

PHYSICAL TRAINING IN THE MINISTRY OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS: NARRATIVE REVIEW

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Abstract

Physical training represents a fundamental component of professional development within the structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), contributing to operational efficiency, health protection, and the psychological resilience of personnel with special status. The aim of this narrative review is to examine the national regulatory framework of the Republic of Moldova and align it with international perspectives on occupational physical fitness. The methodology is based on extensive documentary analysis, including scientific literature, normative acts and comparative studies. The results highlight the natural decline of physical capacity in the absence of continuous monitoring, the significant influence of institutional policies, and the effectiveness of modern models, including ability-based training frameworks. The conclusions emphasize the need for differentiated standards, annual assessments, and the integration of cardiorespiratory and neuromuscular components into the physical training system of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Key Words: *physical training, Ministry of Internal Affairs, physical fitness, physical assessment, professional performance, law enforcement.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Physical training is one of the essential components of professional development for personnel serving in military and law enforcement structures. International literature emphasizes that police and military activities involve complex physical requirements, such as moving across varied terrain, immobilizing aggressive individuals, handling heavy equipment, intervening in high-risk situations, and managing high levels of operational stress. (Massuça, Santos and Monteiro, 2022; Orr *et al.*, 2025)

Under these conditions, physical training becomes a critical determinant of professional efficiency and a key factor in safeguarding personnel health.

Numerous international studies demonstrate that physical fitness levels tend to decline over time, particularly in contexts involving shift work, chronic stress exposure, sedentary behavior, and age-related physiological changes. (Losty, Williams and Gossman, 2016; Massuça, Santos and Monteiro, 2022)

This decline can directly impair reaction capacity, execution speed, coordination, and endurance, thereby generating significant operational vulnerabilities.

In parallel, institutional policies play a major role in maintaining or improving physical performance. The study conducted within the Military Police of Paraná (Brazil) by Caetano and colleagues(Caetano *et al.*, 2020) shows that introducing mandatory physical evaluations as a requirement for career advancement led to consistent, significant, and sustainable improvements in occupational fitness levels. These findings highlight that physical training cannot be left solely to individual discretion but requires clear regulation, systematic monitoring, and institutional accountability.

The World Health Organization (WHO) plays a leading role in the field of physical activity, being responsible for developing evidence-based guidelines and policy recommendations that emphasize the central importance of physical activity for maintaining health and work capacity. The Global Action Plan on Physical Activity serves as an international roadmap aimed at increasing physical activity levels and reducing sedentary behaviors worldwide.(World Health Organization (WHO), no date)

In the study titled „*Police Fitness: An International Perspective on Current and Future Challenges*”,(Orr *et al.*, 2025) the authors highlight the decline in physical capacity among police officers, emphasizing that maintaining continuous physical preparedness has become a major challenge for law enforcement institutions.

Insufficient physical fitness reduces the effectiveness of task execution and increases the risk of injuries, absenteeism, and health complications, thereby undermining the ability of institutions to maintain operational staff. Optimizing physical fitness is therefore essential for both active personnel and new recruits; however, this process is hindered by factors such as shift work, sedentary behavior, aging, obesity, and declining physical activity levels among younger populations.

In the Republic of Moldova, the physical training of the Ministry of Internal Affairs personnel is explicitly regulated through normative acts that define it as an integral component of continuous professional development and as a prerequisite for fulfilling operational duties.

Law No. 288/2016 on civil servants with special status within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Law No. 110/2025 on Physical Education and Sport, MIA Order No. 114/2017 on the Approval of the Regulation on Continuous Professional Training for Public Servants with Special Status within the Ministry of Internal Affairs and MIA Order No. 644/2022 on the Approval of the Regulation on the Organization and Implementation of Physical Training and Sport within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. (*Legea nr. 288 din 16-12-2016*, no date; *Legea nr. 110 din 22.05.2025*, no date; *Ordinul MAI nr. 114 din 04.05.2017*, no date; *Ordinul MAI nr. 644 din 29.12.2022*, no date)

However, the integration of these requirements into practice necessitates a modern scientific approach that aligns legal provisions with international evidence regarding the standardization and optimization of occupational physical training.

In this context, the present article is structured as a narrative review, aiming to synthesize the relevant scientific literature and normative framework governing physical training within the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA).

Building on these premises, the aim of the present study is to analyze the role of physical training within the MIA, by relating the national regulatory framework to contemporary international models and findings.

The main objectives are as follows:

1. to clarify the conceptual framework of occupational physical fitness;
2. to examine the regulatory provisions relevant to physical training within the MIA;
3. to provide a comparative overview of international models;
4. to formulate directions for optimizing physical training in the context of the MIA.

1.1. Theoretical and normative framework

To ensure the coherence of the scientific approach, this chapter provides the theoretical and documentary analysis characteristic of a narrative review, synthesizing

the conceptual perspectives and normative provisions relevant to physical training within the structures of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

1.1.1. Evolution of the concept of physical education

Physical education has undergone a long historical evolution, being associated since ancient times with preparation for labor, survival, or military confrontation.

In Antiquity and the Middle Ages, physical education received varying yet significant attention, representing a central component of educational ideals and contributing to the psychophysical and biological development of the individual. In the modern period, the focus shifted considerably towards professional sport, and physical and corporal education became somewhat marginalized. However, in the contemporary era — and especially today — physical education has experienced a substantial revitalization, being increasingly recognized for its essential role in the harmonious development of the individual and the optimization of physical performance. (Cimpoi, no date)

According to Cârstea (Cârstea, 1993, p. 19), physical education represents an essential component of general education, alongside intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and technical-professional education. This educational process presupposes continuous activity and takes place within a bilateral framework, involving two main actors: the educator and the learner. Physical education does not merely aim to improve physical fitness, as may be assumed by non-specialists, but seeks to ensure the harmonious development of the entire human organism.

