

## Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED):

Preliminary findings and recommendations on the  
key issues in Moldova's education system

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EU-funded Support to Education Reforms and skills (SER) for Eastern Partnership



# Introduction and Context

## Findings :

Inequality analysis

Financing analysis

Governance analysis

## Areas for recommendations





## Introduction (1/2) : Background and objective

**Rapid education diagnosis (RED)** is part of the **regional programme ‘SER’** (Support to Education Reforms and skills):

- implemented by the ETF, European agency based in Turin
- at the request and with the funding of the European Commission, DG NEAR
- targeting the 5 countries of the Eastern Partnership
- Implementation period 2024-26, budget 2.5 million Euros

Objective: to highlight the **most critical (‘red’) challenges of the education sector** in Eastern Partnership (*Pillar 1, RED*), focusing on **Inequalities, Financing, Governance**, and propose **recommendations**, with a view to :

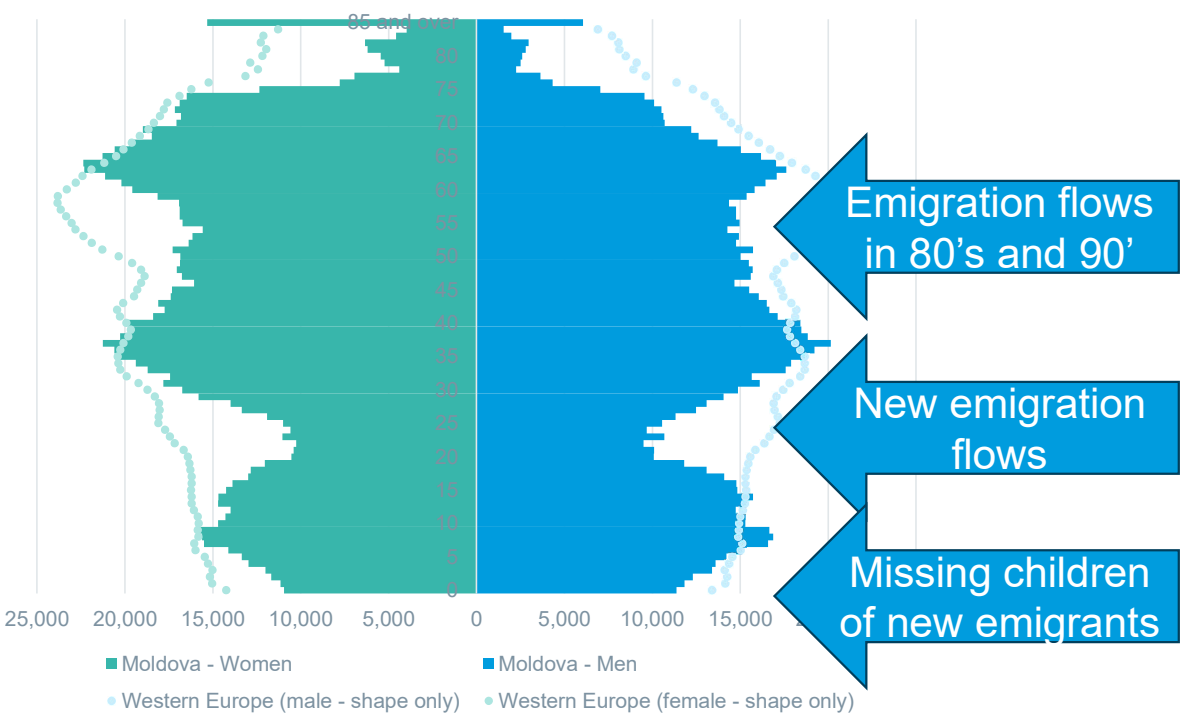
- **Support the monitoring and adjustments/remediation efforts** of the national education strategy 2030, and inform future reform measures
- **Identify needs for institutional capacity reinforcement** (*Pillar 2*) and common policy **issues for peer exchange** with EaP countries and EU member states (*Pillar 3*),
- **Inform EU support/financial assistance and Moldova-EU (Development Partners) policy dialogue**



## Introduction (2/2) : Methodology applied

- Multi-disciplinary **expert team**, mainly based in Turin (ETF specialists) and Chisinau (3+1 consultants)
- Comprehensive desk review, to collect **secondary evidence** (significant volume of bibliographic references used)
- **Data** collection and analysis from National Bureau of Statistics, SIME [Sistem Informational de Management în Educație](#) and international data sources to gather or create additional **quantitative evidence**
- Field visits (**Chisinau, Puhoi, Ialoveni**), bilateral interviews (incl. with some UTA Gagauzia's actors) and Focus groups (7) to add **qualitative evidence**, suggestions for improvement/recommendations, and apply a participatory approach as a model for effective policy making.
- Stakeholders consulted through **7 focus groups**:
  - Two FG with **35 parents**
  - One FG with **11** representatives of the **Psycho-pedagogical Support Services**
  - Two FG with **14** representatives of the regional departments of Education
  - One FG with **8 school directors**
  - One FG with **8 community mediators**
- **Findings** clustered around the 3 abovementioned priority themes **Inequalities, Financing, Governance**, in the process of being channelled into (co-created) **recommendations** related as much as possible to the current education strategy

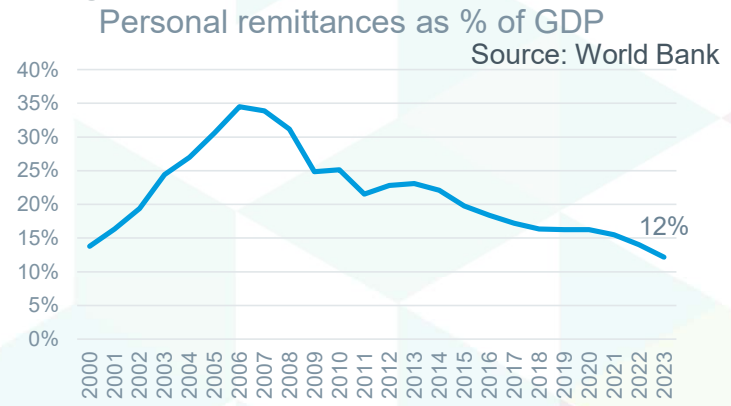
# Context of the education policy - Demography



Source: National Bureau of Statistics



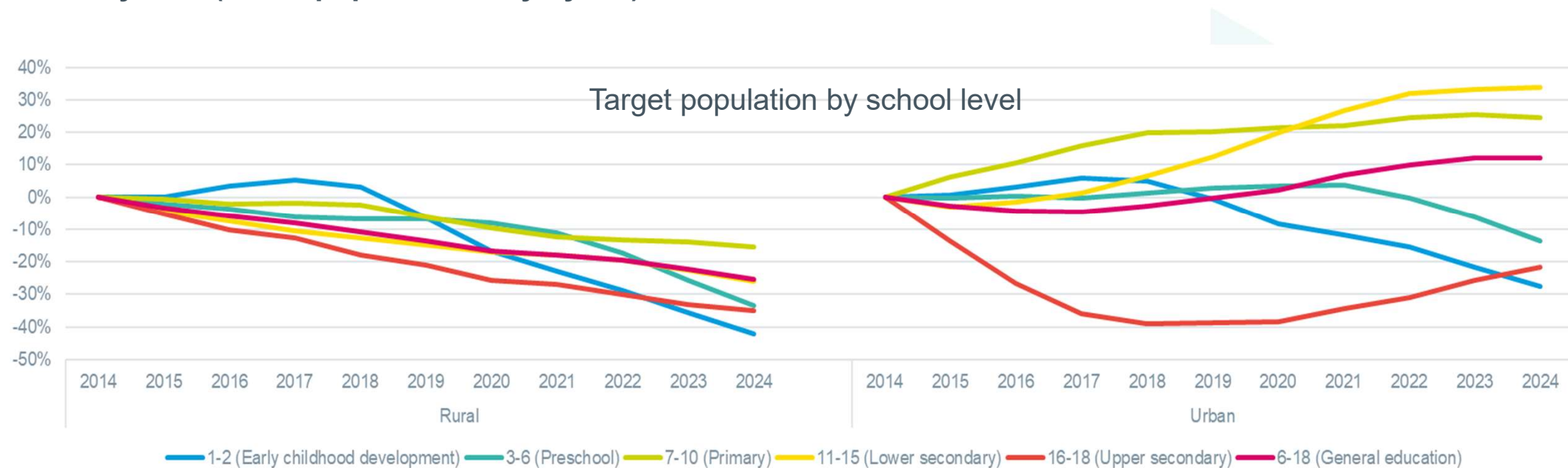
- 3 marked dips in the population pyramid
- Pros of emigration: Remittances =12% of GDP (but decreasing)



- Cons of emigration:
  - Higher young age dependency rate
  - Loss of work force and trained youth

