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International Conference

**CHILD PROTECTION AND CARE REFORM
IN THE CONTEXT OF MOLDOVA –
EU ASSOCIATION AGENDA**



2024 Theme: Ending the placement of young children
in institutional care – from policy to action



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CHILD PROTECTION AND CARE REFORM IN THE CONTEXT OF MOLDOVA – EU ASSOCIATION AGENDA

2024 Theme: Ending the placement of young children in institutional care – from policy to action

March 21, 2024

Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

Location – Radisson Blu Leograd Convention Center

BACKGROUND

Moldova has been reforming its child care and protection system for more than fifteen years with remarkable achievements. This includes a strong legal and policy framework supporting family care and social services, strengthened and expanded alternative family-based care,¹ and a reduction of children in institutional care from a peak of 17,000 in 2003 to 11,544 in 2007 and to less than 700 in 2022.² In 2022, the Government of Moldova articulated its commitment to translating these legal provisions into practical implementation through the National Child Protection Program (2022–2026).³ The five-year program illustrates the commitment of the Government of Moldova and its partners to fulfill the goal of zero children in institutions⁴ and a social service system anchored in securing safe and nurturing family care for all children.⁵

Despite the notable achievements in reforming the child care and protection system, there remain gaps in policy and practice that continue to allow for the placement of children in institutions, including young children under seven years and children with disabilities. Recent evidence found 10% of the 676 children in institutional care in 2021 were under three years old. More than one third (38%) were children with disabilities, and more than two thirds of those have a severe disability and/or complex needs. Only four out of five children were found to have a case plan.⁶ As recently as May 2023, 26 children under the age of three were found to have been placed in institutional care.⁷

¹ Changing the Way We Care. (2021). Situational Analysis of Care Reform in the Republic of Moldova: Report 1. Analysis Focused on Vulnerable Groups of Children and the Prevention of Child-Family Separation. Situational Analysis of the Care System in the Republic of Moldova. Changing the Way We Care. Retrieved from: <https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/Report%201%20Care%20Assessment%20187%20Web.pdf>

² National Bureau of Statistics, Moldova.

³ Government of Moldova, National Programme for Children Protection (2022–2026). Retrieved from: https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/325_0.pdf

⁴ Changing the Way We Care (2023). Investing in Family Care for Moldova's Future: The Case for Meeting Moldova's Human Capital Needs. Retrieved from <https://bettercarenetwork.org/library/strengthening-family-care/investing-in-family-care-for-moldova%E2%80%99s-future-the-case-for-meeting-moldovas-human-capital-need>

⁵ Government of Moldova (2022). Op.cit.

⁶ Changing the Way We Care. (2021). Op.cit.

⁷ Data provided by CTWWC partners engaged in placement centers for children under three.



Ending the placement of all children in institutional care remains at the forefront of Moldova’s care reform efforts. A critical step in this effort is beginning with young children. Reaching this goal also reflects Moldova’s commitment to securing membership in 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.⁸ The recommendations specifically mentioned that the number of babies and children with disabilities in institutional care in Moldova is a concern.⁹

Economic resources saved through the closure of institutions have not, until now, been used to prevent separation by providing social services designed to address the root causes that make families vulnerable to separation. Funds have not been reorganized to expand and strengthen family-based alternative care services.¹⁰ A recent investment case for family care has further illustrated the clear cost benefits of investing in social services versus residential care.¹¹ A 2022 study found that Moldovan institutions for young children cost from 245,000–339,000 MDL per child, versus the 17,185 MDL per child on average for family-based services¹² and 120,000 MDL per child placed in foster care.¹³

The Moldovan legal framework clearly states that placing children in residential care, including institutions, should be the last resort. The National Child Protection Program includes a recommendation for introducing a moratorium on placement of children under three in institutional care,¹⁴ a step articulated, for the first time, in 2013 at the Sofia Conference on Deinstitutionalization of Children 0–3.¹⁵ State and non-state actors have endorsed the recommendation to introduce a moratorium on the placement of children under seven in institutional care.¹⁶ The age was expanded to include children up to and including six years old to reflect the age range of children cared for in institutions for young children.

For Moldova to truly move forward in its effort to end reliance on institutional care for children, and fully emulate the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, which specifically mention that “in accordance with the predominant opinion of experts, alternative care for young children, especially those under the age of three years, should be provided in family-based settings”¹⁷ prohibiting the placement of young children, aged 0–6 in institutional care is not only necessary but urgent.

