

Capitolul 31 – EVOLUȚIA TABERELOR DE VARĂ PENTRU COPII ÎN REPUBLICA MOLDOVA

Chapter 31 – EVOLUTION OF SUMMER CAMPS FOR CHILDREN IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract

Rest and recreation are of crucial importance for the appropriate physical and cognitive development of the children. Being also a form of tourism, summer camps are an already well-known way for organization of rest and recreation for children. In the conditions of pervading trend of digitalization in the human society and to face the various restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic or obstacles of other nature that makes in-person contact difficult, a relatively recent way to organize children recreation are the virtual summer camps. Republic of Moldova is also no exception to such a trend. Therefore, in this paper are analyzed some aspects of the evolution of summer camps for children in the Republic of Moldova, including the implementation of virtual summer camps and it's peculiarities. This paper was elaborated and financed within the Scientific Project for the period 2020-2023, registered in the State Register of Science and Innovation Projects of the Republic of Moldova with the code 20.80009.0807.29 State Program Project „Improving the mechanisms for applying innovative tools oriented towards the sustainable growth of the welfare of the population of the Republic of Moldova”.

Keywords: children, children in difficulty, Moldova, summer camps, virtual summer camps.

JEL: H52, H75, J13, L83

Introduction

One of the fastest-growing economic sectors in the world is tourism. A particular branch of tourism is represented by the summer camps for children. The organization of children's recreation and their recovery through the means of summer camps is a social phenomenon in which the process of purposeful upbringing and development of the child can be most effectively organized. This state and position of the institutions that organize this rest and recreation became possible due to the decrease in educational and developmental functions in the system of school education and its centering on education itself. The summer camps provide a lot of benefits for children, from which can be mentioned: provision of social skills and abilities; increasing self-confidence; learning to cope; teamwork engagement; development of skills; nourishment of love for nature; stimulation of participation in competitions as a team; psycho-emotional development of children; showing the importance of following the rules; creation of lasting memories. However growing, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism sector and in particular, summer camps for children was one of the most affected. To deal with the restrictions that children's camps faced, solutions were found in their digitization, developing virtual summer camps for children. The Republic of Moldova was no exception and has not escaped such trends. Thus, this paper will focus on the summer camps for children in Republic of Moldova.

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Review of literature

There is a large body of scientific literature on the development of summer camps for children, including on the period of COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, the scientific literature that focus on the particular topic of the summer camps in the Republic of Moldova is scarce and in this paper we try to fill this void.

A lot of recent literature focused on the particularities of organization of summer camps during COVID-19 pandemic. From it we can mention a few and their findings.

The restrictions that were put in place during the pandemic has determined a smaller number of tourist children and also of overnight stays for them and also of the quantity of lessons/hours on a day and days on a week for children, of children group sizes as is shown in (Merkies et al., 2020). Some authors has shown that inappropriate COVID-19 mitigation measures lead to rapid COVID-19 virus transmission in large populations of youngsters at overnight camps (Pray et al. 2020). Regardless of how common COVID-19 was in the local and global areas where campers came from, multifaceted public health strategies for prevention and mitigation in overnight camps could help minimize COVID-19 virus spread (Blaisdell et al., 2020). While there were decreased risks when campers wore masks and kept social distance, rather than utilizing pre-camp quarantine, numerous strategies for the prevention of infection outbreaks in summer camps with physical presence are not enough to keep summer camps open (Suh et al., 2021) (Szablewski et al., 2020). Another study (Nachman et al., 2021) has demonstrated that a number of COVID-19 prevention strategies, including camper cohorting, entry-level screening, increasing outdoor activity, requiring mask wear indoors, and frequent hand washing, can help keep summer camps operational. Even though there has been a drop in scheduled travel expenses due to the pandemic, alternating activities might help boost the profit in educational tourism from summer camps (Le, 2020). Like other states, the Republic of Moldova too experienced a decline in summer camp activities and looked for alternatives to keep kids busy.

Object, subject and research methods

The object of the present research are the summer camps for children in the Republic of Moldova. The subject of the research are some aspects of the organization of summer camps in the Republic of Moldova. From them we can mention: the evolution of the number of summer camps, of the number of overnight stays, the existing capacities for children tourist accommodation in summer camps, including rooms and places, the changes in the legislation of Moldova since obtaining the independence and until present, the experience of the Republic of Moldova in applying virtual summer camps and the obstacles in its organization. As research methods used in the paper are the following: statistical analysis and synthesis of the data provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of Moldova for the existing accommodation capacities for summer camps and the number of children and of the overnight stays in the summer camps; legal analysis of the changes in the Moldovan legislation; literature review of the scientific literature about the organization of the children summer camps; data analysis of the ticket prices to summer camps and their evolution provided by the Moldovan legislation.

