

LABOUR MARKET (RE-)INTEGRATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Country note

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PREFACE

The Information Note presents the situation in Moldova related to labour market (re-)integration and skills development for persons with disabilities with special attention on the role of Active Labour Market Policy and Measures.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) initiated a mapping of policies and programmes for labour market (re-)integration and skills development for persons with disabilities in several Partner countries, in response to the European Union's priority to foster social inclusion and economic autonomy of persons with disabilities through employment, as per priorities set out in the EU Disability Employment Package.

The main objectives were to conduct a systemic, comparative policy analysis of the support for employment of persons with disabilities and to identify needs for strengthening the capacity of actors in selected EU neighbouring countries.

The analysis was conducted in accordance with the framework proposed by the EU Disability Employment Package, with a particular focus on Active Labour Market Policies and skills development dimensions.

In Moldova, the methodology consisted in desk review and interviews with the main stakeholders active in the area promotion of employment and inclusion of persons with disabilities. The list of interviewees appears in Annex 1.

1 CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

1.1 Context

Moldova is among the countries with the fastest population decline in the world, driven by emigration, ageing, and low fertility. With an estimated 30–40% of the working-age population abroad, remittances (10.5% of GDP in 2024 and 10 - 12% in 2025) provide income stability for many households, including those supporting persons with disabilities, reducing immediate pressure for labour market participation across all social groups¹.

The Moldovan labour market faces several notable challenges. Data from the Labour Force Survey reveals that, in 2024, labour force participation among individuals aged 20–64 was 59.1%, considerably below the EU-27 average of 80.4%. The employment rate for this age group was 56.8%, compared to 75.8% in the EU-27. Interestingly, the unemployment rate was recorded at 4%, markedly lower than the EU-27 figure of 5.9%. Data shows that the labour market in Moldova faces significant challenges primarily in terms of professional activity due to a large share of the population being outside the labour market².

The population of Moldova also faces severe deprivation. In 2024, 33% of the population lived in monetary poverty. Multidimensional poverty (measuring deprivation in access to health, education, living conditions, and employment) affected 25.6% of the population. The rate was significantly higher in rural areas (37.6%) than in urban areas (10%). These figures highlight the significant socio-economic challenges faced by the Moldovan population, especially for those residing in rural areas³.

Overall, Moldova's demographic contraction, regional imbalances, informal employment patterns, and weak enforcement of inclusion measures create structural barriers that limit labour market participation for persons with disabilities, despite growing labour shortages.

1.2 Statistics on persons with disabilities

Reliable data on disability employment in Moldova is limited and fragmented. Information comes from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and administrative systems (ANOFM, CNAS, CNDDCM), but coverage is inconsistent. The LFS provides basic employment indicators but lacks disaggregation by disability type, severity, or education, while administrative records capture only registered unemployed individuals, underrepresenting actual unemployment. Moldova is not part of the EU-SILC survey system coordinated by Eurostat, which hampers access to data on situation of persons with disability. Data gaps also persist on workplace accommodations, employer quota compliance, and informal sector participation, making it difficult to fully assess labour market inclusion.

As of January 2025, 160 000 individuals (6.7% of Moldova's population) are officially recognized as having disabilities (down from 177 000 in 2020). Of these, 86% have severe (requiring constant care) or pronounced disabilities, and 14% moderate. Children aged 0–17 represent approximately 11 400 individuals (2.2% of all children). Women comprise 56% of the population with disabilities, and geographic distribution shows that 61% live in rural areas, 22% in small and medium towns, and only 17% in major municipalities⁴.

Persons with disabilities in Moldova face significant labour market exclusion. According to the LFS, in 2024 the labour force participation rate of persons with disabilities aged 15+ was 18.4%. Participation

¹ World Bank, Migration and Development Brief, 2024; UN DESA, World Population Prospects, 2022.

² National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Labour Force Survey, 2024; Eurostat, Labour Market Statistics, 2024.

³ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Poverty Statistics, 2024.

⁴ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Disability Statistics, 2025.

was slightly higher among men (19.6%) than women (16.9%), and significantly higher in urban areas (25.0%) than in rural areas (15.0%)⁵.

These rates are substantially lower than those observed for the general population. The labour force participation gap between persons with disabilities and general population reached 25 percentage points (p.p.). The gap was wider for men (28 p.p.) and in urban areas (26 p.p.), while slightly smaller for women (24.8 p.p.) and in rural areas (24 p.p.)⁶.

The employment rate of persons with disabilities aged 15+ stood at 17.5% in 2024. Employment was somewhat higher among men (18.5%) than women (16.2%). By place of residence, the employment rate reached 23.2% in urban areas and 14.6% in rural areas. The employment gap between persons with and without disabilities amounted to 25 p.p., highlighting the persistent and systemic exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labour market⁷.

The majority of persons with disabilities are not working due to disability-related limitations or early retirement. Employment status distribution shows that among persons with disabilities, 45% are inactive due to disability, 31% are pensioners, and only 11% are in formal employment, 6% are actively seeking work, and 5% are self-employed (including subsistence agriculture), while 1% are students⁸.

National Employment Agency (ANOFM) shows that in 2024 1475 persons with disabilities registered as job seekers, accounting for 2.5% of all jobseekers. In this group, 822 registered with unemployed status (55%), which constitutes 4% of the total registered unemployed. In 2024, among people with disabilities registered as unemployed, 56% had only primary or secondary education, 22% had vocational training, 9% had college education, and 13% had higher education. By disability degree, 62% had moderate disabilities, 35% severe, and 3% very severe. Overall, 28% of those registered found employment, mostly people with severe or moderate disabilities⁹.

Employment exclusion is reinforced by multiple, interconnected barriers. Research conducted by the National Employment Agency shows that physical and environmental obstacles e.g. inaccessible workplaces, limited transport in rural areas, and lack of accommodations, affects 49% of job seekers. Attitudinal barriers, including employer discrimination (34%), productivity stereotypes, family overprotection, and social stigma also contribute to the difficult situation of persons with disabilities. Structural, human capital, and informational gaps – job scarcity (29%)¹⁰, fears of losing disability benefits, weak quota enforcement, low educational attainment, limited vocational training, digital divide issues, and poor awareness of employment rights – further restrict opportunities. These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive, coordinated strategies to promote inclusion and economic participation¹¹.

⁵ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Labour Force Survey, 2025.

⁶ Ibid

⁷ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Labour Force Survey, 2025.

⁸ National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova, Labour Force Survey, 2025.

⁹ National Employment Agency (ANOFM), Labour Market Statistics on Persons with Disabilities, 2025.

¹⁰ The family overprotection and productivity stereotypes concerning persons with disabilities was also noted as a key driver of unemployment by the Association of Deaf from Moldova, in their recommendations to the draft Country Note during the public consultations phase (30.03-22.04.2026).

¹¹ National Employment Agency (ANOFM), Study on Barriers to Employment of Persons with Disabilities, 2025.

2 STRATEGIC AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Legislative framework

The basic regulation determining the legal framework is the Law on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, adopted in 2012, establishes the **general framework for protection, promotion of rights and social inclusion** of persons with disabilities in Moldova. establishes a rights-based employment framework¹².

The law affirms the **right to work without discrimination and obliges employers to** provide reasonable accommodation, including workplace adaptation, assistive technologies and support measures. It introduces a **mandatory employment quota** of at least **5 % for employers with 20 or more employees**, although enforcement and incentives are mainly defined in secondary legislation.

To facilitate labour market inclusion, the law promotes **diversified employment pathways**, including employment in mainstream enterprises, home-based work arrangements and specialised enterprises employing a majority of workers with disabilities, which may benefit from fiscal incentives and state support. It also provides **job-retention and re-employment safeguards** for workers who acquire disabilities due to occupational accidents or diseases¹³.

Specific provisions regulate **adapted working conditions**, such as reduced working hours with full pay for persons with severe or pronounced disabilities, extended annual leave and the possibility of additional unpaid leave. The law guarantees **access to vocational guidance, training, rehabilitation and employment services**, mainly financed from public resources and delivered through the public employment service network.

Beyond employment measures, the law introduces a broader set of enabling conditions for inclusion, including requirements to improve accessibility of infrastructure, transport and information, the development of individual rehabilitation and social integration programs, provision of personal assistance and community-based social services, and linkages with the disability assessment and social protection system¹⁴.

Overall, the regulation establishes a comprehensive framework combining anti-discrimination safeguards, quota-based demand-side instruments and supply-side activation and support measures. However, practical impact depends on implementation capacity, inter-institutional coordination and effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms¹⁵.

The Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova complements disability-specific legislation by establishing general labour protection measures and adapted working conditions for employees with disabilities and for parents or guardians caring for children with disabilities¹⁶.

For employees with severe or pronounced disabilities, the Code provides:

- the possibility of a reduced working week (up to 30 hours) with full salary retention, subject to medical recommendation;
- entitlement to extended annual paid leave;
- restrictions on assigning night work, overtime, work on rest days or public holidays, business travel or continuous shifts, which may be performed only with the employee's written consent and in line with medical advice;

¹² Republic of Moldova, Law on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, Law No. 60/2012.

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Republic of Moldova, Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova, Law No. 154/2003.

- guarantees of equal pay for equal work and certain safeguards in cases of workforce reductions (e.g. consideration of social criteria in retention decisions).

In addition, the Labour Code includes work–family reconciliation measures for parents or guardians of children with disabilities, such as:

- the right to request part-time or flexible working arrangements;
- special leave for caring for children with disabilities for up to 2 years, with job protection.
- additional paid leave: one day per month at average salary, plus 4 days of paid annual leave and 14 calendar days of unpaid leave.
- priority in scheduling annual leave and expedited resignation procedures¹⁷.

The Law on Ensuring Equality (2012) and the Law on the activity of the Equality Council (2012) prohibit all forms of discrimination and empower the Equality Council to examine complaints concerning disability-related discrimination¹⁸.