International evidence

More than eight decades of research documents the adverse effects of child separation and institutionalization on the young child. The 1940’s and 1950’s work of Dr. John Bowlby, who published widely on attachment, child–mother separation, and institutionalization, has brought considerable attention to this research. He suggested that the stable relationships between

⁸ European Commission (2022). Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, and the Council. Commission Opinion on the Republic of Moldova’s application for membership of the European Union. COM (2022) 406. Final.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Cannon, M. & Gheorghe, C. (2018). Assessing Alternative Care for Children in Moldova: Assessment report (Volume 1). Retrieved from: <https://www.data4impactproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/tr-18-262a-1.pdf>

¹¹ Changing the Way We Care (2023). Investing in Family Care for Moldova’s Future. Retrieved from: https://bettercarenetwork.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/final_en_investing_in_family_care_for_moldovas_future.pdf

¹² Changing the Way We Care (2022). Residential institutional evaluation findings and recommendations. Retrieved May 15, 2023: EN Final Summary Residential Assessments (bettercarenetwork.org)

¹³ Based on calculations provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

¹⁴ Government of Moldova (2022). *Op.cit.*

¹⁵ Changing the Way We Care. (2021). *Op.cit.*

¹⁶ Changing the Way We Care. (2021). *Op.cit.*

¹⁷ UN General Assembly (2010). Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 February 2010, A/RES/64/142, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4c3acc162.html>, page 5.



children and caregivers is critical to healthy development and is missing in institutional care settings. A 2008 publication on the St. Petersburg Orphanage Research suggested that children in institutions can have as many as fifty different caregivers.¹⁸ The world-renowned Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University has continued building and sharing evidence on child development, resiliency, and the impact of toxic stress on children, which includes the stress of separation. Some of their most seminal work finds adversity can disrupt children's development; that responsive relationships and positive experiences build strong brain architecture; and that early experiences and early development of adaptive skills can counterbalance adversity.¹⁹

In 2019, the Lancet commissioned a group of researchers to look at the eight decades of evidence on the institutionalization and deinstitutionalization of children. **This research, published in 2020, found strong negative associations between institutional care and children's development, especially in relation to physical growth, cognition, attention, socioemotional development and mental health. They found that leaving institutions for foster or family care is associated with significant recovery for some developmental outcomes, and that the length of time in institutions was associated with increased risk of adverse sequelae and diminished chance of recovery.**²⁰ Analyses by the Bucharest Early Intervention Project,²¹ published in 2022, indicates that stable placements throughout childhood are associated with the greatest long-term gains in cognitive ability, indicating that early investment in family care as an alternative to institutional care leads to sustained gains in cognitive ability.²² The one-to-one foster caregiving relationships is a likely mechanism for such outcomes.

In the words of the Center on the Developing Child, "The healthy development of all children is essential for a thriving and prosperous community, and we now know a great deal about how child development works, as well as how to prevent and address problems."²³ Research and practice both show that early interventions for young children lead to lasting change that has significant implications for long-term health of society. Such evidence is critical to influencing decision-makers in Moldova to invest in programs aimed at improving care of the young child and, therefore, children's developmental outcomes.

Conference overview and objectives

The International Conference "Ending the placement of young children in institutional care—from policy to action" is a one-day event organized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. The conference will engage around 100 participants responsible for and/or supporting child protection and care reforms in Moldova and is organized in partnership with the *Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and Research, the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova, UNICEF, CCF Moldova, Keystone, Partnerships for Every Child and with technical assistance and funding from USAID, MacArthur Foundation, and GHR Foundation via the Changing the Way We Care (CTWWC) Global Initiative.*

¹⁸ Cited in Bakermans-Kranenburg, M.J., et al. (2011). "Attachment and emotional development in institutional care: Characteristics and catch-up," *Society for Research in Child Development*, vol. 76, no. 4, pp. 62-91. [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4166527/#:~:text=Bowlby%20\(1951\)%20was%20highly%20suspicious,%3B%20Spitz%2C%20\(1946\)%20regarding%20the](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4166527/#:~:text=Bowlby%20(1951)%20was%20highly%20suspicious,%3B%20Spitz%2C%20(1946)%20regarding%20the)

¹⁹ Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (2016). "Applying the Science of Child Development in Child Welfare Systems." <http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu>

²⁰ Van IJzendoorn, Marinus H, et al. (2020). "Institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation of children 1: A systematic and integrative review of Evidence regarding effects on development." *The Lancet Psychiatry*, vol. 7, no. 8, 2020, pp. 703-720, [https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(19\)30399-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(19)30399-2)

²¹ <https://www.bucharestearlyinterventionproject.org/>

²² Humphreys, K.L., et al. (2022). "Foster care leads to sustained cognitive gains following severe early deprivation." *PNAS*, vol. 119, no. 38, 2022, pp. 1-6, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2119318119>

²³ Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Op.cit.



