

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

2025

MOLDOVA

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The manuscript was completed in December, 2025.

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Please cite this publication as: European Training Foundation (2025), *Key Developments in Education, Skills and Employment – Moldova 2025*, Turin, Italy.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

Each year, the ETF monitors developments in education, skills, and employment in its partner countries to support informed decision-making by identifying trends, opportunities, and challenges. The results are reported by country, across countries, and by selected theme.

The present document is the country-level report (country fiche) for 2025 for Moldova. Like all ETF monitoring, it draws on multiple sources of evidence and is the culmination of a year-long process of data collection, analysis, and consultations. One key source of evidence is the ETF KIESE database, which provides internationally comparable indicators on areas such as country demography, economy, education, and employment. The indicators are sourced mainly from international repositories, including UNESCO, the World Bank, the OECD, Eurostat, and the ILO, while some come directly from partner countries, for instance, from their labour force surveys¹.

Another source of evidence is the Torino Process, a flagship monitoring initiative of the ETF which compiles system performance indices (SPIs) on the basis of KIESE data and expert surveys. The SPIs combine selected KIESE indicators to track policy and system performance in education and VET in key areas such as access, quality, and system management. Where KIESE data is missing, the SPIs rely on expert surveys, which help fill the gaps and contextualise the findings at the stage of analysis. “Performance” in this context refers to the extent to which policies and systems deliver results in these areas². In 2025, the ETF compiled SPIs for a total of 32 areas and sub-areas of performance, including for groups of learners such as youth and adults, males and females, socio-economically disadvantaged young people, and adults with no or low education.

ETF country missions complement these data sources by engaging with key policy stakeholders, gathering qualitative insights on policy developments, recently enacted legislation, and major reform steps. Finally, where necessary, the ETF draws on third-party publications and analytical work to complement gaps in available evidence or to clarify developments that are not fully captured in the ETF monitoring evidence.

The country fiche begins with Chapter 1 – a country profile that describes the demographic and socio-economic conditions in the country. Chapter 2 presents recent policies in education and training, together with the structure of the education system, including adult learning. Chapter 3 provides an overview of employment and labour-market policies and introduces the main strategies, institutions, and programmes. Chapter 4, which is the final chapter, presents the results of policies and arrangements in education and training.

¹ The full selection of KIESE indicators for 2025 can be found here <https://bit.ly/4i6taZW>.

² The subset of KIESE indicators used for the calculation of the Torino Process SPIs in 2025 can be found here: <https://bit.ly/433OR8j>. The full list of questions used in the 2025 round of Torino Process system performance monitoring can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3YUlbXE>. For a full overview of the Torino Process system performance monitoring framework, see <https://bit.ly/47YGA6l>. The methodology for the calculation of the SPIs can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3XJg101>.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Country profile and developments:** Moldova, with 2.46 million people in 2023, is experiencing rapid demographic decline due to high emigration – almost 30 % live abroad. This has caused labour shortages, rural depopulation, and population ageing. The working-age population has declined since 2008; the dependency ratio is high, and the population could decline by a third by 2050. Economic growth was 0.8 % in 2023, but inflation (13.4 %) reduced real incomes. GDP per capita (PPP) reached USD 17 600, partly from remittances (12 % of GDP). About 20 % of Moldovans live in poverty, though overall inequality is low. The country is advancing EU accession reforms, which also include commitments outlined in the Moldova Growth Plan, supported by EUR 1.9 billion in planned growth investments (2025–2027). The Ukraine war has increased pressure, with Moldova hosting around 136 000 refugees facing integration challenges.
- **Developments in education and training:** Since 2021, education has been a central pillar of Moldova's national development agenda. Education 2030 is a strategic document that aims to align the system with EU standards through quality improvement, inclusion and digitisation. Key reforms include expanding the Model School Network to reduce rural disparities, modernising teacher training, and upgrading school infrastructure. In vocational education and training (VET), reforms promote institutional autonomy, dual education, and work-based learning through Centres of Excellence, thereby strengthening links with employers. The National Qualifications Framework supports qualifications reform and recognition of non-formal learning and informal learning. Digital transformation has advanced through a new Digital Competence Framework, distance learning regulations, and the Education Management Information System (SIME). Adult learning opportunities are growing under Education Strategy 2030 and the National Employment Programme, although coordination remains limited.
- **Employment and labour market developments:** Moldova's labour market is governed by the Labour Code (2003, updated 2023) and the National Employment Programme (NEP) 2022–2026, which promotes inclusive employment, lifelong learning, and active labour market policies (ALMPs). The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection oversees employment and skills development, while the National Employment Agency (NEA) manages job matching, training referrals, and career guidance through 35 branches and the 'angajat.md' platform. Complementary strategies, including European Moldova 2030 and the National Youth Strategy 2030, focus on lifelong learning and workforce adaptability. The government continues to improve ALMP funding, expanding career guidance, vocational training, and local job-creation projects. Recent progress suggests that such measures are beginning to take effect. Between 2022 and 2023, over 23 000 more women entered the labour market, and the female employment rate rose to 40.8 % in early 2024 – the highest in six years.
- **Trends in access, retention, completion:** Early school leaving, mainly affecting boys and disadvantaged groups, is linked to poverty and poor links between education and the job market. Completion rates have improved, but ensuring that students in rural areas stay in school until graduation remains difficult. Access to VET and adult learning is still uneven across gender, regions, and social groups. Boys enrol more often than girls, who face stereotypes and limited exposure to technical fields. Adult participation – especially among women – remains low due to family duties, lack of flexible options, and inadequate financial aid. Programmes are primarily available in cities, whereas targeted support measures reach too few learners.
- **Quality and relevance of learning:** Moldova continues to improve the relevance of its education and training system, though challenges remain in matching skills to labour market needs. The introduction of modern curricula, strengthened partnerships with employers, and the expansion of dual education are helping to make VET more responsive. Initiatives such as the UNFPA-supported life skills programme and the Digital Transformation Strategy 2023–2030 have enhanced learners' employability and digital readiness. However, gaps persist in numeracy, languages, and entrepreneurship skills. Women remain underrepresented in STEM and ICT fields, contributing to

ongoing gender pay disparities. Graduate employability remains limited, and for those who do enter the labour market, working conditions are often characterised by informality and low wages. Continuous efforts to expand work-based learning, improve career guidance, and engage employers are key to enhancing outcomes and aligning training with Moldova's evolving economy.

System management and organisation: Despite progress, Moldova's education and training system continues to face funding, capacity, and governance constraints. Public spending on education is relatively high, yet allocations to VET remain low, restricting investments in facilities, teaching materials, and staff development. The teaching workforce is ageing, and rural areas face chronic shortages of teachers. Quality assurance is managed by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC), while data systems such as the Education Management Information System (SIME) and the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) are improving planning and monitoring. Governance reforms, including the Law on Sector Skills Committees (2017) and Education 2030 strategic directions, encourage social partner participation and institutional autonomy. International donors – especially the EU, World Bank, GIZ, UNICEF, and UNFPA – have provided about EUR 100 million in recent years to support modernisation, digitisation, and inclusion. While accountability and coordination have strengthened, key challenges persist: sustainable financing, capacity development, and better integration of education, labour market, and social policies remain vital for ensuring long-term effectiveness and better responsiveness of the skills ecosystem.

1. COUNTRY PROFILE

Table 1.1 Demographic and socio-economic context: key indicators, Moldova

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
Total population (in thousands)	2 457.8	2023	UN DESA, World Bank
Relative size of youth population (%)	16.7	2023	UN DESA
Population growth rate	-2.8	2023	World Bank, UN DESA
Dependency ratio	55.3	2023	World Bank, UN DESA
Immigrant stock as % of total population	6.2	2024	UN DESA
Emigrant stock as % of total population	28.5	2024	UN DESA
GDP growth rate	0.8	2023	World Bank
GDP per capita (PPP)	17 596.9	2023	World Bank
Migrant remittance inflows (US\$ mil.) as % of GDP	12.2	2023	World Bank
Inflation rate	13.4	2023	IMF
Poverty headcount ratio (\$8.30/day)	19.7	2022	World Bank
Gini coefficient (Income inequality)	25.7	2021	World Bank
Human development index (HDI)	0.785	2023	UNDP, World Bank

Source: ETF KIESE database

1.1 Demography

In 2023, Moldova's population was approximately 2.46 million people (Table 1.1), of whom 16.7 % were youth. While this share is comparable to the youth share of other countries in the region, Moldova's overall population is declining very rapidly, by around 2.8 % each year. Since the 1990s, Moldova has experienced one of the world's fastest population declines (OSW, 2025), a trend driven overwhelmingly by emigration: between 1998 and 2020, over 90 % of the population decline was due to net outward migration (Gagauz, Tabac, & Pahomii, 2023). Nearly three out of every ten Moldovans (28.5 %) live abroad as of 2024, which represents a substantial loss of labour and skills. While this large diaspora can provide remittances and potential returnees, emigration exacerbates labour shortages in the country. Immigration, meanwhile, remains modest: foreign-born residents account for only about 6.2 % of the population, hardly sufficient to offset the substantial outward migration.

Depopulation is not the same across the country. The capital, Chișinău, has kept a stable population since independence, while most rural districts are steadily losing people (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024). Such outflow reflects a pattern of young people leaving villages and small towns to pursue opportunities for studies and jobs, while the capital city retains or attracts people, despite the national trend of outward migration. In other words, emigration is draining working-age Moldovans not only from the national labour market, but also from the countryside, leaving some localities with rapidly ageing or shrinking communities.

The demographic dependency ratio in Moldova is high: about 55 dependents per 100 adults in working age. The demographic profile of the country is still relatively 'young' compared to the EU, but it is ageing fast. Youth currently make up around 17 % of the population, and children under 15 account for about 18 %, while the share of seniors (65+) is ~17 %. This means that so far, the dependency burden has been more about supporting youth (education, family benefits) than supporting the elderly. However, that balance is shifting.

Moldova's working-age population (15–64) already peaked around 2008 (UNFPA, 2023) and, according to UN forecasts, the overall population could be nearly one-third smaller by 2050 (medium scenario), which implies a similarly drastic decline in the labour force (UN DESA, 2024). The country is

on the verge of a major demographic shift, with an ageing, shrinking population placing unprecedented pressure on the social support ratio and public finances.

1.2 Economy

In 2023, the Moldovan economy grew by only 0.8 %. At the same time, inflation was high enough (13.4 % in 2023, Table 1.1) to erode real wages and household savings and weaken the purchasing power and overall living standards of households.

GDP per capita (PPP) in Moldova was approximately USD 17 600 in 2023, which places the country in the upper-middle-income group by World Bank standards but still considerably below the EU average. Remittances from Moldovans living abroad accounted for around 12.2 % of GDP in 2023, a significant, though not dominant, share of national income in international comparison. Nonetheless, the importance of these remittances should not be underestimated. On the positive side, they support household consumption and poverty reduction. However, on the downside, they may weaken incentives for young people to enter the domestic labour market or pursue local entrepreneurial opportunities, thereby limiting the country's longer-term economic prospects.

1.3 Income and living standards

In 2022, about 20 % of people lived below the upper-middle-income poverty line of USD 8.30/day (PPP). Poverty has declined but remains a challenge, and slow economic growth with high inflation could reverse recent gains. Income inequality is low, with a Gini coefficient of 25.7 in 2021, indicating that Moldova's primary economic challenge is to raise overall prosperity rather than narrow income gaps.

