



1. GENERAL GOVERNANCE

The Republic of Moldova (hereafter Moldova) is a representative parliamentary democratic republic. Constitutionally, parliament is the supreme representative body and the sole legislative authority. Government is headed by the prime minister, designated by the president, who is head of state. It consists of a council of ministers and a single-chamber legislature. Laws are judicially reviewed by a constitutional court. Moldova is divided into 32 raions, three municipalities and the breakaway region of Transnistria, whose status is disputed. There are 982 localities – five with municipality status, 61 with city status, and 916 villages with commune status.

2. VET GOVERNANCE

Key roles and functions

The main actor for VET governance and policy making is the Ministry of Education (MoE) and its authorities and bodies, including the Directorate of Technical, Vocational and Secondary Specialised Education; the Vocational Education Development Centre; and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (ANACIP). Other actors include the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (MoLSPF), which works with the MoE and Ministry of Finance (MoF), the key actor in VET funding. Among social partners, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has mainly a consultative role.

Sectoral committees are in charge of reviewing existing occupational standards and developing new ones. The National Employment Agency (NEA) coordinates annual labour market forecasts and organises courses offering qualifications and skills development for unemployed people. The Moldovan Organisation for SME Development is quite active in policy implementation, developing projects and programmes around entrepreneurial skills and

training. International stakeholders support and fund several reform initiatives and VET-related projects.

Financing

Around half of investment funds for education come from the state, and the remainder from businesses or donors. Investment in VET is seen as insufficient, and more funding is needed for infrastructure. International stakeholders play a substantial role in funding through projects including MOL-AGRI and training firm programmes, funded by the Austrian Development Agency, KulturKontakt Austria and MoE, which have led to two centres of competence in agri-industrial education and 18 vocational education institutions. Other international investment has funded equipment, capacity building, curriculum development and teacher training for entrepreneurship.

The key criterion for state funding is performance. For a long time, the state made no capital investments and there was no well-defined plan nor enough resources to meet needs. Though this has improved, financial resources need to be channelled based on guiding principles such as strengthening centres of excellence or focusing on the trades and professions most in demand.

Coordination mechanisms for VET policymaking

Looking at legislative and normative orientated mechanisms, significant legislative initiatives happened between 2010 and 2014. Results for VET include social inclusion for people with disabilities, tax exemptions for training spending, and development of occupational standards. Several strategies have also been developed, including the National Development Strategy Moldova 2020; the National Regional Development Strategy; the Development Strategy of Small and Medium Enterprises 2012-20; the Domestic Trade Development Strategy of Moldova 2014-20; and the Classification of Occupations in Moldova. All these raise issues around reskilling and entrepreneurship.



But most important for VET is the Development Strategy of Vocational/Technical Education 2013-20. Its development priorities include restructuring the network of educational institutions; aligning vocational education to labour market needs; establishing a national centre to assess and accredit centres; aligning curricula of training with the NQF; and increasing the quality of vocational training, as well as making it more attractive and accessible. It sets medium and long-term objectives and tasks to develop vocational education, focusing on connecting the national context and European and global trends in vocational education, and meeting European integration aspirations.

The Education Code approved in 2013 is the legal basis for institutionalising reforms in VET. It means there is a choice after gymnasium between secondary and post-secondary technical vocational education (i.e., vocational school or college).. From 2018, education will be compulsory up to the age of 18.

Institutionalised policy advice orientated mechanisms include other VET governance and policy actors such as the Republican Centre for the Development of Vocational Education. It was appointed by MoE to prepare reports within the Torino Process.. The VET Center played a significant part in developing the new VET Strategy. NAVEQA leads on evaluating VET quality and developing and reviewing national reference standards, performance indicators and a methodology for evaluating and accrediting training providers. The NEA, as well as supporting unemployed people with training, uses labour market forecasts for planning purposes relating to financial planning, information on labour demand for final-year students, requirements for adult training courses, and priority occupations.

The key development in public-private orientated mechanisms are sectoral committees, which contribute to institutionalised partnership building. They are involved in developing methodologies for occupational standards (they also develop occupational standards) and qualifications, and identifying training needs and recognising prior learning. Also, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry is involved in the process. ODIMM

(SME Development Organization) has conducted training and entrepreneurial skills development through two programmes, one of which aims to involve 18-30-year-olds from rural areas in entrepreneurial activities. It has also established a library of publications for entrepreneurs. The Centre for Entrepreneurship Education and Business Assistance consults with employers and social partners to train teachers for entrepreneurship education. It also organises business start-up courses for secondary VET graduates. Junior Achievement Moldova runs 18 entrepreneurial programmes for 16-18-year-old students.

Knowledge creation orientated mechanisms include the NEA's annual labour market studies and skills needs surveys. The NEA has developed, with EU support, an annual labour market forecast and a 'professions barometer' to reflect labour market trends and explore how to connect skills supply and demand. The Classification of Occupations is the basic inventory of trades and professions, while the Nomenclature of Trades/Professions for Secondary Vocational Education Training defines about 80-90 trades and professions for which training is available in TVET institutions. This contributes to a more evidence-based approach to policy making. A barrier to progress here is the lack of a national VET data collection or information system.

