



Mapping Gender Equality in Moldova

*(Module 1: Foundation of Gender
Equality in the EU Context)*

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Objective 2: Case study analysis focused on EU policy implementations (successes and challenges)

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Introduction

This analytical report has been developed as a group work within the ERIK (Equality, Rights and Inclusion Knowledge) Programme and focuses on examining how European Union gender equality policies are implemented and how their experiences can inform policy development in the Republic of Moldova. The main aim of the analysis is to assess the relevance and applicability of EU gender equality frameworks for strengthening institutional capacity, governance mechanisms, and evidence-based policymaking in Moldova.

The European Union has established a comprehensive policy framework to advance gender equality through coordinated strategies, legal instruments, institutional arrangements, and monitoring systems. The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 represents a central reference within this framework, defining key priorities related to gender-based violence, labour market equality, and balanced participation in decision-making.

While Moldova has made progress in aligning its legal and policy framework with EU standards, implementation challenges remain, particularly in areas such as institutional coordination, sustainable resourcing, leadership representation, and the availability and use of gender-disaggregated data. Understanding how EU policies move from strategic commitments to operational practice is therefore critical for identifying realistic pathways for reform.

Against this background, the report explores EU implementation experiences and comparative models to support informed policy learning. The analysis places particular emphasis on identifying lessons that are relevant for Moldova and, where applicable, for other Eastern Partnership countries. By focusing on governance mechanisms rather than formal policy alignment alone, the report seeks to contribute to more effective and sustainable gender equality implementation in the Moldovan context.

Methodology

The analysis applies a qualitative comparative methodology based on case study analysis and benchmarking. This approach enables an in-depth examination of how EU gender equality policies are operationalised and how different institutional models influence implementation outcomes.

Two case studies form the analytical core of the report. The first examines the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025, focusing on its implementation logic, governance structures, and monitoring mechanisms. The second analyses gender mainstreaming practices within EU institutions, with attention to institutional arrangements, accountability structures, and operational instruments supporting policy delivery.

Benchmarking is used to compare implementation approaches and institutional performance across selected EU Member States. The analysis draws on experiences from Sweden and Poland, which represent contrasting governance models. Sweden illustrates a context where strong institutional capacity, resourcing, and data systems support effective gender equality implementation, while Poland highlights challenges associated with limited institutionalisation despite formal commitments.

The benchmarking exercise is informed by frameworks and indicators developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), particularly those related to political commitment, human and financial resources, gender mainstreaming tools, and gender statistics. These dimensions are used to structure the comparative assessment and to identify enabling factors and implementation gaps.

The analysis relies on document review and secondary sources, including EU policy documents, EIGE monitoring reports, European Commission publications, and analyses produced by international organisations. Throughout the study, an adaptability perspective is applied to assess how EU tools and mechanisms could be realistically transferred to the Moldovan context, taking into account differences in administrative capacity, governance structures, and data availability.

1. EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025

1.1. Priority areas

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 establishes a comprehensive and operational framework to advance gender equality across all Member States. The Strategy is structured around three interrelated priority areas, each supported by concrete legal, institutional, funding, and monitoring mechanisms. These priorities provide a relevant benchmark for assessing implementation and adaptability in the Republic of Moldova¹:

- **Ending gender-based violence**

A central priority of the EU Gender Equality Strategy is the prevention and elimination of all forms of gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic violence, sexual violence, harassment, trafficking of human beings, and online abuse.

At the EU level, this priority is operationalised through:

- ❖ Alignment with international standards, notably the Istanbul Convention, and EU-level legislative initiatives addressing violence against women and domestic violence.
- ❖ Strengthening victim-centred approaches, including access to protection services, shelters, legal assistance, and psychosocial support.
- ❖ Improving institutional coordination between law enforcement, judicial authorities, social services, and health systems.
- ❖ Investing in prevention measures, such as education, awareness-raising campaigns, and training of frontline professionals (police, prosecutors, judges, and social workers).

The Strategy emphasises the importance of reliable data collection and monitoring, including sex-disaggregated data on violence, prevalence surveys, and annual reporting mechanisms, to ensure evidence-based policymaking and accountability².

Gender-based violence (GBV) remains one of the most acute gender equality challenges in the Republic of Moldova. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), about 63% of women have experienced violence in their lifetime (2018 NBS survey)³.

¹ European Commission, *The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>

² European Commission, *The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>

³ Violence against women in the family in Republic of Moldova, https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Violenta/Raport_violen_fem_eng.pdf