Research results

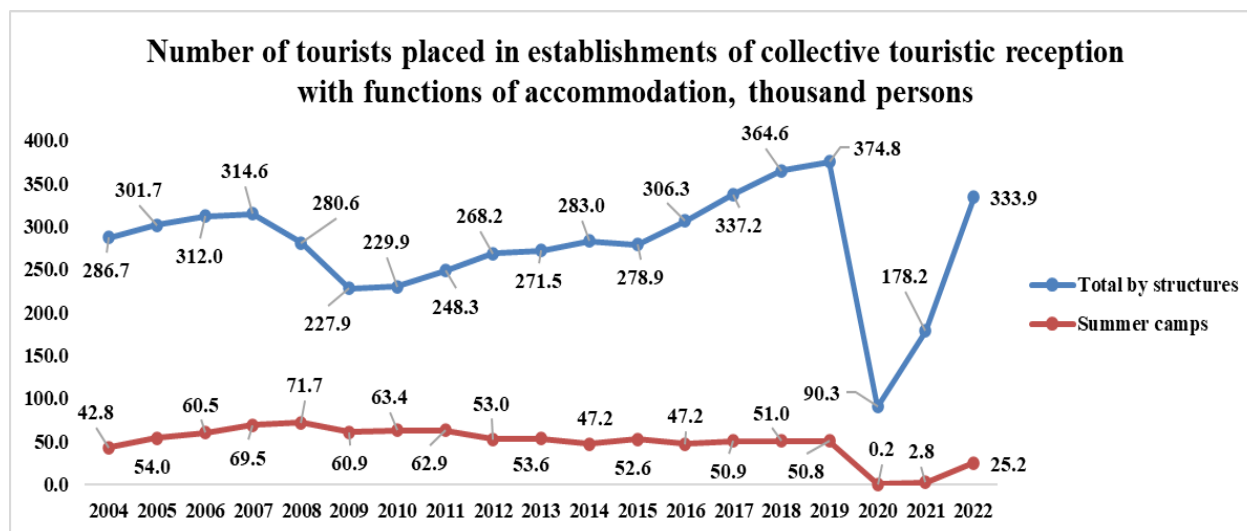
Since the earliest disponible data on touristic activity in the official statistics of Moldova are from 2004 this year will be used as starting year of the analyzed period. According to the data

of the National Bureau of Statistics of Moldova in the country from 2004 to 2022 the number of establishments of collective touristic reception with functions of accommodation, as of December 31 has increased by 1.6 times (from 184 to 289). At the same time the number of rooms has increased by 14,2% (from 7296 to 8333) and the number of places – by 3.7% (from 23827 to 24709). Yet, the average number of rooms per establishment has decreased from 39.7 to 28.8, consequently, the average number of places per establishment has reduced from 129.5 to 85.5. During the years 2020-2022 the number of rooms and places increased (by 2.6%, and, respectively, by 0.2%) like the number of establishments - by 6.3%.

The share of children summer camps in the total number of establishments of collective touristic reception with functions of accommodation has shown a trend of reduction (from 28. 8% to 18.3%). The number of summer camps increased between 2004 and 2014 (from 53 to 76 units or by 31.5%), and after this year and until 2022 the number showed a decrease to 53 units, returning to the number of the year 2004. Correspondingly, the number of rooms and places in summer camps has shown the same trends. If the number of rooms has increased by 39.2% (from 1869 to 2602) between 2004-2014 after that it decreased by 18.9% (from 2602 to 2110), the number of places grew up from 12346 to 16168 units or by 31.0% in 2004-2014 and decreased by 27.5% down to 11725 units.

The number of tourists placed in establishments of collective touristic reception with functions of accommodation in total in the period 2004-2019 was relatively stable, only in the period 2007-2009 during the Great Recession it has shown a continuous reduction (from 314. 6 thousands to 227.9 thousands or by 27.6%), after which it had a slow and steady growth that became sharper from 2015 to 2019 when it was at its peak. In the first year of COVID-19 pandemic with the most and harshest restrictions, i.e. 2020 year, the number of tourists plummeted (from 374.8 thousands to 90.3 thousands or by 76.0%). The 2021 year when restrictions lessened a comeback up by 97.3% was seen (practically the number doubled). The 2022-year level represents 89.1% of the 2019 level. A far look on this suggests the number of tourists in 2021 is only around 50% from the last pre-pandemic year and doubled in 2022, yet not reaching pre-pandemic level (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Number of tourists placed in establishments of collective touristic reception with functions of accommodation, thousand persons