Within the multidimensional system of education, physical education holds a fundamental role, defined by specific content and objectives, and exerting systemic influences on the individual's motor, physical, affective, aesthetic, and other characteristics. (Dragnea *et al.*, 2000, p. 53)

Physical education is defined as „*the activity that systematically valorizes the ensemble of forms of practising physical exercises, with the primary aim of increasing the biomotor potential of the individual, in accordance with social requirements*”.

(*Terminologia Educației Fizice și Sport*, 1974, p. 112)

In the newly adopted legislative document of the Republic of Moldova — Law No. 110/2025 on Physical Education and Sport (*Legea nr.110 din 22.05.2025*, no date,

art. 2), physical education is defined as „*a component part of general education which, through organized and independent physical exercise, produces changes in human behavior at the motor, cognitive, social, aesthetic and creative levels*”.

The law further specifies that physical education and sport encompass a broad range of activities divided into distinct categories, including formal physical education, school and university sport, sport for all, performance sport, professional sport, adapted sport, as well as physical exercise carried out for recreational, prophylactic, or therapeutic purposes. (*Legea nr.110 din 22.05.2025*, no date, art. 1)

Physical education and sport are recognized as activities of national importance, supported and regulated by the state. The practice of physical education and sport is a fundamental right of every individual, guaranteed by public authorities without discrimination.

1.1.2. Professional training and special status within the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Adult Professional Training

To clarify the essence of physical training within the MIA, the analysis begins with the concept of education from the perspective of professional training, understood as an essential process for the development of competencies.

According to the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova (*COD Nr. 152 din 17-07-2014*, no date, art. 3), professional training is defined as „*a training process resulting in a qualification certified by a certificate or diploma and diploma supplement in the Europass format, issued in accordance with the law*”.

An important legislative document shaping the approach to professional development is the Regulation on Adult Education (*Hotărâre de Guvern nr. 222 din 26-03-2024*, no date), which outlines the organizational aspects and normative framework governing the educational process intended for adults. The fundamental purpose of this regulatory act is to establish a coherent and unified framework for general education and professional training — both initial and continuous — carried out within the broader context of lifelong learning, in accordance with the provisions of the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova No. 152/2014.

In essence, adult education is regarded as a key dimension of lifelong learning and is accessible to all individuals who have completed the first stage of their educational trajectory, regardless of its final level. This form of education aims not only at acquiring knowledge but also at supporting adaptation to the dynamics of the contemporary socio-economic environment, by providing access to scientific, cultural, and informational resources through various educational processes — formal, non-formal, and informal.

The Regulation identifies three structural components of adult education:

1. general adult education, oriented toward civic, cultural, economic, technological, and ecological development;
2. initial professional training, intended for adults without qualifications, enabling them to acquire the minimum competencies required for labor-market integration;
3. continuous professional training, which allows the improvement and diversification of already acquired professional competencies.

A fundamental provision of this regulation is the guarantee of **equal access to adult education**, without discrimination based on age, gender, ethnicity, religion, social status, political opinion, or any other criterion. (*Hotărâre de Guvern nr. 222 din 26-03-2024, no date*)

The applicability of these provisions becomes particularly relevant in the context of modern physical training strategies for personnel within the structures of the MIA.

Integrating these principles into physical training contributes to the development of a workforce that is adaptable, resilient, and able to respond effectively to the demands of a continuously evolving security environment.

In professions with special status, professional development is even more critical, as the activities performed involve risks, complex tasks, and unpredictable situations. Physical, tactical, psychological, and legal competencies must be constantly updated to maintain an optimal level of professional performance.

The Status of the Public Servant with Special Status

Law No. 288/2016 on the public servant with special status (*Legea nr. 288 din 16-12-2016, no date*) regulates the legal framework governing the service relationship of public servants with special status within the central apparatus of the MIA, its administrative authorities, as well as the institutions subordinate to it. The law highlights their essential role in ensuring public order, state security, and community protection.

Personnel with special status operate in unpredictable environments, face significant physical demands, and are exposed to elevated levels of risk, which requires a high degree of professional preparedness. In this context, physical training becomes not only a professional requirement but also an ongoing responsibility necessary for the effective fulfillment of service duties.

Students with special status, undergoing initial training within MIA educational institutions, are educated according to a curriculum that includes the development of motor abilities, psychological resilience, and operational skills. Although Law No. 288/2016 does not regulate physical training directly, it constitutes a fundamental legal framework by defining the specific professional status of these categories and outlining their rights, obligations, and functional requirements — including those related to physical training activities.

In this regard, it becomes necessary to formulate and clarify operational definitions that delineate the conceptual framework used in the present review, particularly the notions of public servant with special status and student with special status.

According to the legal framework, the term „*public servant with special status*” is defined in Law No. 288/2016 on public servants with special status as „*a person employed within the central apparatus of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, within its administrative authorities or subordinate institutions, who holds special ranks and performs duties falling under the competence of the entity to which they belong, in accordance with the legislation in force*” (*Legea nr. 288 din 16-12-2016, no date, art. 2*).

The term “*student with special status*” refers to “*a person enrolled in full-time undergraduate studies (cycle I), financed from the state budget, who is placed under a special regime within educational institutions in the fields of military studies, public order, and state security of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, or within other educational institutions that train personnel for the Ministry of Internal Affairs*” (Legea nr. 288 din 16-12-2016, no date, art. 2).

The System of Continuous Professional Training within the Ministry of Internal Affairs

Consequently, an essential normative element that ensures the logical continuity of the previously analyzed legislative framework—and directly addresses the dimension of professional development within the Ministry of Internal Affairs is MIA Order No. 114/2017 on the approval of the Regulation on Continuous Professional Training for Public Servants with Special Status within the MIA. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 114 din 04.05.2017*, no date)

This regulation defines continuous professional training as a set of educational activities through which MIA employees who already hold a qualification or profession expand their knowledge in a core domain or acquire new methods and techniques applicable to their specific professional activities.