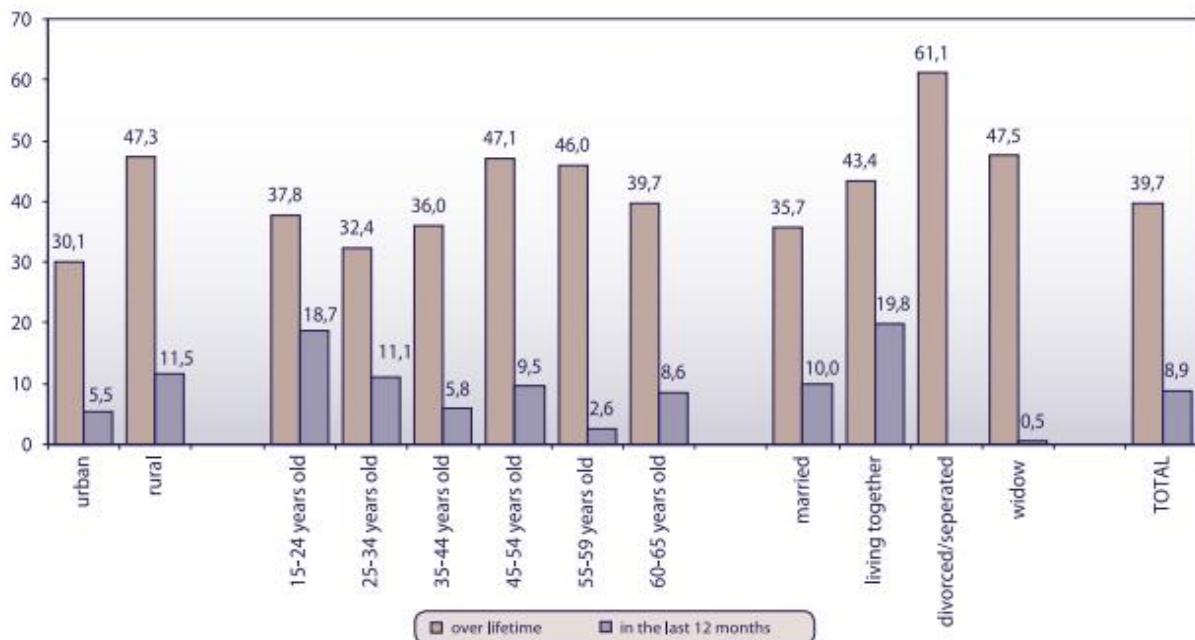


Fig. 1 Prevalence of physical violence committed by husband/partner over women's lifetime and in the last 12 months, by women's area of residence, age, and marital status, %,
Source: 2018 NBS survey.

Despite progress, Moldova continues to face structural gaps:

- ❖ Underreporting remains high, especially in rural areas, due to stigma and financial dependency⁴⁵.
- ❖ Even though Moldova ratified the Istanbul Convention în 2021⁶ full alignment of national procedures is ongoing.

⁴ Ministerul Afacerilor Interne în colaborare cu Centrul de Drept al Femeilor. Raport de analiză a cazurilor examinate de Comisia de monitorizare și analiză a cazurilor de violență în familie soldate cu deces sau cu vătămare gravă a integrității corporale a victimelor în anul 2024. <https://cdf.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/raport-letalitate-2024-final.pdf>

⁵ Moldova struggles with rising domestic violence. Published online on 14.11.2024. <https://moldova1.md/p/38954/moldova-struggles-with-rising-domestic-violence>

⁶ Lege Nr. 144 din 14-10-2021 cu privire la ratificarea Convenției Consiliului Europei privind prevenirea și combaterea violenței împotriva femeilor și a violenței domestice. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=128240&lang=ro

- ❖ Access to protection services varies significantly by region. There are only 21 victim assistance centers, insufficient for national coverage⁷.
- ❖ Coordination among police, social services, prosecutors and courts needs improvement — a problem also confirmed in the Evaluation Report on Domestic Violence 2024⁸.

Positive developments include the establishment of specialised police units trained to respond to domestic violence cases, the implementation of emergency barring orders that allow for the immediate removal of abusers from households, and an increasing number of police officers, including women, who are trained in victim-centred and gender-sensitive approaches. At the same time, significant challenges remain, notably limited and unstable funding for services, persistent stereotypical attitudes within institutions and society, and insufficient availability of psychological and long-term support services for victims⁹.

• Closing gender gaps in the labor market

Another key priority of the Strategy is to address persistent gender inequalities in economic participation, employment conditions, and income.

EU actions in this area focus on:

- ❖ Reducing the gender pay gap and gender pension gap through pay transparency measures and equal pay initiatives.
- ❖ Increasing women's labour market participation, particularly for women with care responsibilities, by promoting affordable childcare, long-term care services, and flexible working arrangements.
- ❖ Addressing horizontal and vertical segregation, including women's underrepresentation in high-growth sectors such as STEM, ICT, and innovation.
- ❖ Supporting women's career progression and leadership, including in research, entrepreneurship, and public administration¹⁰.

The Republic of Moldova continues to face structural challenges in closing gender gaps in the labour market. According to the National Bureau of Statistics data, the gender pay gap remains

⁷ <https://cdf.md/herassments/organizatii-de-suport/>

⁸ Ministerul Afacerilor Interne în colaborare cu Centrul de Drept al Femeilor. Raport de analiză a cazurilor examinate de Comisia de monitorizare și analiză a cazurilor de violență în familie soldate cu deces sau cu vătămare gravă a integrității corporale a victimelor în anul 2024. <https://cdf.md/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/raport-letalitate-2024-final.pdf>

⁹ Hotărârea Guvernului Nr. 332 din 31-05-2023 cu privire la aprobarea Programului național privind prevenirea și combaterea violenței față de femei și a violenței în familie pentru anii 2023-2027

¹⁰ European Commission, *The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>

significant, at approximately **15.6%**, indicating that women, on average, earn substantially less than men for comparable work.¹¹

Labour force participation rates also reveal persistent disparities: in 2023, **39.7% of women** participated in the workforce compared to **47.1% of men** (NBS Labour Force Survey 2023)¹², reflecting barriers to employment access and retention for women. Women are disproportionately concentrated in lower-paid sectors such as education (approximately **70%**) and health care (around **82%**), while they remain significantly underrepresented in high-growth and higher-paid fields like **ICT, STEM, and the security sector**.

