KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

MOLDOVA

2024

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last 3 years, the government, under the leadership of the pro-European Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS), has set out a reform agenda and built strong ties with Europe. The presidential elections in October and November 2024, re-electing Maia Sandu as president and approving the vote for the EU accession referendum, confirmed Moldova's pro-European trajectory. However, the results were closer than expected, and the next parliamentary elections in July 2025 could force a coalition government, which may adopt a less enthusiastic pro-European stance. Following the decision to grant Moldova candidate status on 23 June 2022, the country has been subject to a Russian hybrid war aiming at creating an energy crisis and political unrest.

Since the start of the war in Ukraine, there has been a huge influx of Ukrainian migrants. Over 1.5 million have entered Moldova since the start of the war, and 120,000 have remained (UNHCR source). This is a big number for Moldova and has created challenges for the government. However, the Moldovan population has been open to hosting the Ukrainian refugees, and through help from the EU, the government has implemented effective policies to support the refugees.

The energy crisis caused by the war significantly affected Moldova in 2022 and 2023. Nonetheless, the country began striving for energy independence from Russia, strengthening ties with Europe, and buying on the open market. Despite increased gas prices, the government established an Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund in 2022 to support vulnerable households.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoER) has continued implementing the key reforms as part of the Education Development Strategy (EDS) 2020-2030, and its action plan was approved in 2023. This new strategy is no longer divided into sub-sectors (primary, secondary, VET), but has several transversal objectives for the whole sector (quality, teacher training, digitisation, etc.).

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is implementing the National Employment Programme (NEP) 2022-2026, which focuses on increasing the employment rate for women, reducing informal employment, reforming the state inspectorate, improving the employment of people with special needs, and strengthening the capacities of the National Employment Agency (NEA).

Educational reforms are progressing. The Centres of Excellence have become more active in the education sector, establishing relationships with affiliated VET schools and expanding their services beyond initial education. Dual education is still a priority for the Ministry. This strong commitment and solid cooperation with the Chambers of Commerce has allowed a steep increase in enrolled students (+60% in the 2024/25 school year). Building on the successful example of the VET Centres of Excellence, the Ministry is developing a plan to establish a 'model school network' in general education, to improve the efficiency of the school network and increase access to quality education for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, especially those from small rural communities.

Regarding employment policies, the Ministry of Labour and the NEA have been expanding the spectrum of active employment measures to respond effectively to labour market needs. There is a clear effort by the government to strengthen this policy area, also given the COVID-19 pandemic, which put pressure on the labour market. While further adjustments and introducing new measures have been necessary, implementation faces additional challenges related to limited financial and human resources. New measures related to start-up support and on-the-job training call for more partnerships with employers and the business community. Several active measures have been implemented, although some have had a modest number of beneficiaries.

Furthermore, the labour market information system does not fully comply with the new requirements, as the NEA and the Labour Market Observatory face similar capacity challenges. Therefore, along with ETF support, further methodological developments and capacity building are on the way. Despite all this, the government's commitment to addressing employment challenges may have contributed to positive improvements in several key indicators (NEETs, lifelong learning participation, activity rate, etc.). It is difficult at this stage to disaggregate the impact of new policies from the evolving external context.

1. KEY POLITICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Political developments

The government has been relatively stable in the hands of the pro-European Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS), with President Sandu leading the reform agenda and strengthening ties with Europe. In 2024, the government operated without major disruptions. The presidential elections in October and November 2024, which re-elected Maia Sandu as President and approved the vote for the EU accession referendum, confirmed 'Moldova's pro-European trajectory. However, the results were closer than expected, and the next parliamentary elections in July 2025 could force a coalition government, which may adopt a less enthusiastic pro-European stance.

Despite a very challenging environment, the government has made efforts to stick to its manifesto in the anti-corruption field by nominating new heads of anti-corruption agencies and other law enforcement institutions. Independent NGOs monitoring democratic progress in transition countries have recognised Moldova's improvements in the last year (https://freedomhouse.org/country/moldova/nations-transit/2023).

Overall, the EU integration process creates an optimistic political climate, empowering the government to be bolder in reforming key aspects of its policies to align with EU standards.

The positive political outlook is counterbalanced by the pressure of multidimensional shocks caused by the impacts of the refugee crisis, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis.

Aside from the political tensions, which have been more intense than originally feared, the main challenge caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine is now the pressure of the high number of refugees. As of June 2024, approximately 120,000 refugees[1] (representing over 4.5% of the total population of Moldova) are in the country. Moldova currently hosts the highest number of Ukrainian refugees relative to its population than any other country[2]. The government has periodically had to declare a state of emergency, which allowed displaced persons from Ukraine to enter Moldova with any available ID document and immediately gain access to the national job market. Following the EU example, the Moldovan government began preparations to activate temporary protection. The definition and main principles of temporary protection status were already regulated in Moldova by the 2008 Law on Asylum, recognising temporary protection as one form of asylum in Moldova, and which can be activated by a government decision for a period of 1 year, with the possibility of extension for up to 2 years.

The energy crisis caused by the war in Ukraine has also affected Moldova, impacting people's lives through increased energy prices. The government tried to provide some relief through the Energy Vulnerability Reduction Fund in 2022 to support vulnerable households. A significant development following the beginning of the energy crisis is Moldova's attempt to implement bold energy-sector reforms. Most notably, the country has started to unbundle Moldovagaz to meet EU standards (requiring the three tiers of a natural gas market (upstream/production, midstream/transmission, and downstream/distribution) and is looking to become more energy-independent from Moscow by buying gas on the market and trying to invest in alternative energy sources.

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[1] Moldovan spirit: embracing and supporting Ukrainian refugees - European Commission
[2] reliefweb.int – temporary protection for Ukrainians in Moldova – achievements and challenges.

Demographics

The two main factors shaping Moldova's population structure and demographic change are an ageing population and migration. In addition, more than half of the population lives in rural areas, giving Moldova one of Europe's lowest levels of urbanisation.

According to the World Bank's World Development Indicators database, the total population of Moldova in 2023 was under 2.5 million, with a clear long-term negative trend. Moldova registered a 2p.p. population decrease compared to 2021 and 13p.p. compared to 2010[3]. In addition, the relative size of the youth population has decreased from 19.8% in 2015 to 19.1% in 2023 (see Statistical Annex).

