuring the</b>	5. harmonization of the national regulatory framework in terms of ensuring access to education and equal opportunities in the field of education for every child, young person, adult	
	6. developing and implementing a system of standards for inclusive education	

---

Order no.156 / 2015 and Specific regulations and conditions on the final evaluation and certification of students with SEN, MoECR Order no.311 / 2015.

<b>implementation of inclusive education, complying with regulatory, pedagogical and institutional factors</b>	7. strengthening institutional capacities and developing support services for excluded and / or marginalized children	
	8. reorganizing general / special education, improving the network of institutions for inclusive education	
	9. reconsidering the mechanisms for identifying, evaluating, determining special educational needs, diagnosing the psycho-physical development of children, young people and adults in terms of adjusting education programs and forms	
	10. developing the modalities and forms of integration in line with children's possibilities and with the special educational needs	Changes in educational technologies, inclusive curricula, teaching aids adapted and correlated with the child's development level and different learning needs
	11. adjusting/implementing the inclusive curriculum whose main characteristic is flexibility	
	12. developing/ implementing the flexible evaluation system, in terms of inclusive education	Improving the methodologies for evaluating and identifying the special needs of children
<b>3. Establishing a friendly, accessible educational environment capable meeting the special expectations and requirements of the beneficiaries, complying with pedagogical and institutional factors</b>	13. initial and continuous training, in terms of inclusive education, of human resources in the field of education and related fields	Changes aimed at the initial and long-life professional training of teachers
	14. early identification of special educational needs and ensuring appropriate qualified intervention	Changes aimed at identifying and intervening early in the case of children running the risk of school dropout
	15. individual approach, according to the own pace of development of each child (initial evaluation, individual educational plan, continuous monitoring and evaluation, final evaluation)	Changes referring to services for different categories of children with special educational needs Strengthening the dignity and self-respect of those participating in the educational process Developing skills for school and professional socialization Enhancing educational opportunities and opportunities for children, young people and adults throughout their lives
	16. applying educational, information, communication technologies and equipment suitable for the field of inclusive education	Changes aimed at transforming the school environment into a safe and friendly, stimulating and appropriate one for the child's development, endowed with the necessary special equipment
	17. ensuring the accessibility of educational and training institutions by applying assistive techniques and technological innovation	
<b>4. Establishing an inclusive culture and society, in line with socio-economic factors</b>	18. capacity building and increasing the responsibility of families and the community	Involving parents and the community in the educational process
	19. setting up partnerships between government structures, local authorities, civil society and family, to ensure inclusion in the community and access to the integrated social services system	Assertive communication between parents, children and teachers



	20. raising the awareness of the society and building public opinion on inclusive education	Increasing the community interest in inclusive education Raising awareness and building positive social perception of differences Alleviating stereotypes, prejudices and exclusionary, marginalization practices,
--	---	--

### *Analysis of the target groups covered by the programme*

In terms of target groups, according to GD no. 523/2011, the beneficiaries of the programme are all children, regardless of the material status of the family, place of residence, ethnicity, spoken language, gender, age, political or religious affiliation, health condition, learning characteristics, criminal history, in other words, children, young people and adults who, for various reasons, are marginalized or excluded in the process of participating in and implementing an educational programme. A number of specific target subgroups are presented within the programme, but the activities do not cover them all. The following table depicts the target subgroups of the programme and the level at which each target subgroup is approached by means of the planned activities, services and actions.

*Table 2. Level of target subgroups coverage with activities, actions and services*

Target subgroup of the Inclusive Education Development Programme	Covered by planned activities and actions
<b>orphaned, abandoned children, children deprived of parental care</b>	Indirectly targeted
<b>children from disadvantaged families</b>	Not directly targeted
<b>institutionalized children</b>	Directly targeted
<b>children, young people and adults with disabilities</b>	Directly targeted
<b>homeless children</b>	Not directly targeted
<b>children and young people in conflict with the law</b>	Not directly targeted
<b>children and young people victims of trafficking</b>	Not directly targeted
<b>children and young people victims of violence</b>	Not directly targeted
<b>children and young people who use drugs, alcohol, other toxic substances</b>	Not directly targeted
<b>children infected with HIV / AIDS</b>	Indirectly targeted
<b>children with chronic somatic diseases</b>	Directly targeted
<b>children and young people with mental disorders, behaviour or emotional disturbances, other pathological conditions</b>	Directly targeted
<b>children with learning difficulties and communication difficulties</b>	Directly targeted
<b>gifted children and young people</b>	Not directly targeted
<b>children and young people, victims of labour exploitation</b>	Not directly targeted
<b>children of national minorities, religious or linguistic groups</b>	Not directly targeted
<b>children of refugees or children of internally displaced persons</b>	Not directly targeted

### *Hypotheses, risks and influencing factors*

The programme and action plans do not explicitly include assumptions and risks that underlie or may intervene in the causal relationship between objectives, activities, results and longer-term effects. The evaluation, including case studies, highlighted the following key factors that could be considered in the planning phase:



- political stability that allows the adoption of planned regulatory acts and institutional stability,
- the involvement of the local public authorities in charge with the budgets for education at local level, on whose performance depend the distribution of funds towards inclusive education, the hiring of support teachers, the endowment of schools and resource centres, the provision of the necessary infrastructure, the development of services based on the needs of children with SEN,
- maintaining the commitment to inclusive education, at all levels, on long term, since all the effects planned can be achieved only through long-term intervention,
- inter-institutional cooperation, allowing real access to education. For example, the access of children with disabilities to the school gate must be ensured by services in the social field, by the near space arrangement and public investments, public transport, etc.,
- the interest shown by the parents of children with SEN in reforms and their openness for collaboration,
- the number of children in classes and the overloaded, inflexible curriculum that is not oriented towards the use of each child, young person, adult's potential; textbooks unadjusted to the special educational needs, considered otherwise as elements necessary for the functioning of the general educational system, likely to raise major obstacles to the implementation of the programme of inclusive education,
- the lack of teaching staff and specialised staff, trained at the initial stage, considering the unattractive salaries, as well as the migration of the workforce and the decrease of the workforce in the Republic of Moldova,
- lack of a vision regarding the set of inclusive education services for each educational institution based on the individual needs of integrated children with SEN.

#### *The most relevant activities of the programme*

The evaluation finds that most of the activities implemented have a great relevance for all stakeholders (decision makers, teachers, specialists, and children). Most activities have an interdependence that reinforces their relevance. Thus, the development of the regulatory and methodological framework for inclusive education allows the planning of further interventions at the level of the educational unit. But in educational units, teachers' working load and methods can only be implemented after the training of teachers, the provision of support teachers, the development of infrastructure and the endowment of the resource centres. In addition, none of the activities in schools is sufficient if there is no support from parents, students and teachers, support built through awareness-raising activities. Last but not least, the inclusion of children with SEN would have remained undefined and incomplete, if special and auxiliary schools had not been closed.

#### *Other necessary actions and results*

The interviews conducted at central, district and community level did not show the need for additional activities to those planned in order to meet the objectives set forth. However, the analysis of the programme documents (the programme and the action plans) reveals that the programme was concentrated, in practical terms, almost excessively on the inclusion of children with SEN in education by creating the public policy, regulatory and methodological framework and increasing the capacity of the schools to working with children with SEN and their families. The other target groups mentioned by the programme are very little or not at all taken into account when planning and implementing the activities. These target groups, mentioned by the programme and in relation to whom outcomes are established, but who are not targeted by the activities

presented in the programme include: children without parental care, children of ethnic minorities, migrant children, children from disadvantaged families, homeless children, children who have problems with the law or suffer from addictions, children who are victims of crimes, including trafficking or labour exploitation.

Moreover, due to the programme implementation planning manner, the development of the tools and later the carrying out of practices for inclusive education were first achieved for primary and the secondary education and only later for early education and the vocational and technical sector. Even though when the evaluation was performed these levels of education had already been partially covered by the programme, a second type of children exclusion from the target group has occurred meanwhile, because of their age, corresponding to certain education levels. To put it differently, kindergarten children and those graduating from primary and secondary school could not be integrated in an inclusive education form (with small exceptions represented by some pilot institutions) until recently.

Thus, a series of outputs regarding the methodologies and tools for inclusive education at all levels would have been needed much earlier. Also, the analysis performed at the time of the present evaluation shows the need for a number of methodologies, tools and competences that have not been planned and developed regarding the integration into education of children with the most severe problems and disabilities.

Last but not least, an increased need for reiterating and/or intensifying some of the activities planned has been identified. The 2015-2017 Action Plan aimed at the development of resource centres for inclusive education in 150 schools throughout the country and the hiring of support teachers in 500 schools from a total of 1,345 full-time pre-university units in the Republic of Moldova in the school year 2014/15. The same action plan aimed at training 1,500 managers of educational units, representing practically a 100% coverage of this category of staff, and the training of only 2,500 teachers, out of the total of over 35,000 full-time pre-university units and over 40,000 on the whole.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, in terms of what has been planned so far and of the still existing needs identified by all stakeholders, a series of activities or actions should be carried out with greater intensity, they would be reiterated, better adapted to the target groups that have already benefitted and extended to a larger number of beneficiaries. These activities include:

- training teachers, including support teachers, in a practical way that allows them to apply the knowledge gained in working directly with children with SEN,
- training the management of school units,
- equipping schools (especially the resource centres),
- developing school infrastructure and equipping them with assistive technique for students with sensory disabilities,
- cooperating with specialised departments in the social field, to provide personal assistance service in order to facilitate the access to school for children with severe disabilities,
- intensifying the methodological support, by creating working tools for the implementation of methodologies developed by CRAP and providing additional time for the initial evaluation of the children identified with SEN.

On the other hand, an actor identified by all the parties interviewed and participating in focus groups, but relatively little targeted by the activities under the inclusive education

---

<sup>22</sup> Statistical reference data according to the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova.

programme is represented by the parents. The participants in the educational system: representatives of PAS, of the specialised department and even the teachers admit that a specific way of approaching parents is needed, for promoting inclusive education, both considering the parents of children with SEN (who in some situations must be persuaded not to enrol their children in auxiliary schools), but also considering the parents of children not affected by SEN, who have to change their attitude towards inclusion.

## VI. EFFECTIVENESS - KEY FINDINGS

### *Completeness of the strategic and regulatory framework for inclusive education*

The general opinion of the stakeholders consulted in the evaluation, both at central and local level, public actors and non-governmental organizations, is that the existing legislation in the field of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova is sufficient. Moreover, the existing legislation is in itself one of the main results achieved through the implementation of the Programme, and is a success factor that has contributed decisively to the progress made concerning the inclusion of children with SEN in mass-education schools.<sup>23</sup> As shown in the chapter "Relevance", inclusive education is integrated into multiple strategies and legislative acts<sup>24</sup>, as well as in the Education Code and the "Education 2020" Strategy. *Including a chapter on inclusive education in the Education Code was perceived by the interviewed stakeholders as a revolutionary aspect at that time. Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services specialists mention that the necessary legislation is approved at the school level, and the necessary methodology has been developed lately.*

However, based on the analysed documents and data collected on-site, the evaluation identified a number of changes and additions needed at this time in the legislative framework related to inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova. Some of these changes / additions are taken into account by the Action Plan for 2018-2020 under the Program, hence their relevance.

The changes / additions necessary for the regulatory framework, identified by this evaluation, refer to the regulation of IE financing at the level of early education (by introducing a coefficient for inclusion in their financing formula<sup>25</sup>). Currently, it is not possible to set up resource centres and appoint / hire STS in kindergartens<sup>26</sup>. However, a number of steps have been taken to develop IE at the level of early education<sup>27</sup>, and there

---

<sup>23</sup> Especially regarding the inclusion of children with disabilities, as concluded by the sociological study "INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM", 2018.

<sup>24</sup> See Volume II. Annexes, Effectiveness Section, Annex 1 for a list of the main regulatory acts and methodological documents in the field of inclusive education.

<sup>25</sup> Suggested in the interviews

<sup>26</sup> The case studies show that at LPA level there are no clear instructions for the distribution of funds for inclusive education at preschool level. Presently things are decided at the level of the city hall and the local council. If authorities are not aware of this problem, pre-school children do not have access to the necessary resources. The education code stipulates the right of all children to education, but at the level of early education there is no clear methodology for budgeting and developing services. Thus, in some localities funds were identified, due to the fact that there were people who managed to raise awareness of the city hall and local councilors. For example in Cahul Municipality out of a total of 8 kindergartens, 7 have speech therapists and 5 have psychologist teacher. These positions, like all early education, are budgeted by the state but managed by the LPA.

<sup>27</sup> For example, the Standard Structure and Methodological Notes on the elaboration and implementation of the individualized Educational Plan in the early education institutions,

are many representatives and pre-primary teachers consulted during the evaluation who are familiar with the legal and methodological framework regarding the regulation of IE.

The promotion of inclusive education in technical vocational education was another area not supported by an adequate regulatory and methodological framework<sup>28</sup> although it was targeted, in a generic way by the main strategies and laws in force (as well as by the Programme itself). According to the interviews conducted, recent initiatives (Order no. 1430 as of September 25, 2018, on the approval of the Methodological standards on inclusive education in technical vocational education; piloting, with the support of KulturKontakt, IE models in vocational schools) supplement the regulatory framework and existing methodology and ensure the continuity of the educational progress of the child with SEN from general education institutions to the Technical vocational Education institutions. Changes to the Admission Regulation in the technical vocational education and the Regulation on the certification of graduation in the technical vocational education (according to the interviews conducted) are required.

Better regulation is also required for the inclusion of children with severe / or multiple disabilities (including sensory and visual impairments) who have complex needs and for whom specific regulations are required<sup>29</sup> (according to interviews conducted). Several PAS managers interviewed believe that a new regulatory framework is needed on working with ASD children because the existing methodology does not meet the realities they face: the services are not provided according to the needs, but according to the possibilities.

The IE budgeting model, the cross-sector cooperation and the diversity of inclusive education services are three important areas in which regulatory improvements are needed. As confirmed by this evaluation, the differences between districts / localities regarding the number of children with SEN and their particularities, require a different financing model from the existing one, aligned to the existing individual and specific needs. Children with SEN require integrated interventions (education, social assistance and health) and stronger cooperation is needed between the social, healthcare and educational fields to ensure inclusive education for all children, from any vulnerable category. A number of changes are also needed regarding the PAS Regulation, in order to resize their activity according to the needs of the district, balancing the time spent for evaluation / re-evaluation activities and individual assistance of the children with SEN in the localities where there are no speech therapists, psychologist teachers, psychologists. It is also necessary to clarify the role of PAS in the case of children with SEN in vocational and technical education (according to the interviews conducted).

---

elaborated by LUMOS and approved by the Ministry of Education Order no. 1780 as of 03.12.2018, the introduction of IE modules in the initial educational programmes, piloting exercises such as "Piloting inclusive education models in pre-school educational institutions in the Republic of Moldova" implemented by AO Keystone Moldova, THE REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF EARLY EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA (2018) which reiterates the importance of inclusive education, and in some districts (Nisporeni) they have stated the approval of the IE methodology for early educational institutions, etc. Initiatives for the implementation of inclusive education have been implemented with the support of UNICEF since 2002, when the "Education for All" programme began and early education has become a national priority. Under the Grant Programme (GP) 2006-2014, 6 rehabilitation centres have been set up in kindergartens, for which transport from home to (pilot) kindergarten is also ensured.

<sup>28</sup> As stated by the "Qualitative study on inclusive technical vocational education in the Republic of Moldova", 2018.

<sup>29</sup> KulturKontakt developed between 2015-2017 3 methodological guidelines for practitioners, PAS specialists and for pedagogical universities, focused on the inclusion of children with visual impairments and children with disorders from the spectrum of autism.

Equally important are the legislative changes that will allow the collection and processing of data related to children with SEN, and their transfer between institutions, in order to allow a correct monitoring of the Programme, the early intervention, essential to achieve the objectives set in the shortest time and the proper planning of the necessary resources.

### *The completeness of the methodological and pedagogical framework for the inclusion of all children*

As highlighted in the case studies (included in Annex 7), teachers, support teachers and pre-primary school teachers are mostly familiar with existing guidelines and methodologies, which they consider useful. PAS make an important contribution to the distribution and understanding of the guidelines and methodologies developed, largely, with the support of development partners. Most teachers already know the procedures for enrolment, referral, establishment and work according to the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP)<sup>30</sup> as well as the methodology of working with children with SEN, including in kindergartens (or at least in inclusive kindergartens).

Practitioners interviewed during the evaluation appreciated, for example, the teaching support: "Individualization of the learning process of reading and writing for children with special needs", developed by the Public Association "Verbina" and the methodological standards on home-school education.

However, as evidenced by the sociological study "Implementation of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova" conducted in 2018 by Alliance of NGOs active in the field of Child and Family Social Protection (ACFSP), the interviews conducted highlight a series of needs for the improvement of IEP, such as simplifying the format, involving specialists in the field of psychology, speech therapy and psycho-pedagogy in the elaboration and the implementation of the IEP in all complex cases, and its transformation into a complete working tool, likely to target not only at the educational progress, but also the development of other skills and abilities for social integration.

In order to ensure the implementation of the inclusive education process, the evaluation identified the need for methodological guidelines for specific disabilities, especially for children with intellectual and sensory disabilities<sup>31</sup>, but also methodological support for ASD children and children with learning difficulties or the need for specific methodologies/therapies (Portage, Mellowtherapy, Makaton, teaching-learning methods through art). In spite of the large number of children of immigrant parents, no methodologies of pedagogical approach were identified in interviews, such methodologies being able to support them in the absence of parents. At the same time, there are requests for elaboration of methodological materials and guides in Russian.

Despite the usefulness of the existing guides and methodological support, most of the interviews or group discussions with teachers and STS revealed the shortage of teaching

---

<sup>30</sup> As confirmed by the sociological study "Implementation of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova", 2018, ACFSP.

<sup>31</sup> At PAS Cahul there are working on adjusting the methodological set of classical speech therapy to the current challenges of the cases of language disorders the specialists face.

aids meant to be used while working with children with SEN<sup>32</sup>, for different subjects or of aids based on more visual and sensory content. A large part of the interviewees report that they procure materials on their own (by purchasing or by printing from the Internet), which makes it difficult to implement the IEP and the adapted curriculum.

### *Adjusting the school environment to the specific needs of children with special educational needs*

Both the qualitative data collected through interviews, focus groups and case studies, as well as the available quantitative data indicate that the institutions of general education, but also of early education and vocational and technical education are to a small extent adapted to the needs of children with SEN, in particularly of children with disabilities. A number of measures have been taken since the beginning of the programme for the improvement thereof. For example, according to the MoECR 2016 Activity Report, in order to rehabilitate the district schools infrastructure and equip them in line with quality standards, a project documentation for the consolidation / renovation of 19 educational institutions was prepared under the World Bank's project "Education Reform in Moldova (PRIM)". A large number of kindergartens have been renovated with the support of the Romanian Government.

*According to the data provided by MoECR, in 2017, only 31.6% of the general educational institutions were equipped with access ramps (388 out of 1227 institutions). This percentage increased in 2018 to 34.5% (421 out of 1218 institutions), 33 units being improved to this end. A much smaller number of units is equipped with an adapted toilet (160 in 2017 and 189 respectively in 2018). In 2017, out of 1411 kindergartens only 131 were equipped with access ramps (0.09%), 32 with adapted toilets, 31 had adapted playgrounds, 91 had spaces adapted for children with physical disabilities / suffering from autistic disorders, such as recreation rooms (group room, separate space, etc.). Only 2 kindergartens were provided with adapted facilities for children with visual impairments, and 5 kindergartens were provided with adapted facilities for children with hearing disabilities. In 2018, the situation improved only in terms of an adapted toilet (71 kindergartens equipped as such). Generally, the situation has improved in kindergartens in terms of spaces adapted for children with disabilities (including Resource Centres for Inclusive Education <sup>33</sup> - from 24 in 2013 to 280 in 2018, representing almost 20% of the total of 1421 kindergartens existing this year), as evidenced by the figure below:*

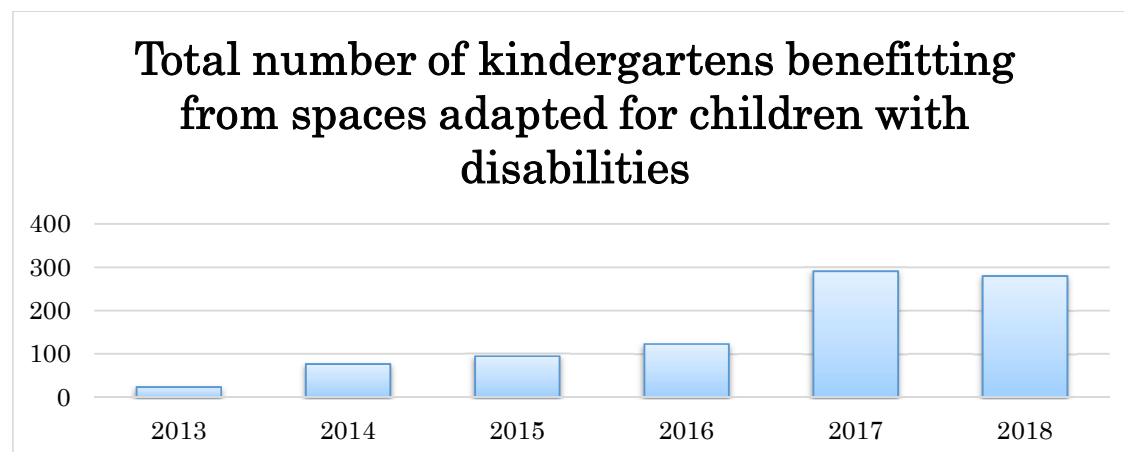
---

<sup>32</sup> For example, the teaching aid "Individualization of the learning process of reading and writing for children with special needs", available at [http://www.verbina.org/media/files/files/suport\\_didactic\\_22\\_2061835.pdf](http://www.verbina.org/media/files/files/suport_didactic_22_2061835.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Evaluators' conclusion based on data presented by MoECR.



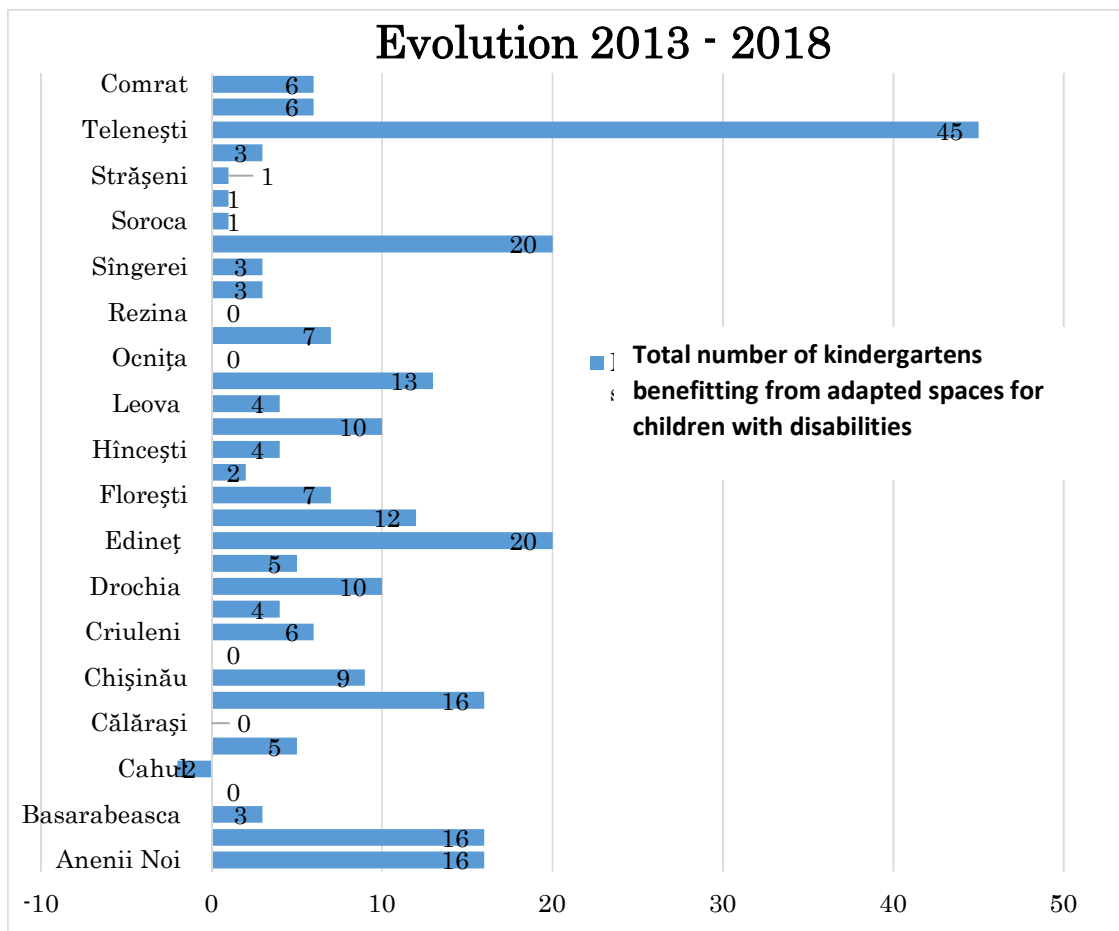
Figure 2. Total number of kindergartens benefitting from spaces adapted for children with disabilities



Source: CRAP data, processed by the authors

From a regional perspective, the largest increase in the number of kindergartens benefitting from adapted spaces is recorded in Telenesti, Soldanesti, and Edinet. Their number has slightly decreased in the Cahul district (as shown in the figure below).