Human development is relatively high (HDI³ 0.785 in 2023), with education as the strongest component: nearly 15 years of expected schooling and 12 years attained. However, these educational gains have not fully translated into higher incomes or improved health, as GDP is modest and life expectancy (68.6 years) remains nearly 10 years below the EU average.

1.4 Recent developments

The government formed after the 2021 parliamentary elections continued to pursue a reform agenda centred on European integration, anti-corruption, and institutional strengthening. The Presidential Election and Constitutional Referendum in the Republic of Moldova took place on 20 October and 3 November 2024 and were observed by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission⁴. Moldova's latest parliamentary elections took place on 28 September 2025, following a parliamentary resolution in April 2025. The result greatly confirmed Moldova's policies and aspiration for European integration. As Moldova seeks EU membership, an October 2025 referendum made EU accession a constitutional priority.

In 2022, Moldova received EU candidate status, which has led to reforms to align national strategies with EU frameworks and the launch of multiple structural reform programmes. In December 2023, the European Council decided to open accession negotiations⁵ with the country. The first intergovernmental conference, marking the formal launch of the accession negotiations, was held on 25 June 2024⁶. On 10 October 2024, the European Commission proposed a EUR 1.9 billion Growth Plan for Moldova with a Reform and Growth Facility for 2025–2027. This support is crucial for Moldova's EU accession and progress towards enlargement. The Growth Plan is the most extensive

³ The Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite statistic developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to measure and rank countries' levels of human development.

⁴ For more information, see OSCE/ODIHR report.

⁵ [European Council conclusions, 14 and 15 December 2023 - Consilium](#).

⁶ [EU opens accession negotiations with Moldova - Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood](#).

EU financial support package to promote the country's economic growth. It aims to accelerate reforms, enhance access to the EU market, attract investments, and improve everyday life, thereby moving Moldova closer to EU membership.

The war in Ukraine, which began in February 2022, has had a significant impact on Moldova's economy and public services. Hosting one of Europe's highest refugee-to-host population ratios (5 %), the country sheltered around 136 000 refugees from Ukraine by the end of 2024, mostly women and children (81 %), older persons (23 %), and people with disabilities (10 %) (UNHCR, 2025).

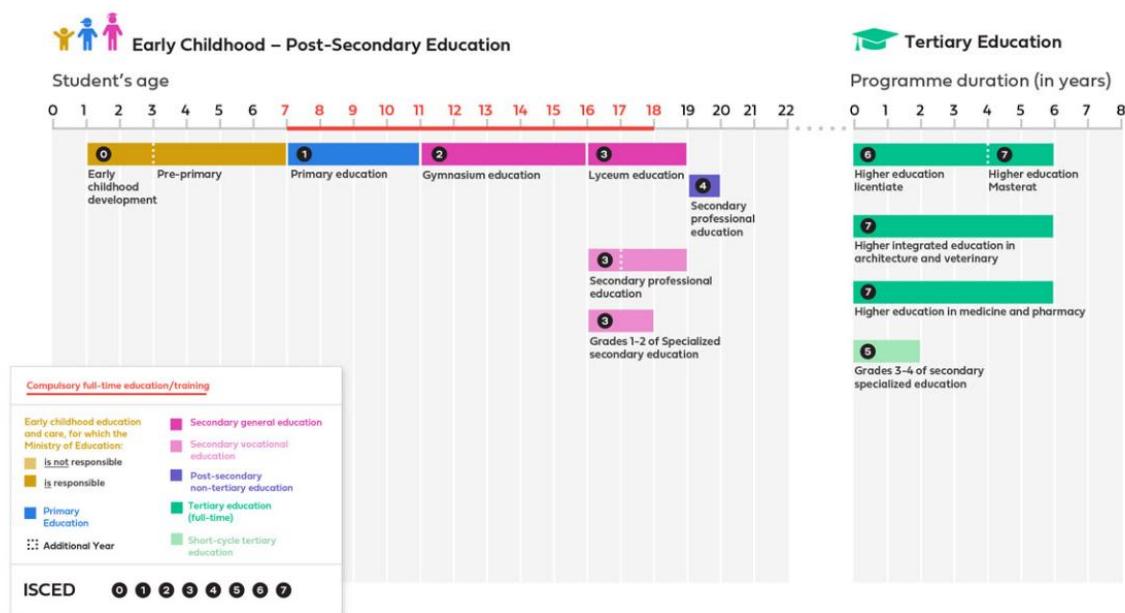
Between January and March 2024, only 49 % of working-age Ukrainian refugees in Moldova were employed, a sharp drop from the 87 % employment rate in Ukraine before displacement. Among those employed, just 37 % held formal contracts, highlighting widespread informal or precarious work. Romanian language proficiency, difficulties in recognising qualifications, lack of childcare, and restricted access to information and networks significantly impede labour market participation, especially for women and older adults (IOM, 2024).

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING: POLICIES AND DEVELOPMENTS

2.1 Structure and levels of education, including VET

This section provides a brief description of how the education system is organised across different levels, including pre-primary, primary, secondary (distinguishing between general and vocational tracks), tertiary, and adult learning. It uses the ISCED classification and is based on monitoring information collected through the Torino Process expert survey.⁷

Figure 2.1 Structure of the education system: Moldova (2025)



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. (2021).

Formal education

Moldova's education system begins with early childhood: ISCED 01 (ages 1.5–3) and pre-primary ISCED 02 (ages 5–6), usually in public kindergartens. Pre-primary is optional but widely seen as important for school readiness, though access is limited.

Primary education (ISCED 1, Grades 1–4) admits children by age and residency and is usually provided in general schools that also offer lower secondary. Lower secondary (ISCED 2, Grades 5–9) admits pupils automatically; advancement depends on school performance. At the end of Grade 9, national exams determine whether learners enter general upper secondary (lyceums) or vocational education (VET).

Upper secondary (ISCED 3) offers two paths: lyceums (Grades 10–12) with the Baccalaureate as entry to university, and VET programmes of two to three years, leading to employment or further study. Post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 4) and short-cycle tertiary (ISCED 5) provide specialised vocational training. Higher education then progresses through bachelor's (ISCED 6), master's (ISCED 7), and doctoral studies (ISCED 8).

⁷ The full questionnaire can be found here: <https://bit.ly/418jfwC>. In this document, the survey may be referred to interchangeably as the 'monitoring survey', 'expert survey', or 'Torino Process monitoring survey'.

Most provision is public and state-funded, though private schools exist in urban areas. Instruction is mainly in Romanian, with Russian and Gagauzian also used. Inclusive education is promoted through tailored support for learners with special needs in mainstream or specialised schools.

Adult education

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova guarantees the right to education for all citizens, forming a constitutional basis for lifelong learning, including adult education. Adult education is delivered through formal, non-formal and community-based courses aimed at personal, professional and civic development. A key provider of such learning opportunities is the Municipal Centre for Adult Learning and Education in Chișinău, which offers a broad range of free or low-cost courses tailored to adults across different ages and backgrounds — including unemployed people, workers seeking new skills, retirees and others seeking lifelong learning.

Currently, this segment of education is evolving as part of broader lifelong learning efforts. Recent initiatives by government, civil society and international partners aim to strengthen non-formal and formal learning opportunities for adults, especially in digital and professional skills, civic engagement and inclusive education. Under the recently updated Regulation on Adult Education from March, 2024⁸, adult education providers deliver continuous training and professional programs; certificates issued by accredited programs are recognised for employment and professional recognition.

2.2 Strategy and legal framework

Since taking office in August 2021, Moldova's government has made education reform a central pillar of its development agenda. Chapter Two of the 2021 Government Programme, titled 'The Main Development Challenges of the Republic of Moldova', identifies an 'education system insufficiently adapted to the needs of society' as one of the key national challenges (Cornea, S., Mandaji, E., 2022). Recognising persistent challenges such as quality disparities, outdated infrastructure, and skills mismatches, the government has launched a series of strategic initiatives.

With the March 2023 adoption of [Education 2030⁹](#), Moldova accelerated its education reforms, focusing on quality, infrastructure, digital skills, and strengthening teacher training. The policy emphasises digital competencies, labour market relevance, and EU alignment to create an inclusive, modern system that supports personal and national growth. Key initiatives for 2025–2027 include: expanding early childhood education, updating teacher training, strengthening so-called model schools, upgrading facilities, providing meals and textbooks, promoting inclusion for children with disabilities, internationalisation, and renovating student housing.

VET is an integral part of Education 2030. The strategic and legal framework for VET in Moldova is supported by several key legislative acts that guide the development, quality, and governance of vocational education and training.

- **Law on Sector Skills Committees (2017):** This law establishes sector-specific committees responsible for identifying skills needs and ensuring that VET programmes are responsive to labour market requirements.
- **Government Decision No 201/2018 on National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC):** This decision outlines the role and responsibilities of the ANACEC, which is pivotal for maintaining and enhancing the quality of vocational education.

⁸ For more information see section 2.4. Policies and developments.

⁹ Government Decision No. 114 of 7 March 2023 approved the 'Education 2030' Development Strategy, outlining the country's long-term vision for education and a corresponding Implementation Programme for 2023–2025, aimed at modernising the education system, improving quality and equity, and aligning national education priorities with sustainable development goals.

- Government Decision No 1234/2018 on Remuneration in Self-Managed Institutions: This legislation regulates remuneration policies in VET institutions that operate with a degree of self-management, supporting institutional autonomy and performance incentives.
- Education Code No.152/2014 and the Law on Dual Education No 110/2022: This legislation provides the financial framework for the allocation and management of resources within the VET sector, ensuring sustainable and equitable funding for institutions.

As part of the [**Education 2030**](#) implementation, several recent legislations and regulations have been approved, including:

- MER Order No 1061, June 2025 – Amends Order No 122/2025, updating the personnel norms for preschool and general education institutions, including those with integrated or multi-level programs.
- MER Order No 1078, June 2025 – Approves the lists of beneficiary institutions under the National Programme '100 Stories Read'¹⁰ and the Socio-Emotional Learning Program, supporting literacy and emotional development.
- MER Order No 957, June 2025 – Approves the Digital Competence Framework for students in primary and secondary education, supporting digital literacy among learners.
- MER Order No 1146, July 2025 – Concerns the expansion of the Model Schools Network, aiming to strengthen quality education through the development of model institutions.
- MER Order No 1139, July 2025 – Addresses the issuance of certificates confirming the right to work in the teaching profession, ensuring that only qualified individuals are authorised to teach.

Several legislative acts outline a reform agenda and set objectives aligned with Education 2030, providing a legal basis for modernising the education system. While these acts define strategic priorities for improving quality, inclusivity, and skills development, their practical implementation remains a challenge, requiring ongoing coordination, resources, and stakeholder engagement to achieve tangible results.

General education

In 2023/24, Moldova had 1 479 preschools serving nearly 130 000 children and 1 194 general schools with about 334 000 students. Enrolment is nearly universal from preschool to lower secondary, with rates among the highest in the Eastern Partnership region. Upper secondary enrolment has improved from 76.5 % in 2018/19 to 83.5 % in 2023/24.

Moldova faces teacher shortages, especially in rural and secondary schools, and a significant proportion lack proper training or degrees. The teaching workforce is ageing, with over half of rural teachers being above 50 years old. Recruitment meets only around 11–14 % of needs annually, and more data is needed to assess government efforts, particularly for rural-urban disparities (ETF, 2025d).