Migration is probably the most significant socio-economic trend, and it has one of the highest total emigration rates in the world. Migration strongly impacts several aspects of Moldovan society, including the population, age structure, economy, and skills availability.

As of 2020, the Moldovan expatriate population exceeded 1,150,000, representing a significant share of the total population. Considering the corresponding depopulation linked to low fertility rates, the share of international migrants has increased by 2-3p.p. every 5 years (and 6.3p.p. in the past 5 years), while the COVID-19 pandemic seems to have increased this trend. The reasons for leaving are similar to those in other countries with strong net emigration profiles (lack of job opportunities, very low salaries, prospects of a better future for children). In addition, Moldova possesses a unique combination of legal opportunities and informal connections that further facilitate migration. Over 1 million Moldovans have Romanian nationality, which allows them to work in other EU Member States without restrictions, even though the visa liberalisation by the EU that Moldova was expecting since the signature of the Mobility Partnership in 2008 has yet to materialise. Additionally, the intensity of past migration has created a strong, well-connected diaspora network that makes migration easier. Given the impossibility of scaling down the population and skills drain, government policies have endeavoured to support the establishment of circular migration by setting up a policy framework in which migrants create development opportunities for Moldova through economic investments and an upskilled returning workforce.

Regarding direct economic impact, in 2023, remittances represented 12.2% of the gross domestic product (GDP) (World Bank, WDI), significantly contributing to keeping a large proportion of the mostly rural population above the poverty line.

On the negative side, high emigration rates have directly impacted on the population dynamics and age structure, particularly in rural areas, which suffer from higher dependency ratios and an ageing population, thus furthering the rural exodus to cities and abroad. Even more damaging is the impact of migration on the availability of people in specific occupations, specifically in the health and education sectors.

Key economic developments

Moldova is a small, lower-middle-income economy, with agriculture accounting for a relatively high share of its economy and employment. It also has an uneven territorial distribution of economic opportunities and growth, with the capital city, Chisinau, generating more than half of the country's GDP (World Bank, Moldova Economic Update 2024). The main economic drivers of the GDP are manufacturing, trade, agriculture, construction, transportation, information and communication technology, and services.

Over the past few years, Moldova's economic performance has fluctuated. Inevitably, growth declined in 2020 (-8.3%) as the country's economy was hit hard by the effects of the pandemic due to disrupted global and domestic demand and the country's high dependency on migrant remittances. In 2021, the

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[3] National Bureau of Statistics https://statistica.gov.md/en/population-with-usually-resident-population-by-sex-and-age-group-in-territorial--9578_60448.html.

country's economy bounced back, with GDP growth reaching nearly 13.9% and the country looking on track for a short period of sustained growth. However, the war in Ukraine and the energy crisis reversed this trend. Growth for 2022 was -5.9%, pushing Moldova into recession before reaching 0.8% in 2023 (World Bank data, WDI). Inflation skyrocketed to 30% in January 2023 but decreased throughout the year, reaching 6% in October.

The National Development Strategy, Moldova 2030, presents the government's strategic vision for 2020-2030. This multi-sectoral strategy focuses on the following development priorities: (a) a sustainable and inclusive economy (increased revenue from sustainable sources and mitigation of economic inequality; expanding people's access to utilities and living conditions; and improving working conditions and reducing informal employment); and (b) a healthy environment (ensuring the fundamental right to a healthy environment and environmental security).

In the medium term, EU candidate status offers Moldova a chance to boost economic growth by attracting more investment, expanding trade, supporting essential reforms for stronger governance and infrastructure, and overcoming the negative impact of the Ukraine war and energetic crisis.

Key social issues

Moldova is one of the poorest countries in Europe. Several vulnerable groups can be identified, such as households living in rural areas, people with disabilities, and minorities. The rural population is more vulnerable to poverty than the urban population. The quality of services and access to resources are more constrained. Poor infrastructure and road quality further limit access to services. Emigration and dependence on remittances are significant. Young Moldovans face multiple interconnected challenges, most notably in employment and health. Many young people do not have the right skills for the local labour market, and young professionals often have difficulties finding employment. About a third of the population has emigrated in the past two decades. Historically, low-skilled labourers emigrated (mainly to Russia, Israel, and the European Union), but the educated middle class and young professionals now migrate for better opportunities. Salary levels in the country are very low. At €587, the average gross monthly salary in Moldova is half that of Romania and little more than 20% of salaries in Germany and France[4]. Consequently, low salaries and poor working conditions have driven migration, leading to a shortage of skilled labour in many sectors of the domestic labour market, which seriously affects economic development.

People with disabilities are often subject to stigma and limitations in exercising their rights. Historically, they had limited access to education, health and political representation. More recently, things have started to improve, at least for children integrated into standard schools. Legal institutions often have poor knowledge of the rights of people with mental and/or physical disabilities.

As regards children of migrant workers, a fifth of all children have at least one parent working abroad, and 10% live with grandparents as both parents work abroad[5]. A large proportion of children of migrant workers live in rural areas. Poor-quality education, malnutrition and poor access to safe water and sanitation are more frequent among this group of children.

In Moldova, tolerance towards the LGBTQI community is extremely low, and they often face stigma and discrimination. Freedom of assembly and expression are, in many ways, restricted. Many political groups, as well as the Orthodox Church, express high levels of intolerance, while hate speech in the media is commonplace. Stigma towards the Roma community is also widespread throughout society[6].

[4] "Salary calculator gross → net (The authorities do not display the net salary and it is calculated online from the gross, made available by the authorities)". Salarii.md (in Romanian). Retrieved 2024-08-30
[5] https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/children-left-behind-impact-labor-migration-moldova-and-ukraine
[6] Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA), Embassy of Sweden, July 2020. https://cdn.sida.se/app/uploads/2022/04/15085758/2020-MDPA-Moldova.pdf

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Trends and challenges

Education strategy and legal framework for education

The main goal of the 'Moldova 2030' strategy is a noticeable improvement in the quality of life of the Moldovan people. This approach also implies poverty eradication in all relevant aspects of this phenomenon, not exclusively in monetary terms, as it involves not only the level of income but also equal and undeniable access to qualitative public and private goods and services.

