

**JUNE 20–21 • 2023**

International Annual Conference

# **FINANCING FAMILY STRENGTHENING AND CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF MOLDOVA–EU ASSOCIATION AGENDA**



2023 Theme: Financing for Better Care



International Annual Conference

## **FINANCING FAMILY STRENGTHENING AND CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF MOLDOVA-EU ASSOCIATION AGENDA**

2023 Theme: Financing for Better Care

**June 20–21, 2023**

Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

*Radisson Blu Leograd Hotel Convention Center*

### **CONFERENCE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES**

The International Conference on Financing of Family Strengthening and Child Protection Services is an annual two-day event hosted by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. The conference is designed to engage stakeholders from the central and local government levels, from non-governmental, private and academic sectors, as well as international experts and organizations to work together to unpack the challenges faced in ensuring adequate public financing for strengthening families and protecting children and how these challenges can be met.

**The first annual conference will be held on June 20–21, 2023 and will focus on financing of family strengthening services and care of children without adequate parental care, including redirection of funds from residential institutions to family-based care in line with national policy and European Union recommendations in the Association Agenda.** Future conferences will discuss other priority services such as social and educational inclusion, early intervention, inter-sectoral cooperation for primary prevention of risks for children and others.

The objectives of this year's conference are to improve public financing for care system in Moldova, specifically to:

1. Discuss progress and challenges, including financing gaps, in meeting the minimum quality standards for key services designed to support families and provide family-based alternative care for children without adequate parental care. Discussions will focus on five key social services currently available in Moldova and that may be included in the minimum package of services funded by the national budget.

2. Discuss the costs for delivering key services per national standards and costing methodologies developed to date.
3. Discuss relevant evidence and recommendations for strengthened provision and financing of services that enable family-based care.
4. Highlight and address policy recommendations and research questions emanating from the conference on strengthening the quality and budgeting of key services for supporting families and family-based alternative care.

The conference will engage approximately 200 international and local participants responsible for and/or supporting child protection and care reforms in Moldova and other countries and is organized with technical assistance and funding from USAID, MacArthur Foundation, and GHR Foundation via Changing the Way We Care (CTWWC), UNICEF and the World Bank.

## CONFERENCE AGENDA

DAY 1 – June 20, 2023	
8:30–09:00	<i>Welcome coffee and registration of participants</i>
9:00–10:00	<p><b>Opening remarks</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> <b>Dan PERCIUN</b>, Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Protection, Health and Family</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Igor GROSU</b>, Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova</li> <li>• <b>Kent D. Logsdon</b>, United States Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova</li> <li>• <b>Inguna DOBRAJA</b>, World Bank Country Manager for Moldova</li> <li>• <b>Ilija TALEV</b>, Deputy Representative UNICEF Moldova</li> <li>• <b>Anne SMITH</b>, Chief of Party, Changing the Way We Care (CTWWC)</li> <li>• Video message from people with lived experience</li> </ul>
10:00–10:45	<p><b>Session 1: Setting the stage</b></p> <p><b>Moderator:</b> <b>Ludmila UNGUREANU</b>, Chief of Party, CTWWC Moldova</p> <p><b>Overview:</b> Presentations on the main concepts driving the conference</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Philip GOLDMAN</b>, President of Maestral International and Member of the CTWWC Governing Board <i>Public Expenditure and Children's Care</i></li> <li>• <b>Alexei BUZU</b>, Minister of Labor and Social Protection <i>Social assistance reform agenda and the anticipated impact on children's care</i></li> </ul>
10:45–11:15	<i>Coffee break</i>
11:15–12:45	<p><b>Session 2: Analysis of progress to date and challenges in achieving performance objectives and meeting minimum quality standards of the key services designed to support families and enable family-based care for children without adequate parental care</b></p>

	<p><b>Moderators:</b> <b>Beth BRADFORD</b>, Technical Director, CTWWC <b>Natalia SEMENIUC</b>, Project coordinator, Partnership for Every Child</p>
	<p><b>Overview:</b> Breakout group discussions organized around the following key services –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Family support service</li> <li>2. Family-based alternative care</li> <li>3. Personal assistance for children with disabilities</li> <li>4. Mobile services</li> <li>5. Respite services</li> </ol> <p>Facilitated discussions will focus on the following questions: To what extent do key services achieve their performance objectives and meet their minimum quality standards? What are the main gaps and obstacles, including financing gaps, in achieving performance objectives and minimum quality standards of key services? What are the specific recommendations (policy and others) to address the identified gaps and challenges? What are the costs for implementing the proposed recommendations?</p> <p><b>Additional group and technical discussions will be organized around:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Perspectives of the lived experience</li> <li>7. International perspectives on strategic questions of Moldova's Social Assistance Reform Agenda – quality management in social assistance</li> <li>8. International perspectives on strategic questions of Moldova's Social Assistance Reform Agenda – achieving value for money in social assistance</li> </ol> <p><b>Group moderators:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Irina SPIVACENCO, Ala NOSATII</b></li> <li>2. <b>Ana PALII, Livia MARGINEAN</b></li> <li>3. <b>Marcela DILION, with support from Natalia SEMENIUC</b></li> <li>4. <b>Liliana SIMCOV, Virgiliu HANGAN</b></li> <li>5. <b>Oxana ISAC, Ecaterina GOLOVATII</b></li> <li>6. <b>Liliana ȚIBREA, Mihaela CIORBA</b></li> <li>7. <b>Parascovia MUNTEANU</b></li> <li>8. <b>Group of experts on social assistance reform</b></li> </ol>
12:45–13:45	<i>Lunch break</i>
13:45–14:30	<p><b>Session 2 (continued): Analysis of progress to date and challenges in achieving performance objectives and meeting minimum quality standards of the key services designed to support families and enable family-based care for children without adequate parental care</b></p> <p><b>Moderators:</b> <b>Beth BRADFORD, Natalia SEMENIUC</b></p> <p><b>Overview:</b> Presentation of the breakout groups' conclusions, including identified next steps, recommendations, and costs for addressing existing gaps.</p>