Law on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance (2018) operationalises disability employment rights through active labour market measures and employment services delivered by the National Employment Agency.

It provides **activation and placement support accessible to all registered jobseekers with disabilities**, including employment mediation, career guidance, supported employment services and access to vocational training with adapted conditions¹⁹.

More intensive measures and financial incentives are generally targeted at persons with formal unemployed status, such as participation in subsidised employment schemes, work-based learning measures (e.g. internships or on-the-job training) and eligibility for unemployment benefits where contribution conditions are met.

Secondary legislation (including Government Decision No. 1276/2018) establishes **employer incentives for hiring registered unemployed persons with disabilities**, such as temporary wage subsidies (30% of the average monthly salary for 12 months per hired person with disability) and partial reimbursement of workplace adaptation costs: 50% of costs, capped at ~MDL73 000 (~€3 500) for indefinite contract hires, subject to contractual and retention requirements.

Overall, the law strengthens the supply-side activation framework for persons with disabilities, but the concentration of financial incentives on registered unemployed persons may limit coverage of those outside formal unemployment status²⁰.

Among other additional relevant legislations are the GD No. 893/2018 on deinstitutionalization with employment integration for persons leaving residential institutions, the Law on Social Assistance (2003), which regulates disability benefits and interaction with employment income, and the Law on Social Services (2010), which establishes a support service framework, including vocational rehabilitation.

Determination of disability is regulated by Government Decision No. 357/2018 implemented through the National Council for Disability Determination and Work Capacity (CNDDCM). The legislation recognizes three disability grades based on functional capacity: severe (0–20% work capacity), pronounced (25–40%), and moderate (45–60%), linking eligibility to work capacity and tailored employment protections.

Despite relatively advanced legislation, key challenges remain, including:

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Republic of Moldova, Law on Ensuring Equality, Law No. 121/2012; Republic of Moldova, Law on the Activity of the Council on Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and Ensuring Equality, Law No. 298/2012.

¹⁹ Republic of Moldova, Law on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance, Law No. 105/2018.

²⁰ Republic of Moldova, Government Decision No. 1276/2018 on Employment Subsidy Measures; Law on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance, Law No. 105/2018.

- limited enforcement of employment quotas;
- gaps in the provision of reasonable accommodations;
- constraints in the delivery and uptake of support services; and
- accessibility of public services and information, including for persons with hearing disabilities²¹.

At the same time, EU accession negotiations are driving reforms to strengthen disability employment in Moldova:

- Proposed amendments to the Law on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities aim to improve quota enforcement, expand reasonable accommodation provisions, establish a disability employment fund, and create a supported employment framework.
- The Labour Code is being modernized to align with EU accessibility standards, introduce remote work provisions, reinforce anti-discrimination protections, and clarify employer obligations. Moldova's commitments under the 2021–2027 Association Agreement, including CRPD implementation and alignment with the EU Disability Strategy 2021–2030, support these efforts. Legislative alignment is about 45% complete, with institutional capacity and data systems still developing.
- New initiatives include the Draft Law on Supported Employment, establishing job coaching and pathways from sheltered to open employment, Comprehensive Accessibility Standards for workplace accessibility, and a Unified Disability Assessment System using WHODAS methodology.

These reforms demonstrate Moldova's ongoing efforts to modernize disability employment legislation, enhance labour market inclusion, and meet EU accession requirements.

2.2 Strategic framework

Moldova ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 21 September 2010, committing to shift from a medical to a human rights disability model and the Optional Protocol was ratified in 2021.²² The initial country review by the UNCRPD Committee took place in 2017²³, and the combined second and third periodic report was considered in 2025²⁴.

The 2017 review by the CRPD Committee identified major implementation gaps, including weak enforcement of employment quotas, limited provision of reasonable accommodation, insufficient transition pathways from sheltered to open employment, and inadequate disability employment data.

Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market was streamlined in the National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030", approved in 2023, which positions persons with disabilities as a priority group under Strategic Objective 6 on inclusive social protection. It aimed, among others to:

- increase their employment rate from 15.8% to 30% by 2030;
- reduce poverty from 42% to 25%; and
- expand formal employment and improve accessibility of infrastructure and services.

Nevertheless, while disability inclusion is integrated across strategic objectives, implementation mechanisms and dedicated funding remain limited²⁵.

²¹ Recommendations shared by the Association of Deaf from Moldova to the draft Country Note on programmes on labour market (re)integration and skills development for persons with disabilities in Moldova, publicly consulted with the Moldovan stakeholders.

²² United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Ratifications Status.

²³ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding Observations on Moldova, 2017.

²⁴ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, List of Country Reviews, 2025.

²⁵ Republic of Moldova, National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030", Government of the Republic of Moldova, Chişinău, 2023.

The National Employment Strategy (2017-2022) showed some progress in addressing disability employment, but results remained limited. Around 60% of planned activities were implemented. Labour force participation of persons with disabilities stagnated at around 30 p.p. gap. Weak enforcement of employment quotas, underutilization of accommodation funds, low placement rates, slow accessibility improvements, and the rising poverty rates among persons with disabilities (from 33.9% to 42%) reflected these gaps²⁶.

The ongoing National Employment Programme (2022-2026) operationalized the legislation more efficiently by expanding and better resourcing active labour market measures. It sets clearer targets, including increasing labour force participation to 17.5%, raising employment to 19%, doubling ANOFM placement rates to 15%, and reaching 80% employer quota compliance. Workplace accommodation funding had a more than tenfold increase, while also introducing a dedicated mechanism for monitoring employment quotas. New measures also include supported employment and job coaching (targeting 500 beneficiaries by Year 3), self-employment support for up to 300 businesses, and reforms addressing the “benefit wedge” that previously discouraged transitions into work. Governance and monitoring have been reinforced through inter-ministerial coordination, participatory evaluation, and impact measurement, marking a shift from symbolic policy commitments to a systematically monitored and adequately resourced approach addressing both supply-and demand-side barriers and structural disincentives to employment²⁷.

2.3 Institutional framework

Moldova’s institutional framework for disability employment involves multiple entities with complementary roles in promoting inclusion:

- The **Ministry of Labour and Social Protection** (MMPS) is the primary regulatory body overseeing disability programs, social protection, and EU integration for the Chapter on social inclusion. The Ministry oversees the National Employment Agency, coordinates social protection benefits and disability determination. Its Department for Protection of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities operates with near full staffing, manages 14 information systems, and administers a 0.8 million MDL disability-specific budget. Key challenges include limited technical expertise and budget constraints.
- The **National Council for Disability and Work Capacity Determination** assesses the functional/ work capacity, issues certificates for disability allowances, and provides employment recommendations through a central council and 33 territorial structures. Challenges include weak coordination with employment services, medical-focused assessments, and no systematic referrals to ANOFM.
- The **Equality Council** oversees anti-discrimination laws and investigates reported cases. In 2024²⁸, it received 279 complaints, and in 2025, the number rose to 399²⁹. Disability was among the top three grounds invoked, with employment-related issues frequently raised. However, a key challenge remains the low level of implementation of the Council’s recommendations and decisions, as responsible authorities and institutions often contest them and delay compliance until a final and enforceable court judgment is issued.
- The **State Labour Inspectorate** – investigates complaints and ensures compliance with labour laws³⁰. It may request or consult the opinion of the Equality Council when necessary, and the latter may participate in working groups as an observer or provide expertise on non-discrimination

²⁶ Republic of Moldova, National Employment Strategy 2017–2022, Government of the Republic of Moldova, Chişinău, 2017.

²⁷ Republic of Moldova, National Employment Programme 2022–2026, Government of the Republic of Moldova, Chişinău, 2022.

²⁸ Equality Council of the Republic of Moldova, *Raport general privind situația în domeniul prevenirii și combaterii discriminării în Republica Moldova, anul 2024*.

²⁹ Equality Council of the Republic of Moldova, *Raport general privind situația în domeniul prevenirii și combaterii discriminării în Republica Moldova, anul 2025*.

³⁰ Republic of Moldova, Law on the State Labour Inspection No. 140/2001.

standards, in conditions of impartiality and independence (the examination of discrimination cases falls under the Council's exclusive competence).

- The National Employment Agency oversees job placement, active labour market programs, vocational training, and support for employers hiring persons with disabilities. It operates 35 territorial offices with ~ 70 staff for vulnerable groups and a total budget of ~ 50 million MDL, including 0.8 million MDL for disability-specific programs. The accessibility of its offices is particularly challenging.
- Specialized support institutions, delivering technical, social, and rehabilitation support:
 - The **Territorial Social Assistance Agencies** comprises 10 entities responsible for the implementation of case management approaches. The coordination with ANOFM needs to be strengthened.
 - The **Republican Experimental Centre for Prosthetics, Orthopaedics and Rehabilitation** (CREPOR) provides technical aids and medical rehabilitation; it lacks vocational rehabilitation components and workplace linkages³¹.
 - The **Agency for Management of Highly Specialized Social Services** manages 7 residential centres and implements deinstitutionalization programs, although employment preparation and community transition services remain limited³².

2.4 Coordination and cooperation mechanisms

Moldova has established multiple coordination mechanisms at strategic, programmatic, sectoral, and local levels to address disability employment within broader policy priorities. However, coordination remains fragmented, irregular, and limited in linking strategic objectives to sectoral and local implementation.

- At the Strategic level:
 - The **Inter-Ministerial Committee for Strategic Planning** (renewed 2023) meets quarterly to review strategic policies³³.
 - The **Council for Coordination of Sustainable Development** (2023) integrates disability under SDG implementation, without a dedicated focal point.
 - The **National Coordination Mechanism for EU Accession** (2024) includes working groups for all 35 chapters, with Chapter 19 covering disability employment³⁴.
- At the Program level:
 - The **Working Group for the National Program on Social Inclusion 2017-2022** included ministries, AOPD, and development partners. It met irregularly (2–3 times yearly), and achieved 60% of planned measures. It is currently not operational.
 - **Coordination for the 2024-2028 program** is under development.