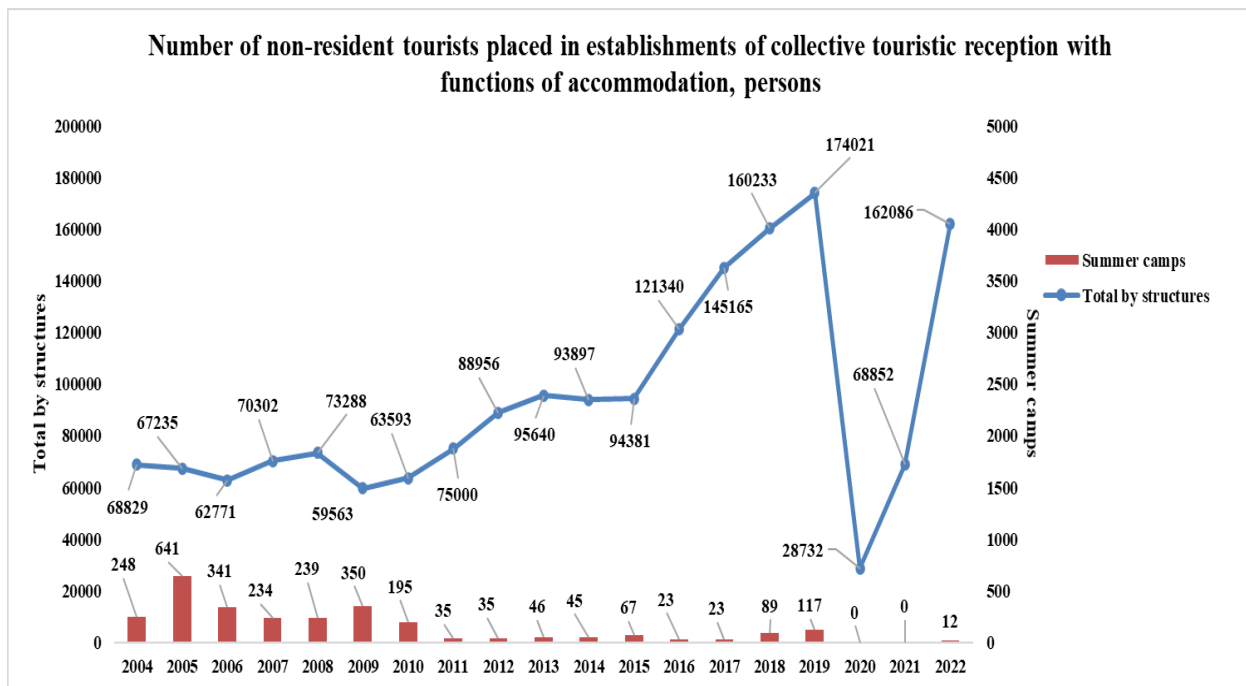


Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023)

The number of children tourists has grown from 2004 until 2007 (by 67.5%), but in the years of Great Recession (2008-2009) it has reduced by 17.7%. The trend of reduction yet continued, thus from 2009 to 2019 it has reduced by 16.6%. Due to COVID-19 strict restrictions the number of children in summer camps reduced drastically in 2020 (to circa 2 hundred), and in 2021 when the restrictions lessened it came back, but only to 5.5% of the last pre-pandemic year, but had a big comeback in 2022, but at the half of last pre-pandemic level.

The number of non-resident tourists has known a growth since 2009, and increased sharply since 2016, to plummet sharply in 2020 and to come back in 2021 to half of the number of the last pre-pandemic year and to increase sharply in 2022, but up to 93.1% of the level of last pre-pandemic year. For non-resident tourist children in summer camps the trend is opposite – from a few hundred children in 2004-2010 it reduced to a few dozen children in the period 2011-2017, in the following 2 years – 2018-2019 it began to increase sharply, but the COVID-19 pandemic reduced it altogether to zero and only in 2022 it just increased to 12 persons, ten times less than in last pre-pandemic year (Figure 2).

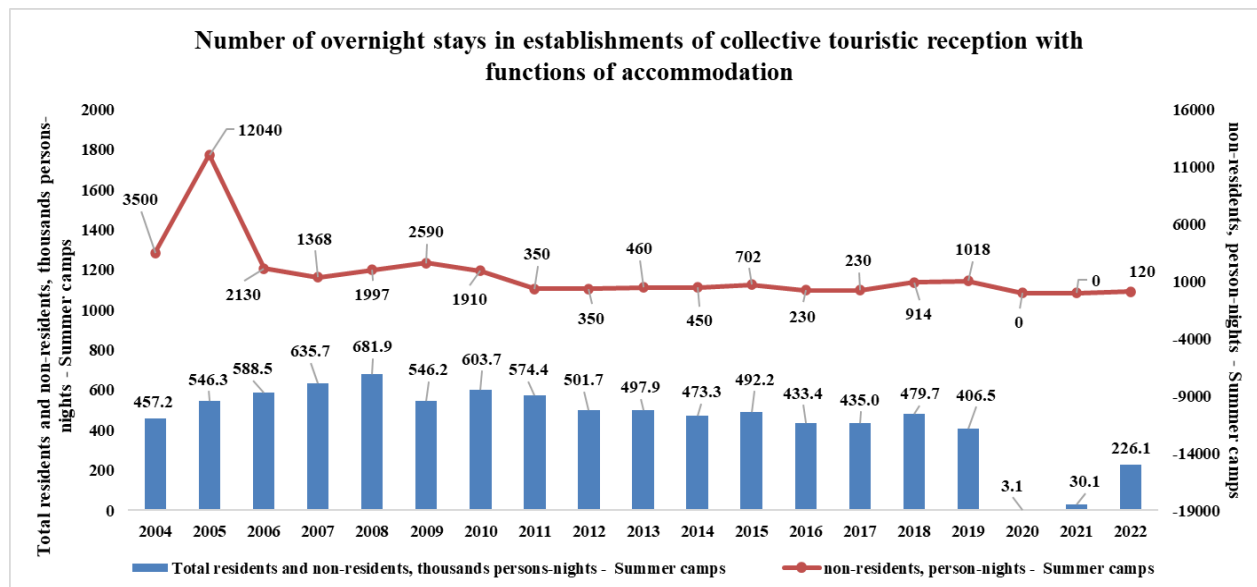
Figure 2. Number of non-resident tourists placed in establishments of collective touristic reception with functions of accommodation, persons