The provisions of this document outline several essential objectives, including supporting the fulfillment of the missions and strategic goals of the MIA, increasing the competence level of personnel, updating knowledge and improving professional training in the relevant field, integrating advanced technologies and innovative methods, raising awareness of the importance of professional development, ensuring compliance with ethical standards, preventing conflicts of interest and combating corruption, encouraging lifelong learning, and optimizing international cooperation.

In addition to these objectives, the document is grounded in key principles that guarantee every MIA employee access to professional development, impose the obligation of continuous improvement, ensure the adaptation of programs to the real needs of personnel, provide a consistent training process, and strengthen an efficient

training system. These principles establish a fair and sustainable framework for professional development.

Continuous professional training of employees within MIA subdivisions is carried out through five modalities:

- basic training;
- practical internships;
- professional mentoring activities;
- complementary training;
- self-instruction.

Basic training represents the primary modality for organizing and conducting continuous professional development and includes the following sections:

- general training;
- specialized training;
- firearms instruction;
- physical training;**
- professional intervention.

Thus, the regulation places particular emphasis on physical training, recognizing it as an essential component of basic preparation. This training program aims primarily to improve the motor abilities and physical condition of MIA employees so that they meet the specific demands associated with service duties. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 114 din 04.05.2017*, no date, ch. II)

A distinct aspect highlighted in the Regulation is the importance of self-instruction, which involves an individual, self-initiated approach aimed at strengthening one's own professional development. This method is supported by supervisors and direct managers, who are required to promote and encourage complementary development activities, provided that these do not interfere with the fulfillment of service duties. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 114 din 04.05.2017*, no date, sect. IV, CAP. II)

Thus, it can be concluded that physical training is not only a mandatory requirement but also an integral component of the professional development of public servants, contributing to their ability to meet the complex demands of work within the MIA.

1.1.3 Physical training in the Ministry of Internal Affairs – legal framework

The physical training of MIA personnel is explicitly regulated by MIA Order No. 644/2022, which approves the Regulation on the organization and implementation of physical training and sport within the MIA. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 644 din 29.12.2022*, no date).

This legal act serves as the fundamental regulatory framework expressly governing this field, establishing the principles, structure, and standards of training activities. Physical training and sport within the MIA constitute essential components of continuous professional development, aiming to strengthen motor abilities and the psychological qualities — cognitive, volitional, and affective — necessary for the efficient fulfillment of service duties, as well as to enhance the overall health of employees.

The MIA provides the general institutional framework for carrying out these activities, while subordinate authorities and institutions organize them within their respective subdivisions, according to the specific nature of their legally mandated responsibilities. Leaders at all levels are obligated to create and maintain the necessary conditions for conducting physical training and sports activities, and any form of obstruction results in disciplinary liability.

Participation in physical training is mandatory and represents a service obligation, whereas participation in sport, which has a complementary character, may be conducted individually or collectively, both during and outside working hours. The physical performance of each employee is evaluated annually and recorded in their professional performance evaluation file. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 644 din 29.12.2022*, no date, p. 1)

According to the current normative framework, the physical training of MIA employees is divided into general physical training and special physical training, each with objectives and content adapted to specific needs.

General physical training “represents the level of development of an employee’s motor abilities achieved through the systematic practice of general physical exercises”. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 644 din 29.12.2022*, no date, p. 2)

In accordance with the regulatory act, general physical training within the MIA of the Republic of Moldova is carried out by personnel from all categories of physical demand and includes thematic sessions from the following sports disciplines:

- gymnastics;
- athletics;
- crossfit (circuit training);
- swimming;
- team sports. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 644 din 29.12.2022*, no date, ch. V, pp. 11–12)

These activities aim to develop the fundamental motor qualities — strength, speed, endurance, and agility — in a balanced manner. For example, gymnastics contributes to improving mobility and proper posture; athletics enhances endurance and speed; and swimming plays a crucial role in developing exceptional respiratory and muscular capacity. In comparison, team sports such as football, basketball, and volleyball help cultivate team spirit and improve adaptability to varied effort conditions.

Thus, the general components of physical training have a predominantly educational and preventive character, being oriented toward maintaining health and the basic motor capacity of the personnel.

In contrast, special physical training „represents the level of physical qualities and abilities required for the successful fulfillment of the functional duties specific to the MIA subdivision or position held”. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 644 din 29.12.2022*, no date, p. 2)

Special physical training is carried out with personnel from all categories of physical demand, except the ordinary category, and includes thematic sessions and lessons in:

- self-defense;
- sports orientation;
- diving;
- mountaineering;
- parachuting. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 644 din 29.12.2022*, no date, ch. VI, p. 18)

Special physical training serves a distinct purpose, being oriented toward acquiring the abilities required for operative missions. These activities develop not only general physical qualities but also specific intervention competencies: self-defense enhances rapid protective and immobilization reflexes; mountaineering and parachuting improve courage and adaptability in extreme conditions; while diving requires exceptional respiratory control and psychological stability.

Therefore, the distinction between general and special physical training, as established by MIA Order No. 644/2022, reflects a logical and necessary structuring of the training process.

While general physical training aims to maintain health, develop basic motor qualities, and ensure a balanced physical condition for all personnel, special physical training is oriented toward acquiring applied competencies that are indispensable for carrying out operative missions.

In this sense, the two dimensions do not exclude but rather complement each other, ensuring both a solid foundational preparation and an adaptation to the specific demands of the profession of special-status public servant.

Additionally, the regulation provides for individual assessment of personnel based on differentiated criteria such as age, sex, and function.

