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GUIDE ON GENDER EQUALITY FOR FOREIGNERS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA



Chisinau

This Guide is designed for foreigners who have come to the territory of the Republic of Moldova for various reasons.

The Guide explains what gender equality is and how it can be upheld in day-to-day life, both in the workplace, as well as in family life and the community. It will help you understand every individual's rights and recognise stereotypes or discrimination that can limit one's choices.

The Guide provides practical information and recommendations on creating an environment where women and men have the same opportunities and are respected, in order to facilitate their integration and equitable lives in the host society.

Gender equality does not mean that women and men are the same. Rather, it means that they have equal opportunities to contribute to, and participate in, both family life and communities in an equitable manner.

A person's choice of profession or personal responsibilities are not always based on free will, as their behaviour and decision-making can be influenced by societal norms and prejudices. To achieve real equality, it is necessary to create an environment where each person can act and take decisions without any constraints or pressure caused by stereotypes. At the same time, women and men in all their diversity are encouraged to learn about their rights and duties, and be open to new information, opportunities and changes to gender roles in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Moldova.

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova stipulates that **“in the Republic of Moldova, women and men have equal rights and freedoms guaranteed to them and equal opportunity to exercise them.”**

KEY CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

1. Gender equality vs gender equity

Gender equality means that women and men have the same rights, duties and opportunities in all spheres of life – employment, education, family and society. The purpose is to ensure that all persons are treated equally and without discrimination.

Gender equity means taking into consideration each person's differences and specific needs to ensure equal opportunities in access to resources. For instance, it may be necessary to provide additional support to persons who face structural disadvantages.

2. Gender stereotypes and discrimination

Gender stereotypes are preconceived ideas or notions about how a woman or a man “should” behave. For instance, ideas that some professions are only suitable “for men” or that women are mainly responsible for their households. Such ideas can affect a person's choice of profession or employment.

Gender-based discrimination means that a person is treated less favourably on the grounds of their gender, which limits his/her access to education, employment, decision-making or any other rights.

3. Gender-based harassment and violence

Gender-based harassment includes undesired conduct targeting a person on the grounds of their gender, such as derogatory comments, inappropriate jokes, or unjustified pressure, especially with a sexual connotation, in the workplace or the community.

Gender-based violence refers to any violent act that causes harm or physical, sexual, psychological or economic suffering to a person on the grounds of their gender. Its manifestations include physical, sexual, psychological, economic or spiritual violence. It can occur in the family, in public or private institutions, or in the community.

4. Diversity and inclusion

Diversity refers to the differences among people, such as gender, age, origin, culture, religion or disability.

Inclusion means creating an environment where these differences are respected and appreciated, so that each person feels they are accepted and contribute to, and benefit from, the same opportunities.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

1. Equal rights for all

All persons, regardless of their gender, have the same rights and should be treated equally. This means that neither women nor men should be disadvantaged or favoured on the grounds of their gender. Respect for equal rights is vital for building a just and equitable society.

2. Freedom of choice without social or cultural pressure

Every individual should be able to make decisions freely, regardless of whether these are decisions about their profession, education, family life or engagement in the community. Societal stereotypes or expectations should not limit a person's choices. For instance, a woman should be able to choose a career that is traditionally deemed to be "male" and a man should be able to engage in childcare without being judged.



3. Equal access to resources and opportunities

Gender equality implies that all people have equal access to:

- ▶ **Education** – equal opportunities for learning and professional development.
- ▶ **Equitable jobs and remuneration** – without discrimination in employment or promotion.
- ▶ **Social resources and public services** – healthcare, social protection and inclusion programmes.
- ▶ **Social engagement and participation in decision-making** – involvement in the community or public life without any gender-related barriers.

The application of these principles helps to create an environment where each person feels respected, supported and able to fulfil their potential.

LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

Gender equality is ensured by a set of national laws and international conventions signed and ratified by the Republic of Moldova. This set of instruments establishes a legal and regulatory framework by means of which women's and men's rights are protected and promoted.

International law (e.g. the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or CEDAW) continues to be an important mechanism to ensure the accountability of signatory states for prohibiting discrimination against women and repealing discriminatory laws.

Having signed and ratified international conventions and treaties, the Republic of Moldova has assumed firm obligations to ensure equal rights, opportunities, prospects and freedoms for men and women, to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, and to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence.

The most important international instruments

These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, ratified by the Republic of Moldova in 1990; the European Convention on Human Rights, 1953, ratified by the Republic of Moldova in 1995; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, 1979, ratified by the Republic of Moldova in 1994; the United Nations Convention on the Political Rights of Women, 1952, ratified by the Republic of Moldova in 1998, etc.

National laws on gender equality

- ▶ Most countries have laws that guarantee equal rights to women and men and prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender.
- ▶ Having passed the Law on Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men in 2006, the Republic of Moldova began working to promote gender equality and ensure social equity for women and men.
- ▶ These laws establish a legal framework for the protection of women and men in areas such as education, employment, health, remuneration and participation in public decision-making.
- ▶ The laws also determine measures to prevent and sanction gender-based harassment and violence.