In early 2024, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) launched a plan to renovate and equip 35 schools as a first step to improve education for disadvantaged students, particularly in rural areas. This effort was reinforced in February 2024, when [**Order No 198**](#) formally introduced the 'Şcoala-Model' (Model School Concept), a framework for a nationwide network of schools designed to reduce educational disparities highlighted by PISA results, which showed that half of Moldovan students do not reach minimum competency levels, with rural schools most affected by teacher shortages and weak infrastructure. Policy measures aim to strengthen education, build human capital, and ensure equitable access. Parents are encouraged to transfer children to model schools, raising concerns over commuting and discrimination despite transport incentives. In July 2025, Order No 1146 expanded the **Model Schools Network** to 90 institutions, approving and authorising the new members. The

¹⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/moldova/en/press-releases/national-program-read-me-100-stories-has-been-launched-kindergartens-across-moldova>

Direktorate for General Education Policies is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the [**Model School Concept**](#).

Vocational education

[**Education 2030**](#) sets a long-term vision for the entire education system – including vocational education and training (VET). It is aligned with the National Development Strategy (NDS), European education standards, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 4). In 2024 and 2025, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) continued advancing its reform agenda in VET.

Reforms, which are also relevant to general education, include revising external quality assessment, validating non-formal learning, and advancing the National Qualifications Framework in alignment with the EQF. ANACEC's registration in the European quality assurance register supports coherence, while EMIS/SIME, integrating all levels in coordination with the National Bureau for Statistics (NBS), aims to become the single education data platform by 2025. A per-student funding formula is applied in general and VET, with preschool norms pending.

VET reforms emphasise institutional autonomy, funding, stronger quality assurance via ANACEC, and dual education, with a focus on new Centres of Excellence. Adult learning is addressed in both Education 2030 and the National Employment Programme 2022–2026, though coordination is weak.

Equity challenges persist: children with disabilities, Roma, low-income, and refugee students face limited access. While VET enrols approximately 45 % of upper secondary learners – the region's highest share – overall enrolment has declined, except for slight growth in post-secondary VET.

In September 2025, MER announced the preliminary results of student admissions to technical-vocational education for the 2025/26 academic year. Training is organised in 81 specialised institutions: 32 vocational schools, 35 colleges, and 14 Centres of Excellence. In total, 20 468 places were made available for admission, of which 12 297 are state-funded (including 2 134 for dual education) and 8 171 are tuition-based. At the level of secondary technical vocational education, out of the 8 718 places allocated for 114 training programmes, over 7 000 places have already been filled. At the same time, for post-secondary technical vocational education, of the 11 409 places distributed across 106 specialities, more than 9 500 places have been filled so far. Dual education provides theoretical training in the classroom and practical training in companies. Students benefit from both a salary and a scholarship¹¹.

2.3 Main actors and governance

National level

The Ministry of Education and Research (MER) is responsible for general and vocational education. The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) manages quality assurance at all educational levels. VET institutions have autonomy over financial and operational matters. Sector Skills Committees are intended to contribute to the development of occupational and qualification standards, though their operation experiences various challenges. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and the National Employment Agency (NEA) are involved in supporting adult education and aligning with labour market needs, particularly through the National Employment Programme (NEP) 2022–2026.

The Directorate for Policies in Technical Vocational Education and Lifelong Learning within the MER is a central body responsible for shaping and overseeing policy frameworks. Under its mandate, the directorate develops strategies for technical-vocational education, promotes dual education models (combining school-based learning with workplace training), and supports adult learning across formal, non-formal, and informal contexts. In recent years, it has also prioritised the validation of

¹¹ [Ministerul Educației și Cercetării | Guvernul Republicii Moldova](#).

competencies gained outside formal schooling – such as through work experience – to make lifelong learning more accessible and better align VET with labour market needs.

Governance structures for specific policies are complex. One example is the governance of teacher policies, which operates at national, institutional, and local levels. At the national level, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) sets and monitors teacher regulations. ANACEC oversees school and leadership evaluations, while the National Institute for Education and Leadership manages in-service teacher training and mentoring for new teachers. Locally, district and municipal education departments manage staff assessment, organise in-service training, and promote innovative teaching practices. These entities collectively ensure ongoing teacher development and quality assurance within Moldova's education sector (ETF, 2025c).

Coordination between the MER and other ministries on VET is currently informal and episodic. While this may minimise bureaucracy, the OECD recommends more regular, systematic consultations (OECD, 2023c). Although Moldova previously had a National Council for VET Coordination, it seems that regular meetings are a challenge. Given the many priorities outlined in Education 2030, re-establishing a cross-ministerial council could help steer VET reform – especially by strengthening self- and external evaluation of VET institutions, consolidating VET programs, and aligning VET with future economic developments (OECD, 2023c).

International level: donors

Major international donors supporting Moldova's education reforms include the Agency for Education and Internationalisation of Austria (OEAD) (with projects like Inclusive Education in VET and COOP-NET), GIZ and SDC (focusing on local development and VET/employment), UNICEF (promoting digitisation of education), and [LED](#) (focusing on environmental education). The European Training Foundation and the EU contribute to quality assurance, VET governance, digital reform, and policy alignment. Recent projects funded by the [World Bank](#)¹², UNESCO, GPE, Romania, ADA, SDC, UNFPA, and others have targeted infrastructure, dual VET, inclusion, and gender equality¹³.

In 2024, educational institutions under the MER reported three key projects with a total of EUR 94.03 million, with a cumulative disbursed amount of EUR 13.29 million, of which EUR 10.95 million was disbursed in 2023. Additionally, there were 49 technical assistance projects of EUR 47.8 million.

Several financing agreements were also signed during this period, including:

- Loan Agreement between the Republic of Moldova and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development for the Project Improving the Quality of Education, EUR 36.5 million and USD 10.0 million equivalent to EUR 9.2 million.
- Grant Agreement of the Multi-Donor Trust Fund of the Early Learning Partnership (Improving the Quality of Education Project) between the Republic of Moldova and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development as ELP Trustee, USD 5.0 million, equivalent to EUR 4.6 million.
- The Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Grant Agreement (Project 'Improving the Quality of Education') between the Republic of Moldova and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as Grant Agent of the Global Partnership for Education, USD 4.8 million, equivalent to EUR 4.4 million¹⁴.

¹² In September 2024, the World Bank investment portfolio included 15 active projects totalling USD 831 million in commitments. Areas of support include regulatory reform and business development, modernisation of government services, land registration, education, roads, health, including COVID-19 emergency response, agriculture, water and sanitation, and energy.

¹³ https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/subject-02-nu-900-mec-2022_1.pdf.

¹⁴ <https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport.pdf>.

2.4 Policies and developments

Overview

The main recent reform was the introduction of the new Education 2030 in 2023, which set nine transversal strategic objectives across the education sector, rather than separate sub-sectoral plans. These include key areas such as quality education, inclusive learning, digitisation, lifelong learning, and governance.

The [**Model School Concept**](#), in Moldova, will promote inclusive, student-centred education with a strong focus on leadership, collaboration, and innovation. General education schools are expected to adapt to individual learning needs, support professional development, and integrate digital tools for hybrid learning. These policy measures are geared towards fostering community participation, environmental responsibility, and active engagement with families and local partners. The Concept will also serve as a framework for implementing key policy directions for general education (ETF, 2025d).

In September 2025, Moldova also endorsed 'The Herning Declaration on attractive and inclusive Vocational Education and Training for increased competitiveness and quality jobs 2026–2030'. The forward-looking declaration marks a pivotal moment for European skills policy as the continent leads digital and green transformations to meet economic competitiveness challenges¹⁵.

Qualifications, validation, and recognition

Moldova began its National Qualification Framework (NQF) reform in 2010, with implementation measures set out in the Moldova 2030 development strategy, as well as Education 2030. By 2030, the aim is to update or develop at least 80 % of qualification standards to better meet labour market needs across vocational and higher education. The NQF is legislated, and a Register of Qualifications is being developed. Since joining the Bologna process, Moldova has shifted to a higher education-focused NQF and recently updated key legislation:

- [**Government Decision No 330/2023**](#), approving the National Qualifications Framework;
- [**Roadmap for the operationalisation of the NQF for 2023–2027**](#), annexed to Government Decision No 330/2023;
- [**Government Decision No 222/2024**](#), approving the Regulation on adult education, applying NQF provisions to adult learning programmes.

The NQF follows European Education Area principles of equity, transparency, and adaptability. Moldova aligned its level descriptors with the EQF and is preparing its first EQF referencing report, which was positively reviewed in 2024. Since joining the EQF network in 2023, it has strengthened peer learning. Validation of non-formal learning exists in accredited Centres of Excellence, but funding remains limited (ETF, 2025c).

Work-based learning

Education 2030 (Government Decision No 114/2023) supports the expansion of work-based learning (WBL) in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) by promoting dual education, strengthening partnerships between VET institutions and employers, and enhancing social partners' involvement. The strategy also emphasises developing the National Qualifications Framework, qualifications, and occupational standards, as well as improving career guidance services to better prepare students for the labour market. The youth strategy 'YOUTH 2030' and its Implementation Plan 2023–2026 further foster youth engagement in WBL through vocational orientation, practical learning opportunities, and entrepreneurship support, facilitating smoother transitions into employment.

Alignment with employment policies is ensured through Government Decision No 785/2022, which approves the National Employment Programme 2022–2026 and its action plan. This programme

¹⁵ [From Osnabrück to Herning: Ministers Endorse Ambitious VET Declaration | CEDEFOP](#).

emphasises connecting training programs, including WBL, to real economic needs, thereby enhancing employment and labour market access for young people.

Law No 110/2022 establishes the framework for integrating classroom learning with enterprise-based training, defining the roles of stakeholders, contracts, and quality standards. Government Decision No 97/2023 establishes regulatory measures, including compliance criteria, compensation mechanisms for companies hosting apprentices, and financial incentives for private sector involvement. Additional documents approved in 2023 provide structured guidance for implementing dual education nationwide.

While dual education numbers remained stable for years, a 60 % increase occurred in 2024/25, also thanks to active engagement by the MER and the Chamber of Commerce. Furthermore, in the 2025/2026 academic year, 3 340 students are enrolled in dual education programs, representing an increase of 1 201 students compared to the previous year, when 2 417 were registered.¹⁶ Challenges persist in ensuring quality and consistency, particularly in underdeveloped sectors such as the agri-food sector. Moldova joined the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EaFA) in 2022, gaining access to further opportunities for peer exchange and development. In 2025, VET institutions in Moldova advanced their engagement with the EaFA network, as the nine Centres of Excellence submitted their applications to join, marking a key step in strengthening international cooperation and promoting high-quality vocational education aligned with European standards.

For the first time in 2025, qualification examinations using the unified system method were conducted in external examination centres, including centres that also host the national baccalaureate exam. The examinations covered the programmes of Merchandising, Accounting, Tourism, and Business Planning and Administration, involving 21 VET institutions and assessing approximately 940 students.¹⁷

Career guidance

Moldova is strengthening career guidance and counselling to help learners and job seekers make informed education and career choices. Key initiatives include:

- **Digital tools:** The National Employment Agency's 'Angajat' portal and a mobile app help youth explore the labour market and job opportunities.
- **Joboteca programme:** Piloted in 24 schools, it provides disadvantaged youth with career guidance, entrepreneurship training, and digital skills.
- **Career guidance resources:** A guide developed with UNICEF and the Ministry of Education and Research supports teachers, psychologists, and parents in student career development¹⁸.
- **Practitioner training:** Continuous training programs, including GIZ-supported courses, enhance counselling and guidance skills.

