



LA
STRADA
Moldova



ANNUAL REPORT



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DEAR READER

We are a non-governmental human rights organization. We, the team of La Strada, work tirelessly to advance and defend the rights of women and children, survivors of trafficking in human beings, domestic violence and sexual violence, child online sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, so that they can live a life without violence.

2021 - the beginning of a new development cycle

For 20 years, we have been working with the Government and CSOs, justice system stakeholders, health and social protection specialists, media and not only around two main programs:

- **The Issues Affecting Women Programme** (it operates in two areas: trafficking in persons, especially women, and violence against women and domestic violence).
- **The Issues Affecting Children Programme** (it is focused on fighting child online sexual exploitation and sexual abuse).



We faced several challenges over the years, but while 2020 was a turning point for La Strada Moldova as we had to complete the strategic plan and learn our lessons, 2021 represented the beginning of a new development cycle. In an unprecedented context we had to quickly adapt to the reality of an ongoing global pandemic, observe and adapt to the changes highlighted by it (especially in the domestic violence and child's online safety areas, but not only) while stay consistent with our usual standard, despite all challenges.

This annual report will show you how we managed these challenges.



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AREA 1. ANTI-TRAFFICKING

The main goal we continued to pursue this year was **to reduce the vulnerability of the people at risk of continuous threats of human trafficking**. In this context, in 2021 we focused our efforts in three specific directions, as follows.

Firstly, we offered continuous expert support to the Directorate for Coordination in the field of Human Rights and Social Dialogue, fulfilling the role of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator. Secondly, we've constantly advocated and lobbied important topics related to our mission (more information provided below). Last but not least, we continued to provide the anti-trafficking community and the society in general with informational support and useful tools to prevent and combat THB; we've also done individual counselling via the Anti-trafficking Hot Line and the online platform for migrants www.migratiesigura.md.

Just to summarize **the most relevant things done by La Strada in 2021 in the anti-trafficking area:**

- Expert input provided to the National report on the implementation of the policy for preventing and combating THB for 2020 (National report) [1];
- Contribution to the development of the National Action Plan in AT field for the next planning period 2021-2022. The majority of La Strada's recommendations are reflected in the Anti-trafficking National Action Plan;
- Assistance with the submission of the GRETA questionnaire for civil society organizations on online and technology-facilitated THB. La Strada provided its input on the impact of technology on THB and using technology to fight THB, based on evidence from its work in the field;
- Written contribution provided in the elaboration of the draft National Report in the context of the third cycle of Universal Periodic Review, which refers to the national AT policies;
- Contribution provided in the Working Group created by the General Prosecutor's Office and IOM aimed at improving the criminal justice response to human trafficking in Moldova. La Strada provided comments to the Practical Guidelines for the Investigation of trafficking in human being crimes;

[1] See: <http://www.antitrafic.gov.md/lib.php?l=en&idc=30&t=/Reports/National-Reports/>



Înainte să accepți o ofertă de muncă peste hotare, informează-te!

Sună la Linia Fierbinte pentru migrație sigură și anti-trafic
0 800 77777 sau scrie-ne pe migratiesigura.md.

migratiesigura.md

- Contributions to the TiP report and to the Report on the Worst Forms of Child Labor developed by the U.S. Department. La Strada participated in the webinars organized by the Directorate for Coordination in the field of Human Rights and Social Dialogue to discuss the key findings, recommendations and actions required;
- Also, La Strada has provided thematic expert support (as the main author) to the Government for the development of a complex policy document - National Referral Mechanism for Protection and Assistance of Victims of Crime (NRMV).
- Individual counselling and information support and referral to relevant services is provided via Anti-trafficking hotline and digital resource center for migrants www.migratiesigura.md

In 2021, La Strada also continued the awareness-raising campaign initiated in 2020 focusing on safe migration and threats of THB for labor exploitation.

KEY FIGURES

16 548

calls registered at
AT & Safe Migration
Hot-Line of La
Strada (080077777);

17 905

visitors on
the website
migratiesigura.md;

51

SOS calls
(34 cases involving
151 people) received
by the hotline
counsellors;

500 000

banner views
encouraging potential
migrants to call the
ATH and access
migratiesigura.md
for more information.

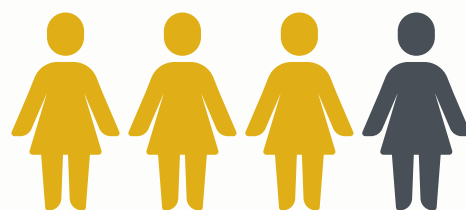


**LA
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AREA 2. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In 2021 the domestic violence remained to be a widespread phenomenon in Moldova. Three out of four women still consider violence against women to be a common occurrence. In 2021, **our main focus was kept on developing the capacities of professionals to address the cases of violence against women.**

In 2021 the domestic violence remained to be a widespread phenomenon in Moldova. **Three out of four women still consider violence against women to be a common occurrence**, which is why the rate of reporting violence is low, given that there are a number of obstacles to women's access to justice and assistance and protection



services, including the lack of trust in the authorities, as well as a lack of medium, long and practical support. Marital rape is still underreported, as 50% of women consider having sex during marriage to be a marital obligation. From the other perspective, media also continued to perpetuate the phenomenon by showing elevated interest first of all for the shocking details of the cases of VAW.

Victims are often re-victimized by the system that should provide them with protection. Thus, even though working in different directions, our main focus was kept on developing the capacities of professionals to address the cases of violence against women. Identifying the good practices and the challenges in the response of law enforcement to cases of domestic violence happened to be also the main challenge. La Strada organized a list of trainings and sharing of experience workshops for criminal investigation officers, prosecutors, doctors, forensic experts, social assistants, and psychologists, but not only, always adjusting the plans and bouncing in between conducting them online and face-to-face every time the imposed restrictions got removed, as previous experience showed their higher effectiveness.

