

# WORK-BASED LEARNING IN MOLDOVA

## Work-based learning in the Moldovan VET system

There are three types of vocational education and training (VET) providers: centres of excellence, colleges and professional schools. The latter provide programmes in secondary VET while the first two offer all types of VET programmes: initial and continuous secondary VET, post-secondary VET and post-secondary non-tertiary VET.

Work practice (work-based learning (WBL)) is part of VET at all levels: secondary, post-secondary and non-tertiary post-secondary VET, both in initial and continuous VET.

The main types of WBL include:

- on-site learning, i.e. in-school practical training (2 to 3 days per week), carried out mostly in VET institutions (e.g. workshops, laboratories, production sites, mini factories and greenhouses); and
- on-the-job training, i.e. internships in companies (for 12 to 14 weeks), ordinarily in a business unit, and dual education, mainly organised in companies (about 70% in practical training and about 30% theoretical).

Elements of dual education (as the most integrated form of WBL) started being introduced in Moldova in 2014. The adoption in 2018 of the regulations (i) on the organisation of VET programmes through dual VET; and (ii) on a framework curriculum for dual secondary VET completed the formal establishment of dual education. Dual VET is the alternative form of technical VET (TVET) programmes within VET institutions and companies.

## The role of social partners

The social dialogue platform allows cooperation between social partners and the government for the management and improvement of the VET system. Social partners are consulted in the process of development, implementation and monitoring of the new strategies and policies. The key stakeholders with a consultative role in VET governance and policy making include sectoral committees, employers' organisations, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and trade unions.

Moldova recently established sectoral committees (Law No 244/2017) that are in charge of reviewing existing occupational standards and developing new ones. The existing six sectoral committees have a limited role due to their lack of capacity.

With the approval of the regulation on the organisation of VET programmes through dual education, for the first time the insurance and monitoring of the quality of training within the company lies with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The Moldovan Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprise Development is active in VET policy implementation as well. It develops projects and programmes around entrepreneurial skills and training. International stakeholders support and fund a range of VET-related projects and pilot reform initiatives. However, cooperation with the private sector is not fully exploited, mostly being limited to providing places for WBL.

## The main challenges

Dual VET requires investment and shared responsibilities between companies and VET institutions. It also depends on the companies' desire and readiness to assume a high level of responsibility, and on their technical and human capacity. Thus, despite strong recognition of the importance of WBL, VET institutions still face difficulties in establishing long-term relations with companies, while companies do not have appropriate mechanisms for ensuring the quality of WBL, including lacking the pedagogical know-how to train learners efficiently.

Big companies could provide a large number of workplaces, possibly with multi-annual cooperation. Small companies do not have the resources (not only financial) to tackle the issue of training. In some sectors, e.g. agri-food, dual VET remains in little demand due to the shortage of big companies cooperating with VET institutions, while small businesses and individual farms, mostly present in rural areas, are not motivated and fully prepared to provide dual VET.

Sometimes vocational schools (in their career guidance mission) see themselves in direct competition with dual education when it comes to enrolment figures. A balance between promoting dual education and potentially losing students must be found.

## KEY FIGURES

- In the 2018/19 academic year, there were 89 VET institutions, including 13 centres of excellence, 34 colleges and 42 professional schools. In the VET system, 44 348 learners were trained, of whom 13 037 in centres of excellence, 17 379 in colleges and 13 932 in professional schools.
- The number of enrolled apprentices doubled in 2017/18 from the 2016/17 figure, reaching a share of 8.5% of the total number of enrolled learners in secondary VET.
- There was an extension of dual VET by increasing the number of VET providers, students and companies involved.
- In the 2017/18 academic year, about 50 companies initiated implementation of dual programmes in cooperation with about 20 TVET institutions, with 661 apprentices involved.
- In the 2018/19 academic year, about 70 companies were involved in dual programmes in cooperation with 30 TVET institutions, with 1 355 apprentices across 15 economic sectors (including automotive supply, metal processing, agricultural machinery assembly, electrical engineering, forestry and medicine).
- The Chamber of Commerce and Industry has trained and certified 79 in-company trainers and about 40 examiners for the dual VET qualification exams.

For the first time ever, the regulation on the organisation of VET programmes through dual VET has introduced an apprenticeship salary for the work carried out by the learner while he/she is in the enterprise. This has been a crucial part of the evolution of WBL in VET in Moldova.

## How does cooperation between learning venues work?

According to the Code of Education, the VET institutions are responsible for organising the internships for learners. Companies and VET institutions conclude agreements and contracts to allow the companies to provide a workplace. The teachers regularly visit the companies to monitor learners during their internships.

The Code of Education stipulates that partnerships between the VET institutions and companies are carried out through provision of places for internships, organisation of dual education, and distribution of graduate learners on the labour market.

The main elements of the dual normative framework include the template cooperation agreement between VET providers and companies.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry can organise (on request of the Ministry of Education and the companies) training courses for instructors in VET institutions involved in dual VET.

VET institutions and companies participate in joint events aimed at informing learners and the wider public about dual VET (e.g. Dual VET Day).

The companies participate in the enrolment process, recruit the learners and help develop the education plan and other similar documents.

## Looking at the future

The expansion of the partnerships with various stakeholders to develop dual VET programmes is one of the objectives of the government's Action Programme (November 2019).

During the ETF's annual Eastern Partnership forum on WBL in VET (in Lviv in October 2019), Moldovan stakeholders mentioned the following priorities:

- strengthen the capacity of the state, private and civil society actors to acknowledge and carry out their roles within the dual VET system (as defined through the improved and consolidated institutional and normative framework);

- ensure a continuous correlation between the dual initial training offers and the quantitative and qualitative requirements of the labour market;
- further develop the occupational standards and curricula;
- update the classification of occupations;
- develop a methodology for dual education quality assessment;
- approve the law on apprenticeships including the new status of apprentices.

## The latest developments

In 2019, several notable actions were carried out in the field of WBL/dual VET:

- approval of the framework plan for dual VET (International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels 3 to 5) and practical guides for the implementation of the framework plans carried out with support from the Structural Reform in VET project, implemented by GIZ;
- development and approval of 22 training plans for dual VET for occupations and specialities from 14 professional training areas;
- development of the draft law on apprenticeships;
- improvement of the image of TVET: launch of a national campaign to promote dual VET (Learn, Work, Earn!) and setting up of two big Dual VET Day events;
- ongoing cooperation with public authorities, sectoral committees and social partners for approval of the curricula and development of occupational standards (around 30 out of 300 needed).

Updates regarding dual VET can be found here:

[www.ipt.md/ru/invataminthedual](http://www.ipt.md/ru/invataminthedual)

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## IMPROVING THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF DUAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

To promote dual VET to companies, specific measures have been taken. The employer hosting an apprentice can benefit from tax deductions for expenses related to dual VET for the following charges: salary of trainers in enterprises and salary of the learners involved in dual VET; procurement of pedagogical materials for learners (e.g. equipment, tools); and provision of working areas for learners. Overall, all financial resources invested in dual training are eligible for tax deductions and exemptions.

Regarding the wage of learners involved in dual VET, they usually earn two-thirds of the national average salary and can benefit from transportation to and from the workplace, food and accommodation.