The new Education Development Strategy (EDS) 2020-2030 was approved in 2023. The draft strategy is not structured around education sub-sectors but defines nine transversal strategic objectives (SO):

SO1: Quality education versus sustainable labour market development.

SO2: Inclusive school versus inclusive society.

SO3: Quality of teaching staff – the quality of education – the quality of human resources – the quality of the economy.

SO4: Society, community and family versus quality of education.

SO5: Safe, formative, inclusive learning environments.

SO6: Digitisation versus the quality and functionality of the education system.

SO7: Lifelong learning versus the quality of adult learning and education.

SO8: Scientific research versus the source of innovation and changes in education.

SO9: Good governance versus quality of education.

The main expected change in the legislative framework is the revision of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) Law, which is currently being discussed.

Education expenditure

Over the past decade, Moldova has spent much of its GDP on education (6.1% in 2022) (World Bank data, WDI). An inefficient school network absorbs a lot of the resources allocated to education. The country has started reflecting on possible ways to make the school network more efficient. In 2023, some decisions were made to close and merge VET schools. The difficulty lies in balancing greater efficiency with equitable access to education in rural areas.

Access, participation and early school leaving

The relatively high levels of educational expenditure have paid off, judging by the relative increase over time in educational attainment among the active population (aged 15+). In 2022, 52.1% of the adult population had a medium level of education, 18.5% a high level and 29.5% a low level. This results from a slight but continuous positive trend of an increasing proportion of the population with a high level of education (+0.3p.p. since 2019 and +3.8p.p. since 2010). The net enrolment rate in secondary education (ISCED level 2-3) is also very high, reaching 99.7% in 2022 at the lower secondary level and 85.4% in 2022 at the upper secondary level (UNESCO UIS).

Moldova has a significant problem with early leavers from education. Despite a decrease from 21.5% in 2022 to 17.5% in 2023, the percentage of early leavers (aged 18-24) from education remains high. Additionally, efforts to raise the population's educational attainment levels and reduce dropout rates may have unintended consequences, leading to poor performance in overall education. This can also mean that the actual quality of education may have deteriorated, probably due to various factors, such as overcrowded classrooms, a higher ratio of students to teachers, etc. In addition, this could have

contributed to the country's poor performance in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (see below).

Moldova has high enrolment rates at the lower secondary level of education but relatively modest rates at the upper secondary level (see above). In addition, the share of VET students at the upper secondary level of education was slightly less than half (44.8%) in 2022, a level that has remained relatively stable over the past 10 years (UNESCO UIS).

Boys are more likely than girls to be enrolled in secondary technical vocational education, with boys comprising 72.4% of those enrolled in 2019-20, compared with 27.6% for girls.

Participation in lifelong learning (2.2% in 2023) is one of the major weaknesses of the education system, but the significant increase since 2022 (+0.9 percentage points) is a positive sign of a possible change. However, this progress needs to be closely monitored to determine whether this will develop into a long-term trend.

Among Ukrainian migrants, almost 50 000 were school-aged children, of which only 2,325 are currently enrolled in Moldova's education system. The number is surprisingly low, considering the government's efforts. Language barriers and the expectation of returning to Ukraine soon are the main reasons for such low enrolment rates. However, this number is still substantial in relation to Moldova's student population, and the education system is making considerable efforts to adjust to their needs.

PISA results

As noted earlier, the quality of education is a concern. The PISA 2022 results, testing 15-year-old students, did not show significant improvement. Overall, Moldova ranked 48th out of 81 countries, slightly better than the previous round in 2018. Boys and girls performed at similar levels on average in mathematics, but girls outperformed boys in reading by 30 points in Moldova.

A closer look at the data reveals a less optimistic picture. Compared to 2010, the results show improvement in mathematics and reading, with science performance staying consistent with 2010 levels. However, in 2022, mathematics scores stayed roughly the same as in 2018, while reading and science scores declined compared to 2018. Over the most recent period (2018 to 2022), the gap between the highest-scoring students (the 10% with the highest scores) and the lowest-scoring ones (the 10% with the lowest scores) narrowed in mathematics, reading and science. Compared to 2015, the proportion of students scoring below a baseline level of proficiency (Level 2) increased by five percentage points in mathematics, while it showed no significant change in either reading or science. Low performance can indicate a lack of efficiency and quality in education, inadequate curricula, outdated learning materials or poorly trained teachers, which are some of the main barriers to education quality[7].

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

The share of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) has fluctuated over the years and remained stable between 2021 and 2022, at a high level of 17.2% for 15-to-24-year-olds. 2023 saw a significant decrease in this value (-4.4 percentage points) to 13.8%. This represents a steady trend since 2019, with an aggregated decrease of 5.7 percentage points. However, the gender gap persists both for 15-to-24-year-olds (4.1 percentage points), reaching as high as 15 percentage points for 15-to-29-year-olds, with the proportion of young female NEETs being double that of males. The overall rate also remains almost double the OECD average. Still, the positive trend is encouraging and potentially evidence of the efforts put into reviewing active labour market policies. The sudden increase in the lifelong learning (LLL) participation indicator is another indicator that, if confirmed over the next few years, could be a proof of successful policies.

The youth unemployment rate (15-to-24-year-olds) has grown again after a few years of decline. In 2023, it stood at 11.5%, with fairly similar levels for men and women.

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[7] Moldova | Factsheets | OECD PISA 2022 results

2.2 Initial VET and adult learning

Strategic and legal framework for initial VET and adult learning

The VET strategic framework is now integrated into the new Education Development Strategy (EDS) 2020-2030. The Ministry does not plan to develop sectoral strategies for the different education sub-sectors. Operational planning documents that extrapolate VET information from the overall action plan could be developed within the VET department for organisational purposes. Adult learning is an area of natural cooperation between the EDS and the National Employment Programme (NEP) 2022-2026. The MoER aims to implement reforms to ensure graduates develop an interest in continuing education throughout their lives (this is thoroughly covered in the EDS) and to ensure continuing education for different target groups. The Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (MHLSP) and NEA are responsible for reaching out to inactive people, adopting active labour market measures for unemployed people, and calculating and anticipating skills needs. The NEP has a clear and sound programme for providing ALMPs to an extended group of stakeholders (with a special focus on NEETs), while the EDS emphasises municipal involvement. Together, both these documents show a willingness to strengthen the government's capacity to reach out to people in need of re-training, but the documents do not appear to be coordinated.