³¹ Government Decision No. 539/2023 on the Regulation on the Organisation and Functioning of the Prosthetics and Orthopaedics Service.

³² Agency for Management of Highly Specialized Social Services (AGSSI), About the Agency / Institutional Mandate, <https://agssi.md/https://agssi.md/> (accessed 3 May 2026).

³³ Government of the Republic of Moldova, Inter-Ministerial Committee for Strategic Planning, <https://gov.md/ro/comitetul-interministerial-pentru-planificare-strategica> (accessed 3 May 2026); Government of the Republic of Moldova, *Inter-Ministerial Committee for Strategic Planning*, <https://gov.md/ro/comitetul-interministerial-pentru-planificare-strategica> (accessed 3 May 2026).

³⁴ Government Decision No. 180 of 13 March 2024 on the Coordination Mechanism for the Accession Process of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union and on the Organisation and Functioning of the Negotiation Team within this Process (Hotărâre nr. 180/2024).

- Moldova currently **lacks a formal CRPD Article 33 coordination mechanism**, with MMPS as the focal point.
- At the Sectoral level:
 - Tripartite Commission for Social Partnership (government, trade unions, employers) addressed disability employment in only 2 meetings in 2024 and 2 meetings in 2025.
- At the District/local level:
 - The **Community Social Assistance Councils** focus on benefit distribution, with limited employment responsibilities.
 - **Informal coordination** between territorial employment agencies and local authorities exists but varies by location.
- **Public-NGO cooperation** exists but remains limited in scale and duration, affecting disability employment outcomes.
- Service contracts typically last 12 months, averaging 50,000–100,000 MDL (€2,564–€5,128).
- Legislative consultations consist of a minimum 15-day public consultation via particip.gov.md; CSO-led workshops³⁵.
- Trade unions & business associations: National Confederation of Trade Unions (400 000+ members) has a limited disability focus; Chamber of Commerce and Industry (1,500+ companies) holds 2–3 disability employment events annually; American Chamber of Commerce (130+ international companies) addresses inclusion via CSR committees³⁶.
- Key NGOs:
 - Motivație Association: EU Supported Employment standards: employment + retention³⁷.
 - Keystone Moldova: Employment + independent living; education³⁸.
 - Eco-Răzeni Association: Transitional employment + vocational training³⁹.
 - CDPD: Employment, legal assistance, information, counseling⁴⁰.

While **these NGOs promote individualized supported employment**, their combined annual capacity (~150–200 placements) reaches only ~0.1% of the target population.

2.5 Sources of financing

Although budgets for disability employment have seen modest increases, current allocations remain significantly inadequate in relation to the target population. This shortfall restricts program coverage, diminishes impact, and limits the potential for improving labour market outcomes. More strategic and proportionate investment is required to translate policy commitments into tangible employment opportunities.

The ANOFM budget for disability-specific employment subsidies in 2024 was MDL 0.8 million (€41 000), including:

- **Wage subsidies:** 0.5 million MDL (€25 600) for 56 employers;

³⁵ Government of the Republic of Moldova, Public Consultation Platform <https://particip.gov.md> (accessed 3 May 2026).

³⁶ American Chamber of Commerce in Moldova (AmCham Moldova), *Official Website*, <https://www.amcham.md> (accessed 3 May 2026).

³⁷ Motivație Association, *Official Website*, <https://motivatie.md/> (accessed 3 May 2026).

³⁸ Keystone Moldova, *Official Website*, <https://www.keystonemoldova.md/> (accessed 3 May 2026).

³⁹ Eco-Răzeni Association, *Official Website*, <https://ecorazeni.md/> (accessed 3 May 2026).

⁴⁰ Centrul pentru Drepturile Persoanelor cu Dizabilități (CDPD), *Official Website*, <https://cdpd.md/> (accessed 3 May 2026).

- **Workplace adaptations:** MDL 0.2 million (€10 300) for 5 workplaces;
- **Job creation:** MDL 0.1 million (€5 100) for 5 positions⁴¹.

Limited budget allocations result in low coverage of disability-related employment measures. In the reported period, only 56 employers received wage subsidies, five workplaces were adapted and five new positions were created. Meanwhile, the relatively low unit cost per supported person suggests that increased financial allocations could significantly expand coverage and improve overall impact.

Disability-specific allocations in the framework of the total ANOFM budget accounted for only 2.1% of total budget, while persons with disabilities accounted for 4% of all registered unemployed. It shows that persons with disabilities cannot expect a share of the budget that would at least be proportional to their share among unemployed, not to mention potential preferences for this group.

Persons with disabilities are eligible to participate in ALMP measures and services; however, limited data collection hinders the ability to accurately track their actual participation and financial allocations. Available estimates suggest that **only 83 persons with disabilities successfully completed vocational training, while 40 participated in public works programs**⁴².

In 2024, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection allocated approximately MDL 103 million (5.38 million EUR) towards disability-related expenditures. In particular, only about 3% (3 million MDL) of this budget was designated for employment-focused activities, including rehabilitation and limited vocational rehabilitation. Nevertheless, this allocation represents a significant increase compared to the funds previously dedicated to Active Labour Market Policies (ALMP) for individuals with disabilities.

Expenditure was primarily distributed among several key categories, with residential care institutions receiving MDL 45 million (€2.31 million), personal assistance for persons with severe disabilities: MDL 28 million (€1.44 million), disability determination: MDL 15 million (€769 000), and community services such as day centres and respite care: MDL 12 million (€615 000). All such expenditure is crucial for the inclusion of persons with disabilities

In 2024, social insurance allocated MDL 2 605 million (€133.6 million) to disability-related benefits, with the majority supporting pensions (71%) and care allowances (23%), while transport compensation and one-time support together account for 6%. This distribution highlights that roughly 78% of resources maintain passive benefits, with only 22% directed toward services that could enable inclusion. Such a funding pattern perpetuates dependency and underscores the need for stronger policy and budgetary commitments to integrate persons with disabilities into the labour market⁴³.

⁴¹ National Employment Agency (ANOFM), *Raport de activitate al Agenției Naționale pentru Ocuparea Forței de Muncă pentru anul 2024*, Chișinău, 2024.

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova, Budget execution reports 2024 (programme-level social protection data), <https://social.gov.md/transparenta-decizionala/bugetul/realizat>/<https://social.gov.md/transparenta-decizionala/bugetul/realizat/>.

Table 1. Disability-related benefits (2024 allocations):

Benefit Type	Amount (million MDL)	Amount (million EUR)	% of Total	Beneficiaries
Disability pensions	1 850	95	71%	101 700
Care allowances	599	31	23%	60 200
Transport compensation	78	4	3%	45 000
One-time support	78	4	3%	Variable
Total	2 605	134	100%	-

Source: Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova, Budget execution reports 2024 (programme-level social protection data), <https://social.gov.md/transparenta-decizionala/bugetul/realizat>/<https://social.gov.md/transparenta-decizionala/bugetul/realizat/>.

District-level funding for disability inclusion remains minimal and fragmented across Moldova's 35 raions, totalling approximately MDL 0.5 million (€25 600) annually, largely limited to small co-financing for public works, modest NGO support, and in-kind contributions. Municipal allocations vary but remain negligible (e.g., Chişinău MDL 200 000; Bălţi MDL 50 000; others significantly less), with no dedicated funding for disability employment, highlighting a critical gap in local investment in economic inclusion where most persons with disabilities reside⁴⁴.

While historically, spending on disability benefits has shown nominal increases, with annual growth ranging from 5–9%. After adjusting for inflation, real spending fell by ~ 2.3% starting in 2018, highlighting that support has not kept pace with actual needs. Combined with the heavy focus on passive payments, this trend underscores that current funding often perpetuates dependency rather than enabling economic participation of persons with disabilities, limiting their opportunities to achieve financial independence and live with dignity.

Between 2021 and 2024, the EU mobilized €2.2 billion for Moldova, with disability-related support embedded through civil society funding, Eastern Partnership mainstreaming, Chapter 19 alignment, and COVID-19 response measures, alongside access to programmes such as EaSI, Erasmus+, Digital Europe, and Horizon Europe. UN agencies complement this through targeted initiatives on inclusive employment, labour market data, assistive technology, CRPD monitoring, and inclusive education, within a broader UN Partnership Framework of €146 million where disability is treated as a cross-cutting priority.

⁴⁴ Based on analysis of local government budget execution reports (35 raions and selected municipalities), Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova, 2024.

3 POLICIES SUPPORTING EMPLOYABILITY

3.1 Services supporting the employability of persons with disabilities

Employment support services for persons with disabilities are primarily delivered through the ANOFM, including job matching, career guidance, vocational counselling, and information services. In 2024, ANOFM provided career guidance services for 365 persons with disabilities, which accounted for 2.6% of all recipients of this service. ANOFM also provides job placement services matching job seekers with employers.

Persons with disabilities also benefit from information services, such as job fairs, information campaigns etc. At the same time, this information is not always accessible to persons with hearing disabilities, either because of a dearth of sign language interpreters or due to absence of proficiency in sign language of rights-holders, which represents an even deeper systemic problem.

Physical and informational accessibility remains a significant constraint in several ANOFM territorial offices, especially in buildings lacking elevators, ramps, sign-language or other adaptations. While staff are expected to receive 2–3 days of initial training on disability inclusion under the National Program for Employment 2022–2026, the training currently provided focuses primarily on administrative procedures rather than practical skills such as job coaching, reasonable accommodation assessment, or employer engagement strategies⁴⁵. Standardized service protocols for supporting different disability types are not yet in place, limiting the consistency and effectiveness of service delivery. Service provision is heavily urban-centered, even though 61% of persons with disabilities reside in rural areas⁴⁶: mobile teams introduced in 2023 aim to partially bridge this gap, but coverage remains limited.