# Context of the education policy - Demography

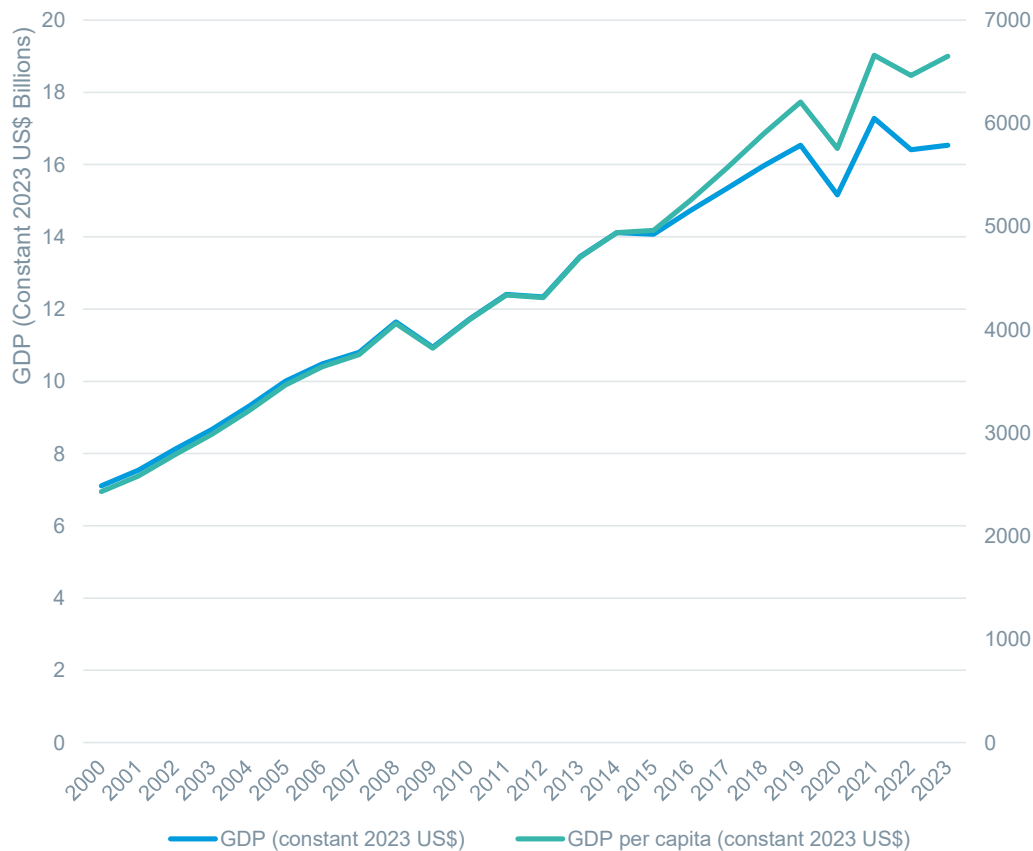
- Population remains in majority rural (56%)
- But rural population decreased by 21% in 10 years (urban population only by 7%)
- All school age groups decrease in rural areas
- In urban areas, 0-5 yo population in decline, but other groups increasing



Source: National Bureau of Statistics



# Context of the education policy - Economy



- Upper-middle-income status since 2020

- GDP contraction in 2022 and a quasi-stagnation in 2023

GDP per capita: USD 6,651 in 2023

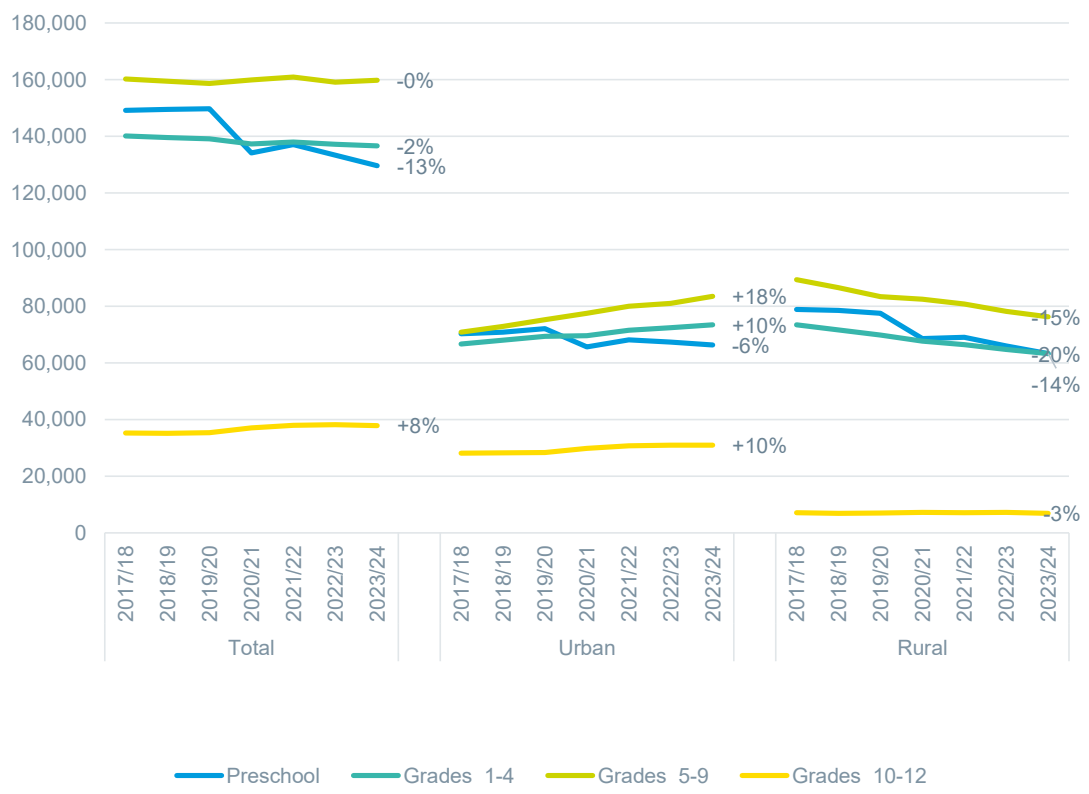
- Poverty rate : 14%  
(Poverty headcount ratio at \$6.85 a day (2017 PPP))  
(Poverty line for Upper-Middle- and High-Income countries)