The goal of the conference is to agree on a roadmap for ending institutionalization of children aged 0-6 in Moldova. The event will bring together decision-makers, representatives of central and local public authorities in relevant fields, members of the National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights, representatives of territorial social welfare agencies and international and local organizations with experience in the field of child protection and care. The event will include presentations of relevant international evidence on the impact of institutionalization and the positive impact of care in a family environment on children affected by the trauma of separation at an early age; analysis of recommendations and best practices in preventing institutionalization of young children; workshop discussions and setting priorities for action to prevent and subsequently stop the institutionalization of children aged 0-6 years.

The recommendations and actions discussed at the conference will contribute to the achievement of the objective included in the EU-Moldova Association Agenda for the years 2022-2027²⁴ point 7, that states Moldova's commitment to finalize the deinstitutionalization of children – "the number of children in institutions is gradually reduced to "0", so that deinstitutionalization is completed, while developing alternative forms of care," as well as to the achievement of the general objective 3, action 62 of the National Child Protection Program (2022-2026) which provides for the establishment of a moratorium on the placement of children of any age, in particular, children up to three years old, in residential institutions undergoing reorganization/liquidation.

Conference key-note presentations and sessions include:

1. A presentation of the longitudinal study findings on the effects of institutionalization and the positive impact of care in a family environment on children affected by the trauma of family separation at a young age. The data will be presented by a panel of internationally renowned experts, academics, and researchers – Dr. Charles A. Nelson,²⁵ Dr. Charles Zeanah,²⁶ and Dr. Nathan Fox,²⁷ coordinators of the research team of the Bucharest Early Intervention Project²⁸ (BEIP) run by Harvard University, Tulane University, and University of Maryland from 1999 to present. BEIP findings have revolutionized and influenced the field of child protection and care policy and programs globally.
2. A presentation of the national research conducted in August-September 2023 on the challenges in preventing institutionalization of children aged 0-6 and recommendations from doctors, nurses, social workers, mayors, and other stakeholders in Moldova for addressing existing barriers in ending institutionalization of young children in Moldova.²⁹ The conclusions of the study will be shared by experts from the Sociopolis Research and Consultancy Centre.³⁰
3. A discussion of the draft roadmap for priority actions in preventing institutionalization of children aged 0-6, facilitated by CCF Moldova experts and focused on confirming specific next steps to be taken by the government and other relevant stakeholders.

²⁴ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/RO/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:22022D1997&from=EN>

²⁵ <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/directory/faculty/charles-nelson-iii>

²⁶ <https://medicine.tulane.edu/departments/psychiatry-child-adolescent-pediatrics-infant-institute-psychiatry/all-faculty/charles-h>

²⁷ <https://nacs.umd.edu/facultyprofile/fox/nathan>

²⁸ <https://www.bucharestearlyinterventionproject.org/>

²⁹ Changing the Way We Care (2023). Understanding the potential for a sustainable moratorium on placing children aged 0-6 in institutional care. Qualitative Study.

³⁰ <https://sociopolis.md/>



CONFERENCE AGENDA

8:30 – 9:00	<i>Welcome coffee and registration of participants</i>
9:00 – 9:30	Opening remarks Moderator: Ludmila UNGUREANU , Chief of Party, CTWWC Moldova Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alexei BUZU, Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova• Kent D. LOGSDON, United States Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova• Jānis MAZEIKS, EU Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova (<i>video message</i>)• Maha DAMAJ, UNICEF Representative in the Republic of Moldova• Shannon SENEFELD, Senior Vice President, Catholic Relief Services
9:30 – 10:00	Ending institutionalization of young children – sectoral and collaboration priorities Moderator: Liliana ROTARU , President, CCF Moldova Panel discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alexei BUZU, Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova• Alexandru GASNAS, State Secretary, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova• Dan PERCIUN, Minister of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova• Tatiana BADAN, President, Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova
10:00 – 10:45	Session I: Setting the stage Overview: Keynote presentations of the international evidence base highlighting the benefits of family care on children’s development, including the impact on children from institutional care who are subsequently placed in foster care. The session will include a Q&A discussion with the participants. Moderator: Kelley BUNKERS , Senior Technical Advisor, CTWWC/Maestral International Speakers: Dr. Charles A. NELSON , Harvard Graduate School of Education, Professor of Education; Professor of Pediatrics and Neuroscience, and Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School; Richard David Scott Chair, Boston Children’s Hospital Dr. Charles ZEANAH , Mary Peters Sellars-Polchow Chair of Psychiatry, Professor of Psychiatry & Pediatrics, Executive Director Infant Institute, Tulane University School of Medicine Dr. Nathan FOX , Distinguished University Professor in the Department of Human Development and Quantitative Methodology, University of Maryland Program in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science
10:45 – 11:15	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:15 – 12:15	Session I: Setting the stage (continued) Moderator: Kelley BUNKERS , Senior Technical Advisor, CTWWC/Maestral International