VET governance and financing arrangements

Several important decisions have shaped the governance of the VET system, including the Law on Sector Skills Committees (2017), Government Decision No 201/2018 on the organisation and functioning of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, and Government Decision No 1234/2018 on remuneration conditions of the staff of educational institutions operating under a financial and economic self-management regime. The approval of the Law on Sector Skills Committees initially generated strong optimism about the private sector's potential to play a more active role in VET and human capital development. However, in recent years, it has become evident that while establishing a broad legislative framework is an important first step, additional effort is needed to ensure that the sector skills committees operate effectively. The committees are currently active but face several challenges in implementing their ambitious mandate.

The MoER has started cooperating effectively with other relevant ministries, sector skills committees, VET institutions, businesses and other social partners. The National Qualifications Department of MoER has accelerated the development of occupational and qualification standards. Sector skills committees and working groups have thus far contributed to developing more than 100 occupational standards, while more than 200 qualification standards have been developed.

In the context of VET reforms, efforts have also been made to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the financial management of VET institutions. Public VET institutions have been financially and economically self-managed since 1 October 2018. They receive allocations from the state budget to execute the state order, their financing is based on a service contract, and they can generate additional funds. The formula funding is based on a 'per-student calculation' adjusted to the economic sectors covered by the institution. Schools have initially faced difficulties in managing this degree of autonomy and coping with the need to generate additional income. The new Education Funding Law (2018) also allows the Ministry of Education a discretionary amount, equal to 3% of its budget, for ad hoc projects and activities. The VET directorate plans to use this money to fund Centres of Excellence to take over as coordinators of affiliated VET institutions.

Qualifications, validation and recognition

Moldova has a legislated National Qualification Framework (NQF). The Ministry of Education, through the NQF department, is putting a lot of effort into making the framework operational. The Moldovan Register of Qualifications is currently under development. In 2024, the first version of the register was positively assessed by the ETF and European Qualification Framework (EQF) advisory board representatives. The decision to grant Moldova candidate status has opened up significant opportunities for networking and peer learning for the NQF department, which joined the EQF in 2023.

VET in Moldova performs well in enabling learners to switch between parallel general and vocational learning pathways. The education and training system delivers a high degree of permeability. However, VET students in Moldova aiming to transition between successive stages of education to a general education/academic track face far greater challenges[8].

Moldova has developed and legislated a solid system for validating non-formal and informal learning. Several Centres of Excellence have been accredited as providers of validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) and, with the financial support of international projects, have seen significant numbers of people receiving a qualification through VNFIL. The financing remains its weak point. Requiring potential applicants to cover the costs of the process reduces the attractiveness and potential added value of the system.

The MoER has expressed interest in becoming one of the first countries outside the current remit of the EQF to have the opportunity to be referenced according to the meta-framework. The accession progress is helping Moldova in this context, as Moldovan representatives are joining several EU discussion platforms.

Quality and quality assurance

Quality assurance is the responsibility of the MoER and the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC), and it was established in 2014 for all levels of education. ANACEC is responsible for creating national reference and accreditation standards, curricula evaluation methodology and educational processes, and processing school results. It also manages the external quality evaluation, carried out at initial and continuous VET institutions every 5 years.

The key documents setting out the legal basis for quality assurance in Moldova include:

- Government Decision No 201/2018 on the organisation and functioning of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research;

- the external quality evaluation methodology, which defines external quality evaluation criteria, accreditation standards and performance indicators; and

- the External Evaluation Guide for Vocational Training Programmes in Technical Vocational Education, which defines evaluation standards.

The documents mentioned above describe the status, objectives, tasks and functions of ANACEC and the methodological and procedural framework for quality assurance. ANACEC has demonstrated significant competence in implementing its mandate; however, like other Human Capital Development stakeholders, it suffers from a lack of staff due to low salaries in public administration in Moldova. School self-assessment processes have not been established yet.

Overall, the education quality is low, and the PISA results have demonstrated this (see the section on PISA results above).

Work-based learning arrangements

The adoption of the Regulation on the Organisation of VET Programmes for Dual VET (2018) and the Regulation on the Framework Curriculum for Dual Secondary VET (2018) have completed the process of formally establishing dual education, which started in 2014. Enrolled apprentices doubled from 2016/2017 to 2017/2018. Still, it remained unchanged at around 1,000 until 2024/25, when a sudden spike of available posts at companies, generated by strong activism from the MoER and the Chamber of Commerce, resulted in a 60% increase. The dual education law and the relevant secondary legislation have been approved. However, the teaching and learning environment and the apprentices degree of satisfaction differ widely from one case to the next. Dual VET requires investments and shared responsibilities between companies and VET institutions. It also depends on companies' desire and readiness to assume a high level of responsibility and on their technical and human capacity.

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[8] Torino Process 2022–24: Moldova | ETF (europa.eu)

Thus, regardless of the widespread recognition of the importance of work-based learning (WBL), VET institutions still face difficulties in establishing long-term relations with companies, and those companies do not yet have appropriate mechanisms to ensure the quality of WBL. In particular, WBL remains underdeveloped in the agri-food sector, owing to the shortage of large companies and the fact that small businesses and individual farms are neither motivated nor fully prepared to provide WBL.

Moldova joined the European Alliance for Apprenticeships in 2022. This should provide ample opportunities for networking and peer learning.

Digital education and skills

There is no standalone legal act on the digitisation of general education and VET in Moldova. Issues related to digitisation are regulated and provided for within the following legal documents:

The Strategic Framework: Moldova Education 2020 provides a strategic direction exclusively for integrating ICT into education at all levels. Another strategy specifically for the VET sector – the Strategy for the Development of Technical Vocational Education for the Years 2013-2020 (the 'VET Strategy') – stipulates the need for activities related to continuously promoting modern teaching technologies using ICT. In addition, following the provisions of the Education Code, key competencies include digital competencies.

