European Training Foundation

VET GOOD MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA

Assessment Report[1]

Part 1. Overview of VET System, Methodology and Main Findings on the Institutional Arrangements

[1] Final working document November 2020

PREFACE

The assessment of effectiveness of VET system in Moldova, made with the use of ETF VET Good Multilevel Governance approach, is based on the review of institutional arrangements of VET system in the country addressing the key areas of VET good multilevel governance and financing. The way to implement ETF methodological tools to support on conducting a review of VET system in the country addressing its institutional approaches and performance, was discussed and agreed with Moldovan high-level stakeholders during a Workshop held in February 2020.

It should be mentioned that it has not been possible, under the restrictions due to the COVID19 crisis situation, to conduct this review in a manner that, ideally, would be desirable. Nevertheless, this report does provide a strong evidence basis, which can be used by the policy makers for taking corresponding decisions.

For the assessment, the following hypothesis was put forth: ***"The Moldovan VET and skill policies in LLL perspective, are implemented through a*** *[governance]* ***architecture which might be more effective and efficient through revisiting the key segments of its current institutional arrangements addressing stakeholder performance whilst using legal and fiscal (financing, funding and budgetary) practices for steering the system change"***. This hypothesis was tested in the framework of the review, and was mainly confirmed.

The Study Report consists of four parts.

This is the **Part 1**, which presents an overview of Education and VET in Moldova, the VET policy framework (including assessment of relevance and credibility) and the legal framework; explains the context, objectives and the methodology of the study, as well as provides the main findings related to the institutional arrangements of the VET system, which are based on a thorough desk research and interviews conducted with the key stakeholders. Short summary of the national stakeholders' self-assessment on core VET Skills Governance Functions and Coordination Mechanisms, are also included in this part.

The **Part 2** provides the findings on the VET financing, on a number of VET practices, such as identification and defining of the learning outcomes and the content of education (NQF, standards and curricula), VET planning, monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning, social partnership, work-based learning and dual education, tracer studies, lifelong learning, and quality assurance, as well as the regional/local experiences.

The **Part 3** contains the Conclusions and the Recommendations based on the analysis of the findings presented in the first two parts of the Report.

The **Part 4** comprises the Bibliography and a package of Annexes. The latter include both methodological and technical information.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Administrative Council
ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
AP	Action Plan
BS	Budget Support
CEDA	Centre for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Assistance
CIDDC	Child Rights Information Centre
CNSM	National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova
CoCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CoE	Centre of Excellence
CoVE	Centres of Vocational Excellence
CRDÎP	National Centre for VET Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
DCT	Data Collection Tool
DEMP	Department of Educational and Migration Policies
DevRAM	Development of Rural Areas in the Republic of Moldova
EC	European Commission
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FECR	Finance in Education, Culture and Research
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HR	Human Resources
HVAA	High Value Agriculture Activity
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
IES	Institute of Education Sciences
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IT	Information Technologies
ITC	Information and Communications Technologies
ITUC	International Trade Union Confederation
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LED	Liechtenstein Development Service

LLL	Lifelong Learning
LM	Labour Market
LMO	Labour Market Observatory
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCT	Methodical Centre for Training
MDL	Moldovan Leu
MERP	Education Reform Project for Moldova
MiDL	Migration and Local Development
MoAFI	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry
MoARDE	Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoECR	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Policy
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MTBF	Medium Term Budgetary Framework
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova
NC	National Council
NCCVET	National Coordination Council for VET
NCEM	National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova
NCVETS	National Council of VET Students
NEA	National Employment Agency
NEET	Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OSMED	Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development
PAME	Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation
PC	Partner Country
PPP	Public-private partnerships
QA	Quality Assurance
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
RG	Sector Councils /Committees
RIA	Review of Institutional Arrangements
RM	Republic of Moldova
RMIC	Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet
SC	Sector Committees

SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDP	Strategic Development Plans
SERES	Science, Education and Rural Extension Service
SIME	Education Management Information System
SIMF	Finance Management Information System
SME	Small and Middle Enterprises
SSC	Sector Councils /Committees
TC	Teachers' Council
ToR	Terms of Reference
TU	Trade Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning
WB	World Bank
WBL	Work-Based Learning
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova
NCCVET	National Coordination Council for VET
NCEM	National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova
NCVETS	National Council of VET Students
NEA	National Employment Agency
NEET	Youth Not in Employment, Education or Training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OSMED	Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development
PAME	Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation
PC	Partner Country
QA	Quality Assurance
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
RIA	Review of Institutional Arrangements
RM	Republic of Moldova
RMIC	Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet
SC	Sector Committees
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation

SDP	Strategic Development Plans
SEN	Special educational needs
SERES	Science, Education and Rural Extension Service
SIME	Education Management Information System
SIMF	Finance Management Information System
SME	Small and Middle Enterprises
TC	Teachers' Council
TU	Trade Union
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning
WB	World Bank
WBL	Work-Based Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

VET Good Multilevel Governance is a model for VET policy-making management based on coordinated action to effectively involve VET public and private stakeholders at all possible levels (international, national, sectoral, regional/local, provider) for objective setting, implementation, monitoring and review. Good multilevel governance in VET aims to reinforce interaction and participation of such stakeholders whilst improving relevance, accountability, transparency, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of VET policies.

The European Training Foundation (ETF) has developed a *VET Governance Toolbox* which should be adapted to a country reality and country needs, with a focus on the following components:

- Method for vision building;
- Assessment of institutional arrangements;
- Costing, Budgeting, Financing and Funding;
- Role of Social Partners linking VET policy to Labour Market needs;
- Territorial Governance (sub-national governance dimension);
- Monitoring and assessment of progress in VET multilevel Governance.

Furthermore, ETF defines *Institutional Arrangements* as the organisation of policies, rules, norms and values that countries have in place to legislate, plan and manage the execution of development, the rule of law, the measurement of change, and other such functions of state; and suggests that *Review of Institutional Arrangements* aims to ensure that the policies defined (strategies, regulations, laws, etc.) are backed up by the appropriate capacities to make them realistic. This includes human resources and organisational arrangements, but also financial resources that will make it possible.

In 2019, the Minister of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR) of the Republic of Moldova formally requested ETF to support implementing multilevel governance approach for assessing VET system in Moldova in the context of the last phase of the Moldovan VET Strategy implementation.

In this context, the ETF VET Governance Toolbox was agreed to be used for a tailored review of VET system in Moldova, and during the Workshop *"Launching a Policy Discussion on VET & Skills Good Multi-Level Governance in Moldova"* organised by ETF in cooperation with MoECR (18th February 2020), main views, ambitions, expectations and other key policy issues for implementing methodological approach on, and review of VET & Skills good multilevel governance in the country were shared and exchanged among high level and other key country stakeholders and ETF.

This Report which consists of four parts[2], presents:

- Results of reviewing and assessing ***institutional arrangements*** within the Moldovan VET system which was based on the ETF VET Good Multilevel Governance approach (and the tool-box) adapted to the local context with strong consideration of the recommendations made by, and the agreements with, the national stakeholders. Structure, tasks and responsibilities, institutional and HR capacities, subordination and accountability, performance, funding and other aspect of all key VET structures and the links between them are identified and described;
- Summary of the results of the ***national stakeholders' self-assessment*** on core VET Skills Governance Functions and Coordination Mechanisms, conducted with use of the ETF VET governance inventory – Data Collection Tool (DCT);

[2] For learning more about the content of each part of this Report, see the Preface.

- Analysis of the business processes (including decision-making processes) in such particular ***VET practices*** as: Identification of skills need and defining the content of VET, including NQF, Standards and curricula; Annual enrolment planning (State Order); Monitoring and Evaluation; Strategic planning, Social Partnership, Work-based learning and Dual education, Tracer studies, Lifelong learning, and Quality assurance, as well as the Regional/local experiences;
- Analysis of the present ***VET funding and financing***: mechanisms, roles, efficiency;
- ***Conclusions*** based on both findings of the implemented study accompanied with the results of the analysis carried out by the Experts, and the generalisation of the statements made by the VET system key stakeholders;
- ***Recommendations*** related to the most problematic VET aspects and also covering many other areas where improvements seem particularly urgent.

* * *

The following types of coordination mechanisms were considered within the review: Legislative – normative-oriented; Institutionalised – policy advice-oriented; Public-Private Partnerships-oriented; Knowledge creation-oriented.

Accordingly, the following was addressed:

- National and sectoral (VET-related) *policy and strategy documents* in terms of vision of VET, its development goals and objectives;
- Main *VET-related legal acts* (laws, sub-laws, regulations, etc.) for identifying the established *business processes* and *legal relations* between the bodies involved in VET governance;
- Key *VET actors* at national and sectoral levels, *directly or indirectly involved in VET governance.*

Based on the initial study implemented during the inception phase of the project as well as considering the recommendations of the Launching Workshop, the following VET players were covered by the review:

A. Governmental Bodies: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research; Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (MoHLSP); Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MoARDE); Ministry of Finance (MoF).

B. Public Institutions: Republican VET Development Centre; National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research; Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet under MoHLSP; Labour Market Observatory; Methodical Training Centre under MoARDE; Centres of Excellence, Colleges, and VET Schools.

C. Councils and Committees: Economic Council to the Prime Minister; National Coordination Council for VET; National Qualification Council; National Council of VET Students; Sector Committees for VET.

D. Social partners and CSOs: Chamber of Commerce and Industry; National Confederation of Employers (Patronat); Organisation for small and medium enterprises development; National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova; some individual private companies.

E. Development partners (and or their projects)**:** Liechtenstein Development Service; Centre for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Assistance; Austrian Development Agency; World Bank in Moldova; USAID; Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation; GIZ; Pro Didactica Educational Centre.

The review was implemented *via* mixture of desk research and field work. The desk research was focused on thorough analysis of the national legislation, policy and strategy documents, legal acts

defining the scope of authorities and the functions of numerous bodies directly or indirectly involved in the VET governance, the rules and procedures on different VET practices. A certain scope of statistical data on the Moldovan education system and specifically on VET, was also processed.

The field works, due to the restrictions caused by the COVID19 crisis, were carried out in distance, with use of electronic means of communication. In total 38 individual interviews and two group interviews were provided. In total, about 40 organisations and/or their units were considered for this review.

* * *

The main sector policy document, the **Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy 2013-2020,** defined the general objective as: *'Modernise and streamline the VET in order to increase the competitiveness of the national economy, by training competent and qualified workforce, in line with current and future requirements of the market'*; and identified six specific objectives: 1) Restructuring the VET into two levels – secondary and post-secondary and reconfigure the network of institutions by 2017; 2) Ensuring the VET based on competences and adjust it to the labour market requirements; 3) Increasing the quality of the VET by improving the efficiency of the utilisation of financial means and by creating and implementing the quality assurance system; 4) Scientific, cultural and methodological provision of the VET, so that all curricula are adjusted to the NQF by 2020; 5) Increase the quality of the teaching staff and improving their motivation, so that, by 2020, the entire teaching staff is trained according to the NQF; 6) Increasing attractiveness and access to the VET.

The VET Development Strategy provides a detailed analysis of the challenges facing the sector. *Inter alia*, these include:

- weakness of quality assurance system and the NQF in VET;
- difficulties in adjusting the qualifications to the actual needs of the labour market, incompliance of curricula with its requirements, and inefficiency of developing and publishing teaching and learning materials;
- the necessity of upgrading the skills and capacities of the VET teachers, managers and administrators in line with modern standards;
- an ageing infrastructure (buildings, equipment etc.) of the VET system and inefficiency of its use;
- poor management on the allocation and administration of finances;
- a need to strengthen the role of the social partners, specifically the business community and civil society in the VET policy-making, decision-taking, policy management and service delivery processes;
- limited access to information technologies and poor use thereof in VET.

During the period from 2013 till 2020, considerable achievements in implementation of the VET Strategy and developing this system were registered. Situation in many VET clusters have been improved and some VET practices strengthened. Nevertheless, none of the challenges could be considered as fully or significantly overcome, therefore, the Strategy remained ***relevant*** during the entire period of validity. Moreover, many of those challenges will most likely remain pertinent also for the next medium-term period.

The ***credibility*** of the VET policy was also mainly ensured in terms of a) Track record in policy implementation; b) Policy financing; c) Institutional capacity and ownership; and d) Analytical basis and data quality.

Presently, a new National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030" is under elaboration, and the Education Strategy 2030 covering also the VET sector, will be derivative of it. Therefore, the present

period selected for this review, seems exceptionally opportune, and the proposed options for restructuring the VET governance and increasing its effectiveness, may be well-timed.

* * *

The VET system in Moldova has a complicated structure with involvement of numerous players both public and non-public. There are many horizontal and vertical links, including administrative and methodological. Some forms of cooperation between the stakeholders are formalised and institutionalised, while others are based on memoranda or similar documents. Although certain non-state actors do participate in VET governance but their role is predominantly consultative, while the decision-making authority almost solely belongs to the governmental bodies.

The VET system and its governance are centralised at the national level. No regional or local bodies have tasks in this area. The sectoral dimension is limited to the Sector Committees for Professional Training, which are composed of social partners' representatives. Those Committees have again consultative role within the corresponding sectors of economy.

There are 89 public VET institutions in Moldova. They are subordinated to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (42 VET schools, 19 Colleges, and 8 Centres of Excellence), the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (4 Colleges and 1 Centre of Excellence), the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (6 Colleges and 2 Centres of Excellence), and the Ministry of Internal Affairs (1 College).

Thus, the above Ministries are directly responsible for VET governance and are accountable to the Prime Minister's Office. The Ministry of Finance participates in the VET governance through different processes of the VET institutions' funding, while other line Ministries have indirect relations to the VET Governance, e.g. through participation in elaboration of qualification standards and modification of the Nomenclature of fields of professional training and specialties.

There are a number of support structures under MoECR, MoHLSP and MoARDE as well as various Councils but the levels of their functionality and the effectiveness are different. The key structure which should ensure social partnership in the field of VET, i.e. National Council for VET Coordination is not functioning since 2017, while the Republican Centre for VET Development is under-staffed and under-funded and in fact, almost non-operational. At the same time Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet of MoHLSP and Methodical Centre for Training of MoARDE cannot effectively fulfil their primary tasks, due to the shortage of staff and also because of being loaded by some other ministerial duties.

There are numerous Social Partner organisations, which are formally involved in different VET processes, in accordance with the corresponding legal acts. A large number of donors are providing considerable assistance to the Moldovan VET system development, and the EU, with its Budget Support, remains the largest among them. Many CSOs are also active in supporting the VET system improvements.

The effectiveness of VET system governance is assessed as average; it is slow and cannot ensure that VET meets the modern LM requirements. There is also a significant bureaucracy. The main reasons of that particularly are the political instability which leads to high level of turnover in the Government, ministries and other state institutions; as well as the lack of funding which results in considerable shortage of workforce at the level of the ministries and public support structures. Another issue is that the VET governance tasks are not clearly and properly distributed among the corresponding bodies. In addition, there is an obvious lack of HR capacities to organise and implement the VET governance effectively. Another important deficiency is absence of a structure

playing an intermediate role between the policy making-level (Government, Ministries) on one hand, and the VET institutions and other players (e.g. Sector Committees, Social partners, NGOs, Donors and other partners), on the other.

At the institutional level, the management effectiveness is also questioned. In the VET institutions, there are four management bodies, i.e. three types of Councils and the Director (*executive manager*). The distribution of the tasks between the two Councils is not really based on clear principles, and the scope of functions of every type of Council differs as by the types of institutions. All three types of Councils are chaired by the Director and they do not seem effectively independent bodies. The Social partners have a very limited representation only in one of the Councils.

According with the position of many stakeholders, there are too many VET institutions in the country, compared with the number of students and the total population. Extensive number of stakeholders expressed their support to transferring the agriculture colleges to the jurisdiction of MoECR, justifying this particularly by the fact that the agro-institutions are somewhat isolated from the entire VET system, and also that there is no public agriculture sector in the country, therefore, also no public employers for those institutions' graduates. Some of the stakeholders propose to transfer also the medical VET institutions to MoECR.

The Centres of Excellence are a new type of VET institution introduced in 2015 and assigned to executing a number of additional tasks compared with other VET institutions. However, at present, none of the CoEs is capable to exercise its role according with the statute and fulfil all its functions, due to the lack of human capacities, managerial and didactic, and financial scarcity. A large number of donors are providing considerable assistance to the CoE, however, considering the present mission of CoEs, they still need much more for and the support has to be systematic, coming chiefly from the national system, in order to assure sustainability. Many tasks that are supposed to be performed by a VET meso-level institution (e.g. a VET Centre) and sectoral entities, are put on the CoEs' shoulders which has already proven its bankruptcy.

A number of bodies are formally responsible for monitoring and evaluating different aspects (practices) of VET as well as the functioning of the entire system. The VET Development Strategy 2013-2020 defined a monitoring and evaluation framework for the policy level, where the MoECR Board, NCCVET, Sector Committees, businesses, as well as CSOs and development partners, should be involved and independently monitor the Strategy implementation. This has never become a reality. At the institutional level, the (internal) monitoring system is established appropriately and the VET institutions regularly publish annual monitoring reports. Evaluation of performance is also planned as a mandatory action at the end of the institutions' every SDP implementation period. At the same time, the external monitoring and evaluation of the institutions is entirely missing. Although the public VET institutions submit annual activity reports to MoECR, no any administrative decisions are taken based e.g. on the level of the institutions' Strategic Plan performance.

The VET funding as a share of the total State budget is slowly decreasing (from 2.8% in 2018 to 2.1% in 2020), however, in absolute amount it is relative stable (~1.1 billion MDL). A new *per capita* VET financing mechanism introduced in 2017, is based on rational, equitable and transparent allocative methodology, however, it is applied only partly: the rates are calculated with consideration of the budget ceiling but not based on the real cost of training as by the categories of qualifications. This new funding mechanism foresees also a considerable level of autonomy for the institutions in managing the allocated financial means. Nevertheless, there are many issues related to the capacities of the VET institutions to work under this new conditions, which means also a high level of responsibility and requires a certain business way of thinking. The new mechanism provides the VET institutions also

with wide opportunities of additional activities for income generation which are mainly not utilised, sometimes due to the institutions' profile, but more often because of the lack of school managers' capabilities and motivation (moral and fiscal) to initiate any entrepreneurial activity.

The normative acts seemingly cover and regulate almost all aspects of the VET system functioning, nevertheless, there are many issues related to the legislation. Some aspects are poorly regulated, there are legal acts and normative documents which are ambiguous or contradicting each other. In several cases, practical implementation of the acts' requirements is complicated due to numerous reasons, particularly lack of funding, limited capabilities of human resources, etc.

The legal dimension of the Social partnership in VET seems properly defined, and there is a Concept of the Social Dialogue Platform in VET which is built on 3 levels (national, sectoral and institutional). However, in practice, the situation is not much encouraging. At the national level, the role of mediator between the VET institutions and the labour market is assigned to NCCVET, which has not been active since 2018. CRDÎP which should facilitate the relationship between the national economic environment and the VET system, is factually dysfunctional. At the sectoral level, the Sector Committees for VET are responsible for the Social partnership but their effectiveness is still far from being satisfactory. The institutional level is also mainly failed due to not full capability of the CoEs to perform their role of mediation between the local economic agents and Colleges and VET schools.

Of 9 recently established Sector Committees for VET, not all are formalised yet, and some are still non-active. The Committees are acting in accordance with the Law on Sector Committees for Vocational Training. The SCs do not always manage to execute their functions properly and achieve the goals. The main reason is busyness of the members with their primary jobs and lack of time to be allocated for the SC activities, and probably also a certain deficiency of commitment. Other main issues are the shortage funds and human resources including absence of technical secretariat, which results particularly in inability to apply for, and implement projects funded by NGOs or donors. The aggregated (generalised) opinion of the key stakeholders about the SCs is that they are not effective enough yet and have no any considerable impact.

In 2017, Government adopted the Moldovan NQF based on professional knowledge, skills and competencies, and with a structure similar to EQF. MoECR is authorised to develop and approve methodologies and procedures necessary for the NQF application. All NQF-related procedures are well regulated and the roles of the different players are clearly defined. However, there are several issues in this field, related specifically to the effectiveness and efficiently of the following chain: development of Occupational Standards – development of Qualification Standard – development, introduction and implementation of a Curriculum. Other challenges in this field are: the VET institutions' limited capacities to adapt the curricula or create new VET courses/programmes by themselves; absence of any regulation for awarding and recognising partial qualifications; the requirement of accrediting the non-formal training programmes, including the short-term courses, which almost by all stakeholders is considered as an unnecessary complication.

At the national level, ANACEC is the structure having a mission to develop and promote the culture of quality in the field of IVET, CVET and Higher education. At the VET institutional level, the internal quality is monitored by the Commission for Internal Evaluation and Quality Assurance, while in the enterprises involved in VET process, there is no body responsible for quality assurance. VET institutions (both public and private) and their programmes (initial and continuing) are subject to external quality evaluation by ANACEC every five year, for accreditation purposes. ANACEC only develops the quality assurance policies but not directly evaluates the quality at each institution in terms of the performance results.

The existent quality assurance mechanisms do not include assessment of the final results produced by the VET providers for ensuring the appropriateness of those VET products, through e.g. VET students' and graduates' or company's satisfaction surveys.

Currently WBL is institutionalised and seems well regulated. Its mandatory status at all VET levels, for both initial and continuous VET, is pinned down by the normative acts. The responsibilities of different stakeholders are also defined by normative acts. MoECR is the dominant body in the process of developing the legal framework, while the participation of other actors, e.g. Sector Committees, CRDÎP, CoCI, in elaboration of methodological recommendations for WBL programmes, facilitation the organisation of WBL, quality assurance, etc., is missing completely. There are also challenges related specifically to the quality, the effectiveness and efficiency of the WBL. Anyway, it has a well-built recognition in the country but the cooperation with economic agents is mostly limited to the provision of places for internships, with low or non-participation in other VET processes.

Dual VET has been introduced in 2014 with a gradual positive trend in the last four years. This is largely due to the essential support from the development partners. However, training and learning environments differ a lot from one case to another, depending on the sector and the region as well. It remains to be a challenge for small companies, and it is in little demand particularly in the agriculture area, where small businesses and individual farms are not motivated and fully prepared to provide dual VET.

Tracer Study mechanism was among the expected results of the VET Strategy for 2013-2020. Accordingly, MoECR developed and piloted a Methodology in the period between 2015 and 2017. However, after 2017, this mechanism was no longer implemented due to lack of resources and capacities. The VET Institutions do not have functional and sustainable mechanisms for conducting Tracer Studies. The situation is more advantageous in the sector of healthcare where the MoHLSP keeps record of the number of all medical graduates and medical workers via SIERUSS system managed by the Agency for Public Health. It is anticipated that the EMIS module for VET, which is being developed by MoECR with the WB support, will contain a domain with statistical data about the graduates' job placement and further education.

LLL has gained prominence during the last years. However, continuous professional training is intermittently provided by a limited number of institutions on request, and some companies provide short courses for their own needs, i.e. to train new workers or upgrade the qualifications of their own employees. There is small number of VET institutions providing CVET programmes. This is conditioned by the fact that the accreditation of those programmes is a long and expensive process as it must follow an accreditation path similar to the formal IVET programmes awarding qualifications. In general, there is still a lack of clarity about how LLL can be operationalised, systematically and systemically. Currently, adult training is limited, and its financing remains low. There is a need of public policies to implement a well-resourced, learner-centred, coordinated and rights-based approach to LLL systems.

* * *

In the Part 3 of this Report, 16 main recommendations are made. They are targeted at the following 7 objectives: 1) Establishing an effective VET policy making scheme, based on social partnership and equipped with operational Monitoring and Evaluation system; 2) Rationalising the VET governance institutional settings; 3) Optimising the VET providers network; 4) Increasing effectiveness of VET practices; 5) Increasing VET funding and optimising VET financing scheme; 6) Improving VET legislation; and 7) Optimising International Support. Those recommendations are:

R.1: Establish a tripartite (or quadripartite) National VET Council.

R.2: Assign coordination of the Sector Committees' activities to the VET Council.

R.3: Establish VET Teachers' National Council.

R.4: Operationalise the system of Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET policy implementation and external Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET institutions and the entire VET network performance.

R.5: Establish an effective national structure assigned for the complete scope of VET support activities.

R.6: Expand the capacities of the VET Department and MoECR and revise its tasks.

R.7: Revise subordination of the public VET institutions.

R.8: Rationalise the public VET institutions' network.

R.9: Unify the types of VET institutions and revise the concept of Centres of Excellence.

R.10: Introduce a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance and management of VET institutions.

R.11: Introduce a system of licencing for the offered qualifications.

R.12: Include optimisation of the VET practices in the new VET Strategy as expected outcomes.

R.13: Increase VET funding.

R.14: Ensure full-fledged and consistent per-capita VET financing mechanism.

R.15: Revise the legislation so that it serves best for effective implementation of the VET policy and strategy.

R.16: Establish a VET donors' coordination platform.

In addition, a set of ***accompanying*** recommendations are also made. They are not less important than the main ones but relate to the structures responsible not solely for VET or not directly involved in the VET governance. These are:

R.17: Restructure the Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department at MoECR and expand the capacities.

R.18: Review the level of the ANACEC independence.

R.19: Expand the capacities of the NQF Department at MoECR and revise its tasks.

R.20: Promote the National Council of VET Students.

1. OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR AND THE VET SYSTEM

1.1. General overview of Education and VET in Moldova

Education in Moldova comprises 8 levels, where VET corresponds to the ISCED levels 3 to 5:

- Secondary VET – ISCED level 3;
- Post-secondary VET – ISCED level 4;
- Post-secondary non-tertiary VET – ISCED level 5.

Since 2018, secondary education to be acquired at lyceum or within VET, is compulsory up to the age of 18 years old.

In the 2018-2019 academic year, there were 149,513 children (or around 58% of those of the corresponding age) enrolled in early education at 1,484 pre-school institutions. Primary education (grades 1-4) covered 139,612 and lower secondary education (grades 5-9) 159,427 pupils at 1,246 primary and secondary education institutions. At the upper-secondary level (lyceum), 35,120 pupils were studying; 1,041 pupils were involved in evening schools and 709 in the institutions for those with special educational needs (SEN). In addition, 13,932 pupils were studying at VET schools, and 30,413 students at Colleges and Centres of Excellence. Distribution of the higher education students as by levels was the following: Bachelor degree – 45,466; Master's degree – 10,947; Doctoral and postdoctoral studies – 4,195 people.

Presently, there are three types of VET institutions in Moldova: ***42 VET schools*** providing only secondary VET, ***34 Colleges*** (including 4 private) and ***13 Centres of Excellence***[3] (including 2 private) offering VET programmes at all three levels of VET[4]. The Table 1 shows the dynamics of the VET institutions' and students' numbers for the last three years, and the Table 2 demonstrates distribution of students as by the VET levels.

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF VET INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENTS AS BY TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

Type of Institution	Number of institutions			Number of students					
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
				Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
VET schools	43	43	42	17,228	4,278	15,436	3,541	13,932	3,319
Colleges	32	32	34	17,188	10,561	17,364	10,680	17,379	10,725
Centres of excellence	11	11	13	14,375	6,428	13,786	6,106	13,037	5,783
TOTAL	**86**	**86**	**89**	**48.791**	**21,267**	**46,586**	**20,327**	**44,348**	**19,827**

Source: NBS.

[3] According with the Education Code, the *'Centre of excellence is a vocational education institution with high potential in its area of competence, having responsibilities both in the organisation of combined training programmes and in the development of capacities in the technical and vocational education and training sector'*.

[4] Till the 2015-2016 academic year, there were also Schools of Trades.

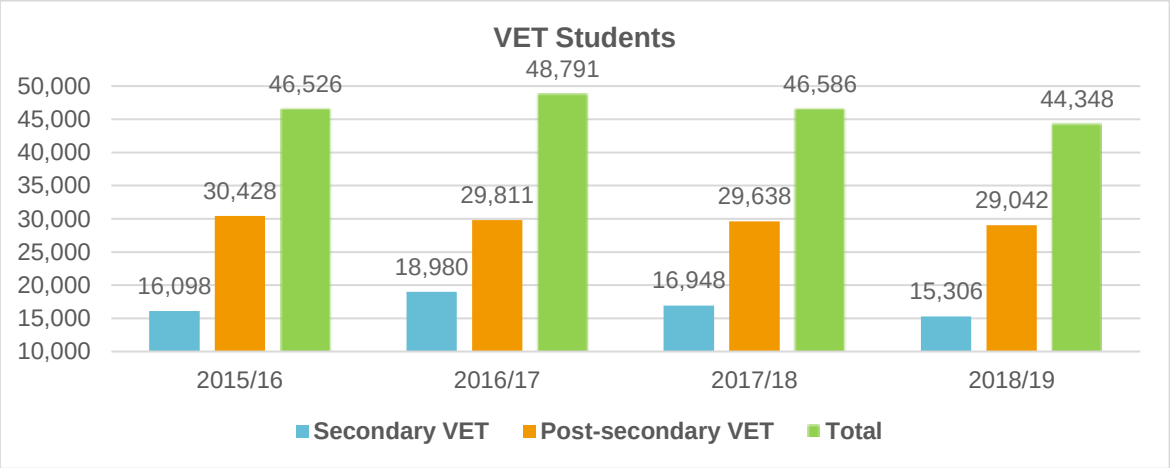
TABLE 2. NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND GRADUATES AS BY VET LEVELS

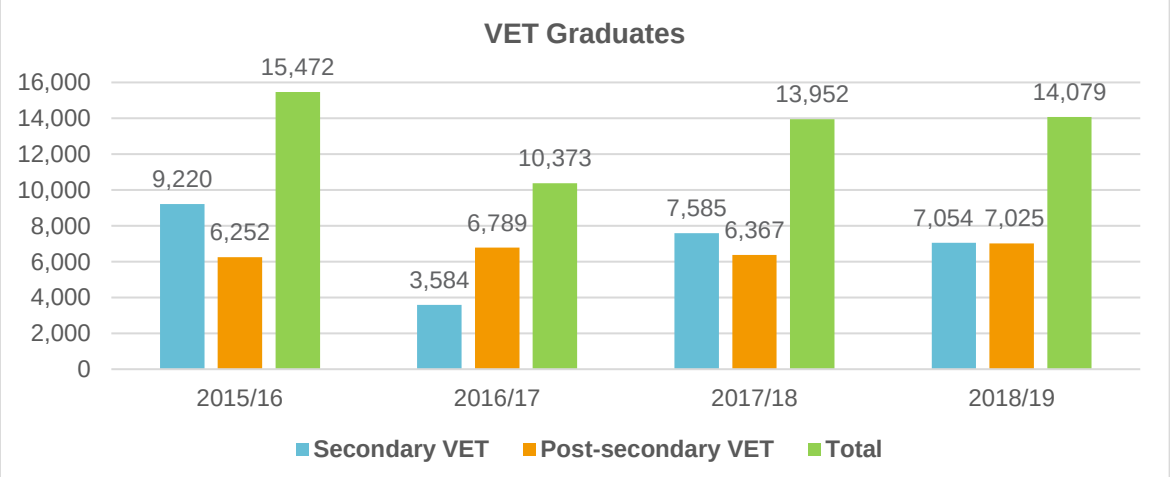
VET Level		Number of students					
		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
		Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
Secondary VET programmes	students	18,980	5,635	16,948	4,568	15,306	4,196
	graduates	3,584	1,121	7,585	2,461	7,054	2,149
Post-secondary VET programmes	students	29,811	15,632	29,638	15,759	29,042	15,631
	graduates	6,789	3,721	6,367	3,282	7,025	3,697
TOTAL VET	students	**48,791**	**21,267**	**46,586**	**20,327**	**44,348**	**19,827**
	graduates	**10,373**	**4,842**	**13,952**	**5,743**	**14,079**	**5,846**

Source: NBS.

The Diagram 1 illustrates the dynamics of VET students and graduates of both levels for the academic years 2015-2016 to 2018-2019:

DIAGRAM 1. DYNAMICS OF VET STUDENT'S AND GRADUATES FOR THE ACADEMIC YEARS 2015-2016 TO 2018-2019





Source: NBS.

Of the 83 public VET institutions, 69 are subordinated to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MoECR), 8 to the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment (MoARDE), 5 to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection (MoHLSP) and 1 to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA):

TABLE 3. DISTRIBUTION OF THE VET INSTITUTIONS BY THE JURISDICTION

	VET Schools	Colleges	Centres of Excellence	Total
Ministry of Education, Culture and Research	42	19	8	69
Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment	0	6	2	8
Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection	0	4	1	5
Ministry of Internal Affairs	0	1	0	1
Total Public	*42*	*30*	*11*	***83***
Private	-	4	2	**6**
TOTAL	**42**	**34**	**13**	**89**

Source: NBS.

The share of female students in the entire cohort of VET students is ~44% and this indicator has been slightly growing from 43.6% for the academic year 2016-2017 to 44.7% for 2018-2019. The portion of female students is specifically large in Colleges (~61.5%) and expectedly small (due to the nature of offered qualifications) in VET Schools (~23.9%). If taken by the levels of education, female students in post-secondary education comprise ~53.1%, while in secondary VET ~28%.

Not only the total number of VET students but also the share of secondary VET students in total cohort of those involved in upper secondary education, are decreasing steadily (Table 4).

TABLE 4. SHARE OF VET IN TOTAL UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Total Secondary Education, *of them:*	52,606	51,018	50,426
Lyceums	33,626	34,070	35,120
Secondary VET programmes	18,980	16,948	15,306
Share of VET in total secondary	***36.1%***	***33.2%***	***30.4%***

Source: RM National Bureau of Statistics.

At the same time, in 2019, the ratio of Post-secondary VET students to those involved in the first cycle of higher education, slightly increased compared with the previous year (Table 5).

TABLE 5. RATIO OF POST-SECONDARY VET TO THE FIRST CYCLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

	2017/18	2018/19
Cycle I of Higher Education (licentiate degree)	49,112	45,466
Post-secondary VET programmes	29,638	29,042
Ratio of VET to the Cycle I of Higher Education	***0.60***	***0.64***

Source: RM National Bureau of Statistics.

The number of staffs in VET institutions is also decreasing but less sharply compared with the VET students decline (Table 6).

TABLE 6. NUMBER OF VET INSTITUTIONS STAFFS

	VET institutions		VET Schools		Colleges		Centres of excellence	
	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female	Total	Female
2017/18								
Total, of them:	**4,201**	2,644	1,692	858	1,485	1,068	1,024	718
• **Management personnel**	**476**	270	199	83	184	124	93	63
• **Pedagogical staff, of them:**	**3,725**	2,374	1,493	775	1,301	944	931	655
▪ **Teachers**	**2,690**	1,902	675	443	1,206	887	809	572
▪ **VET instructors/ foremen**	**881**	356	759	290	46	19	76	47
▪ **Other pedagogical staff**	**154**	116	59	42	49	38	46	36
2018/19								
Total, of them:	**4,069**	2,631	1,582	844	1,465	1,051	1,022	736
• **Management personnel**	**485**	303	191	97	187	134	107	72
• **Pedagogical staff, of them:**	**3584**	2,328	1,391	747	1,278	917	915	664
▪ **Teachers**	**2,615**	1,865	635	435	1,183	865	797	565
▪ **VET instructors/ foremen**	**795**	328	680	255	42	11	73	62
▪ **Other pedagogical staff**	**174**	135	76	57	53	41	45	37

Source: NBS.

1.2. Policy framework

1.2.1. Relevance

The ***National Development Strategy*** for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction – ***Moldova 2020***[5], identifies as one of the seven preconditions[6] for economic growth and poverty reduction the need to ensure greater synergy between the labour market demand and education supply. *The correlation between labour market demand and education supply will have a significant impact on economic development. Modernisation of the vocational education system and improvement of continuous labour force training will allow citizens to adapt to new labour market conditions. Partnerships between education and labour market will lead to a generation of educational offerings that will meet the quantitative, qualitative and structural labour force needs. This in turn will help reduce unemployment and the flow of citizens who leave the country and the rate of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion[7].*

[5] Law № 166, 11th July 2012.
[6] In 2014, the Strategy was amended by the eighth pillar "Agriculture and Rural Development", and the title was changed accordingly (Law № 121, 3rd July 2014).
[7] "Moldova 2020. National Development Strategy: 7 Solutions for Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction", available in English at: https://cancelaria.gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/1100271_en_moldova_2020_e.pdf.