## Areas for recommendations



# The Moldovan education system at a (data-based) glance

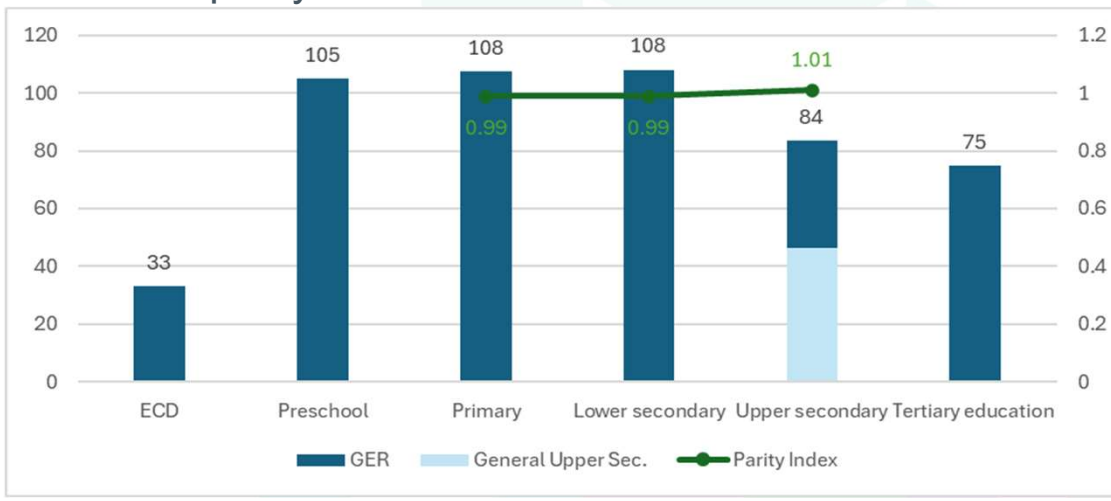
## General Education Enrolments



Source: SIME

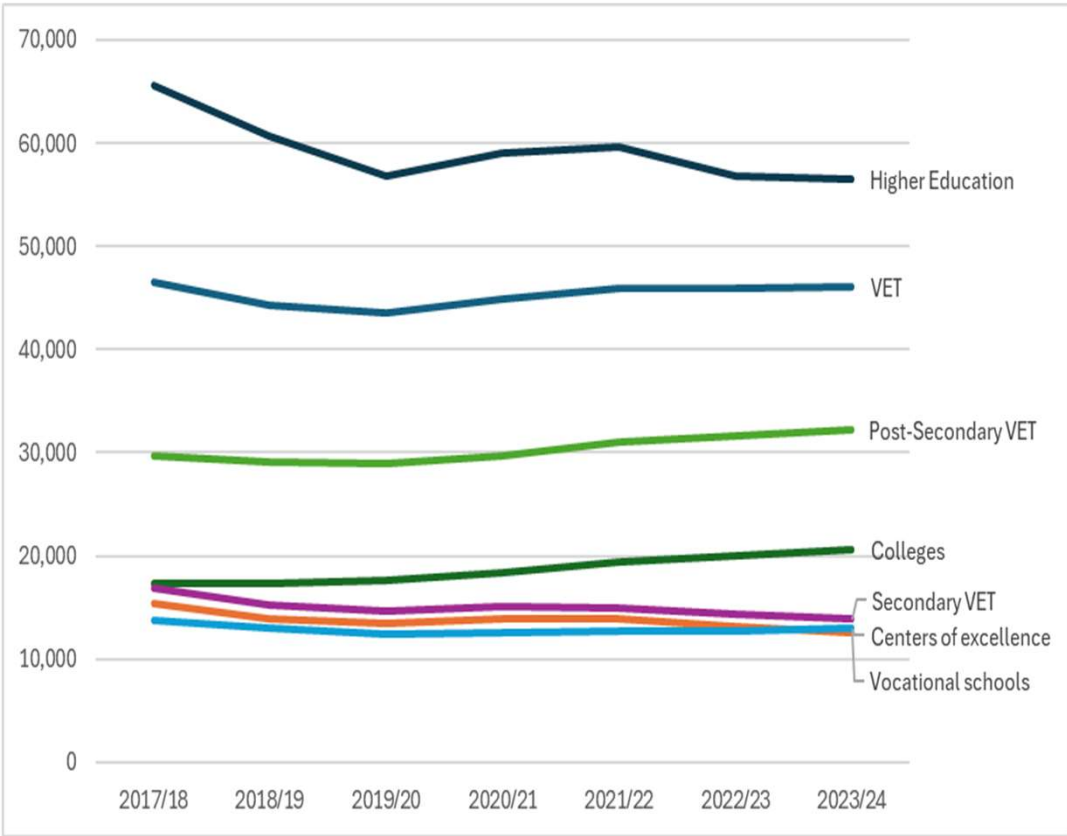
ETF  
European Training Foundation  
Working together Learning for life

- Enrolment increases only in urban areas (but preschool)
- Overall stable enrolment in primary and lower secondary
- Decrease in preschool enrolments (absolute nb)
- Increase Upper sec. Enrolments (GER +11pp (UIS))
- Enrolment rates by area in upper secondary not reliable as youth living in rural areas go to Lyceum in cities
- Gender parity in General Education in HE: 59%female



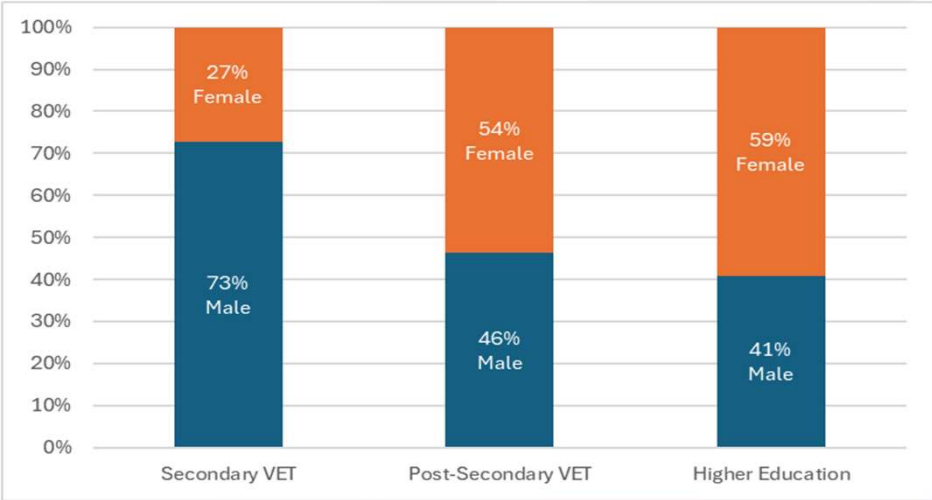
# The Moldovan education system at a (data-based) glance

## TVET and Higher Education



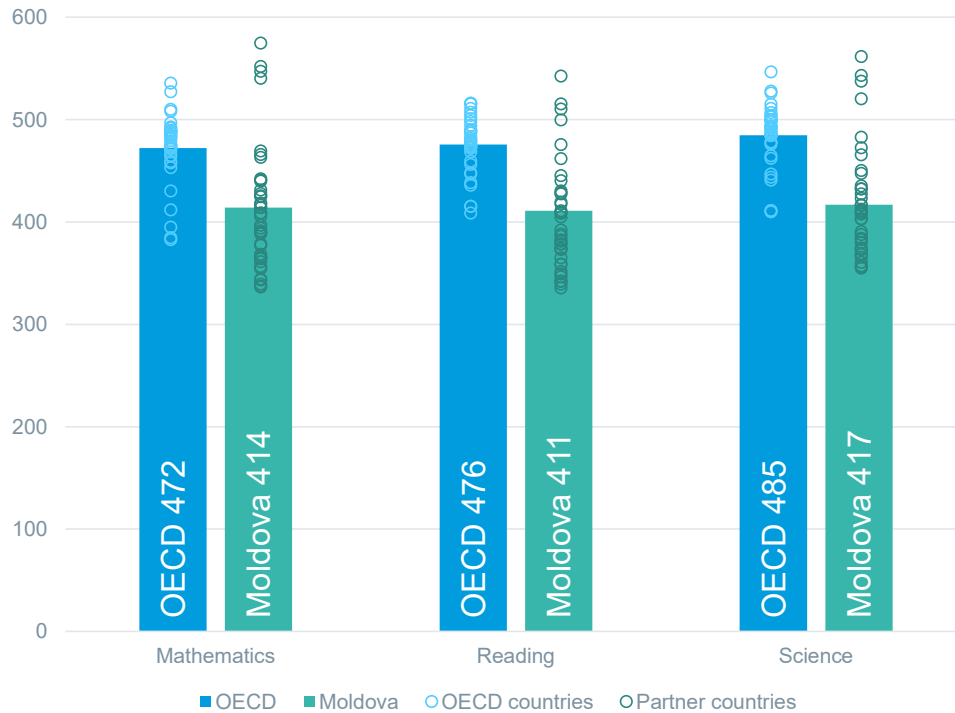
Source: SIME

- VET enrolment increasing since 2020 (+6%)
  - Post secondary VET increases (Colleges +19%)
  - while secondary VET decreases
- Higher Education Enrolment in decline (14% since 2018)
- **Secondary VET mostly male (73%), while majority of post-secondary VET (54%) and higher education (59%) students are female**



# The Moldovan education system at a (data-based) glance

## Quality and learning outcomes

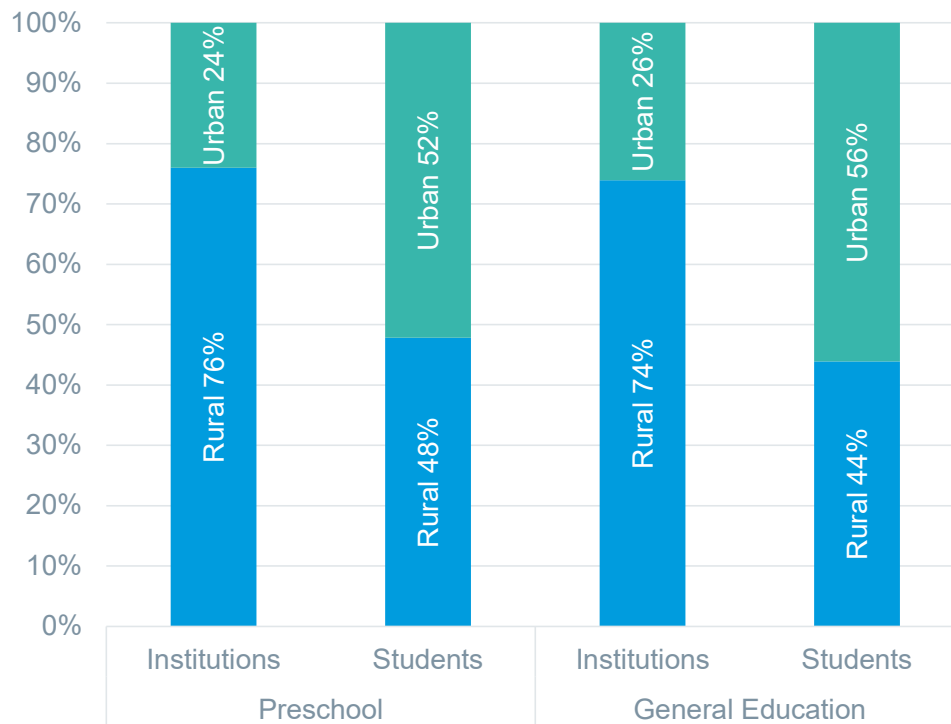


Source: PISA

- 2022 PISA results lower than OECD average on all subjects
- But **difference between the highest and the lowest performers reduced compared to 2018** (in Mathematics, low-achievers became stronger while high-achievers became weaker)
- The **difference between the most privileged and the most disadvantaged is smaller than in OECD countries**

