

Where Systems Meet People

Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED) Republic of Moldova





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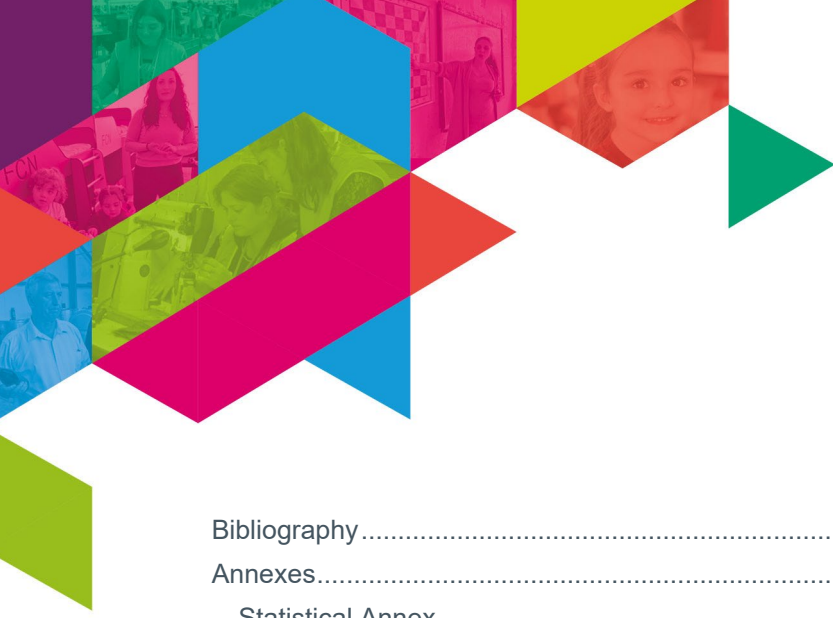
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List of acronyms

ANACER	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DG ENEST	Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Commission
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HE	Higher Education
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LEG	Local Education Group
LPAs	Local Public Authorities
MER	Ministry of Education and Research
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MTBF	Medium-Term Budgetary Framework
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics
NIEL	National Institute for Education and Leadership
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RED	Rapid Education Diagnosis



SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SER	Supporting Education Reforms and Skills in Eastern Partnership
SIME	Education Management Information System (national denomination)
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UIS	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VET	Vocational Education and Training



Synthesis for policymakers

This Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED) presents a comprehensive, data-driven assessment of Moldova’s education system, with a strong focus on inequalities, financing, and governance. RED was carried out as part of the “Support to Education and Skills Reforms” (SER) regional programme funded by the European Union (EU - DG ENEST, formerly DG NEAR) for Eastern Partnership countries¹ and entrusted to the European Training Foundation (ETF). The programme, which includes two other components, on institutional capacity reinforcement, and on peer learning among Eastern Partnership countries and with EU member states aims to support national authorities and development partners—most notably the Moldovan Ministry of Education and Research (MER) and the European Commission—in advancing education reforms and strengthening institutional capacity.

Rather than offering a celebratory review of achievements, the RED approach and report place greater emphasis on challenges, bottlenecks, and risks, offering an analytical foundation for policy dialogue and investment. Accordingly, the political commitment and policy reform efforts of the Government of Moldova, and of the MER in particular, should be recognised and commended at the outset.


The principal findings and recommendations of the RED are summarised hereafter, with primary relevance for policymakers. For a more detailed analysis and full data sources, reference should be made to the main body of the report.

Background and Context

Moldova’s education system operates in a highly constrained environment shaped by demographic decline, economic fragility, and geopolitical uncertainty. The population has shrunk from 4.5 million in 1991 to 3 million in 2024, with resident school-age cohorts experiencing steep reductions—especially among the lyceum and preschool age groups. These trends are driven by low birth rates, high mortality, and sustained outmigration, particularly of young families. Simultaneously, Moldova has faced pressures from refugee inflows since 2022, notably absorbing over 50 000 displaced Ukrainian children, as a direct consequence of the war Russia-Ukraine.

Politically, the country is navigating a crucial transition. Following the 2024 referendum confirming a narrow majority in favour of EU accession, Moldova is expected to align with EU values and

¹ Eastern Partnership countries (EaP) include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine



standards. This offers reform momentum, yet also increases pressure to modernise public institutions—including the education system—amid lingering East-West political tensions.

Economically, Moldova remains among the poorest European countries, with a GDP per capita of \$6,651 and 14% of the population living in poverty. Despite recent upper-middle-income classification, economic vulnerability, particularly in rural areas, constrains opportunities for equitable human capital development. Additionally, Moldova is increasingly exposed to climate change-related risks, especially in its agriculturally dependent rural regions.

Policy and Reform Dynamics

Despite the various challenges analysed hereafter, Moldova has shown notable policy engagement in education. The “Education 2030” Development Strategy articulates nine sector objectives and sets clear priorities, including early education expansion, teacher training modernisation, model school networks, infrastructure upgrades, curriculum materials, inclusive education initiatives and tertiary system development. Together with the National Development Strategy “European Moldova 2030”, they provide a long-term vision aligned with European and global goals.

The EU accession process offers further reform impetus, although it also brings political tensions, especially around school network optimisation and decentralisation. Divergent political interpretations of reform objectives—highlighted by field testimonies—suggest that consensus on direction and pace remains elusive.


Findings

Inequality analysis

Education Access and Participation

Moldova has achieved broadly high enrolment levels across general education, with nearly universal participation in primary and lower secondary. Notably, upper secondary enrolment has increased by 8% since 2017/18. However, access is not uniform across education levels or geographies.

Early childhood education faces the most pronounced gaps. While 1 479 preschool institutions serve 129 592 children, the offering is insufficient to meet demand in urban areas, where enrolment pressures are acute and capacity strained. Urban occupancy rates approach or exceed



100%, while rural preschools are often underutilised, reflecting demographic decline and inefficient allocation of resources.

The system also suffers from significant inefficiencies: 8% of general education schools serve 50 or fewer pupils, and 17% serve between 50 and 100—primarily in rural areas. These small institutions face operational challenges and cost pressures, particularly under the new per-student funding formula, which may exacerbate inequality by penalising schools with low enrolment.

While 44% of upper secondary students are enrolled in vocational education and training (VET)—the highest share in the region—enrolment in these programmes has declined overall, even as post-secondary VET has grown slightly.


Despite a stated policy commitment to inclusion, access remains limited for children with disabilities, children from Roma communities, those from low-income households, and refugee children. Access barriers include insufficient assistive technologies, inadequate teacher training, language barriers (especially for Ukrainian refugees), and social stigma.

Quality of Education

Reform efforts to improve the quality of education are ongoing in Moldova, aiming to align the system with modern standards and better respond to the needs of learners and the labour market. Despite these efforts, a lot remains to be done, and the quality of education emerges as a pervasive, systemic issue—more critical and deep-rooted than access. This is particularly evident in teacher availability and training, pedagogical environments, and infrastructure.

A chronic shortage of qualified teachers—especially in STEM subjects, in upper secondary, and in rural areas—impairs learning outcomes. Nearly half the teaching workforce are over 50, and 22% are 60 or older. One in ten upper secondary teachers lacks the required qualifications, and many teach outside their fields due to recruitment gaps. Young teachers often leave the profession within three years, undermining continuity and effectiveness despite financial incentives.

Infrastructure and resources also remain inadequate. Schools—especially in rural areas—often lack proper sanitation, internet connectivity, and educational technologies. The digital divide is stark: 45% of rural schools report insufficient internet speeds, and over 30% lack adequate digital devices. These shortcomings hinder students' ability to engage meaningfully, particularly during remote learning periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic, or when modern, blended learning would be developed. Furthermore, although Moldova is engaging in green transition initiatives in



education, there is no systematic data to assess progress in areas like climate education or infrastructure adaptation.

Urban-rural divide and Vulnerability

Disparities in Moldova's education system are deeply rooted in a dual divide: rural vs. urban and vulnerable vs. non-vulnerable children. These axes of inequality intersect and reinforce one another.

In urban areas, access issues are driven by high demand and limited infrastructure, resulting in overcrowded schools and (limited) reliance on private education. In contrast, rural areas face problems of poor quality, under-resourced schools, and teacher shortages. Small school size combined with shortage of teachers often leads to multi-grade teaching, further compounding quality challenges.

Learning outcomes reflect these disparities. Students in urban schools consistently outperform their rural peers in both national and international assessments. PISA 2022 results show that students in large cities score significantly higher in mathematics than those from smaller towns or villages, with a 71-point difference between urban and small village students.

As mentioned above, among vulnerable groups, children with disabilities, Roma children, refugees, and children at risk face the greatest educational exclusion. National data on vulnerable children is fragmented and inconsistent, undermining effective monitoring and case management.

About 31% of students are considered at risk, with higher concentrations in rural areas. Many are affected by poverty (child poverty rates exceed 40% in rural zones), family separation due to parental migration, or exposure to violence or neglect. Bullying is widespread, and 44% of students report not feeling safe in school settings. Civil society organisations are concerned about recent anti-bullying legislation, considered as punitive and insufficiently restorative.

Efforts to support inclusive education, such as infrastructure improvements and psycho-pedagogical support services, are underway. Yet, data gaps, lack of coordination between ministries, and insufficient funding limit the impact of these measures. The 2024–2027 Programme of Inclusive Education sets an ambitious target for 80% of schools to be adapted for students with disabilities by 2027 but monitoring and evaluation mechanisms remain underdeveloped.



Financing analysis

Resource Mobilisation

State budget. Overall, government expenditure on education in Moldova accounted for 6.3% of its GDP in 2023—a considerable share, given that the EU average stood at 4.7%, which underscores strong political commitment to the sector. However, the proportion of total government expenditure allocated to education has been declining, from 18.4% in 2020 to 15.9% in 2023. Such reductions, although not problematic given the high proportion of GDP, should be offset by efficiency gains to ensure long-term sustainability.


Despite a public expenditure review conducted by the World Bank in 2022, no comprehensive, sector-wide financial or budget analysis has been conducted by either the MER or Ministry of Finance, leaving questions about cost-effectiveness, which require to integrate financial and school level data, unanswered.

The education expenses by education level and by economic item (salaries, capital investment, etc.) are said to be available but could not be extracted from the budget lines of the above-mentioned programmes. This data gap hinders any detailed breakdown of unit costs.

However, and despite progress in recent years, budget figures indicate a persisting chronic underspending in categories such as goods, services and subventions. It is mainly due to procurement bottlenecks, weak budget planning, insufficient financial management skills among school leaders or unfilled MER vacancies.

Development Partners financial assistance. Over recent years, a wide array of international donors (World Bank, EU, UNICEF, UNESCO, Global Partnership for Education (GPE), Romanian and Austrian agencies, Swiss Development Cooperation, UNFPA, etc.) have financed projects spanning from education infrastructure, vocational training, inclusive education to gender equality. In 2023, three large projects totalled EUR 94 million, alongside 49 technical assistance initiatives (EUR 47.8 million), and budget execution reports included a further EUR 6 million for centrally managed education related projects.

The MER's Aid Management Platform launched in 2014, and upgraded in 2022, now offers a full view of donor commitments. It reveals that the World Bank and the European Union and its institutions are the principal external partners—accounting respectively for half of total commitments, predominantly via loans and 10%, through grants. Collectively, bilateral agencies represent nearly one third of all commitments (see Table 7 in the Annex). Unfortunately, compared



to the total official development assistance (ODA) disbursed to the country, the share of education was halved, from 18% to 9%. Overall, the ODA to education (including General Budget Support's contribution to education) represents 14.6% of the total government expenditure on education.

Non-state domestic resource mobilisation. Legally, schools may generate marginal additional income—through venue rentals, production linked training in VET institutions and voluntary donations—but these locally mobilised funds account for only about 0.2% of state- budgeted education resources. Private companies hardly contribute to the funding of the sector, including for VET level.

Resource Allocation

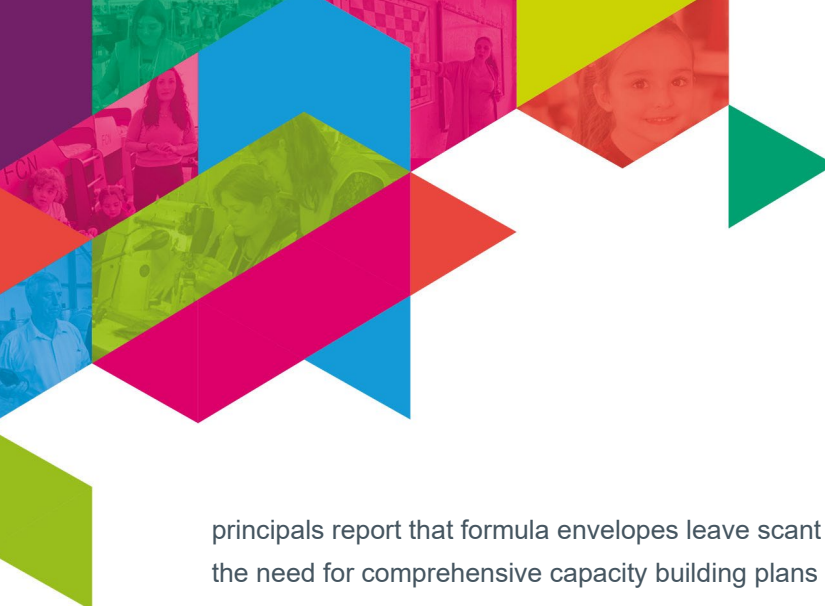
Resource allocation to schools. Shifting to the funding formula for allocating resources to schools appears to be a promising prerequisite but not a sufficient condition for improved quality of provision. Under the per student model, 95% (rising to 96% in 2025) of each school's core budget is formula driven; yet, true autonomy remains limited by lack of funds. The funding formula for schools is evolving to incentivize standards and address challenges, but economic limits still hinder schools' ability to improve quality. Similar funding changes are also being considered for early childhood education, with a pilot phase in 164 kindergartens from four rayons.

Financial Incentives for teachers and students. Moldova offers diverse support measures—lump sum bonuses, rural teaching allowances, commuting stipends for teachers, or scholarships for students, based on merit or vulnerability. Yet the absence of built in monitoring tools raises concerns about their eventual impact and value for money. This would be key to assess, especially in view of EU accession and the EU focus on ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Management of the Financing Chain & Institutional Capacity

Financial flows' challenges. Funds flow from the centre through multiple levels, including rayons and local public authorities, not without some bottlenecks, including due to funding delays and lack of oversight. To overcome these, two options are being considered: decentralise further, as preschool directors recommend for the management of their education level, even calling for self-governance models; or centralise more financial management, following the example of the RESTART reform that is implemented in the social protection sector. But no decision is made so far on the direction(s) to take.

The creation of chief accountant and economist posts in schools and the introduction of standard per-pupil and per-institution cost norms aim to enhance predictability and autonomy. However,



principals report that formula envelopes leave scant discretionary funds, and they also underscore the need for comprehensive capacity building plans to strengthen local financial management.

At central level, and despite the 2018 salary reform, pay scales in MER's implementing agencies are reported to still outstrip those in the ministry, posing retention and equity issues if asserted. A detailed, amount-based comparison is needed to gauge the effect on MER's institutional capacity.

Education Strategy 2030 Costing. The MER's Education Strategy 2030 outlines a detailed Medium-Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) for 2025–2027, covering the main abovementioned policy priorities. While total estimated costs are anchored in a multi-donor financing plan, only about half of the required external contributions were confirmed at approval, leaving funding gaps—despite ongoing World Bank and GPE project consultations – that put strategy's implementation at risk.

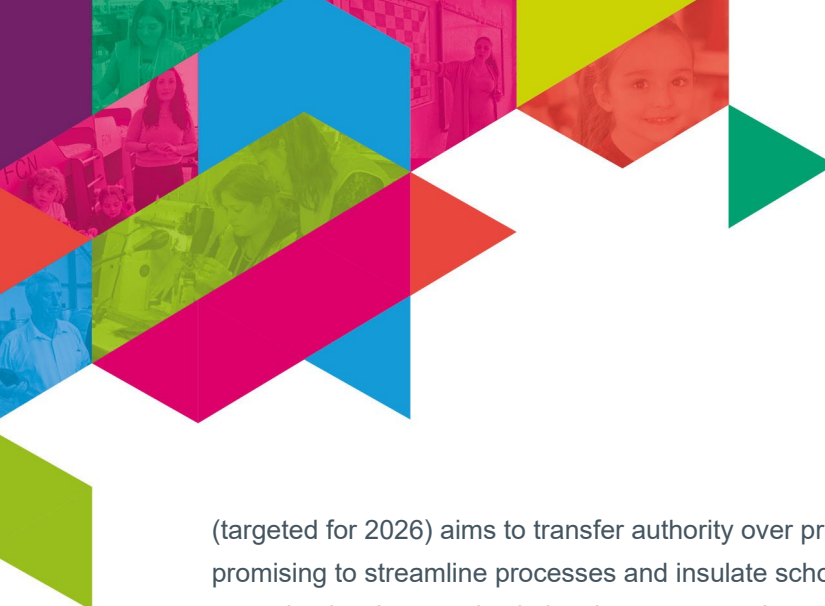
Eventually, monitoring mechanisms for linking education policy choices and financial management implications are not ensured. For instance, monitoring tools for assessing the effectiveness of the school funding formula remain under resourced, and the education management information system (EMIS) does not integrate financial data.

Governance analysis

Responsibilities, subsidiarity and accountability. Despite a formal commitment to responsibilities' decentralisation, the Ministry of Education and Research continues to centralise an excessive range of functions—many of which could be delegated to local education bodies—while operating with insufficient staff capacity. This mismatch undermines both efficiency and local ownership, as newly created subordinate entities lack clear role definitions or collaborative frameworks, and anomalous units remain directly under MER control without clear justification.

The principle of subsidiarity is routinely proclaimed yet poorly enacted. Key decision-making powers remain concentrated in Chişinău, constraining the ability of rayons and communities to tailor solutions to local needs. Strengthening subsidiarity would require not only formal devolution of authority but also capacity building and accountability mechanisms at the meso level.

Moldova's hybrid mix of decentralisation and deconcentration places regional education departments in an awkward duality: tasked with enacting central policy yet answerable to politically elected rayon councils. This "mixed" model fuels erratic leadership appointments, funding delays and political interference in school operations. The pending RESTART re-centralisation reform



(targeted for 2026) aims to transfer authority over primary to lyceum levels back to MER, promising to streamline processes and insulate schools from local politics—though it risks reversing hard won gains in local autonomy unless carefully managed.


A coherent strategy to professionalise and empower local education leaders is notably absent, leaving meso level managers without essential skills in strategic planning, financial management or policy evaluation—capabilities enshrined in the Education Code but not systematically developed.

Strategic vision and role of donors and partners. The “Education 2030” strategy, underpinned by robust legal instruments, articulates nine sector objectives. Yet its ambition outstrips secured funding and coordination mechanisms, with annual action plans misaligned to strategic priorities and donor initiatives operating in parallel rather than in concert. A more unified approach—anchored in joint planning forums and shared monitoring through joint sector reviews—would leverage partner resources toward agreed reform milestones instead of fragmenting efforts. Development partners provide crucial financing and technical assistance, yet coordination remains limited to information sharing via the Local Education Group. Elevating the LEG into a formal platform for harmonised policy oversight would strengthen alignment between donor rules and national priorities, reducing overlap and ensuring coherent support for strategic reforms.

EU integration. Moldova’s transposition of EU acquis—particularly Chapters 25 and 26 on research, culture and education—faces hurdles in qualification recognition, youth law alignment and minority language access. A focused legislative and administrative roadmap is required to meet accession criteria while maintaining system stability.

The sociocultural setting and its influence on the education system. Moldovan society prizes discipline and academic rigour—even in early childhood—fostering an instruction-centred culture that can stifle creativity and learner centred pedagogies. Extracurricular programmes remain vital but lack harmonised governance, while digitalisation efforts face both infrastructure gaps and entrenched mindsets favouring closed, equipment restricted computer labs over open, student driven learning spaces.

Teacher management. Severe teacher shortages—exacerbated by migration, an ageing workforce and low recruitment—leave thousands of positions unfilled. Performance management is rudimentary: salary scales are uniform, rewards are tied to certification rather than demonstrated impact, and professional development is self-selected rather than needs driven. VET and general




education alike suffer from outdated pre-service training and misaligned in-service courses, while school leaders often lack managerial expertise. The National Institute for Education and Leadership (NIEL), recently established and operational since March 2024, is expected to improve the situation, namely through the development of new training programmes or the training of 1 000 experienced mentors to support teaching internships and early-career teachers. However, addressing systemic weaknesses demands a strategic overhaul of recruitment incentives, differentiated career pathways, data informed workforce planning and a professionalised leadership.

School network optimisation and model schools. Demographic decline and rural exodus have left many small schools underutilised, prompting the need for network rationalisation. In 2024, 35 “Model Schools” were launched to concentrate resources, infrastructure, and expertise, with the aim of uplifting rural and disadvantaged learners. While this initiative promises improved outcomes, it also risks widening inequalities if school closures outpace viable transport solutions or lack community support. To mitigate these risks, politically sensitive closures are largely deferred to “natural” attrition through future transfers to model schools. A transparent micro-planning process—integrating transport logistics, safety considerations, and community consultation—is essential to ensure optimisation strengthens rather than undermines access. Ultimately, success depends on clear funding rules, strong stakeholder engagement, accountability for inclusive enrolment, and parallel support pathways for non-model institutions.

Use of data along the policy cycle. Two governance challenges demand granular data: teacher deployment (by subject, workload and geography) and school network planning (leveraging demographic and geospatial data to optimise access and quality). Without disaggregated, interoperable datasets, policy choices rest on anecdote rather than evidence.

The Education Management Information System (EMIS), although it encompasses pre-school to VET modules, remains incomplete, -for instance on education related financial data- and plagued by interoperability issues—with Social Protection, Finance and Statistics databases—undermining its promise as a single source of evidence. Prioritising data quality, cross sector links and user capacity are vital to unlock EMIS as the backbone for evidence-based governance.

Monitoring green and sustainable development efforts. While energy efficiency and green growth projects (e.g. solar panels, building renovations) benefit dozens of schools, no consolidated monitoring framework tracks education sector progress on sustainability goals. Embedding environmental indicators within EMIS and aligning donor supported initiatives under a unified



green education strategy would ensure both accountability and learning from implementation challenges.

Digitalisation of and within the education system. Moldova’s readiness for digital education is rated “emerging”: infrastructure is outdated, especially in rural areas; teacher training lags behind the EU Digital Competence Framework; and only 27% of learning content is online. Strategic plans are fragmented, lacking impact metrics, while online safety regulations and inter-institutional coordination remain underdeveloped. A unified digital education roadmap—covering infrastructure, pedagogy, content and cybersecurity—must be paired with dedicated financing and governance mechanisms to move from pilot projects to system wide transformation.

Policy framework and implementation, and the “human factor”. While umbrella laws establish broad mandates, implementation guidelines remain under specified or unevenly applied at the local level, leaving policy success to hinge on individual initiative rather than system wide rigour. To ensure strategic vision is realised consistently, roles must be clearly defined, procedures standardised and oversight mechanisms reinforced.


Equally important is formalising the “human factor”—the creativity and dedication of individuals—within a state defined framework. With formal systems and coordination often incomplete, individual initiative fuels many successes. Nevertheless, inconsistent community engagement and a top-down mindset hinder the scaling of effective practices. Introducing incentive structures to reward and diffuse local innovations, alongside stronger institutional linkages, is crucial for embedding—and sustaining—governance improvements.

Recommendations

To advance Moldova’s strategic education objectives, a cohesive package of six key areas of recommendations has been developed. Each section addresses critical components of the system’s improvement, from infrastructure and equity to teacher development and data governance. This integrated approach seeks to guide implementation, monitoring, and sustainable reform delivery.

1. School system reforms and model schools

Holistic analysis of small schools. Small schools require a strategic review to align resources with efficiency and quality objectives. A geographic and financial analysis, including changes in



enrolment due to the new model school approach, should be completed within the first nine months of 2025 to inform evidence-based recommendations.

Reliable transportation and equity in access to model schools. The shift towards a network of model schools must be accompanied by mechanisms that ensure equitable access for students from remote areas. In the short term, a feasibility study should be conducted to assess transportation needs and consider incentives such as school feeding and boarding options to mitigate potential discrimination effects. By the medium term, pilot transportation schemes should be deployed in priority regions, and long-term efforts should focus on comprehensive evaluations, with the MER, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) and development partners leading a review process to integrate transport into a broader family support framework.

Improved learning environment at school. A dual emphasis on digital and green infrastructure will modernise the school environment. Immediate action should include incentivising internet providers to expand coverage in rural areas and conducting environmental audits. By 2026, digital devices should be distributed to disadvantaged students, and a Green Schools Initiative launched to retrofit schools. By 2027/28, at least half of all schools should adopt basic green practices.

2. Teachers' recruitment, support and development

Teacher incentives and recruitment. To address critical shortages and improve retention, Moldova should adopt a comprehensive compensation and incentive framework. Initial efforts should include detailed financial and qualitative studies, with medium-term goals of launching a restructured incentive system that includes housing support, career progression opportunities, and targeted strategies to reduce turnover in underserved areas.

Teacher training and involvement. Improving teacher capacity, including in digital and inclusive education, is vital. The Teachers' Assembly should evolve into a formal consultation platform. A national training programme must be rolled out with a focus on rural educators. From 2026, annual professional development sessions should target remote-area teachers, aiming for 80% participation and tiered support based on seniority.