12:15 – 12:45	<p>Session 2: Understanding the policy and practice barriers for effective prevention of separation and ending placement of young children in institutional care – an overview across sectors</p> <p>Overview: Presentation and discussion of the national research conducted in August–September 2023 on the challenges in preventing institutionalization of children aged 0–6 and recommendations from doctors, nurses, social workers, mayors and other stakeholders in Moldova for addressing existing barriers in ending institutionalization of young children in Moldova. The session will include a Q&A discussion with the participants.</p> <p>Moderator: Igor CHIȘCĂ, Head of the Child Protection Directorate, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection</p> <p>Speaker: Dr. Diana CHEIANU-ANDREI, Program director, SocioPolis Research and Consultancy Center</p>
12:45 – 13:15	<p>Session 3: Presentation of the draft Roadmap for priority actions in preventing the separation and ending the placement of children aged 0–6 in institutional care</p> <p>Moderator: Anastasia GRUZIN, Deputy Head of the Child Protection Directorate, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection</p> <p>Speaker: Parascovia MUNTEANU, National Expert</p>
13:15 – 14:15	Lunch
14:15 – 15:15	<p>Session 4: Discussion and agreement on the Roadmap for priority actions in preventing the separation and ending the placement of children aged 0–6 in institutional care</p> <p>Overview: Breakout group discussions organized by sector (social protection, health, education, local public authorities, civil society & development partners) and around the priority actions included in the roadmap. Discussions will focus on reviewing the proposed actions, confirming commitments, and addressing remaining gaps.</p> <p>Moderator: Ala NOSATII, Program Director, CCF Moldova</p> <p>Group moderators: Technical experts from CCF Moldova, Keystone, and Partnerships for Every Child:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Livia MARGINEAN, CCF Moldova• Daniela MĂMĂLIGĂ, P4EC• Natalia SEMENIUC, P4EC• Irina SPIVACENCO, P4EC• Ana PALII, P4EC• Oxana ISAC, Keystone Moldova• Marcela DILION-STRECHIE, Keystone Moldova• Liliana SIMCOV, Keystone Moldova
15:15 – 16:15	<p>Session 5: Presentation of the breakout groups' conclusions, including an analysis of the proposed actions, a presentation of commitments, and immediate next steps to be taken in setting up a coordination mechanism for the implementation of the roadmap.</p> <p>Moderator: Ala NOSATII, Program Director, CCF Moldova</p> <p>Speakers: Delegated representatives of the group discussions</p>
16:15 – 16:30	Conference closing



PLENARY SPEAKERS

(in order of appearance)



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, Läkarmissionen 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.



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.



Jānis MAZEIKS, Ambassador, Head of the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova

Before joining the EU Delegation to the Republic of Moldova, Ambassador Māzeiks was Under-Secretary of State, Political Director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Latvia. He formerly served as Latvian Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York. Ambassador Māzeiks holds a degree in political science and a master’s degree in human rights and democratization.



Maha DAMAJ, UNICEF Moldova

Dr. Damaj is the UNICEF Representative in the Republic of Moldova. Prior to joining the UNICEF Moldova Country Office in February 2021, Dr. Damaj held several management positions within UNICEF in Tanzania, Oman, Sri Lanka and Lebanon. Dr. Damaj has worked in community development and rights issues for over 25 years, where she has developed, advised or evaluated national and regional programs in disability and inclusion, child protection, children and adolescents’ participation, child rights programming and social innovation, working with UN partners as well as international and national organizations in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. She also served as an Assistant Professor of Public Health Practice in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the American University of Beirut. Dr. Damaj holds a PhD in social health policy from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK, a master’s degree in public health from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, and a BSc in biomedical engineering from the Johns Hopkins University, U.S.