These measures aim to improve access to guidance, modernise service delivery, and target support to specific groups, particularly youth and disadvantaged students.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance in the education system is coordinated by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC), operating under the authority of the Ministry of Education. The agency's mandate encompasses the external evaluation of institutions on a five-year cycle, the development of accreditation standards, and the monitoring of educational quality. While ANACEC demonstrates solid institutional and technical capacities, its effectiveness is constrained by limited human resources, primarily attributable to low remuneration levels in the public sector. The key reference documents governing its activities include Government Decision No 201/2018, the

¹⁶ Newsletter, 2025, Ministry of Education and Research, Vocational Education and Training Reform

¹⁷ Newsletter, 2025, Ministry of Education and Research, Vocational Education and Training Reform

¹⁸ [School Career Guidance Guide | UNICEF Moldova](#).

Methodology for External Quality Evaluation, and the External Evaluation Guide for Vocational Training in Technical Education. It is noteworthy that structured mechanisms for institutional self-assessment at the school level have not yet been established.

At the end of 2024, the quality of VET programmes was strengthened through an update of the curriculum reference framework for technical vocational education, including the Curriculum Development Methodological Guide and the curriculum reference framework itself, with a particular focus on dual education and curriculum development. In parallel, working groups responsible for updating curricula were formally approved, leading to the approval of revised curricula for 40 out of 73 secondary VET programmes and 11 out of 100 post-secondary VET programmes.¹⁹

Centres of Excellence

The Ministry of Education and Research of Moldova has made Centres of Excellence (COEs) central to its strategy for modernising vocational education and training (VET). Since 2015, COEs have concentrated resources and expertise in key sectors including construction, ICT, services, and light industry. By 2023, 13 COEs operated nationwide, while in 2025, there were 14 COEs.

COEs are expected to play a crucial role not only in training students but also as methodological and innovation hubs, driving the reform and improvement of vocational education. They will serve as bridges between the economy and the vocational education system, ensuring that training aligns closely with labour market needs. Additionally, these centres will be instrumental for continuous professional development, capacity building of VET staff, and the validation of non-formal and informal learning, while their operation will be guided by regulations that emphasise both financial and operational sustainability to maintain their status²⁰.

Additionally, COEs promote transversal skills and social inclusion. In 2024, two centres in Chișinău and Bălți were accredited to deliver ongoing education in life skills and healthy lifestyles, supported by UNFPA and the Austrian Development Agency. This highlights the growing role of COEs in equipping learners and educators for personal growth, employability, and adaptability (UNFPA, 2025).

Digital education and skills

The [Digital Transformation Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2023–2030](#), approved by the government in September 2023, outlines a comprehensive vision for building an inclusive, citizen-centred digital society. The strategy includes a dedicated focus on digital education, aiming to modernise the national education system by integrating digital tools, enhancing digital literacy among students and educators, and ensuring equitable access to high-quality digital learning resources. This vision builds upon earlier policy frameworks such as the Moldova [Education 2030](#) Strategy, Moldova Education 2020, and the VET Strategy 2013–2020, which laid the groundwork for digitisation efforts in the sector.

Key reforms and recent developments include:

- **Adoption of a new digital competence framework:** In July 2025, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) approved a new [digital competence framework](#) for students in primary and secondary education (MER Order No 957/2025). The framework aligns with the 2025 action plan and replaces the 2015 digital literacy standards.
- **Regulation on the use of digital devices in education:** In December 2024, the MER approved a [framework regulation](#) on the use of mobile phones and other electronic communication devices in primary, lower secondary, and secondary vocational education institutions, in accordance with the Education Code No 152/2014. The regulation establishes clear guidelines for the use of such devices to support a balanced and purposeful integration of technology in classrooms, while safeguarding student well-being.

¹⁹ Newsletter, 2025, Ministry of Education and Research, Vocational Education and Training Reform

²⁰ [REGULAMENTUL DE FUNCȚIONARE A CENTRELOR DE EXCELENȚĂ ÎN ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL PROFESIONAL TEHNIC](#) | [Particip.gov.md](#).

- **Concept of General Distance Learning:** Also in December 2024, the MER approved the Concept of General Distance Learning, pursuant to Article 140 of the Education Code and the ministry's 2024 action plan. The concept defines the principles, methodology, and implementation mechanisms for distance education across the general education system. The General Directorate for General Education Policies has been tasked with coordinating dissemination efforts with relevant local educational bodies and organising national seminars to support the training of teaching staff in effective digital and distance learning methods.
- **Document supplements in technical vocational education:** In July 2024, the MER issued an order mandating that, starting with the 2024/2025 academic year, all students' documents in TVET must be generated automatically through the Education Management Information System (SIME). These supplements will be issued in PDF format, electronically signed, and delivered digitally to graduates, with printed copies available upon request. The Centre for Information and Communication Technologies in Education will manage the technical operation of SIME, while the Directorate for Policies in Technical Vocational Education and Lifelong Learning is responsible for implementation and oversight.

These reforms signify Moldova's commitment to equipping both learners and educators with the digital skills necessary in a modern education system, contributing to the country's broader digital transformation.

Green transition

The [Environment Strategy 2024–2030](#), approved in June 2024 (Decision No.409 /2024), guides Moldova's green transition by targeting a 70 % reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (from 1990 levels) and promoting sustainability across key sectors. The National Development Strategy [European Moldova 2030](#)²¹ positions the green transition as a central goal, aligning with the UN Agenda and EU commitments, and emphasises a healthy environment, inclusive growth, and governance reforms.

Moldova is actively integrating Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) into its national curriculum. The Ministry of Education and Research is developing an optional subject titled Education for Sustainable Development. This subject aims to equip students with the skills to address local, national, and global environmental challenges, with a focus on sustainable development, the green economy, energy conservation, and alternative energy sources.

In September 2024, a pilot project in 87 schools introduced energy and climate change-related topics into subjects such as physics, geography, and personal development. Part of the EU-funded UNDP project 'Enabling an Inclusive Green Transition in Moldova' involved the Ministries of Education, Energy, and Environment. The EU also provided over USD 420 000 in energy equipment to five institutions, offering students practical experience with modern technologies.

In June 2025, the MER added three green economy-focused qualifications to its vocational training list: solar heating systems installer, geothermal heat pump installer, and food intake and distribution coordinator. These were launched in September 2025 at the Centre of Excellence in Energy and Electronics, with an accreditation mechanism in place to ensure quality.

Adult learning

Adult learning in Moldova supports individuals pursuing qualifications, vocational skills, or professional development. Adults without secondary education can join special programmes to obtain recognised certificates, offered through schools or adult education centres. The new Regulation on Adult Education²² sets a unified framework for adult learning. Defined broadly, 'adult education' includes

²¹ The National Development Strategy 'European Moldova 2030' is Moldova's long-term framework guiding socio-economic development and reforms until 2030, aiming to align the country with European standards in governance, economy, and society.

²² Government Decision No. 222 of 26 March 2024 on the approval of the Regulation on adult education; *Official Gazette* No 141-143 Article. 309; Available at: https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=142707&lang=ro.

general education, initial professional training, and continuing professional training, and it is explicitly recognised as part of lifelong learning. It applies to any person who has completed their first stage of education, regardless of where or when they stopped, ensuring that opportunities for learning remain accessible throughout adulthood, general and vocational education – initial and continuing – within lifelong learning.

Professional development and vocational training for adults are provided by the National Agency of Employment and partners, targeting unemployed people and career changers. NGOs and adult education centres offer non-formal training in areas such as computer literacy, languages, and business, primarily in urban areas. Digital platforms (e.g. Educație Interactivă, Studii.md, EduPlatform.md) further expand lifelong learning opportunities.

Overall, adult learning is a shared responsibility, stipulated in Education 2030 and the National Employment Programme 2022–2026. The MER focuses on lifelong learning and educational continuity, while the NEP supports unemployed and inactive populations through active labour market measures (ALMPs).

3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT: POLICIES AND DEVELOPMENTS

3.1 Strategy and legal framework

Moldova's labour market is governed by the Labour Code (2003, updated 2023) and guided by national employment strategies. The National Employment Strategy 2017–2021 laid the groundwork for labour market reforms and was followed by the National Employment Programme (NEP) 2022–2026, approved in November 2022, which focuses on employment for all, especially vulnerable groups, and promotes active labour market policies. Complementary strategies include the National Development Strategy 'European Moldova 2030' and the National Youth Strategy 2030, both of which support lifelong learning and workforce adaptability objectives outlined in the Education Development Strategy 2030.

The key reform directions of the [**National Employment Programme \(NEP\) 2022–2026**](#) include:

- reduce informal employment by strengthening labour inspection, formalising work, and regulating non-standard jobs;
- increase labour force participation, especially for women and vulnerable groups, through childcare support and inclusion measures;
- strengthen the National Employment Agency (ANOFM) and digitalise active labour market services, including recognition of non-formal skills;
- improve skills matching, ALMPs, and institutional capacity, supported by social protection reforms and external partnerships.

The Employment Promotion Law No. 105/2018 aims to make the labour market more effective and inclusive. In 2023, the government amended Government Decision 1276/2018 (the procedures for accessing ALMPs) to increase the training stipend from 15 % up to 35 % of the average salary, and to reduce the required retention period for subsidised jobs for persons with disabilities from 18 to 12 months²³. In 2024, ANOFM implemented active labour market measures for wage-subsidised jobs (Art. 36), targeting vulnerable groups (e.g., long-term unemployed, people over 50, persons with disabilities), with up to 80 % of the base wage subsidised for 6 months. ANOFM also supports local initiatives – under Art. 40 of the Law, and in 2024, it subsidised local business-initiative projects (especially in rural areas) with 65 % of the eligible costs, to stimulate employment locally²⁴.

3.2 Main actors and governance

National level

Within the government established in 2021, the former Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection was split into two. The new Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) is responsible for human resource development and employment policies (including professional orientation and training for adults), identifying labour market skill requirements, and improving or upgrading the skills of the labour force to meet those requirements.

The MLSP oversees employment policy and the ANOFM, which implements active labour market programmes (ALMPs) and coordinates with regional offices. The NEA delivers public employment

²³ [Ministerul Muncii și Protecției Sociale](#).

²⁴ [În atenția agentilor economici! Anunț privind înregistrarea cererilor de aplicare pentru acordarea subvenției de susținere a proiectelor de inițiativa locală | Anofm site](#).

services, including career guidance, job matching, training referrals, and employer support, in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research to ensure labour market relevance.

The ANOFM manages both active and passive labour market measures and is governed by a tripartite board. Recent reforms have centralised the ANOFM, reduced staff, and optimised operations; it now operates a central office and 35 local branches. Branches can sign agreements with companies for ALMP delivery. The ANOFM's mission is to increase employment and assist employers in filling jobs through activities like policy development, labour market monitoring, implementing and assessing measures, and managing labour market information.

In September 2024, the government approved changes to its organisation to modernise and improve efficiency. The main changes include the establishment of a performance management division of the ANOFM, to enhance efficiency and organisational results by implementing a continuous evaluation system. A structure dedicated to collaboration with employers and a specialised procurement and logistics division will also be created to support the institution's activities in an efficient and sustainable manner.²⁵ The ANOFM has also launched an online portal, [angajat.md²⁶](https://www.angajat.md/), offering free services to employers and job seekers. Current reforms (2023–2026) aim to match job seekers and employers more efficiently, better target services, improve service quality for both groups, and enhance overall institutional performance.