Teacher financial support scheme. An evaluation of the recently launched and pre-existing support and incentive measures addressed to teachers should be conducted to assess the package's coherence, effectiveness and efficiency.



3. Support for vulnerable children and inclusive education

Vulnerable children concept and data. Clear definitions and data integration are essential for targeted support. It is advised to adopt in 2025, a standardised definition of vulnerability, to be incorporated into EMIS. Subsequently, additional funding should be directed toward disadvantaged groups.

Multi-stakeholder coordination for refugee children. Support for refugee children, particularly from Ukraine, requires a robust coordination mechanism. This includes formal national frameworks and cross-country collaboration, with shared digital tools and continuous monitoring to ensure children's educational needs are met.

Child safety at school and online. Protecting children requires a comprehensive safety framework. Early actions would include expanding specialised services and analysing the impact of parental migration. By mid-term, Moldova should involve civil society organisations (CSOs) in anti-bullying campaigns, integrate online safety into curricula, and ensure extra-curricular activities are accessible. Long-term efforts must deliver a centralised digital safety policy with teacher training and parental resources.

Inclusion and integration into education. Inclusive education must continue expanding, with special focus on children with disabilities and national minorities. In 2025, multilingual education guidelines should be developed and teacher needs assessed. By 2026, training, pilot implementation, and secure funding should lay the groundwork for broader roll-out.


4. Financial management and budget allocation

Strategic budget optimisation. To address persistent underspending, a financial audit should be conducted in 2025, including assessing the effectiveness of funding mechanisms and the fiscal realities of small schools before revising funding formulas.

Financial and policy transparency. A transparent reporting framework would need to be designed and tested in pilot regions. Standardised training for local officials will support proper financial oversight and public accountability.

5. Governance and reform implementation

Functional review prior to potential institutional re-arrangements. Any governance reform—whether inspired by the RESTART re-centralisation initiative or by pre-school stakeholders



advocating for self-governance—requires careful planning, as it aims to strengthen system-wide operations: ensuring uniform standards, stricter curriculum implementation, higher quality, reinforced accountability, and alignment with national strategic priorities. The first step is a functional review of the current system, covering MER as a priority, but also -funds allowing-implementing agencies, and sub-national education management levels. This review should assess the feasibility of these reforms in light of existing human resources and lay the foundation for further discussions on institutional re-arrangements (decentralisation or re-centralisation), mandates or functions’ adjustments, budget planning, and recruitment/capacity building. By 2026, consultations should be finalised and, in the event of a “RESTART decision”, asset and human resource transfer mechanisms should be developed to ensure a smooth transition of authority from local public authorities (LPAs) to the MER.

Inter-institutional collaboration and coordination. The Local Education Group (LEG) should evolve into a central mechanism for reform monitoring. From 2025, its operational mandate should be clarified and endorsed, with monthly meetings established. The Teachers’ Assembly should also be strengthened to support reform dialogue. Long-term, the LEG should become the primary coordination body.

6. Data management and use

Enhanced data management. The Education Management Information System (EMIS, also called SIME at national level) must be upgraded for consistency, accessibility, and integration. In the course of 2025, Moldova should publish vetted datasets and metadata, standardise templates, and begin integrating financial and exam performance data. Full integration and training are targeted for late 2025.

Evidence use in policy development. EMIS data use for informing policy should be reinforced. Analyses of private vs public outcomes, equity in resource allocation, impact of incentive formulas, and teacher deployment trends will guide smarter planning and resource use. Benefit Incidence Analyses and microplanning tools should become standard features in education governance.

Conclusion and next steps

While this Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED) may not reveal entirely new insights into the challenges facing the Moldovan education system—many of which practitioners already recognise empirically or intuitively—it provides a comprehensive, systematic, data-driven, and user-friendly



consolidation of existing knowledge. Broad dissemination of these findings should support consensus-building around the most pressing issues and priorities.

The recommendations aim to help the Ministry of Education and Research identify new levers for progress, engage with change agents, better prioritise actions within the Education Strategy 2030 framework, allocate resources more efficiently. They should also help donors, including the European Union, identify priorities for their financial or technical support. Each cluster addresses a specific reform area, offering actionable steps that can be implemented progressively to foster a more inclusive, effective, and efficient education system in Moldova.

Ultimately, the true value of this diagnosis lies with policymakers and partners, who—through the consultation and planning processes they choose to adopt—will determine how to engage with, refine, and follow up on the RED recommendations.



Introduction

Background and Rationale

The Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED) constitutes the first component, or Pillar 1, of the Support to Education Reforms and Skills (SER) programme – a regional initiative supporting the five Eastern Partnership countries: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine. Funded by the European Commission and implemented by the European Training Foundation (ETF) under the coordination of Timo Kuusela, Senior Human Capital Development Expert, SER is a three-year programme (2024-2026) with a budget of €2.5 million.

Alongside RED, the programme includes two additional components: Pillar 2, focused on strengthening institutional capacity at country level by addressing needs identified through RED and other assessments; and Pillar 3, dedicated to fostering knowledge exchange and peer learning both among Eastern Partnership countries and between them and EU member states.


Objectives and Target Audience

By contributing to the identification of the critical elements, including system's weaknesses, policy gaps, bottlenecks, and risks, RED aims to help the Government of the Republic of Moldova (hereafter, Moldova), the European Union (EU), and development partners to target their priority interventions effectively, to identify institutional capacity development needs and to inform the policy dialogue between EU and Moldova. Consequently, the report places greater emphasis on challenges rather than on the progress and achievements of the current education policy reform which nonetheless merit acknowledgment.

The primary audience for this RED report includes senior officials from the European Commission and the Moldovan Ministry of Education and Research (MER). Additionally, it holds relevance for all stakeholders involved in Moldova's education system, and their development partners.

Structure of the RED Report

This document presents findings from a six-month, intermittent diagnostic assessment of Moldova's education system, emphasizing issues of inequality, financing, and governance, and tentatively offering possible recommendations. The findings draw upon an extensive desk review, data analysis, and field missions conducted in November 2023, February 2024, and July 2024, supplemented by evidence gathered by national consultants through focus groups and targeted interviews.



The report's core text provides a summary of the main findings; supplementary information is available in footnotes, side textboxes and annexes. These findings are followed by a set of recommendations for priority attention in the next reform discussions.

Authorship

This report brings together the intensive efforts of a broad expert team led by Marie Dorléans, Senior Human Capital Development Expert from ETF. It also involved contributions from ETF colleagues Mirela Gavoci, Stefano Lasagni and Teuta Toth Mucciacciaro, as well as consultants Angela Cara, Eugenia Busmachi, Aram Avagyan, and Luc Gacougnolle, contracted through PPMI. The final internal peer review was carried out by Margareta Nikolovska and Tamar Kitiashvili. The work was further facilitated by Vita Glushko and Janet Johnson from ETF as well as Stella Tangiyan from PPMI.

The team wishes to express its sincere gratitude to the Ministry of Education and Research for its interest and continuous support – in particular to Minister Dan Perciun, Secretary General Galina Rusu and other state secretaries and specialists of the Ministry. We also extend special thanks to the national coordinator of the SER programme, Olga Tretiacov, whose assistance was invaluable for the implementation of RED.

Finally, we wish to thank all the institutions and practitioners who participated in the interviews and focus groups. Their perspectives greatly enriched the qualitative dimension of this diagnostic assessment. We hope that the report will serve as a useful resource, providing both thought-provoking insights and practical recommendations for strengthening the Moldovan education system.

Disclaimer

By focusing on three specific dimensions—inequalities, financing, and governance—the report inevitably overlooks other aspects of the education system, including pedagogical considerations. This focus was discussed and agreed upon with the intended users of the report, but it is worth reiterating here.

In identifying critical elements—such as system weaknesses, policy gaps, bottlenecks, and risks—the report also places greater emphasis on challenges rather than on the progress and achievements of the current education policy reform, which nonetheless deserve recognition.



Context

The education system in the Republic of Moldova (hereafter Moldova) operates in a challenging environment, characterised by complex demographic flows, a timid economic growth and a sensitive geopolitical context.

Political context

Moldova was granted the status of candidate country to European Union (EU) accession in 2022 (European Commission, 2024).

A nationwide referendum was held on 20th October 2024 to decide whether the country should amend the Constitution to include the Moldovan citizens' wish for EU membership, and a razor thin majority (50.38%) voted in favour of Moldova's EU aspirations. In this context, the results of the presidential elections in October 2024 and the parliamentary elections in 2025 will be decisive as per whether the country's future will be European or whether the Moldovan state will move towards Russian influence (Italian Institute for International Political Studies, 2024).²

Demographic context

Compared to 4.5 million inhabitants in 1991 when it became independent, the total population in Moldova was estimated to be around 3 million in 2024 (UN Population Division, 2024), while the latest population census estimated the usual resident population (excluding the Transnistrian region) as of January 1, 2024, at 2.4 million³. Subsequently, the education system also suffers a decline in the number of students. Based on data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the resident population aged 6-18, corresponding to the **general education school age, dropped by 12%⁴ between 2014 and 2024⁵** (after a decrease by 43% between 2000 and 2016). This decrease is particularly acute for the lyceum age group (16–18-year-olds, -30%). In addition, the early childhood development and preschool education age groups⁶ also experience an acute demographic decrease (-37% and -26% for the 1-2 and the 3-6-year-old age groups respectively). While urban populations in age of attending primary and lower secondary education have been on the rise, **all school-age groups in rural areas have seen a significant decline** (cf. Figure 14 in


² For more information about the EU and Moldova: [Moldova Report 2024 - European Commission](#)

³ Ibid

⁴ Between 2014 and 2024 resident urban population increased by 4.7% and resident rural population decreased by 27.1%.

⁵ A significant reduction of 22.9% was observed in the 0-9 age group, the second-largest decrease after the 20-29 age group, which experienced a reduction of 52.5%.

⁶ In accordance with Education Code, early education includes two stages: ante-preschool education, covering the years from birth to age three; and preschool education, covering the ages three to six years old.



the Annex). The demographic projections for 2019-2040 indicate that the population decline will continue, with a low scenario predicting a 34.5% decrease (1.7 million people) in the country's population (Gagauz, Tabac, & Pahomii, 2023).

Key factors behind the estimated population trends include declining birth rates, high levels of premature mortality and the ageing of the population, as well as, most importantly, high and **continuous migration** outflows particularly among the reproductive-age population. Between 1.11 and 1.25 million Moldovans live outside of the country's territory as of 2021 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, 2021) and from 2014 to 2022, the average annual calculated volume of emigration stood at minus 317.100 people (Macuhin, 2023). However, **since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, 123 729⁷ Ukrainians have sought refuge in Moldova (UNHCR, 2024) - including more than 51 000 children (UNICEF, 2024).**

Socio-economic context

Moldova is a democratic state with three levels of governance. The country's small economy is extremely vulnerable to external economic shocks and disasters. Moldova has recently transitioned from a lower middle-income to an upper-middle-income status (World Bank, 2023), despite a GDP contraction in 2022 and a quasi-stagnation in 2023⁸. Nevertheless, **Moldova remains one of the poorest countries in Europe**, with a GDP per capita of USD 6 651 in 2023 (World Bank, see Figure 15 in the Annex), and 14% of the population living in poverty⁹.

Inequalities are relatively low, however - Moldova, like Belarus and Ukraine, has one of the lowest Gini indices in Europe. The Human Development Index was at 0.76 in 2022, ranking 86th globally and the lowest in Europe¹⁰ (UNDP, 2021). Sustainable investment in human capital, including external investment, fair redistribution, and creation of opportunities for the most vulnerable should be the policy priorities (UNICEF, 2022).

⁷<https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10784>

⁸ According to the World Bank, "Moldova's economy is showing signs of recovery, while unprecedented challenges due to the spillover effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine are still unfolding. A moderate economic recovery in the first half of 2024 improved household incomes and investments. Nevertheless, there are significant macroeconomic risks, including the potential intensification of the war in Ukraine, additional energy disruptions, particularly the potential discontinuation of gas transit through Ukraine, and headwinds from the upcoming elections in 2024 and 2025. Moldova's medium-term prospects hinge on structural reforms and progress toward EU accession". (World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/moldova/overview>, Accessed on Oct 30, 2024)

⁹ Poverty headcount ratio at \$6.85 a day (2017 PPP), World Bank, accessed on November 2, 2024.

¹⁰ With the exception of Ukraine, whose ranking plummeted since the beginning of the war.




Geographic context, in relation to climate change

Due to its reliance on agriculture and its position within a temperate continental climate zone, this small, landlocked country is vulnerable to climate change impacts. Rising temperatures, more frequent droughts, and erratic rainfall patterns have increasingly disrupted its agricultural output, especially for crops like wheat, corn, and grapes, which are staples of the economy. Additionally, Moldova's water resources are under strain, with rivers like the Dniester—shared with Ukraine—facing reduced flow and quality issues. These factors put food security, water availability, and rural livelihoods at significant risk, pushing Moldova to prioritize adaptation measures and sustainable water management. Around 77% of young people polled through a 2022 U-Report Poll said they had already been impacted by climate change and experienced health impacts, food security issues and access to safe water (UNICEF, 2022). More than 90% of respondents said they worried about climate change impacting their futures (Ibid.).

Policy context

Despite these obstacles, there is a commendable **commitment to education**, reflected in the government **expenditure on education** equivalent to **6.3% of GDP in 2023 (UIS SDG4 database)**, the highest among the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries. From a national policy perspective, the context is enabling: the **National Development Strategy (NDS) 'European Moldova 2030'** – approved in 2022 – recognises that investments in human capital development are critical for the country's sustained economic growth and poverty reduction. At the sectoral level, the 'Education 2030' Development Strategy sets the long-term and comprehensive vision for the whole sector based on the concepts of quality, inclusive and equitable education, in line with the NDS, European education policy standards, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 4). In 2024, the Ministry of Education and Research (hereafter MER) followed its reforms agenda on:

- the revision of curricula for general education through the Development Concept Project;
- the review of measures to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession;
- the setting up of psycho-pedagogical assistance structures (SAP);
- the revision of the external quality assessment methodology;
- the validation of non-formal and informal education;
- the implementation of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) aligned with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF);
- the registration of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACER) in the European quality assurance register for higher education;

- 
- the development of the Education Management Information System (EMIS/SIME), including integrating vocational education and training (VET) and pre-school levels, the implementation of the EMIS for higher education (HEMIS), and the synchronisation with education data collected by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) to have EMIS as the unique platform for education data by 2025;
 - the adoption of a per-student funding formula for preschool (already applied for general education and VET, but still at early stages of norm definition for preschool).

The perspective of **EU accession** has introduced both opportunities and challenges for Moldova's education system. As an EU candidate since June 2022, Moldova faces pressure to align its educational practices with the EU (predominantly soft) acquis on education as defined in Chapter 26, promoting reforms to improve quality and access. The push for alignment with the EU is sensitive in an environment of heightened political tensions, as pro-EU and pro-Russian fractions may clash over the direction of educational policies.

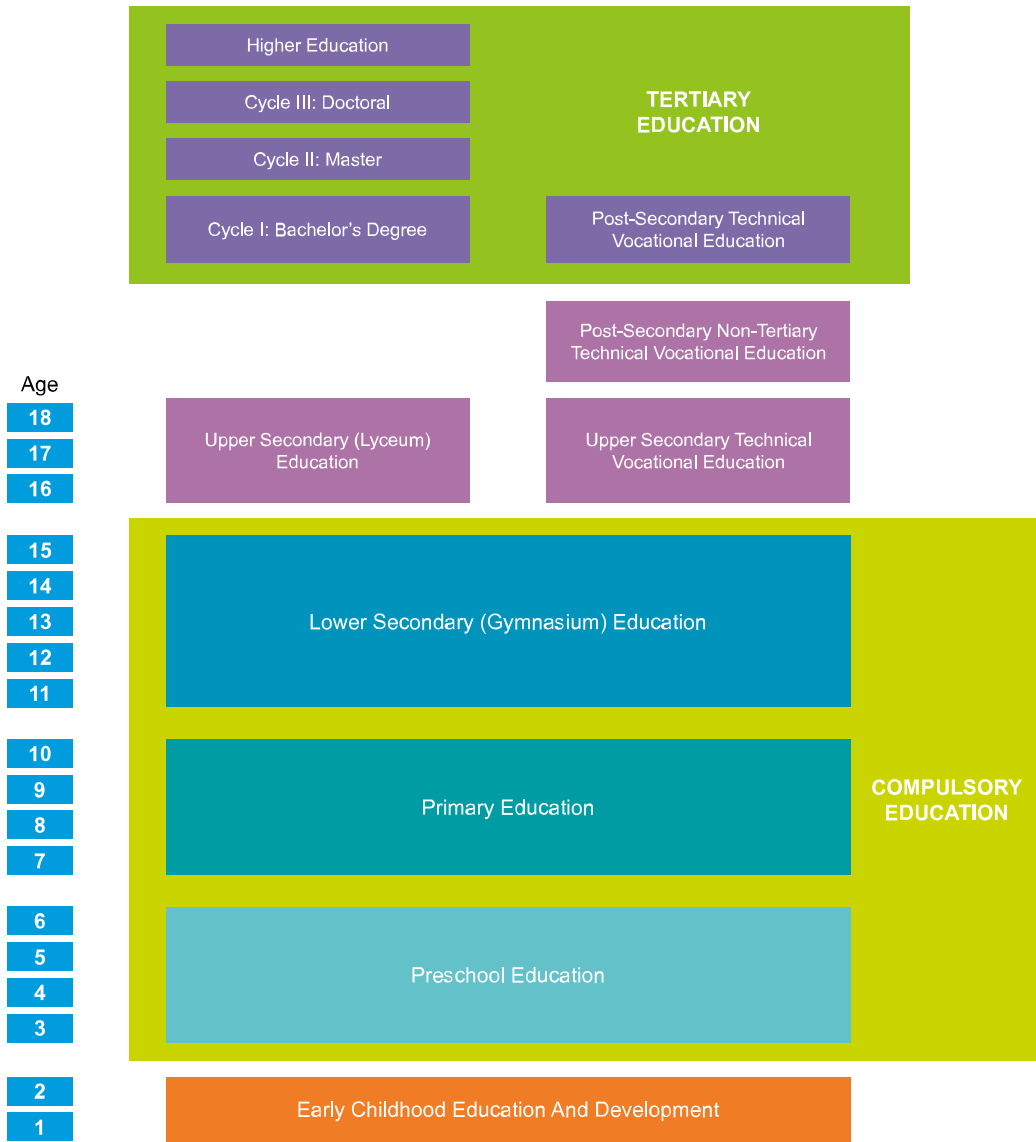
Politically, school optimisation priorities are viewed differently by political parties and other constituencies of Moldova, as the testimony in Box 1 illustrates.

Box 1: From Focus Group with School Principals

'Often the representatives of Local Public Authorities do not understand the meaning of school optimisation, they think this is a political problem'



Figure 1: Structure of the Moldovan Education System



Source: ETF visualisation.

Basic data

The table below provides basic data on the Moldovan education system for the 2023-2024 academic year:

Table 1: Data on the Moldovan education system for the 2023-2024 academic year

	Total	Of which:		
		Urban	Rural	Public institutions
Early education				
Number early childhood education institutions¹¹	1,479 100%	350 24%	1,129 76%	
Number of children	129,592 100%	66,343 51%	63,249 49%	
Number of places	176,941 100%	72,133 41%	104,808 59%	
Children per 100 places	73	92	60	
Pedagogical staff	9,814 100%	4,692 48%	5,122 52%	
Children/teacher ratio	13.2	14.1	12.3	
Primary and general secondary education				
Number of institutions	1,201			1,178 98%
Primary schools	87			84 97%
Gymnasiums	761			761 100%
Lyceums	344			324 94%

¹¹ Kindergarten, nurseries-kindergartens, nurseries, educational complexes, community centres)

Schools for children with mental or physical disability	7			7 100%
Evening education schools	2			2 100%
Number of pupils	334,404	187,955	146,449	325,690 97%
Primary schools	11,222			10,987 98%
Gymnasiums	115,705			115,705 100%
Lyceums	205,951			197,503 96%
Schools for children with mental or physical disability	538			538 100%
Evening education	949			918 97%
Pedagogical staff – total	25,994	12,457	13,537	
Pupil-teacher ratio	12.9	15.1	10.8	
Vocational education and training				
Total number of institutions	88			80 91%
Vocational schools	38			38 100%
Colleges	37			30 81%
Centres of excellence	13			12 92%
Number of students from which:	46,133			42,016 91%
In vocational schools	12,602			12,602 100%

In colleges	20,584			17,029 83%
In Centres of excellence	12,947			
In Secondary VET:	13,860			30%
Vocational schools	12,602			
Centres of excellence	1,258			
In Post-secondary VET	32,273			28,156 87%
Colleges	20,584			
Centres of excellence	11,689			
Pedagogical staff	622			
teachers	32			
vocational instructors	28			
other pedagogical staff	562			
Higher education				
Number of institutions	21			13 62%
Number of students	56,527			47,149 83%
First cycle	42,090			
Second cycle	14,437			
Pedagogical and scientific staff	3,699			

Source: Education in the Republic of Moldova. National Bureau of Statistics, 2024:
https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Educatia/Educatia_editia_2024.zip

Key findings

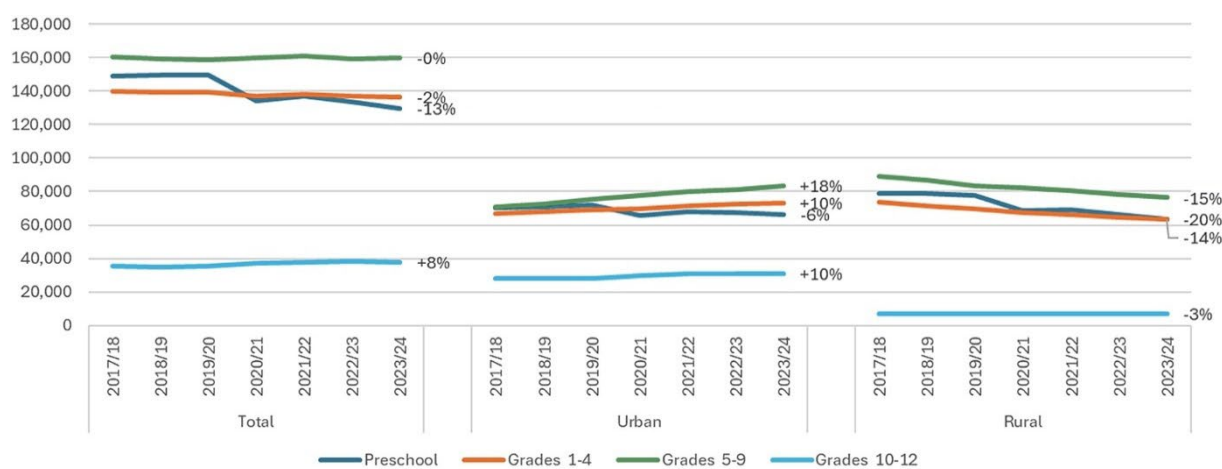
General characteristics of the Moldovan education system

Access to education: Enrolment patterns

The education system in Moldova performs well in terms of access, with increasing participation in upper secondary. However, despite its strengths it faces various challenges across the different education levels.


In 2023/24 Moldova's school network included 1 479 preschools, serving 129 592 children up to age 7, and 1 194 general education schools (including primary schools, gymnasiums, and lyceums), serving 333 866 students from grades 1 to 12. **Of all primary and secondary institutions, 98.1% are public**, educating 97.4% of the students at these levels. **Enrolment in primary and lower secondary education has remained relatively stable in recent years; in contrast, pre-school enrolment dropped significantly in 2020/21 and continued to decline after a brief recovery the following year, while enrolment in upper secondary education grew by 8% between 2017/18 and 2023/24** (Figure 2). This development is however not uniform, as **urban enrolment increased by 8% over the period, reaching 55% of total enrolment (49% in 2019/20)**, while rural enrolment declined by 16%.

Figure 2: Enrolment in preschool, primary and general secondary education by level and environment, 2019/20-2023/24¹²



Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ETF's calculations

¹² Percentage on the chart show evolution over the period.



Early childhood education, which is not compulsory, welcomes one third of target children (33% enrolment rate in 2023/24, National Bureau of Statistics Statistical tables, 2023) are in rural areas¹³, but urban areas, especially the capital, face higher demand and lack available places to accommodate children. For the academic year 2023/24, the gross enrolment ratio in early childhood educational development (ante-preschool education, which is indeed not compulsory) was the lowest among the different education levels at 33%.

A notable issue is the inefficiency caused by **8% of primary and general secondary schools serving 50 pupils or fewer, and an additional 17% with between 50 and 100 pupils. Most of these schools (95%) are located in rural areas, where they make up almost a third of all institutions¹⁴.**

Despite a significant policy focus on inclusive education, access remains limited for children with special needs and children with disabilities, as well as for children from poor households and Roma communities.

According to national data, **access to education is virtually universal from pre-school to lower secondary levels, with gross enrolment ratios close above 100%¹⁵**, positioning Moldova among the countries with the highest enrolment rates in the Eastern Partnership region. While there is still room for improvement in **upper secondary education**, the upward trend in gross enrolment ratios indicates positive progress (from 76.5% in 2018/19 to 83.5% in 2023/24¹⁶). Completion rates for lower and upper general secondary increased by 4.1 and 2.5 percentage points, respectively, compared to 2022 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). **Historically, the capacity in primary and general secondary education has exceeded the number of children enrolled. However, the existence of discrepancies between urban and rural schools regarding resource access and educational conditions impact the quality of education.**

The share of all students in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) programmes stands around 44% in 2024¹⁷ and represents the highest percentage in the Eastern Partnership Region, despite a decrease in enrolment by 18%

¹³ In the academic year 2023/24, 76% of early education centres were located in rural areas, although they served only 49% of students in the country (NBS database)

¹⁴ Cf. Figure 17 in the Annex.