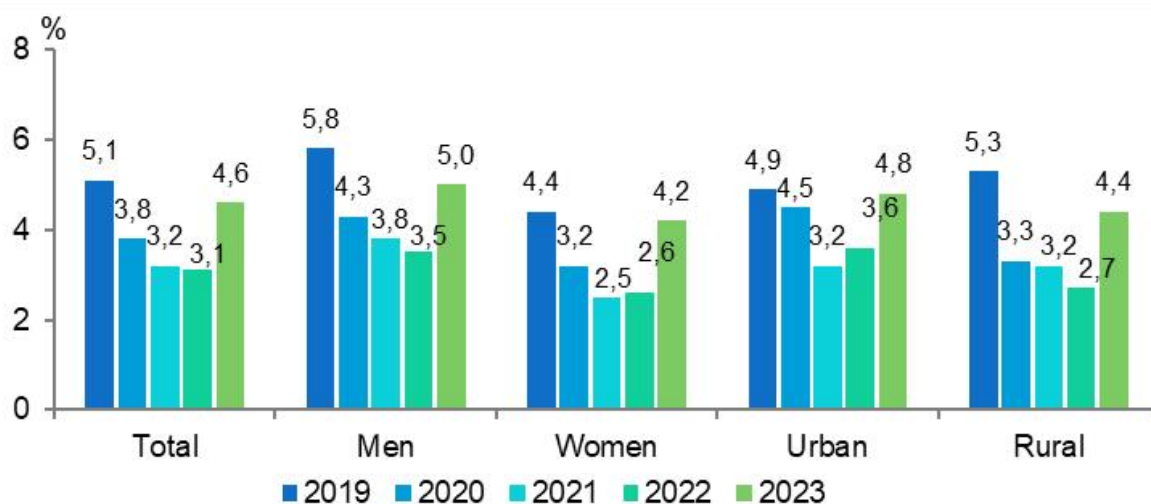


Fig. 2 Unemployment rate by gender and environment, 2019-2023

Source: NBS Labour Force Survey 2023

Leadership distribution further illustrates gender imbalances. In 2023, men held a greater share of leadership positions at all levels, comprising **56.4% of leaders**, compared to **43.6% women**, according to official labour force statistics. These figures show that women face challenges in progressing to managerial and decision-making roles.

Time-use data from **UN Women Moldova** highlights another important dimension of labour market inequality: women spend three times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men, which limits their capacity to engage in paid employment, professional development, or leadership opportunities¹³.

¹¹ National Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Moldova, Gender Statistics, https://statistica.gov.md/en/statistic_indicator_details/28

¹² Labour Force in the Republic of Moldova: Employment and unemployment in 2023, https://statistica.gov.md/en/labour-force-in-the-republic-of-moldova-employment-and-unemployment-in-2023-9430_61083.html

¹³ UN Women Count. Republic of Moldova. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/republic-of-moldova>

• Achieving gender balance in decision-making

The Strategy also prioritises increasing women's representation in political, economic, and institutional decision-making, recognising that balanced leadership is essential for democratic governance and sustainable development.

Concrete EU measures include¹⁴:

- ❖ Promoting gender-balanced political representation at national and local levels, including through legal frameworks, electoral measures, and quota systems where applicable.
- ❖ Increasing women's participation in economic decision-making, such as corporate boards and senior management positions.
- ❖ Strengthening women's leadership in public administration, security, and traditionally male-dominated sectors.
- ❖ Supporting leadership development, mentoring, and capacity-building programmes targeting women.

Globally, some progress on women's rights has been achieved. In the Republic of Moldova, 12.2% of women aged 20–24 years old who were married or in a union before age 18. As of February 2024, 40.8% of seats in parliament were held by women. In 2020, 59.5% of women of reproductive age (15–49 years) had their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods.

However, work still needs to be done in the Republic of Moldova to achieve gender equality. 77.8% of legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality under the SDG indicator, with a focus on violence against women, are in place. In 2018, 9.1% of women aged 15–49 years reported that they had been subject to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months. Also, women and girls aged 10+ spend 22% of their time on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 11% spent by men.

As of Dec-20, only 42.6% of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs from a gender perspective were available, with gaps in key areas, in particular: key labour market indicators, such as the gender pay gap. In addition, many areas – such as gender and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, women's access to assets (including land), and gender and the environment – lack comparable methodologies for regular monitoring. Closing these gender data gaps is essential for achieving gender-related SDG commitments in the Republic of Moldova¹⁵.

While Moldova has made noticeable progress, gaps remain:

- ❖ 40% women in Parliament (after applying the 40% quota law).

¹⁴ European Commission, *The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>

¹⁵ UN Women Count. Republic of Moldova. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/republic-of-moldova>

- ❖ ~24% women in Government positions (2024)¹⁶.
- ❖ Less than 15% women in top leadership roles across the Ministry of Internal Affairs, law enforcement, and security institutions (data provided in MAI gender assessment 2024).
- ❖ In the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), the share of women remains low, especially in operational positions.

Key barriers include persisting gender stereotypes regarding leadership roles, which continue to influence perceptions and institutional cultures; a lack of tailored leadership development opportunities that adequately address the specific needs and career pathways of women; and the limited visibility of role models within the security sector, which reduces motivation, mentorship opportunities, and the likelihood of women aspiring to and accessing decision-making positions.

1.2 Tools and mechanisms:

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 is implemented through a set of interlinked tools and mechanisms designed to ensure that gender equality objectives are not only defined at policy level, but also translated into practice through legislation, funding, institutional structures, and monitoring systems.

- **Gender mainstreaming in all EU policies**

Gender mainstreaming is a core implementation tool of the EU Gender Equality Strategy and requires the systematic integration of a gender perspective into all stages of policy-making, including policy design, implementation, budgeting, and evaluation.