International standards and conventions

- ▶ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) requires that ratifying states take measures to end gender-based discrimination in all spheres of life.
- ▶ EU standards and directives set standards for gender equality in the workplace, the prevention of discrimination and the promotion of social inclusion.
- ▶ Other international conventions, such as those of the International Labour Organization and the United Nations, provide guidelines for gender equality and the prevention of violence.

RECOGNISING AND COUNTERING STEREOTYPES AND PREJUDICES IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS EQUALITY AND MUTUAL RESPECT

Examples of stereotypes and prejudices

1. In the family (traditional roles)

- ▶ The belief exists that women should primarily take care of households and children, while men should be breadwinners.
- ▶ Expectations that women should give up careers or education to take care of their families can limit their opportunities.
- ▶ Men who choose to engage actively in household chores or in raising their children might be criticised or perceived as “weak”.

2. In the workplace (“male” vs “female” professions)

- ▶ Some professions are perceived as only suitable for a single gender. For example, engineering or tech roles are perceived as “for men”, while roles in education or care work are considered “for women”.
- ▶ Such thinking can lead to discrimination in employment and promotion, or to lower remuneration for women even if they have the same skills as men.
- ▶ Women might be underestimated in executive positions and men might be discouraged from pursuing careers in the areas that are considered to be “female”.

3. In society and the media

- ▶ Advertisements, movies and the news may present women and men in stereotypical roles – women as sensitive, passive persons preoccupied with their physical appearance, and men as strong, aggressive or preoccupied with work.
- ▶ Prejudices in society can lead to covert discrimination, for example, criticism of women who choose to work during pregnancy or men who choose to be involved parents.

- ▶ These stereotypes affect how individuals view themselves and what choices they make in life.

REMEMBER!

Many institutions and organisations adopt their own gender equality policies to ensure an inclusive environment where all people have equal opportunities, regardless of their gender.

Institutions are required to:

- ✓ promote a climate where all persons feel respected, accepted and free to participate in decision-making and activities;
- ✓ eliminate discriminatory or derogatory language or behaviour; and
- ✓ ensure protection against violence and harassment, including through clear interventions and victim support procedures.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) provide assistance and services to women and men whose rights or freedoms have been violated, or those who seek to benefit from economic, social, professional or civil opportunities.

SERIOUS FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION AND THEIR IMPACT

Serious forms of discrimination against women include: sexual harassment, psychological, physical or economic violence, sexual violence, trafficking in persons, prostitution, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. **When you are subjected to abuse, you should know your rights and seek help.**

Sexual harassment is any physical, verbal or non-verbal behaviour that is degrading or creates an unpleasant, hostile, humiliating or offensive atmosphere, with a view to coercing a person into sexual relations or other undesired actions of a sexual nature by means of threats, coercion or blackmail.

Domestic violence means acts of physical, sexual, psychological, spiritual or economic violence, except those taken in self-defence or to protect another person, including the threat of such acts, committed by member of a family against another member of the same family. These acts cause material or moral damage to the victim.

Violence is used to intimidate, humiliate or scare a victim and exercise control over her/him. It is a behaviour pattern whereby an intimate partner uses physical violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation, or emotional, sexual or economic abuse to control their partner or change her/his behaviour.

In the Republic of Moldova, gender-based discrimination and violence are prohibited by law!

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS IF YOU ARE A VICTIM OF VIOLENCE?

You can contact a non-governmental organisation that provides psychological, legal and medical assistance, accommodation for you and your children, and economic and social rehabilitation support. These services are provided confidentially and free of charge.

- ▶ You can request a restraining order from a police officer or a protective order from a judge.
- ▶ You can access:
 - ✓ free legal counselling and legal aid;
 - ✓ free medical aid;
 - ✓ free psychological counselling and assistance;
 - ✓ free and confidential accommodation for yourself and your children; and
 - ✓ exemption from stamp duty on a protective order.

MEASURES TO ADDRESS ACTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Urgent restraining order

This is a document issued by a police officer to immediately remove an aggressor from the home and prevent repeated violence. It is issued by the police immediately for a period of up to ten days with immediate effect. The aggressor is removed from a home even if he/she owns it.

Protective order

This is a document issued by a court at the request of a victim or, if the victim cannot file an application in person, of a prosecutor or social worker. It is issued within a maximum of 24 hours after the receipt of an application.

The aggressor is subjected to the following measures: being required to temporarily leave the home shared with the victim or stay far from the victim's home regardless of who owns the property; being required to stay far from the whereabouts of the victim; being prohibited from making any contact with the victim while being required to contribute to support children shared with the victim, etc.