¹⁵ Considering there is no repetition in Moldova, gross enrolment ratios above 100% suggest that the population data is overestimated, possibly due to the refugee influxes from Ukraine.

¹⁶ Data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) database (<https://data.uis.unesco.org>), September 2024 data release.

¹⁷ Ibid.



between 2017/18 and 2023/24. In turn, the post-secondary VET population increased by 9% (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

Tertiary education gross enrolment ratios have increased from 55% to 75% between 2018/19 and 2023/24. It is characterised by a **majority of female students** (59% in 2023/24), and overall decreasing enrolments (by 14% between 2017/18 and 2023/24), mainly due to demographic factors (in particular emigration).

Quality of the education provision: students' learning outcomes, teachers' characteristics and teaching and learning environment

While the education system faces challenges in both access and quality, the quality of education appears to be a more pervasive and systemic issue in Moldova.

Shortage of (qualified) teachers... The quality of education is impacted by the **presence of teachers with inadequate skills, especially in upper secondary where 11% of teachers are not qualified to teach at that level (UIS)**. Others are not qualified to teach the subjects they are assigned to, by lack of alternative choice (see textbox below) despite the government efforts to attract young scientific specialists through special financing incentives. The aging workforce in education poses a challenge and aggravates the teacher crisis. In 2023/24, 48% of primary and general secondary pedagogical staff members were 50 years old or older (22% were 60 or older)¹⁸, reinforcing the need to resort to unqualified staff to replace retiring teachers.

¹⁸ National Bureau of Statistics, 2024.

Box 2: From Focus Groups with Representatives of the Department of Education and School Principals

‘The main problem related to the access to quality education is the lack of specialists in the domain. Today we face the absence of qualified teachers in exact sciences (maths, physics, geography, etc.). In this case these disciplines are taught by teachers from other scientific domains, one specialist being forced to combine teaching of several of them. Despite the fact that the Ministry supports requalification, a large flow of young specialists (especially in rural schools) is not observed. In this case the main person to suffer is the child, but at the same time this situation opens to students many other opportunities for self-education, making them in some cases even more advanced than teachers’

Representative of the Department of Education

‘At the moment, in the district we have a shortage of physics, mathematics, informatics teachers – the problem which leaves its mark during final attestations and exams’

Representative of the Department of Education

‘The teacher shortage is real. Usually, young professionals work for three years, take their financial allocations and leave the school’

School principal

‘Regarding young specialists we have two examples hen youth came, took the 1st and 2nd tranches of financial support after that returned them total and left abroad’

School principal



‘About two years ago, a young girl came to us to work and didn’t take any tranche, she first wanted to work and to see how it will be. As a result, she left after a year’

School principal

‘This year, to our surprise, we have seven young specialists working with us in the district; one teacher even comes from Chisinau to teach our children history and geography’

School principal


‘Even if we are a model school, we also feel the lack of competent teaching staff but in the other localities the situation must be even worse’

School principal

The lack of motivation and job satisfaction among employees leads to low influx of new teachers and a higher rate of professionals leaving their jobs in the early years of their careers, which affects the quality of education at all levels – the shortage of teachers seems to have a greater impact on learning than their lack of qualification.

Students’ Learning Outcomes

According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) Moldova country notes, in 2022, 38% (up from 26% and 29% in 2015 and 2018 respectively) of students in Moldova were in schools whose principal reported that the school’s capacity to provide instruction was hindered by a lack of teaching staff - but only 14% by inadequate or poorly qualified teaching staff (down from 25% in 2015). One cannot assert the direct impact of the lack of (qualified) teachers on the students’ learning outcomes. In all instances, it is important to observe **that Moldovan students score**




significantly lower than the OECD average in PISA assessments¹⁹. In VET, some analyses show that the shortage of teachers for specialised subjects and the lack of practical skills of available teachers affect the VET quality (ETF/MER teacher management system country profile, 2024) (MER, 2023).

Teaching and learning environment. Despite high levels of public funding to education, schools remain underfunded and lack basic infrastructure upgrades and educational technologies. In particular, many rural school facilities lack to meet access to water, basic sanitation and hygiene standards. (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023), as well as digital infrastructure: as of 2023, 45% of schools in rural areas reported inadequate internet speeds, and nearly one-third lacked sufficient digital devices for students and teachers. This digital divide is especially apparent between urban and rural schools, with urban students experiencing more reliable internet and access to a wider range of digital tools and resources.

To bridge these gaps, the Ministry of Education and Research has prioritized the integration of digital technologies and online resources, launching initiatives to upgrade infrastructure and expand digital access. However, data indicates that rural schools still lag significantly, with 26.5% of students in general education reporting only partial engagement in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic due to limited access to devices and connectivity (UNICEF, 2020). Without substantial investment in digital infrastructure, the divide is likely to continue affecting students' educational experiences and outcomes.

In addition, efforts towards the green transition in education, including projects between the government and donor partners to improve the energy efficiency of educational institutions' infrastructure, to adopt good practices regarding the sustainable development of the school environment, as well as to introduce new subjects and modules addressing topics relevant to sustainable development and climate change, to date, there is no statistical data available that can track progress against implementation of actions on promoting green growth in the educational system of Moldova or measuring the greening of the learning environment.

¹⁹ Students in Moldova scored less than the OECD average in mathematics, reading and science. A smaller proportion of students in Moldova, than on average across OECD countries, were top performers (Level 5 or 6) in at least one subject. At the same time a smaller proportion of students than on average across OECD countries achieved a minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in all three subjects (OECD, 2023). The difference in scores between the highest (10%) and the lowest (10%) performers reduced in 2022 compared to 2018: in mathematics, low-achievers became stronger; high-achievers became weaker



In a nutshell, the Moldovan education system as a whole suffers from: in terms of access, i) pre-school education, the offering of which is insufficient to respond to the social demand, in particular in urban areas, and in terms of quality, ii) shortage of teachers and adequate learning environments.

1. Inequality analysis

In terms of inequality, the data analysis presented below identifies the urban-rural divide and child vulnerability as the two main sources of disparity—factors that, as one might expect, often overlap and reinforce each other.


1.1 The rural-urban divide, a complex and non-linear factor of inequal access to quality education

Disparities between rural and urban areas translate differently in terms of inequalities, depending on the education level. On the one hand, the high population density in urban areas creates access issues, as the strong demand is hampered by the limited number of institutions, which leads to larger schools (612 students on average, compared to 169 in rural areas) and classes (26 and 17 students per class respectively²⁰), to multiple shift teaching (which can also lead to learning challenges due to insufficient or inadequate teaching times), or to resorting to private education. The latter in turn raises equity issues linked to wealth which conditions these private education opportunities. On the other hand, in rural areas, inequality relates more to the quality of the education offered than to access; schools are smaller and report especially in most remote areas, to struggle to attract enough qualified teachers.

Focus groups also reveal that small, rural schools struggle to accommodate (often vulnerable) students' needs, due to their poor learning conditions and continue to perform poorly. The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened existing educational inequalities, particularly affecting disadvantaged students, and widening the socio-economic performance gap. Social isolation during the pandemic led to increased unhealthy behaviours among youth, with children from low-income families being particularly fragile. Limited access to online learning resources and increased domestic violence were notable issues.

School size: In primary and general secondary education in 2023/24, one school out of four (25%) had 100 or fewer students (“small schools”), including 8% of all institutions with 50

²⁰ Let us note however that a class size of 26 students is not necessarily problematic, for qualified teachers and if class organisation for practical courses is adapted – and could even be considered good in an efficiency perspective.

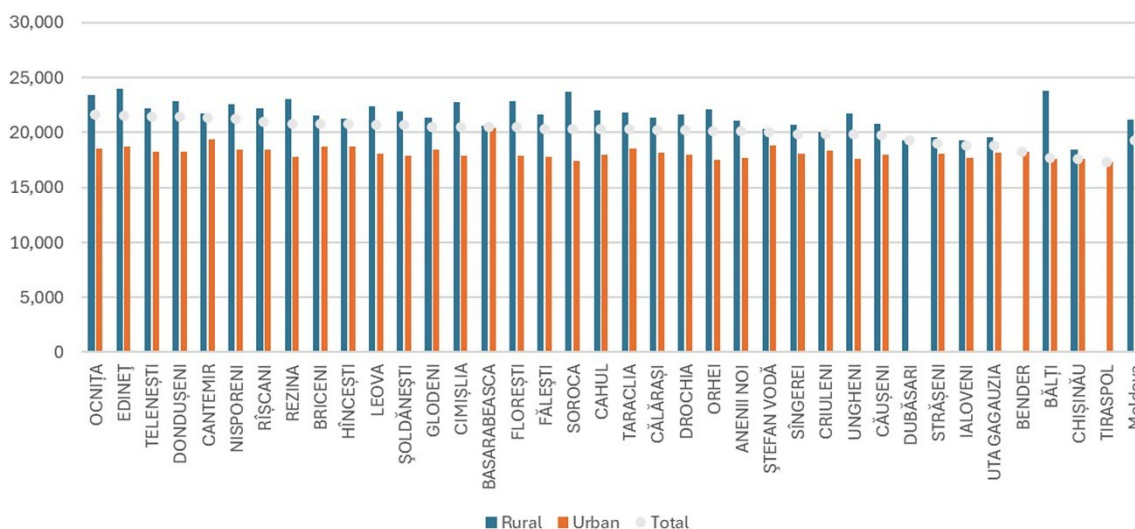


or fewer children (“very small schools”). These small schools lie primarily in rural areas, where they represent close to a third of all institutions. Most very small schools are primary schools, but the majority of small schools are in fact Gymnasiums, which poses efficiency issues for the deployment and utilization of secondary school teachers. (SIME, 2024a). SIME data also indicate that some rural schools even have as few as 3-4 students (MER, 2024). Those very small schools appear to resort to multi-grade teaching, which may pose quality issues if teachers are not properly trained for it. Close to 90% of rural schools have less than 300 students, while half of urban schools have more than 500 students.

Schools’ resources: The recently introduced student-based funding formula to serve as a calculation of school grants seems to exacerbate the difficulties encountered by schools in offering a quality teaching and learning environment to their few students. There seems to be two explanations to this. First, the fixed part of the funding formula is said to be as insufficient to cover the costs of often too big and difficult to maintain premises. Second, these financial shortfalls may be particularly acute for gymnasiums and lyceums, where covering all subjects in the curriculum can be costly for few students, leaving few resources for learning materials, procurement of equipment upgrades and provision of facilities²¹.

²¹ Larger schools with subsidiary schools do however get an extra amount for each small school under their legal status.

Figure 3: Simulated per-student transfer amount, by region and area, MDL, 2023



Source: ETF's calculations based on 2020 formula (DECISION No. HG868/2014 of 08.10.2014).


Note: These amounts do not reflect the actual transfers made to schools. Amounts do not include additional funding to larger schools with auxiliaries, nor salaries to teaching positions.

Learning outcomes: Although the causal link is not established, **students from urban educational institutions perform higher in all areas of PISA testing compared to students from rural educational institutions. In large educational institutions, approximately 7 out of 10 students reach the minimum proficiency level, compared to 3 out of 10 students in small institutions.** Correspondingly, there is a significant difference in the performance of pupils learning in rural schools and pupils from urban schools: 15-year-old students from large cities (with populations over 100 000) score, on average, 51.6 points higher in mathematics than their peers from small towns (with populations between 3 000 and 15 000)²². Moreover, they outperform students from small villages (with populations under 3 000) by an even larger margin of 71.2 points. (OECD, 2023)²³. **National assessment results equally demonstrate that students from small schools perform worse than those from larger schools**, irrespective of the location of the school and the students' socio-economic background²⁴.

²² PISA scoring is designed to range from 0 to 1000; in 2022, Moldova's average scores in Mathematics, reading and science were respectively 414, 411 and 417.

²³ The average score in mathematics of 15-year-old students is 457 in schools located in cities with over 100 000 inhabitants and only 386 in villages under 3 000 inhabitants) (OECD, 2023).

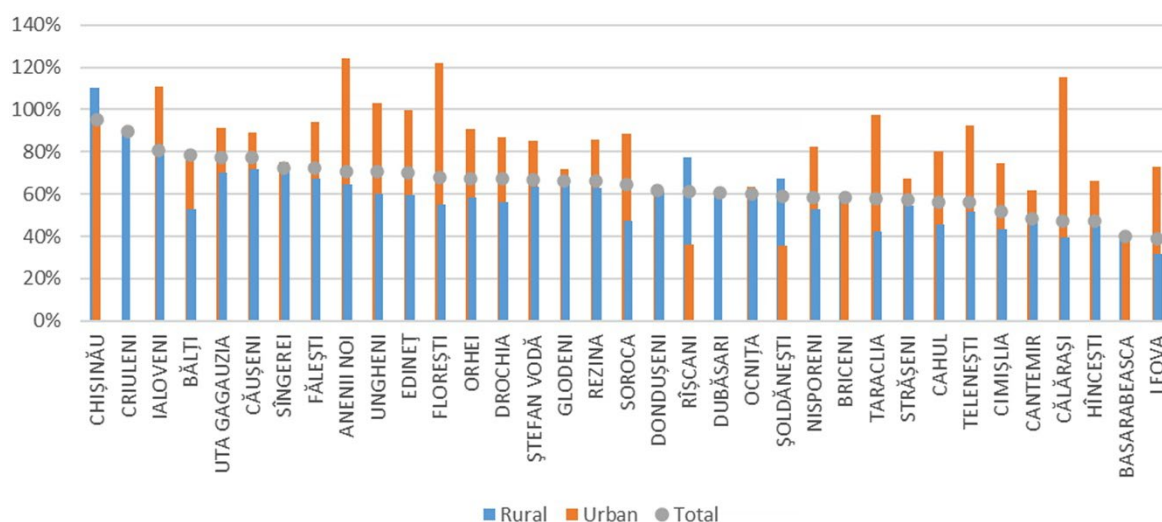
²⁴ According to the yearly reports by the National Agency for Curriculum and Evaluation (ANCE) (2023) average scores of the national standardised 'baccalaureate exams' (last year of secondary school) are higher in urban areas in most of the domains for most of the secondary school tracks.



Inequal access to (public) early childhood education institutions: In the academic year 2023/2024 more than 76% of early education centres in Moldova were in rural areas, but those in urban areas were significantly more in demand (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024a). While 67 310 pupils populated 350 urban institutions across the country, a similar number of students, 66 049 pupils, were distributed among 1 129 rural institutions. **On average, the occupancy rate in urban preschools is 92%, compared to 60% in rural areas.** Locally, these occupancy rates reach 99% and 98% in Chişinău and Bălţi municipalities (down from 102% in Chişinău the previous year²⁵), with individual schools showing occupancy rates up to 140%. In contrast, some rural districts have very low occupancy, the lowest rate being in Leova, with 39% (Ibid.). However, some individual schools in rural areas have very high occupancy rates as well (up to 170%), which indicates an **inadequacy of the offering within rural areas as well.** On the one hand, this imbalance creates long waiting times, lack of access and inadequate learning conditions for children in urban settings, and on the other hand, it creates inefficiency of pre-school institutions in rural areas, where close to one institution out of five serves fewer than 20 children and the number of children in age of attending early education decreased by 4.3% compared to 2021 (Ibid.). In 2022, there were 15 private early education institutions, all active in the urban environment, and the trend is expected to rise in the next few years. Yet, several civil society organisations (CSOs) active in the domain of education in the country (2024) raise concerns about the adequacy and quality of private sector interventions in early education.

²⁵ Thanks to a slight decrease in enrolment and the opening of two new institutions.

Figure 4: Occupancy ratio in preschools, by region and area, 2023/24




Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ETF's calculations.

Note: 464 schools with missing or aberrant data on capacity (where occupancy rates were above 300%) were excluded from the chart.

- Inequal access to the upper levels of education:** While most of the preschools, primary schools and gymnasiums are located in rural areas, almost two thirds of the country's lyceums (215/342) are located in urban areas and concentrate 82% of all upper secondary students (Grades 10-12) (NBS, 2024). This suggests that youth from rural areas need to attend upper secondary in urban areas, facing financial and logistical hurdles²⁶, and raises questions about equality of access to higher grades of general education and later opportunities for rural youth. Similarly, higher education institutions are all located in urban areas, primarily in the municipalities of Chișinău, Bălți and Cahul.
- Inequal availability of teachers:** Moldova has a problem of unattractiveness of the teaching profession, resulting in difficulty in recruitment (reflecting the declining number of young people starting initial teacher education programmes), and retention of teachers, leading to lack of qualified teachers, especially in remote areas, in lower and upper secondary education levels and/or in certain subjects. **As a result, approximately one teacher in every four (26%) does not have pedagogical studies, while close to one out of five (18%) does not have at least a bachelor's degree**, the problem being particularly acute in rural schools, where the proportion of teachers without a bachelor's degree reaches 33%.

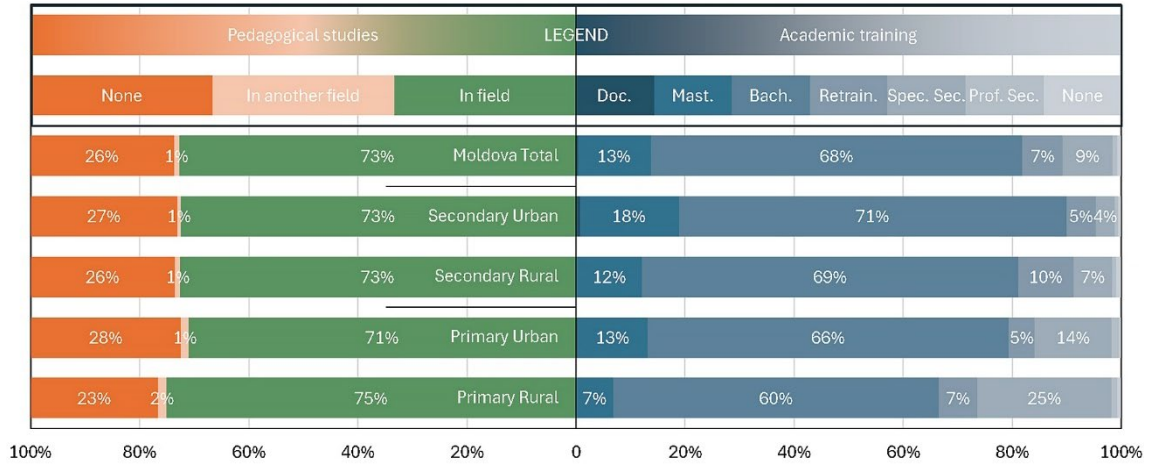
²⁶ Data do not allow to identify the proportion of upper secondary pupils who are in fact from rural areas.

- 
- **While Chişinău and other urban areas also suffer from a lack of teachers, in particular qualified and trained ones, rural areas are more heavily affected.** Regarding shortages for certain subjects, there is a clear mismatch between the supply of graduates and the actual demand for teachers. For example, there was a demand for 211 mathematics teachers, but only 10 graduates specialised in this area. **In rural schools, 21% of STEM secondary teachers do not have a bachelor's degree, while they are only 10% in urban areas** (cf. Annex for a chart by subject area). Inadequate qualifications and the deficit of teachers for certain subjects may negatively impact the quality of competencies and skills obtained by students in rural environments (IMF, 2023).

However, the 2022 PISA results for Moldova indicate no significant difference in measured learning outcomes between schools with different proportions of qualified teachers, which suggests that **these disparities in teacher qualifications have a limited impact in terms of inequities in learning**. Regional education departments are implementing various measures to tackle the problem, including deploying teachers within the region to fill the gaps; covering the costs for teachers to undergo professional conversion (changing their school subject); partnering with universities to attract more graduates; ensuring young teachers have suitable working conditions.



Figure 5: Proportion of general education teachers by pedagogical studies and by academic training



Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ETF's calculations.

Notes: *Doc.*: Doctoral studies, *Mast.*: Master's degree, *Bach.*: Bachelor's degree, *Retrain.*: Retraining studies, *Spec. Sec.*: Specialized secondary education, *Prof. Sec.*: Secondary professional studies. To improve readability, value labels are not displayed for Doctoral studies, Secondary Professional studies and no academic training; values range from 0% to 1%.

Proportions are based on 25 235 teachers for whom qualification data were found in the EMIS online database and on the assumption that teachers without information on pedagogical training have no such training.

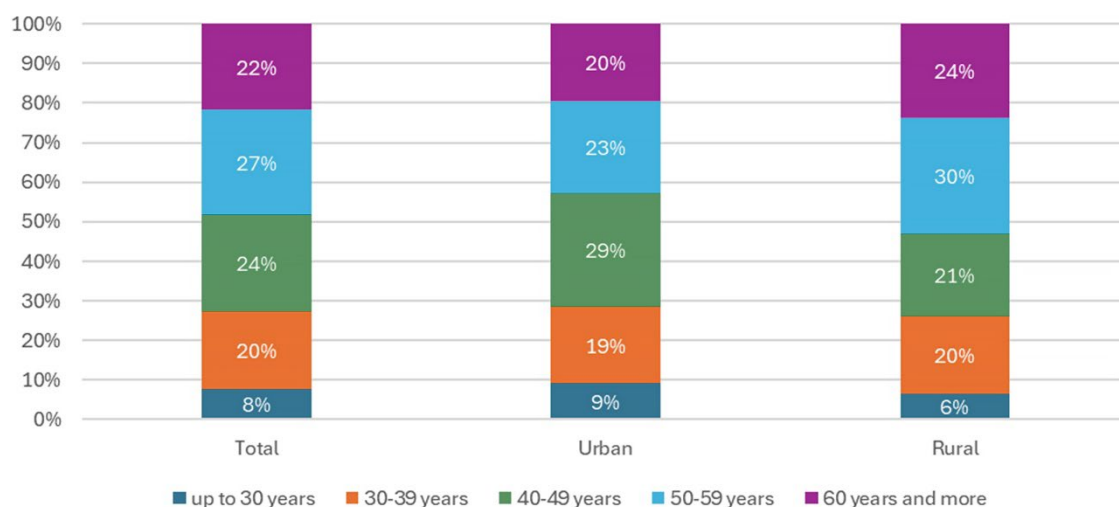
- **In addition, the gender imbalance** in teaching is evident. This trend varies across the education levels, displaying a more positive outlook in higher education (with 56.5% female employment), showing a decline in VET (with 67% of jobs held by women) and raising notable concerns in general education with women comprising 88% of all teachers and managers (SIME, 2024c).

Last but not least, Moldova is faced with an ageing education workforce, with many teachers being close to retirement, especially in rural areas – more than half (54%) of general education teachers in rural institutions are 50 years of age or older, while these older teachers represent only 43% of the total in urban areas (Figure 6). Part of the challenge lies in a decline in the number of young people starting initial teacher education programmes and entering the education profession. As a result, some schools face challenges in attracting sufficient numbers of qualified staff, particularly lower secondary and upper secondary education schools and schools in rural and disadvantaged areas (OECD, 2023). From 2015 to 2022, an

average of 282 graduates per year were employed in the system, filling only about 11-14% of vacant teaching positions.

The government has designed and is implementing substantial measures to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession among young people, to provide support and motivation for young employees to integrate and remain within the education system. It will be essential to organise in the coming year a systematic, data-driven assessment of their effectiveness and impact, not only on average shortages but most importantly on the levelling of inequalities between rural and urban areas.

Figure 6: Pedagogical staff in primary and general secondary institutions by age group and area, 2023/24



Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ETF's calculations

Poverty: The fact that vulnerabilities are concentrated in rural areas compounds the rural-urban divide. In 2022, the absolute poverty rate among children in rural areas was over 40%, compared to 15% for children in urban areas²⁷. Poverty significantly impacts a child's access to education, as unmet basic needs make education a lower priority (Williams, 2024). Yet 2022 **PISA** results indicate that socio-economic inequities in learning (the difference between the average score of the 25% most privileged and that of the 25% most disadvantaged) is lower than on average in OECD countries.

²⁷ NBS. https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Copiii_Moldovei/Analiza_saracie_copii_2022.pdf

Students at risk: The EMIS database contains data on the number of students at risks in schools, taking in consideration a wide range of risk factors²⁸. A total of **31% of all students in general education are considered to be at risk, which means almost one third of all students, hence a critical issue for policy-makers to focus on**, in particular to avoid dropout and support them in their learning efforts; these appear to be more present in rural areas, although some specific urban regions, including Balti, show very high numbers of students at risk.

Figure 7: Percentage of students at risk, by region and by area, 2023-24



Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ETF's calculations.

Note: * Briceni, Chisinau and UTA Gagauzia have numbers of students at risk that are greater than the total number of students in the 2023-24 data available on the EMIS website. They are not shown here and were excluded from the national average (The orange bar shows national average without excluding these regions).