Figure 3. Evolution 2013 - 2018



*Source: CRAP data, processed by the authors*

As for vocational and technical education, "The qualitative study on inclusive technical vocational education in the Republic of Moldova" (2018) highlights the renovation of some study buildings and the provision of some laboratories in vocational schools with appropriate equipment to ensure access for people with physical disabilities (ramps, accessible toilets). However, the reduced accessibility to the physical infrastructure of the institution for the inclusion of young people with locomotor disabilities remains a major barrier in ensuring inclusive education. The application by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research of the "Methodology of external quality evaluation for temporarily authorizing their functioning and accrediting the programmes of studies and the institutions of technical vocational education, higher education and long-life training" is of recent date, therefore, no concrete and complete data are presently available regarding the preparation level of Technical vocational Institutions for ensuring inclusive education.

An analysis of four external evaluation reports produced in 2017 and 2018 by ANACEC for programmes of higher education institutions <sup>34</sup> highlights that the recruitment and admission of students from disadvantaged groups is carried out in strict accordance with the regulatory acts in force, without including specific details related to the admission of

<sup>34</sup> Comrat State-run university, Moldova State-run university, "Ion Creangă" State-run Pedagogical University, "Alecru Russo" State-run university in Balti. For more details see table 11.8 in annex 11.

young people with SEN. The analysis of the access of the students with SEN and of the necessary equipment is more detailed in the case of the institutions where young people with special needs already study (the State-run University of Moldova and the State-run University "Alecă Russo" from Balti) but in some cases there is also a general approach (for example in the case of the State-run Pedagogical University "Ion Creangă", where the report stipulates: "The Decorative Arts study programme does not currently integrate students with locomotor disabilities. Should such students with special needs / conditions be enrolled, the dormitories and the other educational spaces of the faculty itself do not comply with the standards ... "). In general, there are no ramps in the educational building for people with special educational needs but, for example, in Bălți, the evaluated institution was equipped with a ramp (ramp on the first floor, building V) and handrail for students with locomotor problems, visual impairment, and so on. Student dormitories are not generally equipped with access infrastructure, the solution found for students with locomotor disabilities being that of accommodating them on the first floor. The evaluation reports conclude, in general, that the requirements for graduation of the study programme are met and the title awarding, the issuing of the diploma, the supplement to the diploma and the academic certificates is in strict compliance with the regulatory requirements. However, it is unclear to what extent adapted examination methods are prepared or applied for students with SEN.

Students with SEN have been identified in the evaluation reports in two cases, where it seems that there is also a policy of ensuring inclusive education: in the case of the State-run University of Moldova (USM) the support centre "WITHOUT BARRIERS" operates for students with visual impairments, and USARB "Alecă Russo" State-run University of Balti implements ways of promoting inclusive education at the level of the evaluated institution.

The collected evidence identifies a number of cases when schools, mainly those in the rural areas, have opted for the establishment of the resource centre outside the educational institution. Thus, children who use wheelchairs have access only to the centre, not to the school, but they have the opportunity to interact with their colleagues during breaks. A good example in this regard is the Unit for Inclusive Education built with the support of Lumos near the "Petru Ștefănuță" High School of Ialoveni, which is highly equipped for all types of children with SEN, especially those with locomotor disabilities and where they are provided specialised transport as well. It is not clear, however, what manner of cooperation is employed between the IEU and the Resource centres for inclusive education at the aforementioned institution.

### *Resource centres for inclusive education*

The number of Resource Centres for Inclusive Education (RCIE) in general education was relatively constant in 2017-2018<sup>35</sup>, rising from 841 in 2017 to 845 in 2018. Statistical data indicate that RCIE operate in 70% of the general education institutions in Moldova. As we have shown above, their number is much lower in kindergartens (87 in 2018, based on data provided by MoECR and the PAS 2018 General Report). Most RCIE at kindergarten level operate in Balti (20 RCIE), Causeni and Drochia (10 RCIE), Edineț (8) and Ialoveni and Ungheni (6). The districts with the best coverage of primary and secondary general

---

<sup>35</sup> Comrat State-run university, Moldova State-run university, "Ion Creangă" State run Pedagogical University, "Alecă Russo" State-run university in Balti. For more details see table 11.8 in annex 11.

educational institutions with RCIE (see table 11.9 in annex 11) are: Balti and Ialoveni (100%), Glodeni (92%) and Basarabeasca, Cimişlia (90%). On the other hand, there are Chisinau (47%), UTAG (44%), Soroca (51%) Anenii Noi and Rezina (53%), Floresti and Nisporeni (58%). *Although the need for RCIE is also influenced by the existence and distribution of children with SEN, the way in which the coverage rate of institutions with RCIE varies also highlights the uneven pace of implementation of inclusive education, given that in the districts supported by non-governmental organizations, the evolution is more obvious (as it was highlighted in the interviews conducted).*

The case study showed that in general, children with SEN like to go to the Resource Centre and this activity contributes to their integration in school. For example, in Nisporeni, in RCIE they work individually with children with SEN, and it is easier for them to do their lessons. A special schedule is set for the resource centre and STS also work after classes with the children, as mentioned by the teachers interviewed from the Cioresţi gymnasium. In Cahul, the activity of the Resource Centre is highly appreciated in Donici school, in Dm Cantemir school also in the school in Colibaşi village and it is considered to have evolved a lot. The teachers mention that the centre plays a very important role in providing support for the children with SEN. This is also confirmed by the fact that a speech therapist and a psychologist activate in the resource centre of Donici school.

In other districts (for example Drochia), PAS specialists have noted that in schools, children do not come to the centre in the afternoon; In the case of children with severe disabilities, the lack of interest is largely due to the lack of teaching aids adapted to their specific needs (as specified above). The evaluation identified cases where children with SEN are separated and they feel better working with an STS in the Resource Centre than in the classroom and avoid participating in activities outside the classroom. This dynamics highlights that it is necessary that the Centres do not favour the segregation of children with SEN, who, according to the IE principles, should spend more time in the classroom, and go to the Resource Centre only for specific individual activities, recovery, or when their behaviour influence the smooth running of the lesson. There have been identified cases where common children are encouraged to spend time in RCIE together with children with SEN (as confirmed by the study Implementation of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova - sociological study<sup>36</sup>), but this is not a widespread practice which should be encouraged.

The lack of space, but especially of materials, was often mentioned during the field research as the main gap that negatively affects the effectiveness of RCIE, where individual activities cannot be always carried out<sup>37</sup>. The lack of the necessary material base for the resource centres (and the implementation of the IEP) was also mentioned in Chisinau, while in Ialoveni it is considered that RCIE are adequately equipped to ensure the inclusive activities. However, in this district the Resource Centres for Inclusive Education within the school units are not so well equipped as to be able to ensure the same level of inclusive education as that offered within the Unit for Inclusive Education.

### *Support teaching staff and other types of specialists*

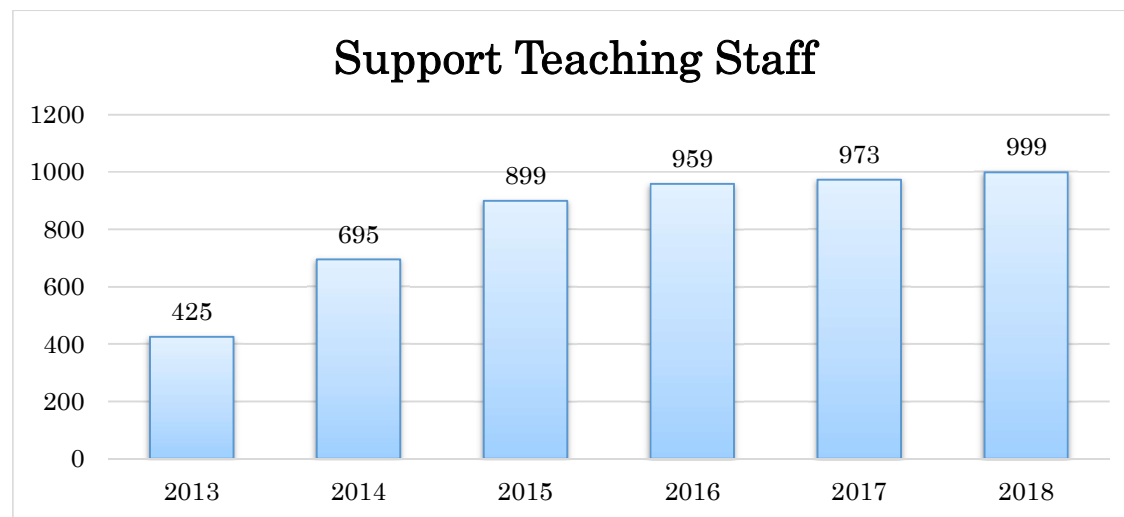
---

<sup>36</sup> Ludmila Malcoci, Inga Sinchevici, Implementation of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova - sociological study, Project "The Civil Society Education Fund 2016-2018 in Moldova" - Chisinau, 2017, p.10.

<sup>37</sup> As evidenced by the sociological studies Implementation of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova (2017) and "Inclusion of children with disabilities in the educational system" (2018).

As shown in the figure below, the number of Support teaching staff in the general education units has steadily increased since 2013 and has stabilized over the last 3 years, indicating that a certain level of maturity of the system has been reached. Compared with the number of schools in the district <sup>38</sup>, in 2018, 88% of the educational units on average benefitted from this inclusive education service, in some districts the ratio being very good (for example Balti and Strășeni - see table 11.9 in annex 11). Compared with the number of RCIE, in all the districts except Răzeși and Rezina there is at least one STS / RCIE and comparing the number of STS with the number of children with SEN (in 2018), one can notice that the ratio is about 9 to 1 (1077 STS for 9503 children with SEN), with districts where this ratio is 5-6 to 1 (for example Ungheni with 58 STS for 307 children with SEN) but also with districts where the situation is less optimal, respectively where the support teaching staff / children ratio with SEN is 16 to 1 (Soldanesti).

Figure 4. Support Teaching Staff



Source: CRAP data, processed by the authors

At kindergarten level, the number of support teaching staff is more than insufficient compared to the total number of children with SEN in the pre-school institutions, for example, in 2018, 113 support teaching staff were active in the 87 RCIE for 1807 children with SEN (based on the generalized PAS Report 2018).

The case study highlights the importance of support teaching staff for the inclusive education of children with SEN. For example, in Nisporeni, according to the teachers from the Ciorești gymnasium, the STS is fully involved and practically ensures the success of children with SEN. In Basarabasca and Drochia the pre-primary teachers greatly appreciate the activity of the support teacher. In other kindergartens in Basarabasca, where there are no RCIE and support teaching staff yet, the pre-school teachers mention that they handle by themselves the children with SEN, including the ones with severe needs, but they fail to carry out individual activities. At the opposite end, there are also situations where the problem of children with SEN is left to the support teacher, and the involvement of teachers is less obvious.

*PAS specialists from Basarabasca emphasize:*

<sup>38</sup> The analysis took into account the total number of full-time or part-time STS.

*Support teaching staff are the ones who see the everyday success of children with SEN. In particular, in the case of children with severe SEN, support teaching staff are everything - invaluable help, assistant and support.*

*An overwhelming majority of interviewees and participants in focus groups, teachers and PAS representatives, consider that the number of support teaching staff is insufficient to achieve inclusive education in an effective manner.* In addition, the low salary and the fact that a support teacher does not represent a separate professional category causes their rather high fluctuation. Not only is it necessary to provide the educational units with support teaching staff according to the regulation in force, but it is also necessary to rethink it in the sense of reducing the number of children, to ensure the quality of support. If children with SEN learn in different classrooms, it is very difficult to provide adequate support to teachers with the help of support teaching staff, especially when the latter work also as teachers in the school. For example, the teachers at Puskin High School appreciate that the support framework service and the work carried out within the RCIE have brought significant added value.

Generally, the support staff have participated in many trainings, initially through the involvement of NGOs in the field, and subsequently through various actions organized by PAS (for example seminars on processes and procedures of framing, elaboration of individual plans, reference to the evaluation and PAS, individualization of the learning process, speech-language assistance, psycho-pedagogical assistance, etc.). *The training activities are considered effective and the practice gained has strengthened the competences of the support staff to a relatively adequate level.* At this point additional basic training is required for less experienced support teaching staff or for those who have recently become part of the system. In order to counteract the fluctuation of staff, it is useful to train a second teacher who can take over the duties of an STS. In addition, support teaching staff need much more applied, practical training, but also specific and in-depth training to work with children with severe disabilities, hearing and sight impairment, ASD (autism spectrum disorders, behavioural disorders). Currently, STS are not prepared to satisfy these challenges. There is a need for a proactive approach of the training process of support teachers, depending on the profile of the children with SEN who attend the school and those who will attend general education, by monitoring their course in the educational process.

The importance of support teaching staff is all the more important as the field research has identified that a limited number of children with SEN who attend school benefit from a personal assistant, and a very limited number of the latter spend time in school with children <sup>39</sup>. According to the evidence collected, the personal assistance service must be viewed not only in terms of social inclusion services, but also in terms of educational inclusion. Thus, in the case of children with severe disabilities, the personal assistant will ensure an inclusive development, as successful as possible. Social assistance services should be directed towards developing the self-care skills of the children with SEN.

At the same time, although measures have been taken in all districts to provide specialised services, the evaluation identified numerous cases where, at local / education unit level, there are no or insufficient speech therapists, psychologists, psychologist teachers or

---

<sup>39</sup> As for specialised services, the head of Social Assistance Directorate Nisporeni mentioned that all 7 children (June 2019) with severe disabilities benefit from the personal assistance service, assistants being the mother or the father of the children.



kinetotherapy specialists. For example, some teachers have stated that a speech therapist is needed at every 2 school and pre-school institutions in the neighbouring localities (in rural areas) and a school psychologist, in each school unit. The lack of specialized services in institutions puts pressure on PAS specialists who have to work individually with a large number of children who need assistance. But they also face the lack of speech therapists and kinetotherapy specialists (according to the interviews conducted and the annual reports of PAS).

### *Teachers in the process of inclusive education*

The number of teachers in primary and secondary education institutions in the Republic of Moldova steadily decreased in 2013-2019, from 32,149 in 2013/2014 school year to 27,657 in 2018/2019 school year (representing an 86% decrease compared to 2013 / 2014). The highest decrease is recorded in Rezina (71%), Cahul, (74%) and also Calarasi (75%)<sup>40</sup>.

The evaluation could not identify complete quantitative data on the training of teachers in the field of inclusive education. Some data are available in different reports prepared by MoECR. For example, in the "Report on the implementation of the Sectoral Strategy for expenses incurred in education in 2017" published by MoECR it is shown that 655 individuals were trained that year (achievement rate 65.5%) out of the 1000 teachers and from the educational system of annual training in the field of inclusive education (the target representing a very small process out of the total number of teachers). The 2015 and 2016 Annual Reports present the training activities carried out with the help of various foundations: FCPS, LUMOS, Keyston, Pas cu Pas (Step by Step), which benefitted 361 teachers, kindergarten managers, specialists in early education within the OLSDE. 180 teachers and managers were trained in 2 mentoring modules (18 32-day seminars) and the training of 750 more teachers and managers from early education institutions was planned to be performed by 2017. In 2016, 4 training modules were held regarding the organization of the educational process and the assistance of children with special educational needs, carried out in the districts of Orhei and Sangerei for 70 teachers and presidents of the multidisciplinary commissions (the provision of the Minister of Education no. 24 as of 02.02.2016).

The evidence collected through interviews and focus groups, however, indicates that many specialists, primary school teachers and teachers, as well as schools management, have been trained in matters of IE. PAS has an important contribution in terms of training and methodological support for all actors involved, including for teachers and school management (for example, in 2018 they attended over 35,000 seminars / trainings, workshops / round tables, individual working sessions and team-based case solving activities<sup>41</sup>). Since the outset of the Programme, inclusive education modules (also at kindergarten level) have been organized<sup>42</sup> both for initial training (within the universities in the field<sup>43</sup>), as well as for long-life training (also organized by the Institute of Education

<sup>40</sup> Analysis based on NBS data - for more details see table 11.10 in annex 11.

<sup>41</sup> According to PAS General Report 2018.

<sup>42</sup> For example, at Ion Creangă State-run Pedagogical University in Chisinau. Course support available at: <http://dir.upsc.md:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/1066/Strategii%20de%20realizare%20a%20EI%20la%20virste%20timpurii%20Suport%20curs.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>43</sup> 10 higher education institutions implement the Inclusive Education course for over 5000 beneficiary students. At the same time, 25 university staff members were trained in a 150-hour

Sciences and universities in Chisinau), benefitting the teachers.

As exemplified above and according to the interviews conducted during the evaluation, including at local level, the largest number of trainings, in different forms, for teaching staff and school management were performed by non-governmental organizations and by PAS. For example, the teachers from Cioresți gymnasium mentioned that PAS regularly asks them about the training needs. According to the teachers but also to OLSDE, the seminars organized by PAS are held locally and are accessible and useful for teachers. There are other training possibilities, for example, all the teaching staff in the same kindergarten benefited from training courses offered by DACIA Youth Resource Centre for one week, in 2017. In 2018 the pre-school teachers participated in training courses delivered by lecturers from the University of Tiraspol based in Chisinau, organized by PAS in the district centre, Nisporeni. Representatives of the kindergarten in Pelinia participated in several training sessions, held locally, nationally in Chisinau and regionally, at Alecu Russo University in Balti.

During the evaluation we also encountered cases where no training was provided (including in Chisinau), the training provided was not sufficient or not very effective. Generally, the courses provided by Schools or Universities are considered too theoretical, they are not adapted to the practical realities, and the trainers cannot offer course attendants practical recommendations with added value. According to the interviews and focus groups, the trainings conducted by government organizations are much closer to the need of teachers and in the pilot schools, which had previously benefitted from support provided by the NGOs, the share of pre-primary teachers who can develop an IEP, can develop a positive environment in the classroom, who can adapt the teaching aids according to the educational needs of the students, can evaluate the results of the children with SEN has increased considerably in the last 2 years it is much higher than the share the teachers in ordinary schools.<sup>44</sup>

In addition to the extension of long-life training courses, in a planned manner, training in specific areas is needed for all teachers involved in inclusive education and in the generalized improvement of its quality, especially in terms of its applicability, so that they are able to work properly with children with language and development disorders, with behavioural disorders, ASD, children with severe psycho- and locomotor disabilities, with hearing and visual impairments<sup>45</sup>. Only some of the teachers feel prepared to work properly with children with disabilities, especially with those with severe disabilities, as confirmed by field research and other studies.<sup>46</sup>

### *Republican Centre and Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services*

In addition to the remarkable results achieved by the implementation of the Programme

---

program in cooperation with LUMOS organization in the implementation of the Inclusive Education module. According to the Activity Report 2018 published by MoECR.

<sup>44</sup> According to the sociological study "Implementation of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova" (2017).

<sup>45</sup> Similar findings were found in the sociological study "Implementation of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova" (2017).

<sup>46</sup> The sociological study "INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM" (2018) found: "In assessing the level of training ascertained by the teachers interviewed, we find that almost half consider themselves as unprepared (41% - rather not prepared 6% - not prepared at all). It is alarming that this share is increasing compared to 2012 (34% - rather unprepared, 7% - not prepared at all)."

from a regulatory and methodological perspective, the evaluation also makes significant progress in terms of increasing the number of institutions and specialists necessary for the implementation of IE in the Republic of Moldova. The Republican Centre and Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services are a reference point in this context for all the actors involved.

With the approval of the Government Decision no. 732 as of 16.09.2013, 35 psycho-pedagogical assistance services (PAS) were created in 32 districts of the country, Chisinau and Balti municipalities, and in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia, as well as the Republican Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Centre (CRAP) ) to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in mass-education schools.<sup>47</sup> In the context of the deinstitutionalization process <sup>48</sup>, models of inclusive education had been previously created in different districts, with the support of foreign donors (mainly "Hope", "Partnerships for Every Child", "CCF Moldova", "Lumos", "Woman and Child - Protection and Support", "Keystone "). These initiatives also involved piloting psycho-pedagogical service centres at this level (for example within the model piloted by Lumos, at district level in Ialoveni and Floresti and nationally<sup>49</sup>, or "Keystone" in the period 2010-2014 in 15 localities in the country<sup>50</sup>).

The evaluation ascertains, and also confirms the results of the numerous studies and analyses carried out since 2013<sup>51</sup>, that the number of PAS specialists varies from district to district <sup>52</sup>, without necessarily being aligned with the number and needs of the children identified with SEN in the geographical area covered. The general degree of increasing the number of PAS staff varies (see table 11.13 in annex 11.), for example in 2018, from 15 children / PAS member in Taraclia, 17 children / PAS member in Dubăsari, 21 in Basarabeasca, Donduseni, to 108 in Chisinau, about 66 in Ialoveni, 65 in Briceni and Orhei, 60 in Causeni and so on, well above the average of 40 children / PAS member. Of course, the needs of children with SEN vary, and this factor needs to be taken into account in sizing PAS staff (to the extent possible), in partnership with the Local public administrations that can supplement PAS funding from the state budget. The case studies revealed great differences from district to district in this regard. For example:

- In Nisporeni (41.4 children assignment degree), according to PAS 207 children with SEN were registered in 2018, of whom a large majority (175 children) with learning difficulties, 23 with a mental/intellectual retardation/disability / severe learning difficulties, 8 with physical / neuromotor disabilities, 1 with emotional and behavioral disorders and no children with language disorders, hearing and visual impairments.
- In Drochia (34.4 children assignment degree) 235 children with SEN were registered, of whom 113 children with disabilities (42 children with a severe degree of disability, 53 with an increased degree, and 18 with a moderate degree of disability).

---

<sup>47</sup> <http://lex.justice.md/md/349661/>

<sup>48</sup> The deinstitutionalization process started in the Republic of Moldova in 2007 as a result of the approval of the *National Strategy and Action Plan on the reform of the residential child care system for the years 2007-2012* (Government Decision no. 784 of 09.07.2007).

<sup>49</sup> As stated in the study "EXISTING EXPERIENCES IN THE FIELD OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL", 2015, conducted by Lumos

<sup>50</sup> Idem.

<sup>51</sup> Including the PAS Monitoring / Evaluation Report for 2014, published in 2015.