Under Objective No 4 of the Education Strategy, 'Guaranteeing quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning opportunities', the Education Strategy 2021-2030 contains axis No 5, related to information and communication technologies in education – a factor in ensuring the quality and functionality of the learning system. The action plan should bring understanding to how this axis will be implemented, presumably also developing a broader legal framework for digitising the education system.

The digital competence standards for teachers in general education were approved by Order 862/2015 of the Ministry of Education. These standards are also valid for VET teachers. It is important to note that the standards are only relevant to the general disciplines studied in TVET. At the same time, there is no way of verifying and ensuring that teaching staff use ICT methods in the classroom.

The minimum standards for ICT equipment for Vocational Education institutions were approved by Order 1043/2015 of the Ministry of Education. The standards stipulate the minimum equipment necessary for Technical Vocational Education institutions.

All VET schools implemented the SELFIE self-assessment in 2021. The results have been analysed and discussed with the Ministry of Education. In 2022, all general schools have implemented the SELFIE self-assessment. In 2023, selected general and VET schools drafted a digital action plan based on the SELFIE results. In 2024, the ETF assessed the status of digitisation in VET through the Digital Education Reform Framework, presenting an overview and key recommendations to policymakers and practitioners.

There are several examples of digital innovation. For example, the Centre for Excellence for ICT has developed a Moodle platform for teaching and assessment. The platform is also used for the final exams of all ICT programmes in VET.

The European Union funded a multiannual project in 2023, implemented by UNICEF, which focuses on supporting reforms linked to the digitisation of education. The focus is on general education, but plans for extending the project results to the VET sector are under discussion.

Statistics on education and training

The Ministry of Education collects education statistics through the different departments that oversee the education sub-sectors. A new Education Management Information System (EMIS) has been implemented and should reinforce data collection. Tracer studies have been piloted but have been put on hold pending integration into the new EMIS.

3.   LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

3.1   Trends and challenges

Labour market characteristics

The employment scene in Moldova is complex and challenging, with insufficient, poor-quality jobs, low productivity, persistent informal arrangements and inequalities.

One of the underlying aspects is the declining size of the Moldovan working-age population. 2023 showed a significant and sudden improvement in many indicators, showing the government's strong efforts to tackle socio-economic challenges and the overall economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be important to continue monitoring whether this positive trend continues over the next few years.

The main challenge to Moldova's labour market is the very high level of inactivity (54.9% in 2023, slightly decreasing from 2022), which is due to a combination of factors, including low salaries and dependence on remittances.

The activity rate grew by 3.3 percentage points in 2023 compared to the previous year, settling at pre-pandemic levels. It still remains very low: 49.5% for men and 41.4% for women. The employment rate also recovered slightly, from 38.8% in 2020 to 43.1% in 2023 (47.1% for men and 39.7% for women). While gender differences persist, with a gender activity gap of 8.1 pp and a gender employment gap of 7.4 pp, they are lower than the EU average (9.6 pp and 10.2 pp, respectively, in 2023). Educational attainment plays a crucial role in employment prospects, with the employment rate of people with tertiary education reaching 62.3% in 2023. Although the employment rate among the low-skilled population has increased – even compared to pre-pandemic levels, reaching 29.8% in 2023 – it remains very low when compared with the outcomes for medium-skilled workers (43.3%).

The service sector employs the largest share of the employed population (57.6% in 2023), with a sizeable role played by trade and hospitality, employing 17.7% of the employed population. The industry sector has been expanding gradually in recent years, reaching an employment share of 21.5% in 2023, and has overtaken the agricultural sector, which accounted for 20.9% of the total employed population. As a reference, in 2015, the agricultural sector employed 34.2% of the population, 17 percentage points more than the industrial sector[9].

The unemployment rate only partially follows the same trend as the activity and employment rates. The 2023 value (4.6%) has grown since 2022 (+1.5%), and is higher than the pre-pandemic value of 2.9%. On the other hand, the number of people registered as unemployed within the NEA has decreased since 2020, reaching 35,003 in 2022. The lowest number of people registered as unemployed between 2019 and 2022 were those with higher education of any level (in 2022, the number was 4 381). The highest number of unemployed people are those with a low level of education, who also face greater difficulties in transitioning into employment. While young people below the age of 29 do not tend to register with public employment services, they have the highest chance and potential to transition into employment[10].

Informality remains a serious challenge in the Moldovan labour market. In 2023, 23% of the employed population were in informal employment. While in the agricultural sector, about 44% of employees were informally employed, in the non-agricultural sector, the highest share of informally employed people was in construction, with 23% of employees informally employed in this sector[11].

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[9] National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova (https://statistica.gov.md/en/statistic_indicator_details/1).

[10] ETF data collection, Active Labour Market Statistics, 2023 update.

[11] https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Forta_de_munca/Publicatia_AFM_2024.pdf.

Finally, a significant skills mismatch in Moldova's labour market has been observed over the years, arising from factors such as uneven demand for highly skilled workers, inadequate education outcomes and lack of practical experience.

Labour market and employment statistics

Moldova's institutional system in the employment field includes:

1. Institutions involved in planning, coordinating, approving and controlling the implementation of labour market policy: the government and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (MHLSP);

2. The National Employment Agency (NEA) – the institution involved in implementing employment policy; and

3. Local public authorities, social partners, non-profit organisations and employers.

The Moldovan government promotes employment at a national level, integrates the needs of the labour market into the country's socio-economic development policy, and provides the funding required to implement employment policies. The MHLSP carries out several activities: developing and promoting normative acts and policies in the employment field; coordinating, analysing and evaluating employment policies; planning and distributing financial resources for employment; and coordinating, monitoring and controlling the NEA's activities. All employment-related activities within the MHLSP are coordinated by the Minister of State and the Directorate for Employment Policy and Migration Regulation. The mission of the NEA is to enhance employment opportunities for jobseekers and assist employers in identifying skilled talent and creating new employment opportunities.

