

# SITUATION OF WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS, WOMEN SEX WORKERS AND THE AVAILABILITY OF DRUG DEPENDENCE TREATMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

This information was prepared by Union for HIV prevention and Harm Reduction (UORN) on the basis of its Joint NGOs Submission. Please access the Joint NGO Submission through this QR code.



**Contact details:**

**Ala IAȚCO**

President of the Union for HIV prevention and Harm Reduction  
tel.no. (+373) 79571441; email: protineret@yahoo.com

# EMERGING ISSUES



## THE NON-IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UN TREATIES BODIES (TB) RECOMMENDATIONS

### DESCRIPTION OF THE EMERGING ISSUE



#### The CEDAW recommendation in 2013:

- To review its laws on prostitution and to ensure that women in prostitution are not discriminated or penalized by administrative fines; step up its efforts to support women who wish to leave prostitution; and implement measures to decrease demand for prostitution, including the potential introduction of sanction for sex buyers (§22).
- To collect comprehensive statistical data, disaggregated by sex and age, on the situation of disadvantaged group of women (...) in all areas covered by the Convention (§38).



#### The CEDAW recommendation in 2020:

- Provide adequate funding to civil society organizations that offer support and rehabilitation services to women who use drugs.
- Repeal article 89 (1) of the Contravention Code to decriminalize women in prostitution and provide alternative income-generating opportunities, educational programmes and exit programmes for women in prostitution.
- Eliminate stigma and discrimination against women and girls in prostitution to ensure that they have adequate access to health care, legal services and shelters.



#### The CESC recommendation in 2017:

- Apply a human rights-based approach to the treatment of drug users.
- Provide appropriate health care, psychological support and rehabilitation.
- It urges the State party to maintain harm reduction programmes for drug users.

**None of these recommendations have concerning the most vulnerable groups of women as female sex workers, women who use drugs been fully implemented.**

### SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To implement fully all the mentioned UN Treaties bodies recommendations.



## FEMALE SEX WORKERS AND WOMEN WHO USE DRUGS.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

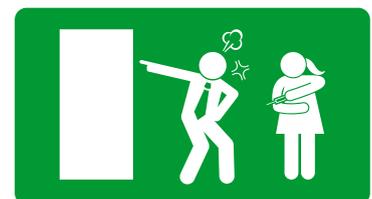
#### *Violence against Women who use Drugs and Access to Domestic Violence Shelters*

The Government of the Republic of Moldova does not have specific policies for women involved in the sex trade to provide additional efforts to support them in accessing services, such as evening opening hours and mobile outreach services. Initiatives, such as peer support, to counter the additional stigma these women may face are not provided.

According to the Government Decision no.1200 from 23.12.2010 for the approval of the Minimum Quality Standards on social services provided to victims of domestic violence: section 2, art 28) people intoxicated with alcohol or drugs are not admitted to the Center. People who use alcohol or drugs within the centre will not receive assistance.

Also, according to art.6 p.5) the Regulation on the organization and functioning of the Pro-Femina maternal Center, coordinated with the Ministry of Social Protection and Family of the Republic of Moldova, the mothers/youths who are addicted on drugs (...) are not admitted to the Center (...).

**At the same time, specially targeted centers for female sex workers/women drug users, victims of domestic violence, or who are in other challenging situations, are not created. The state rehabilitation centres to help former sex workers are inexistent in Moldova also.** To support domestic violence services, noting that 'particular attention should be paid to the protection requirements of women with special needs, including women with substance-abuse problems/sex workers.



### DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

#### *Administrative practices of stigmatization towards women sex workers and woman who use drugs*

Judicial stereotyping is a common and pernicious barrier to justice, particularly for women victims and survivors of violence. Lack of policies to remove the stereotypes from the society, in general, and to change the mentality of police officers, prosecutors, in particular, lead to improper attitudes on their behalf when investigating rape cases with the involvement of sex workers. Very often, these people do not even address to the law-enforcement bodies because they are afraid to be sanctioned for prostitution or not to be aware of their activity among relatives. The eradicating stereotyping from our judicial systems must be a priority.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

### *Discriminatory practices of sanctioning sex work and the consumption of sex services*

The law of several countries prohibits the purchase of sexual services, and the law does not punish women sex workers, but their clients. This is because it is not reasonable to punish people who offer sexual services, but on the contrary, they should be helped to give up this way of life. In Moldova, the current provision of Article 89 of the Contravention Code was amended on December 9, 2018. Amendments include the definition of the prostitution, as well as a new element regarding the punishment of the beneficiary who purchased paid sex services, maintaining the punishment for the person who provides such services. Compared with women sex workers, penalties for their client are lower.

## SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To create a mechanism to report safely and receive protection from the police in cases of domestic violence or other forms of gender-based violence against women who use drugs and sex workers.
- To investigate effectively all the cases of domestic violence committed concerning women drug users or women sex workers.
- To address the issues related to access to shelters for women who use drugs and sex workers and who experience violence, in line with international standards. Shelters must be available for all women who experience violence, and special provisions should be developed to cover the gap and to ensure clear protection for women with drug addiction.



## MOLDOVA'S DRUG DEPENDENCE TREATMENT SYSTEM

### DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

#### *Lack of comprehensive and adequate dependence treatment: drug dependence treatment services, including rehabilitation services to drug-addicted people*

The drug dependence treatment system in the Republic of Moldova operates on the basis of the Soviet model, the main activity consisting in keeping records of drug addicted patients, most of whom become patients of the narcologist following the actions taken by the police and the need for associated drug expert analysis.