Technical assistance from the EU and UNDP has strengthened legislative and policy alignment and certified 20 job coaches, constituting the country's entire professional cadre for supported employment⁴⁷. Additional sporadic training initiatives by UNDP and ILO have reached fewer than 100 professionals across ministries, employment services, and social protection agencies, highlighting that efforts to develop operational capacity among key stakeholders are in their infancy and insufficient⁴⁸. These gaps affect the practical implementation of disability employment measures, including job coaching, reasonable accommodation assessments, and employer engagement, and underscore the need for sustained investment in workforce capacity building to ensure inclusive and effective employment services.

3.2 Measures supporting the employability of persons with disabilities

Beyond basic counselling and job matching, Moldova implements a set of supply-side measures to improve employability, including vocational training, internships, on-the-job training, digital skills courses, and entrepreneurship support. However, participation remains very low and largely dependent on mainstream programs with minimal disability-specific adaptation.

⁴⁵ Government of the Republic of Moldova, *National Employment Programme 2022–2026 (Programul național pentru ocuparea forței de muncă 2022–2026)*, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Chișinău.

⁴⁶ The issue of urban-rural disparities in accessing public services, including ones focused on employment of persons with disabilities was also repeatedly raised up during the the (online) public consultations workshop of the Country Note, organized by EPRD on 30.03.2026.

⁴⁷ European Union, *EU4Moldova Programme – Social Inclusion and Employment Support*, <https://eu4moldova.eu>.

⁴⁸ International Labour Organization (ILO), *Decent Work and Disability Inclusion Programmes in Moldova*, <https://www.ilo.org>.

In 2023 participation levels were modest. These included:

- vocational training: 83 participants (69% of the 120 planned), representing 11% of registered unemployed persons with disabilities but only 1.8% of all vocational trainees nationwide;
- internships: 0.3% of registered PWD;
- on-the-job training: 0.7%;
- digital skills training: 0.4%; and
- entrepreneurship training: 6.6% of registered PWD (~ 1% of total program participants).

Overall, persons with disabilities accounted for only 1–2% of beneficiaries across active labour market measures, indicating limited outreach and weak mainstream inclusion. Planned increases for 2024 (e.g., 100 vocational training places and 80 entrepreneurship slots) signal moderate ambition, but without structural adaptation and stronger targeting, impact is likely to remain limited.

Public vocational training services faces structural gaps. Many facilities remain physically and informationally inaccessible, training centres are urban-concentrated, and course offerings focus on construction and heavy industry – sectors often unsuitable or inaccessible for many persons with disabilities. In these conditions, lack of continuous support systems and insufficient adaptation of vocational training programs, including to the needs of people with hearing disabilities, compels many to accept low-skilled jobs with limited prospects for professional advancement.

Tables below provide more information about the types of services provided by ANOFM in the previous period.

Table 2. Professional Rehabilitation and Employment Services for Persons with Disabilities in Moldova

Services and Activities	2022	2023	2024 (target)
1. Total Services for Professional Rehabilitation	1 524	1 467	1 500
1.1. Information and Counseling Services	1 280	1 467	562
1.2. Career Guidance (individual/group)	105	~ 150	200
1.3. Job Matching/Mediation Services	23	22	229
1.4. Participation in Job Fairs	85	~ 100	150
1.5. Active Job-Seeking Workshops	180	~ 200	250
1.6. Entrepreneurship Training	42	~ 50	80
2. Vocational Training	83	83	100
3. Public Works Programs	40	40	50
4. Registered Unemployed PwD (year-end stock)	754	754	800
5. New registrations (flow)	n/a	1 675	n/a

Source: National Employment Agency (ANOFM), Official webpage (programme or measure description), <https://www.anofm.md/ro/node/74><https://www.anofm.md/ro/node/74>.

Table 3. Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Employment Services (2023)

Service/Measure	% of Registered PWD Stock (754)	% of Total Service Users
Information and Counseling	194.6%	0.9%
Career Guidance Services	19.9%	~ 1.0%
Job Matching/Mediation	2.9%	0.3%
Active Job-Seeking Support	26.5%	2.5%
Job Fairs	13.3%	~ 2.0%
Vocational Training	11.0%	1.8%
Public Works Programs	5.3%	2.1%
Entrepreneurship Training	6.6%	~ 1.0%

Source: ANOFM 2023 administrative data; calculations based on registered stock and total disability population

Note: Information and counselling percentage exceeds 100% as some individuals received multiple consultations during the year.

At the same time, civil society models demonstrate stronger outcomes on a limited scale. Motivație's supported employment program (2021–2023) achieved 65% placement and 70% six-month retention, at approximately €1 200 per sustained placement, yet reaches only 40–50 beneficiaries annually due to funding constraints⁴⁹. Meanwhile, Eco-Răzeni trains 60–80 persons per year and transitions 15–20 (25%) into open employment, combining certification with transitional work⁵⁰.

EU and UNDP initiatives have piloted practical solutions, including training 20 job coaches, partnering with 15 companies, and supporting the creation of 30 businesses (60% survival rate). These results demonstrate that inclusive employment models can work in Moldova. However, they remain project-based and are not yet systematically integrated or financed within public employment services.

3.3 Services and measures addressing the needs of war veterans

Moldova's veteran population includes an estimated 15 000–20 000 persons involved in the 1992 Transnistrian conflict (now aged 50–70), some 2 000–3 000 peacekeeping mission participants, and Chernobyl disaster liquidators. Legal protections focus primarily on Chernobyl-affected persons: the Labour Code (Article 183) guarantees priority retention during workforce reductions when qualifications are equal⁵¹, while Law No. 909/1992 provides full-salary disability allowances, temporary incapacity benefits, and educational priority for children. Other veteran categories do not benefit from similar targeted measures⁵².

Veterans accessing the National Employment Agency (ANOFM) register as general job seekers, with no systematic tracking of veteran status, unemployment rates, service use, or employment outcomes. Veterans with recognized disabilities may access general disability employment measures via CNDDCM.

⁴⁹ Asociația „MOTIVAȚIE” din Moldova, *Proiecte implementate 2023–2024 – servicii de angajare asistată și incluziune pe piața muncii*, <https://motivatie.md/ro/proiecte-implementate-2023/647>.

⁵⁰ Eco-Răzeni Association, official website, <https://www.ecorazeni.md/ro> (accessed 3 May 2026).

⁵¹ Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova (Article 183), available at <https://www.legis.md/>.

⁵² Law No. 909/1992 on social protection of citizens affected by the Chernobyl disaster, <https://www.legis.md/>; Law No. 909/1992 on social protection of citizens affected by the Chernobyl disaster, <https://www.legis.md/>.

Career transition support for veterans is limited: there are no structured programs linking military skills to civilian certification, and the Ministry of Defence primarily handles pensions and discharge documentation. Veterans associations, concentrated in urban areas, provide peer support and advocacy funded through membership and donations. Occasional support comes from international organizations, including ILO initiatives and EU civil society grants.

4 POLICIES SUPPORTING THE DEMAND FOR EMPLOYMENT

This chapter analyses demand-side measures designed to incentivize employers to hire persons with disabilities in Moldova, including quota systems, financial incentives, tax benefits, self-employment support, and promotional initiatives.

4.1 Quota System

Moldova's quota system, established under Law No. 60/2012, requires employers with 20+ employees to reserve at least 5% of positions for persons with disabilities⁵³. The quota applies across all sectors, with limited safety-related exemptions, and is embedded within broader labour protections under the Labour Code (Law No. 154/2003) and the Employment Promotion Law (No. 105/2018), which provide mechanisms such as wage subsidies (30–50% for 6 months) and workplace adaptation support (50% of modification costs)⁵⁴.

Employers must create or reserve positions, maintain application registries, record hiring decisions with justifications, preserve complaint documentation, and report annually to ANOFM. Penalties under the Contravention Code (Art. 56,¹ 2016) range from 180–300 conventional units (~ €2.5/unit) to MDL 3 000–5 000 for non-compliance.

The system operates without alternative compliance options common in some European countries, such as contributions to disability employment funds, procurement credits, or phased compliance pathways.

In practice, enforcement remains limited. Inspections in 2018 and 2021 showed fewer than one-quarter of employers complied fully with registry and position requirements, and no financial penalties have been recorded. ANOFM collects employer reports but lacks enforcement authority, while the State Labour Inspectorate has no dedicated quota monitoring unit. The Equality Council addresses individual discrimination complaints but cannot act on systemic quota compliance. Limited enforcement also results in the lack of dedicated fund supporting labour market integration of persons with disabilities, which could be used to finance the creation of accessible and adapted job opportunities.

4.2 Wage Subsidies

Article 36 of the Law on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance establishes the legal basis for wage subsidies. Employers creating jobs for unemployed persons, including those with disabilities, may receive financial support covering partial salary costs for a defined period⁵⁵.

The differentiated wage subsidy rates (30% for moderate, 40% for pronounced, and 50% for severe disabilities) reflect varying accommodation needs and perceived productivity barriers, with higher support for those facing the greatest employment challenges. Subsidies cover only base salaries for up to six months, excluding social insurance contributions, taxes, or other benefits.

In practice, implementation data show limited uptake among persons with severe disabilities, achieving roughly 56% of planned targets despite increases in the total budget from MDL 0.3 million (€15 400) in 2019–2022 to MDL 0.5 million (€25 600) in 2023–2024. Average per-placement subsidies range from MDL 3 200 to MDL 8 900 (€165–€455). Thus, while the mechanism reduces initial hiring

⁵³ Republic of Moldova, Law No. 60/2012 on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, <https://www.legis.md/>.

⁵⁴ Law No. 105/2018 on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance, <https://www.legis.md/>.