14:30-15:15	<p><b>Session 3: Making an investment case for better care</b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Igor CHISCA</b>, Head of the Child Protection Directorate, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection</p> <p><b>Overview:</b> Expert presentations on investment case for family care, including a brief overview of the global evidence on how family strengthening yields economic and social returns when embedded in social policy, a brief description of current and projected financing flows and levels relevant to Moldova's care reform, an estimation of investment and recurrent costs for services needed to care for children at risk of residential care, comparison of those costs to the costs of residential care in Moldova and an outline of possible domestic and external financing sources for the needed investments.</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Flore ROSSI</b> and <b>Artiom SICI</b>, UNICEF Moldova <i>Family-type Care vs Residential Care Costs: An analysis of the recent developments in government expenditure and the costs per child in family-type care and residential care</i></li> <li>• <b>Daniela MAMALIGA</b>, Director, Partnerships for Every Child <i>Findings and recommendations from financial assessments of residential institutions</i></li> <li>• <b>Constantin GUDIMA</b>, CTWWC public finance advisor <i>Presentation of the draft investment case for family care</i></li> </ul>
15:15 - 16:00	<p><b>Session 4: The role of child-centered cash plus care in the context of care reform – international evidence of impact</b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Francesca STUER</b>, Senior Advisor, Maestral International</p> <p><b>Overview:</b> There is increasing recognition by social protection experts around the world that cash alone is not sufficient to address the spectrum of vulnerabilities that children and families face. While cash assistance can alleviate stressors on a household, it cannot address psycho-social needs, the needs of children with disabilities, violence and abuse in the household, and other risks. A number of recent studies show you get a bigger payoff by combining cash transfers with care services than you do from either cash or care alone. The approach is called 'cash plus care' and it is becoming a centerpiece of World Bank and UNICEF programming globally.</p> <p><b>Speakers:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Roger PEARSON</b>, Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser, Social Protection</li> <li>• <b>Francesco CENEDESE</b>, Economist, World Bank Social Protection and Jobs practice, Europe and Central Asia region</li> </ul>
16:00 - 16:30	<p><b>Coffee Break</b></p>
16:30-18:00	<p><b>Session 5: Panel discussion on the recommendations and next steps for strengthening financing and provision of key services designed to support families and enable family-based care for children without adequate parental care</b></p> <p><b>Moderators: Traian TURCANU</b>, Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF Moldova <b>Viorelia MOLDOVAN-BATRINAC</b>, National Child Protection Program Coordinator, CTWWC</p>

	<p><b>Overview:</b> Panelists analyze the challenges and recommendations shared during the breakout sessions and comment on next steps in addressing them, considering current reform priorities and initiatives.</p>
	<p><b>Participants in the panel discussion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dan PERCIUN</b>, Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Social Protection, Health and Family</li> <li>• <b>Alexei BUZU</b>, Minister of Labor and Social Protection</li> <li>• <b>Ion GUMENE</b>, State Secretary, Ministry of Finance</li> <li>• <b>Viorica DUMBRAVEANU</b>, National Consultant, UNICEF Moldova</li> <li>• <b>Daniela MAMALIGA</b>, Director, P4EC</li> <li>• <b>Marcela DILION-STRECHIE</b>, Program Manager, Keystone Moldova</li> <li>• <b>Liliana ROTARU</b>, Director, CCF Moldova</li> <li>• <b>Ion CRUDU</b>, Head of Glodeni Social Work Territorial Structure</li> </ul>
18:00-20:00	<p><b>Networking Fouchette</b></p>
<p><b>Day 2- June 21, 2023</b></p>	
9:00-11:00	<p><b>Session 6: Opportunities for care reform presented by the European Union Accession and implications for investments in care reform</b></p> <p><b>Moderators: Mathew WATSON</b>, Senior Technical Advisor, Center for DDI/Inclusive Development Hub's Children in Adversity Team at USAID <b>Francesca Stuer</b>, Senior Advisor, Maestral International</p> <p><b>Opportunities for care reform presented by the EU Accession</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vasile CUȘCA</b>, State Secretary, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection <i>Care reform-related preparations for EU accession: progress to date and next steps</i></li> <li>• <b>Ally DUNHILL</b>, Director of Policy, Advocacy and Communications at EuroChild, also on behalf of the European Expert Group on Transition from Institutional to Community-Based Care <i>EU accession-aligned Instruments in support of care reform</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The European Child Guarantee: its purpose, 5 focus areas, importance of family strengthening and prevention of family separation</li> <li>• The EU funds Checklist to promote independent living and deinstitutionalization</li> <li>• Toolkit on the use of EU funds</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<p><b>Learnings on what investments are essential for family strengthening and prevention of family separation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Roman ZHUKOVSKIY</b>, World Bank Social Protection Specialist <i>Social protection and care reform: Learning regarding the importance of social protection to enable care reform (i.e., strengthen families, prevent child-family separation and enable families to take care of their children, including children with disabilities) role of case management in ensuring effective social protection</i></li> <li>• <b>Marijana JASAREVIC</b>, World Bank Social Protection Specialist <i>Social protection and care reform: defining disability and needs, functional disability assessments and graduating from social protection</i></li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stefania ILINCA</b>, Advisor on Long-term Care, World Health Organization <i>Importance of nurturing family care, especially for younger children, and the need to ensure early childhood intervention and disability services are accessible at community level to enable early intervention, nurturing family care and wellbeing of children with disability</i></li> <li>• <b>Vivien THOMSON</b>, Children and Families Policy and Practice Lead, Social Work Scotland, Social Work Scotland <i>Care reform: the role of the social services workforce and importance of investing in the social service workforce to enable Care Reform and effective CASH PLUS CARE: good practice and lessons learned</i></li> </ul> <p>Discussion and Q&amp;A</p>
11:00–11:30	<b>Coffee break</b>
11:30–12:15	<p><b>Fostering intentional linkages with Care Reform in Moldova—identifying opportunities from the donor and development partners’ perspective</b></p> <p><b>Moderator: Kelley BUNKERS</b>, Maestral International/CTWWC</p> <p><b>Overview:</b> Donor and development partners’ representatives will comment on the recommendations and action steps emerging from the conference and their impact on assistance and funding priorities.</p>
12:15–12:45	<p><b>Conclusions of the conference and next steps forward</b></p> <p><b>Overview:</b> the session will summarize the learning gained during this conference, the emerging research questions, and the action points for follow up. The session will close with a summary of the agreed-upon actions to take the recommendations forward for strengthened public financing for better care.</p>
12:45–13:30	<b>Coffee break</b>