Shannon SENEFELD, Catholic Relief Services

Dr. Senefeld is Senior Vice President, Overseas Operations at Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Dr. Senefeld leads global teams that support CRS' overseas operations. Dr. Senefeld has been with CRS since 2000, serving in a variety of positions and locations during her tenure. Dr. Senefeld also currently serves on the Representative Council for Caritas Internationalis, the CEO Council of the World Trade Center Institute, and the Governing Board and Steering Committee of Changing the Way We Care. Dr. Senefeld holds a doctorate in clinical psychology and is a licensed clinical psychologist. She completed her pre-doctoral clinical training at Neuropsychology Associates of Fairfax, the Kennedy Krieger Institute, and Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital. She also completed post-doctoral training at Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital, where she specialized in children and family assessment and evaluation. She is recognized as a diplomat by the American Board of School Neuropsychology. Dr. Senefeld also holds a master's degree in international development from George Washington University, and a bachelor's degrees in political science and French from Indiana University, Bloomington.



Alexandru GASNAS, Ministry of Health

Dr. Gasnas serves as State Secretary at the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova. Dr. Gasnas is also the coordinator of the national project team for the implementation of telemedicine in stroke care in the Republic of Moldova, which is responsible for creating the national stroke care system and the national rehabilitation service. Before joining the Ministry of Health, Dr. Gasnas was the Chief of the Department of Neurology, Epileptology and Internal Medicine at the Institute of Emergency Medicine in Chisinau. Dr. Gasnas holds a doctorate in clinical neurology, is an associate professor at the Nicolae Testemitanu State Medical and Pharmaceutical University of the Republic of Moldova and is a member of the European Academy of Neurology and the World Federation of Neurology.



Dorina SAVOSCHIN, Ministry of Health

Dr. Savoschin is the Head of the Maternal and Child Health Department within the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova. The Department's mission is to develop and evaluate policies in the field of maternal and child health, by ensuring that pregnant women and children have access to quality, safe and cost-effective medical services. Between 2007 - 2021, Dr. Savoschin worked as a pediatrician and scientific researcher at the Institute of Mother and Child. During this time, she served as a healthcare consultant for the project „The protection against abuse, neglect, exploitation, and trafficking through a consolidated and functional system” supported by the OAK Foundation and was also responsible for training doctors and nurses to recognize and intervene in cases of violence, neglect, exploitation and trafficking of children.



Dan PERCIUN, Ministry of Education and Research

Mr. Perciun is the Minister of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova. During his tenure, he has launched several reforms and initiatives in the fields of education, research, youth and sport. He has prioritized increasing quality in education, including attracting young specialists to schools and improving access to quality education for all children. In 2019, he became a Member of Parliament (MP) and later served as Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Social Protection, Health and Family. As an MP he has drafted over 100 bills, contributed to the creation of the compensation mechanism, the creation of the energy vulnerability fund, the drafting of the new Labor Code and the reform of the social assistance system. Mr. Perciun holds a bachelor's degree in political science, psychology and sociology from Cambridge University. He holds a master's degree in social economics from Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania.



Tatiana BADAN, Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova

Ms. Badan is the President of the Congress of Local Authorities from Moldova (CALM). Additionally, she serves in a number of leadership positions including President of the Delegation of the Republic of Moldova to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and Vice-President of the Network of the Association of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS). Ms. Badan is a member of the Moldovan delegation to the Committee of the Regions CORLEAP (Permanent Conference for the Eastern Partnership). She is serving in her fifth term as the mayor of the village of Selemet, Cimislia. Before becoming mayor, Ms. Badan worked as an agricultural engineer and chief accountant at Selemet town hall. She graduated from the State Agrarian University of Moldova with a degree in agricultural engineering.



Charles A. NELSON, Harvard University

Dr. Nelson is a Professor of Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, Professor of Pediatrics and Neuroscience and Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and Richard David Scott Chair at Boston Children's Hospital. Dr. Nelson's research interests center on a variety of facets in developmental cognitive neuroscience including social perception, developmental trajectories to autism, and the consequences of early adversity. He became interested in the effects of experience on brain-behavioral development as an undergraduate student, and currently studies adverse childhood experiences and their impact on the brain in diverse and vulnerable populations. Working toward creating effective interventions, Dr. Nelson has led interdisciplinary research to better understand what happens in the brain during critical periods of child development in individuals experiencing excessive or prolonged adversity and if these critical periods can be reopened. Most recently, Dr. Nelson received the 2021 Klaus J. Jacobs Research Prize and 2023 Distinguished Scientific Contributions to Child Development Award for his innovative work on early adversity and brain development. He is one of the three Principal Investigators of the Bucharest Early Intervention Project.