The evaluation is conducted as follows:

- semi-annually for personnel in the ordinary and advanced physical-demand categories;
- quarterly for personnel included in the special physical-demand category.

With regard to the assessment of candidates seeking employment within MIA subdivisions, as well as applicants for admission to educational institutions of the MIA, the evaluation is conducted on the basis of the results obtained during the completion of a utilitarian-applicative course. This course consists of exercises assessing strength, speed, endurance, and agility, in accordance with the provisions of the Regulation. (*Ordinul MAI nr. 644 din 29.12.2022, no date, app. 15*)

The evaluation of physical training programs has as its primary objective to determine the extent to which these programs achieve the intended outcomes within the training process of personnel responsible for physical preparedness.

The evaluation process is carried out through a comparative interpretation of the results obtained during periodic testing and by analyzing the manner in which the personnel fulfill duties and missions that involve intense and prolonged physical demands.

The conclusions drawn from this process are included in annual reports, serving as a basis for decision-making aimed at improving the instructional process.

1.1.4. Theoretical foundations of physical training

Physical training is grounded in the development of fundamental motor qualities such as strength, speed, endurance, coordination, and flexibility. (Alexe Nicu, 1999)

According to Alexe, the development of these motor abilities represents the foundation of physical preparedness, as it provides the biological and functional support necessary for performing specific types of effort. However, this effort is neither simplistic nor purely mechanical; rather, it is expressed through a variety of technical elements and procedures that are integrated and applied within diverse tactical actions. From this perspective, a strong interdependence emerges between the development of motor qualities and the refinement of technical-tactical skills, which necessitates a unified and coherent approach to training.

These motor attributes determine the body's capacity to cope with the demands imposed by professional activities.

Dragnea and his colleagues (Dragnea *et al.*, 2000) argue that physical training constitutes „*a system of measures that ensures a high functional capacity of the organism, through the advanced development of basic and specific motor qualities, optimal values of morpho-functional indicators, and an overall state of health*”.

Torje (Torje, 2005) emphasizes the role of physical training in high-risk professions, arguing that strength, reaction speed, and coordination are essential for operational interventions. In his view, the policing profession is inherently complex and requires professional competencies supported by specific physical performances and well-defined human qualities. Within this framework, the level of physical preparedness becomes a critical element, as police officers are required to maintain their physical

condition at a high standard in order to respond effectively to service-related demands and to sustain long-term performance.

Based on these professional obligations, it is obvious that the effectiveness of personnel within the MIA largely depends on their health status, mobility, ability to overcome obstacles, and resilience to stress — factors that are all strengthened through physical education and training. Consequently, a police officer's physical preparedness cannot be regarded as secondary; it represents an indispensable component of professional formation. Practical experience shows that police work frequently involves high-risk situations in which an officer's life may be endangered. In such contexts, motor abilities, physical fitness level, and self-defense skills become decisive factors. For this reason, physical aptitudes constitute a fundamental recruitment criterion from the very beginning of the selection process.

Authors Galan and Galan (Galan and Galan, 2019, pp. 18–19), introduce the concept of psychophysical training, highlighting the interdependence between physical abilities and psychological mechanisms such as attention, self-control, stress management, and reaction capacity in critical situations. In this sense, physical training becomes an integrated component of professional preparation.

From the perspective of the authors who have examined the theoretical and methodological foundations of training for personnel within the MIA, traditional physical education is primarily oriented toward individuals who are at the beginning of their exposure to structured motor activities — such as children and adolescents.

By contrast, the personnel of the MIA consist predominantly of adults who are already physically formed, some of whom may have prior experience or specialization in physical education or sports training. From this viewpoint, a more appropriate concept is that of psychophysical training, which more accurately reflects the combined influence on both physical and psychological dimensions required for highly specific professional activities.

This form of preparation does not prioritize the acquisition of skills typical of general physical education — such as understanding the rules of a sport or mastering standardized athletic elements (e.g., long jump, hurdle running). Instead, its central objective is the development of competencies directly aligned with professional duties:

enhancing motor and coordinative abilities, strengthening moral-volitional resources, and refining specialized motor skills such as self-defense techniques, equipment handling, and obstacle negotiation.

For these reasons, the use of the term psychophysical training better reflects the specific nature of the activities carried out by MIA personnel, even though, for conventional and scientific coherence, the established term physical education — deeply rooted in the specialized literature and practice — will continue to be employed.

According to these authors, the traditional notion of physical education does not fully capture the complexity of the professional demands placed on MIA personnel. Consequently, the term psychophysical training becomes more appropriate, as it reflects not only the development of physical qualities but also the strengthening of psychological, moral-volitional, and motivational capacities required in operational contexts.

This approach integrates the objectives of classical physical education but goes beyond them by emphasizing practical applicability and alignment with the specific demands of the institutional environment, thereby underscoring the indispensable role of this form of preparation in ensuring the efficiency and professionalism of MIA personnel.

1.2. International foundations of physical training in uniformed and force structures

This chapter synthesizes the findings of major international studies and analyses concerning physical training within uniformed and force structures, in accordance with the requirements of a narrative review.

International research demonstrates that physical training is a critical determinant of professional performance in these occupational domains and professions with special status require applied training programs aligned with the real operational demands of the role. Although each country employs its own standards and methodological models, the global literature reveals a convergent set of conclusions: physical performance declines in the absence of regular assessments, institutional policies exert a direct influence on fitness levels, and special-status professions.

1.2.1. International concepts and directions

At the international level, physical training for personnel within uniformed and public safety structures is regarded as a fundamental component of operational safety, injury prevention, and the maintenance of efficiency in professional tasks. The World Health Organization (WHO) emphasizes the importance of regular physical activity for adult health and recommends that governments implement policies aimed at developing motor abilities, reducing sedentary behavior, and increasing functional mobility. (World Health Organization (WHO), no date)

In this context, many international systems apply mandatory physical fitness standards that are integrated into career progression, promotion mechanisms, and continuous professional development programs.