## PLENARY SPEAKERS



### Igor GROSU, Parliament of the Republic of Moldova

Speaker of the Parliament of Republic of Moldova, Legislature XI. During his career, activated as Deputy Minister of Education. He also has been for many years an expert in international projects implemented by UNDP and World Bank. Igor Grosu is also one of the founders of several NGOs: Amnesty International Moldova, National NGO Assistance Center of Moldova “CONTACT”, the Pro-Democracy Association, the National Youth Council of Moldova and the Centre for Analysis and Evaluation of Reforms. He has a BA in history. Since 2019, when became a Member of the Parliament, Mr. Grosu drafted over 100 project bills.



### Dan PERCIUN, Parliament of the Republic of Moldova

Mr. Perciun is the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Social Protection, Healthcare and Family. During his career, Mr Perciun served in the Ministry of Education as the Head of the e-Transformation and Information Department. He also has been a consultant for international management consulting companies and organizations including UNICEF. Since being elected as a Member of the Parliament in 2019, Mr. Perciun has drafted over 100 pieces of legislation. Mr. Perciun studied in the United Kingdom and has a BA in Political Science, Psychology and Sociology from Cambridge University.



### Kent D. LOGSDON, U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova

Ambassador Logsdon is the United States Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova and is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service. He most recently served as the Chief of Staff to the Under Secretary for Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment and prior to that was Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the Bureau of Energy Resources. He was also the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin, Germany, serving as Chargé d’Affaires, a.i. from January 2017 to May 2018. He holds a Master’s Degree in International Relations from the University of Virginia and a Bachelor’s Degree in Government from the University of Notre Dame.



### Inguna DOBRAJA, World Bank

Ms. Dobraja is the World Bank’s Country Manager for Moldova. Ms. Dobraja has been working in the World Bank for more than 25 years. She has professional experience in the managerial, operational, and corporate areas of the institution encompassing: country office, program and portfolio management, extensive operational work, including World Bank’s financial and knowledge products, as well as specific social protection technical expertise.

Prior to joining the Bank, from 1990 to 1993, Ms. Dobraja served as Director of the International Economic Relations Department at the Ministry of Welfare in Latvia. She holds a Master’s degree in Economics from the University of Latvia and has the Executive Leadership Program diploma from the Harvard Business School.



### Ilija TALEV, UNICEF Moldova

Mr. Talev is the Deputy Representative for UNICEF Moldova. Previously, Mr. Talev worked with UNICEF as a social policy specialist in his native North Macedonia, before moving to Belize as a Programme Coordinator, and New York as a Public Finance Specialist. He has supported the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Financing initiatives, particularly the work on increasing and improving public, private, and blended finance for achieving the SDGs. He has also worked on strengthening UNICEF programming in social protection for children including supporting decentralization and local governance delivery of services for children, and other good governance initiatives.



### Anne SMITH, Changing the Way We Care

Ms. Smith is the Global Director for the Changing the Way We Care. She brings 25 years of strategic leadership of programs and initiatives aimed at strengthening vulnerable children, their families, and their communities to the position. As the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Deputy Regional Director for Southern Africa, Anne drove strategy and led all technical and programmatic assistance for 10 CRS country programs in the region aimed at building the resilience of vulnerable families and communities. Anne returned to CRS Headquarters in the summer of 2015 to lead global strategy for CRS’ Overseas Operations Division, and to serve as the liaison for CRS’ Board of Directors and its Overseas Operations Committee.

## SPEAKERS



### Alexei BUZU, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection

Mr. Buzu is the Minister of Labor and Social Protection of Moldova. Previously he has worked as the Director of the Partnership for Development Center. Mr. Buzu is a specialist in public policy management, offering support to several ministries in the process of designing, implementing, and assessing public sector policies. He has a vast consulting experience in organizations such as Crisis Management Initiative Finland, Global Gender Help Desk, Council of Europe, UN Women, Lakarmissionen Sweden and Light Foundation Romania, UNDP Moldova, UNICEF, Terres des Hommes, GIZ Moldova, and Soros Moldova. His expertise focuses on gender equality, youth policies and development at central and local levels, and social inclusion.



### Francesco CENEDESE, World Bank

Mr. Cenedese is an Economist at the World Bank Social Protection and Jobs practice, working in the Europe and Central Asia region. Over the last few years, he has been working on operations supporting social assistance programs in European countries, including the implementation of the Guaranteed Minimum Income program in Italy. He is co-leading the Case Compass initiative, a toolkit to support interested countries improve case management services and develop case management information systems. Previously, Mr. Cenedese has worked on government relations between the World Bank and Southern European countries.



### Ion CRUDU, Social Assistance and Family Protection Department, Glodeni

Mr. Crudu is the Head of the Social Assistance and Family Protection Department in Glodeni. He is an experienced professional in the field of social work and has been actively involved in attracting investments for the development of social services. He has an extensive experience in implementing, monitoring and evaluating services at local level. Since the early days of the war in Ukraine, he has been actively involved in the management of the refugee crisis, by creating two Temporary Refugee Placement Centres. He is also involved in strengthening the civil society sector in Glodeni district, for a better participation in the decision-making process in the localities of Glodeni district.



### Vasile CUȘCA, State Secretary, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection

Mr. Cușca is a State Secretary at the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova. His previous roles within the Ministry were Chief of Policy Department for Protection of Rights of People with Disabilities, Chief of Department for Social Protection of People with Disabilities, Social Assistance Services Department, and Social Assistance Reform Department. Mr. Cușca has a Bachelor's Diploma in Social Assistance and a Master's Diploma in Human Rights.