At EU level, gender mainstreaming is operationalised through:

- ❖ Mandatory consideration of gender equality in EU legislative and policy initiatives;
- ❖ The use of gender impact assessments to identify differentiated effects of policies on women and men;
- ❖ The establishment of Gender Equality Units and gender focal points within EU institutions, with defined mandates and coordination responsibilities;
- ❖ Continuous capacity-building and training for policymakers and civil servants¹⁷.

In the Republic of Moldova, gender mainstreaming has been formally incorporated into national strategies and sectoral policies aligned with EU standards. However, implementation remains uneven. Gender mainstreaming is often applied in a procedural manner, focused on formal

¹⁶ Equal Future. Women's representation in politics and public administration in Moldova.
<https://www.equalfuture-eurasia.org/womens-representation-in-politics-and-public-administration/moldova>

¹⁷ European Commission, *The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*,
<https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>

compliance rather than substantive integration into decision-making. Gender focal points exist in many institutions, but they frequently lack sufficient authority, time allocation, training, and institutional support to influence policy outcomes effectively.

Moldova has adopted several frameworks aligned with EU standards:

1. *Programme for Promoting and Ensuring Equality between Women and Men in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2023-2027*. This program establishes objectives, measures, and institutional responsibilities for central and local authorities to advance gender equality, along with monitoring and reporting mechanisms coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. While it provides a comprehensive and EU-aligned strategic framework, its implementation reflects broader systemic challenges: gender mainstreaming is often applied in a procedural, compliance-driven manner, and gender focal points within institutions frequently lack sufficient authority, time, training, and institutional support to meaningfully influence policy design and decision-making outcomes.¹⁸
2. *National Programme for the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security for 2023-2027 (2023–2027)*. This government decision approves a multi-year action framework for implementing Moldova's commitments under UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It guides ministries and public institutions in promoting women's participation in peace and security processes, protecting women's rights in conflict and crisis contexts, and integrating gender perspectives into security and justice policies. The decision assigns institutional responsibilities, requires regular reporting and evaluation, and establishes oversight and funding arrangements¹⁹.

In 2016, with the support of UN Women, the Government of the Republic of Moldova initiated the development of its first National Strategy on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Violence in the Family (2018–2022), marking a significant step toward strengthening the national response to gender-based violence. In parallel, the Parliament adopted amendments to 12 legislative acts, including Law No. 45 on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence²⁰, thereby bringing Moldova's legal framework closer into alignment with international human rights standards.

Gender mainstreaming in the Republic of Moldova is often applied in a procedural rather than strategic manner, focusing on formal compliance instead of being fully integrated into policy design and institutional decision-making. Although gender focal point mechanisms have been formally established across many public institutions in the Republic of Moldova, assessments

¹⁸ Hotărârea Guvernului Nr. 203 din 12-04-2023 cu privire la aprobarea Programului de promovare și asigurare a egalității între femei și bărbați în Republica Moldova pentru anii 2023-2027. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=137409&lang=ro

¹⁹ Hotărârea Guvernului Nr. 152 din 22-03-2023 pentru aprobarea Programului național de implementare a Rezoluției 1325 a Consiliului de Securitate al ONU privind femeile, pacea și securitatea pentru anii 2023-2027. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136728&lang=ro

²⁰ Lege Nr. 45 din 01-03-2007 cu privire la prevenirea și combaterea violenței împotriva femeilor și a violenței în familie. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=150772&lang=ro

highlight that only a limited proportion of these points currently operate with adequate training, authority and institutional support to meaningfully contribute to policy design and decision-making. This gap constrains the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming across the public sector²¹.

- **Funding through EU programs (e.g. Horizon Europe, ESF+)**

Dedicated and conditional funding is a key mechanism supporting the implementation of the EU Gender Equality Strategy.

At EU level, gender equality objectives are financed through:

- ❖ **Horizon Europe** sets **gender equality as a cross-cutting priority** and includes requirements such as the Gender Equality Plan (GEP) eligibility criterion for public bodies, research organisations and higher education institutions to access funding²²;
- ❖ **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)**. Gender mainstreaming and equality priorities are embedded within major EU funding programmes, including **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)**, which supports employment, social inclusion and equality measures²³.
- ❖ **The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme**²⁴ finances initiatives that promote **equality, non-discrimination and gender equality**, including support for civil society organisations working on rights and equality.

A defining feature of these instruments is the use of conditionality: access to funding is linked to compliance with gender equality requirements, transparency, and monitoring obligations.

EU-funded programmes are increasingly conditioning support on partner institutions' adoption of robust gender equality and inclusion practices.

- ❖ Under **Horizon Europe**, gender equality is recognised as a cross-cutting priority, with **Gender Equality Plans (GEPs)** required for eligible research organisations and higher education institutions to participate in certain calls for proposals. This reflects the programme's broader objective to embed gender considerations structurally into research and innovation²⁵.

²¹ European Union, *Country Gender Profile: Republic of Moldova*, EU4GenderEquality Reform Helpdesk, Aug. 2021. <https://euneighbourseast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/moldova-gender-country-profile-4ecf055c05.pdf>

²² Horizon Europe, gender equality. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/51704c8d-ca5f-11eb-84ce-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

²³ Gender equality mainstreaming. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/horizontal-priorities/gender-equality-mainstreaming_en

²⁴ Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme overview. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/horizontal-priorities/gender-equality-mainstreaming_en

²⁵ Gender equality in research and innovation. https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en

- ❖ Under the **European Social Fund Plus (ESF+)** and related cohesion instruments, gender equality and non-discrimination are horizontal principles linked to programme implementation, encouraging partners to adopt inclusive HR policies and to systematically collect, analyse, and report **gender-disaggregated data** to monitor and evaluate outcomes.²⁶
- ❖ The **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) Programme** complements these requirements by providing targeted support for civil society organisations, victim support services, and initiatives that advance equality and fight discrimination, including gender-based discrimination. In addition to financing grassroots advocacy and public awareness campaigns, CERV encourages funded partners to adopt **formal anti-harassment mechanisms, inclusive organisational policies, and evidence-based monitoring practices**, aligning operational culture with the programme's equality and rights objectives²⁷.