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023)

The number of overnight stays for children in summer camps has increased by 49.1% in 2004-2008 and with some exceptions it has overall decreased by 40.4% in 2008-2019. From 2019 to 2020 it decreased 131 times and between 2020 and 2021 it increased just nearly 10 times, between 2021 and 2022 it increased 7.5 times, getting to half the pre-pandemic level. In the case of non-resident children, the sharpest increase was from 2004 to 2005 – by 3.4 times, but the 2006 year has shown a sharp decrease by 5.7 times. It remained at this level more or less up to 2010, after which another sharp decrease followed down to a few hundred person-nights until 2017. After the sharp increase of 2018-2019 it went to zero in 2020 and 2021 and increased to 120 in 2022, 9 times less than in 2019 (Figure 3).

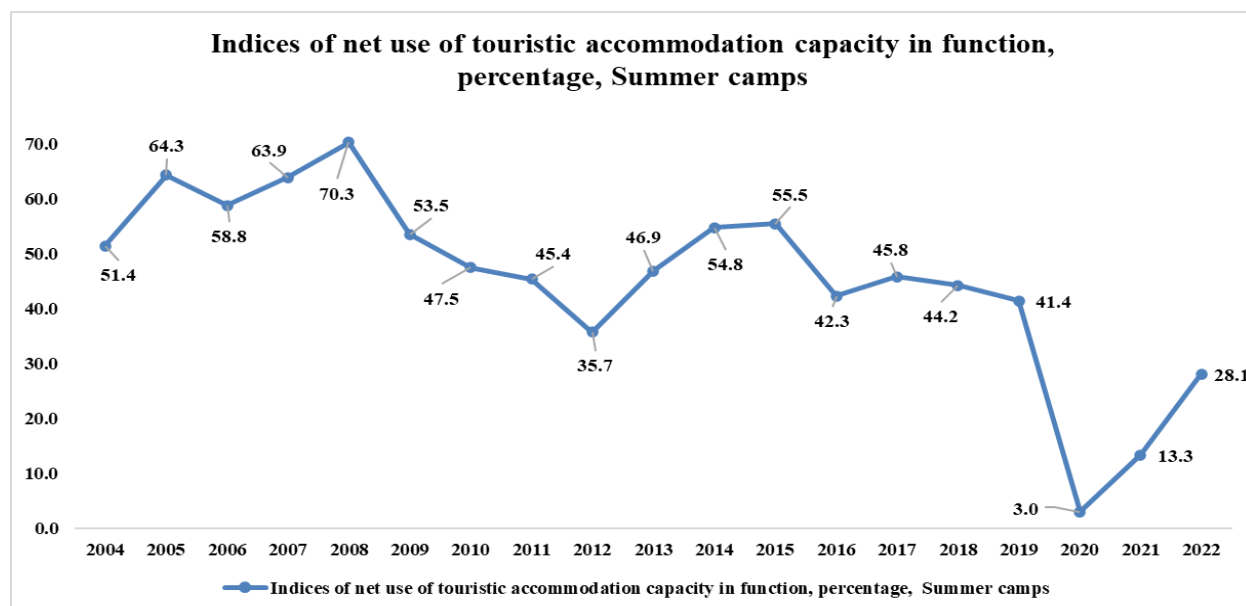
Figure 3. Number of overnight stays in establishments of collective touristic reception with functions of accommodation – summer camps



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023)

The evolution of indices of net use of touristic accommodation capacity in function of summer camps shows that in 2008 was the peak of the use of summer camps (70.3%), yet in most years the index oscillated around 50%. The lowest use of summer camps (35.7%) in the non-pandemic years was in 2012. The pandemic years has shown an extremely low use of summer camps, increasing from 3.0% in 2020 to 28.1% in 2022, which is 1.5 times less than in the last pre-pandemic year (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Indices of net use of touristic accommodation capacity in function, percentage, Summer camps



Source: National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2023)

It is also necessary to explore the larger context in order to comprehend the causes of these shifts. Economic growth has been steady between 2004 and 2008. An irregular period of growth with some stability in recent years was brought on by the economic crisis of 2008 and the emergence of new political actors in authorities ‘institutions in 2009.

With few exceptions, the indicative expenses for youth summer camps funded by the government of the Republic of Moldova changed every year from 1996 to 2022 (Table 1). If the indicative expenses for a ticket to a summer camp were previously given for the duration of the stay from 1996 to 2008, they were subsequently given by day of stay starting in 2009.

It should be noted that the total indicative cost of the tickets is determined by factoring in the current tariff, function salaries, costs associated with feeding children and paying for thermal energy services, as well as other costs that were estimated based on price projections for the major categories of agricultural and consumer goods.

The indicative costs for the youth and child summer camps funded by the Republic of Moldova's budget are shown in Table 1. It should be noted that the sums are stated in national currency in the legislative acts (MDL or Moldovan Leu). To provide a general idea of pricing in each year at the corresponding yearly average exchange rate between MDL and USD, the quantities in USD (US Dollars) were entered into the table.