### Viorica DUMBRĂVEANU, UNICEF Moldova

Ms. Dumbrăveanu is a national consultant in child protection, at UNICEF Moldova. She has over 20 years of experience in the social protection system, and 18 years in the field of child protection. She has contributed to the development of the social protection system and in particular of the policy, legal, and institutional framework in the field of family protection and children's rights, social assistance for low-income families, and preventing and combating violence against children. As a consultant at UNICEF, she was involved in responding to the refugee crisis by strengthening the child protection system, including social services for children and families.



### Dr. Ally DUNHILL, EuroChild

Dr. Dunhill is the Director of Policy, Advocacy, and Communications at Eurochild, a civil society organization based in Brussels. She is responsible for providing strategic leadership and oversight to Eurochild's policy, advocacy, and communications activities and oversees Eurochild's influence on public policy by coordinating advocacy towards the EU institutions. Dr. Dunhill has worked across education and social care organizations globally for over 30 years, advocating for and with children, young people, and their families to bring about key changes in policy, legislation and practice that will have a lasting impact on their lived experiences.



### Philip GOLDMAN, Maestral International

Mr. Goldman is the Founder and President of Maestral International, a team of leading global experts supporting the development, strengthening, and coordination of child protection and social welfare systems that meet the needs of children in adversity. He has spearheaded Maestral's public finance work, which has included national and sub-national costings and budgetary exercises, capacity building, and the development of resources and tools. Since 2018, Mr. Goldman has been a member of the Lancet Commission on the Institutionalization and Deinstitutionalization of Children and is currently a member of the Global Reference Group for Children Affected by COVID-19 and Other Adversities.



### Constantin GUDIMA, Ocnîța District Council

Mr. Gudima is the Head of the Finance Department of the Ocnîța District Council. He has over 25 years of professional experience in the field of public finance. Currently, he manages the work of the team of specialists of the Finance Department of the Ocnîța District Council, which supports the elaboration, administration, and reporting of the budget of the Ocnîța second level local public authority. In addition, he provides advice to local public authorities on issues related to the elaboration, administration, and reporting of the first level local budgets in Ocnîța district.



### Ion GUMENE, State Secretary, Ministry of Finance

Mr. Gumene is the State Secretary at the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova. He has more than 10 years of experience as a civil servant, including eight years in the State Chancellery, and Deputy Head of the Directorate for Policy Coordination, External Assistance and Central Public Administration Reform. Mr. Gumene has worked with several international organizations such as UNDP, World Bank, UNICEF, GIZ, SIGMA in support of public administration. He is noted for his experience and skills in budget planning, communication, and organizational process.



### Dr. Stefania ILINCA, World Health Organization

Dr. Ilinca is Technical Advisor on Long-term Care with the WHO European Office, a Senior Atlantic Fellow for Equity in Brain Health, and a Salzburg Global Seminar fellow. She has extensive experience working at the interface between policy and research, dividing her time between policy advice, technical support, applied research, and advocacy efforts. Her work focuses on innovation and service design in health and long-term care systems and discrimination and inequity in access to health and long-term care, with particular attention to strengthening care delivery for people with complex needs, supporting integrated care models, and improving access to needed care over the life course.



### Marijana JASAREVIC, World Bank

Marijana Jasarevic is a Social Protection Specialist, with the Social Protection and Jobs practice group in the Europe and Central Asia region. In the past 13 years, she has been working on various topics, including social assistance, labor market, social services, disability assessment and early childhood education and care projects in Serbia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Azerbaijan and Greece.



### Daniela MĂMĂLIGĂ, Partnerships for Every Child

Ms. Mămăligă serves as the Director of Partnerships for Every Child and the President of the Alliance of NGOs active in child and family protection in Moldova. She has over 21 years of experience working in the civil society sector, providing technical assistance to the Central and Local Government of the Republic of Moldova in the development of child welfare policies and implementation of child care reform, including deinstitutionalization of children, development of alternative family-based social services, and inclusive education.



### Roger PEARSON, Development Pathways Ltd

Mr. Pearson has worked for NGOs, UNICEF and the private sector in building social sector capacities in Africa, Asia, and the Pacific. For the past twenty years, one of his areas of focus has been building cash-plus care capacities. Mr. Pearson was charged with facilitating the updating of UNICEF's global child protection policy with an eye toward strengthening the linkages between social worker support and cash transfer capacities. Recently, he has been involved in reviewing Uruguay's child protection response to the Covid lock-down, developing monitoring capacities for cash transfers and child protection in Kiribati, managing an independent review of the national cash transfer programs in Uganda, and supporting the monitoring of social protection in Ukraine.





### Liliana ROTARU, CCF Moldova

Ms. Rotaru is the Director of CCF Moldova. She has over 20 years of experience working in the field on children's rights. CCF Moldova works together and represents the British charity Hope and Homes for Children. CCF Moldova supports the central and local authorities to reform the system to decrease the reliance on residential care and to increase the family strengthening, service provision, social innovation, workforce capacity building, and eradication of residential care in Moldova. Ms. Rotaru has a PhD in comparative literature from Bucharest University and is currently participating in a Master programme in Social Innovation and Management at Vienna University of Business and Economy.



### Vivien THOMSON, Social Work Scotland

Ms. Thomson is the Policy and Practice Lead for Children and Families in Social Work Scotland, the leadership organization for social work in Scotland. Ms. Thomson served in local government social work as a practitioner and senior manager in Scotland for over 30 years, before joining Social Work Scotland in October 2020. Her management and practice experience ranges from early years to disability and alternative care, and front-line management to developmental and strategic roles. She has been involved in fostering and kinship policy initiatives, and cross-sector work.



### Roman ZHUKOVSKIY, World Bank

Mr. Zhukovskiy is a Social Protection Specialist at The World Bank in Washington DC, working in the Europe and Central Asia region on designing and supporting the implementation of social protection programs. Previously, he represented Ukraine on the World Bank Board and held senior positions in the civil service.