1.2.2. Perspectives of the European Union

In Europe, the specialized literature highlights a decline in physical fitness among police officers, a trend exacerbated by shift work, the increasing average age of personnel, and low levels of physical activity outside working hours.

The study conducted by Massuça, Santos, and Monteiro (Massuça, Santos and Monteiro, 2022) synthesizes essential components of physical training based on international and Portuguese literature. In their analysis, they identify the primary physical fitness components relevant to police personnel, including muscular strength, endurance, explosive power, agility, flexibility, and both aerobic and anaerobic capacity.

The authors emphasize that these qualities are not abstract parameters but are directly connected to daily policing tasks, such as pursuing suspects, overcoming obstacles, handling firearms, or carrying heavy equipment. When correlated with the broader international literature, these components are regarded as fundamental criteria for maintaining operational efficiency and preventing occupational injuries.

In this regard, the article by Massuça, Santos, and Monteiro provides a theoretical framework supporting the argument that physical training cannot be left to individual discretion but must be systematically integrated into institutional culture.

This foundation naturally leads to examining how these elements are investigated through specific methodologies within the scientific literature.

In the international literature, numerous authors have emphasized the importance of maintaining adequate physical fitness within law enforcement structures, and the study conducted by Losty, Williams and Gossman (Losty, Williams and Gossman, 2016) on Irish police recruits provides a significant contribution in this regard. The authors highlight that, in the absence of clear institutional policies and a system of continuous evaluation, the level of physical activity among officers tends to decline — a phenomenon also reflected in other international research on occupational health in policing environments.

From this perspective, the findings presented by Losty, Williams, and Gossman reinforce the broader argument that physical fitness represents an essential element for the efficiency, safety, and performance of personnel within uniformed service structures.

The study by Losty, Williams, and Gossman (Losty, Williams și Gossman, 2016) aligns with research that conceptualizes physical fitness as a multidimensional component, essential for the fulfillment of operational duties. The authors begin from the premise that police officers must maintain elevated levels of physical abilities — such as strength, endurance, mobility, and cardiorespiratory capacity — to respond effectively to high-risk situations.

In the context of the absence of official fitness standards within the Irish police service, the research demonstrates that the lack of periodic evaluations and continuous training programs may lead to a significant physiological decline. Therefore, operationalizing the concept of “occupational fitness” becomes a strategic objective, consistent with international literature underscoring the need to develop law enforcement forces that are prepared both technically and physically.

1.2.3. Perspectives from Brazil

A representative example is the study conducted in the state of Paraná (Brazil) by Caetano and colleagues (Caetano *et al.*, 2020) in which the authors examine the impact of introducing mandatory physical fitness tests on the professional performance

of officers. The longitudinal analysis of results obtained between 2016 and 2019 indicates that legislative reforms conditioning career advancement on passing physical fitness evaluations led to a consistent improvement in officers' physical preparedness.

The study's conclusions demonstrate that institutional policy can serve as a decisive factor in maintaining or enhancing the physical performance of law enforcement personnel — an idea that aligns coherently with the broader context of physical training within the MIA.

The authors emphasize that physical preparedness constitutes an essential requirement for the efficiency and safety of military police personnel, particularly in a professional environment marked by high stress, difficult working conditions, and operational risks.

They further show that, over the years, officers' levels of physical activity tend to decline, which negatively affects their ability to fulfill job-related tasks. The introduction, in 2015, of legislation requiring officers to pass fitness tests for career advancement represented a significant shift in organizational culture. This perspective complements international literature underscoring the necessity of maintaining optimal physical fitness in professions with special status. (Caetano *et al.*, 2020)

From a theoretical perspective, the article demonstrates the direct relationship between institutional policy and the physical performance of personnel. The authors show that although physical fitness tests are traditionally used in the selection process, their impact on maintaining physical conditioning throughout a career depends on how test results are integrated into institutional promotion mechanisms. In the absence of concrete career-related consequences, failure to meet physical fitness standards tends not to generate behavioral change, thereby reducing the effectiveness of these evaluations as instruments for the genuine improvement of physical preparedness. This argument supports the conclusions of other international studies emphasizing that optimal physical fitness requires both structured training programs and institutional accountability mechanisms. (Caetano *et al.*, 2020)

1.2.4. Russian perspectives on applied physical training

In the article presented by Kudrya, Solodovnik and Gordeev (Кудря, Солодовник and Гордеев, 2015), the authors address the role and place of physical training within the professional development system of employees of the internal affairs bodies of the Russian Federation. They emphasize that physical training is an indispensable part of police professional preparation, directly linked to officers' ability to use physical force lawfully and effectively during operational missions.

Physical training is defined as a core component of professional instruction, playing a crucial role in developing combat-oriented tactical skills and in strengthening the psychological preparedness required for effective action in high-risk situations.

Additionally, the authors refer to the normative framework regulating the use of physical force, thereby reinforcing the importance of applied physical training and the legitimacy of police actions.

The article also highlights that physical training is not limited to the development of motor abilities; it also involves learning efficient and legally compliant methods for accomplishing operational tasks — pursuing offenders, immobilizing them, and engaging physically with violent individuals. The statistical data analyzed by the authors indicate that the physical preparedness level of personnel often falls below societal expectations, which justifies the need for continuous training tailored to current operational demands. (Кудря, Солодовник and Гордеев, 2015)

This source is particularly relevant to the topic of physical training within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as it confirms — based on external research — that physical preparedness is not merely a means of maintaining health, but a fundamental condition for the professionalism and operational effectiveness of personnel within force structures.