Across these instruments, **conditionality** plays a defining role: access to resources and technical support is increasingly tied not only to formal compliance with gender requirements but also to the adoption of measurable practices that institutionalise gender equality and accountability within funded organisations and national partners.

Many universities, research institutes, and several ministries in the Republic of Moldova have already taken steps to institutionalize gender equality by developing and adopting Gender Equality Plans (GEPs) as part of their alignment with EU funding requirements and broader institutional reform agendas. Under Horizon Europe and related EU programmes, the adoption of GEPs has become a formal eligibility condition that promotes systemic integration of gender equality into organisational policies, governance and research practices²⁸.

In contrast, security sector institutions have lagged behind in formalising gender mainstreaming frameworks. However, progress is underway within law enforcement agencies: the General Police Inspectorate implemented a Gender Equality Plan for 2023–2025, marking an important institutional commitment to gender mainstreaming in policing and internal operations. Building on this, the Inspectorate is currently finalising and promoting a new Gender Equality Plan for 2026–2028, which aims to ensure continuity and further strengthen gender equality policies and mechanisms²⁹.

These developments reflect a growing recognition across sectors — from academia and research

²⁶ Gender equality mainstreaming. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/horizontal-priorities/gender-equality-mainstreaming_en

²⁷ Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme overview. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/horizontal-priorities/gender-equality-mainstreaming_en

²⁸ Gender equality in research and innovation. https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/democracy-and-rights/gender-equality-research-and-innovation_en

²⁹ Report on the implementation of the Action Plan of the Programme for the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Republic of Moldova 2023–2027. <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/publications/2023-report-on-the-implementation-of-the-action-plan-of-the-programme-for-the-promotion-of-gender-equality-in-the-republic-of-moldova-2023-2027>

to security and public administration — that structured gender equality planning and implementation mechanisms are essential not only for fulfilling EU funding conditionalities but also for achieving substantive institutional change.

- **Monitoring progress via annual reports and indicators**

Monitoring and evaluation are essential tools for tracking progress and ensuring accountability under the EU Gender Equality Strategy³⁰.

At EU level, progress is monitored through:

- ❖ Annual implementation reports issued by the European Commission;
- ❖ The Gender Equality Index developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), which provides a harmonised measurement framework across Member States;
- ❖ A structured set of indicators covering institutional commitment, resources, policy integration, and gender statistics.

Current national monitoring in Republic of Moldova is fragmented³¹:

- ❖ Gender indicators are included in national strategies but not always collected.
- ❖ Moldova does not yet apply a full Gender Equality Index calculation (EIGE methodology).
- ❖ Monitoring of GBV relies heavily on NGO and donor-funded studies.
- ❖ Monitoring for sectoral gender implementation (ex. security, Ministry of Internal Affairs) is still modest.

Sustained investment is needed to consolidate gender-responsive budgeting and strengthen national monitoring capacity. This includes integrating gender budgeting more consistently into the public finance management cycle, so that budget planning, implementation, and reporting better reflect gender equality objectives. At the same time, Moldova would benefit from developing a centralised national gender data and monitoring system aligned with EU standards, ensuring regular collection of sex-disaggregated data and the use of harmonised indicators. Together, these investments would improve accountability, reduce reliance on ad hoc studies, and support more evidence-based and coherent gender mainstreaming across public policies.

³⁰ Achievements in gender equality. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-equality-strategy_en

³¹ Gender Equality Index. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2025>

2. Gender Mainstreaming in EU Institutions

2.1 *Institutional framework:*

- **Gender Equality Units in EU bodies**

EEU institutions apply sophisticated and well-established internal frameworks for gender mainstreaming, many of which are transferable to the Moldovan context. A key component of this framework is the existence of Gender Equality Units at institutional and ministerial levels. These units are staffed with permanent personnel, have clearly defined mandates, and are responsible for coordinating gender equality policies, monitoring implementation, and supporting decision-makers.

In the Republic of Moldova, similar structures exist formally across several public institutions, including at ministerial level. However, these units are often understaffed, insufficiently resourced, or inactive, which significantly limits their operational capacity and reduces the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming across policies and institutional processes.

Within EU institutions, Gender Focal Points operate under clear legal mandates, receive regular training, and have access to decision-making processes. Their role is formally recognised and integrated into institutional governance structures. In contrast, in Moldova, gender focal point responsibilities are frequently assigned as additional tasks, without dedicated time, resources, or formal authority, which undermines both their influence and the sustainability of gender mainstreaming efforts.

Beyond formal structures, the effectiveness of Gender Equality Units in EU institutions is reinforced by their integration into broader accountability and coordination systems. At EU level, these units operate within a multi-layered governance framework that links political commitment, administrative responsibility, and monitoring. Gender Equality Units are not isolated entities; they are embedded in inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, contribute to policy impact assessments, and are involved in the preparation of strategic documents and annual progress reports. This institutional positioning ensures that gender equality considerations influence policy priorities rather than remaining advisory or symbolic.