# Inequality analysis

## Urban – Rural: the great divide

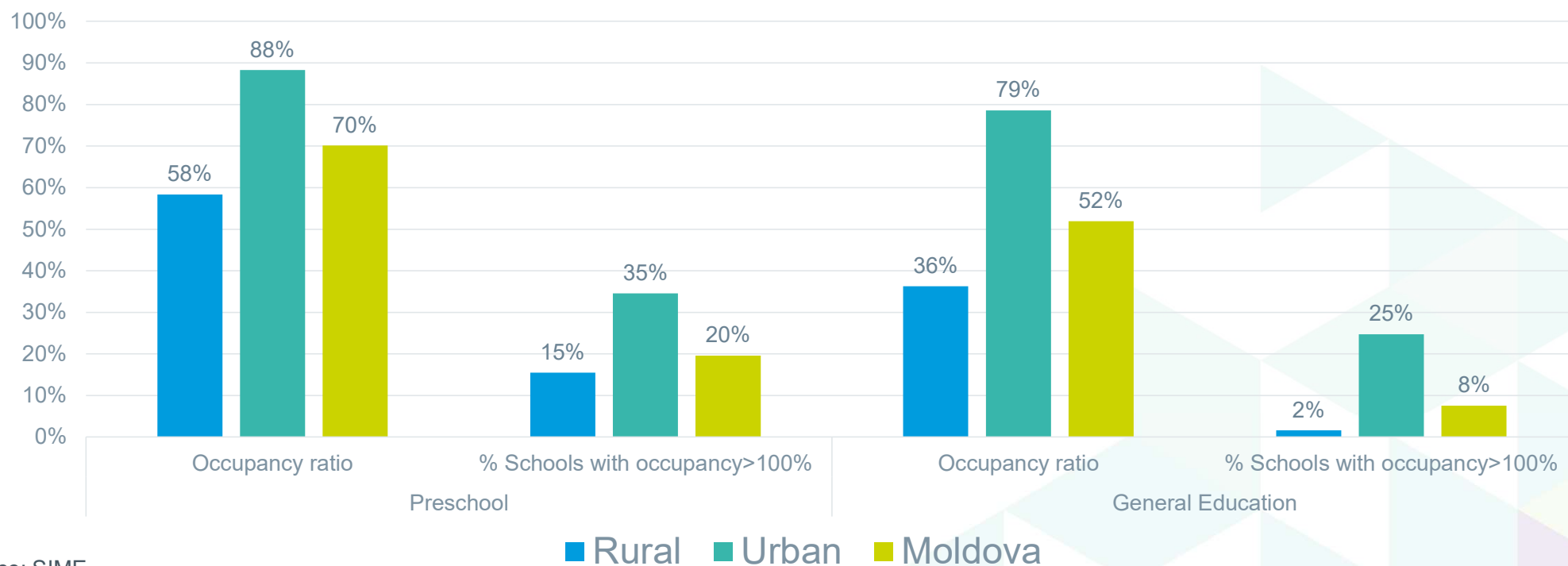


Source: SIME

- Most preschool (78%) and general education (74%) institutions are in rural areas, but serve less than a half of the country's learners
- Rural schools are small: 25% have fewer than 100 students (8% fewer than 50)
- 90% of rural schools have less than 300 students, while 70% of urban schools have more than 300 students (and 50% more than 500)

# Inequality analysis

## Urban – Rural: the great divide



Source: SIME

- Low occupancy of schools : in rural areas (36% in general education)
- High occupancy in urban areas : 88% in preschool, 35% of preschools running over 100% occupancy

# Inequality analysis

## Urban – Rural: the great divide

- **Consequences of small school sizes in rural areas:**
  - Efficiency issues (teacher under-utilization)
  - Lower availability of resources for learning materials, equipment/infrastructure upgrade...  
(As per school directors' feedback - subject to further analysis)
  - Multi-grade teaching
  - Teaching out of specialty /multi-subject teaching
- **Consequences of high occupancy in urban areas:**
  - Long waiting times (preschool)
  - Larger class sizes : 26 (compared to 17 in rural areas)
- **63% of lyceums are located in urban areas (gathering 82% of Grade 10-12 students)**



# Inequality analysis

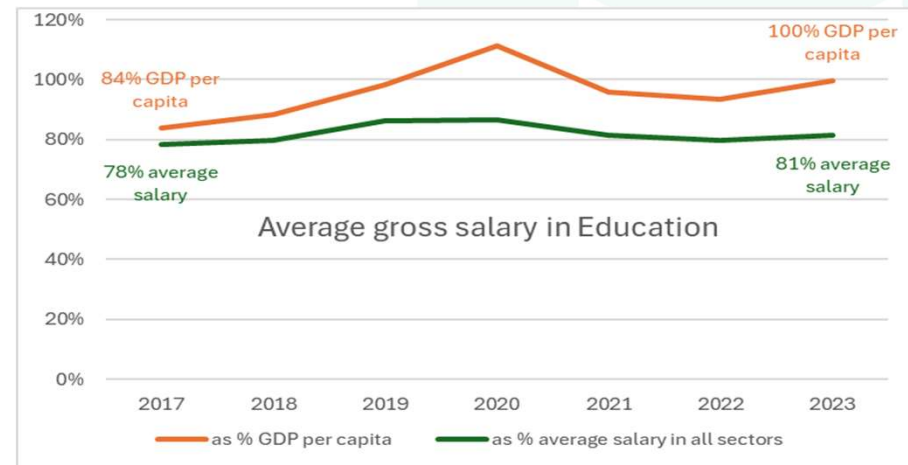
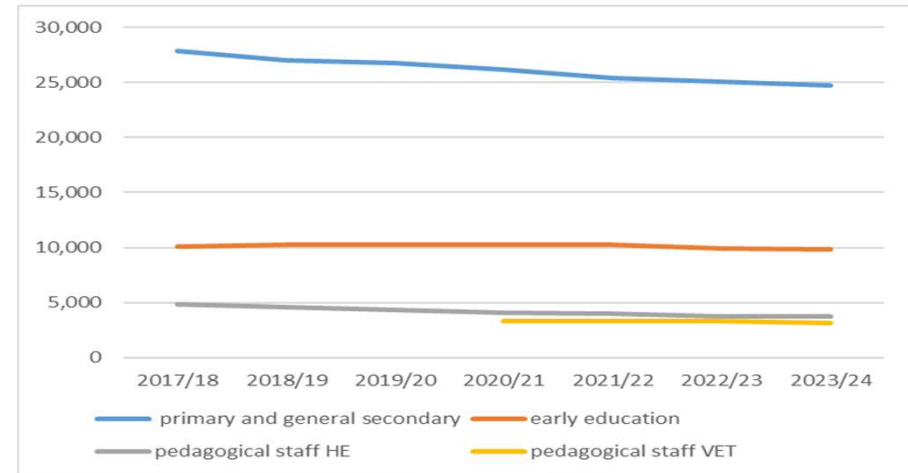
## The (current and future) teacher challenge/shortages

\* **Teacher numbers** in primary and secondary education are decreasing despite stable pupil numbers

\* Worrying **change in age structure** in 10 years: 14.7% to 21.7% over 60yo, 13% to 7.7% under 30 yo