²⁸ The following factors are considered in the EMIS (see Annex for the percentage of students by risk factor): Divorced parents; Both parents abroad; One parent abroad; Mother tongue does not match the language of instruction; A family without income or with small incomes; Both parents are unemployed; One of the parents is unemployed; Three or more minor children in the family; Disabled; Divorced parents; Orphan; Trusteeship/Guardianship; Recorded in the Children's Data Register at Risk

1.2 The (social) vulnerability of children, a key factor of inequality

Box 3: Typology of vulnerable children in Moldova

VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN MOLDOVA: AN ATTEMPT OF TYPOLOGY

1. Children at risk and children separated from parents

According to the article 8 of the Law No 140, 2013 on the 'Special Protection of Children at Risk and of Children Separated from Their Parents' **children at risk** are those belonging to the following categories:

- a) who are victims of violence;
- b) who are neglected;
- c) who practice vagrancy, begging and prostitution;
- d) who are deprived of care and supervision by their parents due to their absence from home for unknown reasons;
- e) whose parents have died;
- f) who live in the streets, have run away or been expelled from home;
- g) whose parents refuse to fulfil their parental duties regarding the child's growth and care;
- h) who have been abandoned by parents;
- i) whose parents have been deprived of their legal capacity by court decision.

The law envisages that all children in the abovementioned situations must be recorded in the 'Children at Risk Data Register'.

The same Law defines **children separated from parents** as those without parental care in cases when parents are absent, abroad; those taken from parents because of an imminent danger for their life or health; and those having the status of children without parental care on a temporary or permanent basis.

About 2 out of 5 children have been subjected to some form of violence: **physical violence has been the most common type of violence experienced in childhood, affecting 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 3 boys.** Additionally, 1 in 9 girls and 1 in 11 boys under the age of 18 have been subjected to emotional violence by a parent, adult caregiver, or adult relative. **More than 1 000 children fall victims of violence and crimes including sexual violence annually.**

There is also an upward trend in the number of children separated from parents: from about 12 500 children in 2017 to more than 15 000 children in 2023.

2. Roma children

Roma children/communities: A person/child whose parents belong to the Roma community, identify themselves as Roma, and/or have it mentioned in their birth certificate. The **EU Child Guarantee** supports ensuring that Roma children have equitable and quality inclusive access to all services, including education, child and social protection, health, preventing social exclusion and school dropout.

Population: Roma families live in every rayon of Moldova, with 60 regions considered densely populated by Roma. As of 2021, there were 7 432 Roma children living in Moldova.

Enrolment: Due to a lack of money for school kits, clothes, etc.; 1 in 5 Roma girls attends a preschool institution.

Rate of school inclusion: The minimal rate of inclusion of Roma children is registered in Soroca: 17.5% (2023).

Source: MER



3. Children with disabilities

A **person with a disability** is considered a person with physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, impairments which, in interaction with various barriers/obstacles, can limit their full and effective participation in the life of society under conditions of equality with other persons.

In 2023, there were 11 300 children with disabilities against 10 600 in 2019. Every fourth child with disability determination was aged 0-2 years, and every third child was between 3 and 6 years old. The predominant causes of primary disability remain mental and behavioural difficulties (36.1%), congenital malformations, chromosomal abnormalities (22.4%) and neurological diseases (13.5%).

More than 100 children with disabilities are placed in educational institutions. The number of children with special education needs and disabilities in early development education institutions declined from 993 in 2019 to 722 in 2021.

4. Children residing in institutions

All children not in the overnight care of at least one of their parents/recognised caregivers, for whatever reason and under whatever circumstances, are considered as **children without parental care**. **Residential Care** is care provided in any non-family-based group setting, i.e. any living arrangement/facility where salaried staff or volunteers ensure care for children living there. This includes large institutions and all other short- and long-term residential institutions including group homes, places of safety, transit centres, and orphanages. A distinction is often made between different forms of residential care. As of 31st December 2023, there were 676 children (320 girls and 356 boys) in the residential care system.

In 2023, there were 83 offences per 100 000 children (aged 0-17), compared to 108 offences in 2020. The number of children sentenced to detention in 2023 was 24, compared to 45 in 2020.

5. Refugee and Migrant Children

All displaced children between up to 18 years old residing in the Republic of Moldova regardless of their legal status including children who are refugees, stateless, migrants, asylum seekers, Roma refugees and Refugee Children with Disabilities, fall under this category. The Multisector needs assessment (MSNA) conducted by the UNHCR and UNICEF (2024) enabled to gather the following data.

52,451 refugee children (48% of them are girls) are residing in the Republic of Moldova;

of these, only 16 000 refugee children received Temporary Protection (TP) status and an additional 6 340 have applied; 30 600 children have no TP status.

only around 202 monitored refugee children are learning online while connecting with Ukrainian education platforms within Moldovan schools;

56% of the children of refugee households interviewed in the MSNA (between two and six years old) reported not having attended any preschool in Moldova in 2022/2023;

since 2022, more than 1 000 Ukrainian Unaccompanied and Separated Children (USAC) were identified in Moldova and were assisted including through community-based alternative care;

in terms of access to protection services and according to MSNA, 97% of respondents stated that they would report cases of violence, exploitation, or neglect of children to the police. Only 38% will use other government services and 25% NGO services;

only 2 361 refugee children (1 193 girls and 1 168 boys) in Moldova are enrolled in formal education up to September 2024, including 735 children in preschools;



54% of surveyed Ukrainian households reported their children were still engaged in online education during the 2022/2023 school year, especially upper secondary students.

Source: *Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Education and Research, UNHCR and UNICEF*

Vulnerable children face a greater risk of inadequate and inequitable access to education. To be effectively supported by active outreach strategies and integrated care measures, these children must first be correctly identified. Yet, in Moldova, there is a **lack of consistency in the definition and data of vulnerable children or children at risk**²⁹. Beyond the problem of identification, this poses a **problem of monitoring** and contributes to the lack of systematic or fully institutionalised **coordination between education and social protection services** for an effective and holistic case management.


The number of children at risk grew significantly in recent years according to the data of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (hereafter MLSP), which accounts them in a 'Children at risk data register': at the end of 2022, there were **approximately 13 200 children at risk, 67.2% of them being from rural areas (demonstrating a “cumulative effect” of inequalities)**. Boys slightly predominated, constituting 51.5%. **Every fourth child (23.9%) was aged 3-6, 64.0% was aged 7-15, 13.1% - aged 16-17 and 12.0% - aged 0-2 years**. These differences certainly illustrate the abovementioned issue of identification, beyond the fact that children are probably more left without appropriate care after they are slightly older (after 6 years of age). Of the number of children at risk, 334 children were children with disabilities³⁰.

The EMIS portal under the MER builds on Law No. 140 but presents data on a more extensive number of categories of children at risk³¹ (SIME, 2024b). Finally, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) includes significantly fewer categories of vulnerable children, as it contains data only for beneficiaries of state social allowances under its social protection statistics distinguishing between

²⁹ MER Annual Report on the diagnosis of the needs of teaching staff in general education by monitoring the employment placement process of graduates of study programs in the field of "Educational Sciences".
https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/16.01.2023_final_completat_redactat_proiect_raport_anual_2022.pdf.

³⁰ NBS. https://statistica.gov.md/ro/situatia-copiilor-in-republica-moldova-in-anul-2022-9578_60434.html.

³¹ Those reported in the Children at Risk Data Register, orphans, children living with disabilities, those with a Trusteeship/Guardianship, with divorced parents, with one or both unemployed parents, with one or both parents abroad, from a family with three or more minors, from a small-income family, and those whose mother tongue does not match with the language of instruction.



children up to 18 years old with severe, accentuated and mild disabilities and children who have ‘lost their breadwinner’ (National Bureau of Statistics, 2024b).

Despite the creation of a sophisticated IT system for the case management of children at risk in the MLSP, there is still a **lack of interoperability** between the EMIS under the MER, the MLSP and the Ministry of Finance (hereafter MoF)’s databases on children at risk/vulnerable children.


In addition to children at risk, **over 33 000 children are reported as separated from their parents in 2023**, with migration of one or both parents being the cause in over 8 in 10 separated children. This situation might lead to a risk of ‘**institutionalisation of children**’, through the placement in residential care.

Children experiencing violence: Among the categories of children at risk defined by Law No. 140, children who are victims of **violence** represent a particularly large segment in Moldova, with significant impacts on the education system. Besides, and according to PISA 2022 results, **39% of Moldovan students do not feel safe on their way to school, 44% do not feel safe in their classrooms, and 43% do not feel safe at other school locations** (e.g. hallway, cafeteria, restroom) (OECD, 2023). These figures are in sharp contrast to the OECD averages of approximately 10% (Ibid.). Moreover, according to UNICEF (2019a), **87% of all pupils in grades 6th to 12th in Moldova are affected by bullying**. On average, every third teenager in Moldova is either a witness, a victim, or an aggressor, and often students cover multiple roles at once (Ibid.). Children who are already vulnerable due to low-income status, domestic violence, etc. experience a **cumulative effect** where they are more likely to be both victims and aggressors.

While inequalities result from different causes, the most exposed to unequal treatment seems to be children experiencing intersecting inequalities (i.e., poverty and disability, disability and ethnicity, gender and ethnicity)³².

The National Programme on Child Protection 2022-2026 aims to enhance the well-being, rights, and safety of children by improving access to social, educational, and health services, while strengthening legal frameworks and protective measures for vulnerable children. Its monitoring and evaluation is crucial to assess if the policy measures taken are appropriate to alleviate their difficulties.

³² Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Moldova, UNICEF 2022.
<https://www.unicef.org/moldova/media/8361/file/Situation%20Analysis%20of%20children%20%20and%20adolescents%20in%20the%20Republic%20of%20Moldova%21.pdf>.



*Regarding the issue of bullying, it is on the MER's agenda: in 2021, an amendment to the Education Code was approved to introduce a clear notion of bullying – with the goal of distinguishing the phenomenon from other forms of violence and allowing its statistical measurement (Terre des Hommes, 2024) - and today, staff in charge of bullying policy exist within the Ministry. Moreover, in June 2024, another amendment to the Education Code entered into force, introducing sanctions against children who present anti-social and violent behaviours in the educational environment. While demonstrating the commitment of the government to resolve the issue, to date, the measures have been debated and criticized namely by the civil society organisations (CSOs): on the one hand, they do not consider the problem that bullying is still too often perpetrated or orchestrated by teachers; on the other, the latest amendment to the Education Code has a punitive rather than restorative nature (Terre des Hommes, 2024). **In all instances, it does not resolve the issue that data monitoring on bullying is still difficult, largely due to under-reporting in schools.***


Box 4: From Focus Group with Parents

'In the first grade my child was not bullied, but in the second grade the problem appeared. The colleagues told me: You are from the village. He suffered a lot'.

'No matter how well he studies, the child always returns home crying. Sometimes these conflicts make parents to transfer children from one institution to another'.

'Children must be valued first of all for the knowledge they show, not for the locality where they come from or finances their parents possess'.

Children whose parents emigrated abroad (often for economic / work-related reasons) face multiple specific challenges regarding their steady participation in education: these children face many risks in the education system, like school dropout and absenteeism. Other school related risks include weak academic performance and lack of motivation.



Ukrainian refugee children: Last but not least, **Ukrainian refugee children seem to still be in a grey area in terms of their schooling status.** According to the Inter-service refugee working group for the Ukrainian refugee crisis, **their enrolment in Moldovan general education is just 6%, as families prefer connecting online to Ukrainian education institutions** (UNICEF Moldova, 2024). However, in the **absence of inter-ministerial and cross-country coordination mechanisms, there is high uncertainty on their actual attendance on-line, and on the level of monitoring of education data regarding these children,** whether by Moldovan or Ukrainian governments. The risk is that Ukrainian children in Moldova are ‘left out of the radar’, and hence at increasing risk of drop-out if the war persists.


In any case, to access the Moldovan system, problems would be the **language barrier** (Proficiency in Romanian is required to pass exams (especially for the 9th and 12th grades) and participate in class), as well as the **limited capacity of schools and preschools,** particularly in Chisinau, to accommodate additional refugee children.

The MER has taken an open and active role in addressing the education needs of the refugee children, including easing requirements for their enrolment in Moldovan schools and offering access to school premises through so-called ‘Tech Labs’, hence allowing children to socialise and benefit from teaching support. Despite these efforts, the opportunities seem to have been seized by a minority.

Roma children: The problem of identification and monitoring is particularly severe also for another category of vulnerable children: **ethnic minorities.** In particular, the size of the **Roma population** in Moldova is difficult to determine (ACTED, 2023), and, at the same time, the Council of Europe (2023) established that the Roma minority is one of the most vulnerable in terms of access to education, to the labour market, income, essential services, participation in society and decision-making. **In education, around 50% of Roma children are estimated to be out of school after primary education** (UNICEF, 2018), and their **drop-out rate is significantly higher than for other students** (MER, 2022)³³. CSOs report that the identification of out-of-school Roma children is

³³ As of 31st May 2022, the number of children who dropped out of school was 224 (0.076%), an increase of 19 children, compared to the data from the end of the 2020-2021 academic year. From the total number of students who drop out the school, 65 were of Roma ethnicity. Source: MER Report 2022: https://mecc.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport_mec_2022_1.pdf.

According to the data collected by the MER, the overall dropout rate in the second semester of the 2023-2024 school year was 0.084%, equivalent to 250 students dropping out of the total number of 294629 students aged 7-16 years enrolled in school. Out of these, 59 students come from grades I-IV (0.02%) and 191 from grades V-IX (0.064%). Source: MER. Thematic report Respecting the right to education of Roma children in the Republic of Moldova, 2023 is available at: <https://ombudsman.md/post-document/respectarea-dreptului-la-educatie-a-copiiilor-de-etnie-roma/>.



difficult due to poor data collection and resistance from parents (Civil Society Organisations in education, 2024). The issue is particularly severe for Roma children coming from Ukraine, who tend to be more conservative (Ibid.).

*In the framework of the **National Programme on Roma Population Support 2022-2025**³⁴, the MER took positive measures such as free transport for children from localities mainly inhabited by Roma to the nearest educational institution if located not less than three kilometres away, after-school programmes to help Roma children do their homework and engage in extra-curricular activities, as well as providing accommodation for Roma students in student residences of technical and higher education institution. CSOs report that community mediators are a promising means for the integration of Roma communities (Civil Society Organisations in education, 2024). Yet, due to limited data, the success of these measures is hard to evaluate³⁵.*

³⁴ To be mentioned as well: The Strategy for the Consolidation of Inter-Ethnic Relations 2017-2027 focuses on promoting social cohesion, equality, and the integration of ethnic minorities through targeted policies, education, and community engagement.

³⁵ The report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the support of the Roma population in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2016-2020, approved by HG no. 734 of 06.09.2016: <https://www.ari.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/raport%20roma%202016-2020.pdf>.



Box 5: From Focus Groups with Community Mediators and School Principals


‘Out of the 3 000 socially vulnerable families in our district, 85% are Roma. For Roma families with 5-8 children, it is very difficult for them to send their children to school. He has to dress them, buy them school supplies. The city hall has no money budgeted for this year to support Roma children. We are trying to identify humanitarian organisations that can help us to procure clothing and supplies so that the families of Roma children can send them to school. Families with 6-7 children can benefit from financial assistance in the amount of MDL 4 000 from social assistance’

Community mediator

‘Socially vulnerable Roma families: they don’t have a place to live, they stay at home, they don’t have a place to work. Another problem is the migration of parents: the parents of Roma children go abroad to work and leave the children in the care of relatives. During this time, children are absent from school. We had premature pregnancy problems: the girls gave birth in the 9th grade. We encourage them to come to school, we tell them: Even if you are married, you should attend school’

Lyceum Deputy director

Children with disabilities: Only 15.3% of general education schools in Moldova have accessible infrastructure for children and young people with physical impairments. Many children with disabilities lack access to ICT and Assistive Technologies, which hinders their ability to continue their education online. This is due to a lack of devices, connectivity issues, and limited teacher knowledge and experience with online learning methods. Children with disabilities often face stigma and discrimination, which affects their social participation and access to essential services. Ethnicity and migration status can further exacerbate these inequalities. The analysis of existing statistical data on the access of children with disabilities to education reveals that **in EMIS there is no data publicly available about school enrolment rates or school attendance rates of children with disabilities** that is disaggregated by personal characteristics (gender, age, place of



residence, etc.) and by type of disability (visual, hearing, autism spectrum disorders, mental, physical disabilities, etc.), which makes it difficult to identify these children's needs and to plan and develop targeted social and educational services. The majority of children with disabilities and with special educational needs included in early education were in the North, Centre and Chisinau regions, with the lowest number being registered in U.T.A. Gagauzia. There is an urgent need for better adaptation of educational services to the needs of children with disabilities and the provision of support services.

The estimated number of children with disabilities accounted to around 2% of Moldova's child population under 18, that is well below the global and regional averages of 10% and 6%, respectively, illustrating a likely underestimation and lack of reliable data. Data includes only children with a disability certificate and not those who did not apply.

Disability programmes and schemes are drastically underfunded and scattered. The disability-related expenditure, as a share of the national budget, remained largely unchanged for several years and even declined despite the nominal and real expenditure increases. More than two thirds of children with a disability under the age of 5 need special equipment to facilitate their social and educational inclusion, and only half of these children are being supported.

Early intervention services for children with disabilities are insufficient to meet the actual demand, estimated to be at only one-tenth of what is required. Young children account for less than one third of first disability determinations, which signals systemic weaknesses in the early detection of disability or developmental delays.

The 2024-2027 Programme of Inclusive Education Development is the most important policy document that regulates and enables the development of inclusive education process in this period in the Republic of Moldova. The MER by 2027 aims to ensure that 80% of the educational institutions are adjusted for children with disabilities and children with special educational needs. Progress monitoring and evaluation of this programme will also be key to assess to what extent the many challenges of inclusive education are being addressed.



Box 6: From various Focus Groups

A limited number of schools are equipped with adequate infrastructure, assistive technologies for working with children with different types of disabilities:

‘In some schools the infrastructure for the inclusion of children with physical disabilities has been adapted, 100 general educational institutions were equipped with assistive technologies. At the same time many schools do not have these conditions. This is an impediment to the inclusion of children with physical disabilities in elementary school’.

Low teachers’ competences to work with severe disabilities, children with Autism spectrum disorders, children with hearing impairments, children with behavioural disorders:

‘Among the difficulties we face in implementing inclusive education, I want to mention the insufficiency of teachers’ competences to support children with Autism spectrum, children with hearing impairments. Investing in Teachers Programme is an opportunity to train all teachers from rayon on Inclusive Education based on the same principles’.

The low salary of the support teacher, which leads to the fluctuation of the number of support teachers:

‘Because of the very low salary of the support teachers, there is a fluctuation of the support teachers. Often, support teachers are teachers, who cumulate this function, namely teachers who have a small number of hours in some subjects’.



‘There is a lack of speech therapists, psychologists in general education institutions’.

Lack of career guidance services for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities:

“Career guidance for children with special educational needs is very important. It is important that after completing their studies in gymnasium, children with special educational needs/disabilities to be informed where they can continue their studies. As a rule, after graduating schools, young people with special educational needs/disabilities don't study, they do not work. They normally work as day labourers”.

2. Financing analysis

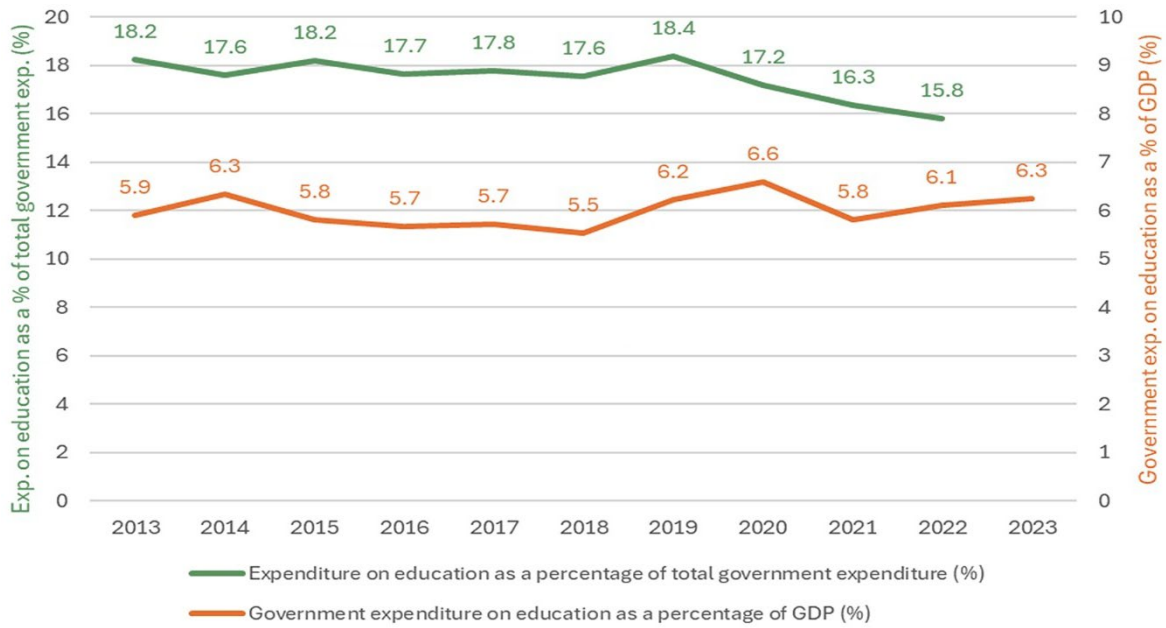
2.1 Resource mobilisation

2.1.1 State budget and public investment in education: a low level explained by the context

Overall, government expenditure on education in Moldova accounted for 6.3% of its GDP in 2023—a considerable share, given that the EU average stood at 4.7%. This reflects a consistently upward trend since 2019, despite a setback in 2021 linked to the COVID-19 crisis. However, the proportion of total government expenditure allocated to education has been declining, from 18.4% in 2020 to 15.9% in 2023. The Ministry of Education and Research (MER) does not view this decrease as problematic—and rightly so—as public spending on education as a percentage of GDP remains high compared to other countries in the region. Nevertheless, such reductions should be offset by efficiency gains.



Figure 8: Education expenditure as a share of GDP and of total government expenditure, 2013-2023



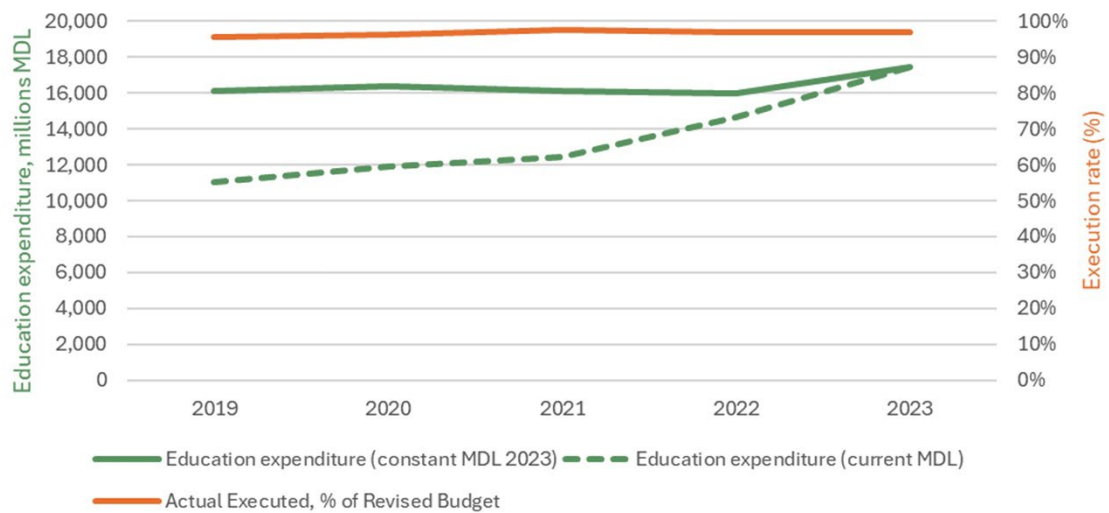
Source: UIS SD database, September 2024 data release

In nominal terms, **the education sector state expenditure** has increased by 58.21%, from MDL 11 billion (EUR 573 million) in 2019 to MDL 17.5 billion (EUR 903 million) in 2023. However, in real terms, i.e. taking account of inflation, it has in fact stagnated between 2019 and 2022 and only increased by 10% between 2022 and 2023. A small decrease of 0.4%³⁶ is estimated for 2024, with an **estimated budget of around MDL 17.4 billion (EUR 897 million)**. **Execution of education budgets have been consistently high, between 96.1% and 97.2% between 2020 and 2023, although specific types of expenditures, such as Goods and Services, show lower execution rates (cf. Figure 21 in Annex).**

³⁶ In nominal terms. Decrease in real terms would be greater.