A domestic violence complaint can be filed with the police, a court, the area office for social assistance or the local public administration authority.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO IF YOU FACE DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT OR VIOLENCE IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

1. Recognise the situation and preserve evidence

- ▶ Discrimination means that you are treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, origin, age, religion or other grounds.
- ▶ Sexual harassment includes undesired behaviour, comments or touch that make you feel offended, humiliated or intimidated.
- ▶ Gender-based violence can be physical, psychological, sexual or economic.

▲ Preserve any evidence (messages, photos, testimony or documents) that can support your case.

2. Seek support immediately

If you are in danger or need urgent protection:

☎ **Call 112** – The police, emergency services or an ambulance can intervene immediately.

If you are victim of **domestic violence**, you can request a protective order against the aggressor.

3. Contact competent institutions

You can contact the following institutions as appropriate:

a) Council for the Prevention and Elimination of Discrimination and for Ensuring Equality (the Equality Council)

- ▶ It accepts complaints of **discrimination and harassment** on the grounds of gender or other grounds.
- ▶ You can file a written complaint personally, by mail or online.

📍 Address: Chisinau, Alecu Russo St., 1, 8th Floor

🌐 egalitate.md

✉ info@egalitate.md

☎ +373 22 245 357

b) General Police Inspectorate/local police station

- ▶ In cases of **physical violence, threats, serious harassment or abuse**, you can file a lawsuit.
- ▶ The police are obliged to listen to you, ensure your immediate protection and document your case.

c) Social Assistance Directorate/Centre of Support for Victims of Violence

- ▶ It provides **temporary shelter, psychological counselling and social support**.
- ▶ In Chisinau, contact the **Centre for Assistance and Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Human Trafficking**
☎ Telephone: +373 22 716 397

d) NGOs that provide assistance free of charge

- ▶ **La Strada Moldova** – provides support and counselling for victims of violence and sexual harassment.
☎ Helpline: 0 800 777777 (toll free and confidential)
- ▶ **Memoria Centre** – provides psychological and legal assistance to victims of violence.
- ▶ **Casa Mărioarei** – provides psychological and legal assistance to victims of violence.
- ▶ **Promo-LEX** – provides free-of-charge assistance in the cases of discrimination.
- ▶ **GENDER-CENTRU** – provides psychological and legal assistance to victims of violence.

4. Request legal and psychological counselling

- ▶ You can benefit from **free legal aid** through the National Council for Legal Aid Guaranteed by the State (NCLAGS).
☎ Telephone: 0800 80008 (toll free)
- ▶ **Psychological counselling** services are available through local social assistance centres or specialised NGOs.

5. Request support in your mother tongue

If you do not speak Romanian fluently, you can request **linguistic assistance** or the support of a **translator**, especially in a police department, in court or when filing a complaint.

6. You are not alone

All persons, regardless of their status – citizens, immigrants, or asylum-seekers – have the right to protection, respect and equal treatment in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Moldova and international standards.

CONTACT THE GENERAL INSPECTORATE FOR MIGRATION FOR INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

The General Inspectorate for Migration (GIM) is an administrative authority under the Ministry of Internal Affairs that is responsible for the implementation of government policies in the areas of migration, asylum, statelessness and the inclusion of foreigners.

The GIM supervises the residency regime for foreigners in the Republic of Moldova, including by determining their whereabouts and removing them from the country's territory or by applying restrictive measures, such as exclusion from Moldovan territory for a certain period of time.

THE GENERAL INSPECTORATE FOR MIGRATION respects gender equality by offering equitable access to services for each person, including:

- ✓ Access to clear and transparent information
- ✓ Access to the right to residency
- ✓ Access to international protection
- ✓ Interviews, upon request, by a person of the same gender
- ✓ Equitable access to safe accommodation and humane conditions
- ✓ Referral to other necessary (healthcare, social, legal, etc.) services

In terms of its organisation, the GIM has area subdivisions in the cities of Chisinau, Balti and Cahul/Comrat, six area offices for the registry of foreigners entering the Republic of Moldova through the Transnistrian region, a Centre for the Accommodation of Asylum-Seekers, and a Centre for Temporary Placement of Foreigners.

CONTACT DETAILS

Call centre: 0 (22) 820-007

Green line: 0800 01527

 Business hours: Monday–Friday, 08:00–17:00

 Website: <https://igm.gov.md>

 Email: migratie@mai.gov.md

 Online petitions: <https://igm.gov.md/depune-o-petitie/>

GIM Headquarters

 Stefan cel Mare Bd., 124, Chisinau

 Telephone: 0 (22) 272 203

Regional Directorate for the Centre

 Lev Tolstoi St., 41, Chisinau

 0671 99 155

Regional Directorate for the North

 Moscovei St., 9, Balți

 0 (23) 161 995

 0672 44 277

Regional Directorate for the South

 Ioan Voda cel Cumplit St., 79, Cahul

 0671 77 977

You and your friends, family members and colleagues can safely contact the institutions and organisations active in the fields of protecting human rights, promoting gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination.

They will offer you support in the form of information, psychological and legal counselling, expertise and cooperation.

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