This broad vision was subsequently translated into a concrete strategy. In February 2013, the Government of Moldova adopted the ***Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy 2013-2020*** (Government Decision № 97, 1st February 2013). It defines the general objective as: *'Modernise and streamline the VET in order to increase the competitiveness of the national economy, by training competent and qualified workforce, in line with current and future requirements of the market'*. The strategy identified six specific objectives.

- Restructure the VET into two levels – secondary and post-secondary and reconfigure the network of institutions by 2017;
- Ensure the vocational training in the VET based on competences and adjust it to the labour market requirements, so that employment increases by 10%, from 50.6% in 2012, for graduates from the secondary specialised education, and from 50% in 2012 for graduates from the secondary vocational education;
- Increase the quality of the VET by improving the efficiency of the utilisation of financial means and by creating and implementing the quality assurance system, so that, by 2017 to have a functional entity for the assessment and accreditation of these institutions;
- Scientific, cultural and methodological provision of the VET, so that 100% of curricula is adjusted to the National Qualifications Framework by 2020;
- Increase the quality of the teaching staff, including by upgrading the initial and continuing professional development of teaching staff for the VET, and improving the motivation of these, so that, by 2020, the entire teaching staff is trained according to the National Qualifications Framework;
- Increase attractiveness and access to the VET, so that by 2020, the number of students increases by 10%.

The VET Development Strategy provides a detailed analysis of the challenges facing the sector. *Inter alia*, these include:

- weakness of quality assurance system and the NQF in VET;
- difficulties in adjusting the qualifications to the actual needs of the labour market, incompliance of curricula with its requirements, and inefficiency of developing and publishing teaching and learning materials;
- the necessity of upgrading the skills and capacities of the VET teachers, managers and administrators in line with modern standards;
- an ageing infrastructure (buildings, equipment etc.) of the VET system and inefficiency of its use;
- poor management on the allocation and administration of finances;
- a need to strengthen the role of the social partners, specifically the business community and civil society in the VET policy-making, decision-taking, policy management and service delivery processes;
- limited access to information technologies and poor use thereof in VET.

Underpinning each of these specific challenges is the broader challenge of ensuring the VET graduates' knowledge, skills and competences relevance to the demand of employers, thus making them employable and competitive in the labour market.

During the period from 2013 till present, considerable achievements in implementation of the VET Strategy and developing this system were registered. Situation in many VET clusters have been improved and some VET practices strengthened. Nevertheless, none of the challenges could be

considered as fully or significantly overcome, therefore, the Strategy remained ***relevant*** during the entire period of validity, i.e. till 2020. Moreover, many of those challenges will most likely remain pertinent also for the next medium-term period.

The only substantive deficiency in the strategy is that there is no discussion of the coordination arrangements for oversight of implementation of the strategy. It was presumed that this role would be performed by a VET Coordination Council but it was established in December 2014 and only held 4 meetings within the period 2014-2016.

For the first 5 years, the planned interventions were clearly stated in the Action Plan for 2013-2017, which accompanied the VET Development Strategy. Each measure and sub-measure was equipped with "strategic targets" and corresponding "expected results". The Action Plan was partially costed: there were overall costs shown by programme and source of revenue (State Budget and Development Partners) but these were not detailed against individual measures.

There was no separate Action Plan adopted for the period of 2018-2020, and implementation of the Strategy was continued in line with the AP for 2013-2017. No new measures were introduced. There are several results to be achieved by 2020, which have been incorporated into the statement of the strategic objectives: e.g. increase in the employment rate of VET graduates by 10%; 100% of curricula is adjusted to the National Qualifications Framework; and 10% increase in the number of registered VET students. Particularly these were taken as targets for the activities to be performed during the final 3 years of the Strategy.

The Action Plan is clearly and realistically focused on re-engineering the institutional and financial base of the VET sector in order to put in place the solid foundations upon which such initiatives might be built in the future. Therefore, the present period selected for this review, seems exceptionally opportune, and the proposed options for restructuring the VET governance and increasing its effectiveness, may be well-timed.

The Strategy expires in several months (end of 2020) and discussing its relevance and the credibility is only important for considering the lessons learnt, while designing the next policy document. This is expected to ensure higher quality thereof.

For the new VET Strategy, two national policy documents, one acting and another being under discussion, are to be appreciated.

The ***National Employment Strategy for 2017-2021*** was approved by the Government Decision № 1473, 30th December 2016, and among a number of challenges related to employment, defines also those associated with education and specifically VET. These are to large extent in line with the issues defined in the VET Strategy:

- decline of the number of people involved in education, the lowest rate of which is recorded in VET;
- relatively modest performance indicators in education, despite the fact that a significant part of budgetary funds is allocated to education compared with other countries in the region;
- lack of mechanisms for accurate forecasting of labour market demand and defining the qualifications in order to increase the workforce ability to adapt to the LM requirements;
- a need to strengthen and expand the cooperation between VET institutions and employers and professional associations in order to promote WBL programmes, as well as the participation of employers in the curricula developing processes;
- inconsistency between the training of specialists and the LM needs, which leads to imbalance of labour force supply, inefficiency in spending the financial resources allocated to VET, and decrease of VET graduates' employability.

Along with this, one of the factors negatively affecting the job placement, is the *'education and qualifications that do not meet the targets of increasing employment rate and economic growth'* conditioned by a number of reasons: lack of coherence between supply and demand in the labour market; the VET system that is not yet adapted to the requirements of the labour market; low involvement of private sector in education and training; lack of WBL; low level of entrepreneurial culture; inefficient human resource management, etc.

Accordingly, one of the Strategy main objectives is to correlate the education system with labour market requirements for better qualifications and skills. Priority 2 "Developing human capital for higher employment opportunities" aims at increasing the attractiveness, relevance and inclusion of the VET system and raising awareness of the importance of LLL. For achieving these targets, the following actions are foreseen:

- strengthening the link between the labour market and the VET system;
- improving the image of VET and its promotion;
- improving the practical skills of graduates by using the forms of internship training, Work-based learning for facilitating transition from school to work;
- ensuring vulnerable groups' access to education and training;
- improving the legal framework on LLL;
- stimulating cooperation and establishing partnerships between research and development institutions, public bodies, educational institutions and enterprises.

All this should unambiguously be considered in the next VET development policy paper. The Employment Strategy sets also a number of quantitative indicators for 2021, achievement of which can be considerably contributed by the VET system. These, for example are: increasing youth employment rate to 32.1% (against 27.9% in 2017 and 31.1% in 2020), decreasing the share of NEET to 26.8% (against 29.3% in 2017 and 27.5% in 2020), increasing the rate of job placed people with disabilities to 39.0% (against 34.0% in 2017 and 38.0% in 2020), etc.

Presently, a new ***National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030"*** is under elaboration. UNDP suggests[8] that it should be human-centred; embed Agenda 2030 and Association Agenda; include a sound monitoring and evaluation system; be considered as an "anchor" for policy and budgetary planning; and the Parliament and civil society should have a more active role in its development and monitoring and evaluation of the performance. The document will be focused on increasing the quality of life; capitalising the potential of each person; and the main stages of life cycle – birth, nursery, education, family life, period of economic activities, and pension. Among the proposed long-term objectives of the Strategy, there are, e.g.: *"Decent working conditions and minimal informal employment"* under the Priority 1. Sustainable and Inclusive Economy; *"Relevant and quality education"* (with Mid-term priority *"Quality education for all"*) under the Priority 2. Robust Human and Social Capital; *"Transparent, efficient, accountable and professional governance"* under the Priority 3. Honest and Efficient Institutions. All this are to be taken as targets also for the future VET Strategy paper[9].

[8] https://www.undp.org/content/dam/unct/moldova/docs/devmeetings/2018/Concept%20of%20the%20National%20Development%20Strategy%20Moldova%202030.pdf.

[9] It is possible, however, that the Government will not adopt a separate VET Strategy but a comprehensive Education Strategy

1.2.2. Credibility

According with the contemporary methodology[10] the ***credibility*** is to be measured against: a) Track record in policy implementation; b) Policy financing; c) Institutional capacity and ownership; and d) Analytical basis and data quality. Review of the institutional arrangements is the purpose of the present review and is analysed in details in the further sections of this Report. Other criteria of credibility are discussed here in short.

1.2.2.1. Track record in policy implementation

As mentioned above, the Strategy has 6 Specific Objectives. Around 40 Actions were foreseen for reaching those objectives for the period 2013-2017[11]. MoECR reports about high level of policy implementation. Indeed, at least formally, extensive number of outputs are produced:

- Necessary number of Centres of Excellence has been established and their facilities refurbished;
- Sector Committees created (against planned 12, nine are established, of which six are registered);
- VET Coordination Council founded;
- National Qualifications Framework, Quality Assurance system and VNFIL mechanism introduced;
- Restructuring of the VET Network[12] is in progress;
- A new Methodology has been adopted according to which standards and curricula are developed (revised) and approved;
- Nomenclature of Professions and Qualifications updated;
- New *per capita* VET funding mechanism launched;
- A number of institutions' administrators and teachers trained on different VET aspects;
- Efforts to improve physical access and facilities for disabled persons made, etc.

Nevertheless, it is arguable what outcomes have been achieved. Moreover, the impact of the reforms is unclear yet. The results of our analysis presented below, will show that in some cases establishment of institutions, approving methodologies or adopting standards is not a guarantee of measurable improvements. In other words, all anticipated outputs could be delivered without having any impact e.g. upon the employment levels of VET graduates. Indeed, presently there is no adequate mechanism for collecting data regarding the job placement of VET graduates and this indicator is effectively not measurable. Another example is the Objective № 6: instead of planned increase, the number of VET students in the academic year 2018-2019 was even *less* than in 2013-2014 by 6.3% (44,348 against 47,321[13]).

Two main recommendations can be done based on this conclusions: the new strategy should be targeted to distinctly *outcome-type* "expected results" and a clear mechanism of measuring achievement of those outputs and then also the impact, should be introduced. In addition, effective coordination and monitoring framework should be defined and made integral part of the Strategy.

[10] See: Budget Support Guidelines. European Commission, 2017: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/budget-support-guidelines-2017_en.pdf.
[11] As mentioned above, there was no Action Plan adopted for 2018-2020.
[12] According with the Government Decision № 230, 4th May 2015.
[13] "Education in the Republic of Moldova 2013/2014". Statistical Publication. National Bureau of Statistics, 2014. https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Educatia/Educatia_RM_2014.pdf.

1.2.2.2. Policy financing

Financing of VET is relatively stable. In 2019, slight decrease equal to 6.4% compared with 2018 was registered (1.052 billion MDL in 2019 against 1.172 billion MDL in 2018) while in 2020 the allocations from the State Budget increased by 8.4% (1.088 billion MDL). However, in absolute amount, the indicator of 2018 was not reached in 2020 (Table 7). At the same time, compared with the funding of 2016 (0.696 billion MDL) and 2017 (0.829 billion MDL), the progress is evident.

TABLE 7. DATA ON VET FUNDING, 2018-2020

	VET funding from the State Budget, thousand MDL			Increase compared with the previous year	
	2018	2019	2020	2019	2020
MoECR	953,300.2	874,929.4	886,018.3	-8.2%	1.3%
Secondary VET	*464,063.9*	*434,405.0*	*471,075.0*	*-6.4%*	*8.4%*
Post-secondary VET	*489,236.3*	*440,524.4*	*414,943.3*	*-10.0%*	*-5.8%*
MoARDE	102,095.5	98,625.8	101,818.3	-3.4%	3.2%
MoHLSP	103,606.5	66,227.7	86,896.0	-36.1%	31.2%
MoIA	12,584.4	12,527.4	13,273.0	-0.5%	6.0%
TOTAL VET	**1,171,586.6**	**1,052,310.3**	**1,088,005.6**	**-6.4%**	**8.4%**
Share of the total State Budget	**2.8%**	**2.2%**	**2.1%**	**-0.6 p.p.**	**-0.1 p.p.**

Source: Laws on the State Budget 2018, 2019, and 2020.

In total, 145.9 million MDL, 87.9 million MDL and 52.9 million MDL was allocated for capital investments in 2018, 2019, and 2020, respectively. Most of these funds are spent for reconstruction of the buildings of the Centres of Excellence (Table 8).

TABLE 8. CAPITAL INVESTMENTS IN VET, 2018-2020

	2018	2019	2020
Ministry of Education, Culture and Research	116,554.8	69,185.1	40,794.6
Secondary VET	*13,882.1*	-	*1,610.0*
Post-secondary VET	*102,672.7*	*69,185.1*	*39,184.6*
Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment	10,000.0	16,671.7	10,056.6
Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection	17,300.0	-	-
TOTAL VET	**145,872.8**	**87,875.8**	**52,871.2**

Source: Laws on the State Budget 2018, 2019, and 2020.

The VET Strategy was costed only partly. It was foreseen to allocate from the State Budget 2.6 billion MDL for the period of 2013-2015, and 400 million was expected from the development partners for 2014-2017. For the period of 2018-2020, no Action Plan was developed and no costing done. This situation should not be the case for the next Strategy, otherwise its credibility will be strongly questioned.

Salaries in the Education sector remain low. They constituted 4,478.6 MDL (€ 218) in 2017 and 5,171.3 MDL (€ 265) in 2018 (increase by 15.5%), while the average national was 5,587.4 MDL (€

272) in 2017 and 5,800.7 MDL (€ 297) in 2018 (increase by 3.8%)[14]. The salaries of VET teachers are equal to around € 300-350. In some exceptional cases they may reach € 500. Low salaries and low status of the teaching profession in general, lead to shortage of teachers and trainers in the system and have a negative impact on the quality of the teaching staff attracting very few young people[15].

1.2.2.3. Analytical basis and data quality

The history of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) goes back to the 19th century, while the modern period could be considered since 1990, when the Law on Statistics was adopted. In 2018, the National Council of Statistics was established (Government Decision № 244, 21st March 2018). In the same year the Bureau was reorganised and its new Regulation was approved by the Government Decision № 935, 24th September 2018.

Presently, Strategy for Development of the National Statistical System 2016-2020 with its Action plan (Government Decision № 1451, 30th December 2016) are active. Every year, Statistical Works Programmes are approved by the Government, and annual reports on implementation of these programmes are systematically published by the Bureau. It has also its Strategic plan of internal audit for 2019-2021. All those documents are publicly available at the NBS official web-site.

NBS collects and periodically publishes data on the sectors of economy such as Agriculture, Construction, Manufacturing, Transport and Communications, Education, Healthcare, etc., and also on the cross-cutting issues, e.g. gender, employment, poverty and so on. Particularly, a separate cluster of statistics on the Sustainable Development Goals is also available.

Annually, NBS produces Statistical Publication “Education in the Republic of Moldova”, which includes a section on Vocational Education. Statistical data on this sector can be found also in the Statistical Yearbook. Similarly, data on the labour market are published annually as a statistical compilation “Labour force in the Republic of Moldova. Employment and unemployment”[16].

It is also important that data on the NBS official site are available not only in Romanian but also in English.

Another source of statistical information is expected to be the EMIS, which should provide instant on-line data even more up-to-date and of larger scope than NBS. The works have already been started and it is expected to have more or less functional EMIS in autumn 2020. A similar tool, developed several years ago for general education (SIME[17]), will be used as a guide and a base. This will facilitate the processes and ensure conformity of the two databases.

Analytical base in MoECR requires improvements. There is no specific methodology of processing and analysing the available statistical data and other quantitative and qualitative information which would lead to informed and evidence-based decision-making.

[14] Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova, 2019. https://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Anuar_Statistic/2019/Anuarul_statistic_2019.pdf.
[15] Torino Process 2018-2020. Moldova.
[16] The most recent publication is available at: https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=en&idc=168&id=6617.
[17] https://sime.md/ords/f?p=200:1:13677214112099.

1.3. Legal Framework

The principal legal base for the Moldovan education is the RM ***Constitution*** (adopted in 1994) which defines particularly that the *right to education is ensured through compulsory general education, lyceum and vocational education, higher education, as well as other forms of training and advanced training*; *the public education is free*; and *public lyceum, vocational and higher education is equally accessible to all, depending on their abilities*.

The ***Education Code*** adopted in 2014 (Law № 152, 17th July 2014) is an umbrella act for the entire education system, establishing the legal framework of the structure, organisation, implementation and development of the education system in the Republic of Moldova. An important concept of the Code is the *"Educational ideal"* which is formulated as *'formation of personality with initiative spirit, capable of self-development, who has not only necessary knowledge and competences to be employed, but independence of opinion and action, being open for an intercultural dialogue in the context of assumed national and universal values'*.

The Section IV of the Education Code relates to the VET (technical and vocational education and training) and says that this system shall provide programmes for: a) professional training of qualified workers, masters, technicians, and other categories of specialists, in line with the National Framework of Qualifications, the Nomenclature of professional training fields and of professions, the Nomenclature of professional training fields, specialties and qualifications, approved by the Government, at the ISCED levels 3, 4 and 5; b) requalification of workers and specialists in various professional training areas; c) strengthening the professional competences of the qualified workers, in line with the requirements of the economy and the labour market. The Code regulates a number of VET aspects, such as: Access conditions and admission procedures; Training programmes and their levels; Standards and Curricula; Qualifications and Quality assessment; Internships and relations with the labour market; Personnel, including teachers; as well as Administration of VET. Provisions related to this aspect are presented below, in the **Section 3.1** of this Report, under the titles about the types of administrative bodies.

The ***Labour Code***, adopted in 2003 (Law № 154, 28th March 2003) includes a number of provisions defining particularly: the right of those involved in formal education (also VET) to enjoy additional leaves with full or partial maintenance of their average salaries; obligation of the employer to create necessary conditions and promote the professional and technical training of employees in production field, to develop, jointly with the representatives of employees, and approve annually the plans of professional training of the employees, etc. This Code regulates also a variety of issues related to the apprenticeship contract and contract of continuous professional training, the work of the employees from the educational field, e.g. requirements to the pedagogical staff, conditions of their vacations and many others.

In 2012, the ***Law on Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities*** was adopted. It defines that the persons with disabilities shall enjoy free access to integration into the educational system at all levels, along with other citizens. The right to education may not be restricted due to learning difficulties. Moreover, the State shall take the necessary measures for employing and training teachers, including those with disabilities, who are qualified to work with students with disabilities (e.g. by means of facial expressions and sign language and/or the Braille system, as well as other alternative forms of communication).

Vocational training and professional development of people with disabilities is carried out in educational institutions, specialised enterprises, social integration enterprises and protected workplaces in accordance with individual rehabilitation and social integration programme, and the

State shall ensure provision of reaching and learning materials in different forms adapted to the educational needs of the learners.

The most recently adopted ***Law*** related to the field of VET is ***on the Sector Committees for Professional Training*** (Law № 244, 2017). Its provisions are discussed in details under the Sub-section 3.1.3 of this Report.

Addressing the requirements of the Education Code, an extensive number of sub-legal acts (Government Decisions and Ministerial Orders) were issued in the country during the last years. They can be grouped according to different aspects of the VET system functioning:

- Operation of the VET Institutions:
  - Framework Regulation on Organisation and Functioning of the Secondary VET Institution (*MoE Order № 840, 21st August 2015*);
  - Framework Regulation on Organisation and Functioning of Non-tertiary and Post-secondary VET Institutions (*MoE Order № 550, 10th June 2015*);
  - Framework Regulation on Organisation and Functioning of the Centre for Excellence (*MoE Order № 1158, 4th December 2015*);
  - Regulation on the Organisation and Implementation of Competition for the Management Position in the VET Institution (*MoE Order № 673, 9th July 2015*);
  - Conditions for Remuneration of the Staff of the Educational Institutions Operating under the Financial-Economic Self-Management Regime (*Government Decision № 1234, 12th December 2018*);
  - Regulations on organisation of admission to secondary VET programmes and to post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET programmes (*approved by MoE/MoECR annually*);
- VET Provision, Work-based Learning and Lifelong Learning:
  - Regulation on the Continuous Training of Adults (*Government Decision № 193, 23rd March 2017*);
  - Regulation on the Organisation of VET Programmes for Dual VET (*Government Decision № 70, 22nd January 2018*);
  - Framework Regulation on Internships and Practical Training in Secondary VET (*MoE Order № 233, 23rd March 2016*);
  - Regulation on the Organisation and Functioning of Internship and Practical Training in Post-secondary VET and Post-Secondary Non-tertiary VET (*MoE Order № 1086, 29th December 2016*);
- National Qualifications Framework and Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning:
  - Nomenclature of Professional Training Areas, for Post-Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary Specialisations and Qualifications (*Government Decision № 853, 14th December 2015*);
  - Nomenclature of professional training and trades/professions (*Government Decision № 425, 3rd June 2015*);
  - National Register of Qualifications (*Government Decision № 1199, 5th December 2018*);
  - NQF of the RM (*Government Decision № 1016, 23rd November 2017*);

- Framework Regulation on the Organisation of Post-Secondary and Post-Secondary Non-Tertiary VET Studies Based on the Transfer Credit System (*MoE Order № 234, 25th March 2016*);
- Framework Regulation on Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Education (*MoECR Order № 65, 24th January 2019*);
- Regulations on the organisation of the qualification examination (*MoECR Order № 1127, 23rd July 2018*);
- Technical Concept of the National Register of Qualifications (*MoECR Order № 782, 23rd May 2018*);
- Methodology for the Development, Revision and Validation of Qualification Standards (*MoECR Order № 1617, 10th December 2019*);

- Quality Assurance:
  - Regulation on organisation and functioning of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (*Government Decision № 201, 28th February 2018*);
  - External Quality Assurance Methodology (*Government Decision № 616, 18th May 2016*).

Regardless of this impressive list of normative acts seemingly covering and regulating almost all aspects of the VET system functioning, majority of the interviewed stakeholders expressed opinion that there are many issues related to the legislation. Some aspects are poorly regulated, there are legal acts and normative documents which are ambiguous or contradicting each other. In several cases, practical implementation of the acts' requirements is complicated due to numerous reasons, particularly lack of funding, limited capabilities of human resources, etc. In details, the legislation issues are discussed under the subsections of this Report devoted to different bodies and/or practices of VET.

BOX 1. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON THE VET LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN MOLDOVA

Director of CEDA: There are contradictions between the legislation and regulations; they have to be harmonised. There is also contradiction between the Civil Code and the Education Code.

The institutions' Administrative Councils should be given more authorities and made more active. More entrepreneurship activities in VET institutions are needed and this should be supported by the legislation. The reporting system (e.g. monthly reporting) should be simplified by the law.

President of Pro Didactica: There are many legal issues regarding development of standards, and we have to deal with revising the normative acts.

GIZ Project Director: The CoCI is functioning on the basis of Law from 1993, which is outdated.

TU Confederation: Some legislation and regulations should be revised, e.g. the provision of the Labour Code on testing the employees should be described in details.

Director of CRDÎP: Firstly, we need a new VET Strategy, including new objectives and new requirements. Based on this new Strategy, all related legislation should be amended and

harmonised, including the Education Code where many articles are to be revised. Introduction of NQF also leads to the need of the Education Code revision.

Head of Division for Finance in Education, Culture and Research, MoF: One of the problems is that some provisions of different laws and normative acts contradict each other and create confusions. We receive many letters with requests to explain which provisions are to be considered. Therefore, we would suggest revising a number of legal acts in order to harmonise them and avoid misunderstandings.

Vice-President of the Sector Committee for IT and Communication: The Law on Sector Committees should be reviewed. Occupational standards can be developed also by other entities apart from the Sector Committees, but the later are to be involved in their validation at a later stage.

Representatives of the Administrative and Financial Section, MoECR: The Government Decision № 1077 is to be updated.

Head of NQF Department, MoECR: The normative framework has to be improved.

Head of LLL Service, MoECR: In general, the legislation is fine. Maybe VET schools should be provided with more autonomy and flexibility in their decision-making.

Head of VET Department, MoECR: Right now I don't see concrete need of revising the legislation. If there is a new concept, this may suggest some changes.

2. CONTEXT, OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY OF THE EXERCISE

In 2019, the Minister of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova formally requested the European Training Foundation (ETF) to support implementing multilevel governance approach for assessing VET system in Moldova in the context of the last phase of implementing Moldovan VET strategy.

VET Good Multilevel Governance is understood[18] as a model for VET policy-making management based on coordinated action to effectively involve VET public and private stakeholders at all possible levels (international, national, sectoral, regional/local, provider) for objective setting, implementation, monitoring and review. Good multilevel governance in VET aims to reinforce interaction and participation of such stakeholders whilst improving relevance, accountability, transparency, coherence, efficiency and effectiveness of VET policies

The ETF *VET Governance Toolbox* which should be adapted to the country reality and the country needs, is expected to be used for a tailored review of VET system in Moldova with a focus on the following components:

- **Method for vision building**;
- **Assessment of institutional arrangements;**
- **Costing, Budgeting, Financing and Funding**;
- **Role of Social Partners linking VET policy to Labour Market needs**;
- **Territorial Governance (sub-national governance dimension)**[19];
- **Monitoring and assessment of progress in VET multilevel Governance**.

In general, the following types of coordination mechanisms were considered within the review:

- *Legislative – normative-oriented.*
- *Institutionalised – policy advice-oriented.*
- *Public-Private Partnerships-oriented.*
- *Knowledge creation-oriented.*

During the Workshop *"Launching a Policy Discussion on VET & Skills Good Multi-Level Governance in Moldova"* organised by ETF in cooperation with MoECR (18th February 2020), main views, ambitions, expectations and other key policy issues for implementing methodological approach on and review of VET & Skills good multilevel governance in the country were shared and exchanged among high level and other key country stakeholders and ETF. In addition, in the result of this event, mutual approach and way forward to implement institutional review based on ETF toolbox was agreed with Moldovan key stakeholders.

The methodology for reviewing and assessing institutional arrangements in the Moldovan VET system is based on the ETF VET Good Multilevel Governance approach (and the tool-box) adapted to the local context with strong consideration of the recommendations made by, and the agreements with, the national stakeholders.

[18] ETF based on CoR 2009 & Cedefop 2011.
[19] Presently does not exist in Moldova but was considered to the possible extent, anyway.

2.1. Objective and the Scope of the Review

The main objective of this review is to study and assess the institutional arrangements of VET system in Moldova addressing key areas of VET good multilevel governance and financing, in order to bring evidence to further support other VET thematic areas, policy options and decision-making in the VET sector in the country.

ETF defines[20] ***Institutional Arrangements*** (IAs) as the organisation of policies, rules, norms and values that countries have in place to legislate, plan and manage the execution of development, the rule of law, the measurement of change, and other such functions of state; and suggests that ***Review of Institutional Arrangements*** (RIA) aims to ensure that the policies defined (strategies, regulations, laws, etc.) are backed up by the appropriate capacities to make them realistic. This includes human resources and organisational arrangements, but also financial resources that will make it possible.

The results of this review can be used by the national authorities, where appropriate, particularly for:

- Informing the new Policy/Strategy development and establishing Policy/Strategy development schemes including methods for Vision Building;
- Reviewing HR policies in terms of hiring, professional development, rewarding, dismissing the VET staff (specifically the managers);
- Improvement of Funding mechanisms;
- Revision of the Legislation;
- Further optimisation[21] of the VET institutions' network, including their status, structure, tasks and functions;
- Operationalising effectively functioning mechanisms of coordination and cooperation within the key stakeholders including social partners;
- Establishing Monitoring & Evaluation mechanisms at the systemic (policy, VET system) and institutional levels;
- Improvement of effective dialogue and coordination among different governmental institutions and stakeholders (both public and private) at vertical and horizontal dimensions within VET and skills policy cycle;
- Other strategic use for best benefiting VET sector and community in the country (e.g. raising awareness at national level on the need of having better VET for economic development and decent jobs as well at international level to support attracting investors to the system).

For meeting the above objective, the following scope of the review was defined:

- Analysing national and sectoral (VET-related) ***policy and strategy documents*** in terms of vision of VET, its development goals and objectives;
- Identifying and analysing the main ***VET-related legal acts*** (laws, sub-laws, regulations, etc.) for identifying the established *business processes* and *legal relations* between the bodies involved in VET governance;
- Identifying and characterising the ***main VET actors*** at national and sectoral levels and critically analysing the ***bodies*** *directly or indirectly* ***involved in VET governance,*** in terms of their

[20] ETF based on CoR 2009 & Cedefop 2011.
[21] Recent optimisation of the VET institutions' network in Moldova, was performed in 2015.

structure, *tasks and responsibilities*, *institutional and HR capacities*, *subordination and accountability*, *performance*, *funding*, etc.;

- Assessing the effectiveness of ***communication***, ***cooperation*** and ***coordination*** between the VET actors;
- Identifying the ***strengths***, ***weaknesses*** and/or ***gaps*** in the VET governance system and recommending some options of possible activities targeted at improving its effectiveness and efficiency. This may include also certain aspects related to ***monitoring and assessment of progress in VET multilevel Governance***.

The business processes (including decision-taking processes) were also subject to analysis for such particular VET clusters as: NQF (including identification of skills need and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education, standards and curricula, quality assurance); VET planning and enrolment; VET provision; administration and management (strategic planning, development, etc.); HR appointment and development; organisation of Dual Education (e.g. selection of the companies and formalisation of cooperation / contract signing); Lifelong Learning; Monitoring and evaluation.

Based on the initial study implemented by the Project Experts as well as considering the recommendations of the Launching Workshop, the following list of the VET players was defined to be involved in the review:

A. Governmental Bodies:

1. Ministry of Education, Culture and Research:
   - VET Department,
   - NQF Department,
   - LLL Service,
   - Administrative and Financial Section,
   - Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department;
2. Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection:
   - Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel,
   - Department for Educational and Migration Policies;
3. Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment:
   - Science, Education and Rural Extension Service[22];
4. Ministry of Finance:
   - Directorate for Sector Budgetary Policies,
   - Division for Finances in Education, Culture and Research.

B. Public Institutions:

5. Republican Centre for VET Development (CRDÎP);
6. National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC);
7. Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet under MoHLSP;
8. Labour Market Observatory;

[22] During this study, it was not made possible to interview representatives of this Service, however, they participated in the Stakeholders' self-assessment exercise (see Section 4 of this Report).

9. Methodical Training Centre under MoARDE[23];
10. Centres of Excellence, Colleges, VET Schools.

C. Councils and Committees:

11. Economic Council to the Prime Minister;
12. National Coordination Council for VET;
13. National Qualification Council;
14. National Council of VET Students;
15. Sector Committee for VET:
    - Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry[24],
    - Sector Committee for Trade, Hotels and Restaurants,
    - Sector Committee for Light Industry,
    - Sector Committee for Water Distribution, Sanitation, Waste Management, Decontamination Activities,
    - Sector Committee for Financial Intermediation and Insurance, Real Estate Transactions,
    - Sector Committee for IT and Communication,
    - Sector Committee for Construction,
    - Sector Committee for Energy,
    - Sector Committee for Transport and Road Infrastructure.

D. Social partners:

16. Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CoCI);
17. National Confederation of Employers (Patronat);
18. Organisation for small and medium enterprises development (OSMED);
19. National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova

E. Development partners:

20. Liechtenstein Development Service (LED);
21. Centre for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Assistance (CEDA);
22. Austrian Development Agency (ADA);
23. World Bank in Moldova;
24. USAID;
25. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation;
26. GIZ and GIZ Project "Support to VET in the Field of Green Economy";
27. Pro Didactica Educational Centre.

In total, about 40 organisations and/or their units were considered for this review.

[23] During this assignment, it was not made possible to interview representatives of this Centre, however, they participated in the Stakeholders' self-assessment exercise (see Section 4 of this Report).
[24] The formal titles of the Committees are: Sector Committee for Professional Training in <name of the field>.

2.2. Methods and Modalities of the Review Implementation

The review was implemented *via* mixture of desk research and field work. The desk research was focused on thorough analysis of the national legislation, policy and strategy documents, legal acts defining the scope of authorities and the functions of numerous bodies directly or indirectly involved in the VET governance, the rules and procedures on different VET practices. A certain scope of statistical data on the Moldovan education system and specifically on VET, was also processed.

Through the desk research, the following was studied:

- Legislation – the main principles of the VET system functioning and the governance scheme; distribution of authorities between the governing bodies; the level of (de-)centralisation and (de-)concentration; financing and funding principles and criteria – *Education Code; Labour Code; State Budgets; Law on the Sector Committees; Law on the Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities.*
- Sub-legal acts and governmental reports – regulations on different aspects of VET system functioning; tasks and functions of difference bodies; performance of public policies; institutions Action and Business plans, etc. – *Government Decisions; Reports of the Government and Ministries; Ministerial Orders; Orders of VET institutions.*
- Policy and Strategy Documents – the vision of VET; challenges and development priorities of the system; strategic goals; action plans – *National Development Strategy Moldova 2030; VET Development Strategy 2013-2020; National Employment Strategy*.
- Reports and studies – independent assessment of VET system challenges, needs, developments, as well as quantitative data on VET – *reports produced by ETF, Unicef, ADA, UNDP, WB and others.*
- Statistical Data – Demography; Socio-economic aspects (sectors of economy, employment, unemployment, migration, gender); Education and specifically VET statistics (enrolment, graduation, job placement, dropouts, teachers, funding, etc.).

This was followed by field works which due to the restrictions caused by the COVID19 crisis, were carried out in distance, with use of electronic means of communication. It included provision of in total 38 individual interviews and two group interviews (**Annex 1)**, based on questionnaires designed specifically for different categories of respondents (**Annex 2**):

1. VET department at MoECR;
2. Other Departments at MoECR;
3. Other Governmental Bodies;
4. Public Institutions;
5. VET Institutions;
6. Social Partners;
7. Sector Committees;
8. Development Partners.

The questionnaires had the following structure:

- General Information about the organisation (institution, department, unit);
- Information about the Interviewee;
- Detailed Information about organisation (institution) activities;

- Internal administration scheme and performance management (*except social partners and development partners*);
- Relations with VET (*only for Social Partners and Development Partners*);
- VET processes and working practices;
- The VET system;
- Any other points and/or recommendations.

More details about the distant provision of the interviews and a short analysis of the corresponding advantages and challenges, can be found in the **Annex 3**.

The preliminary findings (related to the actors at national and sectoral levels directly or indirectly involved in Moldovan VET governance, their structure, tasks and responsibilities, institutional and HR capacities, subordination and accountability, performance, funding, and the links between them), which were based on the results of the desk research and the analysis of the interviews, were presented to, and discussed with the key stakeholders during a Validation Webinar held on the 30th June 2020 (for the Agenda, see **Annex 4**). The event had the following objectives:

- Discussing among ETF and key stakeholders, preliminary findings on the review of VET institutional arrangements conducted in Moldova;
- Introducing and agree on next phase through collection of smart feedbacks from main stakeholders to moving ahead.

In total, 22 key local stakeholders participated *via* Zoom platform (for the List of Participants, see **Annex 5**). The executive summary of the initial version of this Report was made available for the participants beforehand, and during the event, an extensive presentation covering the topic of the VET Good Multilevel Governance Toolbox, as well as the methodology and the findings of the research (**Annex 6**) was made.

The key outcome of the Webinar was the agreement on delivery an advisory report which should address the following components/sections:

- Propose scenarios and new architecture for institutional reform in the country addressing system change.
- Review critically some practices and processes linked to key policy areas that are currently shaping VET reforms in the country (e.g. NQF, Q.A., WBL, financing etc.), as key drivers for having more efficient and effective VET system.
- Use ETF VET governance inventory 4.0 to wrap up assessment of key institutions and actors (around 40 informants) and support further ETF monitoring of VET system in the country.
- Make a thorough selection of European and international practices to support selected scenarios for institutional reforms and policy learning.