Charles H. ZEANAH, Tulane University

Dr. Zeanah is Mary Peters Sellars-Polchow Chair in Psychiatry and Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans. He also directs the Tulane Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health. Throughout his career, he has studied the effects of adverse early experiences on development, including trauma, abuse and neglect. He also has studied interventions designed to enhance recovery following exposure to adverse experience and published widely on these topics. Dr. Zeanah is one of the three Principal Investigators of the Bucharest Early Intervention Project.



Nathan A. FOX, University of Maryland

Dr. Fox is Distinguished University Professor at the University of Maryland in the Department of Human Development and Quantitative Methodology and the Program in Neuroscience and Cognitive Science. He has completed research on the biological bases of social and emotional behavior and infant temperament developing methods for assessing brain activity in infants and young children during tasks designed to elicit a range of emotions and executive control. His work on the temperamental antecedents of anxiety is funded by the National Institutes of Health where he was awarded a MERIT award for excellence of this research program. He is an elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Association for Psychological Science and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. In 2017, he received the Ruane Award for Outstanding Research in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. He is a founding member of the National Scientific Council for the Developing Child and is co-Scientific Director of this group. He is an Associate Director of the Data Core of the Healthy Brain and Child Development study with oversight over electroencephalography (EEG) for the national consortium. Dr. Fox is one of the three Principal Investigators of the Bucharest Early Intervention Project.



Diana CHEIANU-ANDREI, Sociopolis Consultancy

Dr. Cheianu-Andrei is the Research Programs Director at Sociopolis Consultancy company in the Republic of Moldova. With extensive national and international consultancy expertise in the field of social policy development, Dr. Cheianu-Andrei has conducted sociological research on various aspects of social life and has completed external evaluations of social programs. The outcomes of her professional endeavors over a period of more than 25 years are reflected in numerous national and international publications on social protection policies, migration, gender equality, and the involvement of marginalized groups in local decision-making processes.



Parascovia MUNTEANU, Social policy and services expert

Dr. Munteanu holds a PhD in sociology, social policy and human rights and is currently an associate professor at the Moldova State University in the Sociology and Social Assistance Department. She has more than 15 years of experience in promoting social inclusion, deinstitutionalization, and children rights. She was actively involved in the development of Moldova's National Child Protection Program, Moldova's National Program on the Deinstitutionalization of Persons with Intellectual and Psychosocial Disabilities and the legal framework for social services development. Dr. Munteanu is the author and co-author of several publications addressing issues of deinstitutionalization, social inclusion, disability-rights based approach, inclusive education and child protection. She is involved in various technical assistance projects for strengthening the national social assistance system.



MODERATORS

(in alphabetical order)



Kelley BUNKERS, Maestral International

Ms. Bunkers is a Senior Associate at Maestral International and currently serves as a Senior Technical Advisor for Changing the Way We Care and is supporting UNICEF Ukraine in national care reform efforts. She has over three decades of experience in child care and protection across 30 countries. Her six-year stint in Romania deepened her understanding of the importance of safe and nurturing care for children. Ms. Bunkers has actively participated in the design, implementation and evaluation of alternative care programming, research and advocacy in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa. She has worked with UNICEF, USAID, private foundations, national governments and international and local NGOs. Ms. Bunkers is a member of the Better Care Network Steering Committee and a board member of Faith to Action. She has co-authored over 100 publications and guidance documents on child protection, alternative care, and adoption.



Igor CHISCA, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection

Mr. Chisca 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.



Marcela DILION-STRECHIE, Keystone Moldova

Dr. Dilion-Strechie is a Program Manager at Keystone Moldova. Dr. Dilion-Strechie worked at the Department of Sociology and Social Work of Moldova State University for over 14 years, moving from assistant lecturer to university professor. 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 and 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.



Anastasia GRUZIN, Ministry of Labor and Protection

Ms. Gruzin is the Deputy Head of the Child Protection Directorate at the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. 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. Ms. Gruzin coordinates international adoption procedures and provides technical assistance to territorial guardianship authorities in national adoption procedures. Ms. Gruzin is a graduate of Moldova State University, with a degree in social assistance.



Oxana ISAC, Keystone Moldova

Dr. Isac works as a project coordinator for Keystone Moldova, working with the Changing the Way We Care team on deinstitutionalization and family strengthening. Dr. Isac has more than 30 years of professional experience in the social and educational field, working as a lecturer at the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Moldova State University. Dr. Isac's current portfolio includes promoting safe and protective family-based care for children who have been deinstitutionalized from residential facilities and for children at risk of separation from their families, through strengthening families, reforming national childcare systems and changing commitments at national, regional and global levels.



Livia MARGINEAN, CCF Moldova

Ms. Marginean is a Program Director 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 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.