Many institutions in Moldova are involved in producing information on labour market skills needs, and a significant amount of data has been gathered. However, the analysis and management of, and access to, the information for the relevant stakeholders was reportedly challenging. Therefore, the Labour Market Observatory (LMO) was established in 2018. The LMO operates based on a partnership signed between the MHLSP and the NEA on the one hand, and the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Finance, the MoER, the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment, the National Bureau of Statistics, the National Institute for Economic Research, the National Confederation of Employers, the National Trade Union Confederation, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the Migration and Asylum Bureau on the other hand. The LMO is responsible for collecting, systematising and analysing the statistical data produced by the NEA and other public institutions, developing analytical studies, forecasting labour supply and demand, and disseminating labour market information to different stakeholders in the labour market. However, the LMO would require further investment in an analytical capacity to perform more complex tasks, leading to comprehensive studies and medium-term forecasts on the supply of, and demand for, labour and professional skills.

3.2   Employment policy and institutional settings

Strategy and legal framework in the employment policy field

Within the government established in 2021, the former Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection was split in two. The new Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is responsible for human resource development and employment policies (including professional orientation and training for adults), identifying the labour market skills requirements, and improving or upgrading the skills of the labour force following those requirements. The National Employment Strategy 2017-2021 has been followed by the National Employment Programme 2022-2026 (NEP), approved in November 2022.

The Employment Promotion Law, which was approved in June 2018 and entered into force in February 2019, seeks to make the labour market more effective and inclusive. It promotes active labour market policies (ALMPs) to increase employability through training, creating job opportunities through wage subsidies, and stimulating start-ups. Specifically, targeted groups mentioned in the law

include unskilled young people, women over 50, people with disabilities, and individuals from the Roma minority.

The NEA is a key institution in the provision of both active and passive labour market measures for jobseekers. The agency has a tripartite management board of nine members, with three representatives appointed by the government, employers and trade unions. As part of the public administration reform, the NEA has been restructured. This included centralising the system, cutting staff and optimising business operations. There is now a central office with 50 staff in Chisinau, plus 35 local branches, which now have 200 staff members rather than 289. The branches are not independent legal entities but do have the right to sign agreements with local companies on the provision of ALMPs. The NEA's mission is to increase employment opportunities for jobseekers and to support employers in identifying skilled workers and creating new jobs. Starting from that mission, the NEA carries out several activities:

- contributing to drawing up employment policies;
- monitoring the labour market and forecasting its changes at the national level;
- ensuring that employment measures are implemented;
- assessing the impact of employment measures;
- formulating proposals for measures aimed at reducing unemployment and increasing employment;
- developing and managing the information system of the labour market, etc.

The NEA recently launched a new online portal, angajat.md[12] for employers and jobseekers, which is set to provide information and free services.

Structural reform of NEA started in line with the strategic document Reform on improving NEA services for 2023-2026. The strategic objective of the reform is as important as it is simple: more jobseekers/unemployed and employers find a needed job/workforce faster through NEA. In addition, there are four specific objectives:

- the NEA's services and measures better target different categories of people;
- the NEA provides more qualitative employment services and measures adjusted to the individual needs of different categories of people;
- the NEA provides more qualitative services adjusted to the needs of employers;
- the NEA's institutional performance increases.

Initiatives to boost employment

The NEA currently provides intermediary services, career guidance and counselling, organise job fairs and public works, and provides training to jobseekers and priority groups of people with special needs. Services for jobseekers include registration, counselling and guidance, client profiling, employment planning and job placement. Services for employers include registering vacancies, preselecting job candidates, and intermediation. Employers are required to inform the NEA about job vacancies. The NEA's public works programme aims to improve the situation of temporarily unemployed people in vulnerable groups (particularly those in rural areas), while maintaining their motivation to work and helping them to acquire skills to work. The NEA runs annual employer surveys to identify workforce requirements and labour shortages and publishes the results in a labour market barometer.

The ILO supported the creation of Local Employment Partnerships. These are based on the cooperation between public and private partners to try and find solutions for labour market challenges in their communities. For example, in the city of Cahul, there are 20 partners, including educational institutions, microfinance banks, the employment service and businesses.

In 2023, the government provided a huge increase in the funds available to ALMPs. The budget rose from MDL 26 million to over MDL 50 million. A detailed analysis of the typology and target for the services provided shows the following:

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[12] https://www.angajat.md/

- The number of people benefiting from job intermediation, training courses, vocational internships and on-the-job training did not significantly change.
- Many more jobseekers received career guidance than in 2022, confirming a positive trend. These services were introduced in 2020, and the number spiked from 975 in the first year to more than 7,000 in 2021 and 2022, and more than 16,000 in 2023.
- The relatively new services incentives for start-up (new in 2023) and supporting local projects (6 projects funded in 2021, 30 in 2022 and 113 in 2023) have taken the 'lion's share' of the additional ALPM budget.

This distribution of additional funds is linked to a strategic vision and some objective constraints. On the one hand, the NEA has identified a clear need in the creation of job opportunities, investing in the creation of new companies or in support for local projects. On the other hand, there are structural limitations in the NEA's capacity to quickly expand the volume of their services due to limited human resources capacities in the network of employment offices, and a limited training offer from private providers. However, the government's commitment to reinforce the NEA and resource ALPMs is a very positive trend, which could create the basis for a successful implementation of the youth guarantee scheme, currently piloted at local level.

Initiatives to increase the capacity of the public employment services

The Modernisation of Government Services Project (MGSP), launched in June 2018 to increase the efficiency, quality and accessibility of public services in Moldova, at the mid-point of its implementation period. A re-organisation of the public employment services is ongoing.

Through its subdivisions, the NEA provides additional support to certain categories of jobseekers considered most vulnerable in the labour market. NEA customers who need a special or individualised approach include young people aged between 16 and 24; people without a profession; people with disabilities; long-term unemployed people; people aged 50 and over; people released from prison; victims of human trafficking; people using narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances; and victims of domestic violence.