This Report fully covers those topics.

It is also to mention that according with the results of the participants' voting, they all found the methodology used for this multi-level governance analysis clear, 69% fully agreed with the proposed conclusions (31% agreed partially), and 94% found that those conclusions were balanced/realistic (6% found them too optimistic).

A questioning for Self-assessment on core VET Skills Governance Functions and Coordination Mechanisms was also conducted. It was based on the ETF VET & Skills Governance Inventory Data

Collection Tool 4.0 (**Annex 7**). In total 36 people participated as informants. The results are discussed under the Section 4.2.

In addition, interviews with representatives of different VET-related structures from three selected EU countries, i.e. Croatia, Estonia and Romania (**Annex 1**), were conducted with a purpose to collect information necessary for illustration of international practices.

On the final Webinar held on the 19th and 20th November 2020, the ETF main findings on the review of VET institutional arrangements and practices conducted in the country were presented to, and discussed with key stakeholders. Besides, the main conclusions and policy recommendations were shared for validation and appropriation, with a view on identifying and agreeing the next steps to be taken for helping the country moving forward implementing proposed reforms. Comments and suggestions made by the participants (for the Agenda, List of Participants and the presentations**, see Annex 8**) were also considered in this report.

3. MAIN FINDINGS ON THE INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND SOCIAL PARTNERSHIPS

A number of bodies belonging to various categories, are directly or indirectly involved in the VET governance in Moldova. The scope of their authorities and the level of influence are different. Certain non-state actors do participate in VET governance but their role is predominantly consultative, while the decision-making authority almost solely belongs to the governmental bodies.

The VET system of Moldova and its governance are centralised at the national level. No regional or local bodies have tasks in this area. The sectoral dimension is limited to the Sector Committees for Professional Training, which are composed of social partners' representatives. Those Committees have again consultative role within the corresponding sectors of economy.

As mentioned above, besides MoECR, three line Ministries have public VET institutions under their jurisdiction and are part of the VET governance system. Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Economy have specific duties related to the entire education system, and therefore also to VET.

In the next subsections the main VET actors are characterised in terms of their roles, tasks and responsibilities, structure, institutional and HR capacities, subordination and accountability, performance, funding, etc. They are grouped into the following categories: 1) Governmental Bodies; 2) Public Institutions; 3) Councils and Committees; 4) VET Institutions; 5) Social Partners and Civil Society Organisations; and 6) Donors and Projects supporting VET.

Statements and opinions of some respondents on specific topics are also illustrated below (see the boxes).

3.1. Governmental Bodies

3.1.1. The Government

According with the Education Code (approved on the 17th July 2014, № 152), in relation with VET, the **RM Government** is responsible for:

a) Approving the state policy;
b) Organising development and approval of the draft legislative acts and submitting them to the Parliament for examination and adoption;
c) Adopting normative acts to enforce the legislation and to ensure education priority;
d) Approving organisational structure, the number of personnel and the Regulation of the Ministry responsible for education;
e) Monitoring the activities of the above Ministry;
f) Based on the proposals of the central administrative authorities and public institutions, taking decisions on establishment, reorganisation and dissolution of public educational institutions;
g) Approving enrolment plans (state order) for professional education (VET and Higher education), by professions, specialisations and general fields of study.

In the Central Apparatus of the Government (Prime-Minister's Office), there is a Department of Coordination of Policies and Priorities where at least one person is dealing with education including VET related issues.

3.1.2. Ministry of Education, Culture and Research

The **Ministry of Education, Culture and Research** (MoECR) is the central sectoral body of public administration, which ensures implementation of state policy not only in those three areas mentioned in its title, but also in the fields of Youth affairs, Sports and Interethnic relations and the functioning of languages in the territory of the country. MoECR was established in 2017 *via* amalgamating the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Youth and Sports, and has in total 97 employees.

The Education Code defines for the Ministry[25] a considerable number of duties. Those related to VET, particularly are:

a) develop and promote the state policy;
b) develop draft legislative and normative acts and exercise the state control over their enforcement;
c) carry out the management, monitoring and assessment of the education system;
d) estimate and analyse the performance and economic efficiency indicators of the education system;
e) develop and approve the state educational standards and exercise, through the authorised institutions, the control over their fulfilment;
f) approve the evaluation procedures for teaching and management staff for awarding or confirm the teaching and managerial degrees, ensuring the control over their fulfilment;
g) manage the national programmes and projects, including organisation of public procurement of goods, works and services for the education sector within those programmes;
h) approve the manuals and didactical materials;
i) develop the strategic plans of expenditures for the education system, collaborating with the central and local public administration authorities;
j) develop the draft state budget for the subordinated educational institutions and coordinate and monitor their financial activities;
k) develop, through coordination with the interested authorities and approve the rules for personnel, work and financing in the education system;
l) formulate and submit to the Government the proposals for improving the remuneration of the teaching staff and other categories of personnel from the education system;
m) coordinate pre- and in-service training of the teaching and management staffs;
n) based on competition results, appoint and dismiss the Directors of the public VET institutions and other subordinated public institutions;
o) initiate and conclude international collaboration agreements in the area of education;
p) organise the process of recognition and equivalence of the study documents, issued by the educational institutions from abroad and the qualifications awarded by them;
q) negotiate and sign collective work conventions in the education area;
r) provide free-of-charge the alternative forms/systems of communication, writing, reading and orientation for students with special educational needs, taking into account their individual needs.

[25] The Education Code was adopted in 2014, before restructuring the Ministry, and refers to the Ministry of Education.

In addition, the Ministry is responsible for ensuring design, creation and maintenance of the Education Information System, and checking the periodical update and accuracy of the information placed there. MoECR shall also develop and publish on its web page the annual reports on its own activities. For exercising its duties, the Ministry is entitled to establish councils, commissions, experts' groups and other consultative bodies.

After establishing MoECR, the Regulation of this Ministry was approved by the Government Decision № 691, 30th August 2017. This document formulates the ***mission*** of MoECR as: *analysing the situation and problems in the areas of responsibility, developing effective public policies, monitoring the quality of policies and regulations, and proposing reasonable measures of state intervention which would lead to taking effective decisions, with the best balance between the expected results and costs*.

The Regulation translates the MoECR duties defined by the Education Code, into sets of functions and rights. There are remarkable ones among them. For example, the duty of monitoring and assessment of the education system (see point "c" in the above list) is foreseen to be implemented particularly through the following functions, which could be considered as demonstration of efforts targeted at openness of education system and democratisation of its governance:

- monitoring the position of the Republic of Moldova in the framework of international indicators and ratings, and developing proposals for improving them;
- monitoring the perception of public policies, regulations and state activities by citizens and economic agents, and development of proposals for their improvement;
- monitoring the quality of public policies and regulations, particularly, in cooperation with the civil society and the private sector.

MoECR has **Collegium**, which comprises 13 members, and is *ex-officio* chaired by the Minister. Six members are high officials of the Ministry (Minister, Secretary General, 3 State secretaries and Head of Law Service), six are representing such fields as science, arts and sports, and only one person is from the business world – the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The main duties of the Collegium are: to consider issues related to organisation of the Ministry activities targeted at the promotion of policies in the spheres related to its responsibility; solve the burning issues; develop long- and short-term forecasts; discuss issues related to the activities of administrative bodies subordinated to the Ministry; consider draft normative acts and reports of the Heads of the Ministry Departments and the subordinate administrative bodies. Nevertheless, due to the frequent changes in the Government, the membership of the Collegium is also revised systematically. Therefore, the effectiveness of this body is an issue.

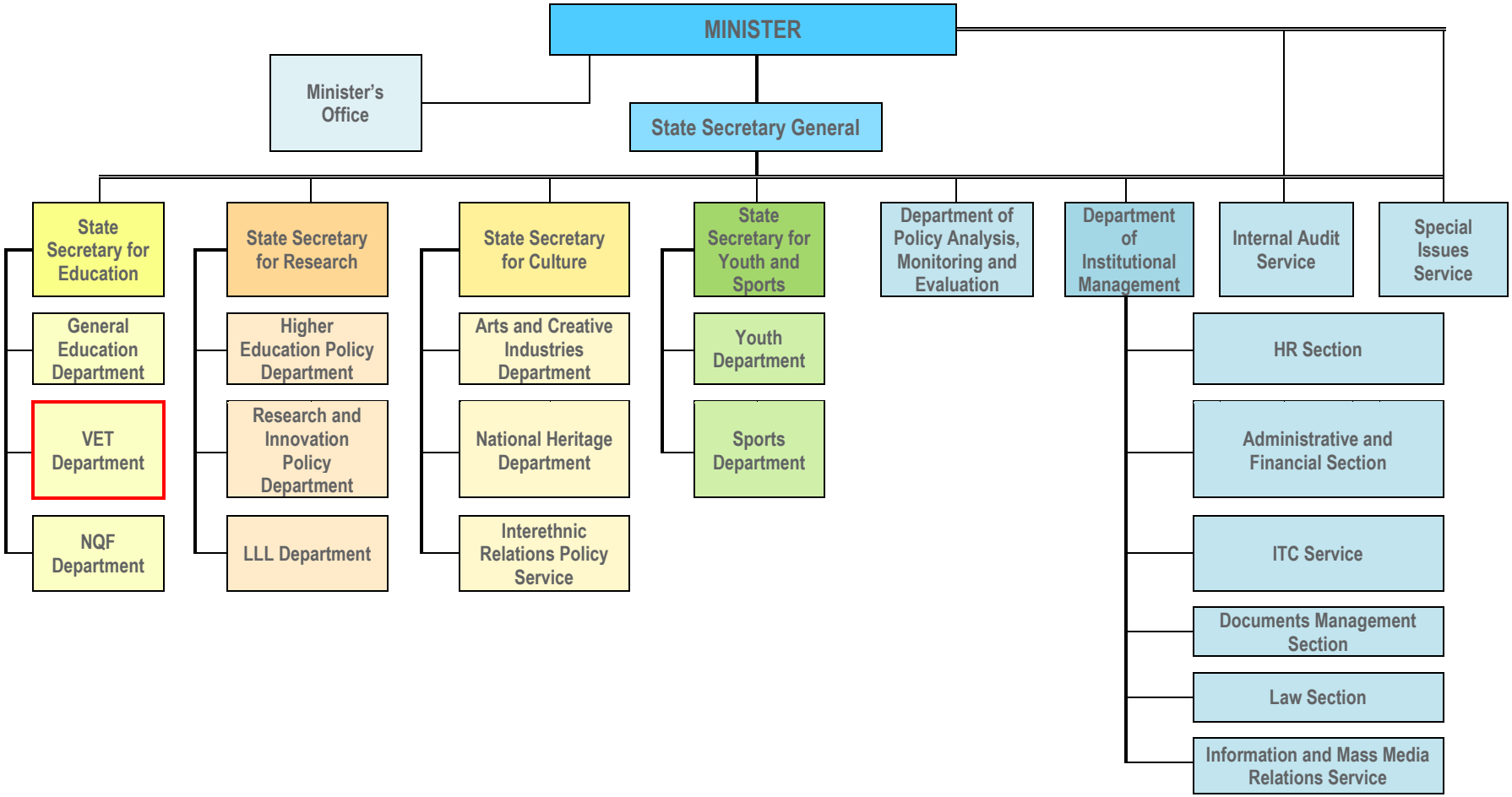
Besides the VET Schools, Colleges and Centres of Excellence, there are also two public institutions under subordination of the Ministry: the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, and the Republican Centre VET for Development (see **Sub-section 3.1.2**).

MoECR executes also some supervising functions over the VET institutions acting under jurisdiction of MoHLSP (4 Colleges and 1 CoE) and MoARDE (6 Colleges and 2 CoEs)[26].

The key units within MoECR, which have duties related to VET, are the VET Department, NQF Department, LLL Service, Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department as well as Administrative and Financial Section (see Diagram 2).

[26] There is also a National College of Border Police in Ungheni, under the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

DIAGRAM 2. ORGANIGRAM OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE AND RESEARCH



VET Department at MoECR[27]

The **VET Department** (formally Department of Technical Vocational Education) of MoECR is the key unit coordinating the entire VET system in the country. It has six staff (including the Head), one of which is detached from the Department and working for another unit of the Ministry. Instead, there is an External Expert (paid by a Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) project) full-time working at the Department. He is responsible for supporting the Department in a wide range of topics, particularly for coordinating the external assistance.

The Regulation approved in 2018 by a MoECR Order, formulates the mission of the Department as *'coordination of the processes of elaboration, monitoring and evaluation of sectoral policies in the field of technical vocational education; coordination of the activities of technical vocational education institutions, regardless of their subordination and form of ownership'.*

Five areas of tasks and the corresponding functions are defined for the Department:

1) Coordinating the process of elaboration and promotion of the VET state policy and legislation:
   - implement the MoECR development policies and strategies in collaboration with the line ministries and other bodies responsible for VET;
   - participate in elaboration of the draft legislative and normative acts related to VET;
   - elaborate methodologies and coordinate the admission, training, promotion and graduation processes in the VET institutions.
2) Coordinating and monitoring the implementation of national programmes and strategies in the field of vocational training and development:
   - ensure realisation of the state policy in the field of VET, according with the principles of correlation, coordination and consecutiveness between the levels, and observance of the legislation;
   - promote the objectives and principles of integrating the VET system into the Common European Area of Vocational Education.
3) Coordinating the activities of VET institutions in terms of specific and general issues:
   - organise and coordinate the subordinated institutions' activities, supervise the VET institutions network formation, submit proposals for its reorganisation and optimisation;
   - participate in different events in the field of VET at national and international level (seminars, conferences, symposia), collaborate with various national and international institutions and organisations in the topics related to the Department's activities,
   - elaborate policy documents (methodologies, regulations, etc.) in the field of VET;
   - coordinate the process related to selection and appointment of VET institutions managers.
4) Coordinating the exercise of control over the application and observance of the initial professional training and the continuous professional development legislation in the educational institutions:
   - ensure the exercise of control over the application and observance of the legal provisions regarding the professional training and development;
   - analyse draft information notes on inspection or assessment, as well as recommendations addressed to the educational institutions regarding the elimination of violations of the provisions of the legislation on vocational education identified as a result of the assessment;

[27] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Silviu Gîncu, Head of VET Department, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova.

- based on the results of monitoring, inspection and evaluation activities, submitting proposals for the improvement of the state of play in the field and, if necessary, of the existing legal framework;
- evaluate the level of achieving the state educational standards and ensuring the quality of VET; elaboration and presentation of information notes, reports, syntheses.

5) Providing methodical assistance to the VET institutions:
   - organise promotion of teaching materials for VET;
   - analyse and generalise the annual reports and other information presented by the VET institutions; formulate relevant conclusions based on the performed analyses;
   - examine the complains, appeals and petitions related to the competencies of the Department and resolve them within the limits of its competencies.

Thus, the VET Department is responsible for a wide range of duties related to *policy and strategy* development, realisation, monitoring and evaluation; development of *legislation* and supervision over its implementation; development of *methodologies*, provision of *methodological support* to the educational institutions, and promotion of *teaching materials*; institutions' *HR issues* and education *quality assurance*; *analysis* and *reporting*; as well as *day-to-day management* and general *supervision* of the VET institutions' activities. According with the Head of the Department, they implement also a number of purely administrative activities which are not even mentioned in the Regulation.

After the establishment of the NQF Department at the MoECR (see below), the VET Department in fact is not anymore responsible for the VET content which is defined through the Occupational and Qualification Standards. The latter are under the authority of the NQF Department.

ANACEC and CRDÎP also support the activities of the VET Department. The National Coordination Council for VET which supposed to be a platform for social dialogue at the national level and support the MoECR in general, and VET Department in particular, for discussing the VET reforms strategies and policies, legislation and other key issues, is presently non-functioning.

BOX 2. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF VET DEPARTMENT

We don't have sufficient insight of what is the situation in the VET system in general. Therefore, we would need to have at least 1 person with strong analytical skills in the Department, who would constantly study the state of play in VET, make assessment and make informed recommendations on the reforms.

In some respect, the system is "blocked", and the institutions cannot react to the LM needs quickly. This is due to the procedures of the Occupational Standards and Qualifications development.

We need an intermediate support body, an agency or a structure, which would take the responsibility of methodological support to the institutions, and also a part of our routine administrative work. In this case we would be able to concentrate more on our direct mission, which is the VET policy and strategy. The present status of the CRDÎP does not make it feasible to invest in this Centre and count on that, therefore, the solution could be establishment of subdivisions at the ANACEC. This could be e.g. 2 units with some 3-5 people each, assigned to perform all the tasks which we require.

The Dual education, in general, is performing well. The CoCI is a good partner and works

effectively with both the VET institutions and the companies. The GIZ project helps them considerably. Probably some more contribution would be expected from the private sector. The Law on Dual education / apprenticeship (draft is almost ready and planned to be submitted for the Government consideration by the end of May – beginning of June) will improve some financial aspects and also define requirements towards the instructing staff of the companies for increasing the quality of the training.

In addition to different engineering professions, dual education is already introduced in the field of Medical VET and is being piloted also in Pedagogy (preparation of pre-school teachers[28]). Our plan is to increase the number of students involved in dual education. The latter is a bit cheaper for the VET institutions[29], while per students they receive the same amount of money as for the "traditional" VET. However, the groups are smaller here. So, we need exact calculations to understand the real costs.

Only ANACEC carries out quality assessment of the institutions. We do not have a mechanism for comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the VET institutions, moreover, the entire VET system.

Further optimisation of the VET network is required. We have defined 2 criteria for this: 1) no more than one institution of the given profile in the same region; 2) the size of any institution should fit the requirements of economic feasibility, e.g. no less than 700 students in a college and no less than 300-350 in a VET school. Subordination of the Agricultural VET institutions to MoARDE is not purposeful and they could be transferred to MoECR, while the Medical Colleges are better to remain under MoHLSP. There are organisational, methodological and policy-related reasons for that[30].

The new mechanism of VET funding is probably not perfect but considerably more effective than it was before. Recently we developed some amendments to the corresponding Government Decision in order to introduce two additional sources: funding based on projects, and funding based on needs.

NQF Department at MoECR[31]

The **Department of National Qualification Framework** was established in November 2017. The main tasks of the Department are organisation and coordination of Qualification Standards elaboration as well as recognition, authentication and equivalences of qualifications and nostrification of Diplomas acquired e.g. in other countries[32]. Of the total four staff, including the Head of Department, two are dealing with the recognition issues, while only one, along with the Head, with the NQF.

The Department is the only structure in the country dealing with NQF. This process is coordinated by the National Qualification Council established in 2018 and consisting of 19 members (for details, see the Sub-section 3.1.3) and the 3 representatives of the NQF Department who make up the Secretariat

[28] Around 200 trainees are involved in the dual pedagogical education and pay 10,000 MDL annually.
[29] Compare with the opinion of CoCI President, under the Section 3.1.5.
[30] Those reasons mentioned by the Head of VET Department, were particularly the absence of any specific agricultural VET policy ever developed by MoARDE, on one hand, and a well-established cooperation of Medical colleges with the hospitals which are under MoHLSP, on the other.
[31] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Tatiana Gherstega, Head of NQF Department, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova.
[32] The department is a member of ENIC/NARIC network.

of the Council. It has a task to discuss draft legal acts related to NQF, as well as draft qualification standards (endorsed in advance by the corresponding line ministries), their development processes and also the content, if necessary. Only after that draft standards can be submitted to the formal approval.

The NQF Department has also functions related to supervision of the standards performance.

Department performs its works in accordance with a number of regulations and methodologies:

- Methodological Guide for the Elaboration of the Qualification Evaluation Procedure (MoECR Order № 1618, 10th December 2019);
- Methodology for the Elaboration, Revision and Validation of the Qualification Standards (MoECR Order № 1617, 10th December 2019);
- Methodology for Establishing the Correspondence of the Education Levels with the Qualifications Obtained Before the Approval of the National Qualifications Framework (MoECR Order № 1703, 26th December 2019);
- National Register of Qualifications (Government Decision № 1199, 5th December, 2018);
- Technical Concept for the National Register of Qualifications in the Republic of Moldova (MoECR Order № 782, 23rd May, 2018).
- National Qualifications Framework (Government Decision № 1016, 23rd November 2017);
- Nomenclature of Vocational Training Areas and Specialties in Higher Education (Government Decision № 482, 28th June 2017);
- Nomenclature of Vocational Training Fields, Specialties and Qualifications for Non-Tertiary Post-secondary and Non-Tertiary Technical Vocational Education (Government Decision № 853, 14th December 2015);
- Nomenclature of Vocational Training Fields and of the Professions (Government Decision № 425, 3rd July 2015);

National Register of Qualifications for the entire Education system is presently under construction.

BOX 3. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF NQF DEPARTMENT (1)

Due to limited number of staff, we are extremely overloaded by the work but in general are performing efficiently. The Department specialists are capable and it could execute even wider scope of activities if the staff is expanded.

The employees of the Department still have considerable learning needs related to NQF which remains relatively new area for the country.

LLL Service at MoECR[33]

There are 3 employees in the **Lifelong Learning Service** of MoECR: Head of the Service and 2 Chief Consultants. They all have some tasks associated with VET to different extent. One consultant is responsible for attestation of teachers, including also VET teachers and trainers; the other – for adult education and training programmes, including those provided by the VET institutions; while the Head is mainly responsible for processes of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

According with the Regulation approved by MoECR Order in January 2018, the mission of the Service is '*to contribute to achieving the strategic objectives of the Ministry by promoting state policies and legislation in the field of lifelong learning'*. The scope of the Service functions covers particularly the following:

- Initiation of, and participation in, development of national strategies, legal and normative acts in the field of LLL, as well as monitoring of their implementation;
- Designing administrative acts regarding the authorisation of provisional functioning, accreditation or withdrawal of the right to provide programmes of continuous professional training;
- Elaborating methodologies on:
  - certification of knowledge and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning, including the creation of the corresponding database,
  - professional training programmes, the qualifications framework, professional re-qualification;
- Monitoring implementation of continuous training programmes, including creation of the database of the providers of continuous professional training for adults;
- Examining and approving the programmes and curricula proposed by the providers;
- Organising and monitoring the process of continuous professional development and certification of teaching and managerial staff in general and vocational education, and within the services of psycho-pedagogical assistance;
- Coordinating the processes of informing the continuous education providers and the beneficiaries about the legislation related to the field;
- Monitoring the implementation of the legislative / normative acts and the methodological benchmarks in the field of LLL;
- Ensuring performance of the Republican Contest "Teacher of the Year".

BOX 4. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LLL SERVICE (1)

The key duties of the Service relate to:

- Professional development of teaching staff, both involved in continuing training and career guidance;
- Formal, non-formal and informal training for adults;
- Developing partnerships with different NGOs to improve the situation in adult education sector;

[33] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Cristina Deniță, Head of LLL Service, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova.

- Collaboration with other ministries for ensuring the training employees from different sectors of economy.
- Recognition, validation and certification of non-formal and informal learning (this was piloted in 2019 in 4 VET institutions (College of Ecology, College of Pedagogy, CoE in Services and Food Processing from Bălți, CoE in Construction). The VET institutions do not receive additional funds for providing this service, therefore the candidates should pay for that, and the amount depends on the expenditures for equipment, materials to be used, assessors work, etc.).

There are many tasks assigned to the LLL Service, which are apparently insignificant but very much time-consuming.

The Service is also promoting LLL. Particularly, it works closely with VET institutions for encouraging them to introduce different non-formal education courses including those for adult learning. In the institutions, where such courses are already being implemented, the next step is to initiate VNFIL. The Service is involved in identification of training needs of teaching staff, too.

BOX 5. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF LLL SERVICE (2)

The labour market needs are not yet promptly responded due to the limited number of staff and the bureaucracy: very often, adoption of any Government Decision takes too long time. Frequent changes in governmental structures and high staff turnover also slow down many processes.

Involvement of the Sector Committees, Ministries, private companies and NGOs is quite high. There is a direct feedback from them and a continuous communication with social partners.

There is a need to improve the communication with large companies providing continuous training for their own employees, to find out what are their needs. The degree of their involvement is quite low. The Service still faces problems in attracting those large companies for participating in its activities.

LLL is not much popular in the society. It is rather challenging to improve its image and to make it more demanded, to increase the level of awareness of adult population on the advantages of LLL.

Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department at MoECR[34]

The **Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation** (PAME) **Department** was reorganised in 2017 and has 7 positions including the Head of Department. It is supposed that 3 employees are to be responsible for international relations and external support, while 4 others for coordination of activities related to developing, monitoring and evaluation of policies. Presently, the Department has 5 staff only: one position remains unoccupied and one employee is seconded to the State Chancellery.

[34] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Tudor Cojocaru, Head of Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova.

Therefore, besides the Head of Department, only one person is dealing with education including VET. Two others have duties related to culture issues, and youth programmes.

Duties in the field of international relations are not formally attached to the Department, but due to the fact that after restructuring, no unit for international relations was foreseen at MoECR, the corresponding tasks were distributed among the other subdivisions of the Ministry.

Formally, the Department has to follow the Framework Regulation approved by the Government Decision № 168, 9th March 2010, for the Units for Public Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Central Bodies of Public Governance. The main objective of those units is defined as supporting to enhance the efficiency of the relevant public body, which shall be ensured through conducting the following functions:

- Provision of methodological assistance in developing public policies initiated by the internal units of the central (sectoral) public governance body in which the unit operates;
- Analysis and presentation of conclusions on draft public policy documents, other legislative and regulatory acts, as well as documents that contain results of impact assessment, monitoring and evaluation of public policies developed by other internal units, in order to ensure:
  a) the conformity of the developed public policies with the provisions of national public policy documents,
  b) compliance with the requirements towards the structure and content of public policy documents, the stages and procedures for their development, analysis, monitoring and reporting on the implementation of public policies,
  c) correlation of developed public policies with available financial resources;
- Coordination of the monitoring process and generalisation of the public policy implementation results;
- Making proposals on adaptation and updating the existing public policy documents and initiating new public policies based on the results of sectoral, cross-sectoral and national public policies implementation;
- Creation and management of the database necessary for analysis, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of public policy documents.

Thus, the principal function of the PAME Department is monitoring and evaluating implementation of policy documents, such as strategies, concepts, and programmes, including both sectoral and inter-sectoral. This is done jointly with other MoECR units. Nevertheless, the Department is additionally requested to review and endorse drafts of various normative acts which, however, not necessarily relate to the policy issues. For example, they were requested to review a draft Government Decision on amending the Regulation on registering the land slots, which was initiated by the Public Procurement Agency. This additional burden with activities not relevant to the main profile of the Department, which on top of everything is understaffed, is considered as a serious challenge for its effectiveness.

Another challenge relates to the interaction and communication within MoECR. The nature of the Department's tasks requires constant and efficient collaboration with almost all other units. This is not always successful due to the extreme workload of the entire Ministry staff and permanent busyness of the counterparts with their daily routine. This results not only in issues with the performance level but sometimes also in violation of established deadlines. The limited number of the Department staff leads also to a situation when none of the employees is specialised in any specific task but has to deal with

a wide range of issues which vary by their nature and content. This also negatively affects the quality of the works.

The Department not only monitors, evaluates and reports on implementation of strategic documents[35] annually (in some cases also quarterly, depending on the requirements) but also makes recommendations on updating or revising the policy documents and also on expenditures in various sectors. For this purpose, four working groups, one per sector, are established annually. They include representatives of different partners, e.g. UNICEF, Trade Unions, employers' associations and NGOs dealing with education or youth sector. Each group has around 30 members.

Presently, one of the Department's main focuses is the National Development Strategy – Moldova 2030 which is still under discussion. After its adoption, the development of a new Education Strategy 2030 will be launched. Preliminary agreement of UNICEF and the Global Fund for Education to support this exercise, has already been achieved.

Department participates also in drafting MTBF for the sectors which are under the MoECR responsibility.

Administrative and Financial Section at MoECR[36]

The ***Administrative and Financial Section*** has 2 employees dealing with VET. They are responsible for making calculations according with the formula defined by the funding mechanism; preparing all necessary documentation for signing the "State Order" contracts with the VET institutions (covering expenses related to scholarships, maintenance of facilities and dormitories, and staff salaries, as well as meals for the students of secondary VET only); based on the institutions' invoices (8 different types), preparing monthly payment orders for the State Treasury, as well as collecting and analysing financial data of the institutions and preparing corresponding reports.

The workload of the Section was expected to reduce after the awarding financial autonomy to the VET institutions, but due to this transformation, the institutions were removed from the unified Financial Management Information System (SIMF). Therefore, the standard financial management software is not applicable anymore and the volume of mechanical work for the Service employees enlarged considerably: presently, for registering the data and for financial reporting, they use simple MS Excel worksheets filled in manually. Suffice it to say that one of the employees continuously does that for 47 VET institutions.

BOX 6. STATEMENTS OF THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL SECTION

The new *per student* financing formula is profitable for large institutions but not for small ones. The latter are under the risk of being closed down.

In general, funding of the VET institutions has been reduced. Previously they had more money and more budget lines. The salaries of teachers and administrative staff increased, while for auxiliary staff the increase was insignificant and salaries remain very low.

[35] One of the examples is mid-term evaluation of the Education Development Strategy 2020.
[36] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Mariana Grozav, Main Consultant of the Administrative and Financial Section, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research of the Republic of Moldova.

Financial management of the institutions under the new conditions of the financial autonomy is not efficient enough. One of the reasons is the HR capacities: e.g. Chief Accountant in one of the institutions is a nurse.

The Section needs more staff. A single reporting template with MoF and the special soft is required.

The financing mechanism approved by the Government Decision № 1077, 23rd September 2016, should be updated with a view to ensure more balanced funding of different size institutions. At the same time, for increasing the system efficiency, the number of institutions should be further decreased by means of mergers. There are dormitories which are used only for 25-50%. This also needs to be optimised.

3.1.3. Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection

Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection has 5 subordinated Colleges (including one Centre of Excellence) and is also directly involved in the VET governance. Two units within this Ministry are dealing *inter alia* with VET: Department for Educational and Migration Policies, and Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel.

Department of Educational and Migration Policies at MoHLSP[37]

According with the Regulation approved by the Minister of Health, Labour and Social Protection in 2018, the tasks of the **Department of Educational and Migration Policies** (DEMP) of the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection, include:

- development and promotion of state policy in the field of employment;
- setting annual objectives for the National Agency for Employment Coordinating and monitoring and evaluating its activities;
- updating the methodology for the occupational standards elaboration, identifying the sources of, and ensuring financing for their development
- coordinating the collaboration with the Sectoral Committees, including evaluation, selection and financing the projects carried out by those Committees, and strengthening their capacities;
- ensuring continuous update of the Classifier of Occupations.

DEMP has 5 staff (including the Head of Department), of which only one person is in charge for issues related to National Employment Agency, its Labour Market Observatory (LMO)[38], Sector Committees, Classifier of occupations, Occupational standards, and developing policies.

Since 2017, when in the framework of the public governance system restructuring, ministries and some their units were amalgamated or eliminated, the Department has been performing much more considerable amount of work (by the assessment of the Department Head, a double size), with the same number of employees. Thus, there are tasks (e.g. reporting on the fulfilment of the international conventions related to a number of sectors, i.e. education, health, labour etc., or calculation of the minimal subsistence level which refers to the social protection sphere) which are not foreseen by the

[37] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Anna Gherganova, Head of Department of Educational and Migration Policies, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova.
[38] The Labour Market Observatory was established in 2018 as a part of the National Employment Agency, with support of ETF.

Department regulation but required to be done due to elimination of the structures formerly responsible for those tasks.

The Regulation of the Department does not stipulate also any task immediately related to VET but requires collaboration with the MoECR in the field of labour market needs. Therefore, representatives of DEMP are involved in all working groups, established by MoECR, e.g. those for making amendments to the methodology of qualifications development (but do not participate directly in development of qualifications and curricula), for preparing MTBF (not only for education but for all related sectors). In addition, the Department is involved, although indirectly, in some aspects of dual education through participation in designing of amendments to the corresponding regulation, of continuing education performed within the MoECR network (discussions on different aspects such as training profiles, programmes and duration with the LLL Department), as well as of vocational training of unemployed carried out by the National Employments Agency.

Other functions of the DEMP are: coordination of the tracing the job placement of trained unemployed implemented by the National Employment Agency and its 35 regional sub-divisions (but not the VET institutions graduates); monitoring of Employment Strategy performance by different public bodies including MoECR related particularly to VET.

BOX 7. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF EDUCATIONAL AND MIGRATION POLICIES DEPARTMENT

The unit carries out some activities directly associated with the VET system, e.g. updating the Classifier of Occupations; coordination of the methodologies for developing occupational standards, primarily for VET; coordination of the Sector Committees activities; conducting labour market analyses and forecasts for VET, etc.

Lack of human resources is the main challenge of the Department. It would be appropriate to have at least two more employees involved specifically in VET issues.

For establishing and coordination the Sector Committees, the CRDÎP is seen as a more appropriate entity rather than the Ministry.

At the stage of initiating LMO, we came with the proposal to place it at the National Institute of Economic Research due to the latter's research capabilities, but the Institute refused this. Now the LMO is proposed to be made an independent body, but in this case they would need more experienced staff for ensuring self-financing via provision of quality services.

DEMP is working closely with the Social partners. For example, in the Coordination Group of LMO, representatives of all Ministries are involved, while the Administrative Council of NEA is a tripartite body. Nevertheless, motivation and effectiveness of the members of those collective structures are rather low.

Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel at MoHLSP[39]

The Regulation[40] defines for the Service a mission *'to elaborate, coordinate and implement the public policies and the normative framework regarding the planning, training, strategic development in the field of medical and social personal management'*. Only 2 staff are foreseen for this unit. These are Head of the Service and Chief Consultant who are responsible for an extensive number of tasks, which could hardly be carried out effectively even by a structure with 2 or 3 times larger personnel:

- elaborate and promote the policies and the normative framework in the field of the management of the medical and social personnel, the medical and pharmaceutical education (technical professional, post-secondary and non-tertiary post-secondary, university and post-university) and science;
- evaluate and monitor the implementation of policies in the field of medical and social personnel management (strategic planning, monitoring, evaluation and development of human resources in the health and social sector), medical and pharmaceutical education (technical, post-secondary and non-tertiary, university and post-secondary education) and science;
- monitor and evaluate the implementation of scientific projects;
- elaborate methodology of planning the needs of the training of the medical professionals (doctors, pharmacists and medical personnel with secondary education) and placement of young specialists in the field of work;
- approve the programmes of university, post-university studies and curricula for training of the medical professionals from the technical, post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education; plans submitted by economic agents providing staff training services;
- assure methodological support to implementation of the policies in the field of the management of the medical and social personnel, confirm and authenticate the documents of medical studies, confirm the attestation and the conferring of the categories of qualifications;
- elaborate and promote draft normative acts on remuneration of the employees of the real sector of economy and present proposals for improving the incidence legislation;
- elaborate initial and periodic reports to ILO Conventions in the field of remuneration ratified by the Republic of Moldova;
- contribute to the elaboration of the reports to the revised European Social Charter, the International Covenant on economic, social and cultural rights and other multilateral synthesis treaties ratified by the Republic of Moldova and containing labour remuneration rules;
- elaborate annual reports on the measures taken in order to minimise the practice of paying shadow salaries in the real sector of the economy;
- examine draft normative acts that are associated with the remuneration of the employees in the real sector of the economy;
- provide methodological support in applying the legislation on the remuneration of the employees in the real sector of the economy.

[39] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Valeriu Goncear, Head of Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova.
[40] MoHLSP Order № 19, 1st February 2018.

BOX 8. OF STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF SERVICE FOR POLICIES IN THE FIELD OF MEDICAL AND SOCIAL PERSONNEL (1)

Besides the shortage of personnel at the Service who should deal with too many tasks from different fields, the other main challenge is the lack of medical staff who could be invited to support development of different aspects of the system.