While the youngsters spend the nights at home in the recovery camps with day stays, they spend the entire night in the rest and health recovery camps. The camps for students to work and rest, where the kids may engage in work activities, were forced to adjust their activity in 2009 due to efforts aimed at combating child labor, leaving only camps focused on touristic activities in this category. The Moldovan law makes a distinction between sports schools for children, juniors, and upper-class students.

The indicative expenses have increased consistently year over year, as seen in Table 1. Indicative prices were often greater in sports camps and tourism camps than in rest and health recovery camps and recovery camps with day stays. The National Bureau of Statistics of Moldova (NBS, 2023) reports that while the consumer price index increased 5.7 times between 1996 and 2008, the indicative expenses per stay increased only 3 times, depending on the type of camp. The consumer price index climbed by 2 times between January 2009 and March 2020, whereas the indicative prices per day of stay increased by 2 times, depending on the type of camp. This is another situation. This could be one of the factors, along with selecting other rest and recreation options, that contributed to the recent decline in demand for summer camp tickets and, consequently, the number of summer camps, particularly those with day stays.

Table 1. The indicative costs in the summer camps for children and teenagers, financed from the budget of Republic of Moldova

Type of camp	Recovery camps with day stay		Rest and health recovery camps		Sports camps of sports schools for children and juniors		Camps for work and rest for pupils, including touristic camps (from 2009 – touristic only)		Sports camps for upper class pupils	
	MDL	USD	MDL	USD	MDL	USD	MDL	USD	MDL	USD
Indicative cost per stay										
1996	248.20	54.07	344.78	75.12	371.85	81.01	324.78	70.76	335.59	73.11
1997	215.00	46.44	345.00	74.51	320.00	69.11	270.00	58.32	285.00	61.56
1998³	215.00	39.96	345.00	64.13	320.00	59.48	270.00	50.19	285.00	52.97
1999	283.33	26.93	362.70	34.48	390.08	37.08	340.80	32.40	350.00	33.27
2000	283.33	22.85	362.70	29.25	390.08	31.46	340.80	27.48	350.00	28.23
2001	306.00	23.78	400.00	31.08	431.00	33.49	376.00	29.22	386.00	29.99
2002	327.00	24.10	424.00	31.25	457.00	33.68	402.00	29.62	410.00	30.21
2003	430.00	30.85	510.00	36.59	521.00	37.37	450.00	32.28	442.00	31.71
2004	453.00	36.74	537.00	43.55	549.00	44.53	477.00	38.69	467.00	37.88
2005	522.00	41.43	615.00	48.81	632.00	50.16	555.00	44.05	542.00	43.02
2006	674.00	51.33	780.00	59.41	807.00	61.46	720.00	54.84	708.00	53.92
2007	715.00	58.90	1000.00	82.37	1050.00	86.49	980.00	80.72	1000.00	82.37

³ In 1998 the price was for 21 days of stay, in 1996-1997 – the number wasn't specified, in 1999-2002 – 12 days, in 2003 – 10 days, in 2004-2008 – 10-12 days, from 2009 onwards – the cost is given by day.

Type of camp	Recovery camps with day stay		Rest and health recovery camps		Sports camps of sports schools for children and juniors		Camps for work and rest for pupils, including touristic camps (from 2009 – touristic only)		Sports camps for upper class pupils	
	MDL	USD	MDL	USD	MDL	USD	MDL	USD	MDL	USD
Indicative cost per stay										
2008	780.00	75.07	1100.00	105.87	1150.00	110.68	1070.00	102.98	1100.00	105.87
Indicative cost per day of stay										
2009	71.00	6.39	100.00	9.00	105.00	9.45	105.00	9.45	105.00	9.45
2010	75.00	6.06	108.34	8.76	116.67	9.43	125.00	10.11	116.67	9.43
2011	80.83	6.89	116.67	9.94	125.00	10.65	133.00	11.33	125.00	10.65
2012	89.17	7.36	133.33	11.01	141.87	11.72	150.00	12.39	141.87	11.72
2013	92.08	7.31	137.73	10.94	145.32	11.54	155.98	12.39	144.09	11.44
2014	92.57	6.59	138.32	9.85	145.94	10.39	156.24	11.13	144.09	10.26
2015	97.82	5.20	142.65	7.58	151.80	8.07	160.26	8.52	148.26	7.88
2016	119.44	6.00	153.37	7.70	182.94	9.18	168.75	8.47	156.35	7.85
2017	128.47	6.95	163.68	8.85	195.43	10.57	179.60	9.71	167.24	9.04
2018	137.84	8.20	175.63	10.45	209.70	12.48	192.71	11.47	179.45	10.68
2019	165.41	9.41	210.76	11.99	251.64	14.31	231.25	13.15	215.34	12.25
2020⁴	174.80	9.92	222.77	12.64	265.98	15.10	244.43	13.87	227.61	12.92
2021⁵	174.80	9.89	222.77	12.60	265.98	15.04	244.43	13.82	227.61	12.87
2022	316.74	16.76	310.00	16.40	370.13	19.58	340.14	17.99	316.74	16.76

Source: Elaborated by the author on the basis of the Decisions of Government of Moldova (Primăria Municipiului Chișinău, 2020) (Ciobanu, 2020)

Every year, the Government of the Republic of Moldova decides the conditions under which rest and recreation of children in summer camps will be organized in that year. Taking into account the existence of difficult situations in which some children may find themselves, the categories of children in difficulty who are to benefit from support from the state in the form of free tickets to summer camps are established. In 1991, a series of acts were elaborated that were aimed at creation of summer camps for children, including the centralized provision of personnel, with funds for the necessary inventory.