Country typology

VET governance is hybrid – centralised, yet clearly moving towards decentralisation. MoE and other ministries and public authorities are the key actors in policy making and involved in the main governance functions. Yet social partners and civil society associations and VET providers are consulted in defining the VET vision and implementing the new strategy. They are also involved in policy monitoring. Sectoral committees contribute to decentralising policy making and implementation. Also, a draft concept paper on social dialogue and a social dialogue platform, developed in 2014, are expected to help deepen and institutionalise social dialogue. More clear evidence of a decisive move to decentralisation is the NQF. It is developed not just by MoE but other ministries, sectoral committees, VET institutions and providers, businesses, and other social partners.

Development assessment

Existing VET governance is 'structured', moving towards 'defined'. Actors have good capabilities and a huge reform initiative is in place, with EU backing. A comprehensive vision has been institutionalised, providing a legal and operational basis for a series of reforms. Social partners and stakeholders are consulted on policy making and participate in innovative projects supported by international partners and MoE. Public-private partnerships are built and strengthened, as in the case of the sectoral committees. The technical vocational education system has improved since 2010, especially in terms of structural reforms and pilot reform projects. The new legislative framework and strategic objectives largely ensure an integrated approach based on a coherent development vision.

VET governance is still centralised. MoE and MoLSPF are the key actors in policy making, though the priorities for improving governance emphasise the need for active involvement from 'key players in society' in policy development, implementation and monitoring. Regional authorities' role in VET governance is extremely limited, and while coordination mechanisms are efficient, they need to be strengthened and social partners' and stakeholders' participation in key VET governance bodies should be institutionalised. For this purpose the understaffed VET Department of the Ministry of Education would need more personnel which could focus on additional coordination mechanisms and on strengthening the stakeholders' involvement. Under-funding, plus the exclusively performance-based funding formula, hamper progress. In addition, the lack of a national VET database and reliable data on graduate employment is a challenge. Overcoming it would further the existing trend towards more evidence-based policy making.

Ongoing work in policy development

The VET Strategy and Education Code reflect the priorities of the Moldova 2020 Strategy and are in line with international standards and treaties, as well as developing a comprehensive vision for VET, and they contribute to modernising the system. They support the VET governance function of formulating a VET national policy framework.

Management of public-private partnerships for VET is supported by modernising occupational standards by sectoral committees, which have been in charge of new and existing standards since 2011. The National Council Meeting approved six occupational standards for trades in 2013. Sectoral committees in six other sectors are planned by 2020.

Management of VET provider networks is supported by a credit system for post-secondary TVET, being first piloted in 13 colleges and currently implemented in all colleges and Centres of Excellence since September 2016. This can contribute substantially to the transparency, comparability and functionality of the VET system and facilitate modernisation of the NQF, since it enhances an approach to VET based on learning outcomes.

3. POLICY POINTERS

Policy makers may wish to consider the following points for reflection, with a view to working towards their implementation in line with national priorities and in the context of national, regional, and local needs.

Overall planning and management

1. Establish the extra sectoral committees to prepare the complete set of occupational standards for technical vocational trades and specialisations.
2. Support sectoral committees' capacities and evaluate how representative they are. Give them institutional and legal status.
3. Diversify sectors
4. To develop a strategy on the cooperation of the key stakeholders and the set of mechanism to make the concept paper on social dialogue active and functional.
5. Continue empowering ANACIP through capacity building to strengthen quality assurance processes in the VET system.
6. Fund the labour market forecast to increase the capacity to forecast labour market skills trends,



while focusing on creating lifelong training opportunities.

7. Complete, approve and enact the concept paper on validating non-formal and informal learning.
8. Establish elements of a dual training approach for the promotion of a demand-driven VET system.
9. Implement more practice-oriented and standardized assessment approaches.
10. Establish a structured pre-service training for VET teachers.

Finance and funding

1. Develop and enact legal provisions for public VET providers' financial autonomy, based on a consultation with VET providers and public and private stakeholders
2. Make institutional arrangements to diversify the existing VET funding formula and channel resources more strategically, based on principles or funding like strengthening centres of excellence, and focusing on trades and professions most in demand etc.

Coordination mechanisms for VET policy making

1. Develop a mechanism for strengthening participation of public and private stakeholders from all levels of governance in VET policy making. And strengthening cooperation and coordination between them. Institutionalise stakeholders' participation in the existing major coordination bodies such as the National VET coordinating Council.
2. Make VET more visible and attractive via social advertising and promotion.
3. Develop a national VET data collection and/or information system and a VET database to help communication between ministries, employers, chambers, trade unions, civil society associations, local authorities and VET providers, and enhance evidence-based policy making.