International level: donors

The [**Decent Work Country Programme \(DWCP\) for Moldova 2025–2027**](#) (ILO 2025), developed through tripartite consultations and validated in October 2024, establishes the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) medium-term support framework for Moldova. This programme is closely aligned with Moldova's National Development Strategy 2030 and the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023–2027). The DWCP is structured around three strategic priorities and ten expected outcomes:

- strengthening social dialogue at all levels;
- enhancing the labour and social protection of workers;
- reinforcing employment, skills, and enterprise development policies.

The initiative, formally named [**EU support to inclusive labour markets in the Republic of Moldova**](#), is implemented by the ILO with funding from the European Union. Its primary aim is to enhance labour market governance by bolstering institutional capacities – particularly those of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, National Employment Agency (NEA), and the State Labour Inspectorate (SLI) – to improve access to employment, ensure better working conditions, and protect workers' rights. The project, active from November 2023 to November 2025, strengthens national alignment with EU and international labour standards, advances digital employment tools, improves labour inspector training, and supports workplace gender equality.

The [**Inclusive and Productive Employment in Eastern Europe – Moldova**](#) programme, co-implemented by the ILO and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), through State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), operated from 1 December 2022 to 30 June 2025, with a budget of CHF 2 million, and aims to modernise employment policies, build the capacities of labour market programmes, and enhance employment services. Meanwhile, the [**Strong Businesses and Communities for Moldova**](#) initiative, led by GIZ and co-funded by the EU and SDC, runs from 2022 to 2026 and promotes vocational training, local economic development, and socio-economic integration across communities.

In Moldova, UN agencies collaborate on numerous joint programmes for youth and vulnerable populations, such as [**UNFPA's focus**](#) on youth empowerment, reproductive health, and UNDP/IOM's initiatives to support Ukrainian refugees and host communities. [**UNICEF**](#) addresses child and family

²⁵ [Ministerul Muncii și Protecției Sociale](https://www.msp.gov.md/ministerul-muncii-si-protectiei-sociale).

²⁶ <https://www.angajat.md/>.

needs through improved education and social protection, while the [UN Adolescents and Youth Advisory Panel \(UN AYAP\)](#) creates dialogue with young people to integrate their well-being into the UN's development agenda. Joint efforts also involve [UNHCR](#) and other partners, providing humanitarian and development support to refugees and vulnerable groups. These programmes are funded through a combination of UN core resources, multi-donor trust funds, and contributions from bilateral and multilateral development partners.

3.3 Policies and developments

Overview

The National Employment Programme (NEP) 2022–2026 serves as Moldova's principal policy framework for employment promotion. The [ANOFM 2024 report](#) indicates significant policy measures and activities to increase performance in working with job seekers and employers, such as:

- improved processes of matching demand with supply on the labour market, contributing to increasing the number of people placed in the labour market by 50 % (from 11 thousand in 2023 to 16.7 thousand in 2024);
- improved monitoring in order to achieve performance indicators, including subdivisions with lower performance (performance evaluation methodology developed by Expert Group, permanently organised meetings, visits to the territory, etc.);
- creating better conditions for local/territorial divisions to work with employers and citizens, including the creation of mobile teams;
- efficient use of the budget (98.4 % achievement), contributing to inclusion and increasing access to the labour market by engaging 1322 people who encounter barriers on the labour market in active labour market measures (people with disabilities, young people from vulnerable families, victims of human trafficking, people aged 55+, etc.);
- etc.

Youth Guarantee

The Youth Guarantee – an EU scheme ensuring that all young people receive quality offers of employment, continued learning, apprenticeships, or traineeships within four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education – has not yet been formally established in Moldova. However, a reflection on its adaptation to Moldovan realities is taking place.

In April 2024, under the EU4Youth Phase III Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship programme (financed by the EU and the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs), a Youth Guarantee Training for Co-management Structures took place in Chișinău. Representatives from Moldova, Georgia, and Lithuania attended, discussing the Youth Guarantee strategy – including mapping, tracking, and outreach for NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) youth²⁷. In March 2024, ANOFM launched a new technical cooperation project (with GIZ/BMZ) to identify NEET young people (15–29) and support their integration by providing youth-friendly employment services, career guidance, and connections to social or labour market measures²⁸.

Furthermore, the NEP incorporates initiatives that align with the objectives of the Youth Guarantee, including early intervention for NEETs, job counselling and profiling, and access to training, apprenticeships, and entrepreneurship support. The ANOFM has enhanced its outreach efforts among young people – particularly in rural regions – and is implementing targeted pilot measures in partnership with international organisations.

²⁷ [EU for Moldova](#).

²⁸ <https://www.giz.de/en/projects/youth-employment-promotion-moldova>.

3.4 Active labour market programmes (ALMPs)

The ANOFM offers intermediary services, career guidance, counselling, job fairs, public works, and training for jobseekers and priority groups. Jobseeker support includes registration, guidance, profiling, employment planning, and placement. Employers can register vacancies, receive candidate preselection, and access employment intermediation services; they are also required to report vacancies to ANOFM. The public works programme supports temporarily unemployed people in vulnerable groups – mainly rural – by maintaining work motivation and skills development. Annual employer surveys identify labour needs and shortages, with results published in a labour market barometer.

In 2023, the government provided a significant increase in funding for ALMPs. The budget rose from MDL 26 million to over MDL 50 million. A detailed analysis of the typology and targeting shows the following:

- The number of people benefiting from job intermediation, training courses, vocational internships and on-the-job training did not significantly change.
- More job seekers received career guidance than in 2022, confirming a positive trend. These services were introduced in 2020, and the number increased from 975 in the first year to more than 7 000 in 2021 and 2022, and to over 16 000 in 2023.
- The relatively new services in the form of incentives for start-ups (introduced in 2023) and supporting local projects (6 projects funded in 2021, 30 in 2022 and 113 in 2023) have taken the lion's share of the additional ALMP budget. This indicates that, while financing for traditional measures remained stable, the government prioritised encouraging entrepreneurship and local development initiatives.

The allocation of additional funds follows a strategic plan, balancing the NEA's focus on job creation and local project support with challenges like limited staff and private training options. Despite these constraints, the government's efforts to strengthen the NEA and resource ALMPs show promise for a more effective employment policy.

4. KEY INDICATORS: EDUCATION, SKILLS, EMPLOYMENT

4.1 Headline indicators

Education and VET

Monitoring a complex education and training system typically starts with three straightforward questions: who takes part, what do they achieve, and what supports the process?

The first question explores the extent to which learners engage in education or training. It is addressed by indicators grouped under *Participation and access* in Table 4.1: net enrolment rates at lower and upper secondary levels, the share of students in upper-secondary VET, the gross enrolment ratio in tertiary education, and adult participation rates in lifelong learning. The second question – what learners achieve – examines key education outcomes, such as learner progression and the skills or qualifications they obtain. These are reflected in the indicators under *Attainment, completion and outcomes*: the share of adults with tertiary qualifications, the rate of early leavers from education and training, and the percentage of 15-year-olds underachieving in mathematics. The third question considers the financial, physical, and informational resources that sustain the education process, reflected by the indicators under *Resources and data*: public expenditure on education as a share of GDP, the adequacy of infrastructure, and the availability of internationally comparable data.

Table 4.1 Headline indicators: education and VET (Moldova, EU average) (2022–2024)

Participation and access	2022	2023	2024	EU (1)	Source
Total net enrolment rate (lower secondary)	100.0	M.D.	M.D.	98.1	UIS UNESCO
Total net enrolment rate (upper secondary)	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	93.6	UIS UNESCO
Students in VET as a % of total upper secondary students	44.8	44.5	44.4	48.8	UIS UNESCO
Gross enrolment ratio (tertiary)	68.1	M.D.	M.D.	79.7	UIS UNESCO
Participation in training/lifelong learning in the previous 4 weeks (% aged 25–64)	1.3	2.2	2.9	13.3	LFS
Attainment, completion and outcomes	2022	2023	2024	EU (1)	Source
Educational attainment of total population: % with ISCED 5–8	18.5	19.1	20.4	30.2	LFS
Early leavers from education and training (% aged 18–24)	21.5	17.5	16.4	9.3	LFS
Underachievers in maths (% aged 15)	55.8	N.A.	N.A.	31.1	PISA OECD
Resources and data	2022	2023	2024	EU (1)	Source
Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	6.1	6.6	M.D.	4.7	UIS UNESCO
Inadequate or poor-quality physical infrastructure (2)	28.5	N.A.	N.A.	27.9	PISA OECD
Availability of internationally comparable data on education	N.A.	36.8	56.3	N.A.	TRP (3)

Notes: 1. EU average, latest available year. PISA data: OECD average. 2. Percentage of students in schools whose principal reported that the school's capacity to provide instruction is hindered at least to some extent by inadequate or poor-quality physical infrastructure. 3. ETF Torino Process (TRP).

Source: ETF KIESE database.

Perhaps the most prominent finding in Table 4.1 is the significant inconsistency in the availability of basic data on education in Moldova over the reporting period. Enrolment figures are missing entirely for upper-secondary education over the full period (2022–2024), and recent evidence for lower-secondary enrolment and tertiary participation is incomplete. Additionally, there is no recent data on adult participation in lifelong learning, early school leaving in 2024, or school infrastructure conditions after 2022. At the same time, Moldova's capacity to supply internationally comparable education data

has improved, from 36.8 % of monitoring indicators in 2023 to 56.3 % in 2024. However, this improvement has been uneven, as the data gaps in Table 4.1 show. Data coverage still varies considerably across areas of education policy, years, and educational segments.

Where data is available, it shows mixed results. Moldova reported universal enrolment at the lower-secondary education level in 2022, well above the EU benchmark of 98.1 %. However, the absence of data for subsequent years (2023 and 2024) means it is unclear whether this achievement has been sustained. While there is no data on enrolment at the upper-secondary level, participation in VET consistently accounts for approximately 45 % of that enrolment. This proportion is close to the EU average and indicates that vocational pathways form an important part of secondary education in Moldova.

Roughly two-thirds (68 % in 2022) of young people enter higher education. Although substantial, this share remains significantly below the EU average of approximately 80 % and may suggest potential constraints on the future supply of advanced skills.

Adult participation in lifelong learning is very low. Only 1–2 % of adults have recently participated in training activities, far below the EU average of 13.3 %. At the same time, the proportion of adults in Moldova with tertiary education qualifications has gradually increased over the reporting period, from around 18.5 % in 2022 to just over 20 % by 2024. Despite this steady improvement, the results are still below the EU average of 30.2 %.

The rate of early school leaving has declined significantly, from approximately 21.5 % in 2022 to 16.4 % in 2024, but is still almost twice as high as the EU average (9.3 %). A sizeable share of young people remains at risk of economic and social exclusion. In the latest PISA 2022 round, Moldovan 15-year-olds scored an average of 404 in mathematics, which is significantly below the OECD average. Only 44 % of students reached at least Level 2 proficiency, meaning most struggle to apply mathematics in real-life problem-solving. Very few (around 1 %) were top performers (Level 5–6), highlighting a weak top performer group²⁹. This points to critical gaps in the ability of the system to provide foundational competencies. Furthermore, approximately 28 % of students attend schools reported to have inadequate facilities.

Taken together, these findings – high early school leaving, low performance in mathematics, and inadequate school facilities – appear to be at odds with the considerable financial resources which Moldova is allocating to education. Public expenditure in the sector reached 6.6 % of GDP in 2023 (Table 4.1). This share is high by international standards and suggests that, in Moldova, the effectiveness of resource use may pose a greater challenge than the level of spending alone.