Figure 9: Education expenditure in current and constant MDL and education budget execution rate, 2019-2023

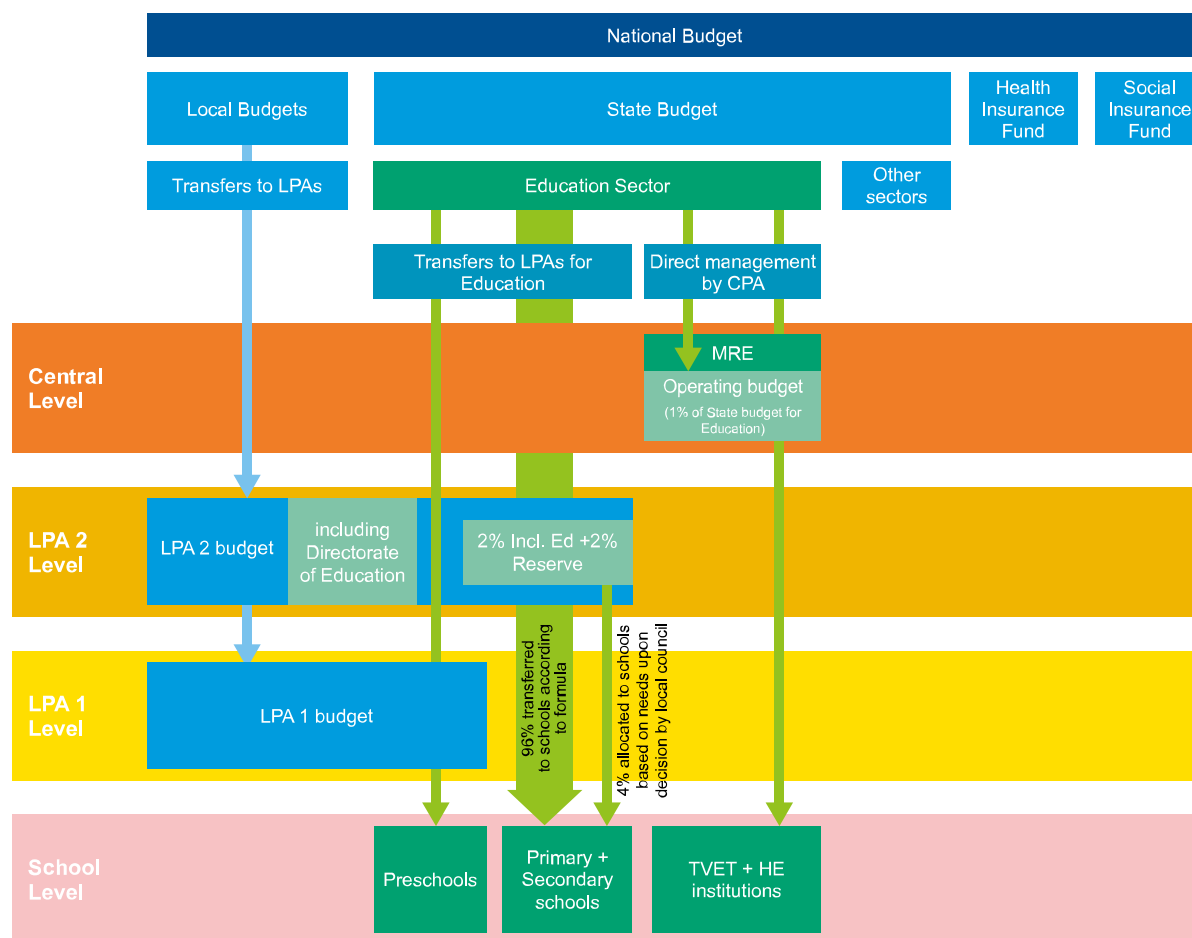


Source: Ministry of Finance and World Bank World Development Indicators (24/10/2024 update) for deflators.

It should be noted that actual approved budgets for education from the State budget (21.2% in 2024) are higher than the total share of education in the national budget expenditure, as only a small share (9% in 2023) of the Local Public Authorities' budget (excluding education transfers from the State budget) is spent on education³⁷.

³⁷ In 2023, the local budgets represented 12% of the total national budget.


Figure 10: National and State budget flows to the education sector



Note: Green boxes and arrows indicate budgets and flows for the education sector. Sizes of boxes and arrows are not representative of the relative amounts of respective budgets and flows.

The education budget in Moldova is highly decentralized, with funds for early childhood education and development institutions transferred through Local Public Authorities (LPAs) Level 1 (Villages and communities) while budgets for primary and secondary education are transferred to and managed by Level 2 LPAs (regions, municipalities and the Autonomous Territory of Gagauzia); only Technical and Vocational Education and Higher education are managed directly by the central level (MER). Hence, in the structure of public expenditures for education, the sub-programme ‘State provision of education at the local level’ (8817³⁸, which

³⁸ Hereafter, the number in parenthesis corresponds to the number in the official budget documents.




includes the public resources allocated to General Directorates of Education) has the largest share in the total Education Budget, through the general transfers from the State Budget to Local Public Authorities, and the following biggest budgetary envelopes are for the sub-programmes ‘Higher education’ (8810), ‘Post-secondary vocational technical education’ (8809) and ‘High school education’ (8806) (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova, 2022), which are implemented directly by the MER.

Although a Public Expenditure Review was conducted with the World Bank in 2022, no systematic financial/budget analysis focused on the education sector seems to have been comprehensively made to date, neither by the Ministry of Finance nor by the MER; all the less the calculations about effectiveness or efficiency issues, which would require combining financial data with administrative/school data. **Despite progress in recent years, the issue of underspending of the budget persists, in particular for goods and services and subventions, as well as social benefits (cf. Figure 22 in the Annex), for various reasons, including inefficient public procurement processes, insufficient training for school leaders in budget planning, and unfilled job vacancies in the MER. The education expenses by education level and by economic item (salaries, capital investment, etc.) are said to be available but could not be extracted from the budget lines of the abovementioned programmes.**

Concerns expressed by the Minister about the distribution of funds—particularly the balance between the pre-school and higher education levels —highlight the need for a comparative analysis of the structure of the budget related to the number of students by level, weighted by a realistic estimate of actual unit costs (and assessed, as far as higher education is concerned against the consistency between graduates and labour market needs).

Various stakeholders have highlighted further issues concerning the misalignment between rules and practices of resource allocation (e.g.: 2% for inclusive education, ratio for support staff for special education needs...) and the actual needs at school level that these resources are supposed to fulfil, as summarised in Box 8 below.



Box 7: From Focus Groups with Representatives of Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Services and School principals

'The allocation of 2% funds for inclusive education from the total budget for education is used to pay the salaries of support staff, and do not meet the educational needs of the children with special educational needs/disabilities'

Representative of the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service

'The teacher–pupil ratio of one support teacher for every three students with special educational needs cannot be covered from Inclusive education fund, due to the fact that 98% of schools have a budget deficit in our rayon'.

'There are a number of inequities in the distribution of funds for inclusive education, since preschool and vocational and technical education have not been considered from the beginning in the implementation of the programme for development of inclusive education in the Republic of Moldova'


Representative of the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service

'The budget in the institution is related to the number of children. In our rayon there are 13 schools transferred on self-financing. Self-financing of school gives advantages for larger institutions and disadvantages for small schools'

School principal

'In large schools, the law does not allow freedom of investments in schools. Money must be invested only for development purpose (interactive whiteboard, didactical materials etc.) but not for capital improvement', i.e. renovation or construction

Scholl principal



The funds for inclusive education are distributed by the rayon council to the education budgetary institution according to the legal framework and needs. The fund is largely used up to pay the salaries of teachers, support teachers, and to a lesser extent (at least in recent years) on equipping school resource centres, the development of support services speech therapy, psychological assistance, etc. It is somehow difficult to monitor the expenditures because the resources are allocated by different economic categories such as salaries, goods and services etc. In the opinion of the specialists, in order to ensure the efficiency of inclusive education funding, there should be a mechanism or a dedicated economic account item in the classification, in order for the schools to report and for the MER to monitor these expenditures.

2.1.2 Non state domestic resource mobilisation


Educational institutions have the possibility to collect funds locally, in addition to the funding received from the Local Public Authorities and/or Central Public Authorities. These resources may come from the provision of paid services, such as renting out school premises, training with production activities especially in VET institutions, as well as from international collaboration, voluntary donations, etc. Such collected **revenues represent on average 0.2% from total state budget education resources**, and resources generated from **external funds are around 1% (cf. Table 9 in the Annex).**

2.1.3 Development partners' support

Over the last few years, the education system has been implementing several projects on different dimensions (infrastructure development, development of education technical vocational dual education, the development of inclusive education, ensuring gender equality in education, etc.), financed by the World Bank, the European Union, UNICEF, UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the Government of Romania, the Austrian Cooperation Agency (ADA), the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC), the Federal Ministry for Cooperation and Development, UNFPA and other international donors³⁹.

In 2023, educational institutions under the Ministry of Education and Research reported three projects with 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:

³⁹ https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/subiect-02-nu-900-mec-2022_1.pdf



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 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 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 million⁴⁰.

In addition, the 2023 budget execution reports included education-related project such as Horizon and Erasmus+ initiatives, as well as bilateral projects implemented by central public authorities amounting to approximately EUR 6 million in total.

Since its launch in 2014 and subsequent upgrade in 2022, the Aid Management Platform provides a comprehensive overview of initiatives supporting financially the education sector. It reveals that the World Bank is the principal external backer—accounting for over 50% of total commitments, predominantly via loans—while the European Union and its institutions contribute around 10% through grants. Collectively, bilateral agencies⁴¹ represent nearly one-third of all commitments (see Table 6 in the Annex).

This overview can be complemented by the OECD-DAC Creditor Reporting System (CRS), which focuses on Official Development Assistance (ODA) specifically. The education sector benefits from ODA loans and grants directly to the sector as well as through General Budget Support. Overall, **ODA disbursements to education have increased steadily between 2019 and 2022, from USD 71.3 million to USD 81.2 million** (in constant 2022 USD, a 22% increase in three years). **However, relative to total ODA disbursed to the country, the share of education was halved, from 18% to 9%** (or from 19% to 12% when taking into account General Budget Support)⁴², while

⁴⁰ <https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/raport.pdf>

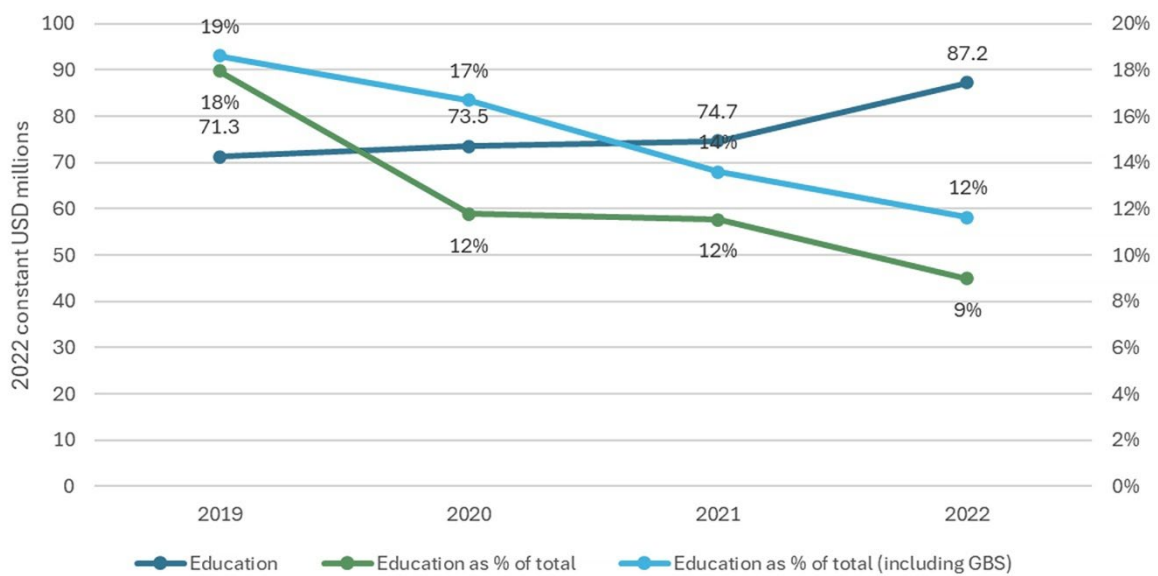
⁴¹ Based on the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the Government of Romania, a grant financial assistance of EUR 100 million will support the sector, including for early childhood education infrastructure renovation, development of school transportation means, among other.

⁴² The share of education in the total government expenditure was applied to the General Budget Support disbursements to estimate their contributions to the education sector.



social protection programmes and General Budget Support have strongly increased (as well as humanitarian aid in 2022).

Figure 11: Education ODA and share of total ODA, 2019-2022



Source: OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System, accessed on November 4, 2024 and ETF's calculations

Note: The share of education in the total government expenditure was applied to the General Budget Support disbursements to estimate their contributions to the education sector.

Overall, ODA to education (including General Budget Support's contribution to education) represented 14.6% of the total government expenditure on education. Also, it is important to note that an increasing proportion of external support to education comes in the form of loans.

Table 2: Education and General Budget Support ODA disbursements, 2019-2022

	Education Sector				Education Sector + GBS			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
Current USD millions	67.8	72.0	77.4	87.2	70.3	102.5	91.5	113.1
ODA Grants	64.1	64.9	71.4	68.7	66.2	66.8	71.4	85.4
ODA Loans	3.7	7.1	6.0	18.5	4.2	35.7	20.1	27.6
As % Ed. Gvt. exp.	10.8%	10.5%	11.0%	11.2%	11.2%	14.9%	13.0%	14.6%
ODA Grants	10.2%	9.5%	10.1%	8.9%	10.5%	9.7%	10.1%	11.0%
ODA Loans	0.6%	1.0%	0.9%	2.4%	0.7%	5.2%	2.9%	3.6%

Source: OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System, accessed on November 4, 2024 and ETF's calculations.
 Note: The share of education in the total government expenditure was applied to the General Budget Support amounts to estimate their contributions to the education sector.

2.2 Resource allocation

2.2.1 Resource allocation to schools

Shifting to the funding formula for allocating resources to school appears to be a promising pre-requisite but not a sufficient condition for improved quality of provision.

Despite some advancements in general education through the implementation of the **per-capita funding formula**, there is still a significant **delay in achieving the autonomy for schools that is stated as an objective**. In general, 95% (96% from 2025) of the budget allocated to primary and secondary schools is determined by the per-student financing formula; these funds are used by schools to pay teachers' and administrators' salaries, procure learning materials, conduct infrastructure maintenance, etc. In addition, schools may receive additional funding from the inclusive education fund (2% of the general education budget, intended to provide additional support to students with special needs) and from the resources allocated to the local public authority's component (rayon component, equal to 3% and 2% from 2025), based on specific school needs, by decision of the local councils for transportation, hostels, renovations etc.). While the regulatory framework theoretically permits schools to use these resources as deemed necessary, including to undertake localised and contextual interventions to address quality issues, these interventions **lack coherence due to economic constraints**. The costs associated with



infrastructure maintenance, salary increments, and other factors prevent the allocation of resources towards quality assurance or result in insufficient resources for this purpose.

The formula contains a variable part, proportional to the number of “weighted” students⁴³, and a fixed part for all institutions. As such, the formula grants larger transfers per students to small schools, those being capped for primary schools with fewer than 41 students and for gymnasiums with fewer than 91 students (at MDL 37 862 and MDL 26 021 respectively). In addition, larger schools with subsidiary schools get an extra amount for each small school under their legal status, equal to the amount not distributed to them as per the per-student ceiling.

$$V = ((A \times N + B) + (B1 \times S1)) \times K + R + I$$

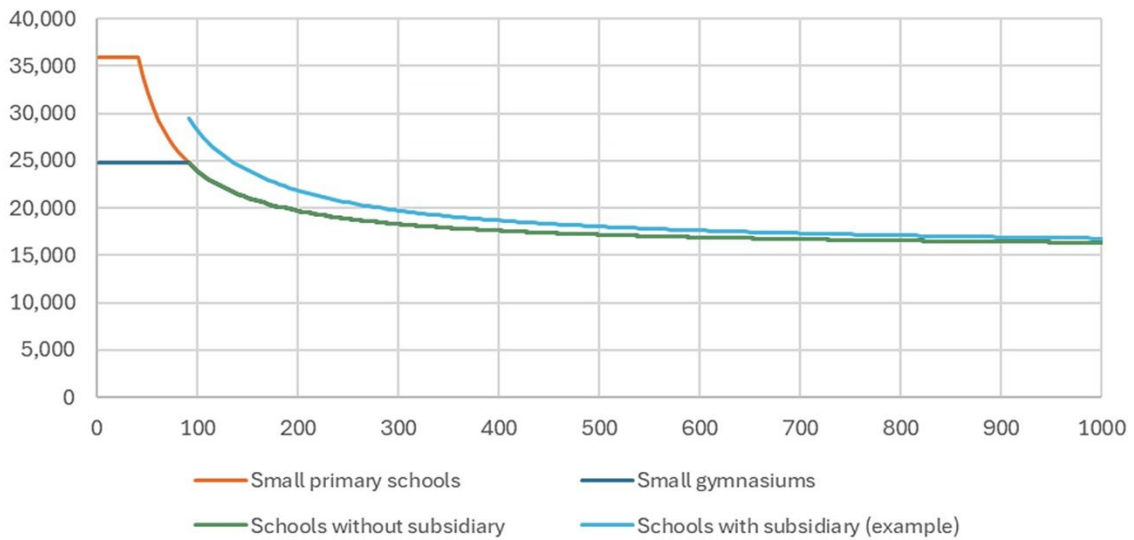
Where A is the normative value per student, N is the number of “weighted” students, B and B1 are the normative value per institution, S1 is the number of subsidiary schools, K is the proportion directly transferred to schools (95%, to be increased to 96% in 2025) and R and I are the amounts allocated by the Directorate of Education from the Reserve and Inclusive funds respectively (3% and 2% respectively)⁴⁴.

⁴³ The number of “weighted” students is the number of students with a specific weight given to them depending on their level of education. As per 2020, these weights were 0.83 for students of grades I-IV; 1.00 for students of grades V-IX; and 1.22 for students of classes X-XII.

⁴⁴ Formula (4), as per DECISION No. HG868/2014 of 08.10.2014



Figure 12: Simulated amount of per-student transfer to general education schools as per the formula, by number of students in the school and type of school, MDL, 2023



Source: ETF's calculations based on 2020 formula (DECISION No. HG868/2014 of 08.10.2014)
 Note: Example school with subsidiary is for one school with one 20-student primary school or one 44-student gymnasium as a subsidiary.

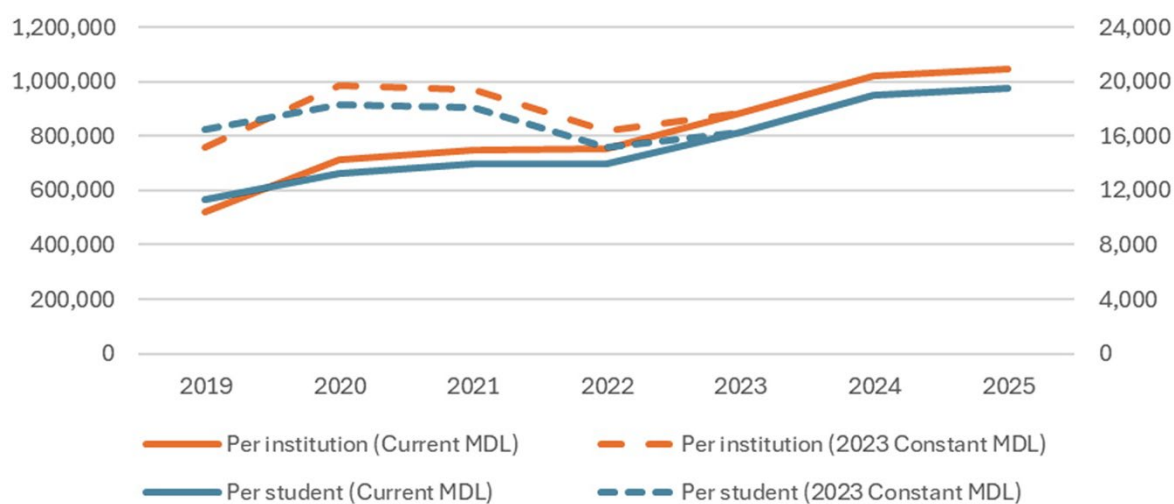
Revised provisions with effect as of September 2024 introduce two variations to the formula which can be interpreted as incentives. The first one concerns schools directly and reduces the transfer for the number of students whose schooling conditions are not conform to the standards – those are in fact excluded from the calculation. This measure positively illustrates the political consistency and willingness to have new frameworks respected. While this constitutes an incentive for schools to follow standards, it raises concerns for schools who do not meet these standards, and whose grants will be reduced, further reducing their capacity to implement school improvements. It calls for accompaniment measures to reinforce the planning and management capacities of these schools in particular.

The second incentive concerns the Local Authorities. The new formula introduces a reduction of the transfers for additional schools compared to the previous year - or an increase of the allocation for schools closed since the previous year. The intensity of the incentive is to be reduced as of 2025 (from 50% of the per-institution component per school opened or closed, to 25%).



The normative values for students and institutions have evolved very similarly over the last few years, and have increased steadily in nominal terms, although in constant terms they decreased by 16% in 2022, and despite an increase in 2023 didn't get back to their 2020 value.


Figure 13: Evolution of the normative values per weighted student and per institution, MDL, 2019-2025



Source: ETF's calculations based on budget documents and World Bank deflator

The introduction of a similar funding formula **for early childhood education** is still being examined in the MER and the MoF and will be piloted in 164 kindergartens of four rayons (Anenii, Noi, Cahul, Floresti and Nisporeni) starting in 2025. The initiative aims to ensure a better correlation between the funding allocated by the state and the real needs of each kindergarten, taking into account factors that influence costs, such as the presence of children with special educational needs or disabilities, or the presence of children who speak a language other than Romanian (for incurring the cost of additional Romanian language courses), etc. According to MER⁴⁵ data "... in 2023, the total budget for preschool educational institutions nationwide was MDL 5.3 billion, with 62.8% allocated for salaries, 11.4% for energy and utilities, and 5.3% for capital expenditures". On average, the annual budget per child in 2023 was MDL 42 300, but there are notable regional disparities. Some districts spend around MDL 35 000 per child, while others exceed MDL 56 600. These discrepancies are evident across all spending categories, including salaries, energy and utilities, food, and capital expenditures".

⁴⁵ <https://mec.gov.md/ro/content/o-noua-formula-de-finantare-gradinitelor-va-fi-pilotata-incepand-cu-anul-2025>



The application of outdated models of early childhood education funding poses a threat to both equity and quality, as well as to the schools' autonomy. At the same time, upon analysing the potential implementation of the per-child funding formula in preschool institutions, it becomes evident that there are considerable obstacles to attaining the desired outcome, particularly concerning smaller institutions facing closure. It therefore remains to be analysed how the new funding mechanism would impact small pre-schools, particularly considering the (seemingly contradictory) goal of the MER of keeping at least one early childhood education institution in each community (MER, 2024).


The data on the budgetary envelope allocated to schools through regional councils, i.e., the 2nd tier of local government, or through villages, communities, towns and municipalities, i.e., the 1st tier, remains to be collected. **The 2% of the education budget constituting the rayon component, i.e., the funds allocated to the regional authorities for capital overhauling, transport of students and teachers and regional schools' budget deficits, was found by the financial-administrative department of the MER to be inequitably disbursed** (Financial-administrative Department of the MER, 2024). **Specifically, funds were not allocated based on schools' needs only; rather, political considerations played a role.** Government Resolution No 868 – entered into force from January 2025 – has reduced the rayon component to 2%. It is expected that the issue of equity and transparency of financial flows going through the regions should also significantly improve if the RESTART reform⁴⁶ is implemented as planned.

2.2.2 Scholarships and Financial Incentives

The country has a plethora of financial support measures in place: financial incentives for teachers and new entrants into the profession (MDL 200 000 lump-sum in two instalments over the first five years of professional life, free accommodation and utilities in cold seasons for teachers in rural areas, transportation schemes), **scholarships for students** based on merit (1st, 2nd and 3rd categories) and on vulnerability (4th category) for higher education and VET students, MDL 1 000 per month for every family whose child is **commuting to a larger school**, etc. However, it is not clear whether the **monitoring tools** for these measures are foreseen from the outset, which raises the question of the assessment of their **efficacy**, even before the efficiency.

The envelop for scholarships to students represents around 13% of MER budget 2023. The scholarships are awarded on a strictly semester-by-semester basis, ranked in descending order of

⁴⁶ The RESTART reform is a comprehensive overhaul of Moldova's social assistance system, launched in March 2023 by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. It aims to enhance the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of social services, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children, people with disabilities, and low-income families.



academic average. The maximum number of scholarships granted is limited to 70% of the total number of local students enrolled in full-time studies, in accordance with the budget-funded enrolment plan for each specialty. Allocations for Category I scholarships will not exceed 10%, while Category II and III scholarships will receive 20% and 70%, respectively, of the budget designated for this purpose.

Scholarships based first on merit (and then on vulnerability) should be well analysed, in particular concerning the EU accession requirements: amount granted and number of beneficiaries, transparency of criteria retained for granting the scholarship, and impact compared to the objectives.

In order to support the academic performance of young individuals and encourage their participation in various extracurricular and research activities, merit scholarships – including the Government Scholarship, Presidential Scholarship, and Republic Scholarship – are currently awarded to students enrolled in higher education institutions as well as those in higher and technical vocational education institutions.

In 2023, a project was initiated to double the scholarships for students pursuing pedagogical specialties HG949/06.12.2023). Thus, the higher amount of MDL 3 280 is awarded to top-performing students in Category I, while the lowest scholarship of Category III, amounts to MDL 2 200.

Table 3: Allocation of Merit-based scholarships from 2019 to 2024 in MDL

	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Scholarship “Republic”	1,525	1,600	1,640	1,755	2,030
Scholarship “Government”	1,270	1,335	1,365	1,460	1,690
Scholarship “Gaudeamus” (Colleges)	920	965	990	1,060	1,230
Consumer Price Index ⁴⁷	7.5	3.9	30.2	4.2	5.0
	GD No 440, 11.09.2019	GD No 688, 23.09.2020	GD No 277, 20.10.2021	GD No 694, 05.10.2022	GD No 702, 20.09.2023

More information on the scholarships is provided in Annex.