Furthermore, EU institutions benefit from stable and predictable funding for gender equality structures, which supports continuity, expertise development, and long-term planning. The presence of performance indicators and reporting obligations strengthens accountability and allows for systematic evaluation of progress. In contrast, in the Republic of Moldova, the limited institutionalisation of accountability mechanisms and the absence of dedicated budget lines for gender equality units reduce both their visibility and their influence within public administration.

The EU experience demonstrates that gender mainstreaming is most effective when Gender Equality Units and focal points are empowered with formal authority, adequate resources, and direct access to decision-making processes. For Moldova, strengthening these elements would significantly enhance the operational capacity of existing structures and improve the sustainability and impact of gender equality policies, particularly in complex sectors such as security, law enforcement, and public administration³².

- **Gender budgeting practices**

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) represents another core practice within EU institutions, ensuring that public resources are planned, allocated, and monitored in a way that addresses gender inequalities. In the EU context, GRB is embedded in strategic planning and public financial management systems, supported by clear methodologies, indicators, and accountability mechanisms.

In Moldova, pilot initiatives on gender-responsive budgeting have been implemented, primarily coordinated by the Ministry of Finance and supported by international partners. Despite this progress, GRB remains partially institutionalised and is not yet applied systematically across all sectors of public administration. Further efforts are needed to integrate gender considerations into budgeting processes at national and sectoral levels, in order to ensure a more equitable and evidence-based allocation of public resources.

At EU level, the effectiveness of gender-responsive budgeting is reinforced by its integration into multiannual financial frameworks, performance-based budgeting, and systematic reporting obligations. Gender equality objectives are linked to concrete budget lines and indicators, allowing for the assessment of how public spending impacts women and men differently. This integration strengthens transparency and accountability, ensuring that gender equality commitments are supported by measurable financial allocations rather than remaining declarative³³.

In the Republic of Moldova, the partial institutionalisation of gender-responsive budgeting limits its transformative potential. Pilot initiatives have generated valuable experience, but the absence of mandatory requirements, standardised methodologies, and gender budget tagging across all sectors constrains scalability and sustainability. Compared to EU best practices, Moldova lacks a consolidated monitoring framework that links budget allocations to gender equality outcomes, making it difficult to assess impact and ensure accountability.

³² European Commission, *The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en>

³³ European Commission. Gender equality mainstreaming in the EU budget. https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/horizontal-priorities/gender-equality-mainstreaming_en

The EU experience demonstrates that gender-responsive budgeting is most effective when legally anchored, supported by central budget authorities, and combined with capacity-building for line ministries. For Moldova, strengthening these elements would support more efficient use of public resources, improve evidence-based policymaking, and enhance alignment with EU gender equality standards.

2.2 Operational tools:

- **Impact assessments with gender lens**

In EU institutions, Gender Impact Assessments (GIAs) are a mandatory element of the policy-making process. Under the European Commission's *Better Regulation* framework, all legislative and policy initiatives must assess potential gender impacts where relevant, ensuring that policies do not reinforce existing inequalities³⁴.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) provides standardized methodologies and practical tools for conducting GIAs, which are widely used across EU institutions to identify differentiated impacts on women and men and to support evidence-based policymaking³⁵.

In the Republic of Moldova, impact assessments are formally regulated within the national policy development framework. However, available analyses indicate that the integration of a gender perspective remains uneven and is often applied in a formalistic manner, depending largely on institutional capacity, availability of gender-disaggregated data, and staff expertise. According to UN Women and national assessments, gender considerations are inconsistently reflected in policy impact assessments, particularly at the sectoral level³⁶.

Adapting EU practices on Gender Impact Assessments would support Moldovan public institutions in systematically integrating gender considerations into strategies, programmes, and legislation, improving policy quality, accountability, and alignment with EU standards.

Within EU institutions, the effectiveness of Gender Impact Assessments is closely linked to their procedural enforceability and quality control mechanisms. GIAs are not optional analytical exercises, but integral components of the policy cycle, subject to internal review and scrutiny before proposals advance in the decision-making process. This ensures that gender impacts are considered early and systematically, rather than retrospectively or symbolically.

³⁴ European Commission. Better Regulation. https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/better-regulation_en

³⁵ The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Tools and methods. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/tools-methods/gender-impact>

³⁶ UN Women Moldova. *Status of Women in the Security and Defence Sector: Between Stability and Transformation*. Chişinău: UN Women, 2025.

In contrast, in the Republic of Moldova, the absence of standardised quality criteria and dedicated oversight for gender impact assessments limits their practical influence. Gender analysis is often treated as a formal requirement rather than a substantive tool informing policy choices, particularly when time constraints, limited expertise, or insufficient data are present. As a result, potential differentiated impacts on women and men may remain underexplored.

- **Training for policymakers and staff**

In the European Union, gender equality training for policymakers and public administration staff is a core and institutionalised part of gender mainstreaming. Regular training programmes are provided to civil servants, senior managers, and decision-makers to ensure that gender considerations are integrated into policy design, implementation, and evaluation. These trainings cover key concepts such as gender equality principles, gender impact assessment, gender-responsive budgeting, and prevention of discrimination, and are supported by EU-level tools and guidelines.

In the Republic of Moldova, gender equality training has been delivered with support from international partners including UN Women, UNFPA, and the European Union, notably through the *EU4Gender Equality* programme implemented in Moldova, which aims to build awareness and capacities related to gender equality and to shift discriminatory social norms across institutional and community spheres³⁷.