Employment and demand for skills

The set of labour market indicators follows the same question-and-answer logic as that applied to education and training, but from an employment perspective. The indicators are organised into two complementary groups. The first group, *Employment and labour market outcomes* (Table 4.2), addresses how effectively the labour market absorbs people. It consists of the overall employment rate (aged 15+), youth employment rate (aged 15–24), employment rate of recent graduates (aged 20–34, ISCED 3–8), unemployment rate of the overall population (aged 15+), youth unemployment rate (aged 15–24), and the NEET rate (aged 15–29). The second group, *Demand for skills* (Table 4.2), looks at the types of jobs and skills that the economy generates. It consists of employment by broad economic sector (agriculture, industry, services), the incidence of vulnerable employment, and educational mismatch.

²⁹ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/pisa-2022-results-volume-i-and-ii-country-notes_ed6fbcc5-en/moldova_23239952-en.html.

Table 4.2 Headline indicators: employment (Moldova, EU average) (2022–2024)

Employment and labour market outcomes	2022	2023	2024	EU (1)	Source
Employment rate (% aged 15+ or similar age group)	40.5	43.1	42.7	54.7	LFS
Employment rate (% aged 15–24 or similar age group)	15.8	18.7	17.6	35.0	LFS
Employment rate of recent graduates aged 20–34 (ISCED 3–8)	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	82.4	LFS
Unemployment rate (% aged 15+ or similar age group)	3.1	4.6	4.0	5.9	LFS
Unemployment rate (% aged 15–24 or similar age group)	10.7	11.5	9.8	14.9	LFS
NEET rate (% aged 15–29 or similar age group)	26.2	23.1	21.9	11.0	LFS
Demand for skills	2022	2023	2024	EU (1)	Source
Employment by broad economic sectors (%): agriculture	20.8	20.9	18.1	3.3	LFS
Employment by broad economic sectors (%): industry	22.5	21.5	20.9	24.1	LFS
Employment by broad economic sectors (%): service	56.7	57.6	61.0	72.1	LFS
Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)	20.2	20.0	18.6	10.0	LFS
Employment by 'educational mismatch': % matched	66.3	66.2	M.D.	M.D.	ILOSTAT

Notes: 1. Data refer to 2019. 2. data refer to 2019, age group 15–59. 3. data refer to 2019, age group 16–24. 4. data refer to 2019, age group 15–24.

Source: ETF KIASE database

In 2024, the employment rate stood at 42.7 %. This low share likely reflects both a shortage of attractive employment opportunities and substantial informal employment not fully captured by official statistics. Youth employment (ages 15–24) was even lower, at 17.6 %, meaning that fewer than one in five young people held paid work.

Unemployment among adults was relatively low, at 4.6 % in 2023, yet many employers cannot fill vacancies. In fact, at the end of Q1 2025, about 4.7 % of all jobs in Moldova were vacant according to National Bureau of Statistics data (NBS, 2025). According to third-party reports, certain sectors are particularly affected. Manufacturing and construction firms report vacancy rates well above 4 %, despite the surplus of labour implied by rural underemployment. The ICT sector is a clear example of both opportunities and skill bottlenecks in Moldova's labour market. ICT has been an engine for growth that accounted for 8.3 % of GDP in 2023, along with a rapid expansion (Invest Moldova Agency, 2024)³⁰. However, the sector also faces acute skill shortages. It already employs over 4 % of Moldova's workforce, but its demand for talent by far outstrips local supply.

In 2024, youth unemployment stood at 9.8 %. Nevertheless, Moldova continues to face challenges with high levels of youth inactivity as it struggles to attract young people into active participation in the labour market. Although the share of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEET) declined to 21.9 %, it remains almost double the EU average (11.0 %).

In Moldova, employment by economic sector differs significantly from the patterns common to EU countries, on average. Approximately one-fifth (20.9 %) of all employed persons in Moldova work in agriculture, a proportion roughly six times greater than in the EU (3.3 %). Employment in industry decreased slightly from 22.5 % in 2022 to 21.5 %, and in 2023 was marginally below the EU average of 24.1 %. Meanwhile, employment in the services sector grew modestly to 57.6 %, though this is still significantly less than in the EU (72.1 %). Whether the country's strong reliance on agriculture constrains or promotes its long-run economic development will depend on the specific nature, productivity, and competitiveness of its agricultural activities.

Table 4.2 also suggests that Moldova's labour market has issues with job quality. The incidence of vulnerable employment – jobs characterised by low security, informality, or poor working conditions – remained stable at around 20 % in 2022 and 2023, which is twice the EU average of 10 %. The missing 2024 data does not allow conclusions about whether the shortage of secure formal

³⁰ <https://invest.gov.md/en/moldovas-it-sector-eastern-europes-new-digital-hotspot>.

employment is an ongoing weakness. However, even with the available data, it is clear that a substantial share of the employed in Moldova hold jobs that offer inadequate security, unfavourable conditions, or both.

Skills utilisation in employment is another relevant dimension of job quality and labour market effectiveness. Roughly two-thirds (66.2 %) of workers hold jobs that match their qualifications. However, the fact that the remaining one-third of adults in official employment are either overqualified or underqualified indicates significant inefficiencies in how Moldova uses the skills available to its economy.

Finally, there are important gaps in the availability of key data. Specifically, the absence of information on recent-graduate employment rates and the lack of 2024 data complicate an accurate assessment of how effectively education and training systems facilitate the transition to employment. It also makes it difficult to judge whether the employment trends observed in 2023 have continued or changed.

4.2 System performance indicators

As noted in the introduction to this paper, 'performance' in the context of ETF monitoring refers to the extent to which VET systems fulfil their commitments to learners and stakeholders in support of lifelong learning. These commitments typically cover three key areas: ensuring broad and equitable access to educational and training opportunities; delivering high-quality, relevant education; and maintaining effective and efficient organisation and management of the education system, including adequate resourcing.

To measure performance systematically, the ETF uses System Performance Indices (SPIs), which summarise the extent to which education and training systems fulfil each of their commitments. Each SPI is presented on a scale from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating stronger performance.

Both the headline indicators in Section 4.1 and the SPIs presented in this section are guided by the same core questions: Who takes part? What do they achieve? How do education and training systems support them? The main difference between these two sets of data lies in how these questions are answered. Headline indicators answer the questions with single, stand-alone measures drawn directly from international data sources. The SPIs, on the other hand, are evaluative, composite measures. They are designed explicitly to assess how well VET systems fulfil broader policy commitments that cannot be adequately captured through individual statistics.

Access and participation

This section presents system performance in VET and adult learning against two specific policy outcomes: support for equitable access and participation for young people and adults, and support for young people in initial VET (IVET) to successfully complete their programmes.

The scope of SPIs tracking access differs according to the target group of learners. For youth, the SPI assesses access specifically to IVET, while for adults it captures access to continuing VET (CVET) and other adult learning opportunities, such as those provided through active labour market policies (ALMPs). A separate SPI measures how effectively young learners in IVET are supported in progressing through their programmes and achieving graduation.

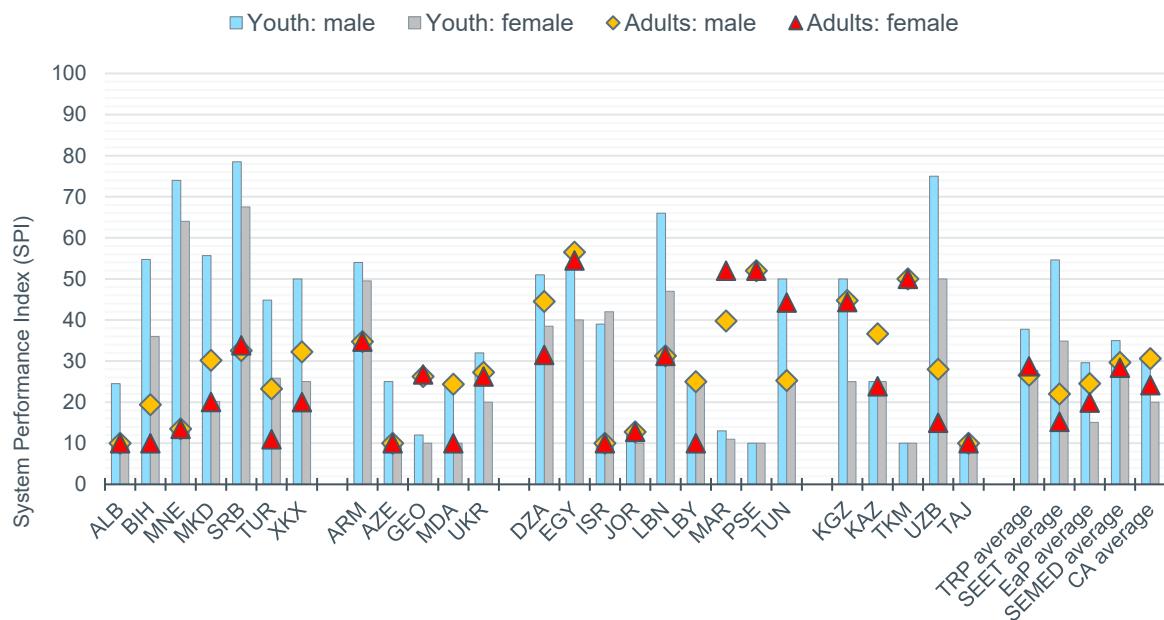
In both cases, performance depends on the policies and measures the country is implementing. They provide the opportunities, incentives, and guidance needed to encourage participation and successful completion. The SPI results therefore reflect how effectively these policies deliver on their intended objectives.

Access by age and gender

The data in Figure 4.1 suggest that VET in Moldova struggles to attract learners, especially girls and adults. Of all learner groups, boys are the most likely to opt for a VET programme (SPI of 25). The

situation for girls is considerably less favourable (SPI of 10) and reflects barriers such as limited encouragement, societal norms, and preferences for alternative educational routes.

Figure 4.1 Access to learning opportunities by country, age and gender of learners - system performance index, ETF partner countries and international average (2025)



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100.³¹

Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

The monitoring survey confirms that, despite legal guarantees of equal access, enrolment remains strongly gendered. Girls are underrepresented in technical and high-demand fields, with uptake further constrained by limited awareness, prevailing perceptions of VET as a lower-status option, and a lack of role models. The concentration of IVET providers in urban centres also disadvantages rural learners.

Adults are similarly unlikely to engage in learning. System performance in support of access to CVET and other adult learning, such as ALMPs, is weak for both sexes, but more so for women (SPI of 10, compared to 25 for men). While women accounted for 53.3 % of CVET enrolments in 2024/25, participation is limited by a lack of information, family responsibilities, and financial difficulties, especially in rural or low-income settings. Many adult programmes are urban-based and concentrated in traditionally female fields such as nursing, social work, and beauty services.

State-supported measures seek to promote participation in ALMP-related training, particularly among unemployed and vulnerable women, through free or subsidised courses, counselling, and flexible formats. Yet, many remain unaware of these opportunities or face barriers such as caregiving responsibilities and stereotypes.