Few victims of sexual offenses complain about the sexual abuse they've been subjected to. Victims' reluctance is due to existing gender stereotypes. Also, accessibility to adequate protection and support services for all women affected by DV and SV still encounters systemic deficiencies even though an important step taken by the Republic of Moldova was the adoption by the Parliament of the Law no. 144 of 14.10.2021 on the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

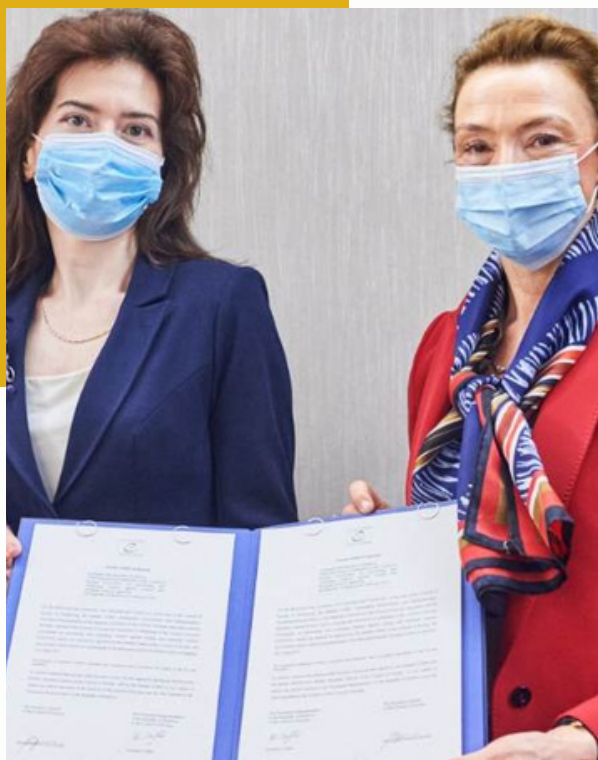


Photo source: www.coe.int

The Republic of Moldova became the 35th member state of the Council of Europe to ratify the Istanbul Convention

The treaty includes 81 articles with provisions in which States parties ensure the prevention and combating of violence against women and domestic violence, the protection of victims, the prosecution of criminals and the adoption of integrated policies.

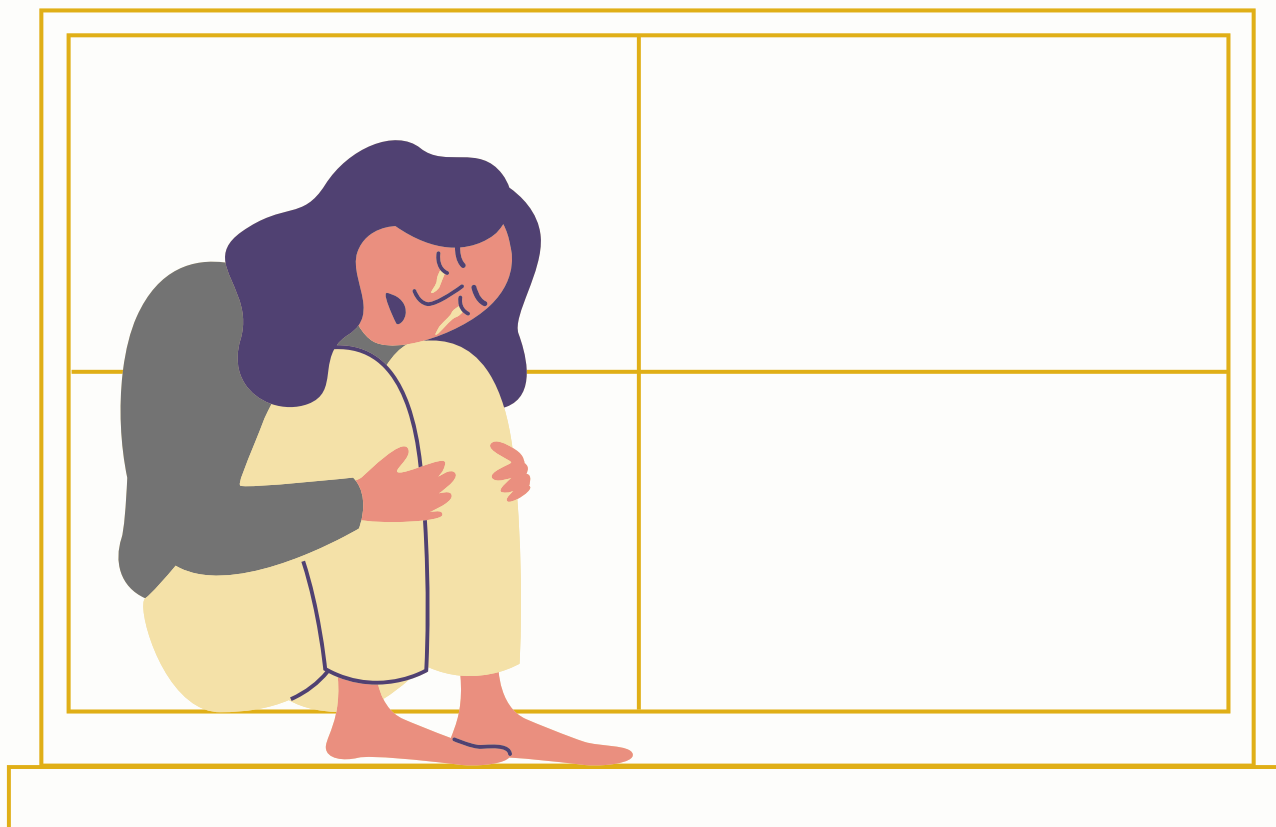
By ratifying the Convention, the Moldovan authorities undertook to punish violence against women in accordance with the law, to allocate resources to ensure the functioning of crisis centers for victims of violence, 24/7 emergency hotlines, shelters for victims of violence, psychological and legal counseling services, but also other measures in this regard.

Following the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, the authorities have taken several measures at national level to transpose the relevant international rules at national level.