Another study conducted by Russian authors (Zholob, Gerchak and Kolesnikov, 2021) notes that under current conditions marked by heightened security tensions and an increasingly complex operational environment, the need for continuous improvement of the professional training of military personnel in the Russian Federation has become even more pronounced. Professional training does not concern solely technical or legal components; it also encompasses psychological preparation

and physical conditioning, both of which directly contribute to maintaining operational capacity and increasing the level of readiness within force structures.

The authors emphasize that the foundation for sustaining a high level of operational capability is solid physical fitness, defined through the development of key physical qualities: endurance, strength, speed, and agility. These qualities contribute not only to the harmonious development of the individual, but also to enhancing the body's resistance to the adverse conditions characteristic of professional activity in force and security institutions.

Zholob and colleagues (Zholob, Gerchak and Kolesnikov, 2021) view physical training as a fundamental factor in professional adaptation. In their perspective, comprehensive professional preparation for personnel in force structures requires not only the acquisition of specialized knowledge but also the development of long-term physiological adaptation to the demands of the profession.

This adaptation is achieved through systematic physical training and is reflected in increased resilience to the stressors inherent in professional activity.

Throughout the process of professional formation, changes occur not only in values and attitudes but also in psychological and physical qualities. Within a strict operational environment characterized by extended working hours, unpredictable tasks, rigid hierarchy, and specific restrictions, personnel may experience elevated levels of stress and psychological strain. Therefore, examining psychophysical characteristics and the mechanisms of adaptation to the professional environment becomes a central component of the training process.

At the same time, the authors emphasize that the level of physical preparedness is determined by the development of key physical qualities: endurance, strength, speed, and agility. The targeted development of these attributes is regarded as a fundamental task of physical training, as it directly influences the personnel's ability to perform complex duties — often under conditions of maximal effort, limited time, and heightened stress.

Work within security and public order structures frequently involves interventions in unpredictable situations that require not only technical intervention

skills but also intense physical effort, rapid reactions, refined motor coordination, and the capacity to sustain exertion up to the limits of physiological capability.

In this context, physical training becomes an essential tool for preventing exhaustion, enhancing psychological resilience, and reducing the risk of errors in critical situations.

In the article examined by the Russian authors (Гуняев Евгений Викторович and Алдошина Евгения Александровна, 2019), physical training for personnel of the MIA is presented as an integral component of professional preparation, serving to maintain and restore work capacity, ensure comprehensive physical development, and provide applied readiness for actions carried out in highly demanding environments.

The physical training requirements for graduates of MIA educational institutions are highly specific and differ substantially from general physical education standards. This distinction necessitates the development of specialized pedagogical technologies aimed at preparing personnel for the effective execution of operational and service-related tasks.

1.2.5. Global perspective

In a comprehensive international analysis presented in the article „*Police Fitness: An International Perspective on Current and Future Challenges*” (Orr *et al.*, 2025), the authors argue that professional physical preparedness must be reconsidered in light of modern challenges — sedentary lifestyles, ageing police workforce, and changes in the nature of operational missions. They promote the differentiated training model (ability-based training) as a theoretical response to these trends. This approach aligns with Russian and Brazilian research supporting the adaptation of physical training to the specific demands of the profession.

The study employs an international analytical methodology, examining longitudinal data, surveys, and comparative fitness standards across various policing systems. This methodological framework provides a reference point for the structure of our own analysis, suggesting that source selection and comparative interpretation must take into account the global dimension of the phenomenon and the institutional standards that shape it.

1.2.6. The perspective of the Republic of Moldova and Romania in relation to international literature

The analyses conducted by Romanian authors Torje (Torje, 2005) and Pui (Pui Eduard, 2020) coherently complement the international landscape regarding operational physical preparedness.

According to Torje (Torje, 2005, p. 3), *„it is unacceptable for a police officer — regardless of the sector in which they operate — not to possess motor abilities and physical aptitudes that exceed the average performance of individuals of the same age. Rigidity, obesity, or a lack of harmony between body segments turn the police officer into an easy ‘prey’ for agile offenders and a preferred target for jokes and irony from members of society. Unfortunately, reality confirms that many police officers do not fit the desired model, show significant deficiencies in physical education training, and display no particular concern for their physical appearance”*.

The author also emphasizes that, in the context of the profound transformations taking place within Romanian society, the continuous training of MIA personnel represents a strategic priority.

The professional quality of police officers depends not only on their theoretical and moral competencies but also on a high level of physical fitness, which becomes an essential criterion for the effective fulfillment of mission-specific tasks.

The author notes that robust health, mobility, stress resilience, and the willingness to overcome obstacles are closely linked to the consistent practice of physical training. From the very stage of recruitment, motor abilities are established as a decisive indicator for admission into ministry structures, while throughout the career, annual, semi-annual, or quarterly physical fitness examinations are mandatory.

Repeated failure to pass these evaluations may even lead to dismissal, confirming the indispensable role of physical training in maintaining professional status.

The author concludes unequivocally that physical education is not an auxiliary component, but rather one of the fundamental pillars of police training and performance — without which the exercise of this profession cannot be conceived. (Torje, 2005, pp. 9–10)

Thus, Torje complements the international literature by providing a solid conceptual framework for the training of MAI personnel.

In the article by Pui (Pui Eduard, 2020), the issue of optimizing the physical training of future MAI personnel is addressed, highlighting the role of normative programs and methodological recommendations in adapting instruction to the specific demands of the profession. The author emphasizes that optimizing the physical training of students and future MIA employees represents a current and pressing concern, given that police work involves interventions in extreme conditions and overcoming task-specific obstacles.

The article underscores the importance of methodological guidelines in planning physical training and the necessity of using specialized training tools adapted to professional duties. This approach supports the perspective that physical preparation within the MIA must be application-oriented and aligned with the real functional demands of the position — an idea consistently reflected in other specialized studies, which allows for the integration of this article into the broader theoretical foundation.