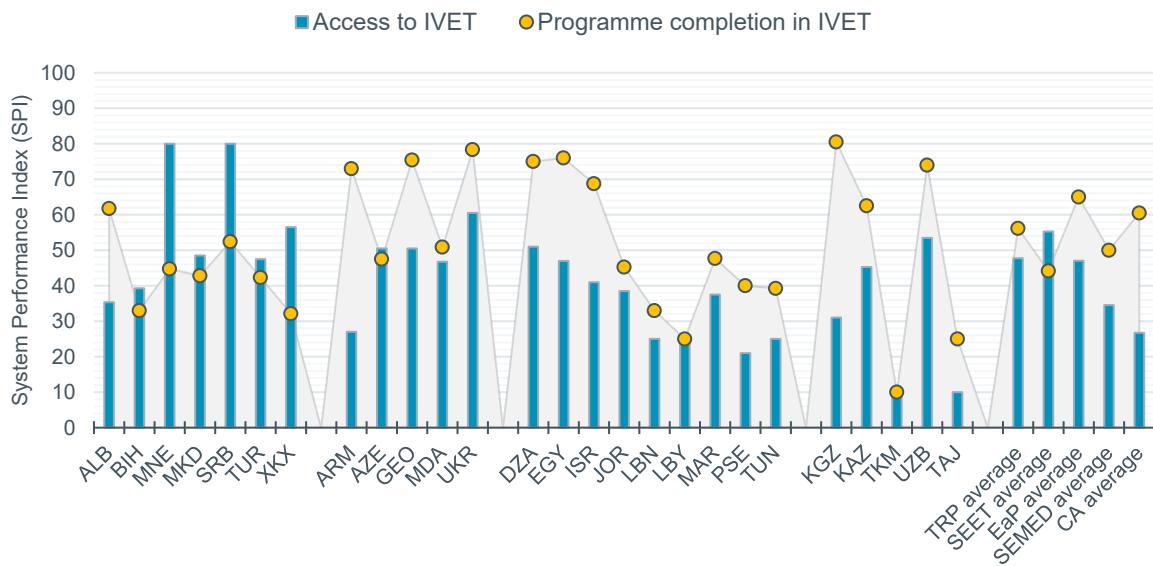
Between 2022 and 2023, over 23 000 more women entered the labour market, and the female employment rate rose to 40.8 % in early 2024 – the highest in six years. Support for women's entrepreneurship has also expanded, with more than 1 200 women trained through national programmes. Nonetheless, persistent barriers remain, particularly in rural and disadvantaged settings. Targeted action is required to close these gaps by improving outreach, expanding childcare support, offering flexible training schedules, and tailoring financial assistance.

³¹ The Torino Process makes a distinction between theoretical (full) index range and index range used for reporting purposes. For reporting purposes, rare instances of extreme values on the low end (SPI < 10) and on the high end (SPI > 90) of the index scale are truncated at the upper (10) and lower (90) decile end. This means that the reporting does not discriminate SPI values below 10 and above 90. The international average, on the other hand, is calculated using the full range of the index.

Retention and programme completion

The monitoring data suggests that IVET students in Moldova face a higher risk of not completing their programmes than their peers in neighbouring countries. System performance in support of learner progression and graduation in IVET is moderate (SPI of 51) and lower than in other countries in the Eastern Partnership region, on average (SPI of 65) (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Access and programme completion in IVET - system performance index, ETF partner countries and international average



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

In Moldova, early school leaving is a systemic challenge affecting upper secondary education as a whole, not just vocational programmes. As already shown in Table 4.1, the average rate of early school leaving during the reference period was 18 %, which is more than double the EU average. While boys are more likely to enrol in IVET, they are also significantly more likely to leave school early (ETF, 2024).

The monitoring survey describes several factors which may be contributing to this performance gap. Although support measures such as scholarships, counselling, and subsidised accommodation are in place, their coverage remains uneven across institutions and regions in Moldova which, in turn, limits their effectiveness in preventing dropout. Learners who face personal or economic difficulties, such as the need to work, caregiving responsibilities, or health problems, may find it difficult to remain enrolled, particularly as programmes are often inflexible and lack tailored support. In addition, insufficient follow-up mechanisms for at-risk students and limited teacher support are cited as barriers to successful completion.

Quality and relevance of learning outcomes

In this section, the SPIs capture the quality of the provision of basic skills and key competences to learners in IVET, as well as the degree to which adults possess foundational skills. These results are complemented by selected KIESE indicators, which track the relevance of learning outcomes by examining employment rates of individuals aged 15 and older, disaggregated by educational attainment in ETF partner countries.

The ETF monitoring keeps quality and relevance separate because, although they often reinforce each other, they do not always coincide. Learners with strong foundational skills may still struggle to find suitable employment, while individuals might secure jobs without acquiring a comprehensive skillset. By tracking these aspects separately, the reporting hopes to identify both the intrinsic benefits of education and how effectively it aligns with the needs of the labour market.

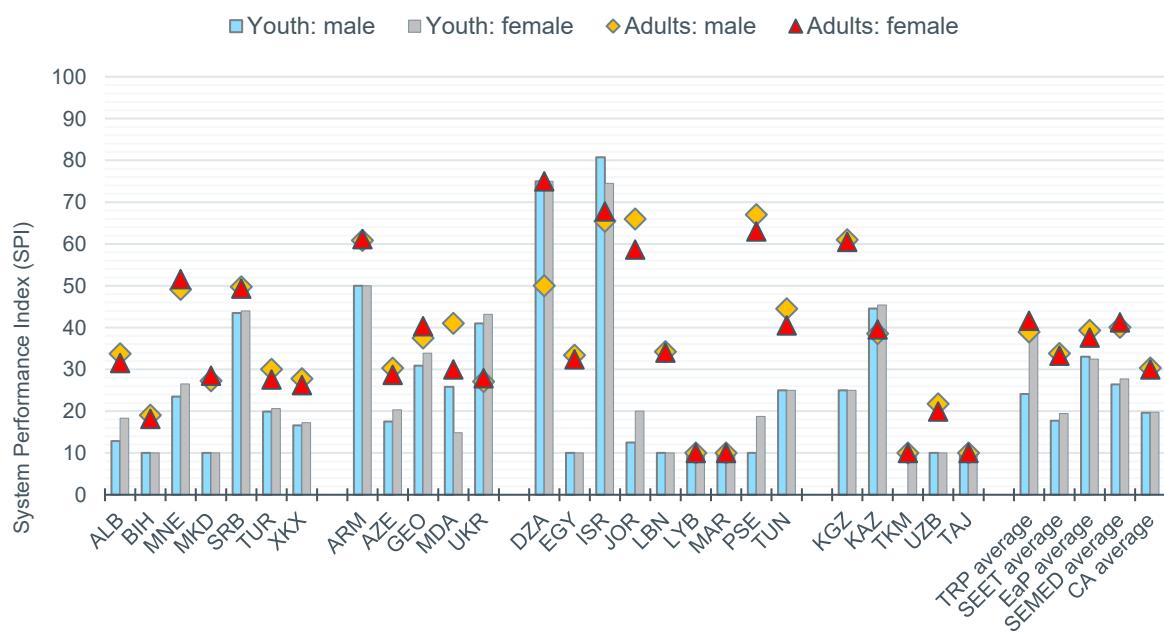
Quality of learning by age and gender

VET in Moldova has limited success in equipping young learners with foundational skills and competences (Figure 4.3). Girls are more disadvantaged than boys, both in absolute terms and compared with peers in neighbouring countries. The SPI scores are 26 for boys and just 15 for girls, which is below the broader Torino Process averages (SPI of 27 for girls, 26 for boys) and considerably lower than the Eastern Partnership averages (SPI of 33 for boys, 32 for girls). The gender gap is not only reversed compared to other countries but also considerably wider: system performance in delivering quality of learning to girls is 11 SPI points below boys nationally and 17 points below the regional average for girls – more than twice the gap observed for boys (7 points below the regional average).

Recent developments suggest targeted improvements may be underway. Between 2019 and 2023, a national life skills programme by UNFPA, the Austrian Development Agency, and the Ministry of Education was piloted in 12 VET institutions. A UNFPA study found that the share of students with strong employability skills (communication, teamwork, problem-solving) rose from 11 % in 2020 to 19 % in 2022³². In 2024, the programme was extended to all 88 VET institutions, reaching more than 27 000 students. Initiatives focusing on girls, such as the 'Decisions for a Healthy Lifestyle' project, have supported over 6 000 young women, promoting skills alongside well-being, gender equality, and violence prevention. The impact of these programmes may not yet be visible in current SPI results.

Adults of working age are considerably more likely to possess foundational skills than young VET graduates (SPI of 41 for men and 30 for women). While the data do not specify how these competences were acquired, the difference suggests adults are generally better prepared for employment or further study, with gender disparities persisting. Adult men's scores are close to the Torino Process average and slightly above the EaP average (39), while women score below both benchmarks (41 and 38 respectively).

Figure 4.3 Quality of skills and competences by country, age and gender of learners – system performance index, ETF partner countries and international average (2025)



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

³² https://moldova.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/study_to_evaluate_the_knowledge_attitudes_and_practices_regarding_the_health_and_life_skills_of_students_in_vocational_education_and_training_in_the_republic_of_moldova_1.pdf.

Information from the Torino Process monitoring survey corroborates these findings. Moldova maintains near-universal adult literacy (99.6 %), yet gaps remain in numeracy and digital skills, particularly for women. Only 4.6 % of women in higher education study STEM, and women hold just 19 % of ICT jobs, earning on average 33 % less than men.

Ongoing initiatives, such as the Digital Transformation Strategy 2023–2030 and programmes like 'English for IT', aim to strengthen digital competences and support women's participation in a rapidly evolving economy. These may help narrow disparities over time, but current data continue to reflect structural and gender-based inequalities.

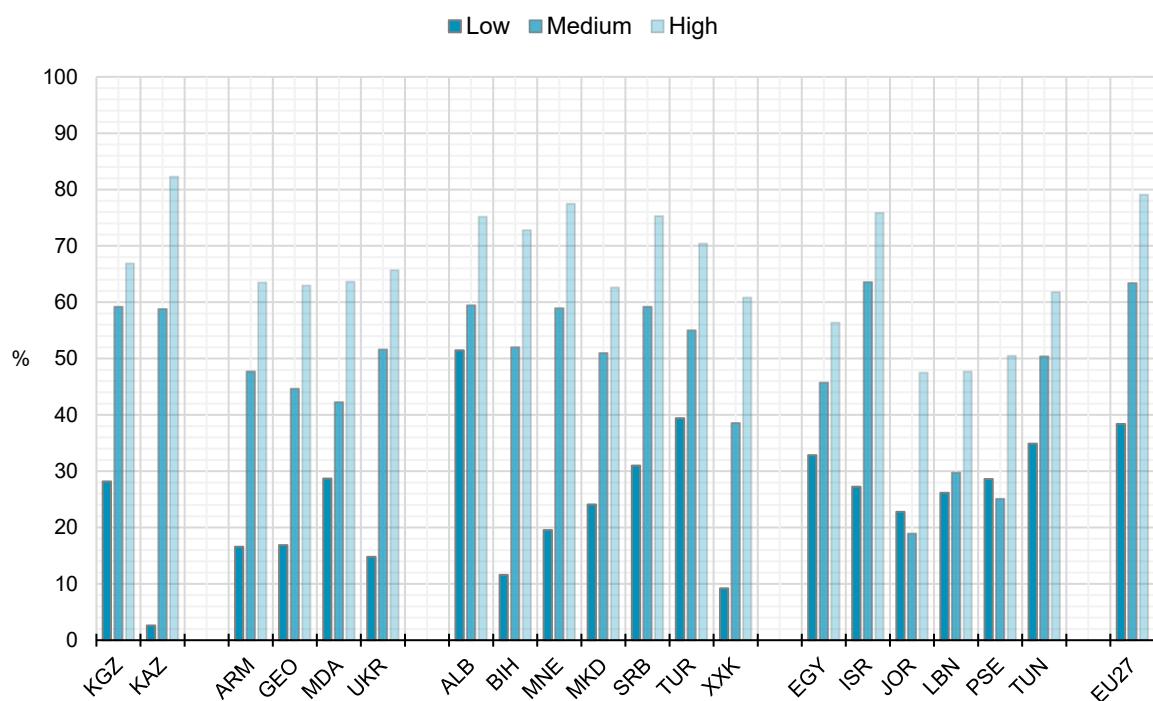
Relevance and labour market outcomes

This section uses employment data to gauge how effectively education in Moldova meets labour market needs. Specifically, it compares employment rates by the highest education level adults have reached, with EU-27 averages.