To provide quality services and enable the efficient implementation of active labour market measures, the NEA has established several national and local partnerships. At the national level, partnerships have been concluded with educational institutions for vocational training for unemployed people; the public association 'Concordia Social Projects' on the professional integration of young people; the National Council for Determining Disability and Work Capacity regarding online data exchange for people with disabilities; the public association 'YOU ARE NOT ALONE'; and the National Administration of Penitentiaries regarding the integration of people to be released from prison. (Anofm.md). However, given the new labour market challenges and expanding requirements, including the inflow of refugees from neighbouring Ukraine, NEA employees require further upskilling and capacity building.

To strengthen its capacities, the NEA benefited from consulting and support services provided by the World Bank (WB), the European Training Foundation (ETF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and others. The Local Employment Partnership, an initiative of the ILO, is a social dialogue platform that brings together representatives of the NEA, local public authorities, trade unions and employers at a local level. The ILO provided financial support for the initiation of a programme to identify existing labour market opportunities and provide outreach for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), while the EU-funded EU4Youth programme is supporting the pilot of a Youth Guarantee-type measure at a local (municipal) level.

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STATISTICAL ANNEX –MOLDOVA

The Annex includes annual data from 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 or the last available year.

	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
1	Total population (in thousands)[1]		2 836.0	2 664.2	2 635.1	2 595.8	2 538.9	2 486.9
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15-24 and denominator age 15-64, %)[1] C		19.8	16.9	16.6	16.4	18.2	19.1
3	GDP growth rate (%)		-0.3	3.6	-8.3	13.9	-5.0	0.8
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	Agriculture	12.8	10.2	9.4	10.6	8.3	7.6
		Industry	21.1	21.9	23.1	20.6	19.4	17.4
		Services	53.3	54.7	54.1	54.6	58.4	61.1
5	Public expenditure on education (as% of GDP)		5.8	6.2	6.6	5.8	6.1	M.D.
6	Public expenditure on education (as% of total public expenditure)		18.2	18.4	17.2	16.3	15.8	M.D.
7	Adult literacy (%)		M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	99.6	M.D.	M.D.
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)[5][6]	Low[2]	30.6	28.9	28.9	29.1	29.5	28.5
		Medium[3]	52.7	52.9	53.0	52.5	52.1	52.4
		High[4]	16.7	18.1	18.2	18.4	18.5	19.1
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%)[5][6]	Total	21.3	19.0	16.9	19.6	21.5	17.5
		Male	25.6	22.6	20.6	23.1	24.5	18.6
		Female	16.7	15.3	13.1	16.1	18.7	16.4
10	Total NET enrolment rate (%)	Lower secondary	100.0	98.9	99.2	99.4	99.7	M.D.
		Upper secondary	74.2	79.1	82.0	84.2	85.4	M.D.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)		43.4	45.7	45.3	44.8	44.8	M.D.
12	Low achievement in reading, mathematics and science – PISA (%)[7]	Reading	45.8	43.0	N.A.	N.A.	48.8	N.A.
		Mathematics	50.3	50.3	N.A.	N.A.	55.8	N.A.
		Science	42.2	42.6	N.A.	N.A.	48.7	N.A.
13		Total	44.5	42.3	40.3	41.1	41.8	45.1

	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)[5][6]	Male	48.2	47.0	45.1	46.5	46.3	49.5
		Female	41.2	38.2	36.1	36.4	37.8	41.4
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)[5][6]	Total	55.5	57.7	59.7	58.9	58.2	54.9
		Male	51.8	53.0	54.9	53.5	53.7	50.5
		Female	58.8	61.8	63.9	63.6	62.2	58.6
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)[5][6]	Total	42.4	40.1	38.8	39.8	40.5	43.1
		Male	45.3	44.2	43.1	44.7	44.7	47.1
		Female	39.8	36.5	35.0	35.4	36.8	39.7
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)[5][6]	Low[2]	27.7	23.6	23.2	25.6	25.5	29.8
		Medium[3]	45.5	41.7	39.9	40.4	41.3	43.3
		High[4]	59.3	61.6	60.4	60.4	62.0	62.3
17	Employment by sector (%)[5][6]	Agriculture	34.2	21.0	21.1	21.5	20.8	20.9
		Industry	17.1	21.7	21.8	22.1	22.5	21.5
		Services	48.7	57.3	57.1	56.4	56.7	57.6
18	Incidence of self-employment (%)[5][6]		36,3	22.2	21.9	21.8	20.6	20.5
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)[5][6]		35,7	21.8	21.5	21.3	20.2	20.0
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)[5][6]	Total	4.7	5.1	3.8	3.2	3.1	4.6
		Male	5.9	5.8	4.3	3.8	3.5	5.0
		Female	3.4	4.4	3.2	2.5	2.6	4.2
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)[5][6]	Low[2]	6.1	8.4	5.8	4.2	4.6	6.1
		Medium[3]	4.2	5.1	3.9	3.6	3.2	4.9
		High[4]	4.6	2.8	2.3	1.8	1.9	2.8
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%)[5][6]	Total	12.3	10.4	10.9	9.2	10.7	11.5
		Male	12.0	11.1	9.9	9.0	9.4	11.7
		Female	12.8	9.4	12.3	9.6	12.6	11.2
23	Proportion of people aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)[5][6]	Total	27.7	19.5	17.6	17.2	17.2	13.8
		Male	29.6	16.5	15.6	14.1	13.5	11.5
		Female	25.6	22.8	19.7	20.4	20.8	16.1

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	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Proportion of people aged 15-29 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)[5][6]	Total	36.3	27.4	26.0	26.4	26.2	23.1
		Male	35.8	19.4	19.6	18.8	17.5	15.3
		Female	37.0	35.5	32.5	33.9	34.6	30.3
24	Participation in training / lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)[8]	Total	M.D.	1.3	1.1	1.1	1.3	2.2
		Male	M.D.	1.2	0.8	0.9	1.1	1.6
		Female	M.D.	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.4	2.7
25	Human Development Index		0.749	0.773	0.765	0.767	0.763	M.D.

Last update: 13/08/2024

Sources:
Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: The World Bank, World Development Indicators database.
Indicators 10, 11: UNESCO, Institute for Statistics.
Indicators 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24: NBS, Labour Force Survey.
Indicator 12: OECD PISA 2018 Results (Volume I) Annex B1; OECD PISA 2022 Results (Volume I).
Indicator 25: UNDP.