Daniela MAMALIGA, Partnerships for Every Child

Ms. Mamaliga 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.



Ala NOSATII, CCF Moldova

Dr. Nosatii is the Program Director of CCF Moldova. She has more than 15 years of experience in child protection, special education and early child development. She has actively contributed to the creation of social and educational services for children (alternative family services, early development services, early intervention services, and psycho-pedagogical assistance services). Dr. Nosatii actively contributes to the training and capacity building of social, medical and educational specialists.



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 training programs 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.



Liliana ROTARU, CCF Moldova

Ms. Rotaru is the President of CCF Moldova, a national non-governmental organization that supports the central and local authorities to eradicate reliance on residential care in Moldova and increase efforts on family strengthening, service provision, social innovation, and workforce capacity building. CCF Moldova works together with and represents the British charity Hope and Homes for Children. Ms. Rotaru has over 20 years of experience working in the area of children's rights, holds a PhD in comparative literature from Bucharest University and is currently participating in a master's program in strategy, innovation, and management at Vienna University of Economics and Business.



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 at the local and national levels. She was directly involved in supporting the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection in the development and implementation of the national training curricula and program 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, she worked 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 special educational needs and coordinated the national team of trainers for 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” program trainer and has extensive experience in implementing social and educational support programs focused on parenting education and family strengthening. Her current work includes strengthening the social protection system at national and local levels by ensuring the development and delivery of appropriate and sustainable support services and programs aimed at providing children with a nurturing and resilient family environment.



Ludmila UNGUREANU, Changing the Way We Care

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.

CHILD PROTECTION AND CARE REFORM IN THE CONTEXT OF MOLDOVA – EU ASSOCIATION AGENDA

2024 Theme: Ending the placement of young children in institutional care – from policy to action



LIST OF INVITED PARTICIPANTS

Central Public Authorities	
Alexei BUZU	Minister of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova
Dan PERCIUN	Minister of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova
Petru ROTARU	Minister of Finances of the Republic of Moldova
Adrian BELII	Chairman, Standing Committee on Social Protection, Health and Family, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
Liliana GROSU	Deputy Chairman, Standing Committee on Social Protection, Health and Family, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
Marina MOROZOVA	Deputy Chairman, Standing Committee on Social Protection, Health and Family, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
Vladimir ODNOSTALCO	Deputy Chairman, Standing Committee on Social Protection, Health and Family, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
Liliana NICOLAESCU-ONOFREI	Chairman, Standing Committee for Culture, Education, Research, Youth, Sport and Mass-Media, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
Virgiliu PASLARIUC	Deputy Chairman, Standing Committee for Culture, Education, Research, Youth, Sport and Mass-Media, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
Adela RAILEANU	Deputy Chairman, Standing Committee for Culture, Education, Research, Youth, Sport and Mass-Media, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova
Alexandru GASNAS	State Secretary, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova
Vasile CUSCA	State Secretary, Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova
Valentina CHICU	Advisor to the President of the Republic of Moldova on education and research
Elena DRUTA	Advisor to the President of the Republic of Moldova on relations with diaspora
Lilia PASCAL	Head of the Department on Human Rights and Cooperation with the Civil Society, State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova
Natalia POSTICA	Deputy Head of the Department on Human Rights and Cooperation with the Civil Society, State Chancellery of the Republic of Moldova
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Anastasia GRUZIN	Deputy Head of the Department on Protection of Children's Rights and Families with Children, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova
Eugeniu LIVIȚCHI	Head of the Department on Management and Coordination of the Territorial Social Assistance Agencies, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova
Radion GOREA	Head of the National Agency for Specialized Social Services, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova
Veronica RUSU	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (Center)
Eugen BOTNARI	Head of the Child and Family Protection Department (Dubasari)
Angela CAZAC	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (Center -East)
Marina BALAN	Head of the Child and Family Protection Department (Telenesti)
Marina CROITORU	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (Center-West)
Svetlana BESLIU	Head of the Child and Family Protection Department (Ungheni)