The Service is directly involved in certain activities associated with medical education, particularly medical VET. These are e.g. planning of enrolment which is done *via* collecting demand from the educational institutions (for the state order, it is collated with the results of the situation analysis conducted jointly with the Republican Methodological-Instructional Cabinet – see below) and submitting it for MoECR approval; developing curricula (all curricula are approved once in 5 years and usually no changes happen within this period); internship of students and job placement of graduates; keeping record of number of all medical workers in the system and also the vacancies (the informational system SIERUSS).

In fact, only the Head of the Service is dealing with the above issues, as the other employee who was previously a staff of Ministry of Labour before the reorganisation, is responsible mainly for the salaries in the real sector and has no tasks related to Healthcare or Medical VET.

BOX 9. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF SERVICE FOR POLICIES IN THE FIELD OF MEDICAL AND SOCIAL PERSONNEL (2)

The graduates of Medical educational institutions who have studied free of charge (within the state order) are obliged to work at least 3 years at a specific healthcare institution defined by the Ministry. The fee paid graduates are free to select their place of employment.

In 2019, there were 923 graduates of Medical Colleges, while in 2010 – over 1,000. Universities produce annually around 900 medical doctors.

According with the Head of the Service, the per capita number of medical personnel in Moldova is not large.

Reportedly, all documents drafted by the Service, are endorsed by Trade Unions, National Confederation of Employers, and other key actors, before being approved. At the same time, the Service reviews and endorses documents drafted e.g. by MoECR.

3.1.4. Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment

The **Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment**, according with its Regulation approved by the Government Decision № 695, 30th August 2017, has no directly defined functions related to education or training. The only point is *'coordination and monitoring of the activities of … subordinated … public institutions for which the Ministry exercises the functions of a founder'*. Particularly for VET, this function is assigned to the Science, Education and Rural Extension Service.

Science, Education and Rural Extension Service at MoARDE

The **Science, Education and Rural Extension Service** (SERES) has only two staff (in 2017 the number of positions was reduced from 6 to 2 people and assigned with even more functions by taking over the rural extension and science and innovation divisions responsibilities), including the Head of the Service and one Main Consultant. They are responsible for an extensive number of very different tasks. Those related to VET are the following:

- Coordinating the processes of elaborating and promoting draft legal acts in the corresponding fields, including VET;
- Monitoring and evaluating the activities of the subordinated scientific and educational institutions, particularly the agricultural Colleges and Centres of Excellence;
- Monitoring and improving the quality of agricultural vocational and higher education.

The Service, together with its Methodical Training Centre, is involved in planning of enrolment which is done *via* collecting demand from the educational institutions (for the State Order) and further submission to MoECR approval. SERES is also responsible for coordinating elaboration and implementation of the national programmes and strategies in the field of agricultural VET and participates in development of all methodological and conceptual documents related to the VET system in general.

Coordination of the 2013-2020 VET Strategy performance in the domain of agricultural vocational education, was also the function of SERES. Thus, the Service, jointly with the Methodical Training Centre, is involved in such tasks as elaboration of curricula and training plans; promotion of dual education in agro-VET; updating the register of teachers; tracing the graduates, etc.

3.1.5. Ministry of Finance[41]

At the Ministry of Finance, one of the key units having tasks related to VET, is the ***Division for Finance in Education, Culture and Research*** (FECR) under the ***Directorate for Sector Budgetary Policies***. Nine people are working in this Division, while the entire Department has 26 staff. Only one person is responsible for VET but has also duties associated with other issues, too. For VET, the Division ensures budget planning and estimation, amendments and modifications to budgets and budget allocations, and participation in working groups developing and amending various normative acts.

In fact, the FECR Division covers the aspect related to the financing of VET system running costs, while e.g. the issues of the institutions' infrastructure development or granting certain compensations to companies involved in dual education, are under the responsibility of the ***Department for Public Capital Investments***.

[41] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Olga Rusnac, acting Deputy Head of the Directorate for Sectoral Budgetary Policies, Head of Division for Finance in Education, Culture and Research (FECR), Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Moldova.

BOX 10. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF DIVISION FOR FINANCE IN EDUCATION, CULTURE AND RESEARCH

The main challenge for the Division, like for all units and all ministries in the country, is the lack of Human Resources.

After introducing in 2019 the principle of financial autonomy for the VET institutions, their income or expenditures do not pass through the ministerial financial system anymore. These funds are stocked on institutions' separate bank accounts or Treasury accounts. All the expenditures of VET institutions are presented as one general budget line without any detailed breakdown. This complicates the work of the FECR Division particularly in terms of collecting and providing any real-time information on the VET institutions expenditures e.g. on amounts of paid salaries. Only their annual financial reports include data on expenditures with detailed specification as by the budget lines.

At the same time, the financial autonomy makes VET institutions more responsible for their expenditures. For example, now they have to keep detailed registers where they record every spending.

3.2. Public Institutions

There are several public bodies supporting education. These particularly are: Republican Centre for VET Development and National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research, both under MoECR; Methodical Training Centre under MoARDE and Republican Methodical-Instruction Centre and Labour Market Observatory under MoHLSP.

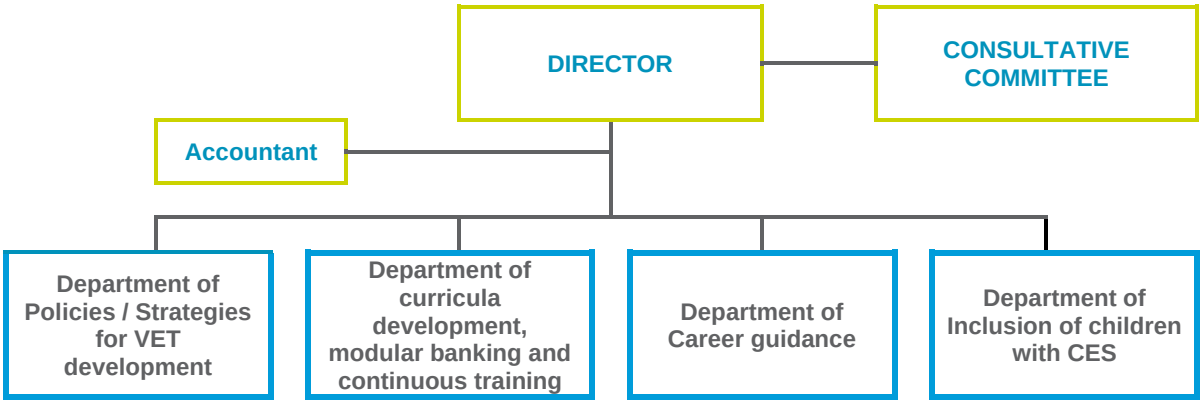
3.2.1. Republican Centre for VET Development[42]

The ***Republican Centre for VET Development*** (CRDÎP) was established by the Order of Ministry of Education № 835, 17th December 2008, and its regulation was approved one year later, by the Order № 825, 1st December 2009.

The Centre is a unit for research and development of vocational education, constituted and operating on the basis of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), is subordinated to it but also works directly with MoECR. The Regulation defines the following structure for the Centre (Diagram 3):

[42] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Octavian Vasilachi, Director of the Republican Centre for VET Development.

DIAGRAM 3. CRDÎP STRUCTURE ACCORDING WITH ITS REGULATION



Source: Order of the Ministry of Education № 825, 1st December 2009.

By the Centre's Regulation, 12 posts are foreseen (Table 9) but presently only 5 are occupied: Director and 4 other staff which have much wider scope of duties than it is formally defined.

TABLE 9. STAFF POSITIONS OF THE REPUBLICAN CENTRE FOR VET DEVELOPMENT

Foreseen Positions	Number of Posts
Management	
Director	1
Department for VET Policies/Strategies and Partnerships	
Expert in Drafting Occupational Standards	1
Expert in Qualifications Development	1
Expert in Curricular Development	1
Experts (specialising in areas of national economy)	3
Expert in drafting project proposals	1
Support Department	
Expert in procurement	1
IT specialist	1
Accountant	1
Secretary	1
TOTAL	**12**

Source: Order of the Ministry of Education № 825, 1st December 2009.

The goal of the Centre is to *'ensure the theoretical and methodological base of vocational education system in the Republic of Moldova in line with the labour market requirements and international occupational standards'* as they particularly relate to:

- Development, implementation, monitoring and updating development policies for VET;
- Development of competence-based occupational standards and modular curricula for VET;
- Elaboration of methodologies for quality assurance in VET;
- Promoting and improving the partnership and social dialogue in VET;

- Developing and implementing methodologies for professional guidance/orientation and career conciliation;
- Approving and monitoring VET programmes and elaboration of methodologies for continuing VET;
- Promoting social inclusion.

For each of those areas, a number of functions are attached to the Centre (details can be found in the **Annex 9**). They can be summarised as follows:

a) participation in elaboration and promotion of VET policies, carrying out studies and analysing those polices, assessing their impact;
b) producing reports with recommendations on the situation in the sector;
c) in cooperation with social partners, elaboration of competence-based curricula and training modules; support and maintenance of the modular bank;
d) identification of the teachers' and managers' continuous training needs; adoption and dissemination of models of continuous training;
e) analysing the labour market needs and adapting the VET courses to those needs;
f) establishing links between the social partners and VET institutions;
g) elaboration of strategies and innovative methodologies for vocational guidance and career counselling;
h) developing methodologies of social inclusion of persons with special educational needs and young people at risk of dropping;
i) providing consultancy, documentary and methodological support and expertise;
j) establishing cooperation with educational and research institutions, public authorities, economic agents, organisations and companies from all branches of the economy, civil society in Moldova and abroad.

In December 2014, the MoE approved (Order № 1281, 30th December 2014) the **Strategy and Action Plan for the development of CRDÎP 2015-2020**. The overall objective of the Strategy is *'strengthening the capacities of the Centre so that the latter carry out its mission, role, and functions in full capacity'.* The Strategy defined the following mission statement for the Centre: *'Permanent connection between the VET system and labour market needs'*. This mission would be achieved by:

- Supporting the development of occupational standards by Sector Committees;
- Participation in the development of qualifications and curriculum products according to market needs;
- Creating and managing database on developments for VET system;
- Coordinating training of specialised teachers to implement the curriculum;
- Synthesising and analysing information collected from relevant stakeholders;
- Creating a network of stakeholders in the VET system and promoting social dialogue.

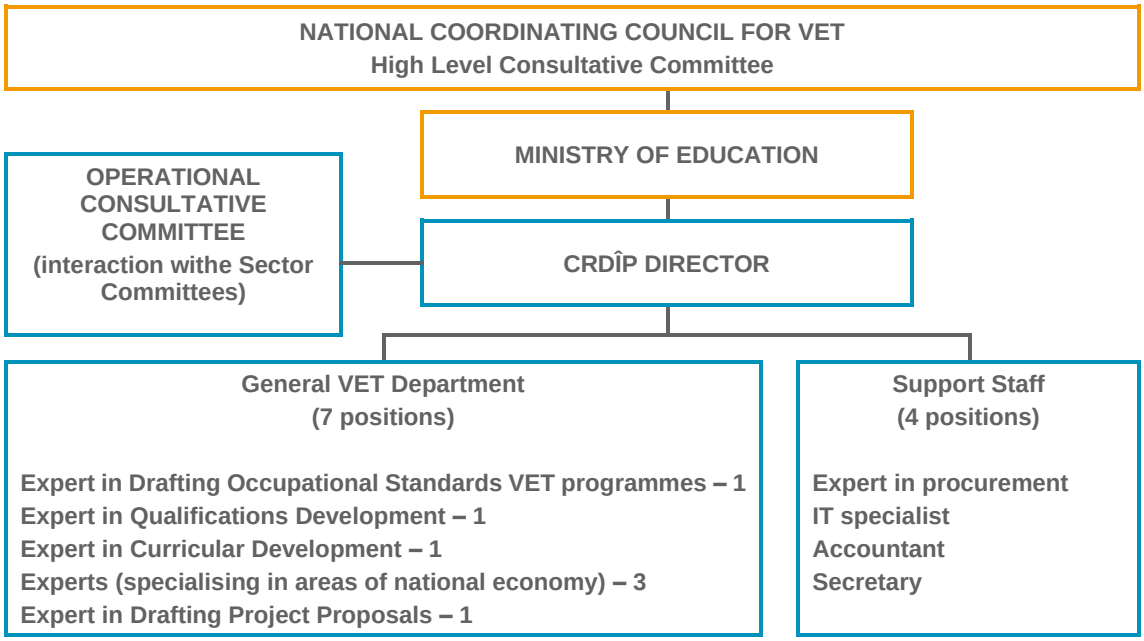
The Strategy determined three Specific Objectives linked to the development of the Centre:

1. Revisiting the legal statute of the CRDÎP and the regulation on its activity, so that the structure, functions, and financing of the Centre provide the optimal framework for performing its role in the process of reforming the vocational education and training system.
   - Output indicator: CRDÎP fully operational in 2015, with a revised Regulation for activity and job descriptions adjusted to the regulation.

2. Hiring and strengthening the capacities of the employed staff of the CRDÎP to establish the general competences for performing its functions.
   - Output indicator: The staff of the Centre employed and trained in basic working methods during 2015.
3. Strengthening the capacities of the CRDÎP staff for developing specific competences for the performance of functions appropriate to the given structure.
   - Output indicator: The staff of the Centre specialised by areas of competence of the national economy within the period 2016-2020.

The Strategy defined a considerably simpler structure of the Centre (Diagram 4) but even this has not materialised till present.

DIAGRAM 4. CRDÎP STRUCTURE ACCORDING WITH ITS STRATEGY 2015-2020



Source: Order of the Ministry of Education № 1281, 30th December 2014

The current management of the Centre's activity is carried out by the Director, who is subordinated to the Director of IES. The Director of the Centre, selected through a public contest, is appointed and dismissed by order of the Institute of Education Sciences.

The CRDÎP Regulation foresees a Consultative Committee composed of the following members (12 in total):

1. Deputy Minister of Education, President;
2. The Minister of Economy and Commerce, Vice-President;
3. The Director of IES, Vice-President;
4. CRDÎP Director, Executive Secretary;
5. Representative of the Trustees;
6. Representative of the Trade Unions;
7. Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
8. National Commission for Consultations and Collective Bargaining;

9. National Employment Agency;
10. Three representatives of vocational education institutions.

There can be also invited members for discussing issues specific to their fields of activity, e.g. representatives of the Ministry of Finance, donors, other funding organisations.

The main tasks of the Advisory Committee are:

a) Providing comments regarding the activity and orientation of the Centre;
b) Ensuring the concordance between the activities of the Centre, the labour market and relevant ministries;
c) Providing informational support regarding the new development trends.

Nevertheless, the Committee has been non-active since at least 2014.

The issue of the CRDÎP *legal status* and the *subordination* has been a subject of polemics since its establishment. The Strategy of the Centre states that the *'current organisation procedure of the CRDÎP was the result of a compromise. Given the constraint of the Ministry of Education by limited staff and financial resources, the latter considered it would be relevant to place the CRDÎP within the Institute for Education Science'* while *'from the European experience perspective, such Centres for Vocational Education and Training Development are separate entities that enjoy a degree of autonomy and financial flexibility'*. The SWOT analysis presented in the Strategy identifies *inter alia* a weakness *'CRDÎP subordination modality does not favour it to perform its role to full extent'* which leads particularly to the following: *capacity to promptly react to the social dialogue related needs as well as freedom in making decisions with regard to participation in various processes in the national economy sectors (analyses, drafting documents, case studies, working meetings, etc.) are limited; although the CRDÎP is involved in the working processes launched by the IES and MoE, the Centre is not involved in decision-making processes with regard to insuring the connection between education and economy; Central public administration authorities, as well as stakeholders from the economy sectors do not perceive the CRDÎP as an empowered entity in the given area because of double subordination'*.

In addition, attracting capable staff to CRDÎP is a serious problem due to low salaries (€ 250-300 per month gross), while the status of the Centre does not allow any independent fundraising[43]. Therefore, the Strategy suggests that the most optimal option would be if the Centre is directly subordinated to the Ministry (two other options are subordination to the IES (*status quo*) or to the State Chancellery). This would support *direct cooperation with the VET Department; higher credibility of the CRDÎP, which would provide a much better collaboration with the rest of the partners, particularly with those from the economic sectors and international partners; wider scope of functions (e.g. coordinating the work group for drafting and managing the VET sector databases, managing the revenues for carrying out different activities, generating own revenues, etc.); a higher attractiveness for competent specialist to work for the CRDÎP.*

The Regulation foresees that the Centre may be financed not only from the State Budget but attract also funds from other sources, including: provision of services, e.g. trainings, research and consultancy, editorial activities; revenues from international development projects; sponsorships and voluntary donations; support provided by professional associations and employers. Nevertheless, it

[43] Present funding of the Centre is around 400-450 thousand MDL (€ 20-22 thousand) annually and covers solely the staff's salaries.

seems that the subordination to IES limits the CRDÎP autonomy in terms of financial activities and/or creates considerable overhead expenses.

BOX 11. STATEMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF CRDÎP

The scope of the Centre's tasks is not comprehensive and there are also functions which are not relevant. Therefore, a new Regulation which would assure a 'better interconnection with the Ministry and the VET Department', has been proposed[44].

The main mission of the VET Department is the VET policy, while different working processes, including methodological support to the VET institutions and to the system in general; development of draft documents, e.g. standards, curricula, teaching and learning material, as well as concepts and manuals; establishment of partnerships at local, national and international levels; organisation and coordination of different Working Groups and processes; staff development, including teachers' and managers' training; monitoring and evaluation at the national and institutional levels, etc., could be done by the Centre, if appropriate conditions are ensured. This was the very purpose of establishing CRDÎP in 2008.

The Centre is involved in different processes, such as standards and curricula development, but these activities are ad hoc and are performed only when they are invited by the Ministry to do so. This is not done systematically.

Any action of the Centre, be it provision of methodological support to the VET institutions or any action at systemic level, shall every time be ordered by the Ministry. This affects the credibility of the Centre negatively.

One of the CRDÎP main achievements is the VET Platform (http://www.ipt.md/ro/CRDÎP). The intention is to attract all VET institutions, stakeholders and other VET actors to this platform and use it for facilitating their communication, and also as a forum for discussing the ways of the VET system improvements.

BOX 12. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON CRDÎP

President of Chamber of Commerce and Industry: The VET Centre does not have capacities to fulfil its obligations. The Centre should be responsible for all VET aspects.

Executive Director of the National Confederation of Employers: It would be good to establish a new institution, particularly for monitoring.

President of the Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry: CRDÎP regulation defines a major role, but it does not fulfil it well. They do not know their role and place in the VET system.

President of Pro Didactica: It would be better to have a strong Resource Institution, e.g. CRDÎP.

[44] Back in 2015, Director of IES, by the initiative of CRDÎP, had sent another letter on submission of the Centre's new Regulation to MoE approval, which however remained unconsidered,

Country Director, LED Moldova: The functions of CRDÎP, should be revised. Many tasks supposed to be done by CRDÎP, and were originally on CRDÎP, now are put on the shoulders of CoEs.

GIZ Project Director: Both, the MoECR and the VET providers are to be served by a professional body – e.g. CRDÎP.

CRDÎP is just on the paper. In its structure and composition, it would be an ideal institution to ensure the stakeholders coordination and social partnership dialogues, but it has been set up just on the paper. This is because of the lack of political will, a lack of coordination between different stakeholders which prevented from carrying out its tasks.

The sectorial approach in VET in Moldova is key. CRDÎP could be the key to host PPP dialogue, (as there are CoEs but they are still VET providers), to assist policy making the MoECR, to assist the providers, the private sector, provide services, draft some documents and make them available, do researches, should serve the MoECR and private sectors, providers in terms of deliverables.

Director of VET school № 5 in Balti: The VET institution elaborates the curriculum based on what they think the employer needs. If, there were a link between the business environment and the VET institution, that would deal with the curricular framework would not be these divergences. Maybe Republican VET Centre could have this role, why not? But the tasks must be clearly stated.

Centre of Excellence in Medicine and Pharmacy "Raisa Pacalo": We would like to have a good and efficient VET Development Centre, which could provide support in developing educational plans, curricula, developing a methodological package for teaching disciplines. Although we have experience in developing manuals and guidelines, we would like to have a good team of researchers and scientists responsible for that process.

Head of NQF Department, MoECR: We do not know very well the activities of all entities in the VET governance structure. But we have a good collaboration with some of them, for example, Republican VET Development Centre (CRDÎP). This year we plan to involve VET Centre in our technical processes.

Head of Occupational Policies and Regulation of Migration Department, MoHLSP: For the establishment and coordination of Sector Committees, the most relevant entity should be CRDIP. I have discussed this issue with the director of CRDÎP and he told that they are willing to do this, but everything depends on the MoECR to decide. They could use this tool to align the educational process to the labour market needs. <….> I think that between VET institutions and the MoECR there should be an intermediate entity similar to CRDÎP, which would act accordingly. It is not the task of the Ministry of Education to develop qualifications, curricula and other such documents. This is exactly the responsibility of this entity which should be subordinate to the Ministry of Education but keep strong collaboration with SCs and LM.

Head of VET Department, MoECR: CRDÎP acting under IES is not appropriate.

3.2.2. National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research[45]

The legal base for establishing the **National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research[46]** (ANACEC) under the subordination of MoECR (originally MoE), is the Education Code which states that the *'the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional[47] education is an administrative authority of national interest, with legal personality, autonomous to the Government, independent in its decisions and organisation, and funded from the state budget and own revenues'.*

Therefore, initially this body was established[48] as National Agency for Quality Assurance in Professional Education (Government Decision № 652, 13th August 2014[49]), and then was reorganised by the Government Decision № 201, 28th February 2018[50]: it was renamed and two other bodies i.e. the National School Inspectorate and the National Council for Accreditation and Attestation were merged with the Agency. New Regulation, new structure and organigram were also approved by the above Decision. The ***mission*** of the agency is formulated as *'implementation of the state policies and promoting development aimed at the highest international standards in designated areas of competence'*, i.e. general, vocational and higher education, continuing professional training, research and innovations.

The Agency has the following ***tasks***:

1) quality assessment in general, vocational and higher education;
2) external evaluation of continuing professional training programmes;
3) external assessment of organisations acting in the field of research and innovations;
4) assessment of scientific and scientific-pedagogical staff;
5) quality control over general and professional education and continuous training, compliance with the requirements for accreditation and authorisation of institutions providing educational programmes and services.

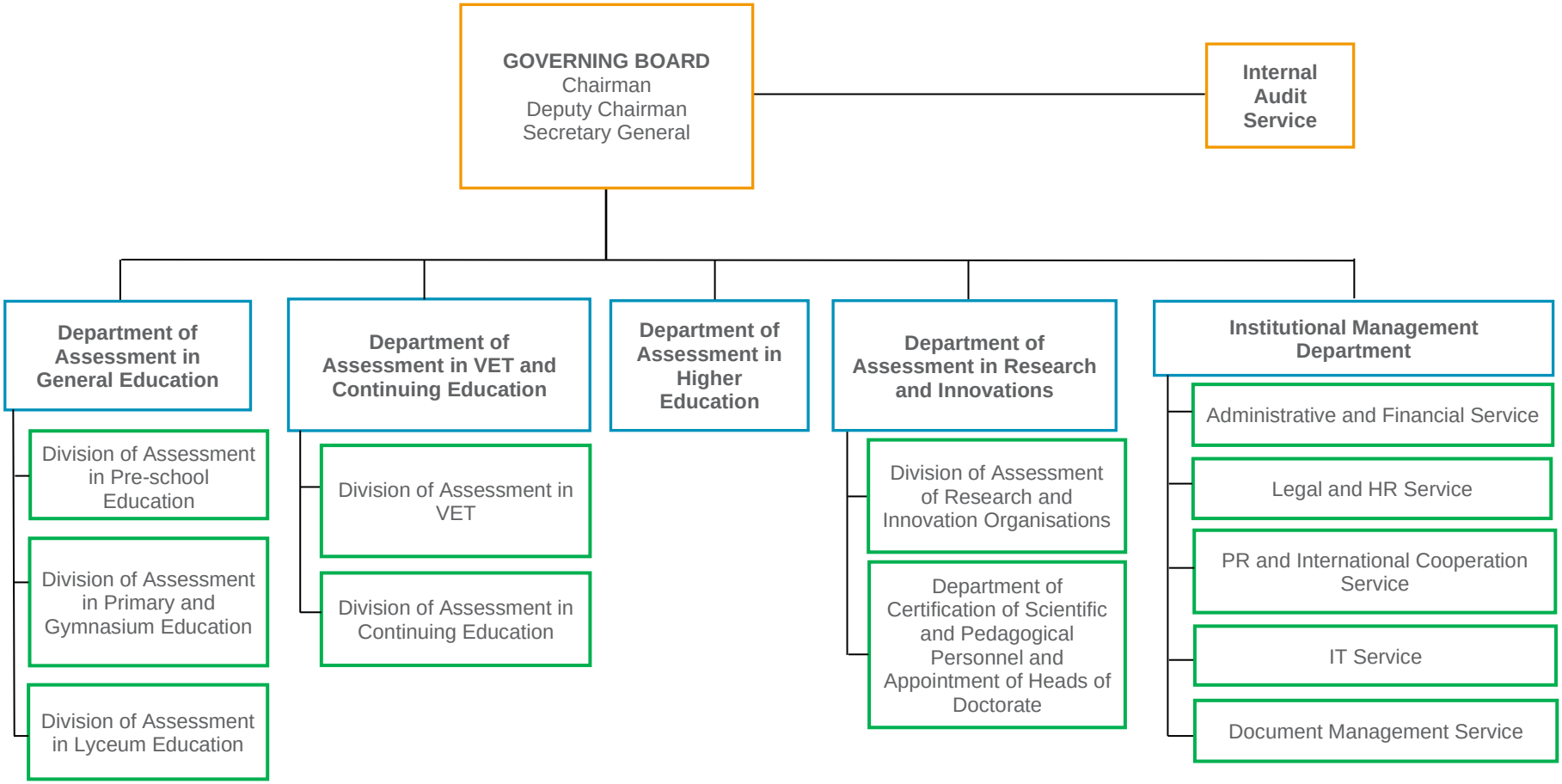
Among the ***functions*** which should ensure performance of the above tasks, particularly the following relate to VET:

- development of basic national and accreditation standards (subject to the Government approval);
- development of a methodology for assessing the curriculum, educational process and performance (subject to the Government approval);
- development of a methodology for assessing quality in VET;
- assessment of pedagogical, auxiliary pedagogical and managerial personnel;
- establishment, in cooperation with MoE and the competent central authorities, of the criteria for the qualification exams, for examination to confirm the competencies obtained in the framework of non-formal and informal education, and/or defence of diploma thesis or project in VET;
- development of methodologies necessary for introducing the continuing VET (CVET) programmes evaluation function (subject to the MoE approval).

[45] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Andrei Chiciuc, President of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research.
[46] http://www.anacip.md.
[47] To be understood as aggregate of Secondary Vocational, Post-secondary Vocational and Higher education.
[48] The Agency was formally established in 2014 but became operational in 2015.
[49] Available at: http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=354362.
[50] Available at: http://lex.justice.md/index.php?action=view&view=doc&lang=1&id=374547.

DIAGRAM 5. ORGANIGRAM OF THE NATIONAL AGENCY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Approved by the Government Decision
№ 201, 28th February 2018



- In addition, the Agency may establish councils, commissions, expert groups and other platforms for exercising its tasks; initiate and participate in national and international projects; become a member of various specialised international organisations; collaborate with similar agencies in other countries.
- ANACEC has 5 main structural units (Department for Assessment in General Education, Department for Assessment in Vocational and Continuing Education, Department for Assessment in Higher Education, Department for Assessment in Research and Innovations, and the Division of Institutional Management) which are comprising divisions or services (see Diagram 5). The supreme body of the Agency is the Governing Board consisting of 15 members (13 are from the academic community, one represents students and one person is coming from the world of business). The Board is chaired by the President, who *ex officio* is also the Executive Manager (Director) of the Agency. There are also Deputy President and Secretary General of the Board. The Internal Audit Service is subordinated to the Board.
- The Agency has a staff complement of 55, only 40 posts of which have been filled (two are part-time); of these, 3 people are dealing with VET.

BOX 13. OF STATEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT OF ANACEC

The main objective of the Agency should not be the direct evaluation of quality at each institution in terms of the performance results, e.g. achieving the defined learning outcomes (which is rather a function of specialised commissions) but development of QA policies for assessing the education provision process and performance of the institutions. For example, the Agency does not evaluate the quality of curricula developed by MoECR but only the compliance to the requirements towards the development process, monitoring of education and assessment of learning outcomes.

The educational institutions' staff assessment is not considered as a function relevant to the Agency. The latter develops only the legal framework thereof and the institutions should assess their own staffs.

Involvement of Social Partners is ensured to a certain extent. In every External Evaluation Commission, there are business representatives from various fields. While assessing the training courses in driving schools, representatives of the National Police Inspectorate are involved.

At the same time, there is no any cooperation with the Trade Unions, moreover, there is no any TU organisation in the Agency.

The challenges of the Agency are formulated by the Director as follows:

1) certain inappropriate tasks/functions assigned to ANACEC;
2) subordination to MoECR instead of full independence;
3) financial limitations due to the above reason (only non-financial incentives, different motivation techniques for the staff are in place while there is no financial stimulation of the performance).

The ANACEC's position regarding the VET system is that the double subordination of some VET institutions negatively affects the effectiveness of the governance. Compared with MoARDE, MoHLSP has some more capacities for administrating VET but concentration of

all VET institutions under the sole jurisdiction of MoE would considerably contribute to increase of the VET governance effectiveness and proper implementation of unified state policy in this field. In this conditions, the line ministries may provide any technical and methodological support or guidance to MoECR, where necessary. Particularly, MoHLSP may act as the employers of the Medical Colleges' graduates, while in the field of Agriculture, the public jobs are extremely limited and the role of MoARDE regarding VET, too.

Another concern of the Agency is the situation with the occupational standards, many of which according to the Director, become outdated already at the moment of approval. The Sector Committees were expected to improve the situation in this area but although they report on a number of activities, at the end of the day they are ineffective. Instead, the professional associations would undoubtedly more productive in developing new occupational standards or adjusting those of other countries, to the national context.

The entire network of VET institutions, including also the offered qualifications, is proposed to be rationalised. The role of the Centres of Excellence and their actual performance in terms of additional tasks assigned to this institutions, should be reviewed, analysed and improved. At present, they do not fit to purpose which also needs to be re-thought.

In the State Budget for 2016-2018, on the top of the line "Quality assurance in education", there was a separate budget line for ANACEC. In 2019-2020, all expenditures for the Quality assurance purposes were consolidating under a single budget line from which the ANACEC funds were provided (Table 10).

TABLE 10. STATE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN EDUCATION

Budget Line	Budget Allocations, 1000 MDL				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Quality Assurance in Education	11,349.4	18,405.6	25,972.6	17,035.7	14,659.0
ANACEC	3,722.6	8,068.3	605.4	-	-
TOTAL	**15,072.0**	**26,473.9**	**26,578.0**	**17,035.7**	**14,659.0**

Source: Laws on the State Budget 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020.

Thus, during the last 5 years, on average slightly less than 1 million Euro was allocated for QA purposes annually. This can be considered as a decent indicator, although it is unclear what was the share for VET.

3.2.3. Methodical Training Centre (MCT) under MoARDE

The **Methodical Centre for Training** is established by the Order of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry № 33, 1st October 1990 with a purpose to improve the management of the training and renewal of the staff working in the system of the Ministry. Presently, the Centre is under jurisdiction of the MoARDE (specifically its Department of Science, Education and Rural Extension) which approved the acting Regulation of MCT by its Order № 292, 26th November 2002.

The main tasks of MCT are:

- didactic-methodical provision of the educational process in post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET institutions (programmes, curricula, recommendations, methodologies, manuals and other scientific, specialised and didactic-methodical literature);
- reviewing, generalising and disseminating the advanced experience of teachers;
- studying and evaluating methodical activities in educational institutions and providing necessary assistance;
- contributing to teachers' professional development (organising trainings, internships, methodical meetings, seminars, conferences, etc.);
- participating in evaluation and certification of the teaching staff for confirming and granting teaching grades (ranks);
- organising professional contests and national competitions for teachers and students.

3.2.4. Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet (RMIC) under MoHLSP[51]

This is a legal entity subordinated to MoHLSP (directly to the State Secretary for Health). However, due to absence of any regulation approved for this Cabinet, there are uncertainties related to its status. Within the Ministry, its main collaborator is the Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel. RMIC has 3 employees (of four positions), and only the Director deals with VET-related issues. The Cabinet has no own premises and is located in the building of the Republican Clinical Hospital for Children "Emilian Cotaga". This is one of the main problems mentioned by the Director, along with the lack of staff.

The tasks of the Cabinet seem simply inherited from the past, partly from soviet times.

BOX 14. STATEMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF RMIC

The main tasks of the Cabinet are:

- Coordinating development of educational programmes, curricula, cooperation with VET institutions, establishing Work Groups for developing Occupational Standards;
- Drafting qualification standards, strategies for development of medical education, HR development strategies;
- Providing methodological support to the Medical colleges;
- Participating in drafting MoHLSP Orders and Government Decisions, in defining the annual state order, and in job placement of graduates;
- Confirmation, authentication and recognition of equivalence of foreign diploma and certificates up to level 5 ISCED;
- Collaborating with Scientific-Methodological Council of the CoE for Medicine and Pharmacy;
- Monitoring the process of continuous training and certification of medical staff, including the teaching and management staff of medical educational institutions;
- Carrying out other activities targeted at implementation of public policies, e.g. VET Strategy and HR Strategy in the field of Medicine.

[51] The authors are thankful for the interview with Diana Savca, Director of the Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova.

The Cabinet participates in general evaluation of the Medical VET institutions performed every three years. No specific monitoring mechanism does exist. Only ad hoc visits to the medical colleges are paid in the event of special requests from the Ministry or in other urgent cases.

RMIC, jointly with the CoE for Medicine and Pharmacy, is responsible for nomination of specialists to be involved in the Working Groups established by MoHLSP for standard development. The Director is also a member of the WG for dual education regulatory framework.

The Cabinet coordinates re-training of the medical personnel which is done mainly by the Centre for Continuing Medical Education of Medical and Pharmaceutical Personnel with post-secondary Education and also by the CoE for Medicine and Pharmacy CoE.

Reportedly, RMIC cooperates closely with MoECR.

3.2.5. National Employment Agency[52]

The National Employment Agency (NEA) was established in 1991 and acts under the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection. It has in total 250 staffs, of which 50 are working at the national office, and 200[53] at the 35 territorial units.

According with the Regulation approved by the Government Decision № 990, 10th October 2018[54], the NEA's mission is to *'improve employability of the job seekers and support employers in finding skilled labour force and creating new jobs'*. The Agency is entitled for a number of functions mainly related to the employment and social policy as well as studying, monitoring and forecasting the labour market at the national level. Provision of services to the beneficiaries, including both passive and active labour market measures, such as paying unemployment benefits, supporting start-ups, organisation of vocational training for unemployed, is the responsibility of the territorial units. Other functions of those units, particularly are[55]:

- registration of jobseekers and vacancies;
- monitoring the job placement of the persons after implementing active employment measures;
- monitoring of registered unemployed;
- labour market monitoring.

The territorial units are expected to cooperate with public and private organisations, local authorities, civil society organisations, and with the training providers. When required, they can also direct the beneficiaries for VNFIL.

There is a specific Procedure of Professional Training of the Unemployed through Qualification, Requalification, Improvement and Specialisation Courses, approved by the Government Decision № 1276, 26th December 2018[56]. This is a very detailed document which defines particularly that provision of the training is to be preceded by the identification of vocational training needs and individual planning of the training measure, and then followed by monitoring and evaluating the results of the training.