Other scholarships include financial aid awards for individual students and contributions to trainees such as bilateral grants to students in institutions of higher education following full-time studies or training courses in the donor country.

Table 4: Indicator 4.b.1: Value of external financial assistance for scholarships

	2019	2020	2021	2022
External assistance, Mln USD	47.3	54.8	53.0	46.7

Source: <https://statisticamd.github.io/sdg-site-moldova/4-b-1/>

2.3 Management of the financing chain

2.3.1 Transparency in the financial chain

The flow of funds from the central government to the schools gives rise to bottlenecks and transparency concerns. This translates into educational institutions, particularly at the pre-school level due to the lack of the funding formula, expressing a desire to switch to a self-governance model⁴⁸ (Pre-school directors, 2024). According to the law, monitoring the execution

⁴⁷ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?document_status=0&nr_doc=&datepicker1=&publication_status=+-+TOATE+-+&nr=&publish_date=&search_type=1&search_string=INDICII+PRE%C8%9AURILOR+DE+CONSUM

⁴⁸ self-governing public authority/institution - a public-law entity which, according to the legal act by which it was founded, carries out non-commercial (non-profit) activity and operates on the basis of self-governing principles. Law 181/2014, art 3. https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=142656&lang=ro#

of the per-student funding formula is a shared responsibility of national and regional governing bodies. However, in reality, the oversight mechanisms seem to be lacking (World Bank, 2018). **The EMIS does not encompass financial information and is not linked with funding databases.** Moreover, the resources and motivations for monitoring at the regional level are not clearly defined (Ibid.). **The proposed RESTART reform of centralisation of the education sector - based on the already adopted RESTART reform model for social protection - is expected to streamline the financial chain and improve transparency, something that is yet to be explored.**


Salary practices. At the crossroads between financing and governance, and despite the salary reform of 2018, a persistent issue in the Moldovan education system appears to be the **difference in salary scales between the positions in the Ministry and those in the implementing agencies**, with the latter offering higher pay (Rayon Education Directorates' staff, 2024). **A detailed, amount-based analysis of these differences would help understand the degree of influence of this element on the institutional capacity challenge identified by the MER itself.**

The following table shows teachers' gross monthly wages.

Indicators	2019		2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Total economy	Budgetary sector	Total economy	Budgetary sector	Total economy	Budgetary sector	Total economy	Budgetary sector	Total economy	Budgetary sector
Education	6,327.6	5,916.0	7,016.8	6,617.9	7,462.3	6,993.9	8,445.5	7,918.1	10,073.5	9,443.8
Scientific research and development	8,252.8	7,252.6	8,816.6	7,573.9	10,124.0	8,358.4	11,081.5	9,500.1	13,148.0	10,450.7

2.3.2 Institutional capacity for financial management

Educational institutions in the country, including pre-university and university systems, face significant challenges due to complex operational environments and inadequate financial management practices. The absence of modern financial management strategies blocks their effectiveness, preventing these institutions from achieving optimal operations and desired financial performance, as well as overall educational administration outcomes. In order to develop managerial capacity in the education system, the National Institute for Education and Leadership (NIEL) was established with a mission of modernising the processes of initial and continuous training of teachers and managers, and strengthening the mentoring activity in the education system. The staffing framework within educational institutions has been enhanced to



include positions such as chief accountant, accountant, and economist, among others, to facilitate improved management of financial resources.

The implementation of cost standards enhances the transparency and predictability of educational financing systems in contrast to financing mechanisms that rely on historical costs. Consequently, and as previously explained, school budgets are formulated based on the per-pupil and institutional costs established annually by the State Budget Law, alongside the student enrolment figures and various specific coefficients. This standard cost per pupil financing model facilitates more effective financial management, and is accompanied by the following changes:

The allocation of designated categorical transfers is intended for specific purposes, restricting their use solely to educational initiatives;

The cash reserves held by educational institutions are reinstated to those same institutions in the subsequent fiscal year;

The financial autonomy granted to educational institutions is supposed to be expanded, as educational institutions are officially entrusted the freedom to manage their financial resources more effectively and to enhance expenditure efficiency.


However, the school principals complain that in practice, the envelopes granted through the formula funding do not leave much room manoeuvre for extraordinary expenses. In addition, an important emphasis should be placed on reinforcing the financial management capacity of these actors, through comprehensive, resourced capacity building plans.

2.3.3 Education strategy costing

The MER reform programme, the Education Strategy 2030, presents a cost estimate, which is a positive prerequisite for sound planning and sustainability.

The main measures and actions planned for 2025-2027 include:


- Development of the early education system, increasing quality and equitable access for children to pre-school and early childhood education services, including those with special needs;
- Modernising the processes of initial and continuous training of teachers and managers by strengthening the capacities of the National Institute for Education and Leadership;

- 
- Developing the primary and general secondary education system by increasing the network of model schools;
 - Modernisation of infrastructure in general education institutions and ensuring the necessary conditions of hygiene and sanitation;
 - Providing children and pupils in schools with food;
 - Providing pupils with new textbooks corresponding to the school curriculum;
 - Support programmes for the development of Romanian language communication skills of children in institutions with instruction in national minority languages;
 - Ensuring the inclusion of people with special needs (physical and sensory disabilities: hearing and sight);
 - Promoting initiatives to modernise and streamline technical vocational education, with the involvement of employers and the business environment, in order to provide graduates with better preparation for the labour market and for a successful career, including the development of dual education;
 - Development of the higher education system for the preparation of specialists in priority areas for the development of society and the adjustment to the requirements of the labour market, promotion of the internationalisation of higher education and renovation of student hostels.

The total cost is MDL 2 461 749.2, of which MDL 233 744.8 is expected to be allocated in the Budgetary Framework for the period 2023 -2025. The contribution of development partners is expected to amount to MDL 2 228 004.4, i.e. 90% of the total cost of the programme. **However, at the moment of the Strategy's approval, confirmed contributions from development partners were only MDL 1 035 413 .5.** Consultations are currently under way for a new World Bank education project, which seeks USD 40 million (approximately MDL 822 088 000) to acquire new assets, together with a USD 5 million grant (circa MDL 93 813 000) from the Global Partnership for Education. **The balance of funding required to implement the strategy has yet to be secured⁴⁹.**

The total estimated Medium Term Budgetary Framework MTBF budget for the years 2025-2027 in order to achieve the strategic goals and ensure the realisation of the key policy objectives are presented in Table 1 in the annex 4.

⁴⁹ https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/subiect-02-nu-900-mec-2022_1.pdf



The updated estimates for the period 2025-2026 show an increase in education budget expenditure in 2025 and 2026 with expenditure revised following the implementation of wage policy measures.

Also, the education expenditure funded from externally financed projects have been revised and increased as a result of attracting additional resources for their implementation. The estimated amount from external sources represents 7.7% around MDL 347 300⁵⁰ for the year 2025.

The analysis reveals a decrease in the percentage of estimated investment projects in the total state budget resources by 1.3 % for the years 2025-2027, compared to the approved budget in 2024. For 2025, the percentage of investment projects was estimated at 0.6%; for 2026 – at 0.2%; and for 2027 – at 0.3%.

A key priority for the period 2025–2027 is to improve the quality of new project proposals, budget planning, prioritisation, management, and implementation of public capital investment projects in order to increase the absorption of domestic and external funds and reduce the time necessary for project completion and to fulfil the legal framework in place GD684/2022 on public investment projects⁵¹.

3. Governance analysis

3.1 Responsibilities and accountability

3.1.1 Subsidiarity

Despite explicit regulations promoting decentralisation and efforts to enact it, the **MER still retains an extremely broad array of functional responsibilities** compared to the limited number of staff available (UNICEF, 2019b). The process of delegating responsibilities to newly established subordinate entities is undergoing transition, lacking a clear delineation of roles and collaborative frameworks with existing institutions sharing similar mandates (Ibid.). As a central governing body, the MER assumes powers which could be delegated to the local education governing bodies. An examination of the roster of subordinate agencies and institutions⁵² reveals unjustified cases of centralisation (e.g., the Chess and Checkers Club in Chişinău is subordinated to the MER).

⁵⁰ <https://mf.gov.md/ro/buget/cadrul-bugetar-pe-termen-mediu>

⁵¹ https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=133707&lang=ro

⁵² Government Decision No. 146 of 25.08.2021 on the organisation and functioning of the Ministry of Education and Research. [HG146/2021 \(legis.md\)](https://legis.md).



3.1.2 Sub-national governance model

The volatile nature of the political landscape within the country has exerted a direct influence on the architecture and **governance of education at the meso level**. This has led to disruptions in several key areas, including: i) the appointment of heads of rayon/municipal education departments and educational institutions managers; ii) administration, and iii) financing of institutions. In some cases, these processes/areas are strongly marked by criteria of **political adherence**, support and loyalty, rather than relevant capabilities, efficient management and accountability.

Due to the ‘mixed’ governance model present in Moldova, which combines **decentralisation and deconcentration**, the abovementioned departments at the regional level are in a sensitive position. While these bodies are in charge of implementing the education policy decided at the central level, they are also effectively under the management of the elected Rayon Councils. This results in unsatisfactory implementation on the ground including due to political interference. The **RESTART reform** of re-centralisation – i.e., transferring the authority over primary schools, gymnasiums, and lyceums from the regional level of local government to the MER - is under examination in the MER as of July 2024 and, if approved, might start implementation in 2026. The re-centralisation is expected to simplify cumbersome processes and reduce political interference from local public authorities, thus streamlining resource allocation directly to schools.

Finally, a coherent strategic vision for enhancing the capabilities of leaders and staff within local specialised education bodies is notably absent, thereby hindering their institutional capacity development. The leaders of local bodies do not have or have insufficient knowledge indispensable for the good governance of education as delineated in the Education Code, such as: Management and leadership; Strategic planning; Financial management; Evaluation of the implementation of educational policies at the meso and micro levels, including evidence-based policy evaluation; Education statistics; Cost-benefit analysis, ex-ante and ex-post impact⁵³.

⁵³ While comprehensive thematic studies and evaluations on this matter are lacking, insights can be gained from ministry reports, tangentially related studies, and information available on the web pages of regional or municipal education departments/directorates, among other sources.



3.2 Strategic vision and role of donors

3.2.1 Policy framework and implementation

The education policy framework in Moldova is supported by a robust set of strategies, laws and other normative acts, with the sectoral development strategy 'Education 2030' playing a key role in guiding the country's vision for addressing challenges, bridging gaps, and achieving educational development goals. The sectoral strategy should serve as the basis for the strategic and operational planning of education development at the central and local levels. However, the identification of nine key objectives for the sectoral strategy raises the question of priority setting, even more so as the funding of the strategy is not fully ensured. In addition, **difficulties in coordination with the annual action plans and in implementation** can be observed (Rayon Education Directorates' staff, 2024).

Besides these discrepancies between strategy and action plans, other reasons can explain that the **implementation** of the education policies on the ground sometimes **lags behind**: umbrella legal texts exist, but application details seem to lack or be to some extent left to local actors. This could be one of the explanations for the **particular importance of the 'human factor'** in Moldova.

3.2.2 The socio-cultural setting and its influence on the education system

The child in the Moldovan society and the vision of education: the Moldovan society's vision of education seems to emphasise discipline and an instruction-focused system already in early childhood education, which is oriented towards primary education, particularly evident in the pre-primary year.

Extracurricular activities are an important (historically, culturally) complement to formal education.

Regarding digitalisation, beyond the issue of uneven availability between urban and rural areas, there is the problem of the mindset that may hamper digital education (free access versus equipment/rooms closed with key).

3.2.3 Donor support

Donor support is crucial for funding the implementation of reforms, however, there seems to be a need for harmonising/aligning their vision and/or rules, as the example of support to school network optimisation illustrates. The **Local Education Group (LEG)** gathering main development partners - which seems to be used mainly, so far, for information sharing on respective donor interventions and less for direct collaboration or synergies across programmes - offers a promising coordination framework and a level for the establishment of formal monitoring of reforms.



3.2.4 EU integration

The MER is currently in the challenging process of **analysing the EU acquis** in the fields related to education, with a particular emphasis on Chapter 26 concerning education and culture and Chapter 25 concerning science and research. Issues already identified relate to the recognition of qualifications, youth legislation (in the form of directives to be transposed into the national system) and the access of migrant and ethnic minority children to the Moldovan system.

3.3 Use of data along the policy cycle

3.3.1 The main governance/management challenges that would need to be documented by data


Various main challenges related to the governance of the education system need to be documented based on disaggregated data analysis, in order to guide policy decision. Two have been documented: teachers' management, and the planning of education provision

- The teacher management: Detailed data on teachers in each school by subject(s) taught, qualification and, if possible, the teaching period workload, is crucial for adequate analysis of issues linked to deployment and under-utilization (linked to small secondary schools) of teachers. These dimensions are important evidence to support the optimisation of the school network as well as to improve the efficiency of the public expenditure on teachers.

The planning of education provision (or optimisation of school network): Demographic issues, in particular rural exodus, have led to the existence of numerous “small schools”, particularly in rural areas, calling for reflection toward school network optimisation to ensure equal educational quality throughout the territory, without jeopardizing access. Microplanning based on geospatial data on school and population locations are essential to support the design and monitoring of such an important reform and its implementation arrangements (transportation routes, hostels, etc.). Moreover, labour market skill need analyses are not sufficiently guiding the adaptation of the VET and higher education offering.

3.3.2 The Education Management Information System

The **EMIS (SIME)** in Moldova has been in development for years, with the existence of additional modules on VET and pre-school other than general education. Yet, the portal is not fully operational, and the higher education module is still under development. At any rate, the EMIS is expected to become the only source of administrative data on education by 2025 (ICT Department of MER, 2024), which is in itself the purpose of and EMIS but seems ambitious as an objective at such short term.



Among remaining issues, inconsistencies have been identified by stakeholders between the data collected from the NBS, the Social Protection Services and the Ministry of Finance. The absence of databases' interoperability has various implications; vis-a-vis the Social Protection Services, it hampers the good articulation of measures across ministries in charge, as well as continuity in case management. Regarding the financial and budgetary data, it prevents crucial analyses of public expenditure and monitoring of equity and efficiency of public resources.

The data available online present numerous inconsistencies between the various tables, in terms of structure and in terms of data themselves, which makes utilization difficult and unreliable. For instance, data by institution show large amounts of missing or incoherent data: 464 schools showed more than three times as many students as they have places available; 93% of teachers have no information on their teaching degree, etc. While statistical tables seem to use estimates for these missing data, the lack of correspondence between the aggregated and disaggregated tables makes the use of data difficult.

As a result, as well as for other reasons related to institutional capacity and/or culture, the extensive amount of data collected and compiled, is little analysed and used for policy decisions. The wealth of information available in EMIS, if well managed and analysed, could constitute a solid basis for evidence-based decision-making.

3.3.3 Monitoring green and sustainable developments efforts of the education system

The National Strategy "European Moldova 2030" encourages partnerships at the local level to develop relevant community-based services to address various vulnerabilities and social risks, to reduce risks of climate change.

The energy efficiency projects were carried out within the National Programme "European Village" programme for 2024-2028 and other projects between the government and donor partners. Based on an energy audit, different institutions, including schools, kindergartens from community benefited from energy efficiency measures.



Box 8: From Focus Groups with Teachers and Representatives from the Department of Education

‘Our school is a big school. There are 750 children in the school. We have many children in our school from the neighbouring villages. Our school benefited from energy efficiency measures such as solar panels, efficient heating of the building. These measures significantly reduced the gas bills and improved education conditions, making them more comfortable for students and teachers’

Teacher

‘In the process of implementation of energy efficiency projects, we faced difficulties in renovation works. It depends on the selected economic agent, but there are frequent delays’

Chief of the Department of Education

A number of 46 schools will benefit from renovation works to ensure energy efficiency standards. The modernization will be done under the project Sustainable transition to energy efficiency in the Republic of Moldova (STEEM). It has a total budget of USD 54.5 million, of which 50 million is to be provided by the IBRD as a loan, and USD 4.5 million is a grant. The beneficiary educational institutions were selected in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Research, the list including the 35 model schools.

Despite considerable efforts towards the green transition in education, including programmes and projects between the government and donor partners to improve the energy efficiency of educational institutions’ infrastructure, adopt good practices regarding the sustainable development of the school environment, as well as introduce new subjects and modules addressing topics relevant to sustainable development and climate change, to date, there is no statistical data available that can track progress against implementation of actions on promoting green growth and sustainable development in the educational system of Moldova.



3.4 Institutional capacity


3.4.1 The “human factor”

Limited institutional capacity remains one of the most serious constraints to a well-functioning public sector and to inclusive and sustainable development. The Moldova Systematic Country Diagnostic Update (World Bank, 2021) and Digital Education Readiness Assessment (World Bank, 2021–22) identified that Moldova’s development continues to be hampered by **poor governance**, political pressure from vested interests, and the politicization of regulatory mandates. Governance is a challenge not only at the national level but also at sector levels, where the delivery of essential public services is hampered by the sub-optimal performance of key institutions. Strengthening systems and institutions, including through **capacity-building and digitalization**, is a key priority for the government and critical for the implementation of its reform agenda. In addition, **efforts are needed to build systems and institutions that align with the requirements of the EU**.

In a context of limited institutional capacity and lack of clear inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, the initiative capacity of individuals is critical to the smooth functioning of the system. The so-called ‘**human factor**’, i.e., the importance of the individual, is frequently mentioned as playing a key role in Moldova at all levels, from the central government to the schools, and in many domains. This means that many aspects of the functioning of the education system depend on the initiative, will and entrepreneurial spirit of its practitioners (as a consequence of missing links, or sometimes rules). Examples include the mobilisation of development partners around the school or the continuity in the social protection of children. On the other hand, on average, the involvement of the community rather than the individual is a challenge (Civil Society Organisations in education, 2024). The majority of parents show little interest in actively engaging in school activities, and local public administrations tend to escalate school issues to higher administrative authorities, perceiving the school as belonging to the district or government rather than the community (Gremalschi, 2017). Understanding how to reward and upscale good initiatives and engagement at the individual and community levels while also addressing the missing links from the central level is crucial for the effective governance of Moldova's education system.

3.4.2 School network optimisation and the model schools

Data on school and class sizes highlight the need to proceed with a degree of school network optimisation. However, given the political sensitiveness of this issue, the emphasis seems to be put on a ‘natural’ depletion of small schools, which would stem families choosing to send their children to better quality schools in the surroundings, namely the newly established model schools. Checking the realism of this assumption requires a precise assessment of the possible conditions and




impediments, including in terms of transportation services, (perceived) security and safety on the way to school, etc.

In early 2024, the MER launched a national project to establish a **Model Schools Network** in the country by renovating and fully equipping 35 general education institutions, one per rayon (UNICEF, 2024). The objective is to increase access to quality education for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those from **small rural communities** (Ibid.). The idea is for parents to voluntarily and gradually transfer their children from small, rural schools to model schools, thus allowing them to gain access to institutions that offer a better quality of education. At the same time, the gradual closure of the small schools that would remain without pupils would lead to **school network optimisation**. While the reform is comprehensive including **financial incentives** for the transport of teachers and students, parents remain concerned about their children commuting and being discriminated against in the model schools. Additionally, CSO representatives raise the question of past failures with transportation schemes under the management of local public authorities (LPAs), potential misallocation of funds favouring infrastructure over human resources, and doubts about whether this reform, given its high costs, should be prioritised over other measures (e.g., investing in after-school programmes). Similarly, development partners point to the importance of not deepening existing inequalities, developing teacher and principal capacities - including new and inclusive ways of teaching - ensuring accountability and effective communication with stakeholders as well as employing democratic school governance as determining factors of success for the reform. Developing parallel scenarios and transitory measures for non-model schools should also be an aspect to look further into.

Box 9: From various Focus Groups

‘There are only primary schools in our village. We do not have gymnasiums and Lyceum in our village, that’s why my child go to school in Lungu village, in Floresti. There are only advantages of attending a larger school. The classes are well equipped. There are teachers for all school subjects’

Parent



‘My third child attended the Lyceum in Anenii Noi. He likes to go to school. He goes to school by bus every day. I would like to mention that the driver of the bus is very polite, and he knows how to communicate with children’

Parent

Transportation issues, including for extra-curricular activities and children with special needs:

‘We come to school from the neighbouring village, it was snowy in winter. Last time my child couldn’t come to school for a week because the roads were snowy. At our school, there are two minibuses for transporting children. Two routes are not enough to transport children to school. Children from more distant villages must enter the minibus at 07:30. In winter, when it gets dark earlier, it is very difficult to send children to schools in another locality’

Parents

‘My child cannot remain for extracurricular activities because the bus leaves earlier. There is no public transport to get back home’ (Parents)

‘Lack of access to transportation is an issue that limits students’ participation in extracurricular activities: children must leave by bus after lessons. If a child wants to stay late, she will need another mode of transportation’

Representative of the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service



‘In our school, 70% of the children come from rural areas. Children whose locality is 5 km away, they have to wake up for school at 7 AM because the bus makes two round trips in the morning. There are not enough buses, a part of the parents, bring the children with their own transport. We have a small bus with 16 seats. The bus makes two routes to bring the children to out gymnasium, Places are limited in the bus. It is necessary to prioritise tasks in problem-solving of this issue’

School director

‘Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities can find change difficult, including moving to a new school. Change in the school environment can make them anxious. Not all teachers in a large school will be aware of the child’s difficulties’

Representative of the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service

‘Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities with partial inclusion will face difficulties with transportation issues due to the fact that the school buses leave at a specific time’.

There are no school buses adapted for children with physical disabilities’

Representative of the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service

‘Parental involvement in school takes a significant sense to meet the needs of children with disabilities. Due to lack of transportation, it will be more difficult to involve parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities in school life. If the parents are from another locality, they usually prefer to connect online for the parent’s conference meetings’

Representative of the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service



A limited of number of schools offer free meals to all children:


‘Not all schools offer free meals to all children, regardless of family income (including for children with special educational needs/disabilities who attend the Resource Centres for Inclusive Education)’

Representative of the Psycho-pedagogical Assistance Service

3.4.3 Teacher management

The most evident limitations of the teacher management cycle in Moldova have been evidenced in the inequality analysis: The system is experiencing **teacher shortages** due to **recruitment challenges** and the retirements linked to the **ageing teaching workforce**. The **migration of educators** abroad, coupled with the unattractiveness of the teaching profession and the consequent **low influx of new entries**, has created a considerable deficit in general education, estimated at 2 140 teachers by 2022 (with a total of 7 000 teachers missing in the education system) (SOURCE). In 2022, there was a demand for 1 345 teaching positions, yet only 611 individuals graduated, resulting in a **coverage of only 45%**. The gaps become even more pronounced when considering specific subject areas. In parallel, **performance-based management of teachers is limited in Moldova**. The salary policy has a generalised character and does not correlate directly or insufficiently correlates with specific performance criteria. This means that merely increasing teachers' salaries does not automatically enhance the quality of education and the attainment of educational quality objectives cannot be accomplished without supplementary incentive systems. The lack of a strategic, well-structured approach to certification and career progression reflects another governance issue present in the education system. In many cases, the teachers' and school leaders' participation in professional development courses is based on their own preferences, rather than on an actual assessment of their professional development needs or their students' learning needs. It is also unclear to what extent teachers' and school leaders' participation in professional development trainings and courses responds to schools' improvement priorities⁵⁴. The emphasis on

⁵⁴ An assessment of the professional development of teachers and school leaders, and curriculum and learning resources in the Republic of Moldova.



certification for salary increases, rather than on skill development, highlights a shortcoming in the current system (ETF teacher management system country profile, 2024).


The current system **lacks a comprehensive professional development approach**. **Traditional teaching methods** persist in pre-service teacher training, with a strong emphasis on theoretical content. This approach fails to sufficiently engage teaching methods that prioritise the needs of students, parents, and communities (Cerbușca, 2020a). **VET teachers** in particular **have less modern teaching skills** to provide action-oriented approaches, innovate, and rapidly respond to the demands of new technologies. In terms of in-service training, many educators view the mandatory courses for degree attainment as a mere means to secure salary increments, rather than recognising them as essential tools for fostering professional advancement (Beara & Petrović, 2020). In VET, most of the in-service teacher training programmes are not adjusted to the specifics of vocational teaching nor to the needs of VET teachers (Vodita, Ionascu-Cuciuc, & Hincu, 2022). **Pedagogical higher education** struggles to adapt to societal changes, making it difficult to cater to the needs and interests of young individuals. Traditional teaching methods persist in the pre-service teacher training, with a strong emphasis on theoretical content. This approach fails to engage students sufficiently as active and responsible participants in their own learning. There is a lack of exploration into teaching methods that prioritise the needs of students, parents, and communities (ETF, 2024)⁵⁵

Headteachers in general and in VET education are frequently individuals who **function more as local administrators** rather than as professional managers of the educational institution. The challenge of school leadership reflects weak governance, particularly in how school management is structured. At the general education level, the ‘one building – one head’ principle limits flexibility and effectiveness, thereby impacting the responsibilities and obligations of managers⁵⁶, and shows a lack of attention to adaptive governance models (ProDidactica, 2016).

Despite the extensive efforts and implementation of incentive measures, the **social standing of educators and the teaching profession is gradually declining** due to various economic, social, and cultural factors. Teachers are influenced by societal perceptions that teaching is a poorly compensated profession with limited opportunities for professional advancement (Negură, 2018).