<sup>52</sup> The effective limit for PAS was set at 10 units by GD 732.

- In Chisinau (108.3 children assignment degree), 758 Children with SEN were registered, of whom 174 children with disabilities (114 children with a severe degree of disability, 51 with an increased degree, and 9 with a moderate degree of disability). Almost 500 of them have learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural disorders.
- In Ialoveni (66 children assignment degree), 330 children with SEN were registered, of whom 94 are children with disabilities (57 children with a severe degree of disability, 29 with an increased degree, and 8 with a moderate degree of disability). Out of these, 223 children with SEN have learning difficulties.
- In Cahul (52.5 children assignment degree), 368 children with SEN were registered, of whom 105 with disabilities (54 children with a severe degree of disability, 32 with an increased degree, and 19 with a moderate degree of disability). Out of these, 296 children with SEN have learning difficulties.
- In Basarabeasca (21 children assignment degree), 109 children with SEN were registered, of whom 48 with disabilities (20 children with a severe degree of disability, 21 with an increased degree, and 7 with a moderate degree of disability). Out of these, 70 children with SEN have learning difficulties.

Thus, as identified in the case study, in several districts the PAS staff is under-sized in relation to the number of children with SEN, but also compared to the number of school and preschool institutions in the district<sup>53</sup>, that PAS serves. For example, at Hincești district level, it was decided that the PAS team should include 1 teacher, 1 psychologist teacher, 1 psychologist, 1 speech therapist and 1 head of department. The number of PAS staff is under-sized in relation to the number of school and pre-school institutions they are assigned to (44 school institutions and 45 pre-school institutions).

*The high children assignment degree for PAS is a challenge in terms of providing services to school units, but also to parents, in identifying children with SEN, evaluating and re-evaluating them, in implementing IEP, in providing services directly to the child (considering the lack of specialized services in the district) but also in terms of monitoring the general quantitative and qualitative progress registered in implementing inclusive education at district level. At this level (management / monitoring) it is necessary to clarify the role of PAS and to work with the Education Directorates<sup>54</sup>.*

However, the evidence collected shows that PAS have succeeded in becoming an important partner of educational institutions, a reference institution in working with children with disabilities and facing various other difficulties. In general, the teachers interviewed

---

<sup>53</sup> This aspect has been admitted for some time, and highlighted in the Generalized Report of PAS, drafted for 2014: "Although the Regulation on the operation of the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services provides the same number of personnel units that PAS has, there are big differences in the number of institutions of education (schools and kindergartens) that each PAS is in charge with. Thus, a large responsibility belongs to the following PAS institutions: Chisinau (over 300 educational institutions) and Orhei, Cahul, Floresti, Soroca, Ungheni, UTAG (over 100 educational institutions). More effort is also necessary in case of PAS Hincesti (98 institutions), Falesti (94 institutions), Edinet and Singerei (89 institutions), Riscani (80 institutions). For the other PAS institutions the number seems to be optimal (between 45-75 institutions), and the most advantageous ones are PAS from small districts, such as Basarabeasca (22 institutions), Dubasari (26 institutions), Taraclia (37 institutions)."

<sup>54</sup> As specified by the study "The Mechanism for Financing Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova", 2015, elaborated by Expert Grup.

appreciate the support provided by PAS in the whole process of identifying and evaluating children as well as in the implementation of the IEP.

Since their establishment, PAS staff has received a large number of trainings from government organizations <sup>55</sup> who work in the field of inclusive education, as well as from CRAP. Together with the practical experience gained in recent years, these have contributed decisively to the capacity of the institution. The exchanges of experience between PAS, organized as early as their establishment, have contributed, in their turn, to the strengthening of this capacity. However, these have not been achieved systematically, with a view to "knowledge management" throughout the system.

The case study highlighted numerous actions performed by PAS to ensure the inclusive education of children with SEN in mass-education, as well as taking on new tasks for this purpose. The PAS staff make efforts to explain to the parents of the children identified with SEN, through personal visits in the community, why it is important to identify some deficiencies of the child's development at an early stage. Where appropriate, specialists also go in the community to explain why the child needs assistance. PAS also support the Courts of Justice when they need psycho-pedagogical specialists.

The transfer of competences to PAS on identifying children with disabilities has been successful in recent years. Thus, the degree of the child's disability is decided after the completion of form 5<sup>56</sup>, elaborated by PAS specialists and thus, with this document, the parent goes to the National Council for Disability and Work Capacity Determination, structure subordinated to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection. In order to extend the degree of disability, parents ask PAS to issue the necessary documents. In this way PAS can have a more complete record on this category of children with SEN and can ensure their right to education in the necessary level. In this context PAS Ialoveni together with the General Directorate of Education and with various NGOs have extended another type of assistance at district level, namely home schooling, which currently benefits 8 children from the district. PAS together with its partners have developed the curriculum by combining and exclusion (modified curriculum) and reduced the objectives of the old curriculum, so that each child learns what he needs and according to the learning ability of each one (individualized curriculum). Currently, they are also working on optimizing this type of assistance, by increasing the number of classes attended. At PAS Cahul they are working on adjusting the methodological set of classical speech therapy to the current challenges faced in cases of language disorders. In the last years the attention of PAS has been focused on types of children with SEN other than those with disabilities, they have been working more with kindergartens to identify children with SEN early, have contributed to ensuring the transition of children with SEN to vocational schools or other types of higher education institutions, and to providing specialized services directly to the child.

*In this context, PAS representatives mentioned that it is necessary to channel more efforts to implement inclusion on a cross-sector basis. The result of this cooperation should be materialized in a clear mechanism for determining the inclusive process for children with severe disabilities (identification of the disability, referral to services, clear assignments*

---

<sup>55</sup> Including from UNICEF. In 2014-2015, UNICEF supported CRAP to train all PAS staff. Thus, approximately 238 PAS specialists have received an average of 10-day training.

<sup>56</sup> The form contains data on the child's development, the services they benefit from, the conditions of training / education / rehabilitation and other circumstances - in the case of the children registered in PAS records.

*of services in terms of child care). On cross-sector level, data on severe disabilities are not exchanged, because physicians do not provide the information by referring to the law on the protection of personal data.<sup>57</sup>*

However, according to the interviews conducted, PAS offer a number of services but within the limits of their capacity, and among them there are not necessarily the specialized services that children with severe disabilities need. It is important to reiterate that, in addition to continuing the guiding activities, teachers and support staff need PAS support in the development of standardized teaching aids for all subjects being taught (including test sets) aligned to the specific needs of each group of children with SEN as well as specialized support / applied on particular cases.

Given the needs of teachers and the need for inclusive education to be implemented in a comprehensive and of quality manner, PAS staff still need training. The interviews highlighted the need for improving some knowledge in specific fields, in an applied manner. For example, psychologists want to get used to new working techniques (such as the road home technique), and specialized training is needed in working with children with autism (for example, using the Makaton method<sup>58</sup>), with Williams syndrome (where PAS members had to self-train) or with behaviour disorders. PAS specialists believe that further training is needed in the field of severe, multiple disabilities, hearing disabilities, pre-school education.

*At this stage of the Programme implementation, both at the level of educational units (especially in general education) and at PAS level, a sufficient level of knowledge has been reached that will allow, progressively, the consolidation of the system of ensuring inclusive education. This process should consider providing a greater number of individualized services to children with SEN at school and community level so that PAS can focus on supporting and training the teachers and support staff, the specialists involved, as well as on providing quality of such activities and on planning and monitoring the necessary actions (in cooperation with the Directorates for Education. Such an evolution is possible provided that the necessary specialized services are available at the local level, ensuring (financially) the continuation in all districts of the general training at school and kindergarten level, of the specialized training both at educational unit level and at PAS level as well as cross-sector cooperation especially with child protection social services.*

The Republican Centre for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance (CRAP) is, through its management attributions,” the supreme institution in relation to IE”<sup>59</sup>. To a very large extent, PAS, but also the development partners consulted during the evaluation, highly appreciate the support offered by CRAP in handling the most difficult problems but also the training provided by it. More support is expected from CRAP regarding the provision of models and the assistance needed to fill in all the necessary documents for each child. Desk-based research, but also the interviews conducted, highlighted, however, the difficulties encountered by CRAP, especially due to the insufficient human resources,

---

<sup>57</sup> As confirmed by numerous interviews at central and local level and analyses conducted with UNICEF support.

<sup>58</sup> Makaton is a unique language programme that offers a structured, multimodal approach to teaching communication, language and literature skills to people with communication and learning difficulties (source: [www.makaton.org](http://www.makaton.org)).

<sup>59</sup> As mentioned also by the study "The Mechanism for Financing Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova", 2015, elaborated by Expert Group.



which disrupts the coordination activity of PAS and prevents the provision of support for IE at all educational levels.

*Factors likely to influence positively or negatively the development of inclusive education*

The evaluation identified a number of factors that contributed decisively to the development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova. Of these, the most important are:

- Legal framework and dedicated budgeting for inclusive education;
- The involvement of NGOs in the field and the consistent support they have provided throughout the decade in the development and implementation of IE;
- Establishment and activity of PAS, RCIE and the introduction of the support teaching staff position in the educational institutions where children with SEN are integrated;
- Improved cooperation between OLSDE, PAS and the Local Public Administration in the development of support services for inclusive education, also at kindergarten level, and through the development and implementation of strategic plans for the development of inclusive education and other cross-sector mechanisms, such as the Cross-sector Coordinating Committee (structure which includes specialists from medicine, police, social assistance, education), mobile teams, multidisciplinary teams (formed at the city hall level) <sup>60</sup>, the Coordination Committee for the development of inclusive education<sup>61</sup>;
- Increased awareness of the role of inclusion in the child's education, among parents and professionals and the skills acquired by the latter, including the Interdisciplinary Methodical Commissions (IMC);
- Existence of specialized services (psychologist, speech therapist, kinetotherapy specialist);
- Existence of certain model educational institutions and IE champions that inspire the process implementation;
- Individualization of the educational process for children with SEN;
- Significant support and contribution from UNICEF Moldova for the educational and social integration of Roma children (for example, in the village of Vulcanesti, Cioreshti township);
- The measures that led to a better record by the PAS of children with disabilities;

The challenges encountered that are considered obstacles to reaching the expected results according to the evidence collected are:

Regulatory factors:

- Lack of the conceptual regulatory framework on the financing of inclusive education at the level of early education;
- Insufficient coherence in the cross-sector cooperation between education-medicine-social protection on topics related to personal assistance, identification and early referral of cases of serious disability cases;
- Lack of mechanisms for collecting and processing valid statistical data on the number and categories of children, young people and adults, currently excluded from the educational system;

Social and economic factors:

---

<sup>60</sup> In Ialoveni.

<sup>61</sup> In Hâncești.

- Insufficient information of parents about the educational opportunities for adolescents and young people regarding vocational education;
- Insufficiency of the allocated budgetary resources - the resources allocated cover only the payment of support teaching staff salaries. There are no sources for materials, for assistive technique, the development of specific services;
- Insufficiently adapted infrastructure in educational institutions: lack of access ramps and wide exits, lack of elevators, adapted toilets, adequate equipment, etc.
- Staff fluctuation due to unfavourable financial working conditions;
- Parental reluctance to accept the evaluation and diagnosis of their children with SEN, can lead to the inability of children to receive specialized services and, thus, to worsen the situation regarding access to an inclusive education.
- Parents' inability to continue at home the support received by the child in school.

#### Pedagogical factors:

- The excessive, less flexible general curriculum that is not oriented towards exploiting the potential of each child, young person, adult;
- Large number of students in classrooms, which do not allow teachers to work properly with children with SEN;
- Lack or insufficiency of psychological, psycho-pedagogical, speech-language services in educational institutions but also the difficulty of ensuring the transport of children with SEN, mainly of those with severe disabilities;
- Differences in relation to the access to and the quality of educational services in rural and urban areas;

#### Institutional factors:

- Insufficiency of additional teaching aids/materials: books, equipment, visual aids, toys, etc.;
- Large number of children in a classroom and of children with SEN;
- Insufficient cooperation between public institutions and social services, between the government and non-governmental sector;
- Poor cooperation between educational institutions at different levels and stages, between general education and special education;
- Insufficient number and low involvement of personal assistants in the educational process;

#### Other factors:

- Low school and kindergarten attendance of Roma children;
- A great amount of time required to fill in the documents. The staff wish to have more time to spend with the children with SEN rather than to fill in the documents,
- Limited resources (guides, other materials) in Russian.

## VII. EFFICIENCY - KEY FINDINGS

### Cost-efficient activities

This section will present the actual budget spent for different types of interventions included in the Programme for development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2011-2020, *from the state budget*. Although the implementation of the Programme was also ensured by large investments from extra-budgetary sources

(through the contribution of numerous NGOs active in the field), the analysis could not be extended to these financial sources due to lack of related data. The efficiency of these expenses is appreciated both in relation to other costs in the field and in relation to the needs expressed by the stakeholders interviewed. To this end, we shall also analyse the financing model by allocating 2% of the funds for education at district level for inclusive education.

Desk-based research, including data made available by the Ministry of Finance, as well as the interviews, focus groups and case studies conducted, allow us to state that, on the whole, interventions for inclusive education have been cost effective, for the budget of the Republic of Moldova. The interviews conducted and the reports studied show that a large number of activities, especially activities performed to increase the capacity of teachers, i.e. trainings, study visits, development of methodologies, were carried out by partners from the civil society, with budget attracted and managed by these partner organizations, with no interventions from the state budget.

The research done on documents, including the implemented action plans and the interviews conducted, as well as the analysis of effectiveness, as presented in the previous chapter, shows that, until 2018 the programme focused extensively on:

- adopting regulatory acts,
- developing the necessary methodological documents,
- institutional development of CRAP and PAS,
- restructuring the residential educational system with special and auxiliary schools,
- piloting inclusive education methodologies in a limited number of pilot schools, where the capacity of socio-educational integration of children with SEN and of children with disabilities in mass-education was developed, where the staff benefited from training and support staffs were provided, support and resource centres were developed.

Among these, the adoption of regulatory acts does not imply an additional budget for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. In the action plans for the implementation of the Programme for the development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova for 2011-2020, such activities as: the development of methodological documents, evaluations necessary to restructure the residential educational system and the piloting of inclusive education in the selected schools, etc. were decided to be financed from external sources, thus generating a high efficiency of the use of budgetary funds, once the partnership principle was developed.

According to the interviews conducted, the overall implementation of the programme - including the closure of residential, special and auxiliary type schools and the socio-educational integration of children in mass- education - should have generated a series of state budget savings, visible in the financial year following the closure of special and auxiliary schools. The specialists interviewed at the level of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research emphasize the need to use the funds saved after the closure of special and auxiliary schools, for developing professionals' capacity, developing materials and providing the general education institutions with technical assistance for the integration of children with specific developmental needs in these schools in an appropriate way specific to inclusive education. On the other hand, the interviews conducted at central level, both at the MoECR and at the Ministry of Finance, showed that these reallocations were not carried out according to expectations.

Two directions can be actually noticed at the level of the Ministry of Finance:

- (a) on the one hand, the budgetary allocation for inclusive education shall amount to 2% of the budget allocated for education/ the district, without any variation generated by the closure of special and auxiliary schools and the savings generated as such and regardless of whether they required, while operating, more or less than 2% of the education budget in the relevant district;
- (b) on the other hand, the interview conducted at the Ministry of Finance shows that once the budget allocation has been reasonably decided, the actual use of funds is decided by the district and local authorities. The Ministry of Finance is not provided with data on budget execution that will allow *accurate identification of expenditures for inclusive education in the total district budget allocations and does not know about other needs in the territory*. They could identify the expenses incurred for support staff and resource centres planned and performed during 2015-2018, the data being transmitted by the Ministry of Finance to the team of evaluators.

Given that the basic rule for financing the educational system in the Republic of Moldova is the standard financing per student, the allocation of 2% of the total district funding for education allocated to inclusive education depends on the total number of students, rather than on the total number of students with SEN or their needs.

The interviews conducted with the representatives of the district and local authorities show that most of the allocation of 2% funds for inclusive education from the total budget for education is used to pay the salaries of support staff and a less percentage (at least in recent years) for the endowment of school resource centres. From this point of view the statistics on the allocated budgets and the budget executions offered by the Ministry of Finance allow the validation of the information from interviews.

On the other hand, the budgets allocated for inclusive education do not include the investments related to renovations, refurbishments or repairs in schools (GB2) (LT3), meant to make them more accessible for children with disabilities. According to the law in force, these expenses must be supported by the general budget granted to educational institutions, so that the achievement of these investments for making educational institutions accessible must be decided by "the competition" on the same budget with other types of investments. As obvious from the interviews conducted, these investments are decided at local level and depend largely on the level of awareness of local authorities and, indirectly, on the organization and activism among parents of children with SEN and non-governmental organizations activating at local level. It is important to emphasize, however, that the interviews conducted locally identified numerous situations when the local authorities invested additionally in the establishment of the resource centres (RCIE) and in the employment of the support teaching staff at kindergarten level and in the renovation and equipping of the PAS headquarters.

However, some of the interviewees pointed out that there are a number of inequities in the distribution of funds for inclusive education, as shown in the annexed table (table 12.1, annex 12), since preschool and vocational and technical education have not have been considered from the beginning in the implementation of the programme for development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova 2011 - 2020.

Thus, while schools receive a financial support per child with SEN from the state budget, kindergartens are exclusively managed by the Local Public Administration and they do not have access to the funds for inclusive education. As such, where authorities are not aware of this problem, pre-school children do not have access to the necessary resources. The Education code stipulates the universal right to education, but at the level of early education there is no clear methodology for budgeting, developing and regulating services.

*On the other hand, it should be noted that the budget allocations and the expenses actually incurred for inclusive education have increased since 2015, as shown by the data provided by the Ministry of Finance for 2015-2018. This tendency is perfectly justified by the fact that the activities for inclusive education have begun to extend from a few pilot schools to a greater coverage of educational units throughout the country, from the elaboration of the norms and the development of instruments to their actual implementation in educational units.*

The comparison below of the unit costs registered in the period 2015-2018 for the inclusion of children with SEN in education compared to other unit costs incurred in the education and child protection system allows us to evaluate in general terms the high efficiency of the programme in terms of costs for the state budget. However, the financing model of inclusive education, according to the evaluation based on case studies, does not lead to the best overall results, generating - as noted in the previous chapter - uneven results. In this context, it is recommended to re-analyse and complete the model.

As presented in the previous chapter, according to statistics from the Ministry of Finance, the number of children with SEN benefitting from inclusive education services decreased on average, from 2015 to 2018.<sup>62</sup> However, the number of STS job positions increased steadily, although slowly, and yet not all of these positions were applied for. Given that the total funds spent (expenses incurred) for inclusive education increased (from 57,861.7 thousand lei (57.86 million) in 2015 to 70,206.8 lei (70.2 million) in 2018), a corresponding increase of average expenses for each child with SEN was registered, i.e. from 5,730 lei in 2015 to 7,060 lei in 2018.

These figures represent average values and it should be noted that the trends noticed at each educational level differ (as shown in the following figure). *While the average costs in secondary education are very similar to the national average presented, and those incurred in upper-secondary education are similar, one can notice that in the case of pre-school education the increase of average costs / child with SEN has been much more noticeable lately, since the piloting of inclusive education in kindergartens has started later.* For preschool education, the differences regarding the lack of funding and the lack of support staff have been less obvious since 2015, the situation being relatively close to the national average at the 2019 allocation.

Primary education benefits from the highest funding / student and the highest number of support teaching staff (lowest average number of children with SEN per support teacher). But on the other hand, primary education is the only level of education where the average cost for each child with SEN has decreased since 2017. This shows that financial allocations for inclusive education have not increased at the same rate as the number of

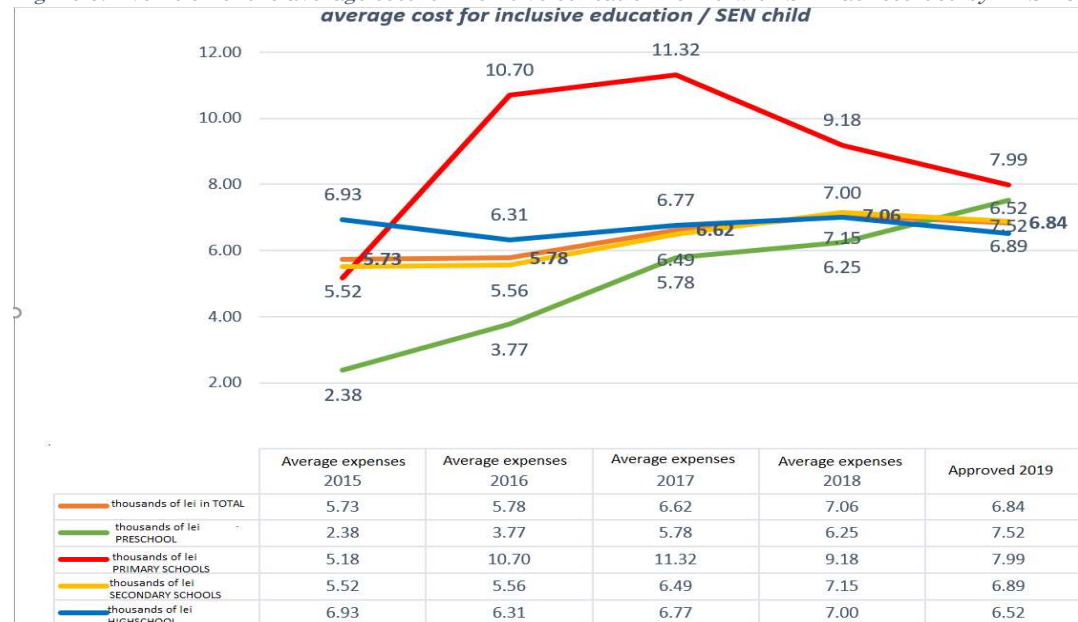
---

<sup>62</sup> The situation is relatively surprising, given that the total number of pupils in schools subject to calculations of the total budgetary allocation of schools increased, in 2018 compared to 2017, by approximately 8,000 pupils.

children in the target group (with SEN) once the special and auxiliary schools started to be closed down and the programme extended to all levels of education. Moreover, the budget allocation for 2019 is below the level of the budget spent (budget execution) in 2018.

*The average values of the costs incurred by the educational system for each child with SEN vary greatly from district to district, as shown in Table 12.2. presented in Annex 12.*

Figure 5. Evolution of the average cost for inclusive education / child with SEN as recorded by PAS / CRAP  
average cost for inclusive education / SEN child



Source: Ministry of Public Finance data processed by authors

In terms of average figures at national level, in order to calculate the unit cost per child with SEN in the educational system in the Republic of Moldova, we have to add the cost of 7,060 lei / child with SEN, financed from the budget allocated for inclusive education (including here support teaching staff, the resource centre and other necessary support elements) to the standard cost / student used in establishing the budget of the educational units for the year 2018 (over 10,445 lei / student). Thus, the total cost for a child with SEN enrolled in mass-education is 17.505 lei / SEN student, including here all the costs for participation in mass-education. The average cost per SEN student is therefore 67.5% higher than the average cost per common student.

*The additional cost of 7,060 lei incurred by the educational system for the integration of each child with SEN in mass-education by means of the inclusive educational system is much lower than the costs incurred in the residential system. According to the Evaluation Report of the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan on the Reform of the Residential Child Care System in Moldova for 2007-2012, the cost for a child in the residential system amounted to 40-50 thousand lei / child / year in 2010, while the costs of childcare in the parental care system could fall by half. In the last years the costs of child care and education in the residential system have amounted to 170 thousand lei / child / year<sup>63</sup>. Consequently, the costs for integrating children with SEN or with disabilities into*

<sup>63</sup> According to interviews conducted.