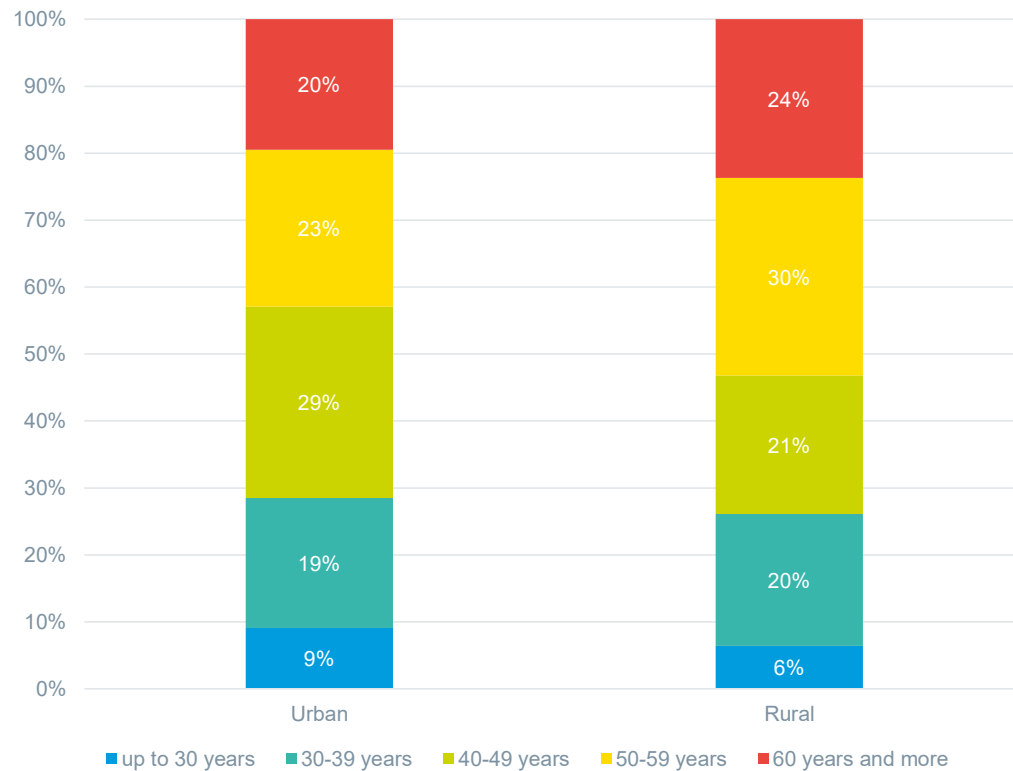
\* **Young teachers are hard to recruit:**

- In 2022, 1,345 vacant teaching positions vs 611 individuals, resulting in a coverage of only 45%
- Increasing salaries alone is not enough: average salary teaching staff at beginning of career + 34% 2023 vs 2021
- Impact of new incentives to be assessed, graduated



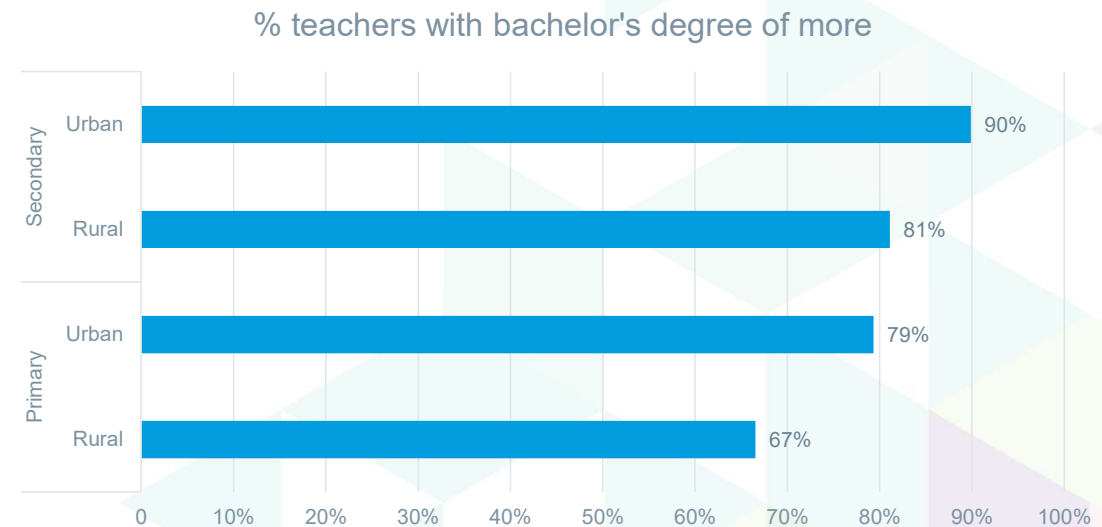
# Inequality analysis

## The teacher challenge ... combined with the rural –urban divide



### Availability of teachers:

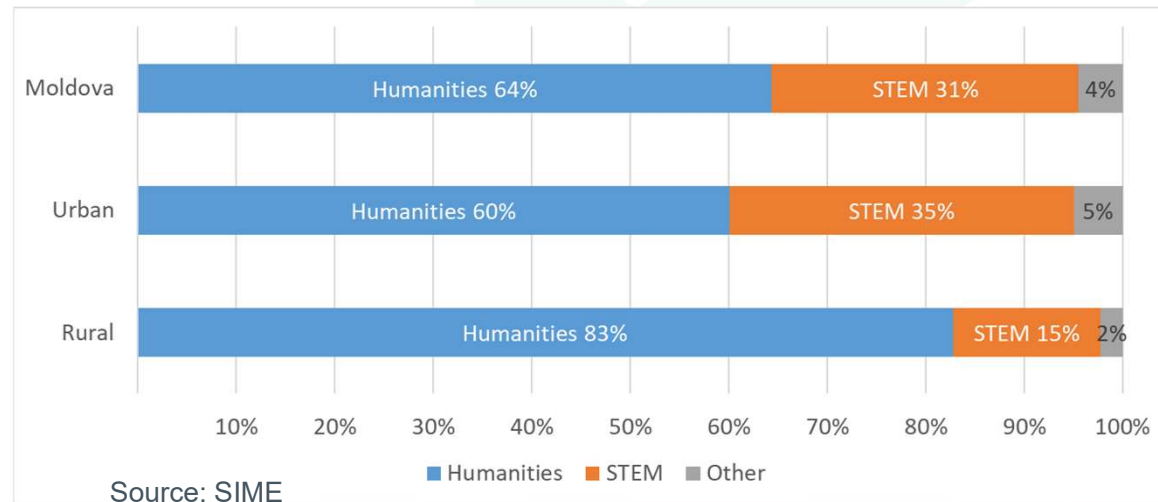
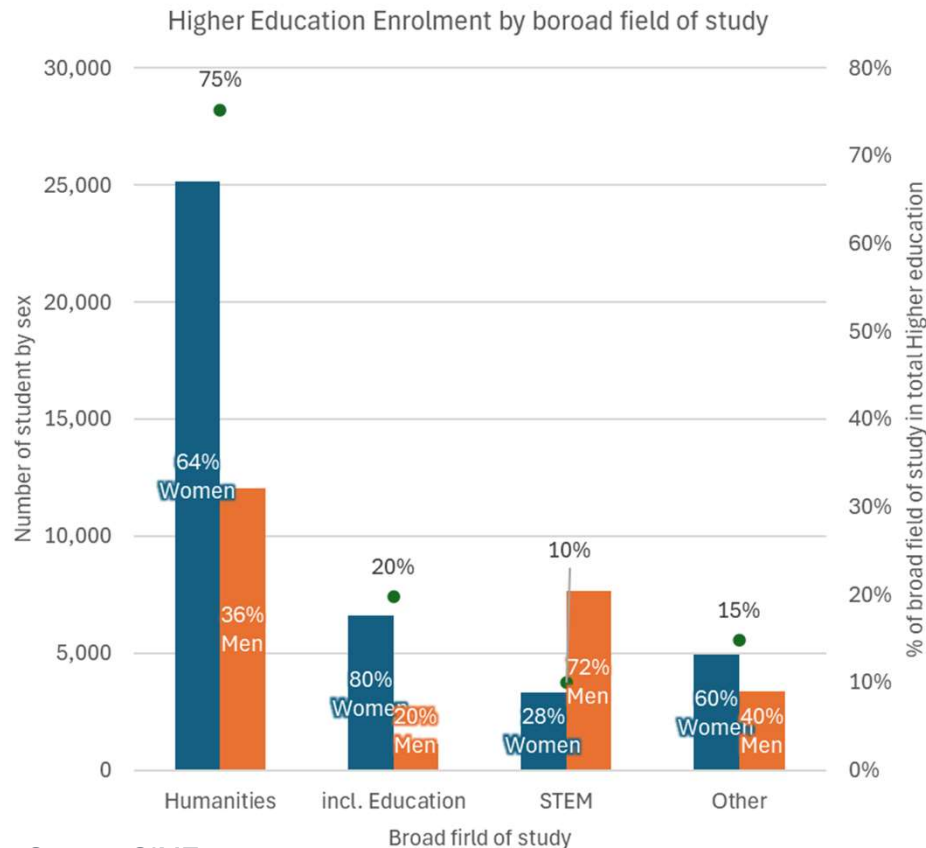
- 54% of general education teachers in rural areas are at least 50 years old (urban: 43%)
- **A third of primary teachers in rural schools do not have a bachelor's degree**