This perspective provides a valuable framework for a wider analysis of physical training within MIA structures, where other studies similarly reveal convergent conclusions.

The author argues that police performance in operational situations depends on the development of qualities such as strength, speed, and coordination, as well as on the level of applied skills, including the ability to complete obstacle courses. The correlational analysis presented in the article demonstrates that the muscle groups of the lower limbs and the trunk exert the greatest influence on the efficiency of these actions, which justifies the use of strength–speed exercises in training.

This line of reasoning aligns with the international literature on task-specific training for law enforcement personnel, creating a solid theoretical basis for integrating these findings into the present review.

2. METHODOLOGY

This article is a narrative review and relies exclusively on documentary analysis and critical synthesis of the literature, without the collection of original data.

The methodology of this study was designed to enable an integrated examination of the national regulatory framework of the Republic of Moldova and international evidence concerning the physical training of personnel in uniformed services. The study employs a qualitative approach based on documentary analysis and critical synthesis of scientific literature, with the aim of obtaining a comprehensive understanding of the role and functions of physical training within the professional activity of employees of the MIA.

The scientific sources were identified by consulting both international and national literature on physical training in police and other uniformed services. Articles indexed in academic databases and scientific-access platforms were analyzed using keywords in Romanian and English, such as: *physical training, police fitness, occupational performance, physical assessment, law enforcement, Ministry of Internal Affairs*.

In parallel, national normative acts regulating physical education and professional training within the MIA of the Republic of Moldova were selected, including laws and ministerial orders applicable to personnel with special status.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The following sources were included in the analysis:

1. studies and reviews published between 2005 and 2025, relevant to the physical training of police officers, military personnel, or MIA staff;
2. established theoretical sources addressing the concepts of education, physical education, motor training, psycho-physical preparation, and professional development, used to substantiate the conceptual framework of the analysis;
3. research examining the relationship between physical fitness, assessment, health, and operational performance;
4. national normative acts defining the legal framework for physical training and professional development within the MIA.

Sources lacking occupational relevance for uniformed services, studies without a minimum methodological description, and duplicate materials were excluded.

Analysis Procedure

The analysis was conducted through a thematic synthesis of the selected studies, structured around four main axes:

1. the role of physical training in operational performance;
2. the dynamics of physical fitness throughout the career;
3. institutional mechanisms for evaluation and accountability;
4. modern methodological models (e.g., annual assessment, ability-based training).

The normative acts were examined through content analysis and juridical-functional interpretation, highlighting the ways in which physical training is integrated into the continuous professional development of MIA personnel.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of national and international literature enabled the identification of a coherent set of findings regarding the role of physical training in professions with special status.

Accordingly, the results are organized into four major directions.

- 1) The importance of physical training for applied/operational performance.
- 2) The level of physical adaptation and resilience in professional activity.
- 3) The impact of institutional policies on physical performance.
- 4) Risks, physiological decline, and the need for a differentiated training model.

In this context, the results of the study by Pui (Pui Eduard, 2020) show a significant improvement in obstacle-course performance in the experimental group compared with the control group (45.07 ± 8.4 sec. vs. 54.41 ± 6.75 sec.), confirming the effectiveness of exercises focused on developing starting strength and strength-speed qualities. The correlational analysis indicates that the musculature of the thighs and trunk contributes most substantially to applied performance. These findings support the idea that physical training must be constructed according to functional criteria, aligned with the real demands of police work — an aspect that allows for the results to be discussed in relation to other similar research.

The study conducted in the state of Paraná highlights a significant increase in physical performance across all tests following the implementation of legislation that links career advancement to the results of physical fitness assessments. The authors note that military and law enforcement institutions frequently face a decline in the physical condition of active personnel, particularly due to shift work, operational stress, and the lack of organized physical activity outside initial training programs. The study demonstrates that enforcing mandatory performance criteria can counteract these negative trends. This research is descriptive, longitudinal, and comparative, analyzing annual assessment results from 2016 to 2019. The data were stratified by year and by physical test. Such an approach allows for the evaluation of physical performance evolution within a real institutional context over a four-year period, providing a relevant perspective for similar structures, including those within the MIA. (Caetano *et al.*, 2020)

According to the authors of the article „*Police Fitness: An International Perspective on Current and Future Challenges*”(Orr *et al.*, 2025), the introduction of strict physical training requirements has led to significant improvements in officers' physical performance. Although the effect size is small, the trend is clear: institutions that condition career advancement on the results of physical fitness tests consistently observe stable increases in scores. These findings confirm the results of the Brazilian study and strengthen the argument that institutionalized physical training is effective.

The authors also discuss future challenges, including the need to adapt training programs to the evolving nature of operational tasks, the importance of continuous testing, and the integration of public health considerations. Within the context of this article, these discussions are relevant for proposing an integrated physical training strategy for the MIA, one that accounts for both innovative methodological elements and institutional constraints.

The literature demonstrates that institutional policies that make physical fitness testing mandatory for promotion can contribute to improving the physical condition of police personnel. For the MIA, this implies that implementing similar criteria and conducting regular assessments of physical capacity could become key components of an efficient professional training system.

The article by Massuça, Santos and Monteiro (Massuça, Santos and Monteiro, 2022), employs a rigorous systematic review conducted in accordance with the PRISMA protocol (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which strengthens the credibility of the authors' conclusions. The authors selected international and Portuguese studies based on clearly defined criteria and analyzed them using the CASP tool (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme) to evaluate methodological quality. Through this approach, they identified the types of tests most frequently used in the assessment of police officers, as well as existing gaps in the evaluation of health status. This demonstrates that the analysis of physical training within an institution such as the MIA must rely on structure, clear criteria, and careful source selection. Thus, the transition toward presenting results becomes logical and well-founded.