### Artiom SICI, UNICEF

Mr. Sici is a Social Policy Specialist at UNICEF with over 11 years of expertise in social protection sector including issues related to social security, cash transfers, informality, legal analysis, project management and evaluation. He provided technical assistance to the Central Public Authorities in coordinating the drafting of the five-year Action Plan and facilitated national discussion and agreement around critical alignments and joint efforts.



### Flore ROSSI, UNICEF

Ms. Rossi is a child protection and GBV specialist currently leading the Child Protection section in UNICEF Moldova country office. During the past ten years, she lived in different countries around the world, working on child protection and GBV including in Israel/Palestine, Liberia, Haiti, in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and in Iraq. She also spent a year in New York working in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (OSRSG/CAAC).

## MODERATORS



### Beth BRADFORD, Changing the Way We Care

Ms. Bradford is the Technical Director for Changing the Way We Care, a global initiative to promote family care for children. She has over thirty years of experience working across a range of contexts, including U.S. child welfare. Ms. Bradford has worked with governments and non-government actors, alike, with a focus on developing strong child protection and care systems. Her work centers around care reform, social work practice, holistic early childhood development, and family strengthening. As Technical Director to Changing the Way We Care, she proudly leads program implementation and learning across six countries, three regions and with global partners.



### Kelley BUNKERS, Changing the Way We Care

Ms. Bunkers is a Senior Associate with Maestral and is currently serving as a Senior Technical Advisor for Changing the Way We Care. She has three decades of engaging in child care and protection. She has been involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of alternative care programming, research and advocacy in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa. She has worked for UNICEF, USAID, private foundations, national governments and international and local NGOs in support of safe and nurturing family-based care for children. She is a member of the Better Care Network Steering Committee and a board member of Faith to Action.



### Igor CHIȘCĂ, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection

Mr. Chișcă is the Head of the Child Protection Directorate at the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. He is responsible for the development and implementation of legislation related to children's rights including issues related to adoption, family-type services, and preventing and combating abuse and violence against children. Under his leadership, the Directorate works to prevent institutionalization of children in residential institutions and to ensure that children and families in Moldova have access to quality social assistance services. The Directorate coordinates the implementation of child and family protection programs in partnership with central and local public administration, international bodies, and non-governmental organizations.



### Mihaela CIORBĂ, Changing the Way We Care Moldova

Ms. Ciorbă is the Project Officer for Participation, Safeguarding and Accountability at CTWWC Moldova. Ms. Ciorbă has over nine years of professional experience in managing and implementing over 10 international donor-funded projects. She gained diverse experience by delivering projects in the fields of underserved SMEs & rural banking, finance, market research (studies and extensive surveys), financial inclusion and dual technical and vocational education. In her current role, she focuses on accountability, safeguarding, and supporting people with lived experience (PWLE) to participate meaningfully in decision-making related to care reform in Moldova.



### Marcela DILION-STRECHIE, Keystone Moldova

Dr. Dilion-Strechie is a Program Manager at Keystone Moldova. For 14 years, Dr. Dilion-Strechie worked as a teacher at the Department of Sociology and Social Work of the State University of Moldova, moving from assistant lecturer to university lecturer. She provided consultancy for various international organizations including UNICEF and the International Organization for Migration and nongovernmental organizations active in the field of child and family rights protection, the protection of the rights of persons with disabilities. Within the global initiative Changing the Way We Care, Dr. Dilion-Strechie coordinates the working group on human resources in the social assistance system.



### Ecaterina GOLOVATII, Keystone Moldova

Ms. Golovatii is a consultant at Keystone Moldova. She is also a social worker providing support to persons with disabilities and their families to defend their rights and to live a meaningful life in their communities. Her professional activities are dedicated to children and people with disabilities. During the last 20 years, Ms. Golovatii worked as a consultant in disability rights protection, advocating for social inclusion, and better care for persons with disabilities. In 2021-2022, she conducted a study on monitoring and evaluation of financial resources allocated for personal assistance at the raion level.



### Virgiliu HANGAN, Partnerships for Every Child

Mr. Hangan is the Social Evaluation and Family Reintegration Coordinator for Partnerships for Every Child, Moldova. He has over 12 years of experience in supporting national and local public authorities countrywide to develop and improve the local child protection systems. Mr. Hangan has been part of the national trainers' team recruited by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection that delivered a capacity-building program to the social welfare workforce across the country in case management, family support service, social workers' ethical code, population needs assessment mechanisms, grievance mechanism, and performance management standards for Territorial Social Assistance Structures.



### Oxana ISAC, Keystone Moldova

Ms. Isac works as a Project Coordinator for Keystone Moldova, working with the Changing the Way We Care team on deinstitutionalization and family strengthening. Ms. Isac has over 30 years of professional experience in the social field, education, public health, child protection, and in empirical research of different fields of social life. Ms. Isac's current portfolio includes promoting safe and supportive family care for children who are deinstitutionalized from residential structures and children at risk of separation from their families, through strengthening families, reforming national childcare systems and changing engagements at national, regional, and global levels.



### Livia MARGINEAN, CCF Moldova

Ms. Marginean is a Program Manager at CCF Moldova. She is a national expert in the accreditation of social services. Ms. Marginean has been working in the field of child protection and promotion of children's rights for over 18 years. She has extensive experience in program and project management, as well as in the training and consulting of specialists in this field. She is an active member of various working groups related to child deinstitutionalization, development of social services, revision of the Nomenclature of Social Services, improvement of the methodological framework for the organization and functioning of foster care services, and the implementation of the Initial and Continuous Training System.



### Viorelia MOLDOVAN-BATRÎNAC, Changing the Way We Care Moldova

Dr. Moldovan-Batrînac is the National Child Protection Program Coordinator at Changing the Way We Care Moldova. She has over seventeen years of professional experience in public administration and advising the high-level Governance leaders in various policy issues. Her experience includes analysis and monitoring of public policy implementation, quality assurance of education program, accreditation, and qualification recognition. Ms. Moldovan-Batrînac provided technical expertise to various international projects financed by World Bank, EU, UNDP, and CMI. Her current work includes supporting strengthening the governance of child protection system through legal framework development, policy implementations, promotion of collective impact for improving the national system of family-based childcare.