In 1993 it was decided to give free tickets, mostly to children from families and socially vulnerable children (25% of the number of children in the camps), and the rest of the tickets were to be sold at 10-20% of their cost. In the years 1993-1996, the transition to a market economy, the insufficiency in providing delivery facilities for children with food products created problems in the organization of children's rest and recreation. Ticket prices increased, the insufficiency of personnel and material base determined the reduction in 1993-1996 of the number of rest camps by 6 times and the number of children attending them – by 10 times.

In 1996, the sizes of the total cost of tickets for different types of summer camps supported by the state budget were established for the first time. An amount of 1 million MDL (about 217.9 thousand USD that year) was allocated for the organization of summer vacation and recovery of orphans, children left without parental guardianship and children from socially vulnerable families and 1 million MDL for partial compensation of expenses for children's nutrition, conditioned by the liberalization of food prices. The profit margin for commercial establishments that were to supply the children's food to the summer camps was restricted to 10%.

In 1997, it was decided that for the rest of socially vulnerable children, each district should maintain at least one summer camp. In 1998, additional money was allocated for the provision of

⁴ The Government Decision for the year 2020 that contains the amounts for this year remained as draft.

⁵ There wasn't published a Government Decision for the year 2021 that contains the amounts for this year

rest for orphans and those left without parental care to cover the debts of 1997 following the 1997 debt crisis caused by the suspension of financing from the IMF and the World Bank, which first required a series of socioeconomic and administrative reforms.

Since 2001, the age of the child who is accepted to the summer camp is set to be between 7 and 16 years. Starting from 2005, parents pay 10% of the ticket price in a summer camp. In 2008, was approved the Regulation on the use of financial means from the state budget for the purpose of organizing the rest and recovery of some categories of children in the summer season which specifies a number of aspects regarding the organization of rest in summer camps. From then can be mentioned: increasing the list of beneficiaries of children in difficulty, establishing the duration of the rest period. The list of groups of children includes: those from low-income families; from single-parent families; from disadvantaged families; from large families (with 3 or more children); those under guardianship/curatorship; placed in family-type services; placed in temporary placement centers; from families where both parents are disabled; from families where both parents have disabilities; those who have obtained achievements in studies or are winners in school and extracurricular Olympiads. The duration of the rest period in the summer camp is set at 10-12 days. Starting from 2008, 5% of the total number of tickets is given to children with performances at school or to winners at school and extracurricular Olympiads.

Starting from 2009, the category of children from low-income families was excluded and the category of orphaned children was included, but children from low-income families can be included in the group of those from disadvantaged families (Ciobanu, 2020).

Starting from 2012, a number of tickets were reserved for other categories of children: 100 tickets for students from Romania (covering round-trip travel expenses). In the following years, the number of tickets and categories of beneficiaries increased and diversified, without reducing the previous incentives, tourist packages were also added. In 2013, the list of beneficiaries of free tickets was expanded to include: children of asylum seekers, refugees recognized in the Republic of Moldova, beneficiaries of humanitarian protection and persons who were recognized as stateless in the Republic of Moldova, as well as children from disadvantaged families in which one of the parents fall into one of the mentioned categories; disabled children and their companions. In 2015, this list was completed with the children of the participants in the fighting actions for the territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Moldova, which in 2017 was generalized to the children of war veterans. In the years 2017-2019, a tourist package was granted each year for 150 students from Ukraine from the war zone in the eastern regions of Ukraine and for students studying in Romanian-language institutions, and 150 tickets for students from this category, as well as the expenses covered for round-trip transportation on the territory of the Republic of Moldova (Ciobanu, 2020). In 2020 with some exceptions the summer camps were in most cases were closed.

In the case of Moldova, summer camp activities were suspended for most children in the first pandemic year (2020), but only for some particularly vulnerable groups. As a substitute, a number of virtual camps with varied themes were introduced. The physically present summer camps resumed in 2021, but limited to 50% of their original capacity. Children's summer camps in Moldova in 2021 functioned in accordance with a set of conditions that were essential to their operation: maintaining a physical separation of at least 1.5 meters, avoiding traffic, cleaning protective equipment, sanitizing, and disinfecting areas; training, information, and communication on the risk of COVID-19 infection (students, teaching staff, non-teaching staff); safeguarding the health of students, teachers, and other staff members in age groups at risk and/or with immunosuppressive conditions; requiring the organization and performance of epidemiological

triage; ensuring the addition of teaching staff and medical staff in the supervision of children's personal hygiene; immunizing staff members involved in these activities; guaranteeing students' access to hand washing and disinfection facilities; and adopting strict hygienic-sanitary measures, as well as physical separation, protective gear, cleanliness, disinfection, and training in the event of food consumption, COVID-19 infection control methods.