The synthesized findings from the literature reviewed by Massuça, Santos and Monteiro, highlight that the development of health-oriented physical training standards, together with specific monitoring and intervention strategies, significantly contributes to optimizing the health status and physical capacity of personnel in public order institutions. The examined research reveals a consistent relationship between morphological parameters, cardiorespiratory indicators, and the neuromuscular components of physical fitness, suggesting the need for an integrated approach to these variables within training programs.

Convergently, international studies indicate that the level of physical fitness directly influences both operational performance and the health profile of police officers. Body composition has been shown to be a relevant determinant of cardiovascular risk, while reductions in cardiorespiratory capacity are closely associated with a progressive increase in metabolic risks with advancing age. In this context, the need for systematic prevention and health-promotion programs — designed to reduce the impact of profession-specific risk factors — becomes increasingly evident.

Another important aspect highlighted in the specialized literature is the consistent association between age and the decline of physical abilities. Available data confirm that maintaining an adequate level of fitness becomes essential for police officers to effectively perform their duties throughout their career. Repeatedly, authors

emphasize that integrating age-appropriate conditioning interventions can help mitigate this decline and support operational performance.

However, the review of existing studies also highlights several methodological limitations.

First, the limited number of investigations that simultaneously assess physical fitness and clinical parameters makes it difficult to formulate definitive conclusions regarding the direct relationship between fitness and police officers' health. Additionally, the wide variety of tests used to evaluate physical fitness complicates procedural standardization and reduces the comparability of results across studies. Another significant limitation stems from the inclusion of cadets or recruits in some research, whose physical profiles do not necessarily reflect those of personnel already serving in operational roles.

With regard to the analysis of the study conducted on Irish police recruits by Losty, Williams and Gossman (Losty, Williams and Gossman, 2016), the results reveal several trends that confirm the vulnerability of physical fitness during initial training programs. The data show that, despite the physical training included in professional instruction, a considerable proportion of key physiological indicators — such as body weight, waist circumference, body mass index, and cardiorespiratory capacity — displayed unfavorable changes over the monitored period. In contrast, certain components of muscular strength and endurance, such as the number of push-ups and sit-ups, demonstrated improvements, and flexibility as well as resting heart rate also presented positive changes.

This program did not directly address environmental problems or barriers, but provided health and fitness assessments before and after a police training program. It was noted that, up to 2016 — the year in which this study was conducted — no other research in Ireland had examined the Irish police force to determine their health and fitness levels. The present study provides valuable data for this unique population, offering insight into recruits undergoing police training and the ways in which these physiological variables change during their preparation.

As Irish police training progresses, the adverse changes in health and fitness variables represent a surprising finding for Garda management. Measures such as body

weight, waist circumference, BMI (body mass index) and VO₂max (maximum oxygen consumption) declined from the initial to the final assessment. These findings reinforce the need for strategies specifically designed to address and counteract these issues.

The authors emphasize that, in the absence of explicit objectives, periodic testing programs, and institutional monitoring mechanisms, both recruits and active officers are prone to an accelerated physiological decline. This issue is further amplified by the fact that current programs are not differentiated by sex, even though the data indicate that women experienced more pronounced physiological decreases than men. This finding suggests the need to develop tailored programs that take into account the physiological particularities and initial fitness levels of each personnel category.

Overall, the study's results confirm a central idea in the international literature: physical training does not fulfill its functional role unless it is approached as a continuous, systematic, and monitored process, accompanied by clear standards and regular evaluations. In the absence of these mechanisms, even formalized training programs may lead to outcomes contrary to their intended objectives, particularly with regard to work capacity, cardiovascular health, and operational readiness.

These findings highlight the need for security structures — including those within the MIA — to adopt modern physical training models similar to those implemented in other countries, where annual testing, individualized training, and standardized protocols are integral components of institutional culture. In this regard, the analyzed study provides a strong foundation for arguing in favor of reforms and for developing a coherent strategic framework aimed at optimizing physical performance and reducing professional risks.

Therefore, physical education has been — and continues to be — one of the most important components of professional training, without which the development of personnel within the MIA cannot be fully conceived.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The integrated analysis of the national regulatory framework and the international scientific literature confirms that physical training constitutes an indispensable component of professional preparation within the structures of the Ministry of Internal

Affairs (MAI). It contributes directly to operational efficiency, psychological resilience, and the protection of employees' health, representing a decisive factor in managing high-risk situations, sustained effort, and the unpredictable demands inherent to the profession.

The results of the examined studies show that physical fitness levels tend to decline in the absence of regular monitoring — an issue documented both in Europe and globally. The introduction of firm institutional mechanisms, such as mandatory evaluations for career advancement (as demonstrated in the case of Brazil), leads to significant and consistent improvements in physical performance. At the same time, Russian and European research indicates that the development of fundamental motor qualities — strength, endurance, speed, and agility —and the achievement of long-term physiological adaptations are essential conditions for the effective fulfillment of operative tasks.

International studies likewise confirm that physical training cannot be approached as an isolated activity, but must be integrated into a coherent system differentiated by functional demands, age, and the specific nature of operational missions. The ability-based training model, increasingly present in contemporary literature, offers a valid direction for modernizing physical preparation in professions with special status, contributing both to reducing injury risk and to optimizing operational performance.

In the context of the Republic of Moldova, the existing normative framework establishes physical training as a service obligation and an integral component of continuous professional development, aligning MIA structures with international trends and recommendations regarding the standardization and evaluation of physical capacity. Therefore, the modernization of the physical training system within the MIA requires:

1. the implementation of a differentiated training model, adapted to functional demands;
2. the establishment of clear standards and mandatory periodic testing;
3. the integration of occupational health considerations;
4. the development of an institutional culture that promotes continuous physical activity.

These directions form the foundation for strengthening the operational capacity of MIA personnel and for enhancing the quality of public service in the field of order and security.

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