⁵⁵ Republic of Moldova, Law No. 105/2018 on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance, Article 36, <https://www.legis.md/>.

costs and partially offsets perceived productivity risks, it does not provide long-term incentives for sustained employment or address broader barriers such as workplace accessibility, employer attitudes, or ongoing support for employees with disabilities⁵⁶.

4.3 Workplace Adaptation Subsidies

Although designed to promote inclusive employment, the workplace adaptation subsidy under Law 105/2018 primarily operates as a conditional reimbursement mechanism that shifts financial and operational risk to employers. Pre-financing requirements, capped compensation, repayment obligations, and administrative complexity significantly limit accessibility – particularly for SMEs – thereby constraining the instrument's systemic impact⁵⁷.

Article 38 provides 50% reimbursement for workplace creation or adaptation, capped at MDL 73 000 (approx. €3 650) per workplace⁵⁸. Employers must retain the adapted position for at least 36 months or fully repay the subsidy if employment ends prematurely.

In practice, employers must pre-finance 100% of adaptation costs and are reimbursed only after completion and ANOFM verification. With average adaptation costs around MDL 146 000 (approx. €7 300), the subsidy typically covers only half of the investment; where costs exceed the ceiling, the employer's contribution increases further.

Administrative delays compound liquidity pressure. The average processing time is approximately 84 days, extending capital exposure to four to six months⁵⁹. For SMEs with limited working capital, advancing MDL 73 000–146 000 (approx. €3 650–€7 300) over several months represents a significant operational constraint.

Administrative requirements (over ten supporting documents, three supplier quotations and post-investment verification) further reduce uptake⁶⁰. The absence of technical assistance to assess adaptation needs increases uncertainty and compliance risks, discouraging broader employer participation.

Table 4. Financial Incentive Utilization and Budget (2023-2024)

Program	Budget Allocation (MDL)	Cost per Beneficiary	Realization Rate
Wage subsidies	500 000	3 200-8 900	56%
Workplace adaptation	200 000	40 000	50%
Job creation	100 000	10 000-20 000	50%
Total	800 000	-	52%

Source: National Employment Agency (ANOFM), <https://www.anofm.md/ro/node/74> <https://www.anofm.md/ro/node/74>: author's calculations

⁵⁶National Employment Agency (ANOFM), *Administrative data on subsidy uptake and budget allocations*, 2019–2024; author's calculations based on programme data.

⁵⁷Detailed adaptation plans with technical specifications: Cost estimates from three independent providers (comparison requirement), Proof of employment for the person with disability (contract, registration), CNDDCM recommendations specifying accommodation needs (requires separate application process), Business registration and tax compliance certificates, Staffing scheme documentation, Workplace inspection reports, No public debt certificates (less than 1 year old), Financial statements demonstrating business viability, Signed contract with ANOFM territorial office.

⁵⁸Republic of Moldova, Law No. 105/2018 on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance, <https://www.legis.md/>

⁵⁹Estimation based on the provisions of the Republic of Moldova, Law No. 105/2018 on Employment Promotion and Unemployment Insurance, <https://www.legis.md/>.

⁶⁰European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPRD), public consultation workshop on the Country Note, 30 March 2026: participants highlighted administrative complexity, procedural burden, and eligibility uncertainty as key barriers to employer uptake.

4.4 Tax Incentives

Current tax provisions primarily benefit specialized enterprises rather than mainstream employers. Article 103(7) of the Tax Code provides VAT exemptions for imports of raw materials and components used by enterprises owned by associations of persons with disabilities, while Article 4 (18) (b) exempts these entities from VAT on domestically produced goods and services. These measures support segregated employment structures, not inclusive hiring in the open labour market⁶¹.

Moldova does not offer the mainstream tax incentives, such as corporate income tax reductions linked to quota compliance, social insurance contribution exemptions, accelerated depreciation for accessibility investments, disability-related tax credits, or payroll tax relief tied to disability employment rates.

While support for specialized enterprises are being phased out to align with EU competition rules, no parallel system of incentives has been introduced to stimulate inclusive employment in the mainstream economy. This creates a policy gap: support mechanisms are being reduced without replacement by modern, inclusion-oriented instruments.

The demand-side measures theoretically cover multiple employer needs. However, underutilization shows that those instruments are not sufficiently adapted to the reality of employers. Low adaptation ceilings, inactive tax incentives, procedural delays limit uptake and impact, as reflected in the modest number of beneficiaries shown in Table 7.2.1.

Table 5. Employment Subsidies for Persons with Disabilities (2021-2024)

Subsidy Type	2023 (Realized)	2024 (Planned)
Wage subsidies	56	100
Moderate disability (30%)	25	-
Pronounced disability (40%)	28	-
Severe disability (50%)	3	-
Workplace adaptation	5	10
Job creation subsidies	5	10
Self-employment grants (PWD)	3-5	20
Total beneficiaries	69-71	140

Source: ANOFM reports, National Programme for Employment 2022-2024

4.5 Self-Employment and Social Enterprises

Moldova lacks specific instruments to support self-employment of persons with disabilities. There is a lack of dedicated entrepreneurship training, start-up financing instruments, or business development services tailored to persons with disabilities. Public schemes remain generic and procedurally rigid, with low business survival rates, whereas adapted donor-supported models show stronger outcomes.

ANOFM administers general start-up grants of MDL 15 000–40 000 MDL (approx. €750–€2 000), accessible to persons with disabilities under standard procedures set by Government Decision No. 1276/2018⁶². In practice, applicants report barriers including complex business plan requirements

⁶¹ Republic of Moldova, Tax Code (Law No. 1163/1997), Articles 103(7) and 4(18)(b), <https://www.legis.md/>.

⁶² Grant amounts of MDL 15 000–40 000 for business start-ups, Complex business plan requirements as precondition for grant access, Mandatory entrepreneurship training prerequisites, Follow-up obligations and success monitoring procedures.

designed for the general population, limited accessibility of materials, and absence of mentorship or specialized advisory support. Business survival remains below 30% after 18 months, indicating weak sustainability.

UNDP's "Leave No One Behind" program combined adapted training with micro-grants of MDL 5 000–20 000 (approx. €250–€1 000), supported 30 businesses with around 60% one-year survival. Still analysis of the main causes of differences in achieved results should be conducted.

Table 6. Self-Employment and Social Enterprise Support (2021-2023)

Initiative	2021	2022	2023	Success Rate
ANOFM self-employment grants (PWD)	3	3-5	3-5	<30% survival
UNDP micro-grants	15	15	-	60% survival
Social enterprises employing PWD	~ 150	~180	~200	Variable
Specialized enterprises (traditional)	~180	~160	~150	Declining

Source: National Employment Agency (ANOFM); United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); NGO reports

4.5.1 Social Enterprise Development

The social economy's potential to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities has not yet been fully realized. The 2017 Law on Social Entrepreneurship describes social enterprises as organizations that aim for social goals while ensuring their financial viability. In Moldova, the framework identifies employing people with disabilities as a key social objective. However, there are no targeted measures e.g. tax incentives, special loans, or grants, to support the hiring of this group⁶³. Additionally, public procurement advantages like social clauses are not available. As a result, only about 150–200 people with disabilities are employed by social enterprises across the country.

4.6 Information, Promotion and Positive Practices Measures

Information and promotional initiatives currently reach a limited number of employers and lack adequate follow-up, thereby reducing their effectiveness in supporting disability employment.

The National Agency for Employment's (ANOFM) annual campaigns held on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities engage only 200–300 employers (representing less than 1% of eligible firms) through single-day events in three to five cities, with no systematic follow-up mechanisms. The "RemarcAbilitatea" Gala recognizes 10–15 employers each year but receives short-term media coverage. Significant gaps persist, including the absence of dedicated liaison positions, an up-to-date employer database, ROI-oriented business case resources, actionable accommodation guidelines, and sector-specific strategies. Non-governmental organizations partly address these shortcomings: Motivație Moldova works with over 50 companies and provides accommodation resources, while AOPD offers policy briefings and conducts targeted media outreach.

A limited number of **positive employer practices** in Moldova demonstrate that inclusive employment of persons with disabilities is achievable when supported by targeted measures and partnerships.

- **Orange Moldova** applies inclusive recruitment procedures, supported internships and workplace accessibility adjustments. The company employs more than 15 persons with disabilities and actively promotes peer learning among employers, suggesting that large firms can play a catalytic role in disseminating inclusive practices.

⁶³ Republic of Moldova, Law No. 223/2017 on Social Entrepreneurship, <https://www.legis.md/223/2017> on Social Entrepreneurship, <https://www.legis.md/>.

- **Moldovan Railway (CFM)** shows partial compliance with disability employment quotas through job-task analysis, cooperation with NGOs and investments in workplace adaptation. With more than 50 employees with disabilities, the case illustrates how traditional sectors can expand inclusion when organisational adjustments are made.
- The **Motivație Moldova employer partnership model** combines pre-employment assessment, ability-based job matching and ongoing support to both employers and employees. Reported outcomes – around 85% employer satisfaction and 70% job retention at an estimated €1 200 per sustained placement – indicate that structured intermediation models can be relatively cost-effective.

Overall, these examples suggest that inclusive employment outcomes improve when employers receive practical support in recruitment, job design and retention, and when cooperation with specialised organisations is institutionalised. This was reaffirmed during the national consultations of the Country Note, where DPOs expressed strong support for supported employment as an approach that challenges employer stereotypes about the complexity or profitability of hiring persons with disabilities, while enabling workplace adaptations, offering guidance to employers, and providing continuous support to both employees and companies to ensure stable and sustainable long-term employment.