In the event that a child contracted COVID-19, the following measures were put in place: all children and teenagers in the relevant group were required to remain at home in self-isolation for a period of 14 days, with the days counting backward from the day on which the child or teenager was last in contact with the person whose test results were positive for COVID-19. The manager of the institution, in consultation with the territorial epidemiologist, made the choice about the self-isolation of teachers and non-teachers who had contact with the relevant group of children or young people based on the particulars and epidemiological risks. All educational institutions were required to conclude each day of instruction with a "Health Hour" that included physical activity, conversations with pupils about developing appropriate behavior in risky situations, and/or promotion of a healthy lifestyle.

The classification of free-ticket receivers changed to a degree in 2019-2021. Children from large families (3 or more children), children from single-parent families, children whose families include at least one parent who is disabled, invalid, or retired, children under guardianship or curatorship, children placed in family-type services or temporary placement centers, children of teachers, children with strong academic performance, Olympiad or sports competition winners, and children with disabilities and their companions, those listed in the General Directorate for the Protection of the Rights of the Child's records, children whose parents have taken part in armed conflicts, those who helped clean up Chernobyl's wreckage, children of refugees who have been granted humanitarian protection in the Republic of Moldova, and children whose parents have been granted stateless status were all given free tickets for rest at summer camps between 2019 and 2021. However, in contrast to the 25% in 2019 and 2020, the share of free tickets in 2021 was 20%. As in previous years, parents only pay 20% of the ticket price for day camps throughout the summer in 2021.

In light of the aforementioned and in light of the epidemiological situation brought about by COVID-19 in the Republic of Moldova, the Moldovan Ministry of Health, Labour, and Social Protection decided on May 22, 2020, to halt the operation of camps for children and adolescents (with day stays and/or stationary) during the summer of 2020. This decision was announced to the district educational departments on June 6, 2020, by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Research. Additionally, on March 11, 2020, all schools nationwide were closed due to the COVID-19 epidemic. All educational institutions had to keep about 434000 students at home, but they were allowed to offer distant learning options.

Moldovan authorities used a strategy that blends IT, virtual tourism, and education to get over COVID-19 regulations by giving kids the option to participate in online summer camps as an alternative to regular summer camps with physical presence. Online summer camps had been available in the country before, but they were few in number and solely private projects. The General Directorate of Education, Youth, and Sports of the capital's Chisinau Municipality launched the program for online camps (Primăria Municipiului Chișinău, 2020).

The online summer camps can be viewed as an e-learning or distant learning program. Children aged 5 to 16 were targeted by the free access to the online workshops, which were designed to help them develop their talent, creativity, mastery, and skills. They were offered by 11 extracurricular educational institutions, and parents and their kids may choose them online by filling out a Google form and going to their websites to learn more about the tour schedule,

activities, and educators. They were slated to take place in June 2020. In addition to presenting touristic information and skills (sports orientation, Chisinau history, survival skills), the institutions also offered a variety of ludic, technological, and artistic activities on video-conferencing platforms like Zoom, WhatsApp, Messenger, Viber, and Google Meet. Four of the online camps had a technical focus, five had an artistic focus, one had an ecological focus, and one had a tourist focus (Primăria Municipiului Chișinău, 2020). Most online summer camps featured 2-4 tours that lasted five days each. Only one camp offered two 10-day tours, each featuring a virtual trip to a different theme-related nation, city, or tourist landmark, along with useful pursuits like ornamental arts or technical modeling. A typical activity session had a maximum of 8 to 15 kids and lasted somewhere between 30 and 70 minutes. While the Chisinau Municipality's General Directorate of Education, Youth, and Sports only planned to use www.etabere.md as an online platform for summer camps, every other institution used Calaméo, Piktochart, SlideShare, or its equivalent for publishing interactive infographics, reports, and presentations. The remote activities involved a total of 40603 children and teenagers from the Chisinau municipality, the republic, and the diaspora. 223 teachers kept an eye on the 15384 activities by interests. However, there are some children who may have problems accessing online summer camps; these children are those who received 25% of the tickets issued for free in summer schools in past years and who are included in a number of child groups (from the families receiving social assistance). Children raised only by one parent, children from low-income households, children from families with three or more children, children under guardianship or curatorship; children enrolled in family-type services; children who have excelled in their studies or are champions in the school or extracurricular Olympiads; children who have been placed in temporary housing centers; children from families with both disabled parents; children from families with both pensioners; children who have achieved success in their studies; children of asylum seekers; children of refugees recognized in the Republic of Moldova; children of recipients of humanitarian assistance and human rights protection that have received stateless status in the Republic of Moldova, children from low-income families where one parent belongs to one of these groups, kids with disabilities and their companions, and kids of war veterans are some of these groups. The following difficulties were discovered: inadequate IT skills of teachers, particularly in the area of protecting personal data; underdeveloped IT infrastructure of online summer camps; slow Internet connection; and inadequate size of Internet data packages. The following can be taken into consideration as potential solutions for the issues previously mentioned that still need to be put into practice: IT training activities for teachers in extracurricular institutions, as well as training activities in the area of personal data protection; hiring of IT trained individuals to manage digital resources and promote online activities; increasing the speed of Internet endowment for each educational institution; and providing teachers with adequate internet packages. The development of an original concept with original standards for remote activity, the facilitation of the sharing of best practices between camps and institutions, and the posting of instructional materials in video format created in the 2020 camps on an online learning platform can all be added to the list of proposals.