# Inequality analysis

## The subject unbalance in Higher education (and upper secondary)

- **59% of Higher education students are women**
- **75% of HE students are in humanities**
- **Only 10% of students study STEM**, crucial for economic development and to avoid vicious circle of lack of STEM teachers
- **Selection of humanities studies starts in upper secondary: 83% of rural BAC takers are in Humanities**



# Inequality analysis

## Vulnerable children

### 1. Children separated from parents

- **Upward trend:** from about 12,500 children in 2017 to more than **15,000 children in 2023.**

### 2. Roma children

- **Data issue**
- Overall, much lower enrolment in general education (72%) (MLSP, 2023) compared to 50% in 2018 (UNICEF) and higher dropouts Roma children, esp. girls

### 3. Children with disabilities

- Number of children with special needs in ECD institutions declined from 993 in 2019 to **722 in 2021.**
- **538 children in special institutions (Gen. Ed.)**

### 4. Children residing in institutions

- **676 children** in the residential system, including:
- 200 children (86 girls and 114 boys) designated as without parental care

### 5. Refugee and Migrant Children

- **52,451** refugee children in Moldova
- **30,600** children have no Temporary Protection status
- **Only 2,361** refugee children are enrolled in formal education by September 2024 (735 in preschools)
- 54% of surveyed Ukrainian households still engaged in online education (2022/23), esp. upper secondary students
- 56% of the children of refugee households (2-6 yo) did not attend any preschool in Moldova in 2022/23
- More than 1,000 Ukrainian Unaccompanied and Separated Children (USAC) identified in Moldova and were assisted including through community-based alternative care

**40% of students in rural areas are "at risk" (24% in urban) - "cumulative effect" of inequalities"**

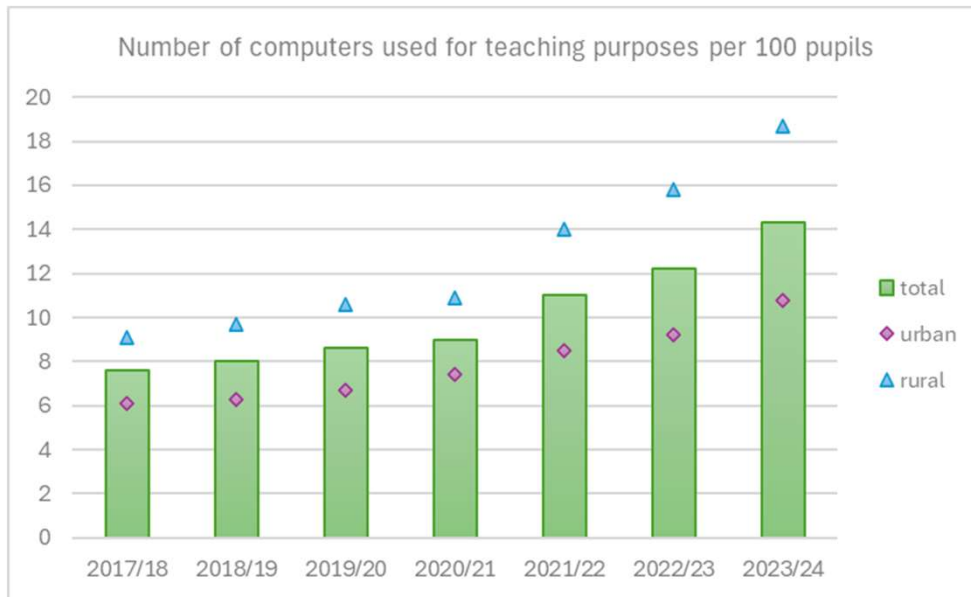
**Issues of definition and data**

# Inequality and digitalization

## Some basic data and indicators

- Equipment almost doubled in 7 years
- Computer / pupil ratio: 0.15 (1 computer for 7 students)
- Computer with internet access/all computers:90%
- Computer for teaching purpose/teacher ratio: 1.84

... but averages little meaningful



## Questions / Issues

- Lack of data on digitalisation skills of teachers and students (or youth in general, e.g. ITU data)
- Share of digital teaching time ?
- Computers for teachers and students alike ?
- Free access to computer rooms ?

# Introduction and Context

## Findings :

Inequality analysis

Financing analysis

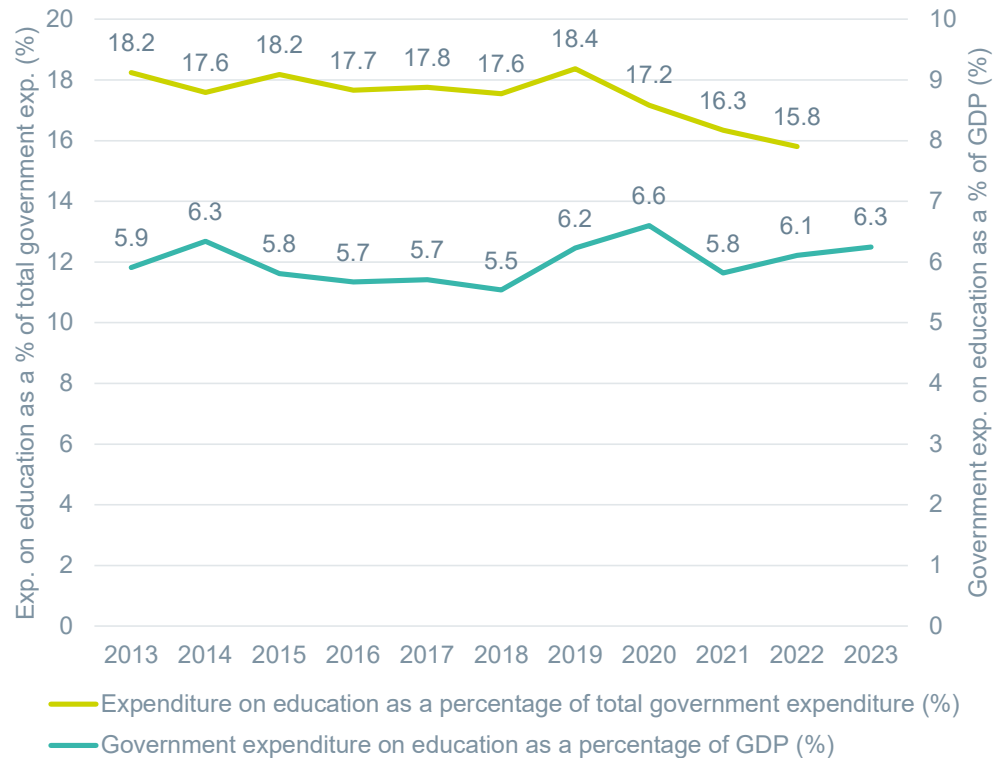
Governance analysis

## Areas for recommendations





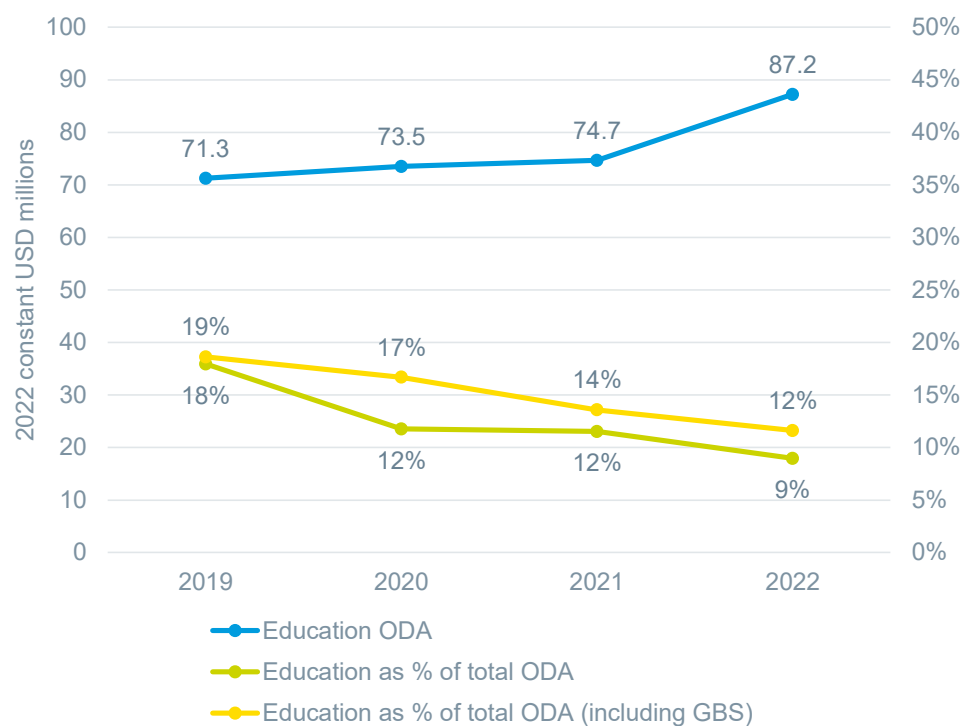
# Financing analysis (resource mobilisation) : Budgetary aspects