### Parascovia MUNTEANU, UNDP Moldova

Ms. Munteanu is currently contracted by UNDP as social assistance policy advisor to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. She has more than 15 years of experience in promoting social inclusion, deinstitutionalization, and children's rights. She was actively involved in the development of the National Program on Child Protection Program on deinstitutionalization of persons with disabilities and legal framework for social services development. Dr. Munteanu is the author and co-author of several profile publications tackling issues about social inclusion, disability, inclusive education, human rights.



### Ala NOSATÎI, CCF Moldova

Ms. Nosatîi is program manager at CCF Moldova. She coordinates the deinstitutionalization program in the Northern region of the Republic of Moldova. This includes collaboration with local public authorities at all levels (central, counties and local) for the planning and implementation of measures to prevent the institutionalization of children and deinstitutionalization of children from the placement and rehabilitation center for young children in Balti municipality, development of foster families and support services, support in strengthening the capacity of specialists in the field of child protection and related fields. Ms. Nosatîi has extensive experience in child protection, special education, and early child development.



### Ana PALII, Partnerships for Every Child

Ms. Palii is an experienced consultant with over 25 years of experience in developing and implementing social welfare services including foster care and training of social work professionals in Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. She has been heavily involved in the development of national curricula and training program for community social workers, regulations and minimum quality standards for foster care, family support, gatekeeping, case management, and inter-agency cooperation mechanism on primary prevention and child wellbeing. She has been part of the national consultants and trainers' team that provided capacity-building program to the social assistance workforce across the country.



### Natalia SEMENIUC, Partnerships for Every Child

Ms. Semeniuc is a consultant in child participation for Partnerships for Every Child Moldova. She has a vast experience in implementing, monitoring, and evaluating services both on local and national levels. She was directly involved in supporting the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in the settlement and management of the national training centre and the development and implementation of the national training curricula and programme for community social workers. In addition, she has assisted the local authorities in various regions of Moldova in the development of Local Social Welfare Strategies.



### Liliana SIMCOV, Keystone Moldova

Ms. Simcov is a Project Coordinator for Keystone Moldova working on the deinstitutionalization component with the Changing the Way We Care initiative. Ms. Simcov, a psychologist by training, has been active for more than 25 years in the educational field. Initially, as a teacher in preschool and pre-university institutions, later - as a methodologist-coordinator for the "Step by Step" Educational Program. For 10 years, she coordinated projects related to the educational inclusion of children with SEN (Special Educational Needs), the development of the community school and coordinated the activity of the trainer's team within the Global Partnership for Education project.



### Irina SPIVACENCO, Partnerships for Every Child Moldova

Ms. Spivacenco is a consultant in child care services development for Partnerships for Every Child in Moldova. She is a licensed "Mellow Parenting" programme trainer and has extensive experience in implementing social and educational support programs focused on parenting education and family strengthening. Her current work includes strengthening of the social protection system at national and local levels by ensuring the development and delivery of appropriate and sustainable support services and programmes aiming at providing children with a nurturing and resilient family environment.



### Francesca STUER, Maestral International

Ms. Stuer is a Senior Associate at Maestral International. She has worked for more than twenty years in international social and health development. She has extensive experience in various aspects of care reform including family-based alternative care, positive parenting, and social service workforce strengthening. She has worked on child protection components of social protection cash transfer programs in Turkey and Ethiopia.



### Liliana ŢIBREA, Changing the Way We Care Moldova

Ms. Ţibrea is Child Protection Advisor for Changing the Way We Care Moldova. Ms. Ţibrea, a social worker, has over 25 years of experience in social services in Romania and over five years of experience in training practitioners in the social field. She organized and coordinated professional activities for multi-disciplinary teams and actively participated in supporting the review process and creating the quality of social assistance services within the partnerships developed with local and central public authorities in Romania. As a member of the National College of Social Workers in Romania, she was responsible for the development of course curricula and/or methodology writing regarding social worker intervention.



### Traian ŢURCANU, UNICEF Moldova

Mr. Ţurcanu is a Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF Moldova since October 2019. He holds an LLM in Human rights law and has experience in working with the Moldovan Government, Council of Europe, and UNHCR.



### Ludmila UNGUREANU, Changing the Way We Care Moldova

Ms. Ungureanu is the Director of Changing the Way We Care Moldova initiative. Ms. Ungureanu is a development policy professional with over 20 years of experience in organizational and program management with a focus on social protection and good governance programs. Prior to joining the CTWWC initiative, she managed child protection programs with Terre des hommes Moldova, decentralization policy reform programs with IREX, and civil society development programs with the American Bar Association/Central and Eastern Law Initiative.



### Mathew WATSON, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)

Mr. Watson is a Senior Technical Advisor for the Center for DDI/Inclusive Development Hub's Children in Adversity Team at USAID. He has over thirty years of professional experience working with children, education, public health, and child protection. His current work includes supporting the development of new projects to end violence against children, providing technical support to implementing partners, overseeing USAID's Digital Strategy to Protect Children and Youth from Digital Harm, and supporting the implementation of the new Center for Children in Adversity Strategy: Advancing Protection and Care for Children in Adversity.





## International Annual Conference

### FINANCING FAMILY STRENGTHENING AND CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF MOLDOVA – EU ASSOCIATION AGENDA

# OVERVIEW OF CARE REFORM IN MOLDOVA

At independence, Moldova inherited a social welfare system that was both costly and harmed children. The system was based heavily on residential institutions that the United States and many countries in Europe had begun to abandon almost a century ago because evidence showed incontrovertibly that they were harming children’s physical, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and social development. In many cases, the institutions had high rates of mortality, abuse, and neglect.<sup>i</sup> In contrast, the Soviet welfare model was based on the principle of full employment, with minimal development of the critical areas of social work, case management, and alternative care services. In short, pregnant women in the Soviet period faced two choices at delivery: keep and care for the baby or place it in an institution.