5 THE LINKAGES BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT AND OTHER POLICY AREAS

5.1 From school to the labour market

Participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream education is high (about **95% of youth with disabilities attended general schools in 2023/24**) yet learning outcomes and progression remain significantly lower than in the general population. Only **around 40% complete upper-secondary education** (compared with roughly **85% overall**), and **fewer than 5% continue to tertiary education** (versus some **30% nationally**). Inclusive support structures are expanding but remain uneven: Resource Centres operate in **approximately one-third of schools**, supported by **1,154 teachers, 131 speech therapists and 420 psychologists**, meaning that many students still receive limited individualised assistance. This shows that youth with disabilities face inequality at the start of their career, which strongly affects their future prospects.

Neither can young persons with disabilities rely on the support for the transition to the labour market after graduation. The limited scale of services and measures offered by ANOFM for supporting youth with disabilities entering the labour market has a negligible effect. As a result, labour market disconnection is pronounced: 48% of youth with disabilities are NEET (12 200 individuals aged 15–34), mostly in rural areas (75%).

A particular situation faced by deaf children is the limited access to early acquisition of their native sign language, which contributes to delays in cognitive development and undermines the foundation for quality education. In the absence of proficiency in sign language and without adequate specialized support in educational institutions, these children encounter substantial obstacles in obtaining professional qualifications, placing them at a systemic disadvantage and reducing their competitiveness in the labor market⁶⁴.

At the same time, several pilot initiatives indicate potential pathways for improvement. The “**First Job for Youth with Disabilities**” program supports around **40–50 participants per year**, achieving employment outcomes of roughly **55%**⁶⁵. Similarly, the **EU- and Sweden-funded AOPD project (2021–2024)** has tested integrated approaches combining vocational assessment, training, business planning and entrepreneurship support for NEET youth in three regions⁶⁶. These experiences suggest that more comprehensive and better-coordinated transition support could significantly enhance labour market inclusion if implemented at scale.

5.2 Skills development opportunities

Access to skills development for persons with disabilities in Moldova remains **structurally constrained**, reflecting a combination of physical inaccessibility, limited inclusive provision and insufficiently adapted training delivery. While evidence from targeted initiatives points to **strong employment outcomes**, these remain small-scale and do not significantly influence overall participation patterns. This suggests that the main challenge is not programme effectiveness, but **system-level coverage and inclusiveness**.

Despite the existence of **45 vocational education and training (VET) institutions and several ANOFM training centres**, most facilities are not accessible. Around **84% of VET institutions lack basic accessibility features**, and only **two of the twelve ANOFM centres in Chişinău are partially**

⁶⁴ Association of Deaf from Moldova, Recommendations to the draft Country Note on labour market (re)integration and skills development for persons with disabilities in Moldova, Chişinău.

⁶⁵ Alianţa Organizaţiilor pentru Persoane cu Dizabilităţi (AOPD), *Numărul tinerilor NEET cu dizabilităţi angajaţi în câmpul muncii – descurajant de mic*, <https://aopd.md/numarul-tinerilor-neet-cu-dizabilitate-angajati-in-campul-muncii-descurajant-de-mic/>.

⁶⁶ Ibid

accessible. As a result, participation of persons with disabilities in adult learning remains marginal: of approximately **47 000 adults enrolled in professional development courses in 2023, fewer than 200 (0.4%) were persons with disabilities.** Geographic disparities further reinforce exclusion. Training opportunities are concentrated in **urban areas (about 70% in Chişinău and Bălţi)**, while **61% of persons with disabilities live in rural communities** with limited infrastructure and mobility options.

Participation is also constrained by the **sectoral focus and design of training programmes.** Labour market training provided by ANOFM continues to prioritise physically demanding sectors e.g. construction (30%), manufacturing (25%) and agriculture (20%), where accessibility and reasonable accommodation are more difficult to ensure. By contrast, potentially more inclusive sectors, including services (15%) and ICT (10%) remain underdeveloped and rarely offer adapted curricula or delivery methods. This mismatch reduces the relevance of training opportunities and limits their impact on labour market integration.

Digital exclusion further compounds these barriers. An estimated **42% of persons with disabilities lack basic digital skills**, compared with **23% in the general population**, restricting access to online learning and emerging employment opportunities. Although EU-funded digital skills programmes trained around **3 000 adults in 2023**, participation of persons with disabilities remained very low (fewer than 30 participants, or about 1%). Moreover, private training providers (comprising some **150 licensed institutions**) generally do not offer disability-specific accommodations, including for persons with hearing disabilities, indicating limited incentives or regulatory requirements for inclusive provision⁶⁷.

At the same time, targeted initiatives demonstrate the **potential effectiveness of adapted training models.** For example, programmes implemented by the **Eco Răzeni Association** provide skills development for **60–80 persons with disabilities annually**, achieving employment outcomes of approximately **60%**. Such results highlight the importance of tailored support, accessible learning environments and closer links with employers. Scaling up similar approaches – combined with investments in accessibility, rural outreach and digital inclusion – could significantly improve participation and employment prospects for persons with disabilities.

5.3 How social benefits support the employment of persons with disabilities

Moldova provides pensions, allowances and social services for persons with disabilities. However, the social protection system mainly supports income maintenance rather than employment. Most funding goes to disability pensions (MDL 1 800–2 500, about €90–125) and state allowances (MDL 800–1 200, about €40–60)⁶⁸.

The system can discourage work. For example, a person with moderate disability receiving a monthly pension of MDL 1 800 may gain only MDL 500–700 (€25–35) from a minimum-wage job after covering work-related costs such as transport, clothing and meals (MDL 800–1 300). This reinforces poverty and inactivity.

Spending on employment-oriented support is very limited – less than 0.05% of disability-related. A 2017 study found that 63% of unemployed persons with disabilities saw the risk of losing benefits as a main barrier to employment⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ Association of Deaf from Moldova, Recommendations to the draft Country Note on labour market (re)integration and skills development for persons with disabilities in Moldova, Chişinău.

⁶⁸ Republic of Moldova, Law No. 156/1998 on State Social Insurance Pensions.

⁶⁹ Colesnicova, T., Ciobanu, M., Stratan, D. (2016); National Institute for Economic Research / UNDP Moldova analytical reports on disability and labour market inclusion.

5.4 Access to social services

Moldova's social service system operates under Law No. 123/2010 on Social Services and Law No. 547/2003 on Social Assistance, with the National Deinstitutionalization Program (2018–2026) guiding the transition toward community-based care. The framework formally includes personal assistance, day centers, mobile teams, respite care, protected housing, community houses, foster care, and home care. However, while the legislative architecture is comprehensive, implementation remains uneven, fragmented, and insufficiently linked to employment inclusion.

- Personal assistance reaches approximately 2 000 beneficiaries, averaging 20 hours per week. Eligibility criteria are narrowly interpreted in practice, and workplace-related support is excluded. According to the AOPD assessment of CNDDCM procedures, territorial disparities persist and not all eligible persons receive services. Evidence suggests that personal assistance is often framed as basic survival support rather than an enabler of social and economic participation⁷⁰.
- Day care services remain limited and structurally misaligned with employment goals. Moldova has 35 centers nationwide, 80% serving children, while 26 of 35 districts lack adult day care entirely. Standard operating hours (8:00–17:00) prevent usage by employed persons⁷¹.
- Mobile teams, expanded under the RESTART reform (2023–2026), operate in 14 districts, each covering 3–5 communities and conducting around 150 monthly visits. However, 70% of interventions address crisis cases rather than sustained support. Government planning identifies the need for 14 additional teams for national coverage⁷².
- Respite care is available only as pilot services in three districts, despite an estimated 50 000 full-time family caregivers – 80% women, with 65% having exited employment to provide care. This highlights the strong gender dimension of service gaps⁷³.
- Independent living services remain severely under-capacitated. With 120 total places nationwide across eight facilities, over 200 persons are on waiting lists. Services primarily target deinstitutionalization rather than working-age persons living with families.
- No paratransit systems operate nationally. Although Article 41 of Law 105/2018 mandates transportation support for employment access, fewer than 10 persons annually receive ad hoc assistance⁷⁴.
- Assistive devices, provided through state funding (by CREPOR) lacks vocational rehabilitation integration and workplace linkage. Waiting lists extend up to two years for certain essential assistive products.

While Law 137/2020 introduced the concept of assisted employment⁷⁵, no implementing regulations, service standards, accreditation procedures, or budget allocations exist. Public funding for job coaching is absent; only one NGO (Motivație Association) provides structured supported employment to 40–50 persons annually through donor financing⁷⁶.

Social services are uneven and largely inaccessible for working-age adults. Day centers mostly serve children (80%) and operate standard hours, mobile teams cover only 14 districts with 3–5 communities each, and independent living, respite care, and personal assistance are severely limited. Accessible transport remains minimal (Chișinău 7%, Bălți 6%), and workplace-linked technical aids or job

⁷⁰ Government Decision No. 314/2012 (on approval of the Regulation on Personal Assistance Service) <https://www.legis.md/>

⁷¹ Republic of Moldova, Government Decision No. 569/2019 on the Framework Regulation on the organisation and functioning of the Day Centre for Persons with Disabilities and Minimum Quality Standards;

⁷² Government of the Republic of Moldova, Social Assistance System Reform “RESTART” (2023–2026), <https://social.gov.md/>.

⁷³ Republic of Moldova, *Legea nr. 123/2010 cu privire la serviciile sociale*, Chișinău, <https://www.legis.md/>.

⁷⁴ Republic of Moldova, *Legea nr. 105/2018 privind promovarea ocupării forței de muncă și asigurarea de șomaj*, Chișinău, <https://www.legis.md/>.

⁷⁵ Republic of Moldova, Law No. 137/2020 on amending and supplementing certain normative acts (including provisions on assisted employment, <https://www.legis.md/>).