The Republican Narcology Dispensary (RND) was appointed by the order of the Ministry of Health to coordinate the drug dependence treatment system in the Republic of Moldova.

Medical assistance related to drug addiction at all stages is governed by *the Regulation on provision of medical assistance to people addicted to alcohol, drugs and other psychotropic substances* approved by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection by Order no. 29 from 11.01.2019. This Regulation refers only to the National Clinical Protocol '*Mental and behavioral disorders related to alcohol consumption*' and '*Pharmacological treatment of opioid dependence*', or **at present there are no other protocols** approved by the Ministry of Health. It is inadmissible in the context of increasing consumption of new substances with psychoactive properties and methamphetamines in the country.

At the same time, the Regulation is limited only to general provisions of assistance, the manner of forced hospitalization and the activity of the drug expertise commission, without describing the stages of assistance, recommended programs and methods of treatment, the responsible institutions at territorial level.



The most common form of drug dependence treatment provided in the Republic of Moldova and the main service available to drug users within the national health care system is detoxification, which is a short-term medical procedure that is to be complemented by long-term treatment interventions, taking into account the chronic and recurrent nature of the disease. The treatment of drug addicts is to be carried out within a specialized program that involves specific objectives, strategies, and methods of intervention. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Health of Moldova does not offer such integrated treatment programs.

According to the Risk Register for 2019-2020 prepared by the Republican Narcology Dispensary of the Republic of Moldova, the following risks are maintained:

- Lack of the internal system of improving knowledge, the experience of the medical staff.
- Lack of technologies and contemporary equipment for diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and patient care.
- Unsatisfactory patient care conditions.
- Lack of quality standards for medical services provides.
- Neglect and non-application of evidence-based medicine.
- Low effectiveness of quality control of medical services provided.

According to official data, the most severe problem in the country's medical system remains actual, namely: reducing the quality of healthcare provided to narcological patients due to the lack of qualified staff.

The only new assistance program implemented by drug dependence treatment services in the country since 2000 is opioid pharmacotherapy (opioid substitution therapy (OST) programs, which although implemented based on the specific medical protocol is currently available in only 7 cities of the country and covers less than 3% of the estimated number of injecting drug users.



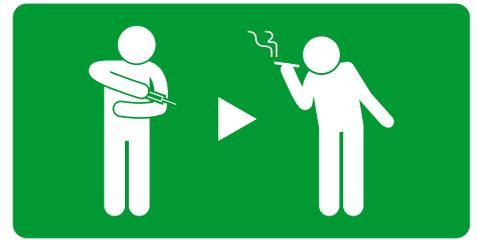
## SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To ensure that a comprehensive treatment system offers a wide range of evidence-based and integrated pharmacological and psychosocial interventions, aimed at treating the whole person. The range includes interventions of diverse intensity, from outreach, low-threshold and brief interventions to long-term, structured treatment.
- To adopt and fund a national plan to increase the availability of rehabilitation treatment by opening rehabilitation programs and centers thorough the country.
- To introduce psychosocial interventions as an integral part of the detoxification procedure. Treatment protocols for detoxification should contain explicit guidance on the kinds and frequency of interventions that should take place during detoxification.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE ISSUE

### *Lack of Harm Reduction Programs for People Who Use New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)*

According to the results of studies on the use of new psychoactive substances (NPS) in Moldova carried out in 2019, the share of people who switched from using opium and amphetamines to smoking or inhaling NPS is growing. People who use NPS are often young and start using NPS with synthetic cathinones (spices). Recent data from the Forensic Science and Technology Centre for Forensic Examination have shown that 70% to 80% of conducted examinations of narcotic substances in Moldova are examinations for NPS (synthetic cannabinoids and synthetic cathinones).



As regards people who use non-injecting NPS, the main difficulty in the framework of harm reduction programs is the inability to register them as clients of the program because they do not use syringes. This is especially critical as the programs state that injecting a drug is mandatory for inclusion.



For those who use NPS, methods of use by smoking and inhaling are common. Consequently, if a person is not registered as a client of the harm reduction program, it is impossible to provide him/her with harm reduction and support services. Therefore, these clients are left without any interventions, including health care and protection of rights.



There is a lack of methodological support for harm reduction programs and a lack of medical protocol for working with people who use NPS.

## SUGGESTED RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Harm reduction programs must be adjusted to identify and implement interventions that are relevant to the needs of people who use NPS, including non-injecting ones, and to ensure appropriate funding for these interventions. This should include information on overdose prevention.
- To adapt the existing psycho-social and medical-social interventions to ensure effective work with people who use NPS, including non-injecting NPS.
- To develop National Clinical Protocols for treating and rehabilitating people who use new psychoactive substances (NPS).

**This information was prepared by Union for HIV prevention and Harm Reduction on the basis of its Joint NGOs Submission.**

**Please access the Joint NGO Submission at the following link:**

[http://uorn.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/UPR\\_JointSubmission\\_Moldova\\_ISSUES-RELATED-TO-THE-SITUATION-OF-VOULNERABLE-WOMEN.pdf](http://uorn.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/UPR_JointSubmission_Moldova_ISSUES-RELATED-TO-THE-SITUATION-OF-VOULNERABLE-WOMEN.pdf)

### Contact details:

#### **Ala IAȚCO**

President of the Union for HIV prevention and Harm Reduction  
tel.no. (+373) 79571441; email: protineret@yahoo.com