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[52] The authors are thankful for the interview with Raisa Dogaru, Director of the National Employment Agency, Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova.
[53] The number of staff was reduced by more than 25% (85 posts) and 10 new broad tasks were assigned after the reforms of public service system in 2018.
[54] Available at: http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=377619&lang=1.
[55] Defined by the NEA Order № 88, 28th December 2018: http://www.anofm.md/files/elfinder/sto.pdf.
[56] Available at: http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=379060&lang=1.

According with the requirements of the Law on Promotion of Employment and Unemployment Insurance[57], a Tripartite Council of NEA was established in 2019 and its Regulation was approved by the MoHLSP Order № 3, 9th January 2019. The Council is composed of nine members representing equally the Government (MoHLSP, MoEI and MoF); the Employers and the Trade Unions. The territorial units also have their tripartite councils with a similar composition.

BOX 15. STATEMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT AGENCY

Previously we did not have research component in our tasks and did not have capacities for that. Now we can contract service providers to do the research, but no financial resources are allocated for this. And this is the main impediment to fulfil this task. Annually we develop the LM forecast as good as we can in the limits of the allocated resources. We study the situation for the last 12 months and also for the next 12 months to understand what the developments are.

We do not have methodology for conducting medium-term LM forecast; the short-term forecast methodology was improved with the support of the WB. We requested ETF to support us with establishing a medium-term LM forecast methodology.

Considerably more efforts are necessary for improving the education offer and matching the courses with the LM needs. Presently, all these processes are very slow. At the same time, many VET institutions are not able to provide those modern courses and ensure proper quality due to insufficient material and human resources.

People shall be more aware about VET. More and better dialogue between the parties should be ensured. All mechanisms and the roles of the different VET players need to be clarified.

A Labour Market Observatory is functioning under the NEA, with a status of department (see below).

Labour Market Observatory of the National Employment Agency

The **Labour Market Observatory** (LMO) was established according with the Government Decision № 990, 10th October 2018, which approved the Regulation of NEA.

Considerable support was provided by ETF for the LMO capacity building. Presently, only 3 positions of foreseen 5, are occupied. For two vacancies, competition is in progress but according with the NEA Director, it is challenging to find staff with proper qualification.

The LMO operates on the basis of a partnership agreement signed between MoHLSP and NEA on one side and the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure (MoEI), Ministry of Finance, MoECR, MoARDE, the NBS, the National Institute for Economic Research, the National Confederation of Employers, the National Trade Union Confederation, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Bureau of Migration and Asylum, on the other side. The Partnership Agreement was concluded on the 18th of January 2019.

[57] Law 105, 14th June 2018: http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=376758&lang=1.

The objective of the Observatory is to collect, systemise and analyse the statistical data produced by NEA and other public institutions, develop analytical studies, conduct in-depth analysis of the labour market, forecast labour force supply and demand, and provide this information to different actors, including policy makers. Thus, the LMO does not collect any information itself but only processes thereof received from different sources.

During 2018, the LMO developed the following analytical notes:

- The analysis of vacancies registered in the NEA database;
- Labour Migration and the Impact on the Labour Market of Moldova (with support of UNDP-funded project "Migration and Local Development" – MiDL);
- Infographic with various themes.

In fact, LMO is not effective enough yet. Its staff needs a considerable capacity building to strengthen analytical and planning skills. In addition, there are financial problems: the budget covers only the salaries of the personnel but no funding is foreseen for research activities.

BOX 16. STATEMENT OF THE HEAD OF VET DEPARTMENT OF MoECR ON THE LMO

Due to the methodology applied by LMO, the information which they produce is not valuable e.g. for VET planning. We have never used any report developed by the LMO.

3.3. National Councils

There are various National Councils directly or indirectly involved in the VET governance system. These are the National Coordination Council for VET, the National Qualification Council, and the National Council of VET students. The Economic Council to the Prime-Minister also discusses issues related to VET[58].

3.3.1. Economic Council to the Prime Minister

The Economic Council[59] was established as an advisory body to the Prime Minister by the Government Decision № 631, 22nd August 2011. Its mission is to facilitate dialogue between the representatives of the business environment, donors' community and policy makers, aimed at developing a favourable social-economic climate and non-discriminatory, transparent business environment, which would be attractive for investment. The Council is authorised to exercise the functions of the National Committee for Trade Facilitation and since 2019 also the functions of the Advisory Council for small and medium enterprises.

This body is entitled particularly to initiate proposals for economic development policies, including improvements in economic and fiscal but also infrastructure development, labour market, social protection, etc. Thus, in 2019, following multiple complaints of the business community regarding the excessive regulation of labour relations in the country, a group of experts from the International Finance Corporation, at the request of the Council's Secretariat, developed recommendations on

[58] There are also National Council for the Approval of Manuals, Council of Libraries of Education, National Council for Curriculum (https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/consilii).
[59] https://consecon.gov.md/en/misiune/.

reforming the Labour Code. It is intended to liberalise relations between the employer and employee in accordance with the best European practices and the ILO principles. The current Labour Code is vague about many issues, and particularly about the apprenticeship processes. Therefore, a new law on apprenticeship and vocational training is proposed and will replace the outdated provisions of the Labour Code. Presently, the concept of the new Labour Code is under discussion with representatives of the business community and civil society.

The Economic Council considerably supported also the Regulation of dual education which was adopted by the Government in 2018.

3.3.2. National Coordination Council for VET

The **National Coordination Council for VET** (NCCVET) is established by the Government Decision № 1019, 10th December 2014 which approved also the Regulation. NCCVET is a consultative body which should provide a platform for dialogue between the VET system and the national economy. The mission of the Council is *'to ensure the synergy between VET, the labour market and the national economy, which would contribute to the quality assurance of VET, but also to a higher quality of the workers/technicians, as well as of the qualified specialists in compliance with the occupational and educational standards, the NQF of the Republic of Moldova and EQF'*.

According with the amended Regulation[60], the Council has two types of members – permanent and associate. The permanent members are representatives of:

- Ministry of Economy – Minster or Deputy Minister, Head of the Council,
- Minister of Education, Culture and Research – Minster or Deputy Minister,
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection – Deputy Minister,
- VET School Directors' Council,
- College Directors' Council,
- University Rectors' Council,
- National Confederation of Employers (Patronat),
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry,
- Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development,
- Civil Society Organisations (selected by MoE based on the criteria of professionalism, achievements and reputation),
- National Confederation of Trade Unions,
- Trade Unions;

and the associate members represent:

- Ministry of Finance – Deputy Minister,
- Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment – Deputy Minister or State Secretary,
- Sector Committee,
- Employers' Association in the field of processing industry,
- Economic agents, non-governmental organisations, investors, etc., relevant to VET.

[60] The point of the Regulation related to the membership was amended by the Government Decision № 941, 29th July 2016.

The members are not remunerated from the State Budget.

The membership is factually not renewed with consideration of changes which took place in the Government structure in 2017.

The Council carries out the following tasks:

1) coordinates the process of elaboration, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and revision of the policies for reforming, developing and modernising the VET system with a purpose to comply it with the needs of the labour market;
2) makes recommendations regarding the consolidation of partnership between the VET institutions and the economic environment, including the modernisation of those institutions, the content of the study programmes, the educational standards, the evaluation and certification system of the qualifications awarded in the result vocational education;
3) promotes collaboration between ministries, other central administrative bodies, employers and trade unions aimed at VET modernisation;
4) implements and monitors the VET reforms from the perspective professional training and employment of the skilled workers / specialists;
5) contributes to the modernisation of the material and methodological-didactic base of the VET institutions;
6) contributes, through a participatory approach, to increasing the transparency and relevance of the VET reforms.

For fulfilling the above tasks, NCCVET is entitled for performing specific functions related to three main areas: 1) economic, 2) educational, and 3) transparency and good governance in the VET reform. More detailed information about the Council authorities, particularly the functions related to the first two above fields, can be found in the **Annex 10**, while those corresponding to the third one are presented here.

Aiming the transparency and good governance of VET reforms, the Council:

- ensures inclusion and participation of relevant stakeholders, including public authorities, trade unions and employers, economic agents and their associations, civil society organisations, as well as VET institutions in the process of reforming VET, particularly in the elaboration, deliberation, evaluation and revision of the VET modernisations policies;
- ensures strategic guidance of the VET reforming process through promoting the reform agenda, considering interests of the society and the business environment, thus increasing the relevance of the VET development policies;
- institutionalises the dialogue between the stakeholders and beneficiaries of the reform policies, for enhancing their legitimacy;
- ensures monitoring of VET reforms transparency in terms of broad participation of the stakeholders in the elaboration, deliberation, monitoring, evaluation and revision of VET modernisation policies.

Thus, the NCCVET is expected not only to participate in the VET governance but also contribute to improving the processes thereof.

For examining and carrying out specific tasks in the field of VET, the Council may propose establishment of working groups and temporary commissions or committees with participation of specialists from the central and local authorities, VET institutions, specialised organisations, economic agents, social partners, civil society as well as independent experts.

The Secretariat of the Council is provided by MoECR, specifically the VET Department, which is responsible for preparation of the materials for the meetings, taking minutes, elaborating reports and information materials, etc.

The meetings of the Council shall be convened at least four times a year. Persons responsible and interested in the issues discussed at the meetings may be invited to attend.

The first meeting of the VET Coordination Council was held in 2014. There were two meetings in 2015 and only one in 2016. No meeting has been convened since 2017, and the Council remains non-functional.

3.3.3. National Qualification Council

The National Council for Qualifications was established by the MoECR Order № 1408, 19th September 2018 with a purpose to implement the Government Decision about approving the National Qualifications Framework, particularly the requirement to promote social partnership policy in the field of professional education.

The Council has 19 members, of whom 6 are representing Ministries (2 persons from MoECR including the State Secretary General who is the Council President, and the State Secretary, Vice-president; 2 persons from MoHLSP; one from MoARDE and one from the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure); 2 representing public institutions, i.e. CRDÎP and ANACEC; 5 from educational institutions (3 Universities and 2 VET Centres of Excellence); and 6 from the social partners, including National Confederation of Employers, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Employers Federation "Condrumat", and three Sector Committees, those for Agriculture and the food industry, for Light Industry and for Trade Hotels and Restaurants. The Secretariat of the Council consists of 3 representatives of the NQF Department of MoECR.

The mission of the Council is to provide consultative support to MoECR for carrying out public policies in the field of the NQF. The following functions are defined for the Council by its regulation:

a) elaborating proposals for amending the legal acts regarding the development and implementation of NQF;
b) proposing short- and long-term priorities for the NQF development;
c) monitoring the compatibility and the links between NQF and EQF, as well as the QF-EHEA;
d) making recommendations regarding the concept and functions of National Qualifications Register;
e) submitting proposals regarding the algorithm for elaboration (revision) of qualifications and examining and approving the elaborated (revised) and validated qualification packages;
f) collaborating with the working groups and other structures involved in the elaboration (revision) and validation of the vocational and higher education qualifications;
g) participating in elaboration of the Report on referencing the NQF with EQF and QF-EHEA, in the various studies, in analysing and making forecasts regarding the evolution of the NQF;
h) contributing to continuous dialogue between all NQF stakeholders, including: professional education institutions of all levels, specialised Central Bodies, the business community, Sector committees, trade unions, non-governmental organisations.

BOX 17. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF NQF DEPARTMENT (2)

At the last meeting, held on the 19th December 2019, the National Council for Qualifications discussed and endorsed newly developed qualification standards which were further submitted for approval to the Minister of Education, Culture and Research. During the meeting, the participants examined drafts of 10 Qualification Standards: Tailor for custom made clothing; Cook; Electro-gas welder-assembler; Plasterer; Beekeeper; Cultivator of vegetables and fruits, all NQF level 3; Agronomist (Horticulture); and Technician hydro-technics, NQF level 4; Horticulturist; and Engineering and branch management (in hydro-ameliorations), NQF level 6.

Achievements of the NQF Department in 2019 and the targeted objectives for 2020, were also reported to the Council.

3.3.4. National Council of VET Students

The **National Council of VET Students** (NCVETS) is a representative and consultative structure of the students, which ensures their right of free expression of opinion, particularly on the issues related to the institutions' response to their needs and interests. According with the Regulation approved by the MoE Order № 331, 30th April 2014, the Council should have 30 members[61] representing the VET institutions of the country[62]. They are nominated by the institution self-governing body of students and are elected through national open competition by a Commission comprising representatives of the MoECR, civil society organisations and students. The NCVETS members are elected for one academic year and only for one term.

The NCVETS organises its activity *via* conferences convened on a quarterly basis, during vacations or on days off, as well as online. i.e. remote communication with and between NCVETS members. It is foreseen that during the Conferences the Council members shall discuss with the representative of MoECR and other ministries draft laws, normative acts, education policy documents and to provide their points of view on them. In addition, the students should receive training on such topics as human rights, communication and relationships with colleagues and adults, strategies for making their voice heard, developing indicators and applying human rights monitoring methods, as well as others topics requested by the members. MoECR appoints a consultant, responsible for organising the NCVETS activities, maintaining communication with the members and with the institutions involved in this process. All costs related to the Council functioning are covered by MoECR. Certain information about NCVETS is posted on the Ministry website[63].

Formally, the NCVETS is expected to: a) collect, generalise and submit to MoE visions and expectations of the students regarding the access to formal and non-formal education, the quality of the educational environment, educational policies, participation in the decision-making process; b) support the Ministry in monitoring the respect of students' right to education at institutional and national levels; c) organise activities for identifying the needs, problems and interests of the students (for more details, see **Annex 11**).

[61] According with the last known composition approved by the MoE Order № 517, 22nd June 2015, the Council had 37 members.
[62] The students of graduating year cannot be Council members.
[63] Available at: https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/consilii.

In the VET Department, there is one person dealing with the Students' Council.

For the current academic year 2019-2020, the Council has 40 members, 23 girls and 17 boys, representing 22 VET schools, 12 Colleges and 6 Centres of Excellence. The first workshop of this academic year was held on 11-13 September, while the previous one took place in May 2019.

3.4. Sector Committees for VET

One of the Results of the Specific Objective 2[64] of the VET Development Strategy for 2013-2020[65] foresees establishment of *Sector Committees for the main areas of the national economy, which will participate in the development of standards for the VET*. According with the Action Plan of the above Strategy, Sector Committees for the 12 specialisation fields should be created, regulation to be updated, relevant members of the Sector Committees recruited and trained, and organisational culture of the Sector Committees developed. For the period of 2014-2017, annually 1.6 million MDL (9.4 million MDL in total) was planned to be allocated for this purpose.

Presently there are nine Sector Committees (SC), established in the period of 2008-2018[66]. Of them, six have been already registered as legal entities (under the original or changed name) and two are in the process of formalisation and one is not active (Table 11).

TABLE 11. SECTOR COMMITTEES FOR VET AND THEIR PRESENT STATUS

№	Title	Year of establishment	Date of registration
1	Sector Committee for Construction	2008	06.03.2018
2	Sector Committee for Transport and Road Infrastructure	2008	In process
3	Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry	2009	19.03.2018
4	Sector Committee for IT and Communication	2012	In process
5	Sector Committee for Trade, Hotels and Restaurants[67]	2013	29.05.2018
6	Sector Committee for Light Industry[68]	2013	23.05.2018
7	Sector Committee for Energy	2017	Not Active
8	Sector Committee for Water Distribution, Sanitation, Waste Management, Decontamination Activities	2018	05.04.2019
9	Sector Committee for Financial Intermediation and Insurance, Real Estate Transactions	2018	21.09.2018

The Committees are acting according with the Law on Sector Committees for Vocational Training, adopted by the Parliament on 23rd November 2017, i.e. around nine years after establishment of the first SC.

The Law defines that the Sectoral Committees are associations with the status of legal entity, which are established voluntarily by the corresponding employers' unions and trade unions at the level of economic sectors foreseen by the national Classifier of Economic Activities. Two main ***tasks*** are

[64] *'Ensure the vocational training based on competences and adjust it to the labour market requirements, so that employment increases by 10%, from 50.6% in 2012, for graduates from the secondary vocational education, and from 50% in 2012 for graduates from the vocational-technical education'.*
[65] Approved by the Government Decision № 97, 1st February 2013.
[66] In fact, four Sector Committees were existent before adoption of the VET Strategy
[67] Previously: for Internal Trade.
[68] Previously: for Non-food Industry.

formulated for the SCs:

- Develop social partnerships in the field of vocational training at the level of the economic sectors in order to support vocational, technical and continuing education, as well as ensure compliance of the workers' and specialists' training with the labour market requirements;
- Based on the needs of the labour market, participate in the creation of a system of information and analytical support in the field of vocational education.

The Committees have particularly the following ***functions***:

- Providing a platform for communication and cooperation between the social partners on one hand and between the social partners and public authorities on the other, in developing regulatory framework for IVET and CVET, and assessment and certification of competences, as well as contributing to those processes through participation in working groups and presenting opinions on draft legal acts;
- Participating in the elaboration of VET-related policy documents at national and sectoral levels;
- Making proposals on updating the classifier of occupations, identifying the occupations for which standards are to be developed and initiating, coordinating and participating in development of those occupational standards or revising the existing ones related to the corresponding sectors of economy;
- Participating in the elaboration, development and upgrading the qualifications related to their economic sector, as well as in the elaboration of the National Qualifications Framework;
- Supporting and promoting introduction of the competence-based training and assessment systems;
- Promoting and encouraging participation of employers, employees and other individuals in vocational education and continuing training, and participation of social partners and other individuals and legal entities in its promotion and development;
- Providing conclusions on the draft curricula and modules/subjects developed for vocational education and continuing training in the corresponding sectors of economy;
- Participating, through its representatives, in the qualification exams and certification of competences acquired in the context of formal education, non-formal or informal learning;
- Conducting labour market research and collaborating with public and private institutions and non-commercial organisations for identifying the sector trends, the workforce demand and skill needs in order to feed the education system with the information necessary for development of required competence;
- Nominating sector specialists for verification and validation of occupational standards and keeping track of these specialists.

Several sources of the SCs ***funding*** (all taxable) are allowed:

a) entrance and membership fees, if foreseen by the SC Statute;
b) budgetary allocations for supporting the SC activities;
c) financial assets of business units, in the manner prescribed by collective agreements;
d) funds of projects financed by national and international organisations, donations, sponsors' investments;
e) income generated through provision of services in accordance with the powers and tasks of the committees;
f) other sources in accordance with the legislation.

The Sectoral Committees have the obligations defined for the NGOs (Public Associations) by the corresponding Law[69].

Of nine Sector Committees, six were interviewed for the purposes of this review. The most important information is presented below.

3.4.1. Sector Committee for Trade, Hotels and Restaurants[70]

The Committee was established in 2013 and registered as a legal entity in May 2018. It has eight ordinary (titular) members, of which 4 are representatives of trade unions and other 4 of Patronate. There are also non-titular (associate) members: 11 from employers' associations, 11 from VET institutions and 8 persons as individual members.

SC has a Strategic Plan, and Action Plans are approved annually by the SC Council at the annual General Assembly. Performance indicators are defined jointly by all members of the SC. The Committee convenes monthly meetings to discuss performance of the activities against the Action Plan. All the members work on voluntary basis.

In 2018-2019, the Committee participated in a number of projects, including those funded by the state, e.g.: on increasing the awareness about the SC's activities (meetings with various stakeholders, i.e. employers, VET schools and economic agents); on establishing a communication platform between the economic agents and VET schools in order to strengthen social dialogue; on developing skills of future cooks/chefs and teaching staff from VET schools (a Masterclass was organised by a specialist invited from Italy); a gastronomic contest was organised jointly with Association Education for Development and held in VET school № 2 from Chisinau, aimed at establishing links between VET institutions and the employers. In addition, the Committee developed three manuals and a practical guideline on the labour market analysis, produced and disseminated some leaflets within the sector. Two members of the Committee were trained in developing occupational standards by a certified trainer.

BOX 18. STATEMENTS OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE SECTOR COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

The goals and objectives are clearly defined but the Committee does not always manage to achieve them. The main reason is busyness of the members with their primary jobs and lack of time for the SC activities. Other main issues are insufficient funds. This hinders the activities of the Committee, for example in implementing Labour Market Analysis, neither to hire appropriate experts due to lack of financial resources; do not manage to monitor conversion of occupational standards into qualification standard and curricula; in the last two years we have not participated in the validation of qualification standards or curricula and elaboration of occupational standards.

Lack of human resources results in inability to apply for, and implement projects funded by NGOs or international donors. There is no person who could write project proposals and reports in English. It was not possible to hire a full-time employee who would be responsible

[69] Law № 837, 17th May 1996.
[70] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Valentina Chiriac, Vice-president of the Sector Committee for Trade, Hotels and Restaurants.

for managing a database of VET schools and economic agents in the economy sectors covered by the Committee.

The Committee also has no own premises.

3.4.2. Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry[71]

The Committee was established in 2009 and registered as a legal entity in March 2018. It has 10 members and 10 regional branches in the field of Agriculture and Food Industry, about 30 persons in total.

The main objectives of the Committee Strategic Plan are: contribution to continuous professional training, i.e. LLL, CVET and validation of the non-formal and informal learning; taking active part in the development of the VET enrolment plan (in reality the SCs have not specified role in this area and do not participate in VET planning); strengthening links between VET institutions and companies, particularly for contributing to a better WBL performance; development of public-private partnership; as well as continuous improvement of HR capacities of the Committee.

In 2019, the Committee participated in development of five Occupational Standards; validation of a number of Curricula (is done regularly) and validation of five Qualification Standards. Presently, the Committee is in the process of developing other three new occupational standards that were required by the labour market. Besides, the SC systematically contributes to updating the Classifier of Occupations and Nomenclatures considering the LM needs, and participates in development and improvement of legal acts related to VET and employment, working closely with VET institutions and National Authorities and businesses.

The main challenges of this Committee are shortage of financial resources resulting particularly in impossibility to maintain a permanent secretariat or to pay the work of the members who contribute to the Committee performance considerable time, while having also their own business.

BOX 19. STATEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOOD INDUSTRY

There are also challenges which are common for all SCs. It is extremely difficult to attract the businesses to get involved in cooperation with VET and CVET; considerable awareness raising activities are required.

Another serious challenge is institutionalising and establishing a proper CVET system, which is exceptionally important.

[71] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Leonard Palii, President of the Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry.

3.4.3. Sector Committee for IT and Communication[72]

The Committee was established in 2012 and now is in process of registration as a legal entity. It has 35 members representing the companies of the IT sector.

Since its establishment, the Committee members' work has been based on enthusiasm and was voluntary. Some financing was only provided for development of occupational standards, but this was only a part of the SC activities.

Reportedly, the following main works are implemented by the ITC Committee:

- Labour market analysis while developing the occupational standards;
- Contribution to curricula endorsement;
- Drafting of proposals for the modification of the Classifier and Nomenclatures of Occupations;
- Activities related to work-based learning.

Cooperation with the Centre of Excellence on IT has also been established.

BOX 20. STATEMENTS OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR IT AND COMMUNICATION

The situation with the SCs financing even worsened after adoption of the Law. Before that, the State could provide at least some funding to the Committee, while now it became impossible as the SCs are actually NGOs founded by the employers and unions, therefore, the public bodies, e.g. ministries, are not part of sector committees anymore. Previously, there were discussions on the possibility of financing at least the secretariat but now it seems not realistic.

In addition, the fact that the representatives of e.g. MoECR cannot participate in the activities of the Committees, considerably reduces also their credibility and impact.

The Law on Sector Committees needs to be revised. Particularly, the task of Occupational standards development can be assigned also to other bodies, while the SCs could be involved in their validation.

The private sector is not interested in establishing partnerships with the Sector Committees and taking part in joint activities. The main reason is the lack of awareness about, and the perception of the importance of the Committee.

The companies usually satisfy their needs related to vocational training by various methods, e.g. Moldtelecom company uses the services of the Technical University of Moldova. In ICT industry, developments are extremely fast, but the processes of updating the educational documents, such as occupational standards or curricula, takes very long time. The ICT companies state that by the time an occupational standard is developed and approved, it may no longer be relevant to their needs anymore.

Another issue is the relevance of the qualifications *per se*. For example, in the nomenclature, there is a qualification of "Computer Operator" (and the Committee

[72] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Mihai Grecu, Vice-President of the Sector Committee for IT and Communications.

participated in development of the corresponding standard) which is actually not demanded in the Labour market due to its very narrow profile. The companies need specialists of wider specialisation, specifically those of small and medium size. Only large enterprises can afford hiring narrow specialists.

Discrepancy between the labour force supply and demand, specifically in the ITC sector, remains considerable. The companies should realise that it would be more advantageous to "use the public money" allocated to education rather than spend own funds for training the staff. The graduates of the educational institutions are trained for wider scope of competences and can work in different types of enterprises, while the companies provide very specific (narrow scope) training for their employees, applicable for the local needs only.

3.4.4. Sector Committee for Light Industry[73]

Originally, this was Sector Committee for Non-food Industry due to the fact that in 2013, it was established by decision of the Branch Commission for Consultations and Collective Bargaining in the Field of Non-food Industry (to which the sector of Light Industry belongs) and was supposed to cover an area wider than the light industry sector. Nevertheless, the latter was actually the only focus of the Committee which could not be specialised in all sectors of non-food industry that involves also e.g. automotive and agricultural machinery, chemical and energy industries, furniture industry. Several attempts were done to rename the Committee during the previous years, but it was only achieved when registered as a legal entity in May 2018 under the title Sector Committee for Light Industry.

The Committee has 6 members, who are representatives of Patronate, Light Industry Employers Association, Trade Union, and companies.

Reportedly, during 2018-2019, the Committee carried out sector mapping and analysis; and developed one occupational standard for *Tailor for custom made clothing*. It was planned also to develop occupational standard for the "Technician in job health and security", corresponding qualification standard and 4 curricula but due to some reasons, including the COVID19 crisis, this was not done.

BOX 21. STATEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR LIGHT INDUSTRY

The labour market 'does not react' properly to their activities, the companies do not understand their role and tasks. The public bodies are also not responsive enough. For example, in 2018 the SC proposed ANACEC to reduce the training period for high-speed seamstresses but no feedback was received.

The main problem is the lack of technical secretariat. Due to this, the members cannot get involved in analytical and consultancy works.

Since adoption of the Law on Sector Committees, no any support from the public bodies has been provided.

[73] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Nadejda Rusnac, President of the Sector Committee for Light Industry.

3.4.5. Sector Committee for Water Distribution, Sanitation, Waste Management, Decontamination Activities[74]

This is a relatively young Committee, established in 2018 and registered in April 2019. There are 9 members representing business, trade union and Patronate.

No tangible activities have been done yet.

BOX 22. STATEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR WATER DISTRIBUTION, SANITATION, WASTE MANAGEMENT, DECONTAMINATION ACTIVITIES

There is a considerable shortage of occupational standards for this branch. The existing ones are not of high quality. The members are real experts of the sector, therefore it is planned to build in 2020 their capacities also for reviewing and analysing the existing problems and create a platform for collaboration with economic agents in the sector.

Challenges of SCs are closely interconnected with those of the country in general, including the effectiveness of the public bodies' functioning.

In the country, the funds are not spent efficiently and fairly. Otherwise it should be possible to find some money for financing the SCs secretariats, which would contribute to increasing the Committees effectiveness considerably.

3.4.6. Sector Committee for Financial Intermediation and Insurance, Real Estate Transactions[75]

This Committee has also been established and formalised recently, i.e. in September 2018. There are 2 members in the committee, representatives of the founders, Patronate and Trade Union. During this short period of its existence, the SC participated in revision of the Classifier of Occupations and invited also some economic agents to support this process.

BOX 23. STATEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMITTEE FOR FINANCIAL INTERMEDIATION AND INSURANCE, REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS

One of the challenges is to convince the private sector to become SC members and participate in its activities. The other problem is the lack of human and financial resources.

Secretariat is not only necessary for assisting the activates but shall carry out also monitoring of the SC's activities performance.

According to Law (№ 30, 2019) amending the Fiscal Code, starting with the revenues related to April 2019, taxpayers can dispose of the destination of an amount representing up

[74] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Marcel Cușnir, President of the Sector Committee for Water Distribution, Sanitation, Waste Management, Decontamination Activities.
[75] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Angela Lazarenco, President of the Sector Committee for Financial Intermediation and Insurance, Real Estate Transactions.

to 3.5% of income tax (in the past, this was equal to 2%), to support non-profit entities that are established and operate under the law and religious units, as well as for the granting of private scholarships. It would be appropriate the Law to be revised. In this event, private sector will be aware of this opportunity to redirect an amount of up to 3.5% to SCs.

It was observed the credibility of the Committees among the private businesses increases significantly when the SCs are supported by ministries. At this initial stage of development, they need to be supported by the central authorities.

* * *

Some key statements of several interviewed stakeholders about the Sector Committees are presented in the box below:

BOX 24. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON THE SECTOR COMMITTEES

Head of LLL Service, MoECR: The degree of the involvement of the Sector Committees is quite high. There is a need to improve the communication with large companies providing continuous training for their own workers, to find out what are their needs. There is a collaboration with Sector Committees, but they work mainly with the National Qualification Department, VET Department. Private sector should have an increased role in this process, only a few companies are involved now in the process of improving the quality of VET training. There is a need of mentoring programmes, improve their collaboration of VET schools with private sector.

Head of NQF Department. MoECR: It is necessary to restructure the Sector Committees and to include in their componence representatives of VET schools. This will facilitate the dialogue between these actors and make a better correlation between the demand and supply. Line ministries should contribute to establishment of Sector Committees as they represent the voice of the labour market. There is a need for a structure which could guide these sector committees. There is no need to establish a new entity, CRDÎP could undertake the role of coordinating sector committees.

Head of the Social and Economic Protection Department of the Confederation of Trade Unions: Sector committees do not have necessary experts to do analysis of the labour market and training needs. <…> Sector Committees are in the early stage of development and very few of them have developed occupational standards. They have limited number of specialists and the financial capacities are not enough for properly fulfilling their objectives. The European funds and projects target more the institutional capacity rather than the performance of the Sector Committees' tasks. They still do not have a strong link with vocational schools to provide information about the labour market requirements. Meetings and round tables that Sector Committees organise, gather more representatives of ministries than of vocational schools.

President of Chamber of Commerce and Industry: Although a lot of money was given to the Sector Committees, they do not show any results and have no any impact.

Executive Director of the National Confederation of Employers: Sector Committees are

not very much efficient but shall continue improving and also involving other stakeholders, not only employers. They should work on occupational profiles and standards. But only some Sector Committees are able and good e.g. in the standard development. The Sector Committees are to be more active and contribute to skills need identification, particularly on a specific sector/subsector, but not alone, also Ministries, sector associations, individual companies, all together should do that.

GIZ Project Director: There are some SCs that struggle to get into action while some are "spoilt" and do want to do anything. <….> Now it is too late to go back, but the influence on the policy should be stricter just to make them work.

Programme Manager, ADA project: The Sector Committees should be reorganised. They shall be focal points between VET and companies, but they do not act properly.

President of Pro Didactica: Probably the Sector Committees could do LM analysis but they need financial resources and also capacity building as it requires good research skills.

3.5. VET Institutions[76]

There are four types of management bodies in the VET institutions: Teachers' Council, Administrative Council, Scientific-Methodical Council (except Secondary VET Schools[77]), and Director. In addition, institutions have also Departments and Chairs (Methodical Committees).

3.5.1. Teachers' Council of VET Institutions

In all types of institutions, the **Teachers' Council** (TC) is the ***collective management body*** of the institution and is chaired by the Director. According with the corresponding Regulations, the TC of the College and CoE is composed of the teachers' staff of the institution and the Director, while in the VET schools, also one student of each study year is a member of the TC.

There are tasks which are common for the TCs of all three types of institutions but a number of others are different. Some important tasks are presented in the Table 12 below:

TABLE 12. TASKS OF THE TEACHERS' COUNCILS BY THE TYPES OF VET INSTITUTIONS

Members	VET School	College	Centre of Excellence
Approving the institution Statute	✓	✓	✓
Approving the strategic development plan of the institution	✓	✓	✓
Approving the annual action plans of the institution and of its structural units	✓	✓	✓
Coordinating and supervising the educational activities of the institution and defining improvement measures		✓	✓

[76] The authors are thankful for the interviews with Ms Lucia Caraiman, Director of VET School № 5 in Bălți; Ms Silvia Protiuc, Director of Centre of Excellence for Services and Food Processing in Bălți; Mr Sergiu Zabolotnii, Director of Centre of Excellence for Wine and Viticulture; Mr Ion Lisnic, Director of Polytechnic College in Bălți; Ms Ala Manolachi, Director of Centre of Excellence in Medicine and Pharmacy "R. Pacalo" and Ms Vera Balova, Director of VET School in Ceadîr Lunga.

[77] There is Methodical Commission in the Secondary VET institutions (VET schools) but according with the Regulation of this type of institutions, it is not considered as a managerial body.

Members	VET School	College	Centre of Excellence
Periodically reviewing performance of the action plans and the results of the institution's educational activities		✓	✓
Electing the members of the Administrative Council	✓		
Approving the internal regulation of the institution	✓		
Approving the membership of methodical commissions and the committee for quality evaluation and assurance	✓		
Discussing draft laws and other legal acts and making recommendations to the Ministry, etc.[78]	✓		
Approving its own regulations, and supervising their observance by the students and the staff		✓	
Approving the annual report on the activities of the institution		✓	
Approving the strategy of the methodical activity and its development			✓

Source: Regulations of the Institutions approved by the Ministry of Education Orders № 1158, 04.12.2015; № 550, 10.06.2015; and № 840, 21.08.2015

There are other differences too. The meetings of the TC in the CoEs and Colleges are convened quarterly and they are competent if at least 2/3 of the total staff members attends, while in the VET schools, the Council meets at least once every 2 months and presence of simple majority of the members is sufficient for taking decisions (only for approving internal regulation of the institution, presence of ¾ of the members is required). The other difference is that the decisions of the Councils in the CoEs and VET schools are taken by open vote only, while in the Colleges secret voting is also possible.

3.5.2. Administrative Council of VET Institutions

The **Administrative Council** (AC) is the ***executive management body*** of the VET institutions which takes decisions on the organisational and administrative issues related to the institution's activities[79]. The Council members are mainly representatives of the institutions staffs (Table 13):

TABLE 13. COMPOSITION OF ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCILS BY THE TYPES OF INSTITUTIONS

Members	VET School	College	Centre of Excellence
Director	✓	✓	✓
Deputy Directors		✓	✓
Chief Accountant	✓	✓	✓
Heads of Departments	✓	✓	✓

[78] Other tasks of the VET School's Teachers Council are such as: Approving the report of the admission commission; Examining and proposing for approval the plan of extracurricular activities; Establishing for the current academic year the optional disciplines offered at the institution level; Validating the report on the semester and annual schooling situation of the students, the results of the evaluation of the activity of the teachers and instructors. In total, the list of the VET school Teachers Council's tasks includes 16 points against 9 for Colleges and the Centres of Excellence.

[79] In the CoEs Regulation, there is also the following definition: '*Administration of the Centre of Excellence is carried out by the Administrative Council*'.

Members	VET School	College	Centre of Excellence
Heads of Chairs / Methodical Committees		✓	✓
Methodologist		✓	✓
Psychologist		✓	✓
Head of the Library		✓	✓
Chair of the trade union committee	✓	✓	✓
Students (1-2 Representative of the Students' Council)	✓	✓	✓
Representatives of Parents (nominated by the Parents General Assembly)	✓	✓	✓
Economic agents (1-2 representatives of Economic agents with which the CoE cooperates)	✓	✓	✓
Representatives of institutions with which the College cooperates		✓	
2 representatives of teachers nominated by the Teachers' Council	✓		

Source: Regulations of the Institutions approved by the Ministry of Education Orders № 1158, 04.12.2015; № 550, 10.06.2015; and № 840, 21.08.2015

The Administrative Council is also headed by the Director. However, for the case of VET schools, *'another person, appointed by the members of the board by secret ballot'*, can also be the AC leader.