Additionally, the *EU4GenderEquality* Reform Helpdesk project, funded by the EU, has organised targeted capacity-building workshops. For example, in 2025 it trained 19 civil servants from the Ministry of Finance on promoting human rights and gender equality in public administration, equipping them with practical tools for integrating gender into public policy and institutional processes.³⁸

Another EU-funded training in June 2025 involved 146 participants from seven central public authorities (including the State Chancellery, the Customs Service, and the Ministry of Agriculture), providing updated knowledge and practical guidance on integrating gender perspectives into public policies and services³⁹.

While these initiatives have contributed to increasing awareness and technical knowledge, training remains largely project-based and irregular. Making gender training more systematic and mandatory across all public institutions would strengthen institutional capacity, improve policy coherence, and align Moldovan public administration more closely with EU gender mainstreaming standards.

³⁷ EU4Gender Equality: Together against gender stereotypes and gender-based violence – Phase II, <https://eu4moldova.eu/en/projects/eu-project-page/?id=2264>

³⁸ <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/moldova-training-for-ministry-of-finance-advances-gender-equality-in-public-administration/>

³⁹ <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/eu-funded-training-for-moldovan-authorities-advances-gender-responsive-governance/>

From a statistical and policy perspective, the need for systematic gender equality training in the Republic of Moldova is strongly supported by both national and international data. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, women remain underrepresented in senior and decision-making positions within public administration, while gender gaps persist in leadership roles and career advancement opportunities, particularly in traditionally male-dominated sectors.

At the international level, the *World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report* highlights persistent gaps in economic participation and political empowerment in Eastern Partnership countries, including Moldova, confirming structural barriers that limit women's access to leadership and influence in policymaking⁴⁰.

Within EU institutions, the impact of gender equality training is reinforced by its systematic integration into human resource management and career development systems. Training is often mandatory for specific functions, linked to leadership responsibilities, and embedded in induction programmes, promotion criteria, and performance evaluations. This institutionalisation ensures continuity, accountability, and the practical application of gender equality knowledge in daily decision-making⁴¹.

In contrast, in the Republic of Moldova, the predominantly project-based nature of gender equality training limits its long-term impact. While EU-funded initiatives have improved awareness and technical capacity, the absence of mandatory training requirements and institutional follow-up mechanisms reduces knowledge retention and behavioural change. Training outcomes are rarely monitored or linked to institutional performance indicators, which weakens accountability and sustainability⁴². The EU experience demonstrates that gender equality training is most effective when it is mandatory, continuous, and directly connected to institutional responsibilities and evaluation systems. For Moldova, embedding gender training into civil service regulations, leadership development programmes, and performance appraisal frameworks would significantly strengthen gender mainstreaming and support the effective implementation of gender equality policies across public administration.

⁴⁰ World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/>

⁴¹ Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the EU: Present realities, future priorities, <https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/institutional-mechanisms-gender-equality-eu-present-realities-future-priorities>

⁴² EU Commission-Better Regulation, https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-making-process/better-regulation_en

3. EU Policy Adaptation in Moldova: Comparative Insights from Sweden and Poland

The European Institute for Gender Equality's (EIGE) 2024 monitoring of institutional mechanisms for gender equality shows very large differences across EU countries: Sweden scores 78% overall, while Poland scores 17%⁴³.

EIGE finds a strong correlation between robust institutional mechanisms and higher gender equality outcomes, as measured by the Gender Equality Index. Successful EU policy implementation is consistently associated with four core conditions: *a budgeted action plan; adequate institutional capacity (staffing and expertise); effective gender mainstreaming tools; and high-quality gender statistics.*

EIGE's monitoring framework explicitly tracks these four pillars⁴⁴:

- ❖ H1 commitment;
- ❖ H2 human resources;
- ❖ H3 mainstreaming;
- ❖ H4 gender statistics.

Moldova should adapt EU practice in a way that builds the four “EIGE pillars” step-by-step (commitment, resources, tools, data), rather than only copying policy language.

Sweden is highlighted by EIGE as one of the top performers overall and also as a top performer in gender statistics (H4) (Sweden is among countries scoring at the top end of the range).

EIGE notes that effective systems require: systemic approach across policy areas, tools/methods (impact assessment & budgeting), good-quality data, and adequate resources.

Adaptation lesson for Moldova from Sweden-type approach are:

- ❖ Build a central, government-wide gender statistics and monitoring system, so policy isn't driven by ad hoc projects;
- ❖ Make gender mainstreaming real via routine methods - ex-ante gender impact assessment + gender budgeting, not optional “nice-to-have” tools;

⁴³ Gender Equality Index. <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2025>

⁴⁴ Institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the EU: Present realities, future priorities. https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/institutional-mechanisms-gender-equality-eu-present-realities-future-priorities?language_content_entity=en

- ❖ Invest in human resources and expertise: EIGE stresses that resourcing and capacity are essential for impact.

Poland's very low overall score (17%) signals that formal commitments can exist while structures, data, and mainstreaming are weak.

EIGE shows Poland also scores extremely low on gender statistics (H4 can be as low as 17% for Poland), which undermines evidence-based policy.

EIGE further warns that “visibility” alone (e.g., formal mandates) does not deliver results unless backed by budgeted plans, targets, and regular monitoring.

Adaptation lesson for Moldova from Poland-type risk:

- ❖ Don't stop at laws/strategies—ensure budget lines + targets + monitoring cycles, otherwise implementation becomes symbolic.
- ❖ Avoid under-resourcing equality bodies: EIGE links weak staffing/resources to weak effectiveness.