Notes:
[1] Estimation.
[2] Low – ISCED 0-2.
[3] Medium – ISCED 3-4.
[4] High – ISCED 5-8.
[5] 2019: break in time series.
[6] From 2015 data estimated using the size of the usually resident population. Since 2019, LFS has been carried out using a new sampling plan and according to the revised definition of employment.
[7] PISA: 2019 refers to 2018.
[8] Participation in training / lifelong learning refers to the last 4 weeks and not to the last 12 months.

Legend:
C = ETF calculations
N.A. = Not applicable
M.D. = Missing data

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ANNEX: DEFINITIONS OF INDICATORS

	Description	Definition
1	Total population (in thousands)	The total population is estimated as the number of people having their usual residence in a country on 1 January of the respective year. When no information on the usually resident population is available, countries may report legal or registered residents.
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15-24) (%)	This is the ratio of the youth population (aged 15-24) to the working-age population, usually aged 15-64 (or 15-74 or 15+).
3	GDP growth rate (%)	Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2010 US dollars. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources.
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	The share of value added from Agriculture, Industry and Services. Agriculture corresponds to ISIC divisions 1-5 and includes forestry, hunting, fishing, crop cultivation and livestock production. Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or depletion and degradation of natural resources. The origin of value added is determined by the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), revision 3 or 4. Industry corresponds to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) tabulation categories C-F (revision 3) or tabulation categories B-F (revision 4), and includes mining and quarrying (including oil production), manufacturing, construction, and public utilities (electricity, gas and water). Services correspond to ISIC divisions 50-99 and include value added in the wholesale and retail trade (including hotels and restaurants), transport, and government, financial, professional and personal services such as education, healthcare, and real estate services. Also included are imputed bank service charges, import duties, and any statistical discrepancies noted by national compilers, as well as discrepancies arising from rescaling.
5	Public expenditure on education (as% of GDP)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of GDP. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans, as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
6	Public expenditure on education (as% of total public expenditure)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of total public expenditure. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans, as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
7	Adult literacy (%)	Adult literacy is the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write a short simple statement on their everyday life, and understand it. Generally, '''literacy' also encompasses '''numeracy' – the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.

	Description	Definition
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)	Educational attainment refers to the highest educational level achieved by individuals expressed as a percentage of all persons in that age group. This is usually measured in terms of the highest educational programme successfully completed, which is typically certified by a recognised qualification. Recognised intermediate qualifications are classified at a lower level than the programme itself.
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%)	Early leavers from education and training are defined as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education who were not in further education or training during the 4 weeks preceding the survey. Lower secondary education refers to ISCED 1997 levels 0-2 and 3C short (i.e. programmes lasting under 2 years) for data up to 2013, and to ISCED 2011 levels 0-2 for data from 2014 onwards.
10	Total NET enrolment rate	Total number of students of the official age group for a given level of education who are enrolled in any level of education, expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	Total number of students enrolled in vocational programmes at a given level of education (in this case, upper secondary), expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled in all programmes (vocational and general) at that level.
12	Low achievement in reading, maths and science – PISA (%)	Low achievers are the 15-year-olds who are failing to reach level 2 on the PISA scale for reading, mathematics and science.
13	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The activity rate is calculated by dividing the active population by the population of the same age group. The active population (also called the 'labour 'force') is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed people. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The inactivity/out of the labour force rate is calculated by dividing the inactive population by the population of the same age group. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed people by the population of the same age group. Employed people are all people who worked at least 1 hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated.
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed persons by the population of the same age group. Employed persons are all persons who worked at least 1 hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated. Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: Low (ISCED level 0-2), Medium (ISCED level 3-4) and High (ISCED 1997 level 5-6, and ISCED 2011 level 5-8).
17	Employment by sector (%)	This indicator provides information on the relative importance of different economic activities with regard to employment. Data is presented by broad branches of economic activity (i.e. Agriculture/Industry/Services), based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC). In Europe, the NACE classification is consistent with ISIC.
18	Incidence of self-employment (%)	The incidence of self-employment is expressed by the self-employed (i.e. employers + own-account workers + contributing family workers) as a proportion of the total employed population.

	Description	Definition
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)	The incidence of vulnerable employment is expressed by the own-account workers and contributing family workers as a proportion of the total employed population.
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the 2 weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the 4-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, 3 months).
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the 2 weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work (had taken specific steps in the 4-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, 3 months)). Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: low (ISCED level 0-2), medium (ISCED level 3-4) and high (ISCED 1997 level 5-6, and ISCED 2011 level 5-8).
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-24 who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the 2 weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the 4-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, 3 months).
23	Proportion of people aged 15-24/15-29 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	The indicator provides information on young people aged 15-24 who meet the following two conditions: first, they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the ILO definition); and second, they have not received any education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey. Data is expressed as a percentage of the total population of the same age group and gender, excluding the respondents who have not answered the question on participation in education and training.
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)	Participants in lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25-64 who stated that they had received education or training in the 12 months preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question on participation in education and training. The information collected relates to all education or training, whether or not it is relevant to the 'respondent's current or possible future job. If a different reference period is used, this should be indicated.
25	Human Development Index	The index is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living.

KEY DONOR PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

OEAD – I-VET | Inclusive Education in VET (Sep 2017 – Dec 2023)

OEAD – MFC | Management for Change (Jan 2020 – Jul 2023)

OEAD – COOP-NET | Cooperation networks of Centers of Excellence (May 2021 – Dec 2023)

GIZ-SDC – Local development project in three regions – component 4: VET and labour market development (22-25)

ABBREVIATIONS

ALMPs	Active labour market programmes
ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
EDS	Education Development Strategy
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
ICT	Information and communication technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification
LGBTQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex
LLL	Lifelong learning
LMO	Labour Market Observatory
MGSP	Modernisation of Government Services Project
MHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection
MoER	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
NEA	National Employment Agency
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NEP	National Employment Programme
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAS	Party of Action and Solidarity

PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SO	Strategic objective
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
VET	Vocational education and training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning
WBL	Work-Based Learning
WDI	World Development Indicators

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