Employment prospects in Moldova improve at every additional level of education (Figure 4.4), yet they remain modest by EU standards. Even among tertiary-educated adults, only about three in five (62.3 %) are employed, which is far below the EU-27 average of 79.1 %. Overall, adults in working age in Moldova face more limited job opportunities than their EU peers, irrespective of their level of educational attainment.

Those with medium-level qualifications have the lowest employment rate at 43.3 %, which is roughly 20 percentage points below the EU-27 figure of 63.4 %. Within Moldova itself, the step from low to medium attainment raises the employment rate by about 13.5 points, from 29.8 % to 43.3 %, and the step from medium to high adds a further 19 points. Completing higher education is therefore associated with noticeably better employment outcomes, while fewer than one in three adults with low attainment are employed (29.8 %), again well below the EU average of 38.4 %.

Figure 4.4 Employment rate (age 15+) by educational attainment, ETF partner countries (2024)



Source: ETF KIESE database

Gender also shapes the employment outcomes of adults. Women remain under-represented in initial VET pathways (about 30–40 % of vocational school enrolments) and often carry a dual burden of paid work and family care. Social norms and limited childcare options restrict entry into better-paid

technical occupations, especially in rural areas. Targeted incentives for female graduates exist, but stronger partnerships between VET providers and employers, alongside broader gender-equality measures, will be needed to create genuinely inclusive labour market conditions.

System management and organisation

In the final section on policy and system performance, the focus shifts to the organisation and management of the education and training system, with particular attention to VET.

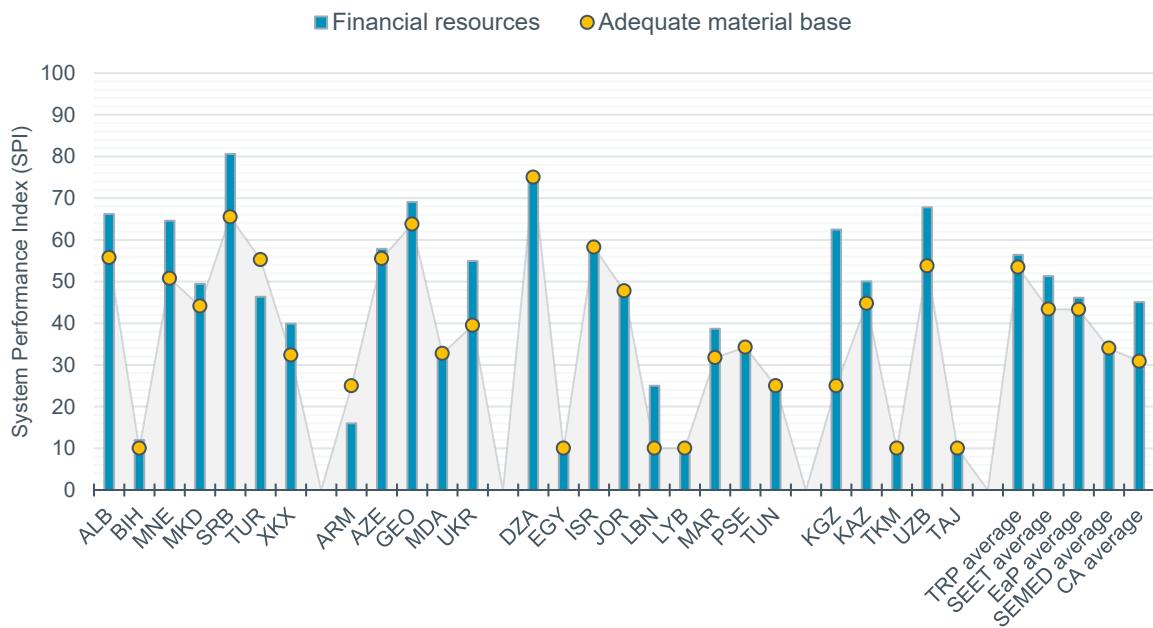
The analysis presents data on system performance in the form of SPIs in three areas: effective allocation and use of financial resources in VET; allocation, use, and professional capacity of human resources, including leadership skills and professional competence of school management and staff; and system steering and management, which includes data, quality assurance, school leadership, and the internationalisation of VET.

Financial resources in VET and lifelong learning

This section examines the availability of funding for VET in Moldova and discusses how effectively this funding translates into tangible resources, such as well-equipped teaching facilities, workshops, and appropriate instructional materials.

According to the monitoring data shown in Figure 4.5, VET in Moldova faces constraints both in securing adequate financial resources and in converting them into environments conducive to learning. The SPIs for both dimensions are 33, below the Torino Process averages for 2025 (48 for financial resources and 43 for the material base) and the EaP regional averages (46 and 43, respectively). The identical scores suggest that shortcomings in facilities, equipment, and teaching resources directly reflect the limited availability of funds.

Figure 4.5 Allocation and use of financial resources in education and training – index of system performance, ETF partner countries and international average (2024)



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

Most VET funding comes from the state and remains modest: around 10–11 % of the national education budget, or roughly 1 % of the total state budget and 0.6 % of GDP. These levels are insufficient to meet system needs such as salaries, teaching materials, dormitory conditions, and replacement of outdated equipment. Funding is allocated per student, with amounts varying by specialisation, and no benchmarks exist for the average cost per learner.

Unlike in some countries where efficient resource use mitigates financial shortfalls, Moldova does not appear effective in translating funds into adequate learning conditions. Many VET institutions operate in deteriorating buildings, with unheated classrooms, poorly equipped workshops, and limited textbooks. While some schools benefit from external projects (GIZ, EU4Skills, UNDP), improvements are uneven. Public funds are still directed to programmes with weak labour market demand, and reforms such as aligning curricula, evaluating institutional performance, and merging underperforming programmes remain at an early stage. Limited private-sector engagement in co-financing or co-investing further constrains the ability of the system to close resource gaps and modernise at scale.

Human resources in the education and training system: allocation, use, professional capacity

The SPI for the adequacy of human resources in Moldova is 38. This is substantially below the regional (SPI of 60) and also below the average for the Torino Process monitoring sample (SPI of 62). According to information from the Torino Process expert survey carried out in the process of monitoring, VET schools in Moldova struggle to recruit and retain qualified teachers, particularly in technical fields. While the teaching workforce includes many dedicated professionals, their numbers are insufficient overall, and they are frequently unevenly distributed across the system. For instance, vocational institutions in urban areas often have better staffing levels, whereas schools in rural regions face chronic shortages. This uneven distribution can result in teachers handling subjects outside their field of specialisation, which has a negative impact on the quality and relevance of instruction.

A confounding problem is that the teaching workforce in VET in Moldova is ageing. Many teachers are approaching retirement and there are only few young professionals entering the profession. Among the reasons for the low attractiveness of teaching are low salaries and limited motivation, which discourage young graduates from pursuing careers in vocational teaching and exacerbate the existing shortages.

Once in the profession, VET teachers do have professional development opportunities, but these opportunities rarely match the actual training needs of teachers and often depend on external initiatives or donor-funded projects, such as those by GIZ or Erasmus+. Moldova currently lacks a clearly structured and stable national programme for continuous professional development, as well as a coherent system for teacher career progression and recognition.

At the policy level, the country has recognised the need to improve conditions for teachers in VET. This is reflected in the national strategy and in recent reforms initiated by the Ministry of Education that aim at improving both initial and continuous teacher training. Nonetheless, there is a need for further investments and clear, targeted policy measures to make the profession more attractive and support existing teachers better.

System steering and management

This section summarises the system performance results in the domains of data availability, quality assurance, school leadership, and internationalisation in VET in Moldova.

Figure 4.6 System steering and management – index of system performance, selected dimensions, ETF partner countries and Torino Process average (2024)



Note: Theoretical index range: min/low performance=0, max/high performance=100

Source: ETF KIESE and Torino Process databases

Moldova has made progress in collecting and using data on education and VET, but in 2025, system performance in this area (SPI of 31) remains below both the regional (SPI of 51) and Torino Process (SPI of 38) averages. Administrative data from the Ministry of Education, the National Bureau of Statistics, and the National Agency for Employment cover enrolments, graduation, and initial labour market integration, but the monitoring survey notes that detailed information on graduate skills and long-term outcomes is limited and inconsistent. Work is underway to digitalise the Education Management Information System (EMIS/SIME) and implement the Education 2030, which sets objectives to improve data availability and use.

System performance in quality assurance is stronger (SPI of 53) but still below regional and Torino Process averages. Learners undergo assessments, and some institutions use satisfaction surveys and graduate tracking, but the results are not systematically published. Teaching staff are evaluated regularly and have some professional development opportunities, though the monitoring survey notes that access to modern training is uneven across regions. Providers follow national guidelines aligned with the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET), and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) carries out external evaluations, but transparency of results remains limited.

The professional capacity of school leaders (SPI of 50) is above both the regional (SPI of 38) and Torino Process (SPI of 29.5) averages. According to the monitoring survey, principals generally meet qualification requirements and are recruited through competitive procedures, yet rural areas struggle to attract staff, and multiple responsibilities are often assigned to single individuals. Professional development for school leaders is limited and largely dependent on international or short-term projects. The National Education Strategy recognises these challenges, but a comprehensive national programme for leadership development is still lacking.

System performance in internationalisation is weak (SPI of 10), among the lowest in the Torino Process sample. Opportunities for mobility through Erasmus+ exist but participation is limited due to resource constraints and insufficient capacity at provider level. Efforts to align the National Qualifications Framework with the European Qualifications Framework are ongoing but incomplete. Curriculum internationalisation, including topics such as intercultural competencies, is mostly confined to institutions engaged in international projects. While the Ministry of Education and Research supports cooperation with organisations such as GIZ and ETF, there is no national strategy guiding internationalisation.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ALMPs	Active Labour Market Policies
ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
ANOFM	National Employment Agency
CHF	Swiss Franc
COE / COEs	Centre(s) of Excellence
COOP-NET	Cooperation Network (project name)
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
DWCP	Decent Work Country Programme
EDS	Education Development Strategy
ELP	Early Learning Partnership
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EU4Youth	European Union for Youth (EU programme)
EUR	Euro
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

HDI	Human Development Index
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
LED	Liechtenstein Development Service
MDL	Moldovan Leu
MER	Ministry of Education and Research
MHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (former ministry)
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of Republic of Moldova
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument
NDS	National Development Strategy
NEET	Not in Employment, Education, or Training
NEP	National Employment Programme
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OEAD	Austrian Agency for Education and Internationalisation

OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAS	Party of Action and Solidarity
PES	Public Employment Services
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity
RED	Regional Education Directorate (inferred)
SAP	Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Structure
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SECO	State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (Switzerland)
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SIME	Sistemul Informațional de Management în Educație (Romanian for EMIS)
SLI	State Labour Inspectorate
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
UN AYAP	United Nations Adolescents and Youth Advisory Panel
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar

VET

Vocational Education and Training

WBL

Work-Based Learning

WB

The World Bank

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