*mainstream education are between 15% and 20% of the costs generated by the residential system. Therefore, the people interviewed mentioned the use of the savings generated by closing down special and auxiliary schools.*

As for districts, the smallest budget allocation / SEN child was registered in Criuleni district (7,750 lei / SEN child), and the highest budgetary allocation / SEN child was registered in Floresti district (18,400 lei / SEN child) in 2018. Large budget allocations / SEN child were registered in the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia and in the districts of Balti and Orhei.

*However, the district hierarchy is not the same if the number of children with SEN per each support teacher is analysed. This shows that the manner of approaching and dealing with inclusive education differs greatly from district to district, and the allocated funds are spent differently.* For example, in Floresti district we find the smallest number of children per support teacher: 4.83 children / support teacher. Balti is also in the top in terms of availability of support teaching staff. But Orhei and the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Găgăuzia are in the middle of the ranking regarding the number of support teaching staff compared to the children with SEN, although they have relatively large budgetary allocations and expenses / child with SEN.

This situation, together with the data presented above regarding the inequitable distribution of funds between levels of education, allows us to ascertain that the model according to which 2% of the funds for education at district level is allocated for inclusive education does not work optimally. On the one hand, as it can be seen from the analyses of effectiveness and those carried out below, the funds allocated at district level are appreciated as insufficient by most of the stakeholders interviewed. On the other hand, for district authorities there is no clear methodology of allocating budgets for inclusive education, which makes the efficiency of the programme on different components vary from district to district (as we have seen in comparing budgets / child with SEN and children with SEN / support teacher in each district).

The analysis of the degree of budget allocation for inclusive education at the district level, based on the data available for 2017 and 2018, shows that most of the districts allocated to inclusive education over 1.5% of the total budget approved for district education. In some districts, the available data show a slightly higher allocation, of 2%, which reveals marginally more generous allocations for inclusive education than the minimum legal provisions. Two districts, Dudăsari and Ialoveni, allocate less than 1.5% to inclusive education, from the budget meant for education. On the other hand, Chisinau Municipality allocates less than 0.8% to inclusive education, from the budget meant for education.

As for the use of resources, based on the data available for the years 2017 and 2018, it can be appreciated that for expenses related to support teachers, the creation, endowment and maintenance of resource centres for inclusive education or other specific services for inclusive education, budget execution reached a very high level. Almost a third of the districts (10 districts) spent on aspects related to inclusive education, including infrastructure and facilities that serve both education units as a whole and resource centres, more than the budget allocated exclusively to inclusive education.

Table 3. Use of resources by district

	Overall budgets and expenses for inclusive education/district	Granted in 2017 from the IE budget EI (thousand lei)	% granted in 2017 from the overall education budget/district	Executed on average in 2017 (thousand lei)	% budget execution in 2017	Granted in 2018 from the IE budget (thousand lei)	granted in 2018 from the overall education budget/district	Executed on average in 2018 (thousand lei)	% budget execution in 2018
1	Anenii Noi	1.656,5	1,69	1.522,30	91,90	1.974,3	1,89	1.703,90	86,30
2	Bălți	2.715,5	1,90	3.637,00	133,93	2.992,1	1,84	4.389,90	146,72
3	Basarabeasca	486,1	1,72	486,10	100,00	528,5	1,74	528,50	100,00
4	Briceni	1.833,3	1,95	1.325,30	72,29	1.617	1,78	1.570,40	97,12
5	Cahul	2.564,8	1,74	2.564,80	100,00	2.637,6	1,53	2.904,40	110,12
6	Călărași	1567	1,85	1.485,30	94,79	1.696,1	1,84	1.510,80	89,07
7	Cantemir	1.233,5	1,50	1.233,50	100,00	1.308,2	1,45	1.308,20	100,00
8	Căușeni	1.990,8	1,79	2.511,70	126,17	1.894,8	1,50	2.580,80	136,20
9	Chișinău	7.352,6	0,76	4.758,70	64,72	8.320,1	0,77	4.147,30	49,85
10	Cimișlia	1.146,2	1,71	1.179,10	102,87	1.244,9	1,78	1.244,90	100,00
11	Criuleni	1.645,8	1,76	1.294,94	78,68	1.806,9	1,73	1.471,10	81,42
12	Dondușeni	801,1	1,72	801,10	100,00	859,1	1,71	859,10	100,00
13	Drochia	1.715	1,79	2.570,60	149,89	1.851	4,52	2.794,10	150,95
14	Dudăsari	504,7	0,98	536,80	106,36	546,1	0,53	564,30	103,33
15	Edineț	1.746,3	1,87	2.141,20	122,61	1.720,5	1,74	2.052,20	119,28
16	Fălești	1.952,2	1,83	1.812,60	92,85	2.193,6	1,86	2.129,60	97,08
17	Florești	1.805,6	1,63	3.329,90	184,42	1.908,4	1,57	4.453,20	233,35
18	Glodeni	1.216,4	1,67	1.140,60	93,77	1.315,9	1,92	1.298,10	98,65
19	Hîncești	2.735,1	1,89	2.137,50	78,15	2.887,2	1,90	2.734,10	94,70
20	Ialoveni	1.589,9	1,33	2.288,90	143,97	1568	1,19	1.568,00	100,00
21	Leova	1.143,2	1,82	1.027,30	89,86	1263	1,82	1.387,80	109,88
22	Nisporeni	1.409,6	1,67	1.186,70	84,19	1.532,1	1,63	1.435,60	93,70
23	Ocnîța	1.030,9	1,71	955,20	92,66	1.099,5	1,79	1.072,50	97,54
24	Orhei	2.912,6	2,03	2.380,30	81,72	3.393,1	2,22	3.343,00	98,52
25	Rezina	1.188,3	1,85	994,10	83,66	1.307,5	1,90	1.023,50	78,28
26	Rîșcani	1.419,4	1,77	1.881,30	132,54	1.542,2	1,79	2.083,70	135,11
27	Sîngerei	2.336,6	2,02	2.363,20	101,14	2.402,9	1,99	2.402,90	100,00
28	Soroca	1.952,1	1,86	1.868,60	95,72	2.123,7	1,98	2.231,20	105,06
29	Ștefan-Vodă	1.412,3	1,58	1.407,20	99,64	1.470,7	1,63	1.459,90	99,27
30	Strășeni	2.598,5	2,55	2.582,80	99,40	2.073,1	1,86	2.073,10	100,00
31	Soldănești	924,6	1,65	924,60	100,00	1.009	1,67	1.009,00	100,00
32	Taraclia	813,2	1,65	813,20	100,00	909,3	1,63	909,30	100,00
33	Telenești	1.592,3	1,85	1.592,30	100,00	1.712,6	1,92	1.710,80	99,89
34	Ungheni	2.740,6	1,79	3.761,20	137,24	2.987,2	1,49	3.043,90	101,90
35	UTA Găgăuzia	2.974,8	1,63	2.850,20	95,81	3.318,6	2,08	3.207,70	96,66

Source: The Ministry of Public Finances and authors' processing

The data on budget execution analyzed also show, confirming the information from the interviews, that most of the budgets for inclusive education are used for staff-related expenses for the support teachers. In addition, the data show that the budget allocated and spent for the salary of support teachers from the total budget for inclusive education has increased in proportion to the budget allocated and spent for other aspects that support inclusive education. In 2015, only Chisinau Municipality and Floresti and Rezina districts, as well as TAU Gagauzia spent less than half of the budget for inclusive education to pay the support teachers. In 2018, all the districts allocated more than 65% of the expenses for education to the salaries of support teachers and only 8 districts allocated less than 90%. The finding is consistent with the fact that the number of support teachers working with CES children has increased, but budgets have increased much slower than the demand for specialized staff salaries. As such, other necessary aspects, such as investments and endowments, have not been allocated to the same extent for the resource centres and other needs of inclusive education.

*Table 4. Percentage of expenses for the salary of support teachers from the budget for inclusive education*

Percentage allocated for support staff from the overall budget for inclusive education	2015	2016	2017	2018
	77.12%	82.49%	85.74%	90.35%

Source: The Ministry of Public Finances and authors' processing

In this context, within interviews conducted nationally and locally, it was discussed (and generally agreed by the stakeholders) the idea of establishing a cost- for pupils with SEN, adapted with the help of coefficients depending on the specificity of individualized educational needs and the severity of disabilities (in the case of children with disabilities). The action plan related to the Programme for the year 2018-2020 provides for the elaboration of the financing formula per child in early education and general education, as well as for the establishment of the Inclusive Education Fund at district/ municipal level, and this evaluation confirms the need to implement these provided sub-actions.

## **Delays in the implementation of the Programme and in achieving the expected effects**

As mentioned in the introductory part of this evaluation report, in the absence of a monitoring system, the reconstruction of immediate activities and achievements, as well as the moment of their occurrence, was a major challenge. As shown in table 12.4 in annex 12, the evaluation team tried to achieve, based on the available documents and interviews conducted, this reconstruction of the 2015-2017 Action Plan (the only one approved by the government), but the image thus outlined is not clear and complete.

Overall, there is a delay in the implementation of the Programme, compared with the stages proposed (2011 - 2012 Elaboration of the regulatory framework for the development of inclusive education, 2013 - 2016 Piloting the models of inclusive education, 2017 - 2020 Large-scale implementation of the Programme). Basically, the first stage was carried out with delays of at least one year (for the main regulatory acts such as the Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Republican Centre for Psycho-pedagogical Assistance, the Regulations on the salaries of the Support teaching staff).

Between 2013-2018, a number of other important acts were adopted that complemented the regulatory framework in force, especially in areas not initially considered such as early education and Vocational and technical education (for example "Regulation on the organization and functioning of the institution of early education - issues specific to the development of inclusive education", approved by Ministry of Education Order no. 254 as of 11.10.2017). The piloting phase of the inclusive education models was broadly achieved on time (or even earlier), given the intense involvement of the NGOs active in the field in the Republic of Moldova<sup>64</sup>. The large-scale implementation of the programme is in delay, although progress has been made for this stage through the activity of PAS implementing IE in each district and municipality. The delays are also caused by the late approval (in 2019) of the *2018-2020 Action Plan* for the Programme.

According to the activity report of MoECR for the year 2018, all the actions provided for the implementation of the Programme for 2017 have been carried out. Therefore, the evaluation finds on the basis of this Report, that the implementation at the level of 2017 has been carried out, to a large extent, during the expected time. Thus, the analysis of the action plans implemented and the interviews conducted, show that before 2018, the programme focused a lot on establishing the legislative and regulatory framework (adopting regulatory acts), on developing the necessary methodology documents, on the institutional development of CRAP and PAS, on restructuring the residential educational system in terms of special and auxiliary schools, as well as on the piloting of inclusive education methodologies in a limited number of schools, where the capacity of socio-educational integration of children with SEN and of children with disabilities in mainstream education has been developed, where staff benefitted of training, the number of support teaching staff increased and resource centres developed.

The training of teachers and CRAP and PAS specialists began early, for some PAS specialists before their formal establishment. According to the annual activity reports of the MoECR, a large number of capacity increasing activities have taken place to ensure the educational inclusion of children and young people with special needs. For example, according to the activity report of the MoECR for 2016, a series of workshops took place, with the participation of representatives from 11 PAS (the provision of the Minister of Education no. 525 as of 04.11.2016) and consultancy activities for about 240 specialists within the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services and OLSDE (provision of the Minister of Education no. 240 as of 02.06.2016 and no. 447 as of 23.09.2016).

Pre-school education was not initially envisaged under the Inclusive Education Development Programme in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2011 - 2020. Only with the elaboration of the action plan for 2015-2017 actions were included for setting up inclusive education services necessary to ensure the educational inclusion of children with special needs within early educational institutions. In this regard, with a delay of at least 3 years compared to the initial planning, between 2015-2017 the regulatory framework was promoted for setting up services of inclusive education in early education institutions, resource centres (RCIE) started operating within 25% of early education institutions, IE training modules were revised and introduced in the initial and long-life training programmes for the managers of early education institutions, as well as for the support teaching staff, support materials for the teachers from early education institutions were prepared.

---

<sup>64</sup> As presented in the study "Experiences in the field of inclusive education at national level". Summary prepared by A. O. "Lumos Foundation Moldova", 2015.

*As for the obtained effects, as analysed in the chapter "Effectiveness", when this evaluation was performed, i.e. the last but one year of the implementation of the programme, no objective was fully achieved, so delays still exist on all levels. However, it must be reiterated that a number of objectives were ambitious for the time frame and for the resources provided.*

An analysis of the objectives of the Action Plan for 2015-2017 (the only one approved at the governmental level), in conjunction with the analysis of effectiveness above, shows that the objectives were not performed on time, therefore the expected effects were not reached according to the planning. The objective of *ensuring equal opportunities for quality education for every child, young person, adult, at all levels and cycles of the educational system* has not yet been materialized (as presented below, in the chapter "Coverage"). However, a number of activities have been carried out, such as:

- strengthening the national regulatory framework for ensuring access to education and equal opportunities in the field of education for every child, young person, adult;
- adjusting the regulatory framework for inclusive education services and structures for children and young people with special educational needs;
- establishing the system of structures, institutions necessary to ensure access to education of all categories of children and young people with special educational needs;

To achieve the objective of *building an inclusive culture and society in order to include children and young people with special educational needs in the community*, many more activities are needed, including communication and dissemination. This goal is the most ambitious compared to the time frame available.

The objective considering the *socio-educational reintegration of the children in the residential type institutions, in order to reduce, by 2017, the number of children placed in these institutions by 40% and the reorganization of at least 25% of the residential type educational institutions* was achieved during the period of time available. This was accomplished by reorganizing the special educational system (80% of the institutions in the special educational system were reorganized), as well as by connecting the forms of organization of education for children and young people with disabilities to their special educational needs.

Based on the data collected through interviews and the case study, the objective regarding the *elaboration and development of the quality assurance framework in terms of inclusive education* was only partially achieved by 2019, by developing and revising the different standards on time (see table 12.4 in Annex 12). However, developing and implementing quality standards for the services provided in the inclusive educational system is still a necessary step to be taken in the future, to be performed as complementary to the applicable quality standards in the education system in the Republic of Moldova.

As for the *strengthening of institutional capacities at all levels of education to ensure access, relevance and quality for inclusive education*, this was an objective only partially achieved by 2019, by adjusting, to a certain extent, the infrastructure of educational institutions to the needs of children, young people with special needs (the establishment of RCIE, presence of STS, psychologist-teachers in (several) institutions, speech therapists).

For carrying on the implementation of the programme, the Action Plan for 2018-2020 was drafted. At the end of 2018, the analysis of the objections and proposals for the GD draft came to an end. Thus, the GD draft on the approval of the Action Plan for the years 2018-2020 was prepared and sent to the Ministry of Justice for examination and approval.<sup>65</sup> The delayed approval of this Plan has a major negative effect on the implementation of the activities and achievement of the expected effects.

Thus, in 2019 a series of actions planned after 2017 are delayed, such as the development of the methodology for the inclusion of children with disabilities or severe behavioural disorders..

### Efficient use of available resources

The efficient use of the available resources must be analysed in the context of previous findings regarding the effectiveness of the implementation of the Programme and the costs involved. Thus, the use of budgetary resources has generally been efficient, considering their involvement and completion through the significant investments made by NGOs in the field. Equally important, the deinstitutionalization process created significant economies, although these have not been included in the inclusive education budget.

Taking into account that human resources are considered insufficient on several levels (especially in terms of STS, PAS and CRAP staff) and their high level of assigned tasks in relation to the number of children with SEN and the educational institutions in the territory covered (in several districts), the evaluation considers that, they have generally been used effectively. In the context of the widespread lack of teaching aids and facilities within RCIE, the discussion on their effective use is somewhat useless.

However, the evaluation finds that the uniformly adopted approach (by allocating budget for IE without aligning to the specific needs of the district as well as by establishing a standard PAS team) has created some inefficiencies in the districts where the degree of support teachers and PAS staff is below average. At the same time, more efforts could have been made in order to systematically centralise the identified teaching aids that were prepared by the champion schools, teachers, support teachers and PAS and to distribute them on a large scale to be used by the whole system, for the efficient use of material resources.

Considering the financing of inclusive education (2%) of the total budget for education, the interviews conducted both with the representatives of the district authorities and with those of the school institutions highlighted that most of the allocation of 2% of the received funds was distributed to the payment of the salaries for the support teaching staff and to a less extent to the endowment of the school resource centres. However, in some (isolated) cases it was mentioned that some savings were made (mainly because the available positions were not applied for), and thus the saved budget was used for the proper equipping / renovation of the school resource centre but also for covering other needs in the educational system. It should be noted that the budgets allocated for inclusive education do not include the investments for renovations, refurbishments or repairs in schools, in an attempt to make them more accessible for children with disabilities. The interviews confirm that these investments are decided at local level and depend largely on the level of awareness of local authorities and, indirectly, on the degree of organization

---

<sup>65</sup> MoECR, *Activity report for the year 2018, March 1, 2019.*



and activism among parents of children with SEN and non-governmental organizations functioning at local level.

An identified element of efficiency may be the fact that in some localities, where there are 2-3 kindergartens, it was decided that inclusive education should be promoted in a single location, and thus RCIE would be established and properly equipped, so that children with SEN can have access to education in the respective institution (for reasons of economy), the example of Nisporeni district. This approach is all the more efficient where there are no SEN pre-schoolers, or their number is very small. *But their complete identification will raise the needs both of human resources, as well as of the material endowments, implicitly of monetary resources, and of other institutions of early education.*

Regarding the human resources involved, the discussions carried out among teachers and the support teaching staff confirm that their number is limited / under-sized. As for teachers, it can be interpreted positively, in terms of effectiveness, that there are, in many cases, a large number of children in one class (pre-school or school units). However, in terms of effectiveness, neither working with a group / class with more than 30 children, nor the inclusive education of children with SEN can be qualitative, especially in cases where there are more than 1-2 SEN pupils or pupils with severe forms of disabilities in the classroom.

Similarly, the lack of specialists at local / educational level (in the absence of jobs or because of their vacancy), leads to savings or to low costs. Although both the existing specialists and many support teaching staff and teachers, as well as PAS staff, generally make efforts to meet the existing needs, the collected evidence confirms that in the absence of adequate investment in human resources, the effectiveness cannot be achieved.

Another need taken into account by the specialists from the pre-school institutions as well as by the teachers and the support teaching staff from the school institutions, refers to the shortage of teaching aids and materials to use in working with children with SEN. They confirmed that they spend a lot of time in procuring and preparing (adapting) the materials, which makes the work of support teaching staff difficult. A much more effective approach would have been to centralize the existing resources identified by all the actors involved in the implementation of IE, and to make them circulate on a large scale, to all teachers and support teaching staff.

## Managing the implementation of the Inclusive Education Development Programme

The programme defined implementation stages and structures, models of cooperation, types of services, roles of stakeholders, regulatory acts necessary for implementation <sup>66</sup>.

---

<sup>66</sup> The action plan on the implementation of the Inclusive education development programme, the minimum quality Standards for inclusive education, the minimum quality Standards for support services, the Framework regulation of the general education institution with inclusive practices, the Regulation on the evaluation and promotion of children with special educational needs, schooled in general education institutions, the Regulation on complex and multidisciplinary evaluation and diagnosis of child development, the Regulation on the psycho-pedagogical assistance of the child, the Regulation on evaluation and accreditation of the education and child protection services, the Regulation on the activity of support teaching staff, the Regulation on the procurement of services

For its implementation, mechanisms for cross-sector cooperation and for ensuring a participatory management (chapter VIII of GD 523/2011) were provided, among which:

- drawing up an action plan,
- elaboration of studies on inclusive education (policies, stage, initiatives for piloting some models and practices, etc.),
- establishing a consultative body for the national coordination of the development of inclusive education,
- creating cooperation and support networks and integrating the objectives of inclusive education in the current social policies.

Although through the GD 523/2011, art 3, the Ministry of Education was assigned the execution of this regulatory act, the Programme itself (chapter VIII) does not clearly stipulate the institutions responsible for its management. According to Chapter XIV, "Evaluation and Reporting Procedures", the Ministry of Education is responsible for the evaluation process of the programme implementation. Although a number of progress and performance indicators have been established (but without setting the basic values and their targets), the same chapter presents limited information about the monitoring mechanisms of the programme (through progress reports, which relate to a monitoring process, but not to evaluation), and makes general references to its evaluation.

As mentioned in the previous section, 3 action plans were elaborated and the first one (2011-2013) was not adopted. The implementation of the Programme was mainly ensured by GD no. 858/2015 on the approval of the Action Plan for the years 2015-2017 for the implementation of the *Programme for development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova 2011-2020*. The action plan 2018 - 2020 for the implementation of the Programme has been elaborated but it has not been adopted at government level, which raises question regarding the government's position towards the development of inclusive education. The recent Action Plan for 2019-2020 of the government, which includes education, and inclusive education actions, respectively, is a positive development in this context.

In 2013, the position of Superior Consultant for Deinstitutionalization (DI) and Inclusive Education (IE) was established within the MoECR. This specialist continued to record the actions regarding the reorganization / liquidation of the residential institutions that were included in the MoECR Order no. 255 as of April 25, 2012 and Order 1257 as of December 19, 2014; coordinated the elaboration of other regulatory acts necessary to regulate the DI and IE processes; elaborated the MoECR action plans on the inclusive education component; coordinated the elaboration of the methodical materials and coordinated the activity of NGO-partners of the MoECR in the given reform.

Regarding the establishment of a consultative body, it should be mentioned that, when the Programme was developed and adopted, a National Council was in charge with coordinating reform of the residential child care system and the development of inclusive education, created by the Order of the Minister of Education no. 338/2010, in the context of the national Strategy on the reform of the residential child care system for 2007-2012. *According to the data collected through the interview, this council played an important*

---

provided by non-governmental organizations, Regulations on the mechanism of financial assurance of school inclusion.

*role in coordinating the actions between ministries and non-governmental organizations.* Its composition included representatives of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Health, UNICEF, partner NGOs: FCPS Criuleni; Keystone, Partnership for Every Child, CCF Moldova, LUMOS Foundation, "Hope" Centre. *Subsequently, based on the recommendation of the Deputy Prime Minister no. 1137/C-62 as of August 22, 2014, a cross-sector group was created<sup>67</sup> to coordinate the implementation of the programme for development of inclusive education and child de-institutionalization activities, which functions as a thematic group within the National Council for Protection of Child Rights.*

According to the research data, most of the actors interviewed consider that the preparation and coordination of the implementation were insufficient, arguing that there were few action plans and that the activity of the coordination council has decreased in time: *"Good things happened, but not necessarily as a result of good planning. There was no monitoring plan or progress indicators."* (Interview, international organization). *"The coordination of the Programme was better at the beginning, then it decreased. There was a platform for cooperation, the documents were discussed and agreed upon"* (interview, civil society organization). For many civil society organizations, the approach was based on needs. *"We had implemented actions before receiving the resources from the state. For example, we paid 25 support teaching staff for 18 months. When institutionalized children were brought to community schools, we needed their evaluation. We provided support for the training of the support teaching staff, for the elaboration of the individualized plans, for the establishment of PAS, which were to evaluate and assist children with SEN."* (Interview, civil society organization).

In terms of Programme management, the participants in the interviews appreciated the activity of the two bodies<sup>68</sup> of coordination of inclusive education, but they indicated that their activity varied, in time, in terms of relevance and effectiveness. The activity of the significant actors in the field of inclusive education was mainly focused on perceived needs and less guided by a rigorous programme management plan. The respondents stated the role of joint conferences on inclusive education. Although, the lack of coordination and correlation between actors / decision-makers was generally felt, the conferences meant *"a progress in communication and coordination"*.

At the local level, the representatives of the institutions interviewed appreciated the role of the MoECR and its representatives in the development and implementation of the programme. In addition, they mentioned the very important role of civil society organizations (Lumos Foundation, CCF), which made a significant contribution to the development of the capacities (people and institutions) needed to implement inclusive education (often mentioning the Lumos Foundation's role in updating the initial training of teachers and in providing scientific and methodological support, the role of the CCF in ensuring the training of practitioners, etc.); propagating inclusive education; creating models of inclusive education; providing support in de-institutionalizing children, etc.