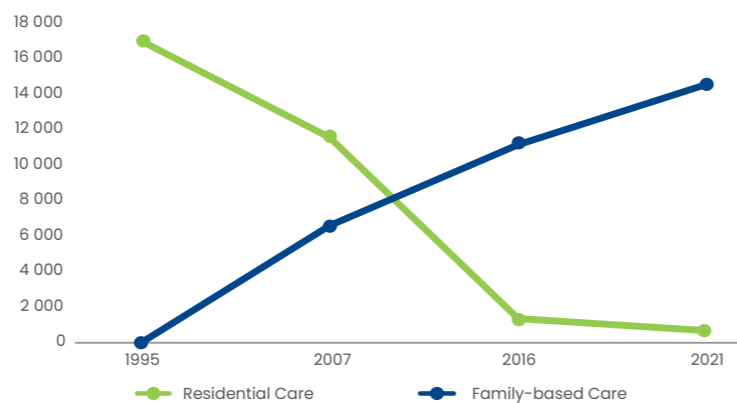
In the past fifteen years, the Government of Moldova shifted from this legacy and has made significant progress in care reform and transitioning children from residential care institutions to family-based care. Despite challenges faced in the provision of family-based care and limited resources, Moldova is increasingly recognized as one of the best examples of childcare and protection reform in the region.<sup>ii</sup>

Through joint efforts of government, civil society, and international organizations the number of children living in institutions in Moldova decreased from 17,000 in 1995 to 11,544 in 2007<sup>iii</sup> and then dropped to 1,365 in 2016 and even further to 685 in 2021.<sup>iv</sup> The number of children in family-based care increased from 0 in 1995 to 6,562 in 2007. then nearly doubled to 11,115 in 2016 and continued to increase to 14,515 in 2021.<sup>v</sup>

The number of residential care institutions has dropped from 67 large-scale residential institutions in 2001<sup>vi</sup> to 15 in 2022<sup>vii</sup>.

This transition from residential care to family-based care was achieved through considerable service development and diversification,

Table 1: Number of Children in Residential vs. Family-based Care in Moldova



funding allocation, strengthening of professionals working in social, educational and medical fields, focusing on inter-sectorial collaboration and changes in practice.<sup>viii</sup> Public attitudes also shifted positively towards supporting vulnerable families and preventing unnecessary child separation from the family.<sup>ix</sup> As reported in the 2021 Moldova KAP study conducted by Changing the Way We Care Initiative (CTWWC)<sup>x</sup>, a large part of the population showed a certain level of awareness of the impacts of institutionalization and a preference for biological family environments or alternative family care, namely extended family (kinship) or foster care, over institutions.

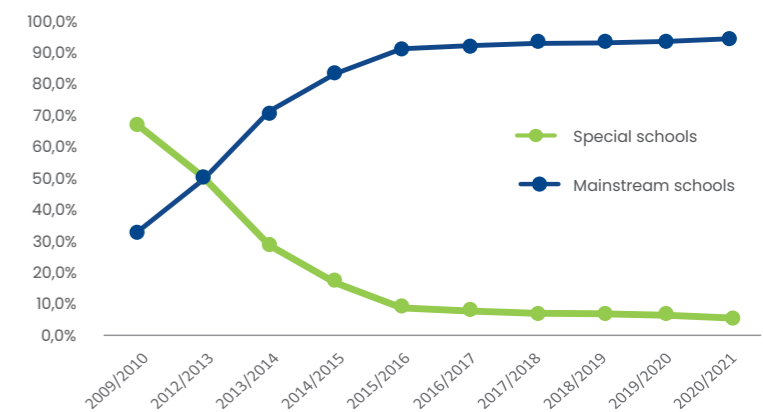
The 2020 report on care reform in Moldova developed by Hope and Homes for Children, Lumos, and CCF Moldova, notes that of the 1,210 children in residential care in 2019, 80 were children under 3 years old, 328 were children with disability and 200 were children who were placed in institutions for tuberculosis treatment.<sup>xi</sup> Of the children with disability living in residential care institutions, most have been living there since early childhood and have been separated from their families for a very long time.<sup>xii</sup> This was a challenge for family reunification and as global evidence illustrates, the earlier placement in institutional care occurs and the longer the placement, the more severe the negative impact on children’s development.<sup>xiii</sup>

Despite these challenges, when considering the number of children with special needs living in residential care institutions, the effort to transition children from residential care to family-based care has also extended to children with special needs (Table 2<sup>xiv</sup>).

In two of the residential care institutions (the institution for girls in Hîncești and the institution for boys in Orhei), most of the residents are currently adults with disabilities who have lived in the institution their whole life and have nowhere to go.<sup>xv</sup> This highlights a critical challenge whereby adult residents live in institutions which were designed, organized, staffed and budgeted for the care of children.<sup>xvi</sup>

Residential care for children in Moldova is nearly exclusively provided by the government: the Ministry of Health manages institutions for pre-school children (0–7 years old) and two homes for children with tuberculosis; the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection manages institutions for children with disability; the Ministry of Education manages residential care for school-age children; and a small number of institutions are managed by local public authorities.<sup>xvii</sup>

Table 2: Percentage of Children with Special Educational Needs in Residential vs. Mainstream Schools



Gatekeeping Commissions have been established in every district of the country to prevent unnecessary placement in institutional care.<sup>xviii</sup> These Gatekeeping Commissions meet to review every application for placement of a child in residential care, consider the most appropriate alternative care placement option that is available and ensure that institutional care is only considered as a last option. Within the care reform agenda, the work of community social workers is very important. They work to address social and parenting challenges that families may be experiencing, as well as monitor and support children placed in family-based alternative care with an aim of future family reintegration.<sup>xix</sup>

Though Moldova has achieved notable successes in care reform, the Evaluation of the 2014–2020 Child Protection Strategy and its Action Plan<sup>xx</sup> shows that progress is still lagging behind in terms of strengthening the institutional capacity at the local level to prevent the separation of child from family, extending availability of foster care services, coordinating the deinstitutionalization process across the Government, and developing the specialized services available at the local level. Interviews with key informants<sup>xxi</sup> further highlighted challenges faced by Local Public Administrations (LPA) to provide adequate support to effectively enable family-based care of children and adults returning from residential institutions.