The tasks of the AC are numerous and many of them again differ as by types of institutions (Table 14):

TABLE 14. TASKS OF ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCILS BY THE TYPES OF VET INSTITUTIONS

Members	VET School	College	Centre of Excellence
Ensures practical application of the legislative and regulatory requirements	✓	✓	✓
Approves annual budgets of the institution	✓	✓	✓
Approves the personnel arrangements (staff list)	✓	✓	✓
Adopts the strategy for spending the extra-budgetary funds, including those received from entrepreneurial activities	✓	✓	✓
Approves the institution's HR development strategy	✓	✓	✓
Approves the platform for social dialogue with educational partners	✓	✓	✓
Periodically monitors and evaluates the educational process development	✓		✓
Considers violations committed by the institution employees and, depending on the situation, offers sanctions, as well as approves the allocation of bonuses to the employees	✓		✓
Approves the dates of students' examinations		✓	✓
Approves job descriptions of the institution personnel		✓	✓
Develops the institution annual activity plan and the semi-annual programmes by the fields of activity	✓		

Members	VET School	College	Centre of Excellence
Develops the Internal Regulations and monitors its implementation by all students and staff of the institution	✓		
Approves the establishment of the quality assessment commission	✓		
Considers and proposes for approval the annual academic load	✓		
Defines the tuition fee for paid education, for the entire training cycle		✓	
Approves the semi-annual report on the institution financial and economic activities and submits it to the founder		✓	
Approves drafts of typical staffing within the available financial resources		✓	
Approves the tariff list of the personnel		✓	
Agrees on budget proposals related to the state order (free of charge education)		✓	

Source: Regulations of the Institutions approved by the Ministry of Education Orders № 1158, 04.12.2015; № 550, 10.06.2015; and № 840, 21.08.2015

The meetings of the Council are convened at least monthly.

As mentioned above, the membership of the Administrative Council in the VET School is approved by the Teachers Council. For the other two types of institutions, the Regulations do not define the body which approves the list of AC members. In the interviewed institutions, the membership of the Administrative Councils was mainly approved by the Teachers Council but in one case, the Administrative Councils of the previous convocation approved the membership of the next one, at its last meeting.

3.5.3. Director

The executive manager of the VET institution is the Director, who is elected through open competition according with the procedure defined by MoE Order № 673, 9th July 2015. A candidate for this position should:

- be a citizen of the RM (only for Directors of public VET institutions);
- have higher education;
- have an uninterrupted teaching experience of at least two years (only for Directors of public VET institutions);
- at the time of expiration of the application submission deadline, to be younger than 65 years-old;
- be fluent in Romanian;
- have no criminal record.

The key functions of the Directors are identical for all three types of VET institutions, nevertheless the variation are important to be mentioned (Table 15):

TABLE 15. TASKS OF THE DIRECTORS BY THE TYPES OF VET INSTITUTIONS

Members	VET School	College	Centre of Excellence
Represents an educational institution	✓	✓	✓
Develops and introduces the Strategic Development Plan of the institution	✓	✓	✓
Prepares and submits the annual budget of the educational institution to the Administrative Council approval	✓	✓	✓
Coordinates and bears responsibility for all educational and managerial activities of the institution	✓	✓	✓
Organises competition and according with its results, appoints and dismisses administrative personnel (Deputy Directors, Heads of Departments) and the teaching staff	✓	✓	✓
Negotiates and signs a collective labour agreements and individual contracts	✓	✓	✓
Bears responsibility for the entrepreneurial activity of the institution	✓	✓	✓
Ensures compliance with legal provisions	✓	✓	✓
Ensures development of the teaching and managerial staffs through creating necessary conditions for improving their qualifications, for their advancement in the awarding of pedagogical degrees	✓	✓	✓
Manages the finances/credits[80]	✓	✓	✓
Submits the functional duties of the institution employees for consideration of the Administrative Council, and exercises constant control over their implementation	✓	✓	✓
Bears responsibility for the development of, and compliance with, the requirements of the Statute and other regulations of the institution	✓	✓	✓
Coordinates preparation of the activity report and ensures its annual submission to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research and, if necessary, to the founder, by the 15th October of the corresponding year, as well as ensures its publication on the institution's website	✓	✓	
Ensures the maintenance and further development of the material, technical and didactic base of the institution	✓		✓
Coordinates and approves the pedagogical load of the teaching staff	✓		
Organises appropriate functioning of dormitories and canteens of the institution, creates conditions for students' accommodation and recreation	✓		
Provides coordination and guidance for application of the achievements of science and practice in vocational education	✓		
Develops and after agreeing with the Administrative Council, submits to the budgetary body, i.e. The founder, budget proposals related to the state order for vocational training, in accordance with the terms and requirements established by such body		✓	

[80] There are some differences in the formulations of this point as by the types of the institutions. For the VET Schools and the CoEs it runs as follows: *'manages finances/credits, signs contracts, opens bank accounts and takes other actions arising from his duties as manager of finances/credits'*, while for the Colleges it says: *'approves expenses within the approved budget and for purposes strictly related to the activities of the educational institution'*.

Members	VET School	College	Centre of Excellence
Ensures integrity, maintenance and effective management of the institution property in accordance with the provisions of regulatory acts		✓	
Ensures transparency of the institution activities by posting the annual activity reports on its website no later than within four months after the end of each reporting year		✓	
Bears disciplinary liability for contractual obligations		✓	
Develops and submits for the Teachers Council approval the report on the activities of the Centres of Excellence and ensures its publication on the institution's website within 15 days from the date of approval			✓

Source: Regulations of the Institutions approved by the Ministry of Education Orders № 1158, 04.12.2015; № 550, 10.06.2015; and № 840, 21.08.2015

In Colleges and VET Schools, Directors are also responsible for ensuring the hygienic-sanitary conditions, for observing the labour regulations, and for excluding any harmful conditions.

The Director of the non-public institutions are elected and appointed by the founders.

The reasons of such considerable inconsistencies between the duties of the management bodies, i.e. Teachers Councils, Administrative Councils and Directors of the three types of institutions, are unclear. They do not seem justified by any differences between the status, objectives or the scope of functions assigned to the VET schools, Colleges and the Centres of Excellence. All the corresponding Regulations were approved in 2015 with intervals of 2 to 4 months, and would be expected to have better congruence.

3.5.4. Students Councils of VET Institutions[81]

The works of the VET Institutions' Students Councils[82] are normally planned annually and include activities targeted at 1-3 specific aspects of intervention. These aspects are studied and addressed at the national and institutional levels. For example, the topic to be addressed in 2019, was Violence in VET institutions (bullying), while presently it is the Remote Studying.

The members of the VET Institutions' Students Councils assume certain roles, interact with different young people and representatives of MoECR and other bodies. Students learn to overcome fears, defend their own rights and the rights of those who do not have opportunity to express their voice.

The activities of the Students Councils have a positive impact on the relations of students with teachers, administration of the institution, and members of the Students Councils of other VET Institutions.

At the end of each school year, students' general assembly is usually organised where they reflect critically on the processes and results of their Council's activity, draw conclusions and recommendations for administration of their institution and for MoECR. Considering the students'

[81] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Rodica Caimac, coordinator of the NVETSC from CIDDC, Ms Romana Vasilachi, former member of NVETSC, Ms Elvira Drangoi, former member of NVETSC, Ms Maria Magalena, member of NVETSC, Mr Zamfir Onofrei, member of NVETSC, Ms Andreea Cazacu, member of NVETSC.

[82] The activity of Students Councils of VET Institutions is supported by LED and Association Education for Development through financing a Youth policy expert, for supporting and facilitating the activities of the Students Councils of VET Institutions and its connection with MoECR.

problems and complaints voiced by the Students Councils, MoECR delivered different circulars to the VET institutions and some issues, e.g. those related to the living conditions in the dormitories, were solved.

3.5.5. Centres of Excellence

As a result of the reorganising the VET network, new VET structures, i.e. Centres of Excellence were established on the basis of some existent Colleges and VET Schools. There are presently 13 CoEs. This type of VET institutions, according with the provisions of the Framework Regulation of the CoEs, apart from providing initial and continuous VET programmes, which is a specific function of all VET institution, are expected also to:

- be the pivot for didactic, curricular and methodological assurance of the VET system;
- coordinate and guide the activity of other Colleges and VET Schools in the sector;
- provide continuous training to teachers and managers of VET institutions;
- certify professional competences, acquired in formal, informal and non-formal environment;
- be the social liaison to ensure social dialogue with important players on the labour market;
- promote the image of the economic sector and vocational education;
- be innovative, elaborate projects, test new models and implement pilot projects that would stimulate the integration of innovative contents and services in VET.

BOX 25. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON THE CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

Head of LLL Department, MoECR: When Centres of Excellence have just been established, big changes were expected to happen in the system. There were ideas to contract part-time teams of experts, responsible for providing trainings for teachers, attracting various educational projects, sharing their experience with assigned schools etc. But nothing happened. The new funding mechanism does not allow them to implement these actions. One of the reasons could be that Centres of Excellence did not understand their role and mission. Although they work now even more than in the past, they fail to be a centre for other institutions in the same field.

Head of Occupational Policies and Regulation of Migration Department, MoHLSP: Centres of Excellence need to be consolidated, as now they exist only on the paper. The idea which stands behind their establishment is a good one and is in line with the EU priorities. There are many initiatives to finance the Centres of Excellence and they should become a key point for developing the quality of VET in the RM. We should start by training managers and teachers and to make them understand their role as Centre of Excellence.

Director of the Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet, MoHLSP: The CoE [for Health and Medicine] performs its tasks at a very high level.

The Centre of Excellence in Medicine and Pharmacy "Raisa Pacalo" supports the colleges in the field of Medicine. <…> The CoE in Medicine and Pharmacy "Raisa Pacalo" performs its tasks at a very high level.

President of ANACEC: The concept of Centres of Excellence is good but it is necessary to

consolidate their capacities.

Director of the National Employment Agency, MoHLSP: CoEs are providers, and we are procurers. It would be better to have Centres of Competence.

President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry: The CoEs were not organised as they were initially expected. The idea of CoE failed – 25 mln EUR from the EU were channelled to VET <…>. The CoEs are to become Centres of Competence and provide practical skills. At the moment, they have no capacities and do not fulfil their functions; they do all they were doing in the past. The CoEs have to work closely with the Republican VET Centre.

Executive Director of the National Confederation of Employers: Even if the students are content with CoEs, yet, they go to take Baccalaureate exam at the end of the third year and go to University, without finishing the entire VET programme and taking VET Diploma (Qualification). It is not clear what is the purpose of the Centres of Excellence.

Vice-President of the Sector Committee for Trade, Hotels and Restaurants: The role of Centres of Excellence in the VET system needs to be strengthened. I think it is necessary to disseminate the good practices of the CoE from Bălți for making more people know about their activities. There is no CoE in Gagauzia, but there were good changes: the CoEs are better equipped and renovated.

Vice-President of the Sector Committee for IT and Communications: Centres of Excellence is a fairly new element for our country. It is necessary to improve their technical and material basis, motivate teachers, provide Lifelong learning to teachers.

Specialist in the USAID project: The role of CoEs is huge. The teachers staff is very weak in the CoEs and they lack equipment/ laboratories. The institutions that have the same specialties, e.g. CoE from Stauceni/Chisinau in Viticulture and Wine production, and VET School in Nisporeni (has a wide technology for wine production) would have a better collaboration, if they have been under one Ministry.

GIZ Project Director: In terms of competences, CoEs are more advanced than other VET institutions, but they still need a lot of support to fulfil all their tasks which are sometimes too ambitious.

Programme Manager, ADA project: CoE – if they have the capacity to became a scientific source for modifying educational content?

Country Director, LED Moldova: Whenever there is a new project there is a push to include the CoE, but the projects cannot really replace the system. The CoE is a kind of project rather than a system. So far, there have been just renovation, but the renovations do not create the CoE.

Many schools feel abandoned: as most of the support is channelled now to the CoE, which have a problem to absorb all of that, all system development tasks are delegated to the CoEs. They act as an education institution and at the same time as a meso-level institution. CoEs need a lot of support from the system and not just from the donors' projects. Many tasks supposed to be done by CRDÎP are now put on the shoulders of CoEs.

President of Pro Didactica: CoE have taken their role seriously but they do need support.

They should not depend that much on donors, as the sustainability is not assured. CoEs have registered good progress with HR development and renovations but they do need a lot more, considering their present mission; a continuous methodological support, curricula development, consultancy, etc.

Director of Resources Department, "Premier Energy Distribution": The CoEs are very poorly equipped. We try to support them. The CoEs should be better funded and be more motivated to keep good teachers, to have equipment, to be aware of new technologies. It would be better to have Centres of Competence.

Director of VET school № 5 in Bălți: The Centres of Excellence have a rather important role, but they must be strengthened, and monitored how they perform their functions. Some have taken their role very seriously in the system, others are concerned about their development as a VET institution, and less about the development of the entire system.

Centre of Excellence in Services and Food Processing: Being a CoE is a challenge, we were not well prepared for that.

3.6. Social partners & CSOs

There are social partners, which are involved in specific VET practices through the participation in different councils and work groups but cooperate with the system and also with some individual VET institutions directly. The principal key social partners, i.e. Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova, National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova, National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova, and Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, are presented below.

3.6.1. Chamber of Commerce and Industry[83]

The **Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova** (CoCI)[84] is an autonomous and independent organisation, established 1999 in accordance with the corresponding Law[85], based on membership, which represents the interests of the entrepreneurs in the Republic of Moldova as a whole. CoCI brings together over 1200 members, large, small and medium-sized enterprises from all branches of the economy and is a member of the International Chamber of Commerce and the European Association of Chambers of Commerce (EUROCHAMBRES).

The main objectives of the Chamber are:

- promoting the development of various types of entrepreneurial activities taking into account the interests of all business entities, sectors of the national economy and specific territories of the country;
- participation in the development of regulations affecting the interests of entrepreneurs or aimed at eliminating obstacles and restrictions in the functioning of a market economy

[83] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Sergiu Harea, President of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Republic of Moldova.
[84] https://chamber.md/en/.
[85] Law on Chamber of Commerce and Industry, № 393, 1999: http://www.law-moldova.com/laws/rom/torgovo-promyshlennoi-palate-ro.txt.

- assistance in establishing relationships between business entities and in the organisation of their cooperation with the governmental bodies;
- organisation of professional training and development of business qualification of its members;
- provision of information and consulting support to the business activities;
- assistance in development of foreign economic activity and export of goods, works and services.

For meeting those objectives, CoCI carries out a wide range of functions, which reportedly include e.g. promotion of the member companies, conducting analyses and consulting the public bodies on the elaboration and adoption of legal acts related to the economic development; providing support in development of projects regarding the national economy; organising meetings and establishing business contacts between the economic agents; supporting participation of local companies at trade fairs and exhibitions abroad; organising specialised exhibitions and trade fairs within the country; providing consulting services and expertise for home and foreign economic agents.

CoCI has a plan of activities on continuous training and provides ad hoc courses based on the needs of companies. In 2019, around 7,000 people attended the activities, seminars, trainings organised by the Chamber's Continuous Training Centre which systematically organises the management training programme.

There is a considerable cooperation with the VET system. Representatives of the CoCI are involved in the Working Groups developing occupational standards; they are making annual surveys and using the collected data (both related to the number of required specialists and their skills) particularly for advising the VET planning purposes. Nevertheless, the principal cooperation area with VET is coordination of Dual Education in which the Chamber has been involved since 2017. This includes: identification and approval of the companies to be involved in dual education; organisation and maintaining the e-register of the involved companies; participation in elaboration of the normative framework for dual education, etc. CoCI developed a set of criteria for certifying the companies for provision of dual education and any member company may apply for this certification. The Chamber also monitors the activities of the company during the delivery of dual education.

BOX 26. STATEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT OF CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Companies are open to cooperation, but they are less motivated to be involved in dual education. However, the draft of the Law on Apprenticeship and Vocational Training[86] defines some fiscal incentives which makes dual education to a certain extent attractive for some companies. At the same time, there are not so many enterprises which are able to meet the criteria defined for certification, that is, they do not have the conformity finding for carrying out the professional training activity. If we refer to dual education, the vast majority of companies that are in dual cooperation, have passed through this process.

There is a number of other challenges related to dual education. In terms of financing, the State only contributes to the financing of training in the VET institution (MoECR is only

[86] As per proposal of the business community, in the fall of 2019, draft Law on Apprenticeship was elaborated with support of local and international experts from the International Financial Corporation and the World Bank per request of the Economic Council Secretariat. This law comes to address a number of legal loopholes in the relationship between employer and apprentice and help economic agents to train unskilled workers or those whose professional qualifications cannot allow them to find a job.

observing and supervising the process), while most of the expenses, 50-70% of the training period (practical training), rather considerable, are supported by employers, dual education partners, future employers. Moreover, CoCI, as the first partner of the Government in the implementation of Dual Education, fully covers the expenses of its own staff involved in the activities of support and monitoring of practical training within companies that provide dual education. The Chamber is also responsible for the quality of practical training, at the second place of training - in-company training, while the Ministry is only concerned about the admission and enrolment process, the coordination of the admission plan, the coordination of the curriculum and the establishment of the conditions for organising the Qualification Exam.

On the other hand, the VET institutions are also not much interested to promote dual education as the "traditional" programmes are more "profitable" for them due to the per student funding mechanism, related to the training period. In traditional training, the duration of studies is about 4 years, while in dual education it is maximum 2 years.

Unlike dual education, the practical training of the students at the enterprises within the traditional VET programmes, was assessed by the CoCI as unsatisfactory. One of the reasons is the fact (well known for the CoCI) that many companies where the students are sent for internship, have even no staff able to provide any training.

3.6.2. National Confederation of Employers[87]

The **National Confederation of Employers of the Republic of Moldova** (NCEM)[88] is an NGO established in 1996. Presently, it has 27 members, of which 15 are collective. This comprises 40% of all companies in the country. The members represent different sectors of economy such as Construction, Transport, Agriculture, Public Services, some inter-sectoral branches.

The main objectives of the Confederation particularly are:

- promoting employers' solidarity and facilitating participation of employers' organisations in the economic development;
- participating, via tripartite structures, in social dialogue and in the development and consultation of draft laws, other legal acts, government programmes and policies;
- promoting and protecting the interests of its members at international level.

NCEM carries out diverse activities, such as organisation of seminars, e.g. on raising awareness about the amendments to the Labour Code, on managing the personal data, on application of specific legislation, on business reporting; implements various projects, particularly targeted at identifying, attracting and employing young people in different businesses. Confederation has also a platform for communication with the members and uses that for providing necessary consultations.

The sources of the NCEM funding are the membership fees, provision of services, e.g. related to public relations or health insurance, as well as donations and grants.

[87] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Vladislav Caminschi, Executive Director of the National Confederation of Employers of Moldova.
[88] http://www.cnpm.md/index.php?l=en.

BOX 27. STATEMENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF EMPLOYERS

The main challenge for the companies in Moldova and therefore, also for the Confederation, is the lack of business activities in general, which is conditioned inter alia by the shortage of labour force and low or inadequate qualification of employees. One of the considerable factors is migration, and its reason is not only low salaries in Moldova but very often the lack of faith in the future as the youth does not see any prospective for development. Another issue is the political instability. Too often changes in the Government hinder many development processes.

Attracting new members becomes more and more difficult. Initially, only unions or associations of companies could become Confederation members, while now also individual companies are accepted. Finances born from the membership fees are rather limited (small fees and difficulties with collecting even those small amounts), which does not allow to maintain necessary number of administrative personnel for ensuring proper performance of the Confederation.

Confederation is only involved in VET processes at national level. Many Sector Committees, e.g. those for Construction, Transport, Agriculture and Sector Committee for Trade, Hotels and Restaurants, were established by the companies which are members of the Confederation, and the latter continues providing methodological support to the SCs.

BOX 28. OF STATEMENTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF EMPLOYERS

The Sector Committees are particularly important structures, as this is the main way for the employers to be engaged in VET processes, specifically for aligning the needs to the offer (another possible channel is the Chamber of Commerce and Industry). Collaboration with MoHLSP in terms of identifying the skill needs, is not as efficient as it would be desired, therefore the SC are seen as the most appropriate instrument for the standards development.

Effectiveness of the Sector Committees is yet lower than expected, and they should be further improved and involve not only employers but other stakeholders, as well. In the future, the SCs may have many more functions. The skills need identification shall be done jointly with the Ministries, employers' sector associations, individual companies. <…> The Government should coordinate activities of the SCs and also provide financing.

Sector Committees should also be responsible for the coordinating dual education, while presently only the Chamber of Commerce and Industry is entitled to do this.

NCEM is involved also in revising the list of occupations/qualifications and in development of standards; their representatives participate in the VET students' final qualification exams; and the Executive Director is a member of MTBF Committee.

3.6.3. Confederation of Trade Unions[89]

National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova (CNSM)[90] was established in 2007 as result of amalgamation of two trade union centres: Confederation of Trade Unions of the Republic of Moldova and Confederation of Free Trade Unions of the Republic of Moldova "Solidaritate". Presently it unites 24 sector federations, which all together have more than 350 thousand members. These are workers in the spheres of education and science, agriculture and food industry, social services and production of goods, communications, construction, light industry, consumer cooperatives, trade and business, chemical industry and energy resources, culture, employees of some state bodies. CNSM is a member of International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) since February 2010.

The new Statute of the Confederation approved by the General Assembly in 2019, defines the following objectives:

- representation and protection of social-economic, professional, labour, collective and individual rights and interests of the union members, at the national level;
- promoting the basic principles of the European social model;
- defending the freedom of association and the right of employees to set up trade unions and to join trade union centres;
- expansion of the national trade union movement and strengthening the civil society;
- consolidation of unions of all levels;
- updating and developing social dialogue and social partnership;
- the progressive realisation of the social justice and the dignity of the work.

Among the numerous CNSM functions, there is one which seems the most remarkable in terms of Confederation's possible participation in, or at least influencing, the VET governance: *'participation in drafting programmes, laws and other normative acts aimed at regulating the rights and professional, labour, economic and social interests of trade union members'*. Another function foresees possibility of establishing different funds, particularly an Education Fund.

There are no many or considerable objectives associated to the links with the national education system: most of the education-related points of the Strategy are about the Trade Union Education, i.e. development of the capacities for the TU activists or those employed in the TU structures. Thus, in the Section "Youth Strategies" we find only one objective to certain extent connected with education: *'facilitate access of young people to information and counselling services, to continuous education and training'*, while in the Section "Continuing Trade Union Education and Training", there are two objectives which are rather generic or even blurred in terms of implementation and the role of the TU in it: *'direct the educational activity, vocational training and research towards the realisation of policies in order to consolidate the trade union movement in the country and to train the active union staff*' and *'strengthen the educational system at all levels by: providing quality educational services adapted to the current requirements; elaborating the thematic programmes of continuous training of the specialists and the union activists; carrying out studies, scientific researches and sociological surveys in the field of trade union interest'*.

[89] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Sergiu Iurcu, Head of the Social and Economic Protection Department, Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova.
[90] http://sindicate.md/en/.

BOX 29. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROTECTION DEPARTMENT OF THE CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

The Confederation carries out very concrete VET-related activities specifically for dual education: participation in drafting normative-regulatory framework for the implementation of dual education, contribution to its promotion, submitting proposals for better payment conditions or other rights within dual education, discussions with students as to let them know their rights. However, no more specific VET-related tasks are seen by the CNSM to be assigned to this structure, except those included in the Strategy (see above).

Trade Union contributed to development of a number of occupational standards and the Confederation considers this as an indicator of their performance.

The main incentive for the Confederation to cooperate with VET, was explained as interest to have more TU members; and awareness raising of particularly the VET students is considered as a precondition for them to become members while getting employment after graduation. On the other hand, the VET teachers are already members and it is the TU's obligation to defend their interests and rights. The interviewee made an interesting comparison between the positions of the Sector Committees and the Trade Unions: if the former looks at the VET system from the point of view of providing businesses with properly qualified workers meeting the employers' needs, the latter's concern is that the future labour force is equipped with appropriate skills and knowledge making them competitive in the Labour Market.

It was reported also that the Trade Unions and the Confederation are making efforts to promote VET and VET institutions but many of the latter are not capable to operate effectively to meet the current requirements and fit to purpose. This is mainly due to the weaknesses in the material base (e.g. workshops, laboratories, tools), the teaching technologies and human resources, conditioned primarily by the poor financing.

3.6.4. Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development[91]

Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (OSMED) was established in 2007 by the Government Decision № 538, 17th May 2007, and *boosting national economy competitiveness by supporting the SME sector development in the country* was defined as its mission. OSMED is actually a public institution[92] subordinated to the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, and has 55 employees.

For meeting its strategic goal, which is *promoting SME efficient and effective development, thus assuring sustainable economic growth in the country*, OSMED implements numerous projects targeted particularly at: attracting remittances in national economy ("PARE 1+1" project); economic empowerment of youth ("PNAET" project); improvement of business management ("Efficient Business Management" national training programme); creating business incubators; business adaptation of

[91] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Daniela Dascaliuc, Head of SME Funding Department, Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (OSMED).
[92] Although OSMED is a public entity, it is presented under this section due to the character of its activities and the methods of functioning which have more similarities with those of the social partners or SCOs.

repatriates (National programme “Prima Casa”); other means of promoting entrepreneurship (EU Project “Lead Your Way to the Business”). Organisation also offers credit guarantees to small enterprises through the Credit Guarantee Fund.

The main source of the OSMED funds is the State Budget but considerable financial means are received also from donors (mainly EU) via different projects, e.g. for promoting women in rural area since 2018. At the same time, the organisation is financially self-managed: the running costs and the employees’ salaries are not covered by the Government but paid from the funds earned through own activities.

The programmes of OSMED are also targeted at specific groups of population, e.g. youth, women or migrants. One of the youth programmes had an objective to support specifically the VET graduates to establish companies. The idea was, using the advantages of skills and competences acquired at VET institutions, to establish initially a small company (with even just one person) and then develop it to a larger size. In rural areas, where promotion of this initiative was particularly challenging, such business activities as wood curving or carpentry were considered. OSMED cooperates also with GIZ, helping to identify companies where the VET students can effectively perform their practical studies for acquiring proper practical skills.

BOX 30. STATEMENTS OF THE HEAD OF SME FUNDING DEPARTMENT, OSMED

VET is extremely important for the country and is willing to contribute to development of the system and support its students and graduates. However, the limited human resources of the organisation do not allow yet to assist VET more considerably.

3.6.5. Î.C.S. "Premier Energy Distribution" S.A. company[93]

The **Î.C.S. "Premier Energy Distribution" S.A.** company is the largest private operator for the national electricity distribution system in Moldova. It has 750 employees and covers about 70% of the country's territory (21 of the 37 districts, including the municipality of Chisinau), distributing electricity to more than 900,000 consumers in the Centre and South of Moldova.

Since 2016, the company has been engaged in dual education, initially collaborating with VET School № 5 from Chisinau, and then also with the Centre of Excellence for Energy and Electronics. For covering the dual education curricula, training for the apprentices is provided in 3-7 services (departments) of the company. Thus, 50-60% of the employees may deal with the trainees. In every department, there are tutors (Masters) who conduct training for teams of learners. In addition, a person in the HR Department is responsible for organising those trainings, for documentation, designing training plans, developing reports and other similar activities.

Likewise, the Premier Energy participates in the selection of apprentices during the enrolment period and contributes to increasing the visibility of the occupations in their field by participating in, and organising promotion campaigns. The company is actively involved in the student’s assessment and

[93] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Diana Doroș, Director of Resources Department, Î.C.S. "Premier Energy Distribution" S.A.

evaluation, and besides the exams in the school, the apprentices shall pass practical examination in the company.

Moreover, since 2000 the company has a long and steady collaboration with VET institutions and universities providing internship places for students.

The company is involved in the designing the curricula and study plans in dual education together with the CoE and before, with the School № 5 from Chișinău, as well as in the development of the normative framework, e.g. Regulation on Dual Training, etc.

BOX 31. STATEMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES DEPARTMENT, Î.C.S. "PREMIER ENERGY DISTRIBUTION" S.A.

Dual education is costly for us, considering that 50-70% of training process is the responsibility of our company, while the students / apprentices do not produce anything like in other sectors, e.g. the textile industry. The benefit comes only when the students graduate and are employed in the company. The students' fees are like salaries and cause taxes, insurance, etc.

We do not have any benefit of CoCI being responsible for dual education. However, there is support on promoting dual education from GIZ.

We need a thorough analysis of the LM to learn how many students are to be trained every year and what skills are required.

The most important is to align the education supply with the demand. Some VET institutions offer the same qualifications and the same programmes since soviet times. For example, we need external *high-voltage electrical installer*, but the institutions prepare only *internal electrical installer*. The institutions have to introduce new programmes, e.g. on renewable energy.

Teachers in the CoE for Energy and Electronics can teach only theory, but there is no practice provided there. The institution is equipped very poorly. They try to find money here and there to procure good equipment. We try to support them, but different companies have their specific requirements and someone trained in one company can hardly work in another. So, we can't train the students for all companies.

The legal acts are to be modified. The Law on apprenticeship should consider the fact that the companies involved in the dual training have different expenditures and benefits thus it is good to have a sectoral, if not individual, approach.

3.7. Development Partners and their Projects Supporting VET

3.7.1. World Bank[94]

In Moldova, the World Bank is active since 1992 and its main goal has been to contribute to improving the economic governance, fighting corruption, modernising services, enhancing the business environment, and investing in employable skills. The Education Reform Project for Moldova (MERP) launched in January 2013, has objective to strengthen the quality of education through supporting the efficiency of the reforms being implemented in this sector. The MERP supports Moldova's education reform programme; as part of implementing school quality assurance standards in Moldova, the recipient is embarking on rehabilitating and equipping selected schools nationwide. The implementation of school quality assurance standards consists of targets covering various dimensions, including school infrastructure and equipment.

A System to closely monitor and mitigate dropouts in primary and secondary general schools was developed based on the EMIS. Presently, a new EMIS module for VET is about being developed.

In the framework of Moldova Higher Education Project, 35.7 million Euro, effective since 15th September 2020, with the focus on increasing quality and relevance of the higher education, among other activities, the 6 colleges in the pedagogical field would be equipped with the laboratories.

3.7.2. USAID[95]

One of the key VET-related projects implemented by USAID is “Agricultura Performantă în Moldova”. It has been launched in 2016 and is planned to be active till 2021.

The scope of the project activities covers provision of training; promotion of the VET offer and employability; curricula development; improvement of VET legal framework; development of occupational profiles and standards.

The agency mainly works with the VET Schools in Bubuieci and Nisporeni. Based on the market demand of berry production and the respective need of trained specialists, the project proposed to introduce a new qualification of “Berry cultivator” (the occupational profile is being developed) which is presently piloted in the Nisporeni VET School and is funded by the project. For training of berry growers, a laboratory fully equipped for determining types of soil, for identifying specific diseases of the crops, and for other types of studies, has been provided to the above school. The green house of this institution was also modernised. The future plan of the project is helping the Nisporeni VET School to build a nursery for planting material growing.

The principle of the project is to cover the entire value-chain from production in the field to final consumption: *“de la furcă la furculiță”* (from the digging fork to the eating fork).

The project is working also for introducing a new trade “Growing Strawberry in Substrate” according with the modern technologies which are already applied by several farmers in Moldova. This occupation is proposed to be included in the National Register of Qualifications and in the Classifier of Occupations. The curricula package development is in the process.

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[94] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Lucia Casap, Operations Officer in the World Bank's Education Global Practice.
[95] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Oleg Stiopca, Specialist in Workforce Development of the High Value Agriculture Activity Project (USAID/HVAA).

The project supports the Nisporeni VET School through many other activities, too: enhancing the students' entrepreneurial skills and business plan development capacities (specifically for berry-growing); teachers training (with involvement of national and international experts); study visits for the students and teachers; extracurricular training of students on leadership, civic education, etc. Recently, a bee-keeping (apiculture) training course for adults was initiated.

BOX 32. STATEMENTS OF THE SPECIALIST IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGH VALUE AGRICULTURE ACTIVITY PROJECT (USAID/HVAA)

The management of VET institutions should be simplified: only the major topics shall be discussed by the councils, while the issues related to the daily operations should be decided by the Director.

There should be a person in each VET institution responsible for research and development, and partnerships and external relations, who would be exempted from other duties, e.g. teaching hours.

The VET schools should have their own internal monitoring system while at the national level, a proper digital monitoring system needs to be introduced.

The agriculture VET institutions are somewhat "isolated from the real world". At the same time, very often the youth enrols in these schools not as a result of conscious choice of the agro-professions but simply because this is the only institution in their region. Double subordination of the agricultural VET institutions creates additional difficulties for them, for the donors and seemingly also for the ministries.

3.7.3. Austrian Development Agency[96]

Austrian Development Agency (ADA) has been active in VET in Moldova since 2004. The ADA new Country Strategy defines the following thematic priorities for Moldova:

1. Equal opportunity in education, focusing on labour market oriented, socially inclusive vocational education and training;
2. Water, environment and climate change;
3. Governance, rule of law and peace building.

Nevertheless, VET and particularly dual VET are the special focus of ADA. It supports implementation of the VET strategy and contributes to the system reforms. In the VET sector, the ADA's priority targets are:

- Development of a modern and attractive VET system in Moldova;
- Strengthening the capacities of, and cooperation between, the VET and employment actors;
- Development of VET content and teaching / learning approaches in accordance with the national and European requirements;
- Enhancing quality of VET teaching staff through continuous training;

[96] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Otilia Sîrbu, Programme Manager, Austrian Development Agency.

- Increased attractiveness of, and access to VET;
- Better access to education for people with special educational needs;
- Cooperation with Sector Committees on developing occupational standards under the DevRAM project.

ADA has supported a number of VET Projects (with a total budget of 2.5-3 million Euro) implemented in cooperation with different local partners[97]:

- Rehabilitation of the CoE for Construction, 2013-2016, Callidus NGO;
- Partnerships for Quality and Relevance in ICT Vocational Education in Moldova, 2015-2018, Pro Didactica NGO;
- Development of the Practical Training Centre for finance Specialists (FinPractice), 2017-2019, GRAWE Group, Callidus NGO;
- Re-Engineering Vocational Orientation and Career Counselling (REVOCC) for Moldovan labour force competitiveness, 2014-2017, 2018-2021, CEDA NGO;
- Digital Skills for Employment in the Modern Economy ("SHIFT EDU"), 2018-2021, Pro Didactica NGO;
- Development of Rural Areas in the Republic of Moldova (DevRAM), Part 1: Increasing the competitiveness of the agro-food sector through integration to domestic and global value chains, in particular in the soya sector, 2017-2021, Pro Didactica NGO, Donau Soja[98] Moldova, EU funding;
- Development of life skills and healthy behaviours of students in VET for their development and job readiness, 2019-2022, UNFPA.

The new Country Strategy for 2021-2025 is under elaboration.

BOX 33. STATEMENTS OF THE PROGRAMME MANAGER, AUSTRIAN DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

There is no need of radical changes in the VET system, it is just necessary to find solution for making it functional.

VET institutions should have more autonomy and the staff needs to be trained in management. The reporting system should be simplified to reduce the administrative burden by using modern IT solutions.

The education system is very heavy and inflexible to adapt to the reality. The chain of processes for elaborating occupational standard – qualification standard – curriculum, is too costly and too long (up to 3 years), and does not address the current needs.

For the agricultural VET in particular, the training duration is too long; people do not want and very often cannot afford studying 3 years.

LLL is to be promoted widely. The private sector should be more involved in VET. The Sector Committees are not functional, as their members are acting on voluntary basis. The SCs should be reorganised.

[97] More details about some projects are available in the next sub-sections.
[98] International non-profit organisation based in Vienna.

VET institution shall look more into LLL and provide new short-term trainings for adults requalification and recognition of prior working experience. This will lead both for financial sustainability of schools and to reduce unemployment in the country.

The collaborations with partners (Trade Union, employers, National Employment Agency) is to be considerably improved. More short-term Adult Education courses should be offered.