---

<sup>67</sup> <https://cnpdc.gov.md/ro/grupul-de-lucru/coordonarea-implementarii-programului-de-dezvoltare-educatiei-incluzive-si>

<sup>68</sup> The National Council for the coordination of the reform of the residential child care system and the development of inclusive education and the Group for coordinating the implementation of the programme for development of inclusive education and the activities of children deinstitutionalization

According to the evidence collected and the analysis of the available documents monitoring mechanisms represent a weakness of the Programme.

A monitoring system should allow the continuous collection and examination of data and the examination of inputs, outputs and results of a public intervention and provide the management with correct and complete information for making decisions and ensuring efficiency and effectiveness. The monitoring process helps notice the general *progress* of the implemented activities, ensure the comparison of the performance achieved with the aimed targets, identify problems (in cases where there is a risk that the targets will not be reached) and propose corrective solutions / actions.

A common mistake made by the programme managers is the non-differentiation between three key purposes of the monitoring systems: (1) monitoring itself (which uses a large number of indicators according to the needs), (2) reporting (for which it is used a smaller number of key indicators, which shows the achieved performances); and (3) communication/dissemination (which is based on main indicators, accessible to the general public).

A monitoring system consists of 7 elements: a system of proportional but manageable indicators (1), individual indicators (as part of the system) (2); complete data collection and processing procedures for each indicator (3); intra- and inter-institutional cooperation procedures for data collection (4); qualified human resources within the institutions involved (5); reporting system (6) and approval mechanisms (7). Approval mechanisms primarily involve an institution responsible for managing the programme, which validates and assumes its progress and results (for example, a Monitoring Committee).

In general terms, monitoring is the process that uses the system of indicators to observe the progress made in achieving the objectives of the programme / policy and to adequately inform the reporting and dissemination processes. Monitoring is mainly of three types: financial monitoring (of the financial resources involved, their consumption), progress monitoring (focused on the analysis of the extent to which the planned activities are implemented)

The indicators system shall meet a number of quality criteria: coverage (the extent to which the indicators have the capacity to reflect the objectives and operations / activities of the intervention), balance (the extent to which the indicators system includes a well-distributed mix of indicators (context, input, output, result, impact), the ability to meet, by means of this mix, the need for information of different categories of stakeholders), proportionality (sufficiently complex but not very large indicators systems), but also an adequate management capacity (the extent to which the institutional capacity is sufficient for the collection, measurement, processing, monitoring and communication of indicators.)

In turn, an indicator consists of: label, definition, values (actual values and target values), measuring units. The measurement of the indicator requires a method (data source, data collection / processing procedure) and *clear assignment of responsibilities to the staff*. A properly formulated indicator is at least SMART (specific, measurable, attributable / directly influenced by the implemented programme, relevant / reflecting the proposed activities and objectives and time-framed / it is clear when the proposed targets should be reached in time). A good practice involves making a record for each indicator, containing all the information and related procedures.

A final important aspect, the possibility to select a SMART indicator, especially concerning

the result, is clear evidence of the quality of the assigned objectives.

Generally, the programme monitoring system was poorly designed. As mentioned above, the Programme has set forth a number of indicators, largely of impact or of outcome and less using a SMART formulation (for example "the level of diminishing social exclusion of children in difficulty"), without determining basic values and targets. No other elements of a monitoring system have been identified, as presented above (progress reports have been provided, but no mechanisms for their approval).

The two action plans analysed, although generally relevant for the objectives of the Programme and built on the same structure, do not consistently follow each general or specific objective, so as to highlight the progress in their planning and implementation (as discussed in the chapter "Relevance" ). The plans included a series of indicators, mostly of output (immediate achievement), but in some cases (complex sub-activities) they do not have targets. *A positive aspect is the collection, processing and elaboration of annual general reports by CRAP and PAS of a large volume of qualitative and quantitative data, which could be used in the process of programme monitoring.* However, based on the quantitative data provided by the MoECR, it is necessary to systematically clarify, collect and store a specified number of indicators, which should not vary from year to year.

At programme level, no progress reports were prepared by the MoECR, in line with the provisions of GD 532, to present information regarding at least the activities implemented (from budgetary and extra-budgetary sources). To compensate for their absence, data on the implementation and the annual results of the Programme have been recorded in the annual reports of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. The reports include the actions taken and the results reached, subordinated to the objective of promoting inclusive education but in an incomplete / brief manner.

## VIII.IMPACT - KEY FINDINGS

As concluded by the mid-term evaluation of the Education Development Strategy for the years 2014-2020 "Education 2020", regarding Strategic Direction 1: "Increasing access and participation in lifelong learning and training", the best results were registered for the specific objective 1.6, "Promoting and ensuring inclusive education at educational system level", so as to achieve an annual increase of at least 10% of the rate of access of children with special educational needs to education ") but also in the case of SO 1.7 (" Socio-educational reintegration of children in residential type institutions, which leads to the reduction of the number of children in these institutions by 25%, by 2015, and by 50%, by 2020, and to the transformation, of at least 20%, by 2015 and of at least 25%, by 2020, of residential education institutions in general education institutions")<sup>69</sup>. *Thus, in 2017 the number of children with special educational needs attending traditional schools was twice as high (8415 children) compared to the intermediate target (4550 children), far exceeding the final target (5600 children). The number of children living in residential institutions in 2017 (749 children) decreased from 1700 children in 2012, reaching both the intermediate target of 1275 children and the final target of 850 children.*

---

<sup>69</sup> As in SO 1.9 ("Ensuring favourable conditions for the sociolinguistic integration of representatives of ethnic minorities and migrants").

As the mid-term evaluation also highlights, and as confirmed by the data collected for the purpose of this evaluation, this performance beyond the expected targets is also due to the development partners, who were intensely involved in de-institutionalization and development of IE.

These results were recorded in such context when, on the whole, the Republic of Moldova is facing a decrease in terms of young population as well as school population. The percentage of people between the age of 5<sup>70</sup> and 18 years of the total number of population has steadily dropped from 2011 to 2018 in all districts (see table 13.1 in annex 13). More intense decreases (with more than 20%) have been registered in the districts Cimişlia and Basarabeasca, but also Telenesti, Soroca, Sanguerei. The smallest drops, below 10%, have been registered in Chisinau, Bălţi, Ialoveni and Străşeni. In most districts, there has been registered a slightly more serious drop in terms of female population.

The number of pupils drops in most districts both as an absolute number and as a proportion of the number of inhabitants (on average, at the country level, by 5% in the 2018/2019 school year compared to the 2013/2014 school year). The only exceptions are Chisinau and Balti municipalities (see table 13.2 in annex 13). Important to note is that, if the gross and net enrolment rates in primary and secondary education have dropped since the 2011/2012 school year (both for boys and girls), the enrolment rates in pre-school education have increased by, on average, 8-9%. However, the majority (over 80%) of children enrolled in kindergartens are over 3 years old; the number of children under 3 years old enrolled in kindergartens has increased in the last years in many districts, but especially in districts where this rate was already low (for example Ocnita, Calarasi, Cimişlia) (see table 13.4 in annex 13). Considering that the gross rates in the 2018/2019 school year were around 90% and the net rates around 86% (lower by 4-5% in the secondary school education), and according to the qualitative data collected through interviews and the case study, *the evaluation finds that there is a high possibility of not having identified some children with SEN in schools and kindergartens and not having referred them to PAS, according to the existing procedures. In this context, the importance of an adequate cooperation between social assistance and educational services is emphasized, in order to ensure the participation of all children in the educational process.*

The NBS data also show a drop, in general, by about 10%, in the number of registered children with disabilities of up to 18 years of age (at the end of the year) as a percentage of the total number of children up to this age in several districts (see table 13.2 in annex 13). However, this ratio has shown increases in Causeni, Ungheni, Nisporeni, Hânceşti, Ocnita and Donduseni, as shown in the figure below. As shown in Figures 13.16 and 13.17 in Annex 13, the occurrence of behavioural and mental disorders as well as congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal anomalies has increased in the last 2-3 years. On the other hand, the occurrence of nervous system diseases has decreased. *This dynamics is an additional argument for the resizing, and equipping of PAS, on medium term, according to the existing and future needs at district level, as well as for the need to plan in advance their organization and activities. Considering the results achieved by the*

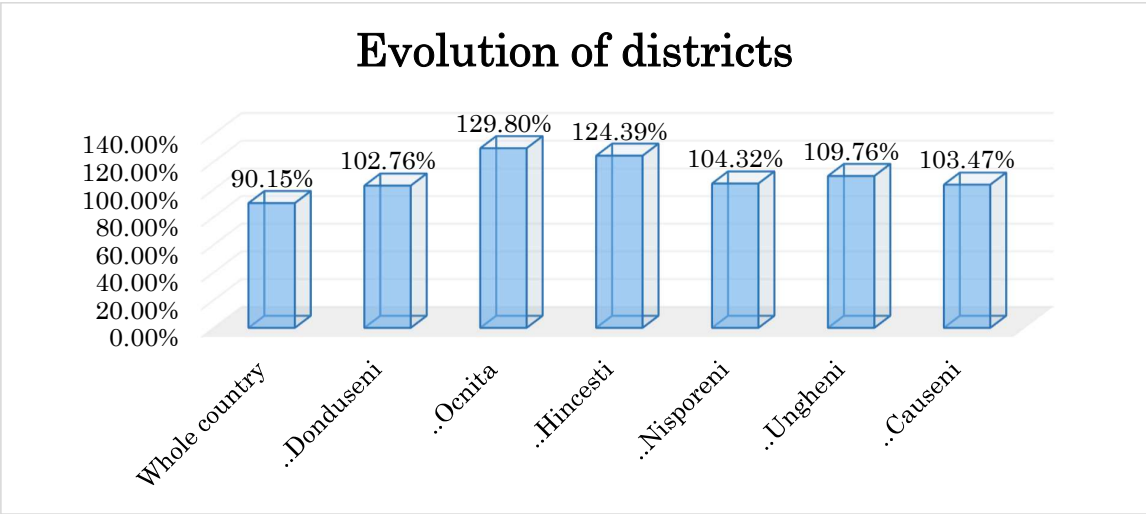
---

<sup>70</sup> The age from which education is compulsory in the Republic of Moldova.



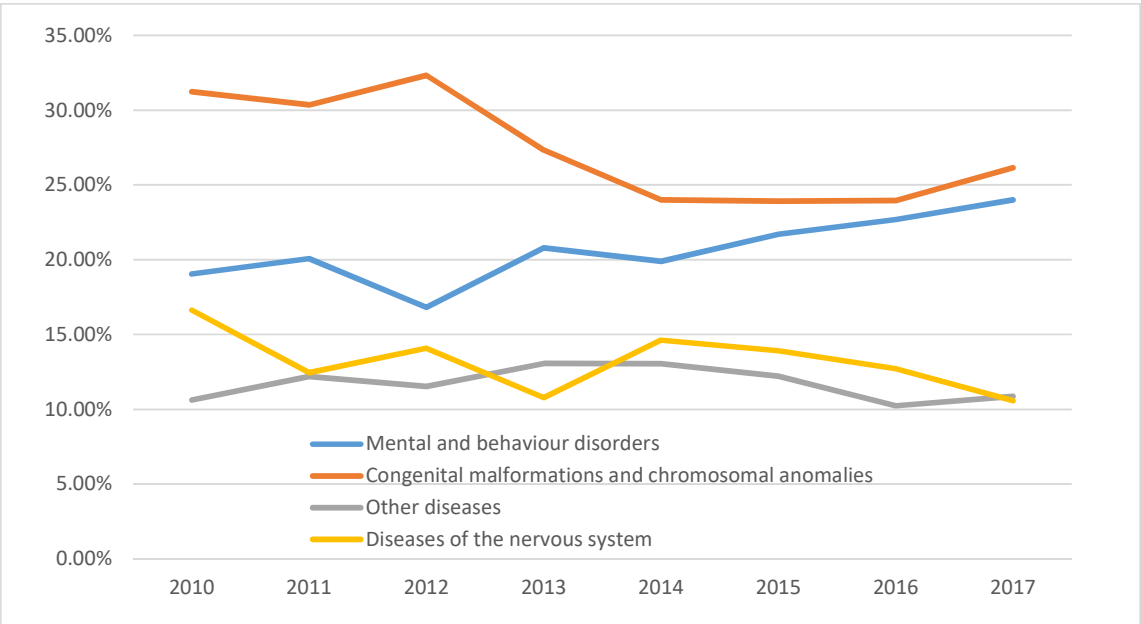
specialists involved in working with children with SEN, these needs may decrease on long term.

Figure 6. Evolution of districts



Source: National Statistical Office data, processed by the authors

Figure 7. Dynamics of behavioural and mental disorders as well as congenital malformations, deformations and chromosomal anomalies

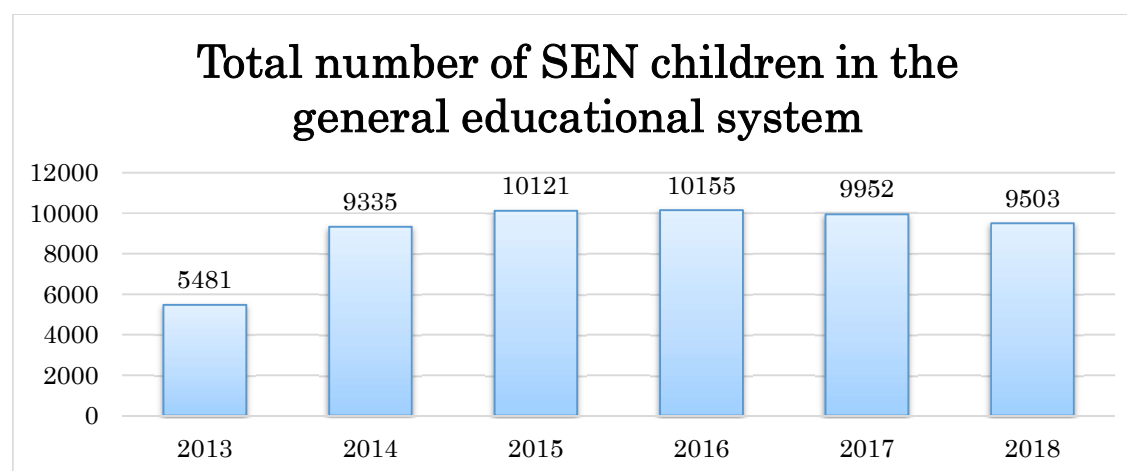


Source: CRAP data, processed by the authors

In this context, the number of children referred to, evaluated and present in PAS records has increased since 2013, as highlighted in the figure below. A similar evolution is

registered for children from early education, in 2017 PAS recording 1,672, and in 2018, 1,807 children with SEN at this educational level (despite legislative and budgetary deficiencies). The decreases recorded in the years 2017 and 2018 regarding children with SEN in general education, according to the interviews conducted and case studies, are due to early intervention, strengthening the capacity of the school and of PAS to identify, evaluate and help children with SEN; a number of children have left this category based on the obtained results<sup>71</sup> or have left the general educational system, and also (to a less extent) some of them have returned to residential or semi-residential institutions (for example day-care centres).

*Figure 8. Total number of Children with SEN in the General Educational system*



*Source: CRAP data, processed by the authors*

## Changes observed among the children with SEN

By means of the case study performed, the evaluation captures positive developments of children with SEN, but also of their ordinary colleagues. The children with SEN have made friends with some of their colleagues, have been supported by them and in many cases, they feel like their equals. The modified curriculum has provided some results in terms of their progress in learning. In Nisporeni the Student Council is an open platform for all students, and their colleagues with SEN, including Roma children, express their views and are listened to, although they are more reserved in terms of participating in different extracurricular activities. At Pushkin High School in Basarabasca, students

<sup>71</sup> As highlighted, for example, in Ialoveni. Currently, according to the information collected during the interview with PAS representatives, since 2018, the number of children with SEN has begun to drop due to early intervention. If, in 2017, PAS database included 463 children with SEN, in 2018, their number was 436. The number also dropped due to the assistance provided by the support teaching staff (whose role is to contribute to the school progress of children). At the time, there are 30 children in the district who are not in the SEN category any longer (by the time they reach the 5th, 6th, and 7th grade, some of them are enrolled in general education schools). Even if they withdrawn from the SEN category, they remain in the Multidisciplinary Commission records (they are still monitored at the school level). Regarding the number of children with SEN who graduated the 9th grade in 2019, at the district level there are 43 children who have studied using an adapted curriculum and 26 graduates who will take the exam (individualized test).

consider that through the integration into the general education of pupils with SEN, they learn to be more tolerant and understand that their peers with SEN are no different, and have similar needs to those of their own. At this high school, children with SEN are involved in extra-curricular activities such as basketball, drawing, thematic concerts, etc. The most important advantages of the programme in the opinion of the students interviewed consist in the fact that children with SEN integrate, find friends and develop in a comfortable environment. Thus, the general opinion of the teachers from Pushkin High School is that children feel better at home than in the residential institution.

Many of the common students consulted during the evaluation consider that there are no differences between them and the children with SEN (including children from other ethnic groups) and that everyone should have access to education. The integration of children with SEN in school has created an opportunity to get to know each other more closely, to remove barriers of communication, to become aware of their own qualities and advantages, but also of their flaws, and to make more efficient use of the opportunities provided. For example, according to the teachers at the Cioești gymnasium, there is no difference between children. The children with SEN, they state, are helped by their classmates. Students from Pelinia High School have started to communicate better with their colleagues with SEN, they defend them when necessary, and really enjoy being helpful.

On the other hand, in other secondary schools (for example in Hâncești) there was a more limited level of awareness regarding children with SEN and their needs, and the reluctance to participate together in classes because they, in the opinion of common children, disrupt the educational process. In other schools, there have been identified situations in which children with SEN are isolated, and they often sit alone at their desks (based on the case study from Cahul district), which shows that the school environment in some educational institutions is not sufficiently open and friendly for children with SEN.

The fact that the level of awareness among common children in terms of particularities, needs and rights needs to be improved also results from a survey<sup>72</sup> conducted among them. Children recognize the main categories of children with SEN (children with motor disabilities and emotional disorders) but the number of those who comprehensively identify them is very small. Being positive, about 50% of respondents younger than 19 years old are able to identify the inclusive education practices in class, but between 31% and 44% have not identified such practices. However, 55-56% of them consider that teachers should work with children with SEN in special centres, and only about 30% see the class as the appropriate environment for this purpose. It is interesting to note that the respondents older than 19 years old share different point of views.

Speaking about the impact of inclusion, pre-primary teachers and STS mention that young children are having fun, playing, helping each other. The ease with which typical children at this school level interact with their colleagues with SEN has been highlighted in many kindergartens. At Bozieni kindergarten, a little girl with locomotor disability attended the kindergarten for 4 years and also benefitted from the services of a speech therapist, thus managing to be enrolled in primary education. In the opinion of pre-primary teachers, she would not have developed as well if she had not attended kindergarten. There have been identified cases of children with SEN (for example in Ialoveni) who graduated the gymnasium or vocational school and are already employed.

---

<sup>72</sup> The survey results are available at: <https://moldova.ureport.in/poll/1260/> but are not statistically representative. The survey has been filled in by 650 - 700 people, mostly children (up to 19 years old) but also young people between 18 and 35 years old.

*The data collected indicate that the inclusion of children with severe disabilities faces challenges mainly due to insufficient training at the level of education institutions and teachers (as highlighted in the chapter "Effectiveness") and to the time required to work with these children.* A major impact in this regard could be the personal assistance service given primarily to children with severe disabilities but which is not sufficient and is less effective in the absence of PA involvement in the educational act (in school). A good example in this regard is the Unit for Inclusive Education from Ialoveni). The facilities of the Unit for Inclusive Education are highly appreciated, so that even children with severe disabilities from other localities can participate in the educational process (according to the recommendations of the IEP) and in the activities organized within it. In the opinion of the individuals approached, these services (for children with severe disabilities) could not be performed within the RCIE because the centres do not have the same level of infrastructure and equipment adaptation as the Unit for Inclusive Education.

On long term, there are concerns about the prospects of children with SEN. It is necessary to achieve a functional collaboration between the educational system, the social assistance system and the employment services system, so that after the children with SEN graduate the school they attended - with the curriculum adapted according to the inclusive education policy - they will not end up as isolated young people and isolated adults. Interviewees expressed concerns about the possibilities of children with SEN to become competitive young adults on a 100% competitive labour market.

### Changes observed among parents

*The case studies show that the attitude of parents of typical children regarding the participation of children with SEN in mass-education has also improved, although their aversion is only partially reduced and still high against children with mental disabilities and those with emotional and behaviour disorders.* If, at the beginning of the process of inclusive education, they were against the enrolment of children with SEN, at this point, the situation has changed and some parents accept the idea that all children have the right to education in the general educational system and they even work together with their children to support the children with SEN.

Among the positive examples in this regard, we mention the kindergarten in Pelinia where the parents of children with SEN have become very active. There is a change in the way people perceive and are aware of the process of inclusion in education. They are now asking for more services. In this context, the pre-primary teacher and the STS constantly communicate and discuss with the parents of the children with SEN. On the other hand, Roma families are still following their traditions of not going to school, because they do not see the purpose of education, even if they have very good conditions in kindergarten, as the PAS specialists from Nisporeni mentioned.

However, in some districts (for example, Chisinau municipality), teachers do not feel the necessary support from parents and believe that there is no partnership between school and family. In many situations, teachers feel parents like come "adversaries" in the inclusion process, either because parents of children with SEN refuse the diagnosis, or because parents of typical children will not accept that their children should study in the same classroom with children with SEN. In many situations, teachers and PAS staff notice a passive attitude of parents that leave the entire education process to the school, without getting involved or communicating with the school. They are relieved that their children

attend kindergarten / school and consider that it is the obligation of teachers and support teaching staff to take care of their children.

In Cahul district, the teachers from Donici school consider that there is still more work to be done until the parents of common students will be able to accept, although, they have understood that the inclusion is legally regulated and it is not just an option. At the same time, parents of children with SEN have become more aware, have shown the courage to talk about the disability of their children and of their needs. In the case of the kindergarten in the village of Colibași, pre-primary teachers noticed that initially parents were very reserved. They did not reveal the problem, they were trying not to talk about the deviations from the normal development of their children. Much work was needed in this direction and the situation has improved with the support and training provided by PAS Cahul. OLSDE representatives noted that parents are becoming more active in involving their children in the inclusion process. This, according to OLSDE, contributes significantly to the elimination of prejudices.

### **Changes among teachers and in the educational system at local level**

The evaluation has found positive changes in the attitude towards the inclusion process, both among teachers, as well as at the school management level and at the OLSDE level. An important contribution in this regard is due to the Inclusive Education District Plans, available in most districts and partly implemented at least. However, the situation differs from district to district and from school to school, depending on the number of children with SEN (in schools with fewer children with SEN and less contact with them a general positive trend has not yet emerged) and the undertaken activities (in the districts and schools supported by NGOs the progress is more obvious, some of them becoming champions of inclusive education). For example, the interviews and focus groups conducted in Chisinau show that the schools where the programme was piloted achieve a very good level of integration of children with SEN; on the other hand, the progress is not visible at the level of the other schools. The interviews conducted indicate that, considering the integration of children with SEN, the situation is better in primary schools and only satisfying in kindergartens. In secondary schools the process is more difficult.

The school management but also the teachers are the ones who set the attitude of acceptance and support shown towards children with SEN. The extent to which a school is friendly to children with SEN depends on their behaviour, which influences the opinion and behaviours of the majority children. For example, in the opinion of the students from Pelinia high school, the headmaster of the school is an example to follow in her attitude towards the children with SEN and similar evidence has been collected in all high schools where inclusive education has become a standard (for example, Puskin, Pro Succes high schools). In Cahul, all children with SEN who applied to be enrolled at Donici school have been integrated. This is why, lately, many parents come to enrol their children with SEN at Donici school, at Pro Succes high school, which have become known for some of the best inclusive practices in the district / municipality.