⁷⁶ Motivație Association, input to the public consultations of the Country Note on labour market (re)integration and skills development for persons with disabilities in Moldova.

coaching are almost entirely donor-dependent. Shortages in sign language interpreters (1:100 vs recommended 1:50) further constrain access for deaf persons. And even where an interpreter is available, systemic shortcomings in sign language education mean that many young people do not acquire adequate proficiency in the language; as a result, the mere provision of interpretation does not resolve employment barriers, since communication between the service provider and the beneficiary remains fundamentally impaired⁷⁷.

5.5 Accessibility

Moldova's accessibility framework, established under Law No. 60/2012 and related technical standards, defines broad obligations across physical, transport, digital, and workplace environments⁷⁸. However, it lacks enforcement mechanisms, sanctions, measurable targets, and effective inter-institutional coordination. As a result, accessibility remains largely declarative. Across sectors, legal guarantees do not translate into enforceable access due to weak oversight, limited technical capacity, and insufficient implementation tools.

Physical infrastructure illustrates this gap. Although construction standards require accessible features, some 95% of buildings predate these norms and face no retrofitting obligations. NGO audits of 200 public buildings (2023) found 80% lacking basic accessibility elements. Employment institutions are similarly affected, with most territorial employment offices operating in inaccessible premises⁷⁹.

Transport exclusion remains a systemic issue. In Chişinău, just 7.4% of buses are low-floor, while in Bălţi only 6.4% meet this accessibility standard. Additionally, there are no accessible inter-city buses or national railway services available. Accessible taxis charge approximately triple rates compared to standard fares, effectively shifting accessibility costs onto users.

Digital accessibility remains critically weak. Testing of 50 government websites shows that only 34% were compliant with WCAG 2.1, with none meeting national requirements. Core failures include inaccessible PDFs, lack of alternative text, and keyboard navigation barriers. Government information is not available in Braille, audio, or easy-read formats, and draft digital standards have remained pending since 2019.

Workplace accessibility mechanisms are underutilized. As noted above, despite legal recognition of reasonable accommodation and adaptation subsidies, procedural clarity, appeal mechanisms, and technical support are absent. Only five workplaces were adapted in 2023 and only one in 2024. Public funding for sign language interpretation excludes employment contexts, while 42 interpreters serve an estimated 3 000–5 000 deaf persons. Despite the availability of subsidy schemes, their uptake remains limited. Administrative complexity, burdensome procedures, and uncertainty regarding eligibility and outcomes appear to constitute significant barriers, reducing employers' willingness to apply.

Institutional capacity remains a structural constraint due to a lack of certified accessibility auditors, university training in universal design, accessibility specialists within inspection bodies, and limited achievement of national program targets (less than 10% of planned audits completed)⁸⁰.

⁷⁷ Recommendations shared by the Association of Deaf from Moldova to the draft Country Note on programmes on labour market (re)integration and skills development for persons with disabilities in Moldova, publicly consulted with the Moldovan stakeholders

⁷⁸ Republic of Moldova, Law No. 60/2012 on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, <https://www.legis.md/https://www.legis.md/>

⁷⁹ Motivaţie Association of Moldova, Accessibility audits and reports on public institutions (including ANOFM and other public buildings), <https://motivatie.md/>

⁸⁰ Ibid

6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Conclusions

Moldova has established a **relatively comprehensive legal and strategic framework** for promoting the employment and social inclusion of persons with disabilities, including ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2010), progress in legislative reforms since 2012, and commitments linked to EU candidate status granted in 2022. Nevertheless, **labour market outcomes demonstrate significant implementation gaps and limited policy impact**. In 2024, the employment rate of persons with disabilities aged 15+ remained very low at 18.4%, while the employment gap compared with the general population reached 25 percentage points, indicating persistent structural exclusion.

Overall, the analysis shows that the **existing policy package requires strengthening through improved policy design, better alignment of instruments with the needs of key stakeholders, stronger implementation capacity and greater prioritisation of employment outcomes across relevant policy areas**. Disability inclusion remains insufficiently integrated into mainstream labour market, education and social policies, which limits the effectiveness of interventions.

A key challenge concerns the **limited capacity of the public employment services** to provide tailored and comprehensive support. Although the National Employment Agency delivers standard labour market services, its ability to respond to the complex needs of persons with disabilities and employers remains constrained. **The offer of specialised services** e.g., supported employment, job coaching, individualised employment planning and systematic employer engagement, **is still very limited**. In addition, employment counsellors often lack adequate preparation to assess functional capacities, identify suitable workplace adjustments and support sustainable job placement. As a result, persons with disabilities are largely served through mainstream measures with insufficient adaptation.

The institutional architecture for supporting the employment of persons with disabilities remains fragmented and characterised by weak horizontal and vertical coordination. Policy design and service delivery across employment, social protection, health and education systems are insufficiently aligned, resulting in discontinuities in support pathways and reduced effectiveness of labour market interventions. In practice, responsibility for employment outcomes is predominantly attributed to the public employment service, while the contribution of other policy domains to activation and labour market inclusion remains limited and weakly institutionalised.

This fragmented governance setting **constrains the development of integrated support models** and undermines the implementation of comprehensive activation strategies. **Case management and inter-institutional referral mechanisms are still insufficiently developed**, thus limiting the capacity to provide personalised and continuous support tailored to individual needs. Consequently, **persons with disabilities and their families are often required to navigate complex administrative procedures and multiple service providers on their own**. This not only creates additional barriers to accessing employment support but also increases the risk of disengagement from activation pathways and long-term labour market exclusion.

Preventive and early-intervention approaches are also underdeveloped. Instruments supporting timely rehabilitation and return-to-work pathways after illness or injury (by combining medical, vocational and employment services) are largely absent. This increases the risk that individuals who could remain economically active with appropriate support instead transition into long-term inactivity with limited prospects of labour market reintegration.

At the same time, **civil society organisations have developed effective models** of supported employment and integrated service provision. However, cooperation between public employment services and these organisations **remains limited and project-based, resulting in small-scale interventions** and missed opportunities to mainstream proven approaches within the public system.

Demand-side measures require significant redesign. The limited uptake of wage subsidies, workplace adaptation support and other incentives suggests that existing instruments are not sufficiently attractive or adapted to employers' operational realities. They may be too burdensome or not well understood. Policy design processes appear to insufficiently involve key stakeholders, thereby reducing the relevance and usability of support schemes. Moreover, employer support is largely focused on financial incentives, while **non-financial measures (including practical guidance, advisory services, workplace mediation and peer learning) remain underdeveloped.** Employers often lack information on how to adapt recruitment practices, ensure workplace accessibility or manage inclusive teams, thus weakening their engagement in disability employment initiatives.

The employment quota system is only partially enforced, resulting in weak incentives for inclusive hiring and limited generation of resources that could be reinvested in employment support measures. At the same time, overall funding allocated to disability-related employment interventions remains modest relative to the size of the target population. This contributes to the very low scale of active labour market support and may lead to a “creaming effect” whereby programmes tend to prioritise jobseekers with fewer barriers, leaving persons with higher support needs underrepresented among beneficiaries.

The data on participation of persons with disabilities in labour market services and measures and the effects are insufficient to feed the evidence-based policy redesign and improvement of policy effectiveness. There is a need to strengthening analytics of the situation of persons with disabilities, as well as implement evaluation of existing practices and initiatives.

Education and skills development systems also do not sufficiently equip persons with disabilities with the competencies required in the evolving labour market. Although formal participation in inclusive education has increased, attainment levels remain significantly lower than among persons without disabilities, adversely affecting employment prospects. Access to vocational and professional education opportunities – limited in availability across the country – are often not accessible to persons with disabilities. As a result, many are channelled into low-skilled or unqualified jobs, which may themselves be inaccessible.

In addition, structured transition support from school to work is limited. Tailored career guidance, opportunities for work-based learning and targeted youth employment measures remain insufficiently developed, contributing to high inactivity rates among young persons with disabilities. Expanding accessible vocational and professional education is therefore key to stimulating employment among persons with disabilities⁸¹.

A particular situation faced by **deaf children is the limited access to early acquisition of their native sign language, which contributes to delays in cognitive development and undermines the foundation for quality education.** In the absence of proficiency in sign language and without adequate specialized support in educational institutions, these children encounter substantial obstacles in obtaining professional qualifications, placing them at a systemic disadvantage and reducing their competitiveness in the labour market.

Accessibility deficits constitute a cross-cutting structural barrier. A large share of public buildings – including employment offices and training institutions – lacks basic accessibility features, while digital accessibility of public information systems remains weak. Broader accessibility challenges in transport, public space navigation and access to services further constrain labour market participation. **Without systemic improvements in accessibility, employment policies alone are unlikely to achieve significant impact.**

Finally, the **social protection system may create disincentives** to employment due to limited coordination between benefits and labour market participation. The absence of gradual benefit

⁸¹ European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPRD), Public consultation workshop on the Country Note, 30 March 2026: participants highlighted administrative complexity, procedural burden, and eligibility uncertainty as key barriers to employer uptake.

withdrawal mechanisms and insufficient recognition of disability-related costs can reduce financial incentives to take up employment.

Overall, **Moldova's policy framework demonstrates strong legislative intent but limited operational transformation.** Persistent employment gaps, weak enforcement mechanisms, under-resourced support services, structural occupational segregation and systemic accessibility barriers suggest that incremental adjustments will not be sufficient. **Moldova is in a transition from a protection-oriented disability model to an activation-oriented one, but the system architecture is not yet aligned with this shift.** More comprehensive reforms focusing on implementation capacity, service scaling, employer engagement and integrated policy design will be necessary to move on close to the activation-oriented model and achieve substantial progress in labour market inclusion of persons with disabilities.

6.2 Recommendations

1. Modernise and scale the disability employment support system

Moldova should strengthen the capacity of public employment services to deliver specialised and effective support to persons with disabilities. This requires developing a comprehensive service model that includes individualised employment planning, career guidance, job coaching, supported employment pathways, work-based learning opportunities and systematic employer engagement.