Teodor VICOL	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (North)
Evelina CHISELITA	Head of the Social Assistance Structure (Edinet)
Aliona PERECHIATCO	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (North-East)
Lilia TARPAN	Head of the Child and Family Protection Department (Drochia)
Lucia DIONEAC	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (North-North-West)
Natalia TIGHINEANU	Head of the Social Assistance Structure (Balti)
Lilia MALACHI	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (North-West)
Maria HUZUN	Head of the Child and Family Protection Department (Singerei)
Oxana RADU	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (South)
Georgeta MOCANU	Head of the Child and Family Protection Department (Cahul)
Victoria GANDRABUR	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (South-East)
Lilia SIRBU	Head of the Child and Family Protection Department (Causeni)
Tamara CALUGARU	Director of the Regional Social Assistance Agency (South-West)
Viorica RUSU	Head of the Child and Family Protection Department (Hincesti)
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Edgar DIMOV	Head of General Directorate for Health and Social Protection UTA Gagauzia
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Dorina SAVOSCHIN	Head of the Maternal and Child Health Services, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Moldova
Ninel REVENCO	President, Society of Pediatrics of the Republic of Moldova, University Professor, Head of the Department of Pediatrics, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Nicolae Testemitanu"
Olga CIRSTEA	Secretary, Society of Pediatrics of the Republic of Moldova, University Associate, Department of Pediatrics, State University of Medicine and Pharmacy "Nicolae Testemitanu"
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Ecaterina GINGOTA-BUFTEAC	Director, Republican Center of Rehabilitation Services for Children
Elena ROBU	Deputy Medical Director of Mother and Child Care, IMSP AMT Centru
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Svetlana BRINZA	Senior Specialist in Mother and Child Health Care, Balti Centre for Family Doctors
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Aurica NUCA	Head of the Leova Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Department
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Viorica ANDRITCHI	Director, National Institute for Education and Leadership (INEL)
Vasile COROI	The People's Advocate for the rights of the child
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Viorel FURDUI	Executive Director, CALM
Constantin COJOCARU	Mayor of Edineț, CALM Executive Board



Vitalii GORODINSCHII	Mayor of Briceni, CALM Executive Board
Nina CERETEU	Mayor of Drochia, CALM Executive Board
Maria GALIT	Mayor of Sarata Veche village (Falesti), CALM Executive Board
Nicolai GRIGORISIN	Mayor of Balti, CALM Executive Board
Victor BOGATICO	Mayor of Rascani, CALM Executive Board
Ion CEBAN	Mayor of Chisinau, CALM Executive Board
Sergiu ARMASU	Mayor of Ialoveni, CALM Executive Board
Valentina CASIAN	Mayor of Straseni, CALM Executive Board
Valentin GUTAN	Mayor of Cricova, CALM Executive Board
Valentina BUZU	Mayor of Peresecina village (Orhei), CALM Executive Board
Victor GORI	Mayor of Botnaresti village (Anenii Noi), CALM Executive Board
Nicolae DANDIS	Mayor of Cahul municipality, CALM Executive Board
Vladislav COCIU	Mayor of Stefan Voda, CALM Executive Board
Alexandru BUJOREAN	Mayor of Leova, CALM Executive Board
Tatiana TURCAN	Mayor of Vinogradovca village (Taraclia), CALM Executive Board
Ion BAZU	Mayor of Carpesti village (Cantemir), CALM Executive Board
Ion DOLGANIUC	Mayor of Colibasi village (Cahul), CALM Executive Board

Diplomatic missions and international organizations

Kent D. LOGSDON	United States Ambassador to the Republic of Moldova
Janis MAZEIKS	Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova
Katarina FRIED	Ambassador of Sweden to the Republic of Moldova.
Maha DAMAJ	UNICEF Representative in the Republic of Moldova
Dr. Miljana GRBIC	Head of the World Health Organization in the Republic of Moldova
Jeff BRYAN	USAID Moldova Mission Director
Inguna DOBRAJA	Country Manager for Moldova, Europe and Central Asia
Simon SPRINGETT	United Nations Resident Coordinator in the Republic of Moldova
Irina BESLIU	EU Delegation in the Republic of Moldova
Luigi Nicolo SEGARIZZI	EU Delegation in the Republic of Moldova
David BUERSTEDDE	EU Delegation in the Republic of Moldova
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Kristina KEMPKEY	Senior Advisor, Democracy and Governance Division, USAID Moldova
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Galina CLIMOV	Executive Director, Alliance of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities
Daniela BORDIANU	Executive Director, Voinicel National Institute for Early Childhood Intervention
Edward LUCACI	Executive Director, Caritas Moldova
Igor BELEI	Executive Director, Diaconia
Viorica MATAS	Executive Director, Concordia Moldova
Alina DRUTA	NGO ACMO (Moldova Without Orphans Christian Alliance)
Stela VASLUIAN	Director, Amici dei Bambini Moldova
Liliana ROTARU	President CCF Moldova
Ala NOSATII	CCF Moldova
Livia MARGINEAN	CCF Moldova
Tatiana HARBUR	CCF Moldova
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