At the beginning of the process, there was no acceptance from the society, especially parents and teachers, regarding its progress, although it was clear that residential institutions were closing down. At that time, many teachers reacted quite aggressively and redirected the children with SEN to the Resource Centre. Meantime, most schools have understood that they have benefitted from the implementation of inclusive education

(based on the case study from Basarabeasca district). In the same district, in the opinion of PAS specialists, there have been no problems in convincing schools of the need for the inclusion of children with SEN in the last 2 years. They also consider that in kindergartens all pre-primary teachers know the methodological and legislative framework, respectively they can integrate a child. There are no more obstacles to be faced as it used to be 4 years ago.

*The case study also highlights cases in which teachers have a discriminatory attitude towards children with SEN, but the collected opinions indicate a decrease in the level of discrimination by up to 40% (based on interviews conducted) compared to the years in which IE started to be introduced.* In high schools where inclusive education has become a standard, teachers consider that the school environment has changed a lot and the cases of discrimination are isolated. Discrimination has been overcome due to information, raising awareness, initial training and practice gaining and these activities must be continued in order to achieve the desired change in the Programme.

However, the evaluation has found that in several schools and kindergartens, a large part of teachers still finds it difficult to integrate children with SEN in class, and especially children with severe disabilities. These children need permanent attention and in the absence of personal assistance or of a support teacher the classes cannot be run appropriately. On the other hand, teachers do not feel ready to work with children with hearing and visual impairments, because, especially in the first case, they cannot communicate with the children (for example, in the kindergarten in Bozieni, a girl with severe deafness enrolled for attending classes, but the pre-primary teachers and the STS could not understand). In the case of these categories of children with SEN, there are more opinions claiming their education to be performed in the residential environment (based on the interviews and focus groups conducted). For example, in the municipality of Chisinau, given the capacity of PAS (but also because another integration solution has not been identified), the service representatives claim (as well as the parents of these children) the temporary placement (during the week) of children with severe disabilities in special institutions, depending on the type of disability. The information collected confirms that PAS offers a number of services but to the extent of their capacity, and not necessarily the specialized services that children with severe disabilities need. However, the interviews and focus groups organized during the evaluation do not indicate a deterioration of the opinion of the teachers regarding the integration of children with disabilities in school<sup>73</sup>, although the progress is incremental and directly related to improving the awareness on the importance and benefits of IE and the consolidation of knowledge and of the skills of the specialists in the field.

The case studies and the interviews conducted at national level generally show that much more action is still needed to develop an inclusive society likely to offer people real opportunities for social participation and integration in the labour market. In addition to consolidating and implementing inclusive education at national level, awareness-raising

---

<sup>73</sup> As it was revealed by the sociological study "Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in the Educational system" in 2018: "At the same time, 24% of the teachers interviewed in 2018, compared to 31% in 2012, opt for family care of children with disabilities and / or SEN and 24%, compared to 13% in 2012, consider placing these children in institutions as being the most appropriate. "



activities, such as those already achieved and considered by most of the factors involved to be successful, must be continued at national and local level.

## IX. SUSTAINABILITY -KEY FINDINGS

### Sustainability of actions and of the results achieved

To answer this evaluation question, the analysis focuses on the extent to which the conditions for the sustainability of the already implemented actions are ensured:

- whether the stakeholders have the understanding and the ability to continue the activities implemented (both nationally and locally).
- whether human resources are willing to continue to get involved in inclusive education or planning activities, after the completion of the actual actions they were initially involved in (there is a low level of transfer / fluctuation among the staff involved in the implemented activities – of all types, including the development of legislation)
- whether the new knowledge and tools developed in the implemented activities are still to be used after the completion of the programme piloting (training for teachers in the field of inclusive education will continue to be available, etc.).
- whether the relationship built between schools, parents and other community members is on a long term.
- whether, funds will be generally provided (national budget and / or external funds) for the extension of the planned activities for the implementation of the programme.

The interviews and focus groups conducted show that, in general, a large part of the stakeholders have an adequate understanding of the need to continue the inclusive education activities. There is a willingness to continue all the activities and it is confirmed by the increase in training requests both from PAS and from teachers, pre-primary teachers and support teaching staff. The capacity and experience gained so far is sufficient to contribute to the continuation and improvement of inclusive practices in working with children with SEN. The regulatory acts elaborated and adopted as part of the programme for inclusive education offer a stable framework and impose a series of obligations for the continuation of inclusive education actions.

However, presently, the evaluation finds that the irreversibility of the education development process is not entirely certain. Despite the progress made, a critical mass of trained, informed and aware people regarding the inclusive education has not yet been created among professionals involved in all *districts* and especially at society level, *including parents*. Thus, the created legal framework and the methodologies and tools developed can remain largely unapplied unless efforts and investments are made to train teachers and increase the level of information and awareness at society level, especially among parents.

As highlighted in the chapter "Impact", the research conducted for the evaluation purpose shows that among some stakeholders there are still limitations of understanding the concept and a certain reluctance towards the development of inclusive education through the abolition of all special and auxiliary schools and through integrating all children with SEN, including those with behavioural disorders or severe disabilities, into mass-

education schools. This reluctance regarding some children with SEN (especially those with severe disabilities) is explained by the lack of some capacity components. The interviews conducted at central, district and local level showed that one of the biggest problems for the development of inclusive education consists in the identification of actual, functional and effective solutions for the integration of children with severe disabilities. In this context, in Chisinau, for example, the PAS representative reported that an increase in the number of children in the auxiliary schools in Chisinau can be seen in 2018, given that parents withdraw children from mass-education schools and enrol them in special or auxiliary schools, after an one-year experience in which they could not adjust to mass-education, because mass-education schools have not developed the maximum / optimal integration capacity. These examples indicate the insufficiency of inclusive education services in Chisinau.

A risk noted during some of the interviews is related to the evolution of some forms of inclusion that can lead to a hidden form of segregation of children with SEN. In the absence of specialized services for children with severe sensory and mental disabilities in the general school system, specialized Day care Centres are set up, but these tend to replace school for children with SEN. However, mass-education schools and the interaction with typical colleagues are essential conditions for inclusion.

Regarding the sustainability of the training activities, the desire of the people who have benefitted from training to maintain their teaching positions remains a major risk. The practical and long-term use of the competences for inclusive education developed through training depends largely on the quality of the training activities. The effectiveness, the quality and therefore the sustainability of the training actions is higher in the pilot schools within the programme. Even in these cases, teachers still need training on specific aspects (acquiring working techniques for children with autism, for those with visual impairments, hearing, speaking disabilities, but also for children with behavioural disorders) in order to successfully include children with more severe needs in the future. In addition, the existing pedagogical resources, developed at central level by the development partners, are considered very useful and thus contribute to the sustainability of IE actions, but they are insufficient (textbooks adapted for different categories of disabilities are needed - audiobooks, textbooks with bigger letters for those affected by amblyopes, etc.).

*Thus, the Programme for development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova 2011-2020 is sustainable on the whole, but it is not sustainable unconditionally. The training and information activities must be carried on in order to ensure the sustainability of all the other results of the programme.*

From an institutional point of view, strategic plans on inclusive education have been developed at district level and each school prepares a Strategic Management Plan, which also includes aspects related to inclusive education. As such, inclusive practices will continue to be addressed systematically and planned as long as the existing standards remain in force. In this context, the quality of the plans, as well as the extent to which they are truly assumed and implemented, influence the sustainability of the implementation of inclusive education in Moldova. Case studies show progress in several (but not all) districts, but more effort is needed to generalize this situation.

As for the availability of material and financial resources for sustainability, the process of providing funds at local level depends on the local or district budgeting in the District or

Municipal Council (in Chisinau), but also on the other investment projects and on the political decision regarding the investments at district level. The budgeting process at the local level is relatively complicated, because it does not imply clear standards regarding the funds allocated for various components needed for inclusive education, beyond the recommendation to allocate 2% of the total education budget for inclusive education.

Moreover, to ensure the sustainability of inclusion, *independent life skills shall be developed for everyone (including children with SEN who have severe disabilities)*. Also, for a sustainable integration of children with severe disabilities, they should be accompanied by personal assistants, their parents should become more involved, RCIE should be adequately equipped, and for all this, *further funding is needed*. At the same time, there are children still excluded, because there are cases of children with severe disabilities that need to be home-schooled and the mobile team is a social service, not a school, that is why *inter-institutional collaboration is needed for all children to benefit from inclusive education in the future*.

Considering the sustainability of the effects at the level of each student, the greatest risks refer to the fact that the inclusive education programme did not include the vocational and technical education units, until 2018. In these conditions, students with SEN who attended the general school in the system of inclusive education could not enrol in a vocational education unit after graduating the 9th grade. The interviews revealed situations of children who interrupted their inclusive education after graduating secondary school because they did not have conditions for enrolment in high school or vocational education units. The slow development of the component of inclusive education at upper secondary level (high school and vocational and technical education) affects the sustainability of the entire programme, because many children with SEN stay at home after the 9th grade without having a suitable school for further education.

The development of inclusive education manages to ensure the exploitation of the right to education for each child. With the development of inclusive education in kindergartens, vocational schools and universities, as started and as planned to continue, the right to education will be ensured for the entire educational cycle. *But, if the education reforms are not accompanied by the development of policies for employment and development of social economy (e.g. social insertion companies), then a sustainable social inclusion of these children once they become grown-ups will not be successful on long-term*. At the same time, complementary measures are needed regarding the support provided in order to find a job, as well as finding / offering housing for young people who come either from vulnerable families or from special / residential institutions. It is essential that public policies be coordinated for a real and sustainable inclusion both in the education of children with SEN and subsequently in the labour market of adults with disabilities or challenges (former children with SEN).

## The main factors that influence the sustainability of results

Regarding the factors affecting the sustainability, according to the evaluation matrix, the evaluation identified the aspects that affect the sustainability for each of the 20 specific objectives of the programme. These can be found in the table below. The risk factors of sustainability most frequently claimed were:

- the instability and fluctuation of the teaching staff, especially of STS, which leads both to the loss of the positive effects generated by their training, and to the

- decrease in the capacity of the educational institutions to apply the methodologies and regulations for inclusive education,
- insufficiency / lack of necessary specialists: speech therapists, psychologists, etc.
- the lack of material endowments in resource centres, where investment funds, when available, are directed to the more serious needs of the schools for their typical functioning (even without the inclusive education programme)
- a way of budgeting, which does not take into account the needs of the children, but only implies a standard 2% allocation for inclusive education, which covers a minimum package of inclusive education services from the district financing for education

*Table 5. Risks and factors affecting sustainability*

<b>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>RISKS AND FACTORS WHICH AFFECT SUSTAINABILITY</b>
<b>21. drafting and promoting policies for implementing inclusive education in the national educational system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- political and institutional instability, which may lead to the non-implementation of the adopted policies</li> <li>- the incoherence of educational policies (as an effect of political instability)</li> </ul>
<b>22. harmonization of the national regulatory framework in terms of ensuring access to education and equal opportunities in the field of education for each child, young person, adult</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- poor communication and inter-institutional coordination</li> </ul>
<b>23. developing cross-sector strategies for promoting inclusive education</b>	
<b>24. reviewing and elaborating the appropriate financing mechanisms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of budgetary funds in a crisis context</li> <li>- lack of a financing vision based on the individual needs of children with SEN</li> </ul>
<b>25. monitoring the implementation process of inclusive practices in the educational system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of relevant data collected in a systematic manner</li> </ul>
<b>26. developing and implementing a system of standards for inclusive education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of institutional capacity to implement standards at the level of educational institutions, given the limited coverage of training programmes and the lack of investment funds</li> <li>- lack of institutional capacity at district and central level (for example PAS and CRAP) for monitoring the accomplishment of standards by the educational units</li> </ul>
<b>27. strengthening institutional capacities and developing support services for excluded and / or marginalized children</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of funds allocated to continue the endowment of resource centres for inclusive education and payment of support teaching staff</li> <li>- job instability / migration of support teaching staff</li> <li>- lack of a financing system that takes into account the particular needs of children with SEN</li> <li>- lack of specialists (speech therapists, psychologists) in educational institutions and district centres and the impossibility of providing quality services to SEN students according to their needs</li> </ul>
<b>28. reorganization of general / special education, optimization of the network of institutions for inclusive education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low level of informing parents of children with SEN about the process of inclusive education and their fear of integrating them into community schools / kindergartens</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insufficient training of teachers to meet the needs of students with different types of disabilities and psychological barriers in accepting children with SEN</li> <li>- Large number of children with SEN per support teacher and reduced opportunities to meet the educational needs of children with SEN, given that the reorganization of special education is not coordinated with the capacity development of mass-education schools.</li> <li>- reduced school accessibility for children with physical disabilities due to poor roads, lack of transport, lack of access to the school building, etc.</li> </ul>
<p>29. reconsidering the mechanisms for identifying, evaluating, determining special educational needs, diagnosing the psychophysical development of children, young people and adults in terms of adapting the programmes and the forms of education</p> <p>30. early identification of special educational needs and ensuring appropriate qualified intervention</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the limited access of children with SEN to the early education institutions and the insufficient degree of their preparation for school, given that the implementation of inclusive education at the level of early education started later than in the primary and secondary education. In such conditions, the sustainability of mechanisms for identifying and monitoring special needs is affected by the fact that children are not evaluated early.</li> <li>- institutional capacity and the capacity of human resources in the system (educational units and PAS for the implementation of mechanisms for identification, assessment of needs and specialized assistance)</li> <li>- low level of parents' involvement</li> </ul>
<p>31. developing the modalities and forms of integration in line with the possibilities of the children and with the special educational needs</p> <p>32. the individual approach, observing the own pace of development of each child (initial evaluation, individual educational plan, continuous monitoring and evaluation, final evaluation)</p> <p>33. adjusting/implementing the inclusive curriculum whose essential characteristic is flexibility</p> <p>34. developing/implementing the flexible evaluation system, in terms of inclusive education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the quality of the recommended integration methods generates their long-term use</li> <li>- the capacity of teachers and support teaching staff and the opportunities for lifelong learning appropriate for them affect the sustainability (future use) of the developed integration methods / methodologies, including the curriculum elements and the evaluation system</li> <li>- large number of children in classes (also in inclusive classes)</li> <li>- lack of materials in schools</li> <li>- lack of managerial support</li> </ul>
35. initial and long-life training, in terms of inclusive education, of human resources in the field of education and in the related fields	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- job instability / migration of teachers and support teaching staff</li> <li>- unattractive salaries in the educational system</li> <li>- the quality of training, especially the extent to which it includes practical elements, rather than theoretical ones, affects the sustainability of results, i.e. the future use of the developed skills.</li> <li>- lack of managerial support, so that the persons who were trained can apply the competences for inclusive education in their schools</li> </ul>
36. applying educational, information, communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of available funds (in some districts or localities)</li> </ul>

technologies and using equipment suitable for the field of inclusive education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- lack of a financing system that takes into account the actual needs of children with SEN</li> <li>- lack of materials in schools, where the available funds for renovation will be directed to urgent investments, rather than to the development of infrastructure and the purchase of inclusive facilities</li> </ul>
37. making educational and training institutions accessible through the application of assistive techniques and technological innovation	
38. strengthening capacities and raising families and community awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- common students and parents are to a low extent prepared for cases of crisis specific to children with disabilities</li> <li>- high vulnerability of parents with children with SEN due to their limited knowledge in the field, their limited support and limited financial resources</li> </ul>
39. developing partnerships between government structures, local authorities, civil society and family, to ensure inclusion in the community and access to the integrated social services system	
40. raising the society awareness and building the public opinion on inclusive education	

## X. COVERAGE - KEY FINDINGS

As highlighted in the chapter "Relevance", the Programme has developed a limited number of actions aimed at all vulnerable groups of children. PAS staff attention was recently directed to other vulnerable categories (2017-2018), a situation that was determined by their capacity in development from a qualitative point of view, and insufficient from a quantitative point of view.

Thus, the children from the vulnerable group benefit from attention of PAS only if they face development disorders and difficulties within the SEN category, according to UNESCO.<sup>74</sup> If the vulnerable child does not fall into this category, they do not receive support through the inclusive education services (STS and PAS). At the same time, the specialists of PAS Drochia and PAS Cahul mention in the interview that most of the children from the vulnerable category need educational support / assistance in learning mathematics, reading-writing skills, overcoming language disorders. *In the context of the budget available for inclusive education these children fail to benefit from the necessary educational support.* This happens because STS prioritize children with confirmed SEN, who have more severe difficulties. The manager of PAS Cahul mentions that an STS, as a support service in learning mathematics, reading-writing skills must be present in every school as a continuous service of assistance for primary school teachers and teachers actually teaching such subjects. *This approach has a role in preventing the child from being placed from a vulnerable group into the group of children with SEN.* Vulnerable children get into this situation because they started attending school later, they either have parents abroad and they became emotionally vulnerable or they did not receive the necessary service for recovering language disorders on time.

<sup>74</sup> According to UNESCO, there are 8 categories of SEN, including children in the group at risk (disadvantaged environments for growth and development; belonging to minority ethnic groups; immigrant families; homeless children; children suffering from AIDS)



This lack of support services results in a large number of children with learning difficulties (as it is highlighted in the case studies and presented in the chapter "Effectiveness"). At the same time, during the interviews conducted at the local level, there were encountered cases, when the timely intervention of STS for a vulnerable group of children prevented the majority of them from being included in the SEN category. We are referring to the support provided by an STS in S. Sofia kindergarten (Drochia district) for 12 children from vulnerable environments, who were experiencing slight developmental delays, language disorders and so on. Due to the involvement of the STS in working with these children for 1.5-2 years, after graduating kindergarten only 1 out of 12 children was included in the SEN category in the first year of school. The remaining 11 have overcome the critical situation.

Cases that confirm the relationship between the large number of children with SEN (especially with learning difficulties) and children coming from a vulnerable environment are highlighted by teachers in the case studies, elaborated on the basis of individual and group interviews. For example, according to the teachers from Ciorești Gymnasium, Nisporeni district, most parents of children with SEN belong to the category of vulnerable families. They are not interested in the educational process of their children and do not want to come to school. Only a small number of parents are responsive to the demands of the school and children. Teachers believe that social assistance for vulnerable families should be conditional so that they are constraint to cooperate with the school. The teachers from Pelinia / Drochia and Colibași / Cahul mentioned that they face the same difficulty.

The highest number of children with SEN, according to report drawn by CRAP for 2018, is represented by the category of children with learning difficulties (more than half of the total number of children). The next category is that of children with mental/intellectual retardation/ disability/severe learning difficulties (17%). *In the opinion of the specialists, this number would not have been so high if the children had received early assistance in their learning process, in order to prevent learning difficulties, being offered psychological, psycho-pedagogical and speech therapy assistance.*

However, data on *Children belonging to the group at risk (disadvantaged areas for growth and development; belonging to minority ethnic groups; families of immigrants; homeless children; children affected by AIDS)* have been collected by PAS only in recent years. It should be emphasized in this context that 19 out of 35 districts / municipalities reported 0 children in this category in 2018. These include Balti Municipality, the second largest city after Chisinau, Nisporeni district, known by the largest number of Roma children in a single locality (see Vulcanesti village case) (see table 14 in the annexes). *For comparison, according to the data made available by the representatives of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, the total number of children at risk at the end of 2018 was 10,345, of whom 7,461 (72%) aged between 3-15 years.* The same source indicates a total number of children with both parents working abroad of 37,866, of whom 30,038 (79%) aged between 3-15 years. In the case of children with both parents working abroad, the teachers interviewed from Ciorești / Nisporeni county mentioned that these children live with their grandparents, while actually, they are rather left in the care of the school.

## XI. COORDINATION BETWEEN THE ACTORS INVOLVED - KEY FINDINGS

The launch of the Inclusive Education Development Programme in the Republic of Moldova 2011-2020 should be seen as a continuation and consolidation of the actions performed by MoECR and its partners (other Ministries and development partners, NGOs active in the field) in the context of the reform of the residential care system.

### Cooperation at national level

As stated in the chapter "Efficiency", the task of coordinating the development process of IE was assigned in the first phase to the *Council for the coordination of the reform of the residential child care system and the development of inclusive education*, established in 2010<sup>75</sup>, within the MoECR. Representatives of the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, Labour and social protection, Ministry of Justice, Institute of Education Sciences, the Head of Education Directorate, the School Manager, UNICEF and partner NGOs were included in this Council. The activity of the Council was coordinated by the Head of the Directorate of Pre-university Education within the MoECR. The monthly meetings held during the planning and initial stages of the Programme implementation were aimed at promoting the regulatory framework, adjusting the concepts for the common understanding of the Programme at the level of the key actors, developing effective coordination mechanisms; developing mechanism for monitoring and informing on the activities, achievements or challenges for which solutions were identified.

The data collected by means of interviews showed that *the level of coordination of the Programme's implementation has gradually decreased and the collaboration in a formal framework was replaced by an informal one*. The more intense and formalized collaboration from the first stage was justified by the need of creating the implementation framework, the legislative framework and the necessary structures. Later on, *"based on the existing regulations, things have settled down, and now the coordination is more informal"* (interview, civil society organization).

Law 140/2013 and the Cross-sector Cooperation Mechanism<sup>76</sup> imposed the cross-sector cooperation in the field of child protection and the integration of social, educational and health services (art. 20). However, *the actual modalities and the concept of cooperation are still underdeveloped*. This is an objective for the next stage - *"developing a model / protocol on how disability should be addressed by all sectors. Now we still have a fragmented approach which has no continuity"* (interview, civil society organization). Several civil society organizations stated that a *"Coordination Council for inclusive education is needed, to discuss ideas, communicate with ministries and discuss what each actor does."*

---

<sup>75</sup> Order of the Ministry of Education No. 338 as of June 14, 2010.

<sup>76</sup> DECISION No. 270 regarding the approval of the Instructions on the cross-sectoral cooperation mechanism for the identification, evaluation, referral, assistance and monitoring of children victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation and trafficking.  
<http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=352587&lang=1>

A similar opinion is shared by the consulted ministries, according to which cross-sector cooperation is insufficient, especially for children with severe disabilities, in terms of social and medical services. Cooperation with the social sector should focus on identifying solutions for the provision of the personal assistant service (as confirmed in the chapter "Effectiveness", based on conducted interviews and case studies) but also on facilitating early intervention that prevents the child from being included in the SEN category. Cooperation with the social and medical sector is also needed to support the reintegration of children still remaining in the residential system (approximately 1000 children). In these institutions there are children who need a specific package of services, which belong to all three sectors: educational, social and medical.

*Both at the planning stage and during the implementation stage of the Programme, MoECR actively collaborated with the Ministry of Finance.* This collaboration focused on the dimension of budget planning and budgetary coverage of the Programme actions (the Programme design stage) and the normative and regulatory acts (the Programme implementation stage). As a result of this collaboration, an agreement was reached on a financing formula for inclusive education, which ultimately represented 2% of the district budget for education.

## Cooperation at local level

Cross-sector cooperation at local level takes place broadly between MoECR and MHLSP subdivisions. Starting with 2013, at the level of LPA II (districts) the coordination of the activities of implementation of the Programme is carried out by OLSDE through PAS. These subdivisions of the MoECR in turn coordinate and carry out activities at local level in partnership with the Social Assistance Department (subdivision of MHLSP) and other specialized institutions, as well as NGOs in the field of child protection and inclusive education. At the local level I the activities are carried out by: educational institutions, LPAs and community services / specialized institutions and the institutional level includes the Administration, the Intrascchool Multidisciplinary Commission, Teachers, the IEP Team, the form masters and STS.

During the interviews conducted with the key actors at the local level but also with those at the national level, they expressed their views on the coordination and cooperation within the inclusive educational process at the level of:

### I. Consulting

OLSDE, PAS, educational institutions, as well as NGOs are consulted on the draft decisions, action plans, initiatives that are relevant to the field of inclusive education. This statement was made during interviews with OLSDE Cahul, OLSDE Nisporeni and Drochia, A. Donici Primary School Cahul, "Petre Ștefănuță" High School in Ialoveni district.