- Decreasing budget priority to education
- But overall education expenditure as % GDP remains high (6.3%)
- Education expenditure in fact stable in real terms (small increase in 2023)
- Recurrent expenditure : 98.5%
- Budget Spending (96/97%)



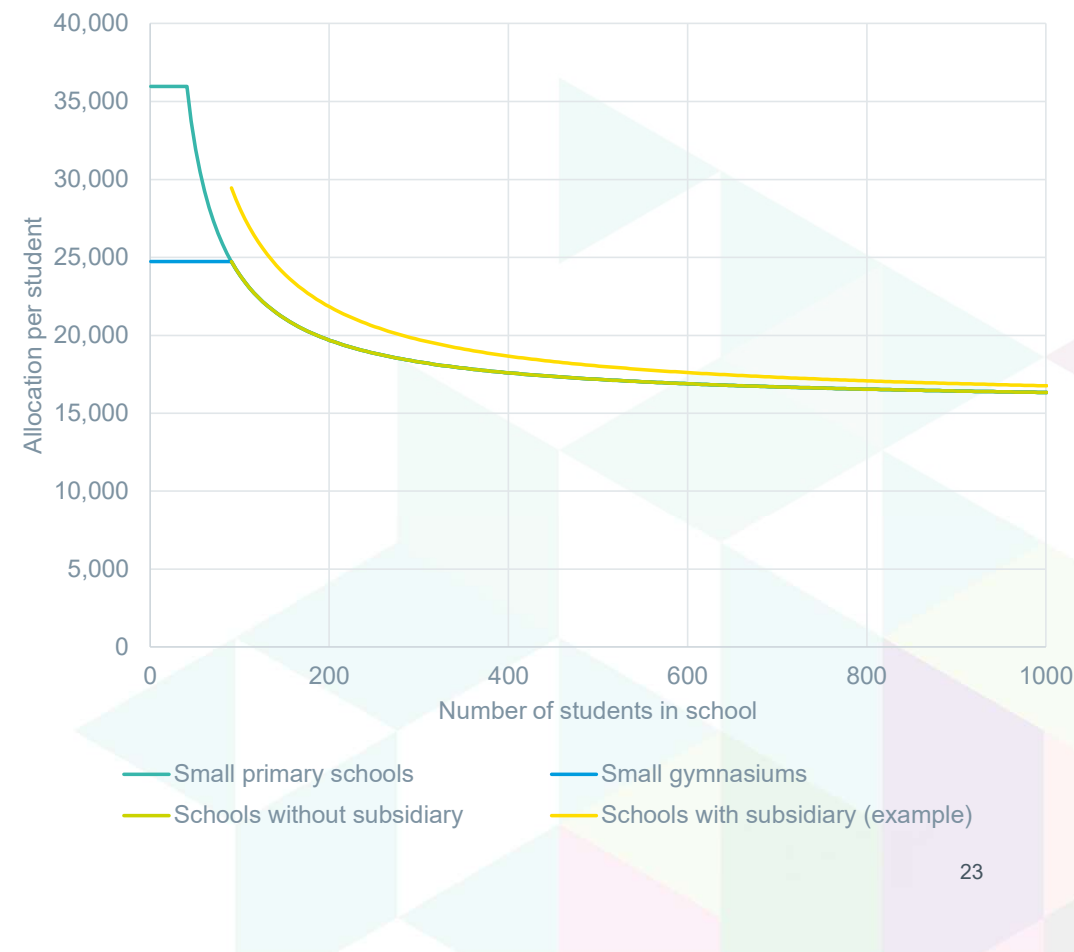
# Financing analysis (resource mobilisation) : Donor support



- Education ODA increased by 22% over 4 years
- Although share of total ODA decreased (even taking account of GBS)
- Education ODA= 10-11% of Education Government Expenditure
- Increasing portion as loans

# Financing analysis (Resource allocation) : distribution to schools

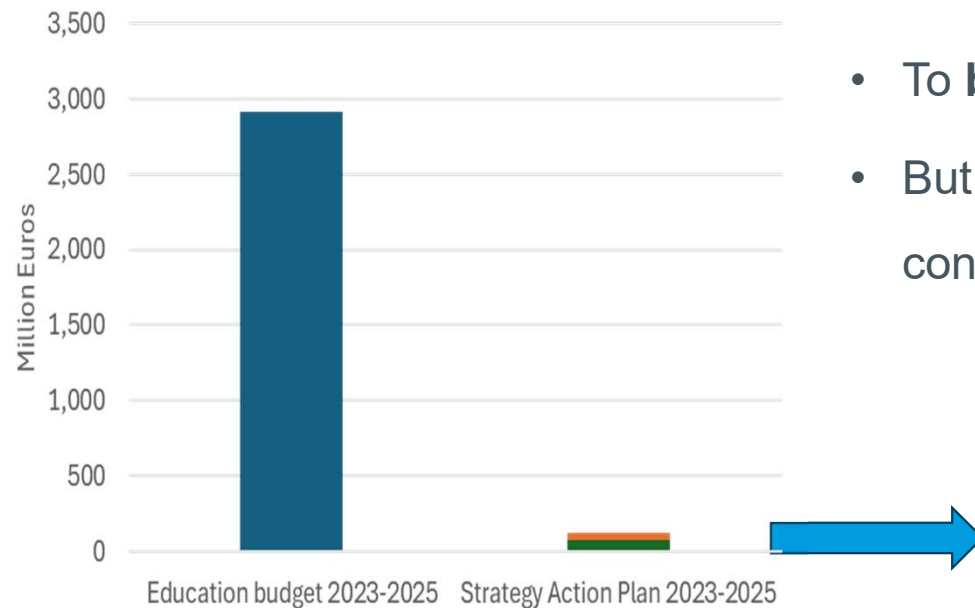
- **Formula for general education schools**
  - Variable part per student
  - Fixed part per institution
- Given the **low PTR in small schools**, it makes it difficult for them to meet their recurrent expenditure (salaries)
- Larger schools with subsidiary get extra funds (various buildings issue)
- Amounts per student and institution decreased (in real terms) in 2022 (2023 still lower than 2020)



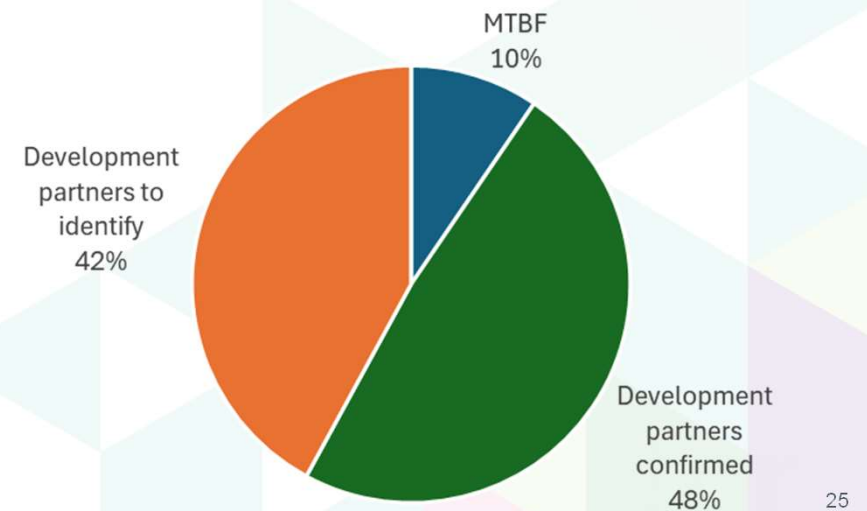
# Financing analysis : Resource allocation to students and teachers

- **Agile and adaptive policy making on resource allocation:**
- Large range of financial support measures
- Financial incentives for teachers and new entrants into the profession
- Scholarships for students based on merit (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> categories) and on vulnerability (4<sup>th</sup> category) for higher education and VET students
- 1000 lei per month for every family whose child is commuting to a larger school, etc.
- **Need further analysis of effectiveness, monitoring of impact and efficiency** (and review of allocation method and transparency principles)

# Financing analysis : costing and funding of the education strategy



- **Costed** Education Strategy 2023-2025 Action Plan
- Marginal compared to total education national budget
- **To be funded primarily by Development Partners**
- But at the time of development, only half of external contributions were identified



# Introduction and Context

## Findings :

Inequality analysis

Financing analysis

Governance analysis

## Areas for recommendations





# Governance analysis : Responsibilities and accountability

- **Horizontal and vertical subsidiarity :**
  - Combined decentralisation / deconcentration pattern : a critical challenge for effective subsidiarity
  - Difficult position/empowerment of education regional departments
  - Lack of school autonomy despite the financial reform
  - Variety of institutional bodies under MER
  - >> Re-start reform positively under consideration
- **Reporting and accountability frameworks**
  - Still weak or missing from sub-national to national level
  - Information circulation from national to sub-national / local level
  - Data gaps
  - >> Delays and bottlenecks in problem-solving