New criteria for assessing the VET institutions performance are proposed:

- the rate of graduates' job placement (to be identified through tracer study);
- the range of services provided by institution, including short-term courses and LLL;
- cooperation with the businesses and whether it converts into real results.

It is also important how the VET institutions are exercising their autonomy. They need to understand what the management is and that the management principles are the same for any organisation – efficiency, effectiveness. The managing staff of VET institutions need trainings in management, as these principles are equal in all type of organisation. General principles of company management such as efficiency, effectiveness, shall be introduced in VET institution. The performance indicators have to be applied. One of performance indicators for efficiency of the school shall be employability of graduated students and staff satisfaction.

The interconnection between the VET institutions and MoECR should be improved, too. I said that the role of MoECR should be at the policy level. VET institutions shall operate as independent bodies. Network of academic cooperation among different VET institutions shall be next step in development of the sector.

3.7.4. Lichtenstein Development Service[99]

Lichtenstein Development Service (LED) has been actively working with Moldovan VET since 2008, continuously expanding the scope of its activities. Presently, non-formal VET is also among the LED targets.

One of the key actions of this donor is the project entitled *"Consept"* which was launched in 2008 (the *Consept* Phase I) It comprehensively covers the following aspects:

- VET school network;
- Continuous training of managers and teachers; the basics of ICT use, digital teaching tools, media, methodological courses, critical thinking for training professional skills;
- Curricula and learning materials development;
- Support to NQF Department of MoECR;
- Qualifications, quality promotion in evaluation, guides, working groups;
- Support for quality assurance
- Support to Students Council, participation of students in the decision-making process, reduction of violence;

[99] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Pius Frick, Country Director, LED Moldova.

- Entrepreneurial training programme (implemented by CEDA – see below), which promotes entrepreneurship in the VET system, including development of curricula and manuals, teacher's guide, training of teachers, institutionalising of entrepreneurship;
- Programme on Renewable energy (2 years) for preparing personnel to be authorised for the instalment of specific equipment.

BOX 34. STATEMENTS OF THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR, LED MOLDOVA

There is no real coordination between the VET bodies. MoECR implements numerous activities which are much more appropriate for a specialised agency rather than for the Ministry. The problem is complicated by extremely limited personnel in MoECR and VET Department who are overloaded by daily routine. Therefore, an effective meso-level entity is necessary.

In 2006 there was a quite resistance to involve private sector but the situation has been improved. Nevertheless, the private sector is not well-organised, except probably the textile and IT sectors. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Sector Committees are not working harmoniously; they are rather competing. The question is how representative they are.

The CoEs are overloaded by the duties which they are not yet ready to fulfil properly. People in VET institutions are not paid for any additional tasks: there is no budget for that. The funding system is improving but the reality is still not in line with the formally defined principles.

Only training and consultancy cannot ensure proper functioning of the system: remuneration of the work is also important.

An important need of the VET system is introduction of Tracer studies which should be carried out regularly and ensure feedback. The latter should not only be from the labour market and employers but also from the students, teachers and directors of institutions to the Ministry. VET teachers are not properly organised and their concerns are not voiced.

The reporting, which sometimes is an end in itself, shall be simplified but made fitting the purpose. The QA system also needs to be reasonable; e.g. there is no sense to have short-term courses accredited: it requires too much time and expenditures.

It is not purposeful to keep purely agricultural VET institutions. In any case, non-agricultural profiles are usually "dominating" and help the institutions to maintain also agricultural programmes. So, the institutions are to be multi-profile. At the same time, existence of institutions in rural and remote areas should be ensured, even with a limited number of students.

Policies for initial and continuous education of VET teachers are lacking. The training is something uniform for general subject teachers and those for vocational disciplines.

MoECR acknowledges the importance and usefulness of the VET Students' Council but is not able to react to their feedback. The Ministry has no resources to monitor the situation in the VET institutions which often deviates from the expectations.

3.7.5. CEDA[100]

The Centre for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Support NGO (CEDA) is acting since 2009. Presently, it has 9 permanent staff and mobilises also local expertise, when necessary. The CEDA's current projects in the field of VET are funded by LED and ADA.

One of the Education Code requirements is formation of entrepreneurial skills (along with other key competences), therefore, Entrepreneurship is a mandatory discipline for all students at all levels of VET. Since 2017, CEDA has been working for imbedding entrepreneur skills in VET curricula, particularly in different subjects, such as Mathematics and Romanian language. For this, 30 people were trained for 100 hours and certified for teaching entrepreneurship on the base of subjects. The accounting and other administration staffs of the VET institutions were also trained in order to ensure a team approach.

Other activities of the Centre are enquiries (e.g. to find out how the students select the school and the profession) and Tracer studies, particularly in terms of entrepreneurship. The following aspects are surveyed: How many graduates established their own businesses? How do they know about the legislation? Are the employers satisfied with the graduates? All the results are communicated to MoECR. Over the last 2 years CEDA carried out 2 tracer studies for all VET institutions involved in the project.

CEDA also organises a National Annual Contest "The Best Business Plan" for the students who learn entrepreneurship. There is support from MoECR and some other organisations.

Another project implemented by CEDA, is targeted at provision of trainings on soft skills, those not taught at VET institutions, for the students. In addition, training on finance management and income generating activities for VET institutions managers and accountants, were delivered.

BOX 35. STATEMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF CEDA

The distribution of the VET institutions over the country needs to consider the regional aspects. Optimisation should lead to creation of an efficient system but not necessarily through closing VET institutions or opening new ones. The institutions are to be adapted to the LM needs. The main criterion is the quality. However, not only the economic but also the social component shall be taken into account.

The transition to financial and economic self-management of VET institutions was provided by Educational Code starting with January 2017 but in reality, it was launched in 2019. The institutions need a transition period to adapt to it.

Accreditation of all VET institutions and professions is obligatory but this should not be the case for the short-term Adult Education courses, Otherwise, it strongly limits the flexibility and responsiveness of the system due to the length and high cost of the accreditation process.

There are many gaps in the Education legislation, particularly for VET, e.g. contradictions between the Civil Code and the Education Code. Years ago, CEDA initiated some works on studying and improving the legislation.

[100] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Sofia Șuleanschi, Director of CEDA.

Inter alia, the following may contribute to the improvement of the VET system:

- Enhancement of the VET institutions Administrative Councils' role and increasing their effectiveness;
- Intensification of VET institutions income generating activities which, however, should by no means lead to reduction of the state funding;
- A system of regular workshops for the VET system employees for awareness raising and capacity building;
- Effective mechanisms of monitoring and evaluation should be in place but not for punishing. The external audit is expected to recommend remedial measures.

3.7.6. Pro Didactica Educational Centre[101]

The Pro Didactica Educational Centre NGO is a multifunctional centre of excellence. It aims at promoting the principles of an open society to support individuals and organisations interested in continuous learning and development, to facilitate their personal and professional affirmation and better integration in the constantly changing democratic society. For this, the Centre offers programmes and services for awareness raising, training and consultancy, focused on the formation of Lifelong learning skills.

Pro Didactica has 12 employees and a pool of over 100 experts, of which about 40 are permanently involved in various activities, and provides continuous professional training for teacher and managers, creates a platform for the educational community in the country.

Currently, the NGO is involved in the implementation of 3 VET projects:

- *"Consept"* project, which is a part of a larger project implemented by *'Educatia pentru Dezvoltare',* aimed at development of the organisational and didactic framework; funded by LED;
- DevRAM – Development of rural areas in the Republic of Moldova, Part 1: Increasing the competitiveness of the agro-food sector by integrating into the domestic and global value chain, in particular the soybean cultivation sector; implemented in partnership with ADA and Danube Soya, financed by EU and ADA;
- "Shift Edu" – Digital skills for employment in the modern economy to develop digital skills for future graduates – funded by ADA.

The Centre has also been involved in curricula and standard development since 2012, mainly for IT and agro sectors. It also made certain recommendations on the corresponding methodology and the normative framework.

BOX 36. STATEMENTS OF THE PRESIDENT OF PRO DIDACTICA NGO

Presently, after considerable investments in human capital development, there is enough capacity within the VET system in Moldova. This capacity only needs to be coagulated into a body, be it CRDÎP or another entity, so it takes the VET development mission and receives

[101] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Rima Bezede, President of Pro Didactica NGO.

continuous support to fulfil it. It is obvious that many tasks of the MoECR VET Department should be transferred to CRDÎP.

Within 6-12 months after completing the VET Strategy 2013-2020, it needs to be evaluated, and the new Strategy, which is to be for a longer period, e.g. for 10 years, shall be elaborated based on the results of this evaluation.

The existing types of VET institutions must be maintained. Reorganisation is inevitable but the country should be prepared for this. It is necessary to conduct a deep, qualitative analysis in order to identify the needs, and allow the Government to do any changes not earlier than in 2- or 3-year period.

There is an evident need of a Resource Institution, and again CRDÎP could successfully take this role, which would include policy development, M&E, methodological support. If there is a strong Resource Institution, the things would move better and quicker. For example, the CoEs have registered good progress in HR development and renovations but they still do need much more assistance to realise their mission: a continuous methodological support, curricula development, consultancy, etc. The CoEs should not permanently depend on donors but have their own capacities and receive local support.

Someone shall take the responsibility for communicating and cooperating with the labour market, be it CoCI or the Sector Committees. The latter, even being relatively active now, still need a lot of training.

The VET planning is mainly not based on the LM needs but is derived from the VET institutions' "needs" and capacities. For example, some VET schools keep preparing welders because they have corresponding teachers and laboratories, but there is no need of this specialists in the region.

3.7.7. GIZ[102]

The Project "Support to VET in the Field of Green Economy" funded by GIZ and co-funded by the Swiss Cooperation Office (SDC), has been active in Moldova since 2015. The scope of the project activities covers particularly the following:

- sectoral reforms in VET;
- support in creating legal framework for dual education;
- support to developing the professions related to "green economy";
- promotion of dual VET.

The main office of the project with 8 permanent employees is located in Chisinau and has branches in Soroca, Orhei, Cahul, and also in Tiraspol.

The Project participated in designing the occupational profiles which are in demand of dual training. Recently it developed a complete package of documents (standard, curricula, teaching and learning

[102] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Oana Vodiță, Project Director, GIZ Project "Support to VET in the field of green economy".

materials, etc.) for introducing a new profession “Mechatronic Technician for Agriculture Machinery”, and also trained the corresponding teachers.

The project is involved in many other activities, too: development of the annual enrolment plan for dual education (now there is a new section on dual education in the general enrolment plan); in LM analysis (a research in the field of wine-making sector was done); in Quality assurance (through ensuring that at the companies the dual training is provided properly and the minimal standards are maintained and by observing the final exams).

In addition, the following was done for contributing to the reforms in dual education:

- Support to companies in identifying the capable workforces and providing training;
- Development of occupational profile, curricula, and qualification standards;
- Support in identifying the needs for trades/ specialities/ occupations and express their needs in terms of intentions and submit it to the education sector;
- Promoting dual VET by organising advocacy campaigns.

In cooperation with German colleagues, the Project supported also the Technical University of Moldova in providing Master course for VET teachers by improving pedagogical skills of technical/engineering staff. Another important initiative is a Tracer Study outsourced to a specialised company. This was expected to be done at the end of 2019-2020 academic year. The indicators for reporting on the dual VET, developed by the Project, were accepted by MoECR and are put in use.

BOX 37. STATEMENTS OF THE PROJECT MANAGER, “SUPPORT TO VET IN THE FIELD OF GREEN ECONOMY”, GIZ

Despite the fact that Moldova is a small country with a small VET system, this system is over-centralised, with no intermediate governance structure at territorial level.

In some cases, the functions of bodies involved in VET and its governance, are defined but not implemented, in other cases the functions are not clearly defined. Sometimes, this is conditioned by the fact that some institutions have been created under high pressure, e.g. in order to meet the EU Budget Support indicators, or for accessing some funds, or for reporting purposes only, but not as a “natural” process.

The VET Department at MoECR is quite engaged and committed to coordinate and govern the VET but is extremely understaffed.

Both, the Ministry and the VET institutions need services to be provided by a professional body. The CRDÎP would be an ideal structure to ensure all those services and also coordinate the social dialogues.

This is an issue, that the VET providers are directly working with the Ministry for all aspects: administrative tasks, HR, methodology, logistics, etc., and there is not an intermediary institution,

CRDÎP and SCs need much more attention. The SCs are based on the law but have no tools for acting. There are some SCs that struggle to get into action (e.g. SCs for Hotels and Services, for IT, for Water and Sanitation) while some others are not motivated.

It is necessary to put more focus on social dialogue and create a “home” for the Social

Partners. They are to be provided with much more information and opportunities for decision-making. No need to create any new institutions but just help the existing ones to become functional.

Many of the VET institutions participating in dual education, acting well, trying to go *"out of the box"* and come out with initiatives. In terms of competences, the CoEs they are more advanced than other VET institutions, but still need a lot of support to fulfil their tasks which are sometimes too ambitious.

The sectorial approach in VET in Moldova is key.

The VET system still doesn't respond the real needs of LM because of the lack of tripartite dialogue. This should be at the base of governance. The annual enrolment plan, in the way it is done now, is not fully efficient as does not reflect the current LM needs. Too many institutions are involved in the elaboration of the State Order without efficient coordination.

The private sector is very much interested to work with the local VET providers but dual education is expensive for the companies. However, there is no real data or analysis for assessing the costs. There is a strong need to regulate dual VET by Law. There are other legal acts to be updated, too. For example, the CoCI is functioning on the basis of a Law from 1993 which is obsolete.

The methodology of Occupational Standards and Qualification Standards should be considerably simplified.

VET funding also is to be discussed with private sector, but up to now there are no clear documents which would explain how exactly private sector could be involved.

3.8. Summary of the Institutional Arrangements

The VET system in Moldova has a complicated structure with involvement of numerous players both public and non-public. There are many horizontal and vertical links, including administrative and methodological. Some forms of cooperation between the stakeholders are formalised and institutionalised, while others are based on memoranda or similar documents.

The Diagram 6 below, illustrates the structure of the Moldovan VET system and the links between the institutions. Summarising, the following main structural features of the system can be mentioned:

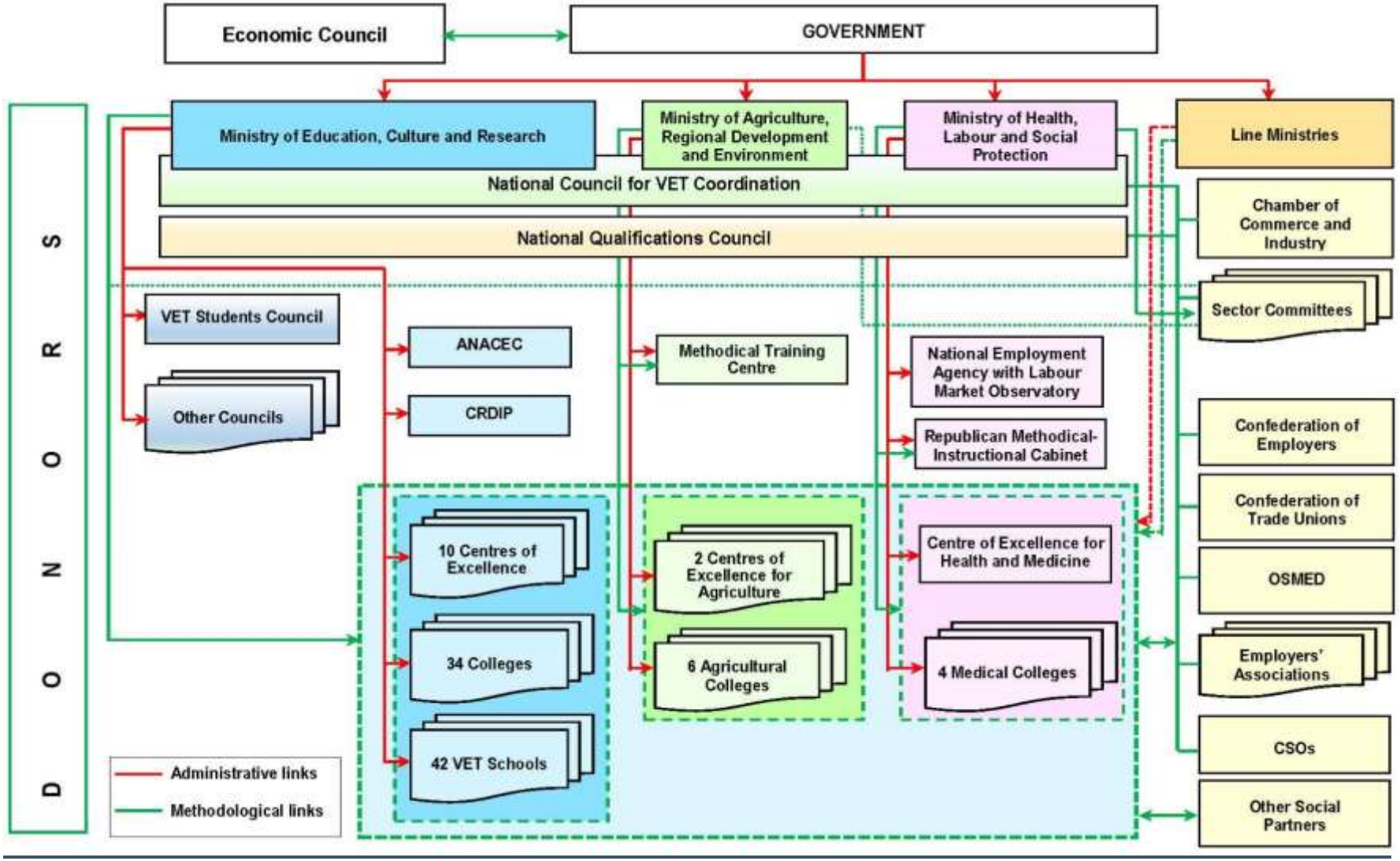
- ***Three Ministries*** –
  - Ministry of Education, Culture and Research;
  - Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Protection; and
  - Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment –

are directly responsible for VET governance[103] and are accountable to the Prime Minister's Office. To the latter, an Economic Council with a wide representation of different stakeholders, is attached.

- Accordingly, there are ***VET institutions under the subordination of those 3 Ministries***. However, MoECR has certain tasks in relation to the institutions acting under MoHLSP and MoARDE, too.

[103] As mentioned above, the MoIA has only one institution and is to a certain extent isolated from the main VET system.

DIAGRAM 6. STRUCTURE OF THE VET SYSTEM IN MOLDOVA



- The VET network is composed of three types of institutions – ***VET Schools*** providing programmes of secondary VET at ISCED level 3, and ***Colleges*** and ***Centres of Excellence*** offering all types of initial and continuous VET programmes – secondary (ISCED level 3), post-secondary (ISCED level 4), and post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED level 5).
- The ***Ministry of Finance*** participates in the VET governance through different processes of the ***VET institutions' funding***.
- Other ***line Ministries*** have indirect relations to the VET Governance. For example, they are involved in the elaboration of qualification standards and modification of the Nomenclature of fields of professional training and specialties.
- ***MoECR has a number of Councils*** which should ensure participation of different stakeholders in the various aspects of the Education policy and strategy development and implementation. However, the ***National Council for VET Coordination has not been functional*** since 2017.
- Therefore, for the ***policy dialogue and consultations, other mechanisms***, such as Work Groups or informal discussions ***are used***.
- ***MoECR has two support structures*** –
  - National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research; and
  - Republican Centre for VET Development –

  but only the former can be considered as fully functional, while the latter is under-staffed and under-funded. In fact, it is almost non-operational and its status remains an open issue.
- ***MoHLSP*** and ***MoARDE*** also ***have methodological support structures***:
  - Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet, and
  - Methodical Training Centre,

  respectively. They are involved in development of standards and provide other types of support to the Ministries and the subordinated VET institutions.
- Under MoHLSP, also ***National Employment Agency*** with its ***Labour Market Observatory***, is acting.
- Recently, ***Sector Committees for VET*** have been established and formalised. They are acting under a specific Law adopted in 2017.
- There are ***numerous Social Partner organisations***, such as Chamber of Commerce and Industry, National Confederation of Employers, other Employers' Associations, Confederation of Trade Unions, Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development, which are ***formally involved in different VET processes***, in accordance with the corresponding legal acts.
- ***Many CSOs*** are also active in ***supporting the VET system improvements***.
- The VET institutions have established direct ***cooperation with companies*** (both private and public), particularly in the framework of dual education and work-based learning.
- A ***large number of donors*** are ***providing considerable assistance*** to the Moldovan VET system development. The EU, with its Budget Support, remains the largest among them.

BOX 38. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ABOUT THE VET GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Head of VET Department, MoECR: We are ready to accept the Agro colleges, but not yet the Medical institutions, because they have a well-established cooperation with hospitals.

MoARDE does not do any policy or whatever with the agro institutions. I don't see any decision taken for the agriculture colleges. <..>

[About optimising the VET institutions network] I have 2 criteria:

1. the same region to have no more than 1 institution of the same profile;
2. an institution to have no less than required from the economic point of view: in the colleges not less than 700, in VET schools – not less than 300-350 students.

Proposals:

- increase the capacities of the existing institutions, e.g. CoE, ANACEC;
- introduce the system of monitoring and making conclusions (preferably annually) on the situation in the system, and what to do;
- probably it is appropriate to complete ANACEC with the above function. The current staff of ANACEC is not representative for VET, therefore at least 2 units, with 3-5 people, doing all functions, are to be established there.

Head of NQF Department, MoECR: VET Governance system is efficient. Double subordination is efficient. It is necessary to involve more representatives of Social Partners in VET Governance. Line ministries and the LM representatives are to be better involved in dialogue. The line ministries are dealing more with logistics and administration. <…>

There are enough entities and we also have a normative framework to regulate these entities. A suggestion would be to revise the normative framework as to make it more efficient. As for the existing entities, they also should be more oriented on the labour market needs.

Head of LLL Service, MoECR: There are many tasks, which are apparently insignificant, but very time-consuming. Therefore, it would be a good solution to establish an Agency for implementation of the Ministry policies and responsible for the technical aspects of the implementation.

There is a need to develop comprehensive analysis and forecasts on labour market needs and trends.

Although there is a close collaboration with VET institutions, problems are caused by the entities-founders (ministries) of some VET institutions, which make it difficult to unify all the latter. It would be good to have only one founder, one entity in charge for all VET institutions, but this entity should have at least one expert to assure the expertise in the sector. <…> Of course, it is not to say that line ministries will not get involved in the VET schools' activities, but all decisions should be taken by one team responsible for VET. I think that double subordination creates confusions and difficulties in understanding and therefore, slows down all processes (I know this well from my previous experience in working at the Ministry of Culture)".

It would be good to have an entity which could combine all components in a single place: forecasts, analysis, curricular development. This entity would be less bureaucratic than a ministry and therefore, would act and react to new trends and tendencies on the labour

market quicker and prompter.

Having a Government Decision approved, sometimes too much time; changes in governmental structures and high staff turnover also slow down many processes.

Representatives of the Administrative and Financial Section, MoECR: The number of VET institutions should be reduced, e.g. via mergers. This will increase the efficiency.

Head of Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel, MoHLSP: [About double subordination of medical VET institutions] There are some specifics in training the medical staff, in both theoretical and practical part. MoECR will never understand these peculiarities. The CoE fulfils the intermediator role.

Transfer [of Medical institutions] to MoECR could be positive on one hand (it would mean less work for the Service and no need to keep an extra staff for collaborating with MoECR anymore), but it will be not good for the system: the practical training is specific, MoHLSP knows better as deals with Colleges, CoE but also with clinical sites, hospitals, medical personnel.

Republican Methodological Instructive Cabinet needs the capacities strengthen and to be much more efficient. The Cabinet should be part of the National Agency for Public Health, given that 2 institutions (the National Centre for Public Health and the Centre for Health Management) have been merged and the new Agency for Public Health which is responsible for promoting the policy of the Ministry.

Head of Occupational Policies and Regulation of Migration Department, MoHLSP: There are tasks fulfilled by MoECR, while these should be done by other entities, maybe subordinated to MoECR. <…>

Double subordination of some VET institutions creates confusion; there should be a single subordination. <...> Maybe, the Education Code should come up with more details and explanations. For example, there are many notions, such as work-based training, dual education or apprenticeship, which the Education Code does not explain or clarify. Sometimes it is difficult to understand the difference between many of them. My only suggestion is to redistribute and define well the tasks. <...> It seems that there are also confusing procedures, for example, the accreditation of institutions is conducted by both MoECR and ANACEC. I think that monitoring process should be improved, and the role of each entity involved clearly defined. I don't think it is correct that ANACEC is subordinated to MoECR. <…> I think that Moldova, with its population of 2 million and a half, has too many VET institutions. We should take into account the demographic situation in the country.

Head of Division for Finance in Education, Culture and Research, MoF: It would be sensible to have all VET institutions under the subordination to MoECR. This idea was rejected, as allegedly MoECR doesn't have enough human resources. MoHLSP and MoARDE consider they have more expertise in terms of developing policies for their sectors.

There are too many colleges compared with the number of students, which is continuously decreasing. These issues are more important than discussions about the subordination of the VET institutions.

President of Chamber of Commerce and Industry: The VET governance system is a bit slow (behind the time) and does not meet the modern LM requirements. This is conditioned particularly, by the lack of finances, lack of capacities and small number of staffs (e.g. VET

Department at MoECR, has only a few staff, they do too many things, i.e. policy, administration, etc.); high staff turnover in the Ministry; lack of capacities to carry out LM analysis (therefore, the Annual Enrolment Plan is a fictive one, not based on the analysis, not justified).

The entire system, including both the VET Governance and the VET network, has to be revised and reconfigured. The WB provides a loan for restructuring the Higher Education system, and the same shall be done for VET.

Executive Director of the National Confederation of Employers: The effectiveness of VET system governance is 50%. The VET system is underfinanced. It leads to low quality. Another reason is the political instability. Temporary (transient) Governments are inefficient. Every new government comes and changes the objectives and people do not manage to achieve them.

There is a lack of communication between the public bodies. For example, many structures have to provide the same information (reports) to different state bodies.

The problems in the process of the VET system governing, are probably due to the lack of actors or the inefficiency of the work of the institutions involved in the governance.

Head of the Social and Economic Protection Department of the Confederation of Trade Unions: It is not to say that MoECR does not fulfil its functions. However, some changes in the VET governance system should be made: ensure connection with the LM demand and strengthen relations with employers.

The wider participation or exclusion of some actors will not be much beneficial. Given the structure, the state is the most responsible for all aspects, and the state should be more involved, but here everything depends on the policies of every ministry in its field. For example, the Ministry of Economy, which covers several areas, should have a clearer vision of developing the sectors regarding their prospects for growth or decline. Line ministries should be more actively involved and make clear analysis of developments in their fields.

Director of CRDÎP: There is a good structure in place: MoECR, VET Department and the Centre for VET Development. In this structure I see our role as to provide necessary methodological support to all actors in the VET sector.

If there was a synergy between these structures, I think we could be more efficient and assure the implementation of many good actions. The problem lies in the lack of communication between institutional structures and people.

President of ANACEC: The Ministry of Agriculture has no potential and capacity to manage VET. It's not logical for an institution to have double subordination, all institutions must be subordinated to MoECR. If MoARDE as an employer, wants to make a contribution to education, it can do that through MoECR.

Head of Republican Methodical-Instructive Cabinet, under MoHLSP: Our Cabinet shall be a section of Division of the MoHLSP and have more employees; or the Centre for Management in Public Health could be reformed and the Cabinet would be ideal to become a part of it and be closer to statistics and analysis.

Vice-president of the Sector Committee for Professional Training in Trade, Hotels and Restaurants: VET system governance is mainly effective, and tasks are properly distributed

among the corresponding bodies.

Vice-president of the Sector Committee for IT and Communications: There is no coordination of VET actors on following issues: quality of education/practical training, internships, graduates' traceability etc. It is not fair that only VET institutions be responsible for these activities. Other entities, such as Sector Committees, Labour Market Observatory and others should also be involved as to ensure reliability of data and information.

There is a need of an information platform for the entire sector. No need to creating a new entity, but only to facilitate the involvement of all stakeholders through a platform.

President of the Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry: MoECR works well in the reality of our country. Of course something is to be improved. The system doesn't provide necessary skills, but we cannot blame anyone.

The VET Council is not functional, not effective – just on the paper. In the Council only representatives of the Ministry but also SPs are to be involved.

There should be a Strategy Group and a Reference Group. The Reference Group (experts, specialists, etc.) should bring ideas but the Strategy Group shall make decision. The RG shall come up with position of the groups whom they present. There is a lot of turnover in the Ministries and other public institutions. There is high level of bureaucracy.

Double subordination of VET institutions often brings to confusions and additional workload.

In MoARDE there is just 1 person responsible for VET and he/she doesn't manage to do this job. They do not have capacities to tackle this problem.

There is not high level of transparency in the Ministry. When a draft document is published, many entities or people make comments, proposals, but they are neglected, the expressed opinions are not taken and they are not provided with any answers. Even when working groups develop a normative/ legal document and commonly agree on something, it happens that at the end you find something else in the approved document.

A lot of discussions but no real steps are taken. Any survey shall lead to concrete action.

The VET governance shall be based on the reality – link with LM is missing. Participatory approach is should be at all levels.

Head of SME Funding Department, OSMED: The Ministries' staffs are limited. The VET institutions should be more active. The local authorities should be much more involved and demanding in terms of support.

Director of Resources Department, Î.C.S. "Premier Energy Distribution" S.A.: MoECR and CoCI are not active and most of the load are on the Centre of Excellence for Energy and Electronics. There should be an entity to provide support to VET institutions and companies and the task of the existing institutions should be clearly defined as we do not know where to address with certain issues.

There should be an entity to provide support to VET institutions and companies, but I don't know where.

The task of the institutions should be clearly defined. Very often we do not know whom to apply with the problems and questions. It is not clear what is the responsibility of the CoCI, who is responsible for what, up to now we resolve all the issues directly with the educational institution.

Specialist in Workforce Development of the High Value Agriculture Activity Project (USAID/HVAA): The VET institutions, especially those in agriculture they are kind of isolated from the real world. Double subordination in some activities stops/blocks many of our activities. There is no logic that some VET institutions are under the MoECR and others are under MoADRE, there would be a better cooperation between these institutions if they were under one Ministry. For us, it is difficult to report to 2 ministries. The ministries face the same problem.

The VET governance tasks are properly distributed among the corresponding bodies. Administration should be more prompt with donors, more open. Collaboration with local authorities and local business has to be improved.

Programme Manager, Austrian Development Agency: VET governance tasks are not properly distributed among the corresponding bodies. No need to have too many bodies, such as Sector Committees and Councils. The set of institutions seems to be good, but they do not function properly (may be the managers are not good). No need to radical change the system just to find solution to make it functioning.

Probably, there are too many VET institutions.

The link should be established by MoECR but just to bring together and coordinate, not to do the main work instead of others.

More autonomy has to be given to the VET institutions, but accompanied with more responsibility. The staffs need to be trained to face and implement the autonomy.

GIZ Project Director: [about the VET governance tasks distribution among the corresponding bodies] They are not clearly distributed, defined and communicated, there are Trade Unions, Qualification Council, CRDÎP, SCs, CoCI, Business Associations. The institutions are there but their role in governance are not clear enough. They are not powered enough to enact to do the tasks they should do. It is not clear why some entities do not do what they have to.

In some cases, the functions are defined but not implemented, in other cases the functions are not clearly defined. Reasons: some institutions have been created under high pressure, e.g. EU BS indicators, or for assessing some funds, or for reporting purposes but not as a natural driver. SCs are based on the law, but there are no tools for acting.

<…> Both, the MoECR and the VET providers are to be served by a professional body – e.g. CRDÎP.

CRDÎP and SCs could perform better but it is because of the lack of political will to make them functional, no tools and no any budget to carry out the administrative functions for SCs. These 2 institutions need much more attention. They should be assisted and provided support to function as both are very important and needed.

Proposals:

- It is not good to over-centralise VET, despite the fact that Moldova is a small territory, and has a small VET system.
- It is a problem that VET providers are directly subordinated to the Ministry that are dealing with everything, administrative tasks, HR, etc., and there is not an intermediary institution between the Ministry and VET institutions to deal with administrative work, HR, logistics, etc.

- The governance also could be at different levels as in different regions of the country we have different commitment, different availability of companies. There is still a huge need of information at regional level.
- It is necessary to put more focus on social dialogue and create a home for the Social Partnership and the social partners to provide more information for decision-making. No need to create new institutions just assist some of them to make them functional.
- To approve the Law on apprenticeship.
- There should be a critical mass of that to be regulated by a law. Not for every 500 beneficiaries, a law should be adopted.
- Double subordination: they should be under one umbrella of education governance but with a close links to the sectoral bodies. But double subordination is actually also possible. I would not see the institutions under the Ministry of Health to subordinate to the MoECR, as the MoECR will not be able to give them sectoral support.
- Some institutions are already very proactive and initially know to whom to approach e.g. the MoECR for any issue.
- To develop a follow-on Strategy
- To define the Strategic objectives.
- VET funding also is to be discussed with private sector, but up to now there are no clear documents which would explain how exactly private sector could be involved.

When optimising the VET network, it is extremely important to consider that the companies are very much interested to work with regional/local VET institutions.

Country Director, LED Moldova: There is a strong shortage of workforce at the level of the Ministry and governance, they are really busy with the daily tasks.

A large part of the present MoECR work, should be done by a specialised agency. This is the main hurdle. And there are no other agencies in between, except ANACEC, which is a young Agency and CRDÎP, which is there and not there.

There is improvement at MoECR in terms of doing more proper tasks i.e. policy development. Before, they were dealing with a lot of tasks that were not for ministerial but for meso-level.

[About VET institutions under double subordination] They do not feel themselves as full-fledged part of the system. There are “ours” and “theirs”. It is not logical.

Who shall do the tracer study? It is a very valuable instrument and necessary to be done regularly. A bit sceptical on putting this on the school as they might be biased, and they need capacity to process and analyse the data.

Institutions’ network: you need to find balance between economic and social aspects. Anyway you need institutions in rural and remote areas, even if the number of students is not large.

Director of CEDA: The limited number of staff and very often changes in the Government block/stop the reforms.

Optimisation means to create an efficient system but not necessarily to close or open new VET institutions. The schools are to be adapted to the needs of the LM and be placed to consider the regional aspects. Not only economic but also the social component shall be taken into account.

There is a lack of coordination between different entities. E.g. the Institute of Education Science is not responsive. Their role is not clear. Some bodies are open, some others are reluctant to anything new.

President of Pro Didactica: MoECR, VET Department has too many tasks, and they fail to go in depth on the side of policies, monitoring, etc., which are their basic functions. They do not manage to focus on the need analysis. Here the problem is the entity, CRDÎP, which could take on a number of tasks: needs analysis, scientific, methodological, policy implementation, coordination of CoEs, etc.

Some tasks should be transferred from VET Department to CRDÎP, which must become a proper Resource Institution.

The existing types of institutions should be kept. Reorganisation is inevitable but it may be in the next 2-3 years after making deep, qualitative analysis and identifying the needs.

If we have a strong Resource Institution (CRDÎP), the things will move better and quicker. The CoEs have registered good progress in HR development and improvement of facilities but they still do need a lot more considering their present mission.

Director of the Centre of Excellence in Services and Food Processing: It would be appropriate besides MoECR to have a functional National VET Centre to provide consultation, expertise, legal advice, methodological support to VET institutions, particularly Centres of Excellence. MoECR has very few employees and does not manage to address all the system needs.

The dialogue between MoECR and the institution is complicated due to the limited number of staff in the VET Department and only 1 person in the Financial Department. Even answering questions is a problem.

Director of the Centre of Excellence in Wine and Viticulture: MoARDE has only 2 employers in the Division [responsible for VET], it is not enough.

Centre of Excellence in Medicine and Pharmacy "Raisa Pacalo": A methodological research and scientific Centre for VET would be much welcome.