⁵⁵ [ETF 2024. Teacher management system country profile.](#)

⁵⁶ Human resources development in education: from strategic ideas to sustainable actions. Study elaborated within the thematic project, with the financial support of Open Society Foundations, offered through Soros Foundation-Moldova http://prodidactica.md/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Dezvoltarea_resurselor_umane_%C3%AEn_educa%C8%9Bie.pdf.



Individual, school-related **data on teachers**, including vacancies by subject, territory etc. and financial information on the salaries are not comprehensively integrated and/or globally analysed in EMIS, which poses difficulties in promoting evidence-based reforms for teachers.

Addressing teacher shortages, particularly in rural areas, is a priority for the MER. There are **several measures in place to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession**: (i) free accommodation and utilities in the cold seasons for teachers working in rural areas, (ii) a MDL 200 000 lump-sum given in two instalments for the first five years of the professional life of the specialists in the system, (iii) a double scholarship for graduates in pedagogical universities, (iv), a decrease in workload down to 75% for young teachers, (v) a free requalification scheme, (vi) a mentorship scheme organised by NIEL for young teachers and those moving to larger or model schools, and (vii), methodological support for long and short-term planning. It remains to be analysed how **comprehensive** the measures are, including their **evidence base** and the **monitoring mechanisms** envisaged for the evaluation of their effectiveness and efficiency. Moreover, the **teachers' assembly** – used to date as a consultation instrument or a forum to announce changes – could become a systematic channel for the discussion of teachers' issues and their **participation in decision-making**.

3.5 Digitalisation of and within the education system

The World Bank (2022) evaluation of digital education in the Republic of Moldova reveals that the education system's readiness for digital transformation is currently classified as **emerging**, which is the second stage out of four levels assessing the preparation for digital education from latent to advanced.

Digital infrastructure and environment. One of the main challenges for digitalisation in the Moldovan education sector is **outdated ICT infrastructure and equipment**. The lack of access to the Internet, particularly in rural areas, limits the availability of ICT resources for educational purposes. Additionally, financial resources are not sufficiently allocated for the provision of technical support and infrastructure maintenance in schools. Finally, the practice of subscribing to system software, general applications, and educational software from specialised providers is still not widely adopted (Coşuleanu, Grecu, & Ţurcan, 2023).



Box 10: From Focus Group with Teachers

‘There is a lack of computers of new generation in our school. Computers in our school are mainly used for lessons of Informatics. There are no laptops in our schools. I taught the optional subject: graphic design, that required to have a laptop, where special programs can be installed. The students were very motivated to attend this subject. But because there were no laptops in the school, the subject was cancelled’.

Teachers’ competences, pedagogies and impact on learners. Although some progress has been made, the MER (2023) estimates that **a relatively large number of educators (approximately 40%) remain sceptical about the impact of information technologies**, particularly on enhancing learning outcomes. Training programmes for teachers have yet to be updated in accordance with the *Digital Competence Framework for Educators*. Training is still centred around the ‘outdated’ concept of digital literacy of education staff, which should be shifted to **digital pedagogy** for fostering sustainable learning (Institutul de Politici Publice, 2021). At the same time, disparities exist in teacher training across different levels of education. VET faces a critical shortage of dedicated and qualified ICT staff (ETF, 2019). The abundance of online information raises the issue of self-instruction. It is, therefore, crucial to incorporate modules on appropriate self-instruction into in-service teacher training programmes (Cerbuşca, 2020b).

Digitalisation of learning content. The transformation of educational materials (textbooks, guidelines, assessment tests, learning portfolios, etc.) into digital format, along with the creation of digital resources, is essential for the advancement of education. It is estimated that only 27% of learning content is accessible online to students, teachers, and other users in general education in Moldova (Cerbuşca, 2020b). In addition, this refers mainly to availability of digital versions of documents (in PDF), not to digitally designed support resources. Additionally, there is a lack of methodological guides to assist in the effective navigation through multiple online resources and their appropriate utilisation (Ibid.).



Policy measures, financing, and governance for the digitalisation of education systems

Fragmented approach to digitalisation. Digitalisation strategies and plans are not sufficiently aligned and, more importantly, there are no clear mechanisms for monitoring and measuring impact (World Bank, 2022). The digitalisation of education should extend beyond the limits of the sector and interact with the economy, labour market, infrastructure, etc. Moreover, to date, strategic and operational interventions have focused predominantly on general education. For example, official data on digitalisation in-service teacher training are not collected/published for VET and higher education, but only for general education (ETF, 2019). The digitalisation of education as an integrated and quality process cannot be achieved without considering other levels of education and cross-sectoral approaches.

Child safety online. The digitalisation of education is accompanied by the increasing exposure of children to the **risks existing in the online environment**, but also to the proliferation of irresponsible behaviours such as **cyberbullying**. In Moldova, there are regulations in place to protect children and young people from these dangers. However, the regulations lag in application due to the limited awareness among educational subjects and the general public about online dangers as well as a lack of alignment with international standards, particularly in a few weak areas (USAID, 2022). Firstly, there is a lack of explicit mechanisms for reporting illegal content online at an early stage. Secondly, teacher training lacks dedicated modules on online safety. Finally, there is insufficient collaboration between entities and professionals, hindering a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to addressing cases.



Recommendations


1. School System Reforms and Model Schools

Area of Recommendation: Holistic analysis of small schools

- **Objective:** Improve efficiency and quality in small schools through optimized resource allocation.
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short/Mid-term (2025, first 9 months):*
 - Conduct a geographic and financial analysis of small schools, including mapping and funding assessments pre- and post-funding formula implementation, taking into account the enrolment changes from new school year 2025/26
 - Complete analysis, assess outcomes, and provide actionable recommendations

Area of Recommendation: Reliable transportation and equity in access to model schools

- **Objective:** Ensure equitable access to model schools for all students, especially those from distant areas.
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (2025):*
 - Conduct a feasibility study on transportation needs in collaboration with local authorities and school boards.
 - Pay attention to the potential discrimination effect for children coming from distant areas, and explore the need for additional incentives (e.g. school feeding, boarding...)
 - *Medium-term (1–2 years):*
 - Secure funding and pilot transportation programmes in regions with identified needs.
 - Monitor the model schools' operations closely during the first three years to assess and address any discrimination effects.
 - *Long-term (2027):*

- 
- Perform a comprehensive review and revision process, co-led by MER and main development partners, with stakeholder involvement, with findings possibly leading to the integration of the transportation scheme into a more comprehensive incentive package/ support framework to families

Area of Recommendation: Improved learning environment at school

- **Objective:** Enhance Digital Infrastructure and Access, and Expand Green Transition Initiatives in schools
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (2025, September):*
 - through inter-ministerial collaboration, offer an incentive for internet providers to increase high-speed internet coverage to a decided share (% to be discussed) of rural schools through targeted investments and public-private partnerships. Prioritize regions with the most significant connectivity gaps to ensure equitable digital access.
 - Conduct an environmental impact assessment for schools to identify areas for improvement in energy efficiency, waste management, and water conservation.
 - *Mid-term (Sept 2026):*
 - provide digital devices (e.g., tablets, laptops) to at least 70% of students in disadvantaged areas through a government-subsidized programme, especially for schools with high levels of economic deprivation and vulnerable populations.
 - Launch a Green Schools Initiative in partnership with local communities and donors to retrofit around 100 schools with energy-efficient infrastructure, sustainable water systems, and recycling schemes, prioritising schools in climate-vulnerable areas.
 - *Long-term (2027/28):*
 - Set a target for 50% of schools to implement basic green practices by 2027/28.



2. Teachers' recruitment and development

Area of Recommendation: Teacher Incentives and Recruitment

- **Objective:** Develop a comprehensive, competitive and fair compensation system (combining salary and incentive) to attract and retain quality teachers.
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (2025, 6–12 months):*
 - Undertake a comprehensive study of the teacher financial support system, including both detailed salary analysis and incentive package, avoiding piecemeal approaches and isolated adjustments
 - Conduct a qualitative analysis, through interviews and focus groups, of the determining factors of retention, beyond financial aspects
 - *Medium-term (1–2 years)*
 - Roll out an updated, competitive incentive system based on these findings.
 - Establish a retention strategy, aiming for a 20% turnover reduction, in underserved areas, by providing housing support, and as possible additional financial incentives related to length of service, and career advancement opportunities

Area of Recommendation: Teacher training, support and involvement

- **Objective:** Enhance digital and other competencies as well as commitment of teachers, especially in underserved areas.
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (2025)*
 - Develop the Teachers' Assembly into a systematic channel for discussing teachers' issues and their participation in decision-making
 - Elaborate and implement a national teacher training programme focused on digital competencies and inclusive education, with annual sessions, prioritizing teachers in rural areas.

- *Medium term (2026 onwards)*
- Introduce a targeted professional development programme, including annual digital training sessions, for teachers in remote areas, with a target of 80% teacher participation and possibly some thresholds for teachers with more seniority

3. Support for vulnerable children and inclusive education

Area of Recommendation: Vulnerable children concept and data

- **Objective:** Establish a unified definition of vulnerability and integrate it into EMIS for proper monitoring and resource targeting.
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (2025, first 6 months)*
 - Standardize the definition of vulnerability with social services
 - Integrate disaggregated data by gender, age, location and other variables enabling to better understand the vulnerability profile of children into EMIS.
 - *Medium-term (2025/2026):*
 - Allocate (additional) specific funds for programmes targeting vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Area of Recommendation: Multi-stakeholder Coordination Frameworks for refugee children

- **Objective:** Enhance cross-country and inter-ministerial collaboration to support refugee children.
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (2025, first 6 months)*
 - Strengthen national coordination between education and social services through formalized frameworks.

- Set up a cross-country, potentially inter-ministerial coordination mechanism for monitoring and reaching out to Ukrainian refugee children.
- *Timeline: Immediate (0–6 months)* – Set up a task force, ensuring cross-country coordination.
- *Medium-term (1 year)* – Develop a continuous monitoring system to ensure refugees’ needs are being met, and children’s access to school is ensured
- *Medium-term (2025/2026)*
 - Ensure coordinated case management, explore the possibility to use shared digital tools for case management and assess effectiveness of the new operational framework.

Area of Recommendation: Child Safety, at school and on-line

- **Objective:** Prevent child risk situations and create a comprehensive safety framework for children, on-line and at school
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (first months of 2025)*
 - Expand the network of highly specialised services for vulnerable children to prevent child risk situations (abandonment, abuse, neglect)
 - Analyse the situation of children left behind by migrant parents to prevent abandonment and neglect
 - Convene stakeholder meetings to discuss best practices, including restorative versus punitive approaches.
 - *Medium-term (2025/2026)*
 - Engage CSOs to co-design anti-bullying initiatives with restorative approaches, and to reach, not only children, but also their parents in the educational process
 - Integrate online safety modules into the national curriculum at all levels (from primary), focusing on safe internet use, cyberbullying prevention, and digital literacy

- Develop a cooperation framework for schools, communities, and social services to provide inclusive education and after-school activities
- Secure, planning and finance-wise, extra-curricular activity availability
- Roll out the abovementioned innovative approaches and tools, incl. anti-bullying pilot programmes, and monitor impact
- Increase capacity-building efforts for professionals working with vulnerable children (e.g., those with special educational needs, children exposed to abuse, neglect, or exploitation).

- *Long term (2026/2027 onwards)*

- Develop a centralised policy on digital safety that includes teacher training, parental guidance materials, and ongoing monitoring of students' online activity, particularly in schools with high rates of digital device usage.

Area of recommendation: Inclusion and Integration into Education

- **Objectives:** Continue efforts to integrate children with disabilities or specificities into mainstream schooling and provide support for their inclusion in secondary and vocational education.
 - Strengthen support programmes for children with special educational needs, ensuring access to quality education.
 - Ensure integration and **social inclusion of national minorities**
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (2025, first 6 months)*
 - Develop guidelines for the implementation of Multilingual Education Models.
 - Identify needs for additional teachers (and adjust recruitment framework as necessary)
 - *Medium-term (2025/2026)*

- Train teachers
- Pilot the Multilingual Education models
- Secure funding for larger scale implementation of multilingual education models

4. Financial Management and Budget Allocation

Area of Recommendation: Strategic Budget Optimisation

- **Objective:** Address budget underspending and improve resource allocation to meet urban-rural educational needs.
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (2025, first 6 months):*
 - Conduct an audit to identify underspending areas
 - Assess the reality of the financial disadvantage of small schools before proposing any changes to the funding formula.

Area of Recommendation: Financial and Policy Transparency

- **Objective:** Enhance accountability in fund allocation, especially for inclusive education.
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short term (2025, first six months):* design and circulate a transparent reporting framework for all levels from schools to ministry
 - *Mid-term (2025/26):*
 - Pilot the use of this transparent reporting framework in a limited number of regions
 - standardize financial management training for local officials.

5. Governance and Reform Implementation

Area of Recommendation: RESTART Reform inspiration

- **Objective:** Establish a clear framework and ensure adequate resources for local structures under the Ministry of Education.
- **Actions and timeline:**

- *Mid-term (2025/26)*
 - Finalise stakeholder consultations and define core objectives of a re-centralisation process.
 - Develop asset and HR transfer mechanism from LPAs to MER.

Area of Recommendation: Inter-institutional Collaboration and Coordination

- **Objective:** Strengthen Local Education Group (LEG) and teacher assembly roles in reform implementation.
- **Actions and timeline:**
 - *Short-term (2025):*
 - Redesign LEG mandate, organize monthly meetings, and designate MER as the coordinating authority (Review and clarify the operational mandate of the LEG, including concrete objectives, time-bound tasks and working modalities and have it endorsed by all members; Organise monthly or bi-monthly LEG technical meetings to discuss ongoing projects, specific education policy issues and/or reform status);
 - Utilise the Teachers' Assembly more systematically as a forum for discussion and decision-making regarding educational reforms.
 - Build ministerial institutional capacity and train MER middle and high managers to lead a development partners group
 - *Long-term (2027) – Establish LEG as the central reform body.*

6. Data Management and Use

Area of Recommendation: Enhanced Data Management

- **Objective:** Improve EMIS data processing and accessibility for detailed analysis of inequality and ensure data integration with financial records to support analysis of equity and efficiency of public resources.
- **Actions:**

- Publish online data that is checked beforehand, including estimates and/or metadata for missing data, and ensure consistency between aggregated statistical table and tables disaggregated by school;
- Build a clear catalogue of data to be published online, and build tables systematically on a standard template;
- Whenever possible, include dimensions linked to gender, age, income, and residence;
- Integrate exam results data from the National Agency for Curriculum and Evaluation and financial data from the Ministry of Finance.

- **Timeline:**

- *Short-term (2025, first 6 months)* – Build data catalogue and table templates and begin data category expansion. Liaise with NACE and MoF to plan integration.
- *Medium-term (2025)* – Complete training and data integration.

Area of Recommendation: Data Use in Policy Development

- **Objective:** Use EMIS data effectively to inform education policies and monitoring.
- **Actions:**
 - Conduct analyses comparing private and public educational outcomes to guide policy adaptations.
 - Conduct analyses on the equity of public resources for education (including Benefit Incidence Analyses)
 - Monitor the impact of the incentives in the school and LPA funding formulas.
 - Monitor the utilisation of secondary teachers in the context of optimisation of the school network and of improving efficiency.



Conclusion

The proposed recommendations aim to support the Ministry of Education and Research in identifying new levers for progress and engaging with key change agents. They are designed to help prioritise actions, allocate resources more effectively, and define clear strategies for improvement across the education system. Each cluster focuses on a specific reform area and sets out actionable measures that can be implemented progressively to build a more inclusive, effective and efficient education system in Moldova.



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Annexes

Statistical Annex

Table 5: General data on the education system

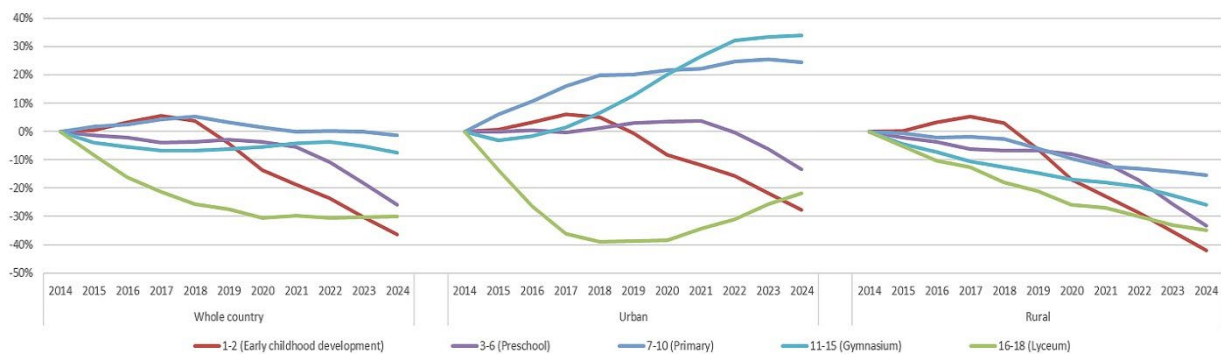
Education data per level, indicator and year				
1. Early education				
Indicators	2018	2019	2020	2021
Early education institutions, total number	1,484	1,486	1,485	1,483
Number of children, total	149,513	149,702	134,158	137,113
Number of pedagogical-educative staff (managing staff and educators)	11,660	11,609	11,610	11,678
Enrolment rate	70.1	72.8	67.4	73.2
2. General secondary education				
2.1. Primary education				
Primary institutions, total number	103	104	106	99
Number of pupils, total	139,612	139,179	137,332	137,942
Number of teachers, total	7,771	7,744	7,579	7,525
Gross enrolment ratio	104.3	106.3	106.5	1225
2.2. Gymnasium education and Lyceum education				
Gymnasiums, total number	780	783	787	786
Number of pupils, total	159427	158,637	159979	160857
Lyceums, total number	348	353	336	338
Number of pupils, total	35120	35328	37064	37914

Number of teachers, total (gymnasium + lyceum)	19,223	18,961	18,536	17,855
Enrolment rate: Lower Secondary education	106.2	104.9	104.3	104.5
Enrolment rate: Upper Secondary education	76.5	79.5	81.8	84.6
Number of pupils, total	1,041.00	1,011.00	1,019.00	992.00
3. Vocational Education				
3.1. Secondary vocational education (vocational schools)				
Vocational schools, total number	42	42	42	42
Number of students, total	13,932	13,458	13,880	13,855
Number of teachers, total	1,582	1,470	1,393	1,338
3.2 Postsecondary vocational and postsecondary non-tertiary education (colleges)				
Colleges, total number	34	36	36	36
Total number of students	17,379	17,665	18,400	19,401
Number of teachers, total	1,465	1,444	1,359	1,449
3.3 Secondary vocational education with integrated programmes (centres of excellence)				
Centres of excellence, total	13	13	13	13
Total number of students	13,037	12,441	12,563	12,742
4. Tertiary education (ISCED 5-8)				
Number of higher education institutions, total	29	27	24	24
Number of students, total	60,608	56,840	59,033	59,647
Enrolment rate	40.8	41.0	44.9	49.4
Bachelor's or equivalent				



Number of students, total	46,779	43,096	44,827	45,670
Number of teachers, total	4,545	4,291	4,114	4,020
Master's or equivalent				
Number of students, total	17,895	18,314	18,801	19,131
Doctoral education or equivalent				
Number of students, total	2,073	2,256	2,330	2,274

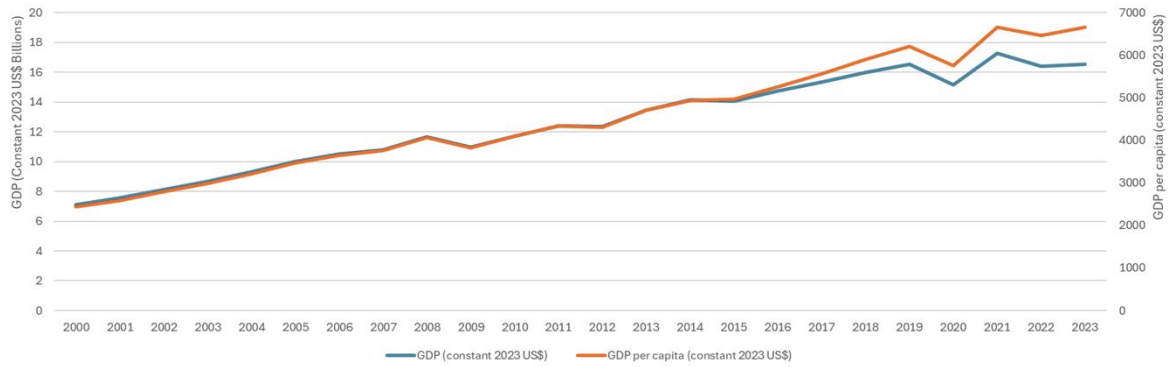
Figure 14: Evolution of the population by education level age group, 2014-2024



Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ETF's calculations

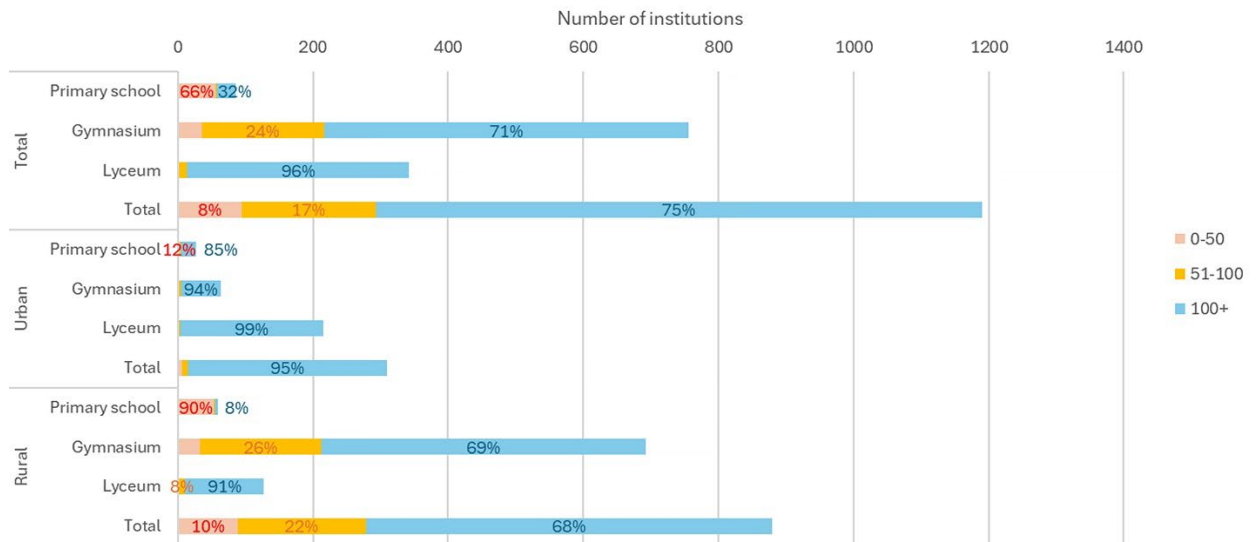


Figure 15: GDP and GDP per capita, 2000-2023



Source: World Bank (data.worldbank.org, accessed on Oct. 30, 2024)

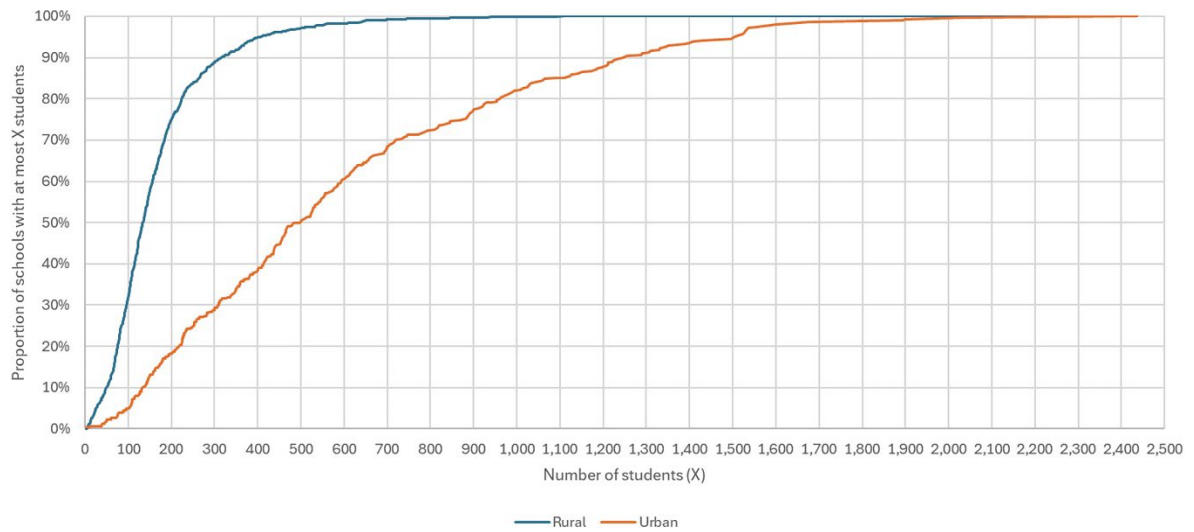
Figure 16: Distribution of primary and general secondary education institutions by size and type, 2023/24



Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ETF's calculations

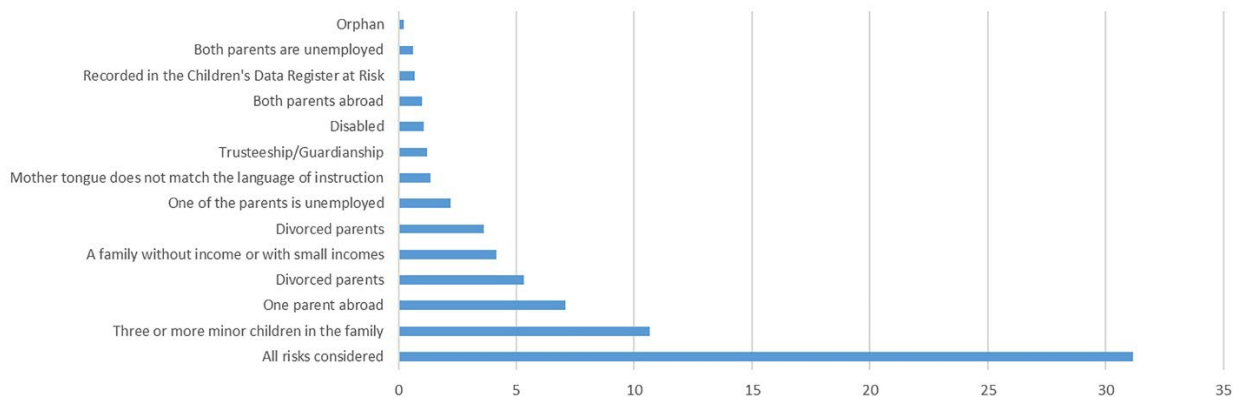


Figure 17: Cumulative distribution of primary and general secondary institutions by number of students, by area, 2023/24



Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ETF's calculations

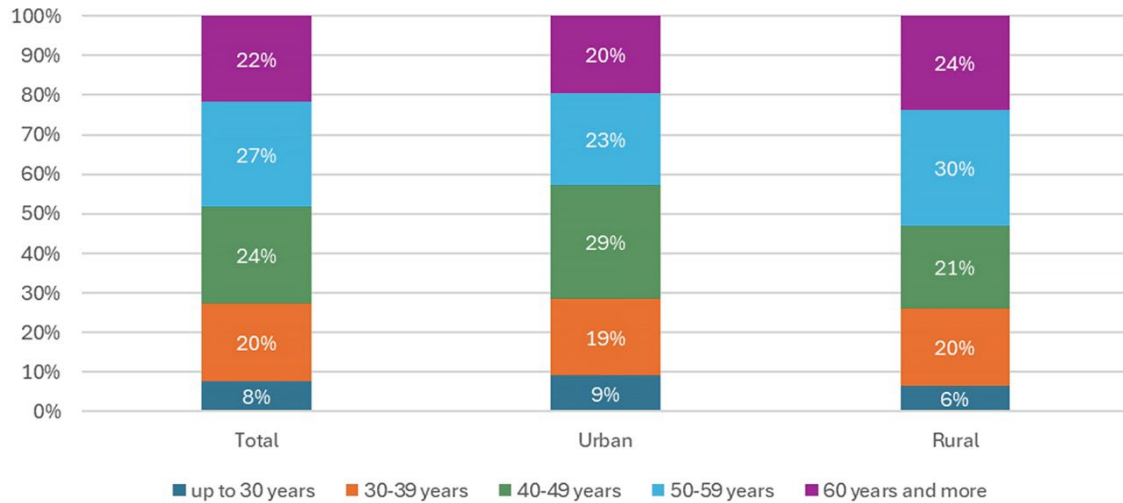
Figure 18: Proportion of students at risk by type of risk, 2023/24



Source: National Bureau of Statistics

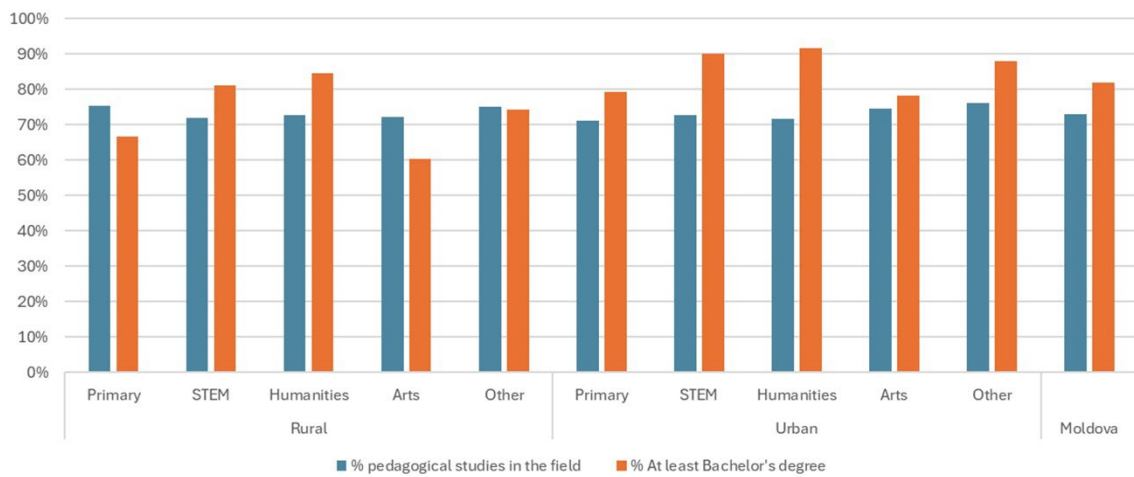


Figure 19: Pedagogical staff in primary and general secondary institutions by age group and area, 2023/24



Source: National Bureau of Statistics and ETF's calculations

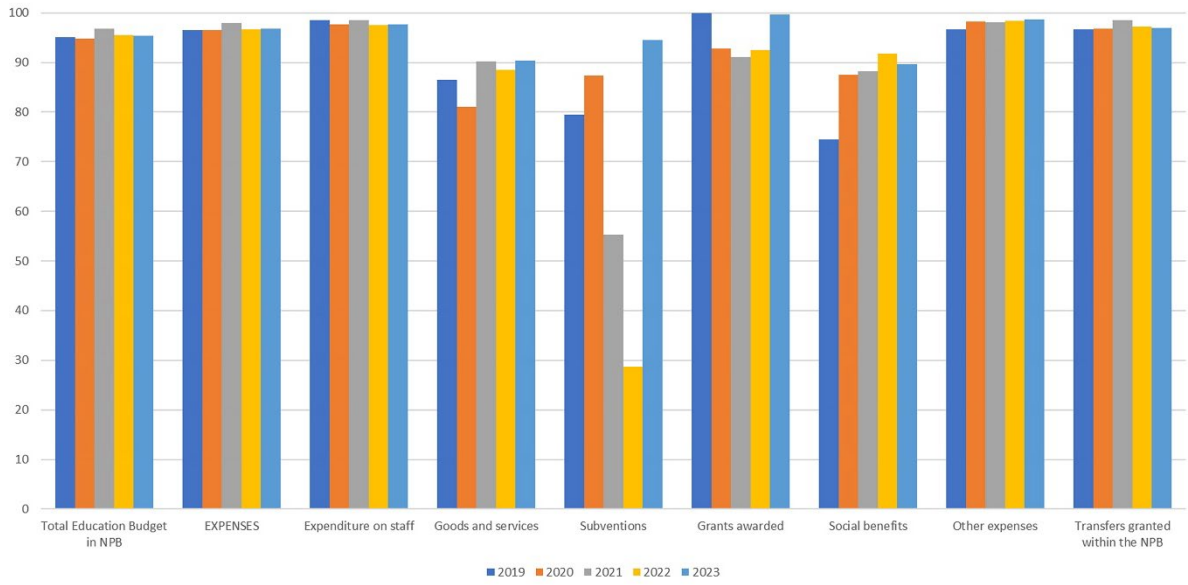
Figure 20: Proportion of teachers with adequate pedagogical and academic training, by subject area and area, 2023/24



Source: EMIS data and ETF's calculation.



Figure 21: Education budget execution rate by economic classification, 2019-2023



Source: Ministry of Finance and ETF's calculations.

Table 6: Aid activities as per the Aid Management Platform, by recipient agency and donor agency

(Millions EUR)	Commitments	Disbursements to date
By Recipient agency		
Government of Republic of Moldova	20.0	0.0
Ministry of Education and Research	63.7	5.2
Other ministry/ministries	0.1	0.1
Other public administration	1.7	0.7
Local authority	1.0	1.0
University	2.8	2.6
School or other educational institution	0.3	0.3
NGO	3.3	0.9
Multiple beneficiaries	9.9	3.8
Other	2.1	1.2
Total	105.0	15.7
By donor agency		
World Bank	55.5	0.3
Bilateral	31.8	7.4
European Commission or other EU agency	10.0	3.6
UN agency	7.5	4.3
NGO	0.1	0.1
Total	105.0	15.7

Source: Aid Management Platform database, accessed on November 4, 2024, and ETF's calculations

Table 7: Education and General Budget Support ODA disbursements, current USD millions, 2019-2022

Current USD millions	Education Sector				Education Sector + GBS			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
Commitments	55.8	96.1	68.3	92.1	56.2	124.0	82.8	122.1
ODA Grants	55.8	60.7	68.3	79.3	55.8	60.7	68.3	99.6
ODA Loans	0.0	35.5	0.0	12.8	2.8	93.0	28.9	49.9
DAC countries	12.9	10.7	14.1	18.9	12.9	10.7	14.1	22.4
ODA Grants	12.9	10.7	14.1	18.9	12.9	10.7	14.1	18.9
ODA Loans					0.0	0.0	0.0	3.5
Multilateral organisations	0.3	35.8	0.4	24.2	0.7	63.6	14.8	48.8
ODA Grants	0.3	0.3	0.4	11.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	29.8
ODA Loans	0.0	35.5	0.0	12.8	0.4	63.3	14.4	19.0
Non-DAC countries	42.6	49.7	53.8	49.0	42.6	49.7	53.8	50.9
ODA Grants	42.6	49.7	53.8	49.0	42.6	49.7	53.8	50.9
ODA Loans					2.3	29.7	14.4	27.4
Disbursements	67.8	72.0	77.4	87.2	70.3	102.5	91.5	113.1
Multilateral organisations	0.3	35.8	0.4	24.2	0.7	63.6	14.8	48.8
ODA Grants	64.1	64.9	71.4	68.7	66.2	66.8	71.4	85.4
ODA Loans	3.7	7.1	6.0	18.5	4.2	35.7	20.1	27.6
DAC countries	14.7	12.3	14.0	15.1	14.7	12.3	14.0	18.4
ODA Grants	14.7	12.3	14.0	15.1	14.7	12.3	14.0	15.1



ODA Loans					0.0	0.0	0.0	3.3
Multilateral organisations	10.4	10.0	9.4	20.6	13.0	40.5	23.5	41.3
ODA Grants	6.7	2.9	3.4	2.1	8.8	4.9	3.4	17.0
ODA Loans	3.7	7.1	6.0	18.5	4.2	35.7	20.1	24.3
Non-DAC countries	42.7	49.7	54.0	51.6	42.7	49.7	54.0	53.3
ODA Grants	42.7	49.7	54.0	51.6	42.7	49.7	54.0	53.3
ODA Loans	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0				

Source: OECD DAC Creditor Reporting System, accessed on November 4, 2024 and ETF's calculations.
 Note: The share of education in the total government expenditure was applied to the General Budget Support disbursements amounts to estimate their contributions to the education sector. For commitments, the average share over 2019-2022 was used.

Table 8: ODA disbursements by sector, 2019–2022 (constant 2022 USD million)

Time period	2019	2020	2021	2022
All sectors	396.9	624.7	647.7	972.0
Sector allocable	365.5	420.8	551.1	668.4
Social infrastructure and services	206.8	222.0	347.3	372.4
Education	71.3	73.5	74.7	87.2
Health	20.2	30.1	63.3	23.9
Population policies/Programmes & reproductive health	0.9	5.1	8.5	11.0
Water supply & sanitation	8.9	24.7	6.5	21.9



Government and civil society	94.7	72.2	169.4	133.7
Other social infrastructure and services	10.8	16.3	24.8	94.7
Economic infrastructure and services	89.4	107.9	81.4	199.4
Transport and storage	51.0	76.8	32.2	111.1
Communications	6.2	6.8	7.4	6.1
Energy	9.6	6.6	12.8	32.7
Banking and financial services	7.1	0.2	8.2	31.6
Business and other services	15.5	17.4	20.8	17.9
Production sectors	49.4	57.5	65.1	42.8
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	26.0	5.3	37.7	39.9
Industry, mining, construction	13.6	51.5	25.9	2.5
Trade policies and regulations	9.6	0.8	1.5	0.4
Tourism	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Multi-sector / Cross-cutting	19.9	33.4	57.3	53.9
General environment protection	1.7	0.9	2.4	2.8
Other multisector	18.3	32.5	54.9	51.1
Commodity aid / General programme assistance	14.3	179.3	81.5	163.7
General budget support	14.2	179.2	81.5	163.6
Humanitarian aid	0.8	1.0	0.2	122.8
Education + GBS contribution to education	73.9	104.3	88.0	113.1



Education as % of total	18%	12%	12%	9%
Education as % of total (including GBS)	19%	17%	14%	12%

Budgetary annex

Table 9: Programmes and sub-programmes in the field of education

Program	Subprogram	Code	Function
88		88	Education
88	01	8801	Education and research policy and management
88	02	8802	Early childhood education
88	03	8803	Primary education
88	04	8804	Secondary education
88	05	8805	Special education
88	06	8806	Secondary education
88	07	8807	Applied scientific research in public education and educational services
88	08	8808	Secondary vocational-technical secondary education
88	09	8809	Post-secondary vocational-technical education
88	10	8810	Higher education
88	11	8811	Postgraduate education
88	12	8812	Staff capacity development
88	13	8813	General services in education
88	14	8814	Out-of-school education and support for talented students



88	15	8815	Curriculum
88	16	8816	Quality assurance in education
88	17	8817	State provision of education at local level

Source: MoF Order 208/2015, Annex 7



Table 10: State financing by level of education and source of funding

State financing by Level of Education and Source of Funding, MDL (millions)																				
Description	2019				2020				2021				2022				2023			
	Annual Budget	Revised Budget	Actual Executed	Actual Executed, % of Revised Budget	Annual Budget	Revised Budget	Actual Executed	Actual Executed, % of Revised Budget	Annual Budget	Revised Budget	Actual Executed	Actual Executed, % of Revised Budget	Annual Budget	Revised Budget	Actual Executed	Actual Executed, % of Revised Budget	Annual Budget, mil MDL	Revised Budget, mil MDL	Actual Executed, mil MDL	Actual Executed, % of Revised Budget
Total resources for education State budget	10,610.10	11,572.10	11,045.60	95.45	12,362.20	12,365.30	11,887.00	96.13	12,625.80	12,744.90	12,453.10	97.71	13,655.40	15,156.40	14,669.80	96.79	17,053.90	18,044.20	17,476.00	96.85
incl:																				
general resources	10,184.50	11,351.40	10,900.90	96.03	11,963.10	12,074.00	11,710.10	96.99	12,355.20	12,482.00	12,266.70	98.28	13,215.40	14,916.10	14,492.80	97.16	16,846.10	17,805.80	17,318.10	97.26
resources of funded projects																				
from external sources	390.2	185.6	116.1	62.55	364.8	260.3	154.4	59.32	235.1	228.1	154.2	67.6	399.3	210.2	150.1	71.41	182.1	210.8	135	64.04
revenue collected	35.4	35.1	28.6	81.48	34.3	31	22.5	72.58	35.5	41.1	32.2	78.35	40.7	30.1	26.9	89.37	25.7	27.6	22.9	82.97
State financing by Level of Education and Source of Funding, %																				
Total resources for education State budget	100	100	100		100	100	100		100	100	100		100	100	100		100	100	100	
incl:																				
general resources	95.99	98.09	98.69	0.6	96.77	97.64	98.51	0.87	97.86	97.94	98.5	0.57	96.78	98.41	98.79	0.38	98.78	98.68	99.1	0.42
resources of funded projects								0												
from external sources	3.68	1.6	1.05	-0.55	2.95	2.11	1.3	-0.81	1.86	1.79	1.24	-0.55	2.92	1.39	1.02	-0.36	1.07	1.17	0.77	-0.4
revenue collected	0.33	0.3	0.26	-0.04	0.28	31	0.19	-8.5	0.28	0.32	0.26	-0.06	0.3	0.2	0.18	-0.02	0.15	0.15	0.13	-0.02

Scholarships

(Government Decision No 1009/September 2006)

Table 11: Amounts of scholarships for higher education students (cycle I, cycle II, integrated studies, medical and pharmaceutical education), MDL

No	Categories of scholarships	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1.	Category I/10%	840	880	925	945	1010	1170	1235
2.	Category II/20%	715	750	790	810	865	1000	1055
3.	Category III/70%	660	690	725	740	790	915	970
II.	Social scholarship	440	465	490	500	535	620	645
III.	Cycle II	900	945	990	1015	1085	1255	1325

In higher education, the size of the scholarship of students of the terminal years and all students of the specialties of agriculture and medicine with an increase of 20%.

Table 12: Amounts of merit scholarships for higher education students (cycle I, cycle II, integrated studies, medical and pharmaceutical education), MDL

No	Categories of scholarships	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1.	Republic Scholarship	1455	1525	1600	1640	1755	2030	4060
2.	President Scholarship	1320	1385	1455	1490	1595	1845	3690
3.	Government Scholarship	1210	1270	1335	1365	1460	1690	3380

Table 13: The amounts of the scholarship for students from postsecondary vocational institutions and postsecondary non-tertiary, secondary technical professional, MDL

№	Categories of scholarships	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1.	Republic Scholarship	660	690	725	740	790	915	970
2.	President Scholarship	550	575	605	620	665	770	815
3.	Government Scholarship	505	530	555	570	610	705	745
II.	Social scholarship	385	405	425	435	465	540	570

Table 14: Amounts of merit scholarships for students in post-secondary technical vocational education and postsecondary nontertiary, secondary technical professional, MDL

№	Categories of scholarships	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1.	President Scholarship	1025	1075	1130	1155	1235	1430	2860
2.	Gaudeamus	880	920	965	990	1060	1230	2460

Table 15: Scholarships for higher education students – cycle III (higher doctoral studies), resident doctors, clinical secondary doctors, as well as for postdoctoral students, MDL

No	Categories of scholarships	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
1.	First-year doctoral students enrolled immediately after graduation and those with less than three years of work experience	1155	1215	1245	1330	1430	1660	1830
2.	Doctoral students in year II enrolled immediately after graduation and those with work experience less than three years	1280	1345	1375	1470	1570	1820	2010
3.	Doctoral students from year III of studies nominated in points 1 and 2 of this table and doctoral students from years I-III of studies who until doctoral enrolment had a seniority in work of that a little three years	1325	1390	1420	1520	1720	1990	2190
II.	Postdoctoral students working on the thesis of doctor habilitatus	In the size of an average salary received before enrolment for postdoctoral work, but not more than the average monthly salary per economy from the previous year.						

Table 16: Expenditure on Scholarships, MDL

2023	Approved	Revised	Executed	Executed/ Revised	
Scholarships	368,849.7	376,978.1	367,408.0	-9,570.1	97.5
Scholarships	349,941.0	326,595.5	318,956.8	-7,638.7	97.7
Scholarships for local students	349,724.4	324,571.4	317,146.9	-7,424.5	97.7
Scholarships for students from abroad	216.6	2,024.1	1,809.8	-214.3	89.4
Social scholarships	9,200.5	10,704.2	10,237.7	-466.5	95.6
Other payments associated with scholarships	9,708.2	39,678.4	38,213.5	-1,464.9	96.3
2022					
Scholarships	337,167.8	312,159.3	302,746.2	-9,413.1	97.0
Scholarships	305,528.2	284,563.0	279,978.9	-4,584.1	98.4
Scholarships for local students	303,533.7	282,864.6	278,327.7	-4,536.9	98.4
Scholarships for students from abroad	1,994.5	1,698.4	1,651.2	-47.2	97.2
Social scholarships	9,209.5	7,663.4	7,582.8	-80.6	98.9
Other payments associated with scholarships	22,430.1	19,932.9	15,184.6	-4,748.3	76.2
2021					
Scholarships	317,063.9	304,107.4	286,563.2	-17,544.2	94.23
Scholarships	288,436.3	279,647.3	265,919.0	-13,728.3	95.09
Scholarships for local students	286,468.8	277,679.7	264,374.5	-13,305.2	95.21
Scholarships for students from abroad	1,967.5	1,967.5	1,544.5	-423.0	78.50



Social scholarships	8,659.6	8,250.1	7,019.9	-1,230.2	85.09
Other payments associated with scholarships	19,968.0	16,210.0	13,624.4	-2,585.6	84.05
2020					
Scholarships	311,085.60	279,549.40	269,411.70	-10,137.70	96.37
Scholarships	283,858.30	256,030.60	252,336.70	-3,693.90	98.56
Scholarships for local students	281,119.00	254,520.30	250,844.80	-3,675.50	98.56
Scholarships for students from abroad	2,138.40	1,508.40	1,491.00	-17.40	98.85
Social scholarships	8,754.00	6,464.00	6,235.00	-229.00	96.46
Other payments associated with scholarships	18,483.00	17,054.80	10,839.00	-6,215.80	63.55
2019					
Scholarships	302,998.00	276,961.00	262,627.50	-14,333.50	94.82
Scholarships	278,761.00	253,404.70	245,523.60	-7,881.10	96.89
Scholarships for local students	277,337.60	251,909.90	244,214.60	-7,695.30	96.95
Scholarships for students from abroad	1,423.00	1,494.80	1,309.00	-185.80	87.57
Social scholarships	5,257.00	7,837.20	7,062.00	-775.20	90.11
Other payments associated with scholarships	18,978.60	15,710.10	10,041.30	-5,668.80	63.92

Table 17: Mid-Term Budgetary Framework MTBF 2025-2027

Name	Executed				Approved 2024	%	Estimated in MTBF						Total estimated 2025-2027	%
	2022	%	2023	%			2025	%	2026	%	2027	%		
National Public Budget, millions MDL														
Total expenditure	100,374.2		117,871.1		122,962.0		129,556.5		137,923.9		149,255.1		416,735.5	
Education	15857.9	15.8	18784.4	15.9	18714.3	15.2	19679.4	15.2	19643.8	14.2	19721.4	13.2	59044.6	14.2
Recurrent expenses	15720.5	99.1	18503.6	98.5	18659.9	99.7	19636.3	15.2	19605.6	99.8	19681.6	99.8	59038.5	100.0
Capital investment	137.4	0.9	280.8	1.5	54.4	0.3	43.1	0.2	38.2	0.2	39.8	0.2	176.2	0.30
State Budget, millions MDL														
Total expenditure	68573.5	%	80727.2	%	82222.0	%	84141.3	%	88493.3	%	95469.2	%	268103.8	
Education	14669.8	21.4	17476.0	21.7	17406.5	21.2	18397.2	21.9	18361.6	20.8	18439.2	19.3	55198.0	20.6
Recurrent expenses	14651.4	99.9	17462.5	99.9	17382.3	99.9	18384.3	99.9	18353.6	100	18429.6	100	55167.5	99.9
Transfers to LB	11882.2	81.0	14205.7	81.3	13870.7	79.7	14726.2	80.1	14777.3	80.5	14828.4	80.4	44331.9	80.3
Capital expenditure	18.4	0.13	13.5	0.08	24.2	0.14	12.9	0.07	8.0	0.04	9.6	0.05	30.5	0.06
Local Budgets, millions MDL														
Total expenditure	24159.6	%	29043.6	%	25923.8	%	27798.9	%	28513.7	%	29391.9	%	85704.5	
Education	13071.3	54.1	15514.7	53.4	15179.7	58.6	16009.6	57.6	16060.7	56.3	16111.8	54.8	48182.1	56.2



<i>Recurrent expenses</i>	12952.3	99.1	15247.4	98.3	15149.5	99.8	15979.4	99.8	16030.5	99.8	16081.6	99.8	48091.5	99.8
Transfers to LB	1.0	0.01	0.6	0.004	1.2	0.01	1.2	0.007	1.2	0.007	1.2	0.007	3.6	0.01
<i>Capital expenditure</i>	119.0	0.91	267.3	1.72	30.2	0.20	30.2	0.19	30.2	0.19	30.2	0.19	90.6	0.19
Education expenditure excluding transfers from State budget	1,189.1	9.7	1,309.0	8.8	1,309.0	10.9	1,283.4	9.8	1,283.4	9.3	1,283.4	8.8	3,850.2	9.3

Table 18: Education expenditure from the national public budget

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Education expenditure and non-financial assets, millions MDL (in current prices)	12,121.2	12,583.1	13,398.2	15,857.9	18,784.4
Euro					
-of the total expenditure and non-financial assets, %	18.4	17.2	16.3	15.8	15.9
of GDP, % ¹	5.9	6.3	5.5	5.7	6.3

Source: https://statistica.gov.md/ro/educatia-in-republica-moldova-editiile-2009-2022-9676_59507.html

Table 19: Average gross monthly salary

	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Average salary per economy, MDL	7,356.1	8,107.5	9,115.9	10,529.1	12,354.7
In education, MDL	6,338.7	7,023.3	7,440.5	8,417.1	10,046.2
In % to the average salary per economy	86.2	86.6	81.6	79.9	81.3

Source: https://statistica.gov.md/ro/educatia-in-republica-moldova-editiile-2009-2022-9676_59507.html