Thus, on November 30, 2021, the Ministry of Justice resumed the process of drafting the law to amend some normative acts (ensuring the rights of victims in cases of sexual offenses).

It should be noted that the draft Law on amending some normative acts in the part related to ensuring the rights of victims in the case of crimes related to sexual life is not a novelty. Or, a similar project was registered in the Parliament with no. 479 of 30.11.2020. Due to the non-adoption of the law within one year of the presentation of the amendment initiative, the proposal was declared null.





Thus, by the end of 2021, a large project to amend the legislation in order to ensure the rights of victims in the case of crimes related to sexual life and domestic violence is under consideration [2].

The project is developed in order to implement international standards: Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) ratified by the Republic of Moldova by Law No. 263/2011, Statute of the International Criminal Court, ratified by Law No. 212 of 09.09.2010 which formed the basis of Law No. 64 of 04.04.2013 amending and supplementing the Criminal Code of the Republic of Moldova, Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) ratified by the Republic of Moldova by Law No. 144 of October 14, 2021, adaptation of legislative norms to social realities, as well as granting maximum protection to life and sexual inviolability.

On 10.11.2021, the National Action Plan in the field of preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence for the years 2021-2022 was approved. The general objectives of the new Action Plan are based on the four pillars of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence: prevention; protection; investigation and prosecution; integrated policies and data collection.

[2] <https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/205.pdf>

On 03.01.2021, the provisions of law no. 85 of 11.06.2020 for the amendment of some normative acts, which establishes the electronic monitoring of family aggressors immediately after the issuance of the order for the protection of the victim of domestic violence. The changes also allow the victim, as well as family members, to be monitored electronically through an electronic surveillance system (such as a small GSM telephone), only if they express their consent in writing.

Development of capacities of professionals to address the cases of VAW

During the reported period, within the project “Strengthening the effective response of law enforcement agencies to cases of domestic violence in the context of public health emergencies”, funded by the SOROS Moldova Foundation, the first activity was to assess the systemic response of law enforcement agencies to cases of domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 crisis in the Republic of Moldova, by identifying the good and bad practices of the law enforcement response to cases of domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

In this regard, the calls received by the counsellors of the Trust Line for Women and Girls of the International Center "La Strada" 0 8008 8008 were analysed, during the state of emergency, which showed that the police officers acted in homogeneously and on in some places, to the detriment of the victim of domestic violence. Precisely taking into account these realities, the in-depth study "Response of law enforcement to cases of domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 crisis in the Republic of Moldova" was developed, the aim of which was to identify what were the good practices, but also what were the challenges of the law enforcement response to cases of domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

In order to contribute to the development of capacities of professionals to effectively address cases of violence against women, domestic violence and sexual violence, a methodological approach was proposed. La Strada organized a list of trainings and sharing of experience workshops, between them being:

- The specially designed training course[3] **(16 hours) on investigation and judgments of sexual assault crimes** (developed and piloted within the previous reporting period), what is now institutionalized within the National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

[3] <https://www.inj.md/plan-calendaristic-modular-de-formare-continuu%C4%83-semestrul-i-%C3%AEn-anul-2020-compilat>

Due to lockdown, the course was conducted online. The previous experience showed low effectiveness of the online course, which determined La Strada not to be involved in the online training of prosecutors and judges, expressing the interest to support the face-to-face training once removed the imposed restrictions.

- The **trainings for front-line police and forensic experts** on response to SV. During 2021, La Strada organized three sharing of experience workshops regarding the intervention of Police in preventing and combating cases of domestic violence during emergencies.

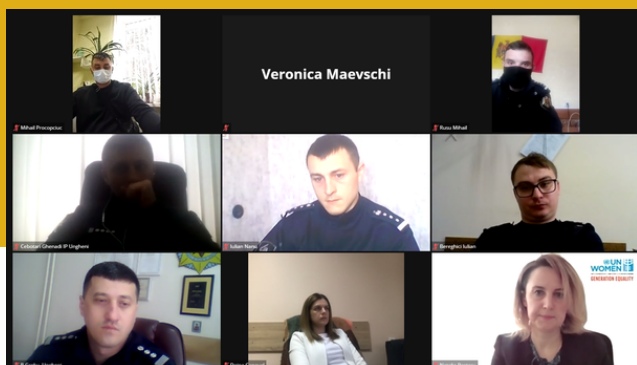
The goal of the workshops was to identify the good practices and the challenges in the response of law enforcement to cases of domestic violence during the pandemics. The events aimed to support the uniform application of the methodical instruction for police intervention in preventing and combating domestic violence during pandemics and to promote a police response focused on the needs of the victims in cases of domestic violence.

The following **topics** have been discussed:

1. The adaptation of the Methodical Instruction on Police Intervention in Preventing and Combating Cases of Domestic Violence;
2. Supervision of the protection mechanisms (Emergency Restriction Order and Protection Ordinance) and ensuring measures to prevent cases of domestic violence in a state of emergency;
3. Lessons learned and exchange of good practices;
4. Police intervention in cases of domestic violence during pandemic period – challenges and identified solutions.

- In April, **two capacity building activities** have been organized: on April 20-21, the online training „Investigation of sexual offences and providing a coordinated response in cases of sexual violence” and on April 22-23 the online training „The response of the medical and social systems to cases of sexual violence”.