Another suggestion is to conduct a sector mapping, similar to the one which was conducted previously. But the results of this mapping should be used to make changes and improve the situation in the sector. Many higher education institutions start training programmes which belong to VET. For example, level 4 and 5 should be assigned to VET and not to Universities. <...>

[About double subordination of medical VET institutions] The MoHLSP is our founder and they are responsible for our relations with the economic operators and our professional training. 50% of our training is done in hospitals. There is a Minister's order on the approved practical sites, which gives us access to these practical sites. Methodologically, we depend on the MoECR. In developing curricula and the educational plans, we are guided by the recommendation of MoECR. In fact, we benefit from this double subordination, as we collaborate with both ministries.

Director of the VET School № 5 in Balti: VET governance system is to be restructured in general. An institution/department for the relationship with the business environment, is to be established.

Mayor of the Ceadîr Lunga City: The national authorities are afraid to decentralise anything.

Proposals:

- Involvement of the local authorities at the level of legislation at least in the coordination process.
- Local authority representatives should be members of the Administrative Council of any educational institution.

Members of the National Council of VET Students:

Proposals:

- I would propose when the VET institutions decide upon the expulsion of a student, a psychologist or somebody who has a neutral position, from outside the institution is invited as well.
- The MoECR is a kind of being in charge for internal relations. We would love to have an institution / an entity / a "Ministry for External Affairs" that would deal with the relations between our VET institutions and similar schools from abroad, our schools. Teachers and administration are overloaded with work and sometimes have no time, no money and no relevant persons to deal with this, to facilitate such relations and they do not know how to do initiate and implement projects. We would need an intermediate body at national level for the entire system that would help us and the school to establish relations with other institutions, apply and develop projects, cooperate with companies, to be creative…
- To establish a National Council of Teachers, for them to communicate, share good teaching ideas, which would facilitate their communication…

4. STAKEHOLDERS' SELF-ASSESSMENTS ON CORE VET SKILLS GOVERNANCE FUNCTIONS AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS

4.1. Methodology of the Self-assessment

The ETF Governance inventory[104] is a reference tool to support policy priority of international community on the VET and skills governance issue. Overall, the objectives of VET governance inventory – Data Collection Tool (DCT) – are:

1. Keep abreast of ETF analytical and operational actions carried out in good multilevel governance in VET;
2. Provide analytical information and comprehensive picture of the governance of VET in ETF Partner Countries (PC) in order to complement and strengthening policy analysis and advice provided by ETF Torino process;
3. Implement regular updating and monitoring of VET governance functions & arrangements, to support ETF corporate and operational approaches addressing dialogue, advice and/or policy learning working with European Commission (EC) and PCs in VET & skills governance issues;
4. Support ETF on having indications about efficiency and effectiveness of institutional arrangements in place in order to bring regular evidence on performance on VET policies and systems in PCs;
5. Support showcasing good practices on VET & Skills good multilevel governance as drivers to inspire possible reforms;
6. Facilitate ETF sharing and acknowledging a common analytical and conceptual framework (glossary) and mutual understanding working with PCs & positioning ETF at international level on good multilevel governance in VET.

The DCT consist of two parts which contains:

- Sections (A, B, C, D, E, F, G) on Overall Planning, Management & Financing of VET and skills, and
- Sections (H, I, L, J, K, L) on Institutional Coordination Mechanisms.

In more details, the sections and their objectives are:

A. Formulation and implementation of overall policy framework, including strategic policy tools: *capture the quality of actual practice in the country for policy design and policy implementation in the VET and skills sector*.

B. Provision of legal, normative and/or regulatory framework: *capture the quality of actual practice in the country for preparing and implementing legislation and regulations in the VET and skills sector*.

C. Management of VET (and skills) provider network: *get deeper understanding on whether the VET provider network management is effective, transparent and accountable and meet user needs (e.g. useful for employers, parents, workers, students etc.)*.

[104] VET & Skills Governance Inventory 4.0. Methodological Framework - Data Collection Tool (DCT). ETF, 2020.

D. Operationalisation, alignment and coordination of financial arrangements: *capture the quality of actual practice in the country for budgeting in VET and skills, including the allocation of financial resources*.

E. Management of public-private partnerships for VET & Skills development: *get a deeper understanding of modus operandi in the relevant country when it comes to public-private partnerships in VET and skills sectors*.

F. Monitoring, evaluation and review of VET & Skills policies. This also include Research & Development. *explore in greater detail if there are established systems and practices for monitoring and review of VET and skills policies to inform VET policy cycle*.

G. Management of Information Systems (MIS). This also includes Data and Statistical provision: *explore in grated details the practices in collecting data to inform policy cycle in VET and skills*.

H. National VET/Skills Councils: *explore in greater detail the National VET Councils and their contribution to development of VET and skills.*

I. Sectoral VET/Skills Councils / Committees: *explore in greater detail the Sectoral VET/Skills and their contribution to development of VET and skills.*

J. Regional/ Subnational VET & Skills -Authorities (e.g. Education Departments, Councils): *explore in grater details the role of vertical governance level and existing coordination mechanisms; mechanisms that allow flexibility and innovation, rather than promoting bureaucratic rigidity or compliance.*

K. National VET Agencies and/or other type of executive and supervisory bodies: *looking at the performance of national VET Agencies and other bodies and explores in grater details this type of institutions.*

L. Inter-Ministerial Working Cooperation/ Coordination: *explore in greater detail the inter-ministerial cooperation as a key practice to address a whole-of-government approach.*

In total, the DCT contains 65 process indicators. A minimum of 7 different type of stakeholders should be involved/engaged in the self-assessment according with those indicators:

- Key Ministry or Agency in charge of VET skills policies.
- Key Ministry participating and/or financing VET & Skill policy making.
- Key Employers organisation participating in VET & Skills policy making.
- Key representative of relevant national Trade Union organisation
- Key representative of National and/or sectoral skill councils/committees.
- Key representative of Regional or local departments/bodies dealing with VET and Skills policy development.
- Key experts on VET & Skills working on and/or with leading institutions.

Within this study, all categories were covered. In total, 36 people representing 28 entities, participated in the self-assessment exercise. These entities were:

- Ministries: Ministry of Education, Culture and Research; Ministry of Health, Labor, and Social Protection; Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment; Ministry of Finance (8 people in total);
- Public institutions: National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research; Republican VET Centre (CRDÎP), Methodical Centre for Training under MoARDE (3 people in total);

- VET providers: Centre of Excellence for Construction, Centre of Excellence for Horticulture and Agricultural Technologies in Țaul, Centre of Excellence for Services and Food Processing, Centre of Excellence for Light Industry, Polytechnic College in Bălţi, VET School in Bubuieci, VET School № 5 in Bălți, VET School in Ceadîr Lunga, Gagauzia (8 people in total);
- Development partners: Austrian Development Agency; GIZ, ProDidactica, Centre for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Assistance (CEDA); Educational Centre ProDidactica (5 people in total)
- Social partners: Chamber of Commerce and Industry; National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova; ICS Premier Energy Distribution SA; DRÄXLMAIER, Bălți (4 people in total);
- Sector Committees: for Water Distribution, Sanitation, Waste Management, Decontamination Activities; for Financial Intermediation and Insurance, Real Estate Transactions; for Agriculture and Food Industry; for Light Industry (4 people in total);

as well as VET and Skills experts (4 people in total).

As a tool for data collection, online survey questionnaires were used. They contained sets of positively formulated statements per sections mentioned above, and the respondents were asked to answer to what extent they agree with those statements. The following grading was used: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Disagree, (5) Strongly Disagree. Therefore, in the sections below, where the self-assessment results are summarised, the lowered the average mark, the stronger is aggregated agreement of the stakeholders with the statement.

In the questionnaires, there was also an option “Do not know / Not Applicable”, which was taken into account but not considered while calculating the average marks.

4.2. Self-assessment Results

Here, a concise summary of the stakeholders’ self-assessment results is presented. More detailed information is available as a separate report submitted to ETF.

4.2.1. Background Information about the Respondents

Of 36 respondents, 30% were men and 70% women; 47% were aged 41- 50 years, followed by 23% of 31- 40 years old. The share of the respondents between 51 and 60 years, was 20% and about 9% for those above 60 years old (See the Figure below).

The highest level of formal education the respondents have completed was as follow: 41% hold master degree, over 23% had scientific degree (Candidates/Doctors of Science), around 21% had bachelor’s degree and less than 15% had other higher education degree.

The share of those with 0-10 years and 11-20 years of work experience in education/ VET/ Skills policies, was equal – 35%; about 26% of respondents had 21-30 years of experience, and almost 3% more than 30 years (see the figure below).

With respect to the managerial experience of the respondents, the findings revealed that the largest cohort (35%) comprised the participants with 6-10 years of experience, followed by those with more than 15 years (~21%), with 0-5 years (~18%), and with 11-15 years (12%). The respondent with no managerial experience comprised 15%.

The respondents' current position denoted that 35% were directors, 26% were Heads of Department/ Division, 29% kept positions of specialists/experts and less than 3% were team leaders/ coordinators. Around 6% of interviewees were holding other positions.

4.2.2. Overall Planning, Management & Financing of VET and Skills

A. Formulation and implementation of overall policy framework, including strategic policy tools.

The participants mainly agreed that (A.1) *The national policy VET and skills has been developed involving both state and non-state stakeholders* (*average mark **2.2***), and that (A.2) *The policy for VET combines long term objectives and short-term targets* (***2.1***).

The statement (A.3) *The policy can be updated to include new developments in both initial training for young people and continuing training for adults*, on average was even more agreeable to the respondents (***2.0***).

The forth statement (A.4) *The national policy for vocational education has a multiyear perspective* had considerably less supporters (***2.4***).

The level of agreement with two other statements, i.e. (A.5) *Cooperation and coordination between national and sub-national (regional, local) public departments and agencies are effective* and (A.6) *Cooperation between government and non-government organisations (including social partners) is transparent and effective,* was the lowest under this section, with almost the same distribution of pros and cons and equal *average mark of **2.7*** (Table 16).

TABLE 16. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "A", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(A.1) The national policy for vocational education and training (VET) -and skills- has been developed involving both state and non-state stakeholders.	**2.2**	12	67	9	12	-	-
(A.2) The policy for VET combines long term objectives and short-term targets.	**2.1**	15	61	15	6	-	3
(A.3) The policy can be updated to include new developments in both initial training for young people and continuing training for adults.	**2.0**	33	48	3	15	-	-
(A.4) The national policy for vocational education has a multiyear perspective.	**2.4**	6	61	23	10	-	-
(A.5) Cooperation and coordination between national and sub-national (regional, local) public departments and agencies are effective.	**2.7**	6	34	41	16	-	3
(A.6) Cooperation between government and non-government organisations (including social partners) is transparent and effective.	**2.7**	6	41	34	19	-	-

These answers are mainly in line with the findings of the Experts, but the latter would agree less, specifically with the statements (A.5) and (A.6). At the same time not strong enough agreement with

the (A.4) is slightly surprising as the country had and is going to have a long-term (multiyear) strategy for VET. The results can be conditioned by a limited awareness of some respondents or by their dissatisfaction with the quality of the strategy performance.

B. Provision of legal/ regulatory/ normative framework for VET and Skills

In general, relatively low level of agreement with the statements under this section, demonstrated the stakeholders concerns about the appropriateness of the VET legislation, which is shared also by the Experts, taking the finding of this study. For many answers, the average result was closer to "*Neither Agree nor Disagree*" than to "*Agree*" with *average marks 2.5* and higher (Table 17).

TABLE 17. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "B", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(B.1) Legal framework for VET aims to meet the expectations of both public and private stakeholders.	**2.4**	3	57	37	3	-	-
(B.2) There is a good understanding on the legal framework for VET by all stakeholders which facilitates policy implementation.	**2.6**	7	40	37	17	-	-
(B.3) The legal framework responds to the needs of women.	**2.2**	14	48	28	3	-	7
(B.4) The legal framework support lifelong learning (LLL), not only initial VET (I-VET).	**2.6**	7	40	37	17	-	-
(B.5) It is common practice in the country to involve VET stakeholders in the updating of regulations and norms.	**2.5**	10	37	43	10	-	-

The highest level of agreement was with the statement (B.3) *The legal framework responds to the needs of women (average mark **2.2**)* followed by (B.1) *Legal framework for VET aims to meet the expectations of both public and private stakeholders (**2.4**).*

The respondents agreed less that (B.5) *It is common practice to involve VET stakeholders in the updating of regulations and norms (**2.5**).*

The lowest level of agreement was with (B.2) *There is a good understanding on the legal framework for VET by all stakeholders which facilitates policy implementation* and (B.4) *The legal framework supports lifelong learning, not only initial VET (both with average mark **2.6**).*

C. Management of VET provider networks

The stakeholders strongly supported the statements (C.1) *VET providers are accessible to users, such as students, parents, and employers (average mark **1.7**) and* (C.7) *VET schools are accountable for the decisions they make (**1.9**).*

The same *average mark of **2.3*** was given to the statements (C.2) *The network of VET providers is considered optimal and based on clear governance structure* and (C.6) *VET School financial autonomy is fair enough to support effective and efficient provider operations and partnerships with industry, employers, civil society* followed by (C.3) *Quality Assurance policy is in place across, both system and provider levels (**2.4**).* At the same time, the respondents did not agree much that (C.4)

Measuring quality –internal and external –is undertaken to support the performance of VET provider (***2.6***), which is not actually surprising. Indeed, as presented in the corresponding sections of this report, there are properly designed policies for many VET practices which, however, are not effectively applied in practice.

The stakeholders were also hesitant whether (C.5) *VET schools are able to make decisions on curriculum and teaching and innovation practices* (***2.5***) and rather sceptical about the Centre of Excellence. They gave *average mark of* ***2.5*** to the statement (C.8) *Centres of Vocational Excellence exist in the country and, overall, these institutions meet stakeholder expectations*, evidently due to disagreement with the second part of this statement (there were actually two statements in one), and rather disagreed that (C.9) *Centres of Vocational Excellence are partnership-based institutions (public-private, university and research, etc.), which are well resourced in terms of both financial and human capacities* (***3.1***).

TABLE 18. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "C", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(C.1) VET providers are accessible to users, such as students, parents, and employers (etc.).	**1.7**	43	43	10	3	-	-
(C.2) The network of VET providers is optimal and based on clear governance structure.	**2.3**	7	60	30	3	-	-
(C.3) A Quality Assurance (Q.A) policy is in place across, both system and provider levels.	**2.4**	7	57	23	13	-	-
(C.4) Measuring quality -internal and external- is undertaken to support the performance of VET provider.	**2.6**	7	50	20	23	-	-
(C.5) VET schools are able to make decisions on curriculum and teaching -and innovation- practices.	**2.5**	17	33	33	10	3	3
(C.6) VET School financial autonomy is fair enough to support effective and efficient provider operations and partnerships with industry, employers, civil society (etc.).	**2.3**	13	53	20	13	-	-
(C.7) VET schools are accountable for the decisions they make.	**1.9**	20	63	10	-	-	7
(C.8) Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) exist in the country and, overall, these institutions meet stakeholder expectations.	**2.5**	3	47	43	3	-	3
(C.9) Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) are partnership-based institutions (public-private, university and research, etc.), which are well resourced in terms of both financial and human capacities.	**3.1**	-	23	43	23	3	7

Here again, it can be stated that the stakeholders' position accorded with the Experts conclusions on the corresponding issues.

D. Financial arrangements (including budgeting, mobilisation and allocation processes)

The attitude of the respondents to the all statements of this section was closer to "*Neither Agree nor Disagree*" than to "*Agree*". This is fully understandable taking into account the present heavy situation with VET funding.

The highest level of disagreement was registered with the statements (D.8) *Incentives for employer's participation are in place and adequate to support VET & Skills financing policies* (*average mark **3.0***) and (D.9) *Employer's financial and/or fiscal incentives are effective and transparent* (***3.2***).

These were followed by (D.2) *Budget planning is targeted to long-term strategic goals and challenges* (***2.9***) and (D.4) *Funding mechanisms are well designed in terms of the objectives of budget* (***2.8***).

The stakeholders were slightly less sceptical with the statements (D.1) *The budget setting process for VET & Skills development is driven by good dialogue among key ministries*, (D.3) *Allocation of financial resources is based on criteria following clear and transparent rules*, (D.5) *Mechanism in place for mobilisation of additional funding resources as required to meet needs of VET & Skills stakeholders* and (D.7) *The sources of financing include both public and private sources*, to which they gave *average mark of **2.6***.

The statement (D.6) *The need for equity of outcomes is taken into account in decisions about the distribution of funding* was given *average mark of **2.7*** (Table 19).

TABLE 19. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "D", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(D.1) The budget setting process for VET & Skills development is driven by good dialogue among key ministries.	**2.6**	3	37	40	7	-	13
(D.2) Budget planning is targeted to long-term strategic goals and challenges	**2.9**	3	23	43	23	-	7
(D.3) Allocation of financial resources is based on criteria following clear and transparent rules.	**2.6**	3	37	47	3	-	10
(D.4) Funding mechanisms are well designed in terms of the objectives of budget.	**2.8**	3	23	53	13	-	7
(D.5) Mechanism in place for mobilisation of additional funding resources as required to meet needs of VET & Skills stakeholders.	**2.6**	3	43	33	7	3	10
(D.6) The need for equity of outcomes is taken into account in decisions about the distribution of funding.	**2.7**	3	27	40	10	-	20
(D.7) The sources of financing include both public and private sources.	**2.6**	7	50	10	23	-	10
(D.8) Incentives for employer's participation are in place and adequate to support VET & Skills financing policies.	**3.0**	3	23	33	20	7	13
(D.9) Employer's financial and/or fiscal incentives are effective and transparent.	**3.2**	0	17	40	23	3	17

It is to mention that there were considerable number of answers "*Do not know / Not Applicable*" which may have two explanations: the statements were formulated not clear enough for the respondents and/or many of them do not have necessary information for assessing those statements.

E. Management of public-private partnerships (PPPs) for VET & Skills provision.

In fact, there are very limited effectively functioning PPPs in VET in Moldova (some cases are discussed in the sections above). Therefore, the restrained attitude of the respondents to the statements about this topic are more than grounded. Even stronger disagreement would be totally understandable.

Nevertheless, the stakeholders were again closer to "*Neither/nor*" for the statements (E.1) *PPPs in VET & Skills are supported by relevant legislation* (*average mark **2.7***), (E.4) *Financial and non-financial incentives motivate employer's participation in VET & Skill policy development* (***2.8***) and (E.5) *Social Partners & Employers cooperation with VET schools is structured and effective, for instance, for having sound WBL policies & practices* (***2.8***).

Considerably less people agreed with (E.2) *Fiscal arrangements are adequate for formation and implementation of PPPs (**3.1**).*

It is, however, not surprising that the statement (E.3) *Social Dialogue plays an effective role at national and, in concrete, sectoral levels for VET & Skills policy formation and implementation* was the most agreeable (***2.2***) among the others. This is to say that the stakeholders realise that, when existing, the social dialogue is strongly beneficial for the policy making and implementing, indeed (Table 20).

TABLE 20. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "E", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(E.1) PPPs in VET & Skills are supported by relevant legislation.	**2.7**	3	33	53	10	-	-
(E.2) Fiscal arrangements are adequate for formation and implementation of PPPs.	**3.1**	3	7	53	27	-	10
(E.3) Social Dialogue plays an effective role at national and, in concrete, sectoral levels for VET & Skills policy formation and implementation.	**2.2**	17	52	24	7	-	-
(E.4) Financial and non-financial incentives motivate employer's participation in VET & Skill policy development.	**2.8**	7	30	37	20	-	7
(E.5) Social Partners & Employers cooperation with VET schools is structured and effective, for instance, for having sound Work Based Learning -WBL- policies and practices.	**2.8**	7	23	53	17	-	-

F. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review of VET & Skills policies

Assessment of the statements related to monitoring and evaluation was much more optimistic (Table 21) than it could be expected, taking into account the present situation with this aspect, which is thoroughly explained particularly under the Section 2.3, Part 2 of this Report. The Experts' finding and the stakeholders' statements (Box 5, Part 2 of this Report) proved that there is no effectively working M&E system in the VET, except the internal monitoring of VET institutions. Therefore, the latter's representatives were those who strongly agreed with all five statements, most probably having in mind their own institutions only.

Nevertheless, the respondents rather agreed that (F.3) *Different type of evaluations (e.g. on different policies such as qualifications, school operations, occupations, adult learning etc.) are conducted to inform VET policy implementation (average mark **2.4**)* and (F.4) *Evaluation and reviews of VET & Skills policies involve the participation of different stakeholders (**2.3**).*

Lower level of agreement was with the statement (F.2) *Monitoring is used to support evaluations and policy review in the country (**2.6**)* and smaller number of stakeholders agreed that (F.1) *There is a recognised and sound monitoring and research system* and (F.5) Opinions on *Research, development and innovation are used to support VET & Skills policy development (both **2.8**).*

TABLE 21. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "F", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(F.1) There is a recognised- and sound- monitoring and research system.	**2.8**	7	17	47	17	-	13
(F.2) Monitoring is used to support evaluations -and policy review- in the country.	**2.6**	7	27	53	3	-	10
(F.3) Different type of evaluations (e.g. on different policies such as qualifications, school operations, occupations, adult learning etc.) are conducted to inform VET policy implementation.	**2.4**	7	40	47	-	-	7
(F.4) Evaluation and reviews of VET & Skills policies, involve the participation of different stakeholders.	**2.3**	7	63	23	7	-	-
(F.5) Research, development and innovation are used to support VET & Skills policy development.	**2.8**	7	33	37	20	3	-

G. Management of Information Systems (MIS) and Statistical provision to support policy making

Any positive responses to the statements under this section are even more surprising. In the conditions when the EMIS for VET is still under construction and is not in use yet, on average the stakeholders did not anyway disagree that (Table 22):

(G.1) *MIS are used to collect data to support planning and decision-making processes (average mark **2.7**);*

(G.2) *Information systems are used to improve governance decisions and reducing uncertainties, for example, for adopting policy options on using of skills for employment/ labour market purposes (**2.6**);*

(G.3) *Management Information Systems have been designed and upgraded involving different type of VET & Skills stakeholders (**2.7**);*

(G.4) *Overall, data produced by information management systems are public accessible to VET & Skills stakeholders and citizens (**2.8**).*

This can be explained by an assumption that the respondents were having in mind the "theoretical" role of EMIS but not the present reality: the EMIS would contribute to all above-mentioned process if exited.

TABLE 22. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "G", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(G.1) Management Information Systems (MIS) are used to collect data to support planning and decision-making processes.	**2.7**	10	28	38	14	3	7
(G.2) Information systems are used to improve governance decisions and reducing uncertainties, for example, for adopting policy options on using of skills for employment/labour market purposes.	**2.6**	10	38	24	14	3	10
(G.3) Management Information Systems have been designed and upgraded involving different type of VET & Skills stakeholders.	**2.7**	7	28	45	10	0	10
(G.4) Overall, data produced by information management systems are public accessible to VET & Skills stakeholders and citizens.	**2.8**	3	34	34	10	7	10

4.2.3. Institutional Coordination Mechanisms

H. National VET/ Skills Councils

This is another section where the answers seem too optimistic (Table 23). As explained particularly in the Section 3.3.2 above, the NCCVET has not been functional since 2017, while around one third of respondent agreed anyway that (H.1) *National Council (NC) for VET exists and, overall, outcomes meet stakeholder expectations (average mark 2.8).*

They showed even higher level of agreement with the statement (H.3) *The NC meets on regular and effective manner in the course of the year coordinating relevant VET & Skill policy agendas (**2.5**)* while this has nothing common with the reality.

However, the limited agreement with (H.4) *Advice/ feedback processes delivered by the NC is distributed to stakeholders in systematic and transparent (**3.4**)* proves that the stakeholders may really have very limited information about the VET Council and only think that hypothetically it exists and acts.

The statement (H.2) *The NC composition represents key VET & Skills stakeholders at national level* has got *average mark of **2.8*** and only demonstrates the stakeholders' attitude to the VET Councils structure.

TABLE 23. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "H", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(H.1) National Council (NC) for VET exists and, overall, outcomes meet stakeholder expectations.	**2.8**	0	29	43	14	0	14
(H.2) The NC composition represents key VET & Skills stakeholders at national level.	**2.8**	0	29	43	14	0	14
(H.3) The NC meets on regular and effective manner in the course of the year coordinating relevant VET & Skill policy agendas.	**2.5**	4	50	21	11	0	14
(H.4) Advice/feedback processes delivered by the NC is distributed to stakeholders in systematic and transparent way.	**3.4**	0	11	21	14	11	43

I. Sectoral VET/Skills Councils/ Committees

The stakeholders position about the Sector Committees seems balanced (Table 24). It can be considered as fully understandable (although not always entirely grounded) that they rather agreed with the statements (I.1) *The Sector Councils /Committees (SSCs) exist and, overall, meet stakeholder expectations,* (I.2) *SCs composition represents key sectoral VET & Skills stakeholders*, (I.4) *SCs are the most appropriate ones to contribute on VET & Skills and economic development* and (I.6) *The results of the SSC add value to VET and skills policy development (all average mark **2.3**).*

The lower level of agreement with (I.3) *The SCs meet on regular and effective manner in the course of the year and they have proper resources to deploy mandate* (***2.9***) and (I.7) *Advice/ feedback processes delivered by the SCs is effective and distributed to right stakeholders* (***2.8***) also is mainly in line with the Experts' findings as not all SCs meet regularly and/or provide necessary feedback.

Any level of agreement with the statement (I.5) *SCs have sub-committees to address specific issues in different VET & Skills policy areas* (***3.0***) is not understandable, as the SC do not have any sub-committees at all. Probably, a misunderstanding of the question took place here.

TABLE 24. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "I", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(I.1) The Sector Councils /Committees (SSCs) exist and, overall, meet stakeholder expectations.	**2.3**	7	54	29	4	0	7
(I.2) SSCs composition represents key sectoral VET & Skills stakeholders.	**2.3**	11	54	25	0	4	7
(I.3) The SCs meet on regular and effective manner in the course of the year and they have proper resources to deploy mandate.	**2.9**	4	18	46	14	0	18

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(I.4) SCs sectors are the most appropriate ones to contribute on VET & Skills and economic development.	**2.3**	11	50	25	4	4	7
(I.5) SCs have sub-committees to address specific issues in different VET & Skills policy areas.	**3.0**	4	18	29	18	4	29
(I.6) The results of the SSC add value to VET and skills policy development.	**2.3**	7	54	21	7	0	11
(I.7) Advice/feedback processes delivered by the SSCs is effective and distributed to right stakeholders.	**2.8**	0	32	36	14	0	18

J. Regional/ Subnational VET & Skills -Authorities (e.g. Councils)

It is known that there is no regional level of VET governance in Moldova. However, considerably more than half of the stakeholders agreed or strongly agreed that (J.3) *Overall, regional/ local levels should have more responsibilities in supporting national level on VET & Skills policies* (*average mark **2.3***).

At the same time, it is difficult to understand what the stakeholders had in mind while assessing positively the statements (J.1) *The Regional / local level is well represented and contributes to the role of VET & Skills socioeconomic and regional development* (***3.1***), (J.2) *The regional / local levels participate on formation and implementation of local partnerships with employers and other key actors* (***3.0***) *and* (J.4) Regional/ local level cooperate with VET schools and this add value to performance of VET institutions (***2.9***).

Majority of the respondents considered the statement (J.5) *The Regional Council (RC) composition (if this exists) operates under clear governance structure* non-relevant as there are no such strictures in the country. Nevertheless, 32% did not disagree with this statement, and the *average mark* was ***3.2*** (Table 25).

TABLE 25. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "J", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(J.1) The Regional/local level is well represented and contributes to the role of VET & Skills socioeconomic and regional development.	**3.1**	7	21	25	36	4	7
(J.2) The regional / local levels participate on formation and implementation of local partnerships with employers and other key actors.	**3.0**	0	29	32	32	0	7
(J.3) Overall, regional/local levels should have more responsibilities in supporting national level on VET & Skills policies.	**2.3**	14	50	21	4	4	7

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(J.4) Regional/ local level cooperate with VET schools and this add value to performance of VET institutions.	**2.9**	0	32	43	18	4	4
(J.5) The Regional Council (RC) composition (if this exists) operates under clear governance structure.	**3.2**	0	11	21	4	7	57

K. National VET Agencies and/or other type of executive and supervisory bodies.

It can be assumed that while assessing the statements under this section (Table 26), the stakeholders considered ANACEC and CRDÎP. If so, the agreement with *(K.1) The national agency-executive/ supervisory body on VET/Qualifications/ Quality (etc.) executes national policies in transparent and accountable manner (average mark **2.0**)* and (K.2) *There is a recognised level of expertise and good outcomes provided by National Agency to support VET & Skills policy development/implementation, evaluation and review (**2.3**)* is understandable, although probably not hundred percent fair.

At the same time the rather high level of agreement with (K.3) *Overall, governing board representation in the national agency is composed by key VET & Skills stakeholders (**2.1**)* may relate to the ANACEC Board only as in fact, the CRDÎP's Board does not presently exist.

TABLE 26. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION "K", % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(K.1) The national agency-executive/supervisory body-on VET/Qualifications/Quality (etc.) executes national policies in transparent and accountable manner.	**2.0**	19	48	19	0	0	15
(K.2) There is a recognised level of expertise and good outcomes provided by National Agency to support VET & Skills policy development/implementation, evaluation and review (etc.).	**2.3**	11	39	32	0	0	18
(K.3) Overall, governing board representation in the national agency is composed by key VET & Skills stakeholders.	**2.1**	7	54	18	0	0	21

L. Inter-Ministerial Working, Cooperation/ Coordination

A certain level of inter-ministerial cooperation does exist in the country (through e.g. different Working groups dealing with some VET aspects), and the assessment of the statements under this section exhibits merely the stakeholders' attitude to its effectiveness.

The highest level of agreement was registered for the statement (L.2) *There are inter-ministerial cooperation mechanisms (e.g. governmental committees, thematic sub-committees etc.) to support VET & Skills policy dialogue and coordination (average mark **2.4**).*

For the two other statements, the assessment was closer to “Neither/nor”. Thus the *average mark* was ***2.6*** for (L.1) *There is effective cooperation among different Ministries involved on shaping and financing VET & Skills policies* and **2.7** for (L.3) *VET providers and stakeholders believe there is effective cooperation between different Ministries involved in VET & Skills policies* (Table 27).

TABLE 27. SUMMARY OF ANSWERS FOR THE SECTION “J”, % OF ANSWERS AND AVERAGE

	AVERAGE MARK	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Do not know/ Not Applicable
(L.1) There is effective cooperation among different Ministries involved on shaping and financing VET & Skills policies.	**2.6**	4	48	37	11	0	0
(L.2) There are inter-ministerial cooperation mechanisms (e.g. governmental committees, thematic sub-committees etc.) to support VET & Skills policy dialogue and coordination.	**2.4**	4	43	32	4	0	18
(L.3) VET providers and stakeholders believe there is effective cooperation between different Ministries involved in VET & Skills policies.	**2.7**	0	37	48	7	0	7

* * *

Summarising the results of the stakeholders’ self-assessment, it can be mentioned that they are mainly in line with the Experts’ findings and conclusions, and many concerns are shared. At the same time, there are points where the stakeholders’ attitude is more optimistic that it could be expected considering the real situation in the national VET system.

The assessment of some statements was unclear indeed. The reasons are still to be identified: was this e.g. due to low quality of the statements formulation or limited awareness of the stakeholders about some specific topics?

European Training Foundation

VET GOOD MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA

Assessment Report[1]

Part 2. Main Findings on the VET Financing, VET Practices and Regional/Local Experiences

[1] Final working document November 2020

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
CEDA	Centre for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Assistance
CoCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CoE	Centre of Excellence
CRDÎP	National Centre for VET Development
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technologies
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LED	Liechtenstein Development Service
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LM	Labour Market
LMA	Labour Market Analysis
LMO	Labour Market Observatory
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDL	Moldovan Leu
MoARDE	Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoECR	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Policy
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
NCCVET	National Coordination Council for VET
NEA	National Employment Agency
NQF	National Qualification Framework
NRQ	National Register of Qualifications
OP	Occupational profile
OS	Occupational Standard
OSMED	Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development

QA	Quality Assurance
QF-EHEA	Qualifications Framework for the European Higher Education Area
QS	Qualification standard
RM	Republic of Moldova
SC	Sector Committees
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDP	Strategic Development Plans
SME	Small and Middle Enterprises
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning
WB	World Bank
WBL	Work-Based Learning

1. FINANCING MECHANISMS AND COSTS

In 2016, the Government adopted a regulation (Government decree № 1077, 23rd September 2016[2]) on *per capita* funding of the public VET institutions. This document defines a formula for calculating the funds for each VET institution as:

A x **B** x **C** x **D** x **E** x **F** + **G**,

where:

- **A** – Number of students enrolled in the institution for the profession (speciality) based on the enrolment plan plus the number of students progressing to the next year of education for the same profession;
- **B** – Average cost of training: *the average annual cost of training of one student within the VET institutions, irrespective of the training programme (profession)*;
- **C** – Coefficient of the programme: *reflects difference in financing per student based on the cost of a training programme or a group training programmes with the same level of relative cost*;
- **D** – Retention coefficient: *established for each profession (speciality) in order to adjust funding in the case of dropouts*;
- **E** – Coefficient of the competitiveness fund: a *fund which provides financial resources from the state budget for co-financing of collaborations between VET institutions and economic agents, according to the criteria specified in the Regulation;*
- **F** – Bonus coefficient: *additional programme coefficient applied for a specific period of time by decision of the budgetary authority to promote the training programmes which, based on the results of analysis, are considered as priorities for the labour market*;
- **G** – Expenditures not covered by this methodology.

It is important to mention that the funding according with the above formula is only applicable for the students enrolled within the State Order, therefore the multiplier "**A**" shall be considered as the number of these free of charge students but not of those admitted on the "contract base" (paid education).

Annex 2 of the Regulation defines also the amount of the above-mentioned coefficients "**C**" (cost category) for the programmes of secondary and post-secondary VET and attaches these coefficients to each profession (Table 1):

TABLE 1. COST CATEGORY COEFFICIENTS AS BY PROFESSIONS

Cost Category	Secondary VET	Post-secondary VET
A_C	1.00	1.00
B_C	1.10	1.05
C_C	1.15	1.10
D_C	1.20	1.15
E_C	1.25	1.25
F_C	-	1.80
G_C	-	3.40

[2] Available at: http://lex.justice.md/viewdoc.php?action=view&view=doc&id=366875&lang=1.

The categories are given to the professions depending on the expenditures necessary for provision of the corresponding formal education curricula, including all relevant costs, e.g. those for teaching staff, equipment and instruments, consumables, etc. Some examples of the professions per category are presented below:

A_C – Cashier-Teller (secondary VET); Accountancy (post-secondary VET);

B_C – Seamstress (secondary VET); Technology of Milk and Dairy Products (post-secondary VET);

C_C – Baker (secondary VET); Packaging Equipment and Technology (post-secondary VET);

D_C – Gas-welder (secondary VET); Horticulture and Viticulture (post-secondary VET);

E_C – Apiculturist (secondary VET); Exploitation of Medical Equipment (post-secondary VET);

F_C – Artist-Sculptor (post-secondary non-tertiary VET);

G_C – Musical Instrument Performance (post-secondary VET).

The Government Decision allowed the Ministry to carry out a three-year experiment in applying the new approach and also permitted to establish a contingency fund to underwrite those institutions which would inevitably experience financial problems or even fall at risk of being closed, because of their low student numbers and therefore, low cost-effectiveness. The base rate (so called "National Rate"), which serves as the multiplier "**B**" in the funding formula[3], is determined annually by the MoECR.

Application of this rational, equitable and transparent allocative methodology has been started since 2017, but actually, only the multipliers "**A**", "**B**", "**C**" and the summand "**G**" are mainly considered