To improve service quality and coverage, specialised disability employment functions could be organised through regional units within the public employment service and through structured cooperation with non-governmental organisations experienced in supported employment. Proven NGO models should be progressively institutionalised through multi-annual contracting and service standards. The scale of the NGO initiatives should be significantly increased.

At the same time, the scale of active labour market support for persons with disabilities should be substantially increased. This could include earmarking a dedicated share of the ALMP budget, setting minimum participation targets for this group and ensuring that persons with disabilities (as a particularly disadvantaged group) are prioritised in activation measures.

2. Strengthen employer engagement and redesign demand-side incentives

Existing instruments supporting employers should be reviewed and redesigned to ensure higher uptake and greater relevance to business needs. This process should involve systematic consultation with employers and business organisations. Simplified procedures, more predictable support and higher adaptation ceilings should be piloted.

Employer support should move beyond financial incentives and include structured advisory services on inclusive recruitment practices, workplace adjustments, team preparation and retention strategies. Public employment services should play a stronger role in providing such guidance, potentially in partnership with business associations.

The public sector should also act as a model employer by proactively increasing the employment of persons with disabilities and promoting inclusive human resource management practices.

3. Reinforce the employment quota system and financing mechanisms

The quota system should be strengthened through the establishment of a dedicated institutional framework for monitoring compliance and collecting contributions. This should include standardised reporting procedures, digital monitoring tools and clearer enforcement mechanisms.

Consideration should be given to introducing alternative compliance pathways, such as contributions to a disability employment fund or social procurement arrangements. Resources generated through the quota system should be earmarked to finance employment support measures, including workplace adaptation, supported employment services and targeted activation programmes.

4. Improve transition pathways and lifelong activation approaches

Greater efforts are needed to support transitions from education to employment and to prevent early labour market exit. This requires strengthening inclusive education outcomes, including for deaf children and introducing structured transition planning for students with disabilities, including specialised career guidance, work-based learning opportunities and targeted youth employment services.

Closer coordination between education and labour market institutions should be established, supported by systematic data sharing. In parallel, early intervention and return-to-work mechanisms should be developed to ensure that persons who acquire disabilities can remain economically active through timely rehabilitation, retraining and job retention support⁸².

5. Invest in accessibility and enabling conditions for labour market participation

Improving accessibility is essential for increasing employment participation of persons with disabilities. Priority investments should focus on public employment service offices, vocational training institutions and transport solutions facilitating access to work. Mechanisms should be in place to scale up accessibility audits, currently provided by a local CSO, and ensure their wider availability to both private and public sector employers⁸³. A comprehensive national approach to accessibility should be strengthened, covering physical infrastructure, digital services, access to information and workplace adaptation. Monitoring and enforcement of existing accessibility regulations should be reinforced, and thorough technical assistance provided to employers to support implementation⁸⁴.

Particular attention should be given to improving access to employment support and stimulation of social entrepreneurship in rural areas, including through mobile service provision and cooperation with local authorities⁸⁵.

6. Reform assessment systems, strengthen governance and improve evidence for policy making

Disability assessment and social protection systems should be better aligned with activation objectives. The introduction of functional assessment tools and systematic referral mechanisms to employment services should be prioritised. Gradual benefit withdrawal mechanisms and compensation for disability-related costs should be considered to reduce disincentives to employment.

Stronger institutional coordination is needed to support integrated employment pathways. This includes improving case management capacity and clarifying the shared responsibility of employment, social protection, education and health systems for labour market outcomes.

Finally, monitoring and evaluation systems should be strengthened. Improved data collection on disability employment, participation in active labour market measures and employer behaviour should support evidence-based policy making. Regular public reporting on progress towards employment targets would enhance accountability and policy effectiveness.

⁸² European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPRD), *Public consultation workshop on the Country Note*, 30 March 2026: Participants highlighted administrative complexity, procedural burden, and eligibility uncertainty as key barriers to employer uptake. A good example could be the Polish institution managing these type of funds. More information here: <https://www.pfron.org.pl/>.

⁸³ "Motivație Association" provides accessibility audits resulting in detailed workplace accommodation assessments for employers. While it has the capacity to scale this service, demand remains limited, and the organization often takes the initiative to promote such evaluations.

⁸⁴ European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPRD), *Public consultation workshop on the Country Note*, 30 March 2026: participants highlighted administrative complexity, procedural burden, and eligibility uncertainty as key barriers to employer uptake. The Austrian example was discussed as a good practice in implementing employment quotas.

⁸⁵ European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPRD), *Public consultation workshop on the Country Note*, 30 March 2026: participants highlighted administrative complexity, procedural burden, and eligibility uncertainty as key barriers to employer uptake.

6.3 Best practices

A number of service delivery and employer engagement initiatives in Moldova provide **practical examples on what works in promoting labour market inclusion of persons with disabilities**. While most operate on a limited scale, they offer important lessons on effective design, cost-efficiency and the value of coordinated support.

The supported employment model implemented by the Motivație Association represents one of the most structured approaches. Aligned with the European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE) methodology, the model follows a **five-stage process consisting of engagement, profiling, job search, employer engagement, and on- and off-job support**. Each placement typically includes **approximately 20 hours of individualised job coaching with gradual withdrawal of assistance**, ensuring sustainable integration. The approach achieves **approximately 70% job retention after six months and an overall employment success rate of about 65%**, while remaining relatively cost-effective at **around €1 200 per sustained placement** and generating an estimated **3:1 return on investment within 18 months**. A key feature is the **“dual customer” approach**, which provides continuous support both to employees and employers⁸⁶.

Keystone Moldova applies a holistic integration model, combining employment services with **independent living support and coordinated medical, social, vocational and environmental interventions** within a single service plan. The approach also uses **peer support as a motivational and learning mechanism** and actively involves families to address overprotection and low expectations. Through sustained interventions lasting **12–24 months**, the model achieves **employment or education outcomes for around 60% of participants**, highlighting the importance of addressing multiple barriers simultaneously⁸⁷.

The Eco-Răzeni Association illustrates the potential of transitional employment pathways. Its vocational training centre operates within a **functioning social enterprise employing more than 30 persons with disabilities**, allowing trainees to gain authentic work experience through commercial production and sales. Participants receive **recognised skills certification valued by employers**, and the organisation provides **ongoing post-transition support to reduce the risk of job loss**. Although the transition rate from sheltered to open employment remains **around 25%**, the model offers a realistic progression route for individuals with higher support needs⁸⁸.

Employer-driven inclusion strategies further demonstrate the role of organisational leadership. **Orange Moldova has introduced accessibility standards across the recruitment and employment process and established a structured six-month supported internship scheme with gradual progression**. The company currently employs **more than 15 persons with disabilities in various functions** and provides **peer mentoring to other firms in the telecommunications sector**. Key success factors include **top management commitment, partnerships with disability organisations and systematic investments in workplace accommodation**⁸⁹.

In a similar vein, **Moldovan Railway has undertaken comprehensive job-task analysis to identify positions suitable for different disability profiles**, enabling **partial compliance with employment quota requirements**. The company works closely with disability organisations to identify candidates and provide support, and has **financed workplace adaptations from internal resources rather**

⁸⁶Association “Motivație” from Moldova, Supported Employment service model and implementation materials, <https://motivatie.md/>.

⁸⁷Keystone Moldova, *Community-based services and holistic inclusion approach (deinstitutionalisation, inclusive education, and employment support)*, Chișinău, <https://www.keystonemoldova.md/>.

⁸⁸Association “Eco-Răzeni”, *On-the-job training service and socio-professional integration programmes (transitional employment pathway)*, Răzeni, <https://www.ecorazeni.md/>.

⁸⁹Orange Moldova, *Responsabilitate socială corporativă și incluziune digitală (CSR strategy, accessibility and inclusion initiatives)*, Chișinău, <https://www.orange.md/>.

than relying on subsidies. With **more than 50 employees with disabilities**, the case demonstrates that inclusion is feasible even in traditional and operationally complex sectors ⁹⁰.

Finally, **the ANOFM “Pathway to Employment” pilot reflects an emerging integrated service approach.** The programme sequences **assessment, training, workplace adaptation and subsidised employment within a unified 12-month pathway**, supported by case management to ensure continuity between interventions. It also builds **structured partnerships between public employment services, specialised NGOs (including Motivație and Keystone) and committed employers**, signalling a shift towards more coordinated and comprehensive transition support.

Taken together, these examples show that **personalised support, employer engagement, practical work experience and integrated service delivery are critical success factors**. Scaling up such approaches could significantly strengthen employment outcomes for persons with disabilities and move the system from fragmented pilot initiatives towards sustainable, mainstream inclusion.

⁹⁰Calea Ferată din Moldova, *Human resources and employment inclusion practices for persons with disabilities*, Chișinău, <https://cfm.md/>.

ANNEX

List of institutions and organisations

The interviews were carried out with the following institutions and organizations:

- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (Employment Policy Directorate);
- Ministry of Education and Research (Technical Professional Education Directorate);
- National Employment Agency, National Council for Disability and Work Capacity Determination;
- National Social Insurance House;
- State Labour Inspectorate;
- Equality Council;
- Alliance of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities;
- Institute for Human Rights of Moldova;
- Keystone Moldova;
- International Labour Organization;
- Chişinău Municipality (Social Assistance and Family Protection Service);
- Bălţi Municipality's Social Assistance and Family Protection Service.

ACRONYMS

ALMP	Active Labour Market Policy
ANOFM	National Employment Agency
AOPD	Alliance of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities
CNAS	National Social Insurance Agency
CNDDCM	National Council for Disability and Work Capacity Determination
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GD	Government Decision
ILO	International Labour Organization
IT	Information Technology
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MDL	Moldovan Leu (currency)
MMPS	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNPRPD	United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
WHO	World Health Organization
WHODAS	WHO Disability Assessment Schedule

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