In order to overcome the barriers encountered in the implementation of the programme, MoECR admits the expertise of national NGOs and individual experts in the field and in partnership, they conduct studies, develop services and training modules for the specialists employed in inclusive education services.

### II. Establishing mechanisms for collaboration / data correlation

*Cross-sector cooperation in the implementation of the Programme at local level is more advanced between the education and social sectors.* According to what the teachers from

the districts of Nisporeni and Basarabeasca mentioned, most of the children with SEN belong to the category of vulnerable families. In such situations, the social worker is in permanent connection with the STS and the educational institution. In general, at the level of LPA I and II, there is a relatively good collaboration between the social and educational fields. The local multidisciplinary teams, as well as the District Commission for the protection of children in difficulty, include representatives of LPA, PAS, educational institutions and SAD. Most of the cases discussed within these structures refer to the situation of children with SEN / children with disabilities. However, there are also specialists from educational institutions who participated in the interviews organized during the research, who mentioned that social services do not cooperate when working with vulnerable families.

We find from the interviews conducted (PAS Cahul, School A. Donici) that, there is a weak cooperation with the medical services. The main reason is that medical workers do not provide data with reference to children with disabilities because they violate the law that provides for the protection of personal data. The manager of PAS Cahul mentioned that much work is being done in the direction of channelling the efforts to implement inclusion on the cross-sector segment. The result of this cooperation should be materialized in a clear mechanism for determining the inclusive progress for children with severe disabilities (disability determination, referral to services, clear attributions of services in terms of child care). Currently, according to PAS manager, physicians nowadays recommend home-schooling (a practice inherited from the Soviet system), while PAS, based on recent regulations, sees another type of inclusion instead. Collecting and recording data on children with severe disabilities by PAS are actions still quite difficult to be done. Still, the physician is the first to report the case of severe disability. The PAS representative considers that the physician should contact the social assistance and the representatives of the educational system in order to inform about the needs of the child with disabilities in order to highlight and to start a complex early intervention, during the child's sensorial development period, but also to prepare the child for a transition to another stage of development.

The manager of SAD Cahul believes that with the development of early intervention services (which started to develop in districts), the problem of early identification and recovery will be solved and the transition of children with disabilities from one age stage to another should be settled.

For the assistance of children with severe disabilities, a clearer algorithm for cross-sector cooperation is needed, as children with severe disabilities need consistent assistance and support, which also involves, in addition to STS (educational service) personal assistants (social service) and specific recovery services. *To meet this need, UNICEF has developed the Guide on the inclusion of children with severe disabilities and children with sensory disabilities in general education units. The guide sets out protocols and procedures to facilitate inclusion. It is to be piloted and disseminated at national level.*

### **III. Planning services based on needs**

Currently the services of inclusive education are being paid out of the 2% of the budget allocated for education in each district. At the stage of Programme development, when the on-site data were not yet known, the identification of a financing formula (2%) was a momentary solution. During the interview with the specialists from the IE services, with the managers of the educational institutions, but also with the representatives of the Ministry of Finance, it was mentioned that there is a need to adjust the cooperation

and coordination of the efforts of budgetary planning of inclusive education, based on the requests of the specialists in the field and on the needs of services. The interviewed representatives of the Ministry of Finance want a cooperation with MoECR focused on budget planning to reach *specific service packages for children with SEN (assistance services for sensory disabilities, emotional disorders, language and communication difficulties)*, considering that the 2% standard package for all districts does not correspond to the current stage of development of the Inclusive Education Programme (as highlighted in the chapter "Efficiency"). In order to strengthen the cooperation and coordination between the two ministries, the interviewed representatives of the Ministry of Finance expressed their willingness and commitment in carrying out training sessions for the representatives of the Education field on topics related to the correct planning and quantification of costs.

## The role of UNICEF in the development of inclusive education

UNICEF has acted as a catalyst for the interventions and efforts to implement the Programme. UNICEF is a strategic partner for education reform, with a clear vision on the process of inclusive education.

UNICEF is the agency that coordinates the Global Partnership for Education in the Republic of Moldova. In this context, the activity of UNICEF during 2013-2017 aimed at supporting the Government and civil society in order to ensure the social inclusion of children and their families and the implementation of the „Education 2020” Strategy. Thus, the programme of cooperation between UNICEF and the Republic of Moldova (2013-2017) has resulted in significant improvements regarding the participation of children in early education, inclusive education, deinstitutionalization or child health care.<sup>77</sup> UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova in promoting and implementing the model of a child-friendly school - a friendly school being the one that ensures a safe, protective and healthy physical and social environment, inclusion, effectiveness, equity and sensitivity to the gender dimension, family involvement and community. A friendly school is one that does not exclude any child, instead it brings them all together at school. It has also supported research in the education and social field through a significant number of studies and analyses, facilitating the knowledge and understanding of the phenomena children may encounter when they found themselves in different vulnerable situations<sup>78</sup>.

From the outset, UNICEF supported the MoECR in the development of the concept of inclusive education, which then took the form of a Programme. In 2007 a cross-sector working group was created, involving an international and a national consultant. This group developed the concept of IE, subsequently presented it to the Government of the Republic of Moldova, which asked for a feasibility study and an analysis of the costs involved. With the support of UNICEF, another working group was formed which included representatives of the organizations active in the field and the Programme for Development of Inclusive Education was developed.

---

<sup>77</sup> Evaluation of the Government of Moldova – UNICEF 2013-2017 Country Programme of Cooperation, Final Report, Chişinău, 2017

<sup>78</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/date-%C8%99i-cercet%C4%83ri>

The programme makes an efficient use of the project "Child-friendly school", implemented by UNICEF and the Government of the Republic of Moldova, inclusion being one of the pillars of this model, and the whole conception of the friendly school being convergent with national and international policies. Also, the annual conferences on the topic of inclusive education, organized by the Ministry of Education, with the support of UNICEF, brought together representatives of schools (headmasters, teachers), representatives of district education departments, civil society organizations, direct beneficiaries (parents, children), representatives of the Government. In order to strengthen the cooperation and coherence of actions, the conferences tried to bring together the non-governmental organizations that have contributed over time - Lumos Foundation, KulturKontakt, Partnership for Every Child, Hope, Keystone, the Alliance of NGOs in the field of Child Protection etc.

According to the interviews conducted, UNICEF has provided substantial support to MoECR in coordinating the Programme by facilitating the establishment of the Council for the coordination of deinstitutionalization and inclusive education, later restructured as the Council for the coordination of Inclusive Education (presented above). At the same time, UNICEF supported the interventions to determine the funding formula for inclusive education. In order to ensure a common understanding of IE by the key actors involved in the process, UNICEF also supported MoECR in organizing 2 annual IE conferences (2017, 2018). Representatives of schools (headmasters, teachers), representatives of district education departments, NGOs, direct beneficiaries (parents, children) and representatives of the Government were all brought together. UNICEF helped in the efforts of having the same message promoted by all those involved in IE. In this regard, a Communication Plan on IE was developed and a media campaign was organized with the slogan: "Come with me! The school is also for you!" (Including commercials on TV and radio; the campaign was repeated twice a year). Following the campaign, some parents got the courage to enrol their children in school and complained when this right was denied. In 2010, the Ministry of Education issued an order requiring schools to receive all children (in the context of deinstitutionalization).

Between 2014 and 2015, UNICEF assisted CRAP to train all PAS specialists. Approx. 238 PAS specialists received a 10-day training. PAS consolidation was very important to ensure a degree of consensus / uniformity in practices and services, in the way the policy of inclusive education reaches the local level. Through the project "Promoting inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova", UNICEF assisted CRAP in carrying out a large number of studies, analyses, guides, curricula, as presented in the table below.

Studies, guides, methodologies developed with the help of UNICEF
--

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Inclusive Education - Updated Concept</i></li> <li>2. <i>Concept regarding the accessibility of pre-university education institutions and adaptation to the needs of children with disabilities</i></li> <li>3. <i>Analysis of the situation in the field of accessibility of buildings and constructions from pre-university education for meeting the needs of children with disabilities</i></li> <li>4. <i>Individualization of the educational process through curricular adaptations - methodological guide</i></li> <li>5. <i>Concept regarding the individualization of the educational process through curricular adaptations</i></li> <li>6. <i>Concept regarding the educational inclusion of children with severe disabilities</i></li> <li>7. <i>Curriculum for the long-life training of OLSDE specialists, PAS specialists and teachers regarding the educational inclusion of children with severe disabilities</i></li> </ol> |
|---|



8. *Educational inclusion of children with severe disabilities - methodological guide*
9. *Concept regarding the educational inclusion of children with sensory disabilities*
10. *Inclusive education of children with sensory disabilities, lifelong learning curriculum for specialists of the district / municipal psycho-pedagogical assistance service, school managers and preschool institutions, teachers, support teaching staff, school psychologists.*
11. *Inclusive education of children with sensory disabilities - methodological and practical guide*
12. *Curriculum regarding the orientation of parents in the education of children with special educational needs, and three training modules for the coordinators within the local specialized bodies in the field of education, for the specialists of the district / municipal psycho-pedagogical assistance service, for teachers*
13. *Guide for parents - orientation of parents in the education of children with special educational needs*
14. *Individualized educational plan model-structure and implementation guide (revised and adapted edition)*
15. *Guide for evaluating the development of children in the educational process for the specialists of the psycho-pedagogical assistance services and the multidisciplinary teams*
16. *Concept of performance indicators for the psycho-pedagogical assistance service and its specialists*
17. *Research report monitoring and evaluation of district / municipal psycho-pedagogical assistance services and of their specialists*
18. *Concept regarding the elaboration of basic (universal) and specific indicators in inclusive education*
19. *Annex-list of basic (universal) and specific indicators in inclusive education*
20. *Regulation regarding the activity of the support teaching staff (STS) from general education institution (pre-primary, primary, secondary)*
21. *Regulation on the activity of the psychologist teacher in general education institution (pre-primary, primary, secondary)*
22. *Regulation on the organization and development of the speech therapist's activity in general education institutions*
23. *Regulation on the organization and development of the psychologist's activity in the general education institutions*
24. *Concept for building a platform in the field of inclusive education to ensure the support of teachers. Design, models and themes for webinars related to the web page.*

## XII. Areas and means of cooperation with other UN agencies and development partners

The Programme for Development of Inclusive Education is complementary to other initiatives of the donor institutions and has made efficient use of their efforts so that inclusion becomes a key message for society. Inclusive education is a broadly assumed commitment by organizations active in the field of education and child rights protection and donor institutions.

As mentioned above, the reform of the residential system has increased the opportunity for the Programme for Development of Inclusive Education (interview, civil society organization). The Council for the coordination of the residential system reform has

become a debate platform for inclusive education. (interview, civil society organization). *The first stages of the reform of residential institutions and the initiation of inclusive education were carried out with the support of UNICEF, and subsequently several donor organizations have been involved. After 2011, NGOs have attracted many resources* (interview, civil society organization).

The programme has made efficient use of previous efforts to develop a concept on inclusive education of MoECR, UNICEF and other partner institutions. The implementation stage of the design and the development of the national Programme was achieved through the significant involvement and the sustained collaboration of the organizations active in the field - Lumos Foundation, Keystone, Partnership for each child, KulturKontakt, Hope, CCF Moldova, Alliance of NGOs in the field of Child Protection etc. Lumos Foundation supported the Ministry of Education in the establishment of the new working group that made the transition from the concept of inclusive education to a national programme.

Thus, Lumos Foundation Moldova has implemented the Project "Integration of children with disabilities in general schools", funded by the grant provided the Government of Japan, managed by the World Bank and the Social Investment Fund of Moldova. Within this project, local public authorities from 24 districts were supported to develop / update the implementation plans for *Programme for Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova 2011 – 2020*. During 2015-2016, activities were implemented in 20 pilot schools to train teachers to support and teach children with disabilities enrolled in primary schools. The Foundation carried out a study in order to find out the training needs of the staff of the 20 pilot schools of the project, and its results have been exploited for the development of the methodology for the training of teachers in the field of inclusive education<sup>79</sup>. Also, eight training modules have been developed in the field of inclusive education, available in Romanian and Russian, for the training / development of teachers' competences in order to support children with disabilities<sup>80</sup>. A large number of teachers (682) benefitted from training / learning in the field of inclusive education.

The Alliance of Organizations for People with Disabilities, within the Programme "Joint Initiative to Promote Equal Opportunities", implemented by the Eastern European Foundation and the Partnership Centre for Development from the resources provided by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Government of Sweden and the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs / DANIDA and the contribution of the IM Swedish Development Partner Representation, conducted a study<sup>81</sup> regarding the inclusion in the labour market. The study highlighted, once again, the close relationship between employment and vocational training / education level, advocating for improving the access of people with disabilities to quality education - a condition of improving their employment.

Steps in monitoring the inclusive education in terms of human / child rights were made by Ombudsperson. Based on the analysis of the legislation and the level of its

---

<sup>79</sup>

[https://fism.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/raport\\_final\\_fism\\_rom\\_15\\_11\\_2016.pdf](https://fism.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/raport_final_fism_rom_15_11_2016.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> P.19.

<sup>81</sup> „The analysis of Labour market in the Republic of Moldova considering the inclusion of people with disabilities” (2016)

implementation, the Ombudsperson Institution<sup>82</sup> made a series of recommendations for measures to ensure access to education for children with disabilities, focusing on children with sensory disabilities.

The "Hope" Centre, with the support of the DSPF (Danube Space Projects Fund) and KulturKontakt Austria, implemented the project "Inclusive Technical vocational Education - Career Guidance and Counselling to support access to relevant education and training", in order to help improve services of counselling and guidance and counselling for students and young people with special educational needs, and especially for those with disabilities.

CCF Moldova provided educational assistance services (educational recovery, learning support), psychological (individual and group counselling), specific therapies (speech therapy, psychotherapy) and support for the support staff (support teaching staff, speech therapist, psychologist, psychologist teacher). The organization has supported hundreds of children to integrate into the schools of the communities they live in and has influenced the evolution of dozens of institutions in the direction of the child-friendly school.

Keystone Human Services International Moldova also contributed to the deinstitutionalization of children and their educational integration. The organization provides support for various actors (central, local authorities, specialists, etc.) in the field of social assistance and protection, inclusive education and social entrepreneurship. Its activities are consistent with the objectives of the Programme for Development of Inclusive Education.

*The agenda of other international donors referred to supporting social and economic inclusion in general and, in particular, inclusive education.* Thus, Individuell Människohjälp Swedish Development Partner has been an active organization in the Republic of Moldova since 2002, its activity being oriented towards improving the situation of persons with disabilities through rehabilitation services, inclusive education, family assistance, professional counselling and guidance and advocacy activities. USAID's educational strategy aims to develop accessible, equitable, quality and inclusive educational systems. The European Union<sup>83</sup> is among the important donors of the Republic of Moldova, which also promotes inclusive education and training based on lifelong learning, in cooperation, among others, with "Partnership for Every Child"<sup>84</sup>. The Action Plan to support the democratic reforms of the Council of Europe<sup>85</sup> implemented between 2013-2016 in the Republic of Moldova promoted the respect for human rights and the creation of conditions for the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and the elderly.

The empowerment of the under-represented groups, among which there are persons with disabilities, is one of the pillars of activity of the *Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights* (OHCHR). The organization provided support for the development of a methodological guide that includes the right to education (how to promote the right to

---

<sup>82</sup> Report on the social inclusion of children with sensory disabilities, <http://incluziune.md/ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Raport-privind-incluziunea-sociala-a-copilor-cu-dizabilitati-senzoriale.pdf>

<sup>83</sup> Donor Assistance to the Republic of Moldova, Special Report, 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Especially as regards the subgroup of children with hearing impairments.

<sup>85</sup> Action Plan to support democratic reforms in the Republic of Moldova 2013-2016, Council of Europe Office in Moldova

education) and the creation of a group of parents with children with disabilities in order to develop their ability of claiming the right to education for their children. OHCHR has taken steps in monitoring the implementation of the legislation and has been providing support in cases where the rights are not respected. The cases are well known, especially in the first years of implementation of the Programme, the educational institutions refused or avoided enrolling children with special needs. In such situations, OHCHR provided support to families <sup>86</sup> (information on their rights) and made efforts for the observance of children's right to education. OHCHR provides support for authorities and institutions advocating for human rights, for civil society institutions, with the purpose to promote the approaches based on human rights. In collaboration with UNICEF and other actors, an online platform has been developed to monitor the recommendations issued by international human rights mechanisms ([monitor.drepturi.md](http://monitor.drepturi.md)). OHCHR also works to promote the rights of linguistic or ethnic minorities. The office organizes internships for people from underrepresented groups (e.g. internships).

*World Health Organization (WHO)* has promoted the rights of people with mental disabilities and the access to services as part of the Global Disability Action Plan, 2014-2021.<sup>87</sup> It has also promoted the importance of mental health and made efforts to prevent violence and bad-treatment of children, helping to expand health care and psychosocial support.

The activity of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is guided by the 17 goals of sustainable development, among which the quality education (objective 4), but also related key issues such as reducing inequalities (objective 10), reducing poverty and ensuring gender equality<sup>88</sup>. The targets for the Republic of Moldova aim at ensuring universal access to quality education, including vulnerable groups, increasing the relevance of education in terms of labour market requirements, ensuring an inclusive, safe, non-violent educational environment, promoting a common set of values - sustainable development, environmental protection, human rights, gender equality, peace and non-violence, global citizenship, cultural diversity.

Considering the multitude of actions implemented, the mechanisms of cooperation are very necessary for the actual implementation of the Programme or for an indirect contribution thereto, but are insufficient, the cooperation being often informal and episodic.

The cooperation and coordination between the actors involved in the implementation of the Programme and between the donor institutions was achieved through the coordination bodies previously analysed, partly on the basis of the adopted action plans, and through less formalized means. Although the activity of the two councils<sup>89</sup> was generally positively

<sup>86</sup><https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/SupportingchildrenwithdisabilitiesintomainstreamschoolsMoldova.aspx>

<sup>87</sup> WHO: Twelfth General Programme of Work, [https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/112792/GPW\\_2014-2019\\_eng.pdf;jsessionid=F28B23712EB57E6B3FB54D97A8DB4257?sequence=1](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/112792/GPW_2014-2019_eng.pdf;jsessionid=F28B23712EB57E6B3FB54D97A8DB4257?sequence=1)

<sup>88</sup><http://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/ro/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-4-quality-education.html>

<sup>89</sup> National Council for the coordination of the reform of the residential child-care system and the development of inclusive education and, respectively, the Cross-sector Group for the coordination of the implementation of the programme for development of inclusive education and the activities of children deinstitutionalization, within the National Council for the Protection of child rights, organized under the supervision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova

appreciated by the participants in the evaluation, the level of coordination of the implementation of the Programme is perceived as insufficient (in terms of rigour in planning) and discontinuous (in terms of the regularity of the actions and the consistency of the coordination). The approach based on needs has prevailed, as mentioned above, but the existing coordination mechanisms have managed to avoid to a certain extent the overlaps or duplications of the interventions. On the other hand, the absence of coordination mechanisms between partner agencies and institutions has led to large variations between districts - some of them benefitting from more interventions and support from one or more organizations, while others have been supported by interventions or benefitted from support to a less extent.

At the local level, from the data collected through the interviews with representatives of the psycho-pedagogical assistance services and of the educational institutions, there seems to be no mechanisms of ensuring coherence between the interventions carried out by all the organizations involved and other programmes.

### XIII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions and recommendations resulting from the findings identified in the previous chapters are presented below.

#### Relevance

The Programme for development of inclusive education (2011-2019) is consistent with international and European strategies and other programmes in the field of education, including the Agenda for Sustainable Development 2030 (Sustainable Development Objective 4 "Guaranteeing a quality education and promoting long-life learning opportunities for all"). The programme aligns the strategic and policy framework of the Republic of Moldova with the general tendency at international and European level to move from parallel educational systems (mass-education and special education) to a single inclusive educational system, which gives everyone access to education adapted to specific needs.

The programme was developed in line with the national strategic framework in force at the time of its adoption (Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, National Strategy "Education for all", "Strategy on social inclusion of persons with disabilities 2010-2013") and continues to be very relevant in the context of future strategic and legislative developments (the new Education Code, the Education Development Strategy for 2014-2020 "Education 2020", the Law no. 60/2012 on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities and the Strategy for child protection for the years 2014-2020). The Programme supports the achievement of the objectives of education reform in the Republic of Moldova, its objectives are congruent and complementary to those of other reform measures.

The logic of intervention of the programme was described in a less explicit way in the planning phase; the general and specific objectives, as well as the actions and services have been listed in the programme, without presenting how each action or service should contribute to the achievement of each specific objective. The lack of this explicit relation in the programme can determine the risk, materialized in practice to some extent that some activities are not planned at all and thus, the objectives are not met.

However, the internal coherence of the Programme is generally adequate, considering that the reconstructed logic of intervention reveals that activities and / or actions and sub-

actions have been planned to achieve all the specific objectives. The expected pedagogical and psychological results are directly and obviously related to the achievement of the general and specific objectives. However, in the absence of coverage of marginalized or disadvantaged groups of children and young people by specific activities (in the action plans developed and/or adopted), some expected changes cannot be achieved exclusively under the Programme, namely equal and universal access to education; observance of child rights and the principle of equal opportunities; ensuring universal educational and social inclusion. At the same time, the expected economic changes can only be achieved indirectly through the envisaged actions (and in the absence of other actions planned and carried out in related sectors). Therefore, the general objectives of the programme are assessed by this evaluation as ambitious.

The activities implemented have a high relevance for the target groups envisaged (decision makers, teachers, specialists, children). The evaluation did not identify any action taken that would be considered irrelevant by the actors involved, instead there is a continuous need for repetition and / or intensification of scheduled activities, especially in terms of teachers and school management training; ensuring the implementation of the programme in early education and in vocational and technical units; ensuring the right to inclusive education for all categories of children at risk; development of methodologies, tools and competences regarding the integration in education of children with severe disabilities as well as in terms of the activities developed with parents of children with SEN and of typical children. Such further relevant activities are set out in the 2018-2020 Action Plan.

## Effectiveness

The evaluation has made progress in most of the areas covered by the specific objectives of the programme, but in the next period the uniformization of the progress of the reform at district level should be a priority (without, of course, ignoring the specificity of each district).

The existing legislation in the field of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova is largely comprehensive and basically represents one of the main results achieved through the implementation of the Programme, a success factor that has decisively contributed to the progress made on the inclusion of children with SEN in mass-education.

The existing methodological framework for the inclusion of all children is largely known by teachers, support staff and pre-primary teachers (at least in inclusive schools, but not only), and PAS and numerous NGOs involved have made a decisive contribution in this regard. Given the consolidation phase in which the system of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova is about to enter (or should enter), a number of specific methodologies, in Romanian and/or in Russian, are needed for sub-groups of children with SEN (with intellectual and sensory disabilities, with spectrum autistic disorders, with learning difficulties, with migrant parents, and other vulnerable groups set forth in the Programme). A general challenge at the system level is the lack of teaching aids for the implementation of the IEP, for different subjects, and for different types of children with SEN, including for children with visual impairments.

Educational institutions, at all levels, are only partially prepared to facilitate the access of children with disabilities (especially motor skills disorders, hearing and visual impairment), through access infrastructure. The identified solutions (such as the Unit for Inclusive Education in Ialoveni) are successfully meeting the challenges raised by the accessibility of learning spaces especially for children with severe and associated



psychomotor disabilities, but these must be thought out and implemented together with the existing RCIE, in order to ensure the efficiency of the financial sources involved.