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) of Moldova conducted two studies for the second and third quarters of 2020 as modules under two research studies on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the household in order to gauge the extent to which households with such children—and not just them—have access to online learning in the nation (NBS, 2023). According to data from the second quarter of 2020, there were a number of issues with gaining access to remote learning services. About 10% of households with students claimed that access to distance learning is restricted because there aren't enough computers or other electronic devices in the home (for the students), 9.6% report having a bad Internet connection, 6.3% report having no Internet connection, and 4.4% report having no electronic equipment. Consumption expenditures were

around 50% lower in households that indicated a lack of internet access or electronic equipment compared to those that did not. Not all homes believe that kids have received this kind of training and education. About 54.6% of households with students mentioned that the teacher's explanations are necessary for the student to understand the educational materials they are receiving, while 23.6% of households believed that the student's knowledge was insufficient or lacking for the use of computers or educational platforms (online), and 19.2% said that knowledge testing, or the practice of testing one's knowledge, was necessary, also homework verification by teachers was insufficient or sporadic or even lacked. In over half of the households with students (53.9%), parents had to be involved in the process of explaining the material. The study's statistics for the third quarter of 2020 indicate that some households face the same challenges, with the share of some responses not considerably different. Approximately 10% of households with students said that access to distance learning is restricted due to poor Internet connections, 8.2% said that there aren't enough computers or other electronic devices in the home (for students), and 4.5% said there isn't an Internet connection or that there aren't any electronic devices in the home. Families with children who have had access issues to educational resources have lower earnings and expenses than those who do not. As a result, households that reported a lack of electronic equipment had revenues that were 45.9% lower and consumption expenditures that were roughly 43.9% lower than those of homes that did not mention these issues. Some households do not believe that this method of schooling has adequately prepared and included children. In the case of more than half of the households with students (53.5%), parents had to be involved in the explanation of the material, about 61.0% noted that the student cannot understand the educational materials without the teacher's explanations, 29.0% thought the student's knowledge was insufficient or lacking for the use of computers or educational platforms (online), and 24.8% said that knowledge testing and homework verification by teachers were necessary. It is clear that between the second and third quarters, a greater proportion of families were dissatisfied with the effectiveness of distant learning.

In the 2021 summer season, rest for children was organized only on the basis of summer camps and at the capacity of 50% of the necessary, considering the pandemic situation due to the infection of COVID-19. Just in the capital of Moldova, Chisinau, 13 day camps for 1140 children were opened based on primary and secondary education institutions cycle I and II. The budget resources provided for this purpose were approximately 2.2 million MDL (circa 121 thousand USD). As in previous years 20% of tickets were issued free of charge. In the summer of 2022, 13 day camps for 1111 children were active in the municipality of Chisinau, for this purpose the City Hall allocated 2.15 million MDL (113.7 thousands USD). 2100 children have rested, including 6 with refugee status.

Conclusions

The effective organization of rest, recreation and entertainment for children during the holidays is an essential factor and contributes significantly to ensuring the effective protection of children's rights, improving their health, reducing the number of crimes committed, as well as intensifying violence prevention activities, prevention of child abuse, of neglect in various social and economic environments. Children's virtual summer camps are a relatively new type of summer camp organization, whose adoption was influenced by the digitalization trend and made necessary as a complement to summer camps with physical presence due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. The number of summer camps, including the number of rooms and places, has decreased slightly over the past years and sharply during pandemic years. At the same time, the net use of the capacity of summer camps for children in function has also decreased slightly,

showing unused reserves and space for other potential state support, which could include other types of recreation and recovery for children in difficulty.

Even though they are not insurmountable obstacles, but rather potential risks, not every child has favorable circumstances to exercise these rights. The state authorities offer these kids various forms of support because they are aware of this. The measures in the case of Republic of Moldova include: a quota of up to 25% of tickets to summer camps to be reserved for children in need; indicative costs per ticket or per day spent in summer camp that are calculated based on tariff and function salaries for staff in summer camp, alimentary expenses for children, expenses for thermal services, and other expenses which are estimated in accordance with the price forecast for the major types of agricultural products (Ciobanu, 2020). Additionally, a small number of tickets—a few hundred each year—are set aside for Romanian children and children from Ukrainian warzones from socially disadvantaged households as well as for a few tourist packages that provide round-trip transportation. While the number of summer camps, including the number of rooms and places, has decreased slightly over the past four years and, at the same time, the net use of the capacity of summer camps for children in function has also decreased slightly, showing unused reserves and space for other potential state support, while the number of summer camps, including the number of rooms and places, has increased year by year and covers many groups of such children.

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