# Governance analysis : National vision-building and role of donors

- **Strategic vision and leadership:**
  - Strong leadership : high budget priority to the sector, costed Education Strategy 2030
  - Robust set of strategic planning documents, laws and normative acts
  - Pragmatic “Challenge-based approach” but difficult coordination strategy/plans and implementation bottlenecks
- **Socio-cultural setting:**
  - Vision for early childhood development /education and **care**: *instruction focused, late entrance*
  - Cultural mindset related to instruction and discipline : *safety at school, bullying, domestic violence, etc.*
  - Importance and praise of extra-curricular activities
  - The “Human factor” : advantages and limitations
- **Donors and development partners**
  - Local education group (LEG) : promising coordination platform, mainly for information sharing so far
  - Still underused for synergy seeking and operational partnerships
  - Limited collective consultations under the leadership of the MER (more political than technical gatherings)
    - > risks of high transaction costs for national partners, capacity deterring, uncoordinated or overlapping interventions

# Governance analysis : Use of data for policy making

- **Data collection :**
  - plethoric vs missing data, inconsistencies
  - School primary responsibility – capacitybuilding need
- **Data analysis :**
  - public versus limited access to EMIS
  - Statistical capacity of MER DGs and other actors
- **Data use**
  - Lack if interoperability EMIS/NBS or of integration EMIS/HEMIS/
    - **Transparency** and social control/social involvement in the sector
  - Risk: Variety of support interventions to EMIS, new institution= new database...
- **(Public) Data gaps for refined inequality analysis**
- **Comprehensive school-level data on Teachers**
  - By subject specialty and subject taught (share of teachers teaching out of specialty)
  - By education level (by school -->available in aggregate in NBS reports, but data incomplete in EMIS)
  - By grade/qualification
  - Multigrade Teaching
  - Pupil Teacher Ratio for primary (not primary+secondary)
- **Coherent data on Vulnerable children**
- **(Public) Data gaps for refined financing analysis**
  - Distribution of the **budget** by education level (breakdown of transfers to LPAs and schools, repartition key for transversal lines)
  - Record of transfers to schools (as per formula, part of inclusive education and LPA reserve)
  - **Teacher salaries** in relation to grades etc.

# Governance analysis : Institutional capacity

- **The “human factor”paradox:**
- Strong interpersonal engagement and support
- Low community-based involvement
  
- **The competence gap paradox:**
- Weak staff (in numbers and profiles) of regional depts for education
- But also weak mandate so far

## ***Data gaps for refined governance analysis:***

- *Functional review of the MER and implementing agencies, incl. with staff numbers and profiles*
- *Organisational mapping/functional review of education regional departments*

# Introduction and Context

## Findings :

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## Areas for recommendations



# Recommendation Areas

**1. Schools**

**2. Teachers**

**3. Vulnerability  
and inclusion**

**4. Financial  
management**

**5. Reforms  
governance**

**6. Data  
management**



# 1. Schools

## Recommendation area 1 : Schools

School reforms, model schools and network consolidation

### 1.1 Equitable Access to Model schools:

- Reliable **transportation schemes**
- Importance of **extra-curricular activities** : should be considered in the transportation scheme

### 1.2 Improved learning environment:

- \* inter-ministerial collaboration for digital coverage improvement (PPP?)
- \* environmental impact assessment of schools (incl. innovative use of multiple buildings)

\*

### 1.3 School network reinforcement

➤ ***Need for further research or continuous analysis***

- *Holistic analysis of small schools, pre and post new funding formula*

➤ ***Need for institutional capacity development***

## 2. Teachers

### Recommendation Area 2 : Teachers

Teacher recruitment,  
development and motivation

#### 2.1 Attractiveness, Recruitment and retention

- Explore possibility to regionalize recruitments and offer mobility schemes ?
- Monitor the pilot introduction of new incentive schemes and organise a joint assessment with teacher unions

#### 2.2 Development and motivation

➤ ***Need for further research or continuous analysis***

*Ad hoc study on teachers: salaries, territorial distribution by categories, multi-subject and multi-grade teaching...*

➤ ***Need for institutional capacity development***

*Teachers digital*

*NIEL*

*EMIS on teacher data by school*

## Recommendation Area 3 : Vulnerability and Inclusion

### 3. Vulnerability and inclusion

#### 3.1 Concept and data harmonization

#### 3.2 Multi-stakeholder coordination frameworks for refugee children

- > Set-up inter-ministerial **coordination** frameworks (MER/MLSP), cross-country coordination mechanisms (Ukraine) for improved case management
- > Harmonise **data** definitions, improve collection

#### 3.3 Child safety, at school and on line

- Open, (in partnership with ? : trade unions, regional education dept, ?) a national debate on child safety incl. bullying, (domestic) violence, on-line safety and make child safety a flagship priority of the MER

#### 3.4 Inclusion and integration measures

- Strengthen support programmes for children with SEN
- Check international studies on best financial schemes for inclusive education

# Recommendation Area 4 : Financial management

## 4.1 Strategic budget optimisation

\* Entrust a MER steering body/team with public expense efficiency analysis

## 4.2 Financial transparency

- Discuss with MoF for increasing the transparency of the financing chain (eg: school information on their budget...)
- Enhance accountability and create reporting channels (bottom up) re:fund allocation, including for
- Insert financial data into EMIS or ensure interoperability of database with MoF

### ➤ *Need for further research or continuous analysis:*

- *Efficiency of budget allocation by education level*
- *Potential for non State contributions (incl. communities, schools IGA...)*
- *Benchmarking on most effective financial instrument for inclusive education (eg: fund, earmarked tenders...)*

### ➤ *Need for institutional capacity development :*

- *School principals on reporting (and transparent financial management – public financial data culture building)*

## 4. Financial management

# Recommendation Area 5 : Reform governance

## 5.1 Subsidiarity, Institutional Decentralisation and Re-start inspiration

## 5.2 Inter-institutional collaboration and coordination

- Create regular coordination frameworks with MLSP, MoF
- Reinforce MER leadership role over LEG by regular thematic meetings

## 5.3 Consultation processes and communication campaigns

- \* Improve involvement of non state actors from the outset of reform design

➤ ***Need for further research or continuous analysis:***

- *Mapping and evaluation of current consultation processes*

➤ ***Need for institutional capacity development :***

## 5. Reforms governance

# Recommendation Area 6 : Data management

## 6.1 Enhanced data management and use, including through EMIS

- **Collection:** improve response rate in EMIS (many gaps, incl. Teachers)
- **Management :** Ensure internal consistency of data and indicator coverage in public EMIS
- **Transparency :** public EMIS
- **Inter-connectivity:** Integrate HR data and financial data into EMIS

## 6.2 Data use in policy development

- **Analysis for informed decision making :** e.g., teachers, expenditure by level, school mapping, etc.
- \* Put in place joint sector reviews

## 6.3 Evidence-based Communication campaigns

### ➤ **Need for further research or continuous analysis:**

- digital skills of school principals for data inputs
- Critical mapping of EMIS modules and gaps

### ➤ **Need for institutional capacity development :**

- Training of school principals or delegated staff for data input on new EMIS

## 6. Data management

## RED Next steps:

### 1. Finalisation of the report – by Feb 2025

- ✓ integration of feedback and final data check on findings
- ✓ processing of suggestions for recommendations (co-creation approach)
- ✓ note for policy makers (executive summary)
- ✓ editing and translation into Romanian

### 2. Sharing of the final report

- ✓ sharing with DGNEAR and EUD and MER
- ✓ electronic dissemination to all interested / involved stakeholders
- ✓ thematic or general inputs to the country-led discussion/reflection on demand (e.g. Education Week, April 2025? Ministry of Finance ?)
- ✓ discussion on possible follow-up support with Local education group LEG meeting
- ✓ Any other relevant platform/meeting

## THANK YOU ! ...and THANKS TO:

**Olga TRETIACOV**, SER National coordinator at MER

**Giuseppe PAGLIONE**, Education policy officer at EU Delegation to Moldova

All consulted stakeholders

### THE EXPERT TEAM

Angela Cara (national lead expert), Eugenia Busmachiu (finance), Aram Avagyan, Luc Gacougnolle, Stefano Lasagni and Mirela Gavoci (data), Teuta Toth (desk research and overall support)

Feel free to **send comments /suggestions** to [marie.dorleans@etf.Europa.eu](mailto:marie.dorleans@etf.Europa.eu), [vita.Glushko.ext@etf.Europa.eu](mailto:vita.Glushko.ext@etf.Europa.eu)