Resource centres for inclusive education have generally shown their usefulness, but their effectiveness is affected, in some cases, by the lack of adequate space, by the insufficient number of support teaching staff and by some tendencies to work with children with SEN only at the centre, contributing to the segregation from common children. The evaluation identified that RCIEs are limitedly equipped with teaching aids/working materials and other teaching equipment/games for children with SEN, especially for those with complex diseases.

The collected evidence highlights the key role that support teaching staff play in the inclusive education process, especially in the absence of the personal assistant or considering the latter's lack of involvement in the education process. In general, the number of STS is considered insufficient to achieve inclusive education in an effective manner and there are districts where the STS work with a well above average number of children with SEN. In addition, the small salary package and the fact that the STS position is not a distinct professional category causes their rather high fluctuation. In general, the support staff have participated in many trainings, initially through the involvement of NGOs in the field, and subsequently through various actions organized by PAS. The training activities are considered effective and the practice gained has improved the support teaching staff competences to a relatively adequate level. At this point additional basic training is required for less experienced or newly employed STS. In addition, STS need much more applied, practical training, but also specific and in-depth training to work with children with severe disabilities, hearing and vision impairments, ASD, behavioural disorders and other special needs). There is still an insufficient number of psychologists, psychologist-teachers and especially speech therapists and physiotherapists in most districts.

The evaluation finds that a large number of activities related to the training of teachers and school management in the field of inclusive education have been carried out, especially by the NGOs active in the field, and, as the PAS have been consolidated, by their specialists. Following these activities teachers have become at least familiar and, in many cases, prepared to assess children, develop IEP and work at least with certain groups of children with SEN. Progress has been made to include and improve the IE modules in the initial and long-life training of teachers. However, on the one hand, the training process (in all forms) does not yet take place uniformly in all districts and in line with the needs felt by the teachers according to their children with SEN in the classroom, and the effectiveness of some forms of theoretical or general training approaches has been challenged.

The evaluation highlights significant progress made in terms of setting up the institutions and training specialists needed to implement IE in the Republic of Moldova. In this context, the Republican Centre and Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services is a reference point for all the actors involved. However, and without presenting an element of novelty, the number of specialists within PAS varies from district to district, without necessarily being aligned with the number and needs of children identified with SEN or the number of educational units in the covered geographical area. The high workload of PAS in many districts raises challenges in terms of the sufficient support offered to the educational units, but also to parents, in identifying children with SEN, in evaluating and re-evaluating them, in implementing the IEP, in providing services directly to the child (considering the lack of specialized services in the district) but also in terms of monitoring at district level the progress of implementation of inclusive education, quantitatively and qualitatively. Because of teachers' needs and of the need that inclusive education should

be performed quantitatively and qualitatively, PAS staff still needs training in specific areas and techniques (for children with severe, multiple disabilities, hearing disabilities).

The evaluation finds that at this stage of the Programme implementation, both at the level of educational units (especially in general education) and at the level of PAS, a sufficient level of knowledge has been reached that will allow, progressively, the consolidation of inclusive education. This process could consider providing more services to children with SEN at school and community level, so that PAS can focus on supporting and training the teachers and the support staff, the specialists involved, as well as on activities of providing better services and on planning and monitoring the necessary actions (in collaboration with the Education Directorate and managed by CRAP, ANACEC).

In this context, although the activity of the Republican Centre for Psychopedagogical Assistance (CRAP) is highly appreciated, its capacity is, to a certain extent, insufficient, in terms of human resources. Thus, CRAP has difficulties in providing all the necessary support for IE at all educational levels and in coordinating PAS.

## Efficiency

Based on the available data, the evaluation concludes that, on the whole, the interventions for inclusive education were cost effective considering the costs incurred for the budget for the *Republic of Moldova*. A large number of activities, especially activities of increasing the capacity of teachers, trainings, study visits, development of methodologies, were carried out by civil society partners, with budget attracted and managed by these partner organizations, without affecting the state budget.

The budget allocations and the expenses actually incurred for inclusive education increased from 2015 to 2018, as the activities for inclusive education began to extend from a few pilot schools to a greater coverage of school units and the territory of the country and from the development of standards and instruments to their effective implementation in the educational units. However, the differences between average costs / child between the levels of education, especially their decrease for the primary level, confirm that the financial allocations for inclusive education did not increase at the same rate as the number of children in the target group (children with SEN) after special and auxiliary schools were closed down and the programme was extended to all levels of education. Moreover, the allocation for 2019 is below the level of the budget spent (budget execution) in 2018. At the same time, there are a number of inequities in the distribution of funds for inclusive education, since pre-school education and vocational and technical education had not been considered from the beginning as part in the implementation of the programme for development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova 2011 - 2020.

The level of the additional cost incurred by the educational system for integrating each child with SEN in mass-education is much lower than the costs incurred in the residential system, so the development of IE has led to a considerable saving of the state budget. As such, the savings generated by closing down special and auxiliary schools could be redirected to inclusive education, especially given that, the current funding model for inclusive education causes inequalities between districts (larger amounts available for smaller numbers of children with SEN where there is a large number of pupils), it does not cover the real needs in the districts with a large number of children with SEN and contributes to obtaining non-unitary results.

Given that human resources are considered insufficient on several levels (particularly in the case of STS, PAS and CRAP staff) and considering their workload in relation to the number of children with SEN and the educational institutions in the covered territory (in many districts), the evaluation considers that, in general, they have been used efficiently. For the efficient use of material resources, more efforts could have been made for the systematic centralization of the teaching aids identified and developed by the champion schools, teachers, STS and PAS and their widespread distribution for use throughout the system.

Generally, there is a delay in the implementation of the Programme, in comparison with the previously proposed stages (2011 - 2012 Elaboration of the regulatory framework for the development of inclusive education, 2013 - 2016 Piloting the models of inclusive education, 2017 - 2020 Large-scale implementation of the present Programme). Essentially, the first stage was carried out with delays of at least one year. Between 2013-2018, a number of other important acts were adopted that complemented the regulatory framework in force, especially in areas not initially considered such as early education and Vocational and technical education (for example "Regulation on the organization and functioning of the early education institution - aspects. The piloting phase of inclusive education models was carried out, in broad terms, in the expected time (or even earlier), given the intense involvement of the NGOs active in the field of education in the Republic of Moldova.<sup>90</sup> The large-scale implementation of the programme is delayed, although progress has been made for this stage through the activity of PAS which have been implementing IE in each district and municipality. Delays are also determined by the late approval of the 2018-2020 Action Plan for the Programme.

The less developed system of managing and monitoring the implementation of the Inclusive Education Development Programme, represents a weakness. The programme itself (Chapter VIII) does not clearly stipulate the institutions responsible for its management, but only the establishment of a consultative body for national coordination. Chapter XIV, "Evaluation and reporting procedures" clearly stipulates that the Ministry of Education is responsible for the evaluation process of the programme's implementation but does not make an adequate differentiation between monitoring and evaluation.

In this context, the Programme was implemented both through the efforts of the MoECR, but especially through the involvement of NGOs in the field, based on the needs identified on-site and not as a result of comprehensive plans, whose monitoring should have systematically identified the progress made and the next steps necessary to achieve the objectives. The monitoring system, as well as the indicators system, correspond to a very small extent to the internationally accepted quality requirements. Progress reports were not elaborated and the MoECR Activity Reports include incomplete information compared to the planned actions. A positive aspect is the effort made by PAS and CRAP for collecting, processing and reporting data.

## Impact

Despite the incompleteness of the measures implemented and the delays recorded, the process of developing inclusive education has made significant progress in terms of reaching the general objectives of the programme. These have been ambitiously formulated and a number of decisive actions are needed to generalize and ensure the

---

<sup>90</sup> As presented in the study "EXPERIENCES IN THE FIELD OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AT NATIONAL LEVEL". Summary prepared by A. O. "Lumos Foundation Moldova", 2015.

quality of inclusive education for all children and young people, from all marginalized categories, including by completing and perfecting the regulatory and didactic-methodological framework. The educational environment has become more friendly and accessible, but this evolution is more obvious in the case of general education, on which the reform was focused until recent years and in the districts that have benefited from the support of NGOs in the field. The building of an inclusive society culture is a goal that can be achieved on long term and that depends on other factors, beyond the control of the Programme or of MoECR.

The progress is noticeable in terms of deinstitutionalization and the number of children with special educational needs who attend traditional schools. However, the evaluation underlines the need to strengthen the mechanisms for enrolling children belonging to risk categories in schools, especially at kindergarten level, in order to identify their specific needs and to facilitate early intervention. At the same time, in order to achieve the expected changes in terms of school environment, it is essential to prepare the educational units and the teachers in their work with children with severe disabilities. Cooperation between the medical, social and educational fields is essential to this end.

The evolution of the statistical indicators regarding the school population and the number of children with disabilities, as well as the results achieved by providing services to children with SEN according to their needs, indicates that on long term, the need of intervention for inclusive education may decrease (and also the need of financial resources). Until then, a number of measures are needed to generalize the reform at district level, including by adjusting the intensity of the intervention according to the existing on-site particularities, in order to ensure progress and adequate effects.

The evaluation has found positive developments among children with SEN, but also among their typical colleagues. Children with SEN have made friends among their colleagues, have been supported by them and in many cases they feel equal. The work based on the modified curriculum has determined the achievement of some results in terms of progress in learning. However, progress is more obvious in school units where inclusive education models have been piloted, supported more by NGOs, and both school management, teachers and children alike have gained experience working with children with SEN. This dynamics emphasizes the importance of information campaigns and the importance of being in contact with the children with SEN, including the children with disabilities, in creating a friendly school environment and completing the process of ensuring an inclusive education.

In this context, the inclusion of children with severe disabilities faces challenges largely due to insufficient training at the level of education institutions and teachers, the extra time needed to work with these children, and, to some extent, the reluctance of parents to integrate their children in school. The situation may be improved by equipping and training the educational units and teachers, as well as by providing specialized services, but a major contribution in this regard could be the availability of the personal assistance service for all children with severe disabilities and its involvement in teaching activities (in school). It is important to develop a broader approach for children with SEN and especially for those with disabilities, which will ensure not only their educational, but also social integration and the acquisition of practical life skills.

The attitude of parents of typical children regarding the enrolment of children with SEN in mass-education schools has also improved, although their reluctance is only partially removed and still high regarding children with mental disabilities and those with emotional-affective and behavioural disorders. Research in the field of education (PISA,

TIMSS, etc.) has highlighted the important role of parents in education. Thus, information campaigns targeting the general public can be useful for influencing parents' attitudes toward inclusive education and the education and the rights of every child. Parents with children with disabilities need to be informed on children's rights and they also need legal / educational support / counselling (in order to help them learn how to better support their children). For parents with typical children, joint actions can be organized at school / kindergarten level, with parents of children with disabilities, in small groups, allowing interaction and exclusion of prejudices.

The evaluation has found positive changes in the attitude towards the inclusion process, both at the level of teachers, as well as at the level of school management and at the OLSDE level. An important contribution in this regard is made by the District Plans of Inclusive Education, existing in most districts and implemented at least partially. However, the situation differs from district to district and from school to school, depending on the exposure to children with SEN (in schools with fewer children with SEN and less contact with them a general positive trend has not yet emerged) and the undertaken activities (in the districts and schools supported by NGOs the progress is more obvious, some of them becoming champions of inclusive education). In line with the progress of the reform, the situation is good in primary schools and satisfying in kindergartens. In secondary schools the process takes place more difficultly.

At the same time, the evaluation has identified cases in which the teachers have a discriminatory attitude towards children with SEN, but the collected opinions indicate a decrease of the discrimination level by up to 40% presently (based on the interviews conducted) compared to the years in which IE was being introduced. Discrimination has been overcome due to information, awareness-raising, initial training and practice gaining and these activities must be continued in order to achieve the change desired by the Programme.

## Sustainability

The Programme for Development of Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova 2011-2020 is sustainable on the whole, but it is not sustainable unconditionally. The regulatory framework in force as well as the institutional one, as well as the district plans for inclusive education and the school's strategic management plans, but also the experience gained, have an important contribution in this regard.

The evaluation has found that the irreversibility of education development is not entirely certain. Despite the progress made, a critical mass of trained, informed and aware persons in terms of inclusive education has not yet been created in all districts, especially among parents and society at large. Thus it is necessary to limit the fluctuation of staff, to continue the training and information activities, and, implicitly, to identify the necessary financial resources, so as to ensure the sustainability of all the other results of the programme. Sustainability risks are largely identified with the inclusion of children with severe disabilities, including hearing or vision impairments, for which the system on the whole is less prepared.

In order to ensure the sustainability of the results already achieved on long-term, the continuity of the educational process must be ensured after the graduation of the 9th grade, as well as the implementation of employment policies, the development of the social economy policies and housing policies for young people who come from vulnerable families, from special / residential institutions and / or with disabilities.

## Other aspects

The evaluation has found that most of the children in the social-vulnerable and at-risk group, including children with parents working abroad, do not represent the direct target of inclusive education services, even if they, according to the Programme, are among the target group. In reality, they join the groups of children with SEN and are provided with services only if they develop a mental or physical impairment or a learning disability over time. Given that the collected records indicate an increased effectiveness of preventive and early intervention, PAS and STS do not have currently the capacity to cover the large number of children at risk.

The mechanisms of cross-sector coordination and cooperation are underdeveloped. Especially at local level, there is good cooperation between the educational and social systems, but additional measures are needed to align the medical system with the principles of inclusive education.

The Programme for development of inclusive education is complementary to other initiatives of the donor institutions and has made efficient use of their efforts so that inclusion becomes a key message for society. Inclusive education is a broad commitment made by organizations active in the field of education and protection of the rights of the child and donor institutions. The mechanisms of cooperation, very necessary considering the multitude of actions implemented, for the actual implementation of the Programme or which contribute indirectly thereto, are insufficient, the cooperation being often informal and episodic.

UNICEF has acted as a catalyst of the interventions and efforts to implement the Programme. UNICEF is a strategic partner for education reform, with a clear vision on the process of inclusive education.

## Key lessons learned

1. An effective national programme inclusive education is based on a rigorous analysis of the national and international context, articulates clearly the logic behind the planned intervention(s) and is in line with overall national policies and international trends, acting in synergy.
2. Effective implementation of the national programme on inclusive education requires good coordination structures, multiannual actions plans accompanied by monitoring tools, as well as functional mechanisms to ensure the flow of information for all the stakeholders. Appropriate coordination and information mechanisms are needed at school level, as inclusive education means a lot of collaborative work.
3. The involvement of the development partners is decisive for the progress of reform in the Republic of Moldova, however, the ownership and involvement of the decision-makers is essential for a uniform implementation across all district in the country. The future interventions should aim towards bringing all districts in the country closer to the IE reform's objectives.
4. Teacher assistants play a major role in promoting inclusive education at school level and fostering a change of attitude towards this. The professional status and,



accordingly, the salary and professional development opportunities should place the teacher aides on a similar position with the highly qualified teachers.

5. The adults and the school management set the tone to inclusive education. Building capacity and ensuring the quality of educational management and activities are to be prioritised in the following period.

6. The current IE financing model creates inefficiencies through disproportionate allocations in some districts, compared to insufficient allocations on other regions. A key measure to be taken by the decision-makers in the immediate future is to develop and implement a needs-based financing model for all education levels. This model should allow the adequate financing of the Resource Centres, for an effective IE.

## Recommendations

The recommendations made are based on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation, following the triangulation of data collected and analyzed including by consulting all key stakeholders interviewed during the on-site research phase. Each interview, focus group as well as the validation workshop with experts and key actors involved in achieving inclusive education verified the perceptions of various stakeholders (UNICEF, Ministry of Education, Research and Culture, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Protection, CRAP, PAS, ISE Moldova, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, international development partners, professionals, local authorities) and a large number of teachers and final beneficiaries (youth/children) regarding the process and the results obtained following the implementation of the Programme, as well as the steps to be taken in the future.

The preliminary recommendations were shared and discussed with UNICEF and a large number of the stakeholders involved at national and local level, during the validation workshop organized on October 22<sup>nd</sup> this year (see Annex 9). Following the discussions in the validation workshop the recommendations have been further clustered, clarified and prioritized. Moreover, the evaluation report was widely discussed during the National Conference on Inclusive Education organised by UNICEF on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2019, with the participation of approximately 300 participants, representatives of all IE stakeholders in the country.

The establishment of the necessary time frame for the implementation of the recommendations took into account the fact that in the next year new strategies will be formulated in the field of education, as well as the need to allocate important budgetary resources that involve a phasing of the future measures. The short term targets a time horizon of approximately one year, the medium term of approximately 2-3 years, and the long term of approximately 3-4 years.

The recommendations are mainly addressed to the Ministry of Education, Research and Culture, responsible for implementing inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova, but also to other relevant Ministries that can contribute in this regard, as well as to local authorities, which play an important role in the planning of available resources.

The validation workshop was an important platform for discussions between all

stakeholders involved in achieving inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova, at national, local level, as well as with development partners.

<i>Recommendation/cluster</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Responsible institution</i>
<i>Future strategical approach</i>			
1. <i>In the planning phase of the future inclusive education programme, all the necessary activities should be identified in order to achieve the expected results. The identified activities should cover the specific needs of all target groups referred to in the context of inclusive education, as identified in Article 58 of the Programme.</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Medium term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
2. <i>The future development strategies, at national level and in the field of "Education", should be consistent with the objectives of the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", by planning the activities necessary to ensure both the relevance and quality of studies but also the access of all children to education.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Short term</i>	<i>Gouvernement of the Republic of Moldova, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research.</i>
<i>Quality and impact of inclusive education</i>			
3. <i>It is necessary to develop and apply a methodology of evaluation and quality assurance of inclusive education services, in line with the quality standards in the field of education.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Short term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research.</i>
4. <i>It is recommended to strengthen cooperation between the fields of education, social and health in order to ensure access to an inclusive education and to facilitate early intervention, by:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Ensuring the transfer of data related to children from the target groups by the health and child protection system to the institutions responsible for inclusive education.</i></li> <li><i>Ensuring cooperation at local and district level within local multidisciplinary teams and at the District Commission for the protection of the child in difficulty regarding the elaboration and effective implementation of individual assistance plans.</i></li> <li><i>Developing and implementing clear mechanisms for the coordination of inclusive education services with the actions provided in the individual assistance plans.</i></li> <li><i>Introducing the duties of each employee within the cooperation mechanism in labour contracts and job descriptions and implementing a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the services provided in a cross-sector manner.</i></li> <li><i>Providing the personal assistant social service for all children with severe disabilities.</i></li> <li><i>Providing the parents of children with SEN / disabilities with the psychological support and guidance necessary to adequately support the child outside the educational and social system and to develop independent living skills<sup>91</sup>.</i></li> </ul>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, Ministry Health, Labour and Social Protection, Local Public Authorities</i>

<sup>91</sup> In line with the measures provided under the Cross-sector strategies for developing parents' skills and competencies for 2016-2022 and the related action plan.

<i>Recommendation/cluster</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Responsible institution</i>
5. <i>The modules of initial and life-long training in the field of inclusive education shall be continued, by involving specialist practitioners in course teaching (within the life-long training) and carrying out some practical long-term internships (during the initial training).</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Short term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
6. <i>Developing and implementing a new Communication Plan for the promotion of Inclusive Education and developing new media campaigns, based on the pattern provided by similar actions carried out in 2013 with the support of UNICEF (under the slogan "Come with me, the school is also for you!"), for raising awareness on the importance of inclusive education among parents and the general public.</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Medium term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
<i>Resources necessary for the implementation of inclusive education</i>			
7. <i>It is necessary to resize the number of specialists employed with PAS in each district according to the number of children with SEN and their needs.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
8. <i>In order to provide specialized assistance services (psychologist, speech therapist, kinesiotherapy specialist) according to the needs of children with SEN, it is recommended to create mobile teams within PAS. The activity of PAS mobile teams must be planned and carried out in line with the services provided by the mobile teams active in the field of social protection.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
9. <i>It is necessary to strengthen the position of support teachers in the context of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova, by reconsidering the workload in the relation to the number of children with SEN for STS, the professional category they belong to, including the salary that should not be lower than that of other teachers. In addition to establishing the workload of support teachers, it is also necessary to prepare job descriptions of support teachers and the set of indicators regarding the results of their activity.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Short term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
10. <i>For the next stage, it is necessary to carry out an analysis of the training needs for each category of staff involved in the management and provision of inclusive education services (MoECR, CRAP, PAS staff, support teachers, teachers and management), to highlight the areas which require an improvement of their capacity, different from district to district, and based on which future training and support activities are to be planned and implemented.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
11. <i>It is necessary to carry out as soon as possible an analysis of the needs that will identify, based on the number of children with SEN managed by PASs, the necessary assistive technologies, teaching</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Short term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>

<i>Recommendation/cluster</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Responsible institution</i>
<i>supports and other materials / games in the existing Resource Centres for inclusive education, as well as to identify the educational units where the establishment of RCIEs is necessary.</i>			
<i>12. In order to provide quickly and efficiently teachers and RCIEs with teaching materials / supports, it is necessary to centralize the materials already identified and developed by champion schools, teachers, STS and PAS and to set up an online "resource base", at the disposal of the staff involved in the implementation of inclusive education. Responsible institution: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. Priority: immediate</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Short term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
<i>13. In addition, depending on the results of the analysis provided for under recommendation 11, it is necessary to develop additional teaching aids for specific categories of SEN, mainly for children with intellectual and sensory disabilities, with autism spectrum disorders, learning difficulties. Responsible institution: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research. Priority: average</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
<i>Sustainability/financial resources</i>			
<i>14. Developing and implementing another methodology for financing inclusive education, by establishing the adjustment coefficients of the financing formula per child, calculated on the basis of quantifying the additional needs of different types of children with SEN. The new methodology should cover both pre-school, school and vocational and technical education and take into account the analyses already carried out in this area<sup>92</sup>.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Short term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research</i>
<i>15. A needs analysis shall be carried out as soon as possible, likely to identify, based on the number of children with SEN managed by PASs and the plans aiming at further implementing the de-institutionalization process, what type of access infrastructure is needed, in which schools, from which districts. Based on this analysis, a prioritization of the educational units can be achieved in order to allocate the necessary financial resources and to perform the access infrastructure in the shortest time.</i>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, local authorities</i>
<i>16. Developing actions / financing programs to stimulate the development of social enterprises which will employ children with SEN, graduates of a form of education.</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Long term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, Ministry of</i>

<sup>92</sup> Expert Group, 2015, The mechanism for financing Inclusive Education in the Republic of Moldova, Chisinau. UNICEF, 2013, Report on the options for SEN groups coefficients for the financing formula per student in order to facilitate IE, Chişinău.

<i>Recommendation/cluster</i>	<i>Priority</i>	<i>Timeframe</i>	<i>Responsible institution</i>
			<i>Economy and Infrastructure.</i>
<i>The management, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme/interventions in the field of inclusive education</i>			
<p><i>17. Improving the current and future management, coordination, monitoring and evaluation system of the Programme for Development of Inclusive Education, by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Clearly assigning the body responsible for managing the implementation of the programme, implicitly for its monitoring and evaluation.</i></li> <li><i>Developing the procedures for managing, monitoring, reporting and evaluating the Programme, which shall establish the role and responsibilities of each institution involved (MoECR, other ministries, CRAP, PAS).</i></li> <li><i>Defining a system of quality indicators, which will include indicators of all types (immediate achievement, result, impact) properly formulated and quantified (basic values and targets) and disaggregated by gender. Identifying the data source of each indicator and developing data collection, processing and reporting procedures. If indicators-related data are available in other institutions (e.g. Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection or at the level of the local / district authorities) it is necessary to sign data transfer protocols, in compliance with the legal provisions in force regarding personal data protection.</i></li> <li><i>Preparing annual monitoring reports, highlighting the progress made in implementing the actions provided by both the Programme and the action plans, by all the actors involved, including the NGOs in the field.</i></li> </ul>	<i>High</i>	<i>Medium term</i>	<i>Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, Ministry Health, Labour and Social Protection or local/district authorities, Development partners</i>

## ANNEXES

See the separately attached document.