A number of concrete EU implementation tools can be realistically adapted by the Republic of Moldova to strengthen gender equality governance and align more closely with EU standards. One of the most transferable mechanisms is the use of conditionality models, as applied under Horizon Europe. Within this framework, the adoption of a Gender Equality Plan (GEP) is an eligibility requirement for funding, accompanied by minimum standards such as public availability of the plan, endorsement by top management, dedicated resources, staff training, and systematic monitoring. Adapting this approach beyond academia would allow Moldova to extend GEP-like requirements to sectors where gender equality implementation remains weak, particularly in security and law enforcement institutions. Such an approach would promote accountability, leadership ownership, and continuity, while ensuring that gender equality commitments are translated into operational practice.

In parallel, strengthening institutional frameworks and budgetary support is essential for sustainable implementation. EU experience demonstrates that gender equality policies are most effective when responsibility is clearly assigned at the highest levels of government, supported by sufficient staffing and technical expertise, and backed by dedicated budget lines. Applying this model in Moldova would directly address existing capacity constraints and reduce reliance on short-term, donor-driven initiatives. Establishing clearer accountability mechanisms, including audits and performance monitoring, would further enhance the effectiveness and credibility of gender equality institutions.

Finally, addressing the data and monitoring gap is a critical priority for Moldova. Current monitoring systems are fragmented and do not provide a comprehensive picture of progress across policy areas. A realistic and feasible adaptation would be the development of a simplified national monitoring framework inspired by the EU's approach, structured around key pillars such as political commitment, institutional capacity, policy integration, and gender statistics. Introducing such a dashboard would support evidence-based policymaking, improve transparency, and enable more systematic tracking of progress toward gender equality objectives.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

This analysis demonstrates that effective gender equality policy implementation depends less on the adoption of formal strategies and more on the strength of institutional systems that support delivery, monitoring, and accountability. The EU experience shows that gender equality advances where political commitment is translated into budgeted action plans, supported by adequate human and technical capacity, operationalised through mandatory mainstreaming tools, and underpinned by reliable gender statistics.

For the Republic of Moldova, the key challenge is not further policy alignment with EU norms, but the consolidation of governance mechanisms that ensure implementation. While Moldova has made notable progress in adopting EU-aligned strategies and legal frameworks, persistent gaps remain in institutional coordination, resourcing, data availability, and accountability. These gaps risk turning gender equality commitments into symbolic measures rather than drivers of change.

The comparative analysis of Sweden and Poland underscores the importance of building the four EIGE pillars—political commitment, human resources, gender mainstreaming, and gender statistics—in a step-by-step and mutually reinforcing manner. Moldova’s reform trajectory would benefit from prioritising institutionalisation over proliferation of strategies, embedding gender considerations into routine policy and budgetary processes, and strengthening national monitoring systems.

Adapting EU tools such as conditionality models, Gender Equality Plans, and integrated monitoring frameworks offers a realistic and feasible pathway for strengthening gender equality governance in Moldova. Such adaptations would reduce reliance on short-term, donor-driven initiatives and support the development of sustainable, evidence-based, and accountable gender equality policies aligned with EU standards.

Key findings:

Implementation capacity matters more than formal alignment

The analysis confirms that alignment with EU gender equality legislation and strategies is a necessary but insufficient condition for achieving substantive outcomes. Across EU Member States, and particularly in the comparative cases of Sweden and Poland, implementation success depends on the strength of institutional mechanisms, not merely on the existence of laws or strategies. Countries with weak resourcing, fragmented coordination, and limited data systems show significantly poorer gender equality outcomes, even where formal commitments exist.

The EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 provides a coherent and transferable governance model

The Strategy combines political commitment with operational tools, conditional funding, and monitoring mechanisms that together ensure policy delivery. Gender mainstreaming, gender-responsive budgeting, impact assessments, and structured reporting are mutually reinforcing

components of an integrated system. These elements provide a relevant benchmark for Moldova, particularly in terms of governance design rather than policy content.

Institutionalisation is the critical dividing line between success and symbolic implementation

Evidence from EU institutions demonstrates that gender equality measures are most effective when they are institutionalised through permanent structures (Gender Equality Units), mandatory procedures (impact assessments and budgeting), and accountability mechanisms (reporting, indicators, audits). In Moldova, by contrast, many gender mainstreaming arrangements remain procedural, project-based, or dependent on individual commitment, limiting their sustainability and impact.

Conditionality is a powerful driver of implementation

EU funding instruments such as Horizon Europe, ESF+, and CERV show that linking access to resources to concrete gender equality requirements incentivises institutional change. The Gender Equality Plan (GEP) model illustrates how minimum standards—leadership endorsement, dedicated resources, staff training, and monitoring—can move gender equality from aspiration to practice. This approach is particularly relevant for sectors in Moldova where implementation remains weak, such as security and law enforcement.

Data and monitoring gaps undermine evidence-based policymaking in Moldova

The analysis highlights significant weaknesses in Moldova's gender data ecosystem. Monitoring systems are fragmented, gender-disaggregated indicators are incomplete, and reliance on donor-funded studies remains high. This limits policy learning, accountability, and strategic prioritisation. Comparative evidence from EIGE demonstrates that strong gender statistics systems are a cornerstone of effective gender equality governance.

Comparative lessons from Sweden and Poland are highly instructive

Sweden illustrates how sustained political commitment, adequate resourcing, routine use of mainstreaming tools, and high-quality gender statistics produce strong outcomes. Poland, by contrast, shows that visibility and formal mandates alone do not deliver results when institutions are under-resourced and monitoring systems are weak. These contrasting cases provide clear guidance for Moldova on both good practices to adopt and risks to avoid.

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