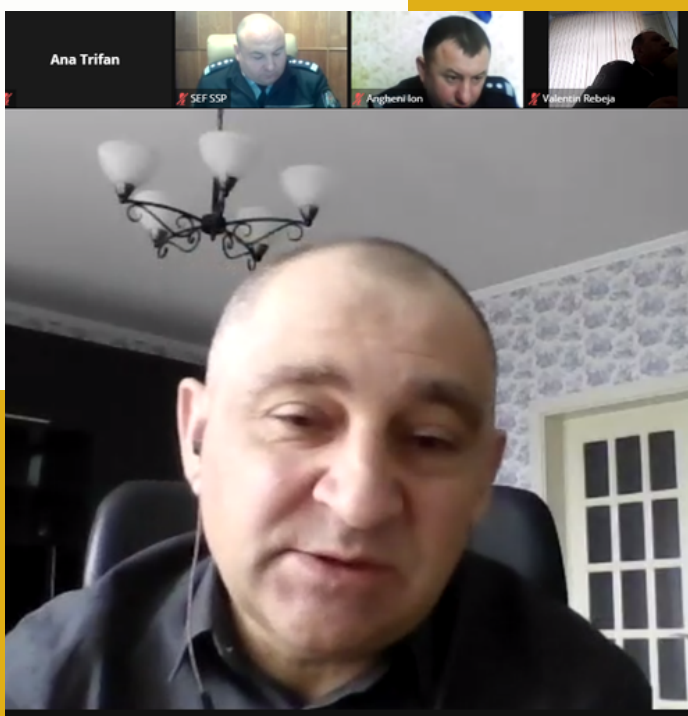
The first training has been organized for law enforcement representatives from Cahul and Ungheni districts (criminal investigators, representatives of the police inspectorates, prosecutors). The two-day event has been attended by 17 participants (4 females and 13 males). The aim of the training was to provide knowledge and skills for law enforcement representatives to investigate cases of sexual violence effectively and to ensure a prompt trauma-oriented response, but also to promote a multidisciplinary response and coordination of efforts of all specialists involved in the response to cases of sexual offences.



The next stage of the capacity building program was to consolidate the **multidisciplinary and coordinated response to cases of sexual violence within the Cahul and Ungheni districts.**

Two separate events for the attendees of the first trainings have been organized in May:

- On May 26th a one-day online workshop „**Multidisciplinary (coordinated) response to cases of sexual violence in the Cahul district**” has been organized for the professionals from Cahul. The event has been attended by 19 participants (11 females and 8 males), including criminal investigation officers, prosecutors, doctors, forensic experts, social assistants, and psychologists.
- On May 27th, a one-day online workshop „**Multidisciplinary (coordinated) response to cases of sexual violence in the Ungheni district**” has been organized for the professionals from Ungheni. The event has been attended by 20 participants (11 females and 9 males), including criminal investigation officers, prosecutors, doctors, forensic experts, and social assistants from Ungheni.



Based on the participants' input, La Strada developed a guideline with practical recommendations of Law enforcement response to domestic violence in the context of public health emergencies, which was printed and distributed to 42 inspectorates of police in June 2021.

Enhancement of the Government response to DV and SV

Following the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the Republic of Moldova on the 14th of October 2021, La Strada's representatives were delegated as members of the Working Groups created by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs aimed at evaluating the results and the determination of the actions needed to ensure the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. La Strada's representatives are included in all four coordination groups created by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs: integrated policies, prevention, protection and punishment.

La Strada representative attended four meetings of the National Coordination Council on prevention and combating domestic violence and gender-based violence organized in 2021. As well, La Strada contributed to the mapping of activities conducted by national stakeholders to ensure the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence by the Republic of Moldova. The mapping of activities was conducted by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs as a first step following the ratification of the Convention by the Republic of Moldova.

La Strada's representative moderated the Anniversary event [4] organized by the

[4]https://m.facebook.com/watch/?ref=watch_permalink

Council of Europe on the 11th of May 2021, with the generic „Voices of practitioners working in the area of violence against women”. The event was organized on the occasion of the 10th anniversary since the approval of the Istanbul Convention and aimed to involve the professionals from the anti-violence community in discussion regarding the key areas covered by the Convention: the prevention, protection, prosecution and coordinated policies to fight domestic violence and violence against women.

To ensure that the national response towards cases of sexual violence is in line with the Istanbul Convention, La Strada contributed to the conceptualization of the specialized services at local and district levels aimed to respond to cases of SV in Cahul and Ungheni districts. During November 2020 – January 2021, La Strada conducted an in-depth analysis of the existing practices and methodology used by service providers in responding to cases of sexual violence in Cahul and Ungheni. Following the main findings and recommendations of the Report on the existing practices and methodologies used by service providers in responding to cases of sexual violence in Cahul and Ungheni districts, an advocacy plan was developed.

The advocacy campaign included the development of a video material for social media: “We need a community-coordinated response to cases of sexual violence” and the 4 dedicated articles/posts about the need and future creation of the specialist service in Cahul and Ungheni districts.



Republica Moldova nu are dezvoltat
un răspuns coordonat, comunitar
la cazurile de violență sexuală.

Expert support for advanced legal framework, implementation mechanism on SV

During November 2020 – January 2021, the in-depth assessment of the existing practices and methodology used by service providers in responding to cases of SV in Cahul and Ungheni districts has been conducted. A holistic methodology has been used to achieve the scope of the Assessment.

First, the relevant normative framework, public policy documents, research and publications in the field of prevention and combating sexual violence were analyzed. Subsequently, on the basis of this analysis, guidelines were developed for the in-depth interviews for the different categories of professionals, as follows: the representatives of law enforcement bodies, policy makers, representatives of local public authorities (LPA), representatives of the Department for Social Assistance and Family Protection (DSAFP), psycho-pedagogical assistance services, representatives of the healthcare system (primary care and hospital care), non – governmental organizations, prosecutors, and judges from these two regions.

To achieve the objective, an in-depth analysis of the decision-makers and their response to cases of sexual violence has been conducted, including 25 in-depth interviews with the following experts from the districts of Cahul and Ungheni: representatives of the district Council, deputy-mayors, representatives from the Social Assistance Department, psychological and pedagogical assistance (PPA), heads of Police Inspectorate (PI), and representatives of NGOs.