The Social Assistance Reform concept – Restart<sup>xxii</sup>, recently launched by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Moldova is meant to address some of these challenges by proposing national budget financing for a minimum package of social services, strengthening the minimum quality standards, and making improvements in the planning and budgeting processes. The reform initiative provides opportunities for analysis and discussion on the minimum package of services and their associated costs to support at risk families and ensure family-based alternative care for children without adequate parental care.

### Making an investment case for family care

Care reform is not just about deinstitutionalization. It is about ensuring that vulnerable families receive the supports they need so that children can meet their full potential. It is also about providing safe, high quality, appropriate and supported family-based alternative care options that some children need such as guardianship, foster care, and adoption.

There are both short and long term economic and social benefits to shifting from residential care towards a fully family-centered social welfare system. In the short term, cost savings can be realized from transitioning away from residential facilities towards community services for children and families. Institutions are capital and resource intensive because of their round-the-clock operations, staffing requirements, and high recurrent costs for utilities, food, and other expenses. Evidence generally shows we can serve from 8–10 children through family services for every one child in an institution.<sup>xxiii</sup> A recent study found that Moldovan institutions for young children cost from 245,000 MDL to 339,000 MDL per child.<sup>xxiv</sup>

More importantly, in the long term, community-based social services for children and families have been shown to strengthen long-term human capital. Human capital is defined by the World Bank as ‘the knowledge, skills, and health that people accumulate throughout their lives, enabling them to realize their potential as productive members of society.’<sup>xxv</sup> There is abundant evidenced that family and community based social services – which were largely unavailable when Moldova became independent -- contribute to human capital by enhancing health status and educational outcomes while reducing social problems. This in turn leads to higher lifetime future earnings for today’s children.

There are significant costs to economies and societies of inaction. Studies from around the globe on the costs of inaction are compelling. When children are exposed to a range of adversities, including loss of family care, violence, abuse, and neglect, evidence shows that this leads to (i) increased health care costs for both physical and mental health issues; (ii) higher costs to the criminal justice system, as these children are much more likely to come in conflict with the law; (iii) higher social welfare costs to address lifelong social problems these children develop; and (iv) as suggested above, a major drop in productivity and lifelong earnings. A recent comprehensive analysis found that adverse childhood experiences are costing Europe and the United States an estimated \$1.3 trillion a year.<sup>xxvi</sup>

In addition, investing in family-centered social welfare is an important step towards Moldova’s path for joining the European Union. The European Commission’s Opinion on the Republic of Moldova’s Application for Membership of the European Union (June 2022) highlighted the importance of Moldova’s continued progress on deinstitutionalization and on securing other rights for children.<sup>xxvii</sup> In 2021, the European Commission adopted a European Child Guarantee that establishes the rights of children to access key services, while outlining the need to eliminate reliance on the remaining residential institutions for children in member States.<sup>xxviii</sup> External funders (EU, World Bank, bilateral and private donors) should accordingly ensure that Moldova’s social welfare and protection programs are adequately resourced to meet its current needs, as well as its long-term EU accession goals.

Reforming care in Moldova to strengthen families and reduce reliance on institutions should not be taken in isolation. Children and families have a broad spectrum of needs. Some of those are income related and require social protection programs that provide cash support while promoting long-term resilience, such as through labor market programs or other measures. But the drivers of institutionalization are not just income related. An array of risks and vulnerabilities can lead to children being separated from family and placed in residential institutions – disability, mental health issues, substance abuse, violence in the household, and other factors. However, if these risks are identified and addressed early, separation can be prevented. There is increasing evidence that combining cash supports with social services – so called ‘cash plus care’ – is leading to high economic returns in some countries.<sup>xxix</sup> Moldova should accordingly seek to coordinate, oversee, monitor, and evaluate programs and services that provide both economic and social supports to families and children facing the risk of child separation and residential placement or addressing the needs of children placed in family care from residential care.

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<sup>ii</sup> Hope and Homes for Children, Lumos and CCF Moldova. (2020). EU support for care reform for children in Moldova in the 2021–2027 period. November 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.hopeandhomes.org/publications/eu-support-for-care-reform-for-children-in-moldova-in-the-2021-2027-period/>

<sup>iii</sup> Stela Grigoraș, Minister of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova. (2017). Childcare Reform in Moldova: Achievements and Challenges. Presentation given at a workshop in London in September 2017, facilitated by MEASURE Evaluation, funded and supported by DCOF/USAID. Retrieved from: [https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/IC\\_MoldovaCountryPresentation\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/IC_MoldovaCountryPresentation_FINAL_EN.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> <https://social.gov.md/informatie-de-interes-public/rapoarte/>

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Stela Grigoraș, Minister of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova. (2017). Childcare Reform in Moldova: Achievements and Challenges

<sup>vii</sup> Interview with Partnerships for Every Child (P4EC), April 2021

<sup>viii</sup> Hope and Homes for Children, Lumos and CCF Moldova. (2020). EU support for care reform for children in Moldova in the 2021–2027 period. November 2020.

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xvi Ibid.

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xviii Interview with Partnerships for Every Child (P4EC)-Moldova representatives, April 2021

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**June 20-21, 2023**

Radisson Blu Leograd Hotel Convention Center  
Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

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<b>Radu MARIAN</b>	Chair of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Economy, Budget and Finance
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<b>Ala NEMERENCO</b>	Minister of Health
<b>Veronica MIHAILOV-MORARU</b>	Minister of Justice
<b>Ana REVENCO</b>	Minister of Internal Affairs
<b>Adriana CAZACU-ȚIGAIE</b>	State Secretary, Ministry of Education and Research
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#### Local civil society organizations

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<b>Olesea LUNGU</b>	Self-advocate
<b>Mariana MARAHOVSCHI</b>	Self-advocate
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<b>Kent D. LOGSDON</b>	United States Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova
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<b>William TRIGG</b>	Head of Democracy and Governance Office, USAID Moldova
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