

POLICIES OF SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN: a policy vision in the EU and proposals for the Republic of Moldova

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Policies of support for families with children: a policy vision in the EU and proposals for the Republic of Moldova

Limitation of responsibility

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■ Executive summary

It is important to mention that the Republic of Moldova has made significant progress in the past ten years in the area of child protection in Moldova. Having recognized this, the declared scope of this study is not dedicated to the evolution, but to the evaluation of the current situation and identification of additional recommendations. Therefore in the first chapter are described the existing measures for support for families with children and as follows, the study presents the vision in the EU, described in the 2nd chapter, and therefore contributes to the arguments in favor of the need to create a long term strategic and holistic vision, which would include multiple areas for interventions.

The goal of the study is to identify the measures of support for families with children in the Republic of Moldova and includes a multi-sectorial approach: social protection, health policies, fiscal policies, Labor Code provisions, services of child care and education, access to information etc.; the role of such measures increasing proportionally in the case of families with many children. The study makes public policy proposals and includes the reference for the vision of policies in the European Union. It makes references to the national legislation, as well as the approximate assessments of the budgetary impact; the recommendations also keep into account the fact that in the 2nd half of 2014 the Government and the Parliament will have a temporary limitation of their activity due to the autumn Parliamentary elections.

Therefore, considering the existing social, economic, budgetary and political constraints in Moldova, as well as taking into account the need for additional sectorial studies, the chapter III offers more details regarding the following proposals:

- **Short term measures:**

- o **Increasing the income tax exemption for every child** supported by employed parents;
- o **Monitoring the implementation of the law on state aid** and the way it includes the families with children and completing this with provisions which include better the families with 3 and more children and the single parent families;
- o **Labor Code changes:**
 - introducing the right of pregnant women employees to a certain maximum number of hours for antenatal care checks during the working hours in the period

from the time a pregnancy is notified and until the start of the maternity leave (a European best practice);

- guaranteeing the right to work a reduced number of hours, for example 4 hours and more per day for the employee who is taking care of a child of 3 years and younger (at present this is at the discretion of the employer);

- extending the benefits which exist today for families with 2 or more children (for additional paid or unpaid benefits) – also to every employee with even 1 child (proportionally for every child, within a set maximum);

- o **A more homogeneous policy regulation of the of after-school hours offered by the schools, but also of the summer program** for school children aged 7-11 years old (regulation of length of hours and costs), to allow parents to work 40 hours per week, while children are supervised;
- o **Improving the access to information regarding the existing benefits for families with children**, by the Government (this should include in a single webpage the information regarding the social protection, fiscal exemptions, medical services for children, the rights to childcare and education, Labor Code provisions for employees with children etc.);
- o **Examining the needs to review the calculation methodology of the minimum subsistence minimum for children under 1 year old** compared with children of 1-7 years (current difference more than double);
- o **Amending the Governmental decision regarding the community early childhood development centers for children aged 3-6(7) years**, through lowering the minimum age from 3 to 1.5 years old and adding the requirements for the specific young age;
- o **Implementing a scheme of offering malnourished children under the age of 1 year** of various food supplies, which would be free of charge and compensated similarly to medicines – through the pharmacies – for low income families (requires a close collaboration between health and social authorities);
- o **Defining in a single way at the policy level what means a family with many children - in Moldova this is the family with 3 or more children** – and focusing the special policies on this category, which has higher poverty risk.
- **Medium term measures, which require additional studies to be made within this project:**
 - o **Early childcare services in state and private nurseries for children 1.5 – 3 years old**, fundamental to offer parents the right to work (in particular in order to eliminate the excessive regulations in the case of private services, and also to identify the additional public funding required for the state nurseries), with the goal to offer services of high quality, with a sufficient length of hours and at an accessible price (a separate study will follow);

- o **Monitoring and continuously improving the kindergarten services for children aged 3-6(7) years** (a separate study will follow);
 - o **Regulating the activity of babysitters**, based on the EU best practices (those which provide services in the home of the child, but also those working in their own home supervising several children simultaneously);
 - o **The partially paid leaves taken by mothers (or other family members) to take care of children under the age 3 years old**: additional improvement of the calculation system and paying allowance for insured (employed) persons, as well as for the non-insured persons.
- **Medium/long term measures, which require additional sectorial studies:**
 - o **Elaborating in 2015 a sectorial strategy for the period of implementation 2015-2020 for the development of the state and private nurseries for children aged 1.5-3 years old** with the involvement of an inter-ministerial working group (Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance);
 - o **Increasing the access to education after the age of 18 years old from the financial affordability point of view (for those who can meet the educational requirements)**: to cover both the tuition fees, and the living expenditures during the period of study (once covering these costs represent one of the core motivations for parents migrating to work abroad);
 - o **Policies focused on providing a leaving space for low income families with children under 18** – in temporary use or schemes with rent compensation – in order to avoid over-crowding and ensure a decent life for children;
 - o **Better assistance for families with children in making health expenditures**:
 - a detailed study of the degree of *de facto* provision of compensated medicines for children under 5 years old, with the gradual extension of these benefits until the age of 18 years old;
 - identifying a *predictable regular* scheme of compensating the costs of medicines and medical services for children from low income families (requires a closer collaboration between the health and social sectors);
 - offering the free health policy insurance for mothers with many children in a new format: in lieu of 'free for life for mothers with 4 and more children' – could be replaced with 'mothers with 3 or more children, for the period when 3 or more are under the age of 18 years old';
 - re-assessing the existing economic criteria set in the legislation for the families eligible for the in-vitro treatments compensated by the health insurance (current income maximum is too low, and differentiated for various sectors of the economy). It is recommended to modify these based on the average salary on the economy and based on the income declaration for the family for the past 3 years, as well as additional medical criteria;

- o **Promoting flexible working for employees with children** – this practice should be in balance with the needs of the employer, based on additional studies.
- o **Policies of support for single parent families**, based on an additional study of the problems of these families;
- o **Implementing a system of tax deductions from income tax for employees with children, applied at the end of the fiscal year** – could include expenditures made for education, health, improvement of living conditions;
- o **A more homogeneous approach, as of 2015, of the payments made for families with children from the Republic fund and the local funds for social support for the population** – through ensuring payments which are predictable, regular and similar in the whole country, in order to ensure the principle of equal rights of children;
- o **Performing a separate study to monitor and improve the way that the pensions of mothers, and of parents of young children in general, are affected by the times spend in unpaid leave or part-time work in the period of taking care of children under the age of 12 (both in terms of size of pensions, and the length of the work experience);**
- o **Policies of stimulation of employment of young persons immediately after graduating**, recognizing the fact that families often support children for a longer time after the end of formal education.

ADDITIONAL NOTE: *above is more of a tactical division of recommendations. For a grouping of recommendations by sectors - please see the infographic attached to the study as a separate document.*