In order to evaluate the response of the healthcare system in cases of sexual violence, the information on the structure of the Center of Forensic Medicine (CFM) has been analysed and presented from the legal point of view, as well as the principles for carrying out the forensic examinations of individuals, the statistical indicators in relation to the findings, and findings related to sex offences carried out by the CFM during the period of 2014-2020, initial and on-going training of forensic doctors, gynecologists and family doctors. The following five specialists have been interviewed in the study: the forensic doctor from the Călărași forensic department (the Ungheni forensic department is not working temporarily, situation determined by the natural turnover of forensic experts (resignation)), the head of the Perinatological Center of Ungheni District Hospital, the family doctor from Ungheni Health Center, the forensic doctor from Cahul forensic department and the Head of the Perinatological Center of Cahul District Hospital. The reports included comments, challenges and proposals suggested by the interviewees. The study also included the analysis of 11 reports and forensic reviews of individuals, victims of sexual violence, prepared on the basis of ordinances issued by the Cahul Police Inspectorate and Ungheni Police Inspectorate in order to identify the need for training of forensic doctors.

For the Analysis of judicial practice in cases of sex crimes in Cahul and Ungheni districts, qualitative research methods were used, considering the time and volume of information.

The analysis is mainly based on **two means of research**:

a) **interviews** with prosecutors and judges from Cahul and Ungheni districts and

b) **analysis of documents** made public on the portal of courts and in the possession of authors, whose professional activity is directly related to the topic of research.



Denim Day 2021

As usual, the Denim Day, became an opportunity for advocacy for better protection of women and girls against sexual violence. In 2021, the La Strada Moldova team chose to mark Denim Day by inviting the anti-violence community and each citizen to join this campaign, promoting education and a healthy dialogue with the growing generation to prevent sexual violence. Thus, Denim Day Moldova 2021 became a campaign about the big changes that start from the little people.



The initiative was launched by La Strada Moldova on April 26, three days before the official date, by publishing a thematic photo album representing the La Strada team, sharing our own experiences of interaction with children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, cousins, any child for whom we are the "trusted person", the resource person.

Shortly after that, the initiative was supported by representatives from the diplomatic corps, by the law enforcements representatives, by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry oh Health and several international organizations.

Never before the campaign had such a good engagement on social media like it has had this year.

KEY FIGURES

1956

calls at the National Trust line for Women and Girls, from all the regions of Moldova and abroad. Most calls – 59 percent of the total – were related to domestic violence. Also, 86 calls were registered concerning 36 cases of sexual violence. If we refer to the type of sex crime, most cases are rapes committed by one or more persons;

117

La Strada's lawyer **provided professional legal assistance** to 117 women including **56 women** who benefit from specialized counseling and **61 women** from professional legal services in court (33 criminal cases, 38 civil cases, and 1 administrative case).

540

students (293 - girls, 247 – boys, from 18 institutions in the Republic of Moldova) were trained on the subject of Consent in sexual intercourse and **zero tolerance for sexual violence**;

42

inspectors of police got the guideline developed by La Strada with practical recommendations of Law enforcement response to domestic violence in the context of public health emergencies;

[4]https://m.facebook.com/watch/?ref=watch_permalink

Some key figures to highlight our efforts in tackling violence against women and domestic violence:

- **105 police officers attended La Strada workshops**, heads of the Public Security Department Community Interaction Service within the Police Inspectorate from all districts of the Republic of Moldova from the North, South and Center regions of Moldova (March 31, April 2, April 6);
- **56 women got provided with legal counseling**; 61 women affected by domestic and sexual violence got legal assistance and representation. The criminal cases represent 12 cases of sexual assaults, and 21 cases of domestic violence. Civil cases reflect the legal representation in divorce procedures, child custody, and alimony.

During the year 2021 the La Strada lawyer has been working on 33 criminal cases (21 - DV and 12 SV), 38 civil cases and one administrative case.

AREA 3. CHILD ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND SEXUAL ABUSE

The year 2021 was pretty challenging when it comes to the online engagement of children (pandemic and distance learning related). All the way since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, data from different international organizations show an increase in the number of cases of child sexual abuse in the lockdown period. So throughout 2021 our main goal **we continued putting extensive efforts into contributing to a strengthened national response to online child sexual exploitation**, through a comprehensive intervention focused on developing the capacities of teachers and education institutions, partnering with authorities in developing national policies reflecting child safety online measures, developing capacities of legal professionals on the efficient investigation and examination of online child sexual exploitation cases and exploring the opportunity of setting up new services enhancing the international cooperation in the field and combatting child sexual abuse materials.

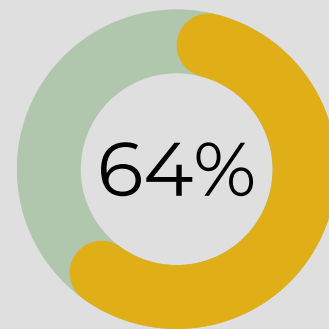


Partnering with teachers

Since its launch in 2018, the „Intersection. Online Safe Zone” Programme for teachers grew from a one-time initiative into a national-scale project:

- The dedicated rubric for teachers on www.siguronline.md was updated with 5 thematic articles and two brochures have been developed: Articles: “What follows after the lesson about online safety?”; “Together for a Better Internet in 2021”; “Hello. I am preparing a project about online safety and I need help”; “FOMO. Fear of missing out”; “Inappropriate content – a delicate topic of discussion”; “Conference for teachers – Online Safety of children and the partnership school – family”; the Brochures: “Teachers, students, education and online safety”; “Guidelines for education professionals – Specialist’s intervention in cases of online violence”.
- The third year in a row, the contest “Together for a Better Internet” proved to be of great interest to teachers from the Intersection Online Safe Zone Community. 22 participants from 13 districts and Chisinau municipality got involved. In spite of the pandemic conditions, in 2021 there were almost **3 times more involved children** than in the previous year.
- Workshops on the best SID practices were organized. On March 24, a workshop for teachers of primary classes was organized. The main objectives of the workshop were: a) to present recent data related to online experiences of children aged 9 – 11; b) to share in the community best practices of educating online safety behaviors during SID activities and lessons; c) to encourage teachers to conduct online safety meetings with parents based on presented materials. In conclusion, it was observed that there is a lack of parents’ abilities to educate their children about safe online safe behaviors. On April 24, a workshop of discussions and sharing of good practices with teachers of gymnasium classes has been organized. 35 teachers from 35 schools from different regions of the country participated, sharing good practices of raising the motivation of many students to get interested in the topic of online safety.
- Online trainings for teachers have been organized, with the following objectives: to supplement teachers with knowledge and resources in order to conduct efficient and child friendly lessons about online safety; guide teachers in adapting informative and didactic resources according to children’s needs. As a result, 10 thematic videos for the trainings were elaborated. Also, previously developed didactic materials for the portal Siguronline.md were used, containing informative materials and infographics.

- In the period April – July, in partnership with UNICEF Moldova, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and General Direction of Education, Youth and Sport Chişinău, 12 video lessons on 6 topics about online safety to be used as didactic material for the work of teachers with students of different ages were produced. The elaborated materials were uploaded on the special dedicated rubric “Online Safety” on the platform Educatie Online. As well, the videos were uploaded on the rubric with didactic materials for teachers. The launch of the sub-page ‘Online Safety’ on the platform Educatie Online took place on 3rd of November.



of trained teachers reported online safety lessons during the whole school year (3630 informed children), except the special dedicated activities with the occasion of Safer Internet Day (7611 informed children).

Partnering with authorities

Schools are safer internet zones for children and adolescents via guidelines, protocols and mentoring services to school management contributing to education of and shared roles in promoting responsible use of internet by all users.

At the beginning of 2021, La Strada in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research created an **expert group to develop a set of Standards** based on the widely consulted and tested Safer Internet School Concept developed by La Strada in 2020. As result of three years of advocacy work, awareness raising and expert support provided to the Ministry of Education and Research, the Set of Standards and the Action Plan for their piloting was approved by the Ministry of Education and Research through the Order no. 872 from 12.07.2021.

6 schools from different regions of the country were selected for the piloting of the Standards.



- The piloting of the Standards refers to a complex process of preparing the school community to achieve a better protection of children from online risks by implementing actions on three dimensions: management, curriculum and education process, institutional capacity. 6 schools from different regions of the country were selected for the piloting of the Standards. A comprehensive capacity building program for the management staff teachers from

primary and gymnasium school, psychologists was developed and implemented based on previous experience within Intersection Online Safe Zone Programme. 22 representatives of school management, 20 teachers of primary classes, 44 teachers of gymnasium classes from all the 6 pilot schools participated in the capacity building activities conducted during August-September 2021. In addition, 57 school psychologists, teachers and support teachers have been trained on the intervention in cases of online abuse. The majority of participants recognized the importance of the discussed topics and the utility of practical activities they had participated at. Although, the participants recognized that even having this acquired knowledge they would still need guidance and support in the work with cases of online abuse.

- To ensure efficient implementation of the Safer Internet School Standards, a group of experts worked on several tools for the schools implementing the **concept of Internet Safety School**:
 1. Two Guides for teachers of primary and gymnasium classes were developed, printed and distributed to teachers in the pilot schools.
 2. Tools to consult opinions of pupils and school community on child safety online were developed. The elaborated questionnaires were sent to online safety coordinators to be applied in the process of piloting;
 3. "Guidelines for school professionals – Intervention of specialist in cases of online violence". providing guidance on the intervention in cases of online violence towards children has been developed.

Safer Internet Day 2021

La Strada Moldova joined the 18th annual edition of Safer Internet Day (SID) on February 9, 2021.

The Safer Internet Day Campaign 2021 aimed at raising awareness of parents and children regarding online risks and encouraging reporting of online sexual abuse, at first dubious signals. The specific objectives of the campaign were to inform children about the risk of online sexual abuse, to encourage reporting, to promote the safe reporting mechanism among youngsters and to put the topic higher

The main message of the Safer Internet Day 2021 Campaign was:

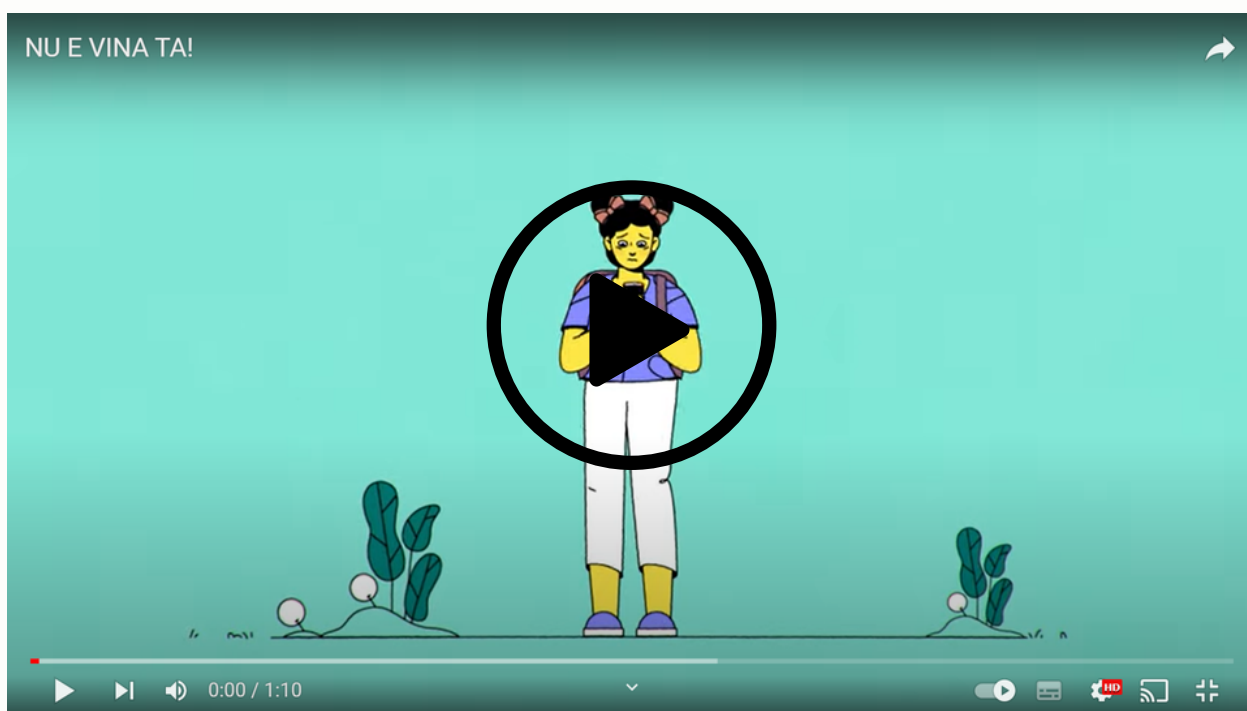
"IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT"

(while addressing teenagers).
On a larger scale, the purpose of the awareness activity was to explain the direct connection between an online sexual abuse against a child and the respect of personal limits and the culture of consent.



on public agenda.

Thus the awareness campaign started by publishing an animated video telling a love story, tailored to help teens to understand where the boundary between one's own desires and someone else's desires is, to help them to identify the manipulative behaviors of another person. In addition, a video graphic targeting parents, that presented some worrying signs indicating about possible online child sexual abuse and encouraging the reporting of cases was developed.



The key messages of the campaign were broadly promoted via Youtube, Google and in public transport. As result, 169k children were informed about risks of online sexual abuse and the safe reporting mechanism, to ask for help. 19k parents got informed about worrying signs indicating about an online sexual abuse and the safe reporting mechanism on www.siguronline.md.

In the context of SID 2021, 3 press-releases have been submitted: the first one submitted to media on February, 9, the second one was released on February, 10 and the third one was launched on February, 11, presenting the video spot for parents).

Interests and needs of children and their families affected by online sexual exploitation or sexual abuse are secured through timely provision of legal aid, psychological support and access to specialized services.

The Child Safeguarding Team, composed of a lawyer and psychologists continued to provide assistance to children, victims or witness of sexual abuse and exploitation throughout criminal court proceedings:

- During 2021, the team provided assistance in 93 cases, of which 58 are new and 35 are ongoing cases, registered in previous years. In the other 4 cases, assistance terminated and cases were closed due to various reasons (refusal of the beneficiary or refusal to further cooperate with police, closure of legal proceedings, issuance of irrevocable court decision; closure of legal proceedings due to lack of offense elements).
- At the end of 2021, the workload of the Child Safeguarding Team represented 89 cases. Most requests for the Child safeguarding team assistance came from police and prosecutors as well as from siguronline.md. The caseload includes rape, perverse actions, online sexual abuse and exploitation (child pornography, grooming, sexual harassment) and child sex trafficking. Most of the new beneficiaries are girls. The youngest beneficiary is only 6 years old and most beneficiaries are in the age category of age of 10-13 years, which **demonstrates a decrease in the age of children who fall prey of online sexual abusers**.
- The psychologist of the Child Safeguarding Team conducted and assisted in 26 hearings in special conditions and/or general conditions, prepared 11 psychological reports and provided psychological assistance prior and during criminal and court proceedings, in a total of 72 interventions.

Throughout the year, La Strada organized activities aimed at **strengthening capacities of the legal system** adequately address cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

- During November 8-12, La Strada in partnership with ICMEC and the National Institute of Justice conducted the training of trainers on effective identification, investigation and prosecution of COSESA cases. Ten international trainers trained the national participants, providing presentations on various topics, according to the agenda. Two prosecutors from the US Department of Justice accepted the proposal to join the team of trainers, providing valuable input for the training. 21 participants, 11 women and 10 men attended the training of trainers. The participants had various professional backgrounds, working as prosecutors, judges, police officers, psychologists, and lawyers. The evaluation of the ToT based on the questionnaires completed by participants may be accessed on the following [link](#).

- During the reporting period, La Strada conducted a knowledge and experience sharing on countering COSESA cases activity to the Netherlands – one of the most advanced countries on combatting online child sexual exploitation. The Study visit was organized in partnership with Defence for Children International which is a lead organization in the Netherlands, on topics related to the protection of children online. They have been recommended by La Strada International and the specialized unit of police from the Netherlands. International cooperation in the fight against CSAM online – INHOPE network. The Moldavian delegation consisted of 9 professionals (3 men and 6 women) representing the following institutions: the General Prosecutor's Office, The Prosecutor's Office for Combatting Organized Crime and Special Causes, the Superior Court of Justice, the Appeal Court Chisinau, the National Institute of Justice, the Specialized Law Enforcement Unit, La Strada, US. Embassy.

As well, in 2021, **La Strada advocated for a comprehensive approach reflected in national policies regarding the prevention and protection of children from online child sexual exploitation.** A special focus was set on the need for developing a national reporting mechanism for child sexual abuse materials.

- La Strada Moldova was involved in the Voices of Survivors research project, aimed to explore child sexual exploitation and abuse online in six countries. In the framework of the project, two best practices were undertaken: qualitative one-in-one conversations with young people who had experienced child sexual exploitation and abuse online, and an online survey of frontline support workers who were working with child survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse. The research put the voices of survivors of child sexual exploitation and abuse online at the forefront of the response to this problem. The findings and recommendations were based on their perspectives about existing reporting mechanisms, and about support services, and must ultimately be translated into strategy, policy and action by duty-bearers, service providers and law enforcement.
- On the 18th of November, La Strada organized an online event to present the experiences of support services in cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation and recommendations for improvements. The event was attended by 73 participants: representatives of public institutions and authorities, social workers, law enforcement, non-governmental organizations, and development partners. The presentations highlighted the need for reporting hotlines, educational measures, and raising awareness to reduce blaming of survivors. The event put the topic of online child sexual exploitation on the agenda of the Ministry of Social Affairs, which agreed on the need of reflecting special measures on this topic in the next Child Protection Measures.

One of the key activities we managed to advocate for is the setting up of a hotline reporting mechanism.

As well, on the occasion of 18th of November, La Strada developed 12 videos reflecting the key messages of survivors. All of these videos were promoted on Facebook and through a Google ads campaign. *Vocile supraviețuitoarelor abuzului și exploatării sexuale online* - YouTube. During 22-29 of November, a social media campaign was conducted. The campaign targeted the general public, adults aged 25-65+ years old, and public officials, teachers aged 25-54 years old. The online campaign reached 344 894 views and 723 754 interactions. The videos were widely promoted nationally, being accessible to people from 32 regions of Moldova.

- La Strada attended 4 working meetings of the Technical Working Group created under the aegis of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection to develop the National Child Protection Program 2022-2026. During these meetings, La Strada advocated for the inclusion of child online protection in the National Child Protection Program. A list of detailed measures reflecting key priorities of the next policy was developed and distributed to the Ministry, development partners interested in the topic (UNICEF) and to national experts selected to draft the policy. All the recommendations were taken into consideration and integrated in the National Child Protection Policy. In addition, it was decided to develop a separate action plan on child online protection, to detail the necessary actions.
- To ensure a better response towards online child sexual abuse and exploitation, in 2021, La Strada initiated a close collaboration with INHOPE to set up a reporting mechanism for child sexual abuse materials in Moldova. Regular meetings were held to discuss about the local context, relevant stakeholders, policies and laws and further steps, based on similar experience in other countries. Following the establishment of the new Government, La Strada managed to agree with the representatives of the Ministry of Interior Affairs on a next collaboration focusing on combatting online child sexual abuse materials. In this regard, a first International Roundtable for national stakeholders was conducted on September 21, in partnership with INHOPE - the international network of hotlines and the specialized cybercrime unit within the police. The goal of the event was to raise awareness about the need for a reporting mechanism in the Republic of Moldova and to encourage the exchange of experience and best practices between national and international stakeholders. The event was attended by 36 professionals (18 women and 18 men), representing the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research, Ministry of Interior Affairs, NGOs, industry, specialized agencies (the E-Government Agency, the Information

Technology and the Cybersecurity Service, etc), development partners (UNICEF, CoE, US Embassy, etc.). International experts with valuable experience shared their inputs regarding the need for a reporting mechanism and how it works.

The International Roundtable was the first step at the national level in upholding the international commitments and will be followed by the signing of a partnership agreement with the Ministry of Interior Affairs for the development and launching of the Hotline in Moldova.



CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE ONLINE:

Survivors' Perspectives in Moldova

KEY FIGURES

47%

increase of reported cases of child online sexual abuse on siguronline.md

500

lessons and extracurricular activities with children aged 8 – 16. In activities about online safety participated 1611 children of primary classes and almost 6000 children of gymnasium classes. All children of gymnasium classes had been informed about the possibility to ask for help and advice on the portal www.Siguronline.md;

1002

teachers, school management, school psychologists reached online and offline, during webinars and seminars on safety online

2353

requests for online counseling on www.siguronline.md; out of the total number of requests about 2.5% come from parents or child carriers. The majority of addresses are from prevention category. The frequently asked questions and issues refers to: how to stay safe online or how to prevent the creation, distribution or access of harmful content by children.



**LA
STRADA
Moldova**

Some other relevant key figures regarding online safety:

- 6 educational institutions from 6 regions, rural and urban, selected for piloting the Safer Internet School Standards;
- La Strada initiated a close collaboration with INHOPE to set up a reporting mechanism for child sexual abuse materials in Moldova.
- La Strada organized activities aimed at strengthening capacities of the legal system adequately address cases of online child sexual abuse and exploitation and the first joint events with private sector representatives, aiming at improving the national response towards online child sexual exploitation, through efficient notice and takedown procedures.

Keeping in mind the future **(learnt lessons and conclusions)**

Strategic lessons learnt:

- The period of transition from the previous strategic plan to the new one made clear the further programmatic priorities of the next years; The collaboration and engagement with the National Coalition contributed to a consolidated voice for advocacy purposes, determining the ratification of -Istanbul Convention by the Republic of Moldova;
- The policy cycle determined the need for La Strada's expertise to advance the national response in the anti-trafficking response, and in ensuring a response for a better protection of children from online child sexual exploitation.



La Strada will further:

- Partner with the National Coalition “Life without violence” and with the Alliance of NGOs in the field of Child and Family Social Protection to advocate for better laws and monitor state response and implementation of commitments at both national and local level;
- Continue to establish and maintain partnerships with international platforms/organizations to advance the national response and bring best practices (ECPAT, INHOPE, etc.);
- Focus on increasing capacities of local organizations and share practices and experiences within the National Coalition “Life without violence”, for a stronger movement;
- Increase efforts to capacitate the justice system to adequately respond to child online sexual abuse by integrating the issue into the formal education cycle and advocating for better laws;
- Increase efforts for integrating child safety online into the educational and school child protection policies;
- Contributing to the development of national policies in the field of child protection from sexual abuse and exploitation, particularly online;
- Strengthen its voice at international level, by sharing key challenges, findings, and lessons learnt on international platforms;
- streamline the multidisciplinary response to cases of violence, involving a victim-centered response and specialized intervention, focusing on victims needs;
- provide support in implementing international standards to advance the national response in the THB and VAW area.
- Continue strategic partnership with national stakeholders enabling efficient implementation of activities etc.

Acronyms

THB - trafficking in human beings

DV - domestic violence; **SV** - sexual violence

VAW - violence against women

CSO - Civil Society Organization

AT - Anti-trafficking; **ATH** - Anti-trafficking hotline

TiP report - Trafficking in Persons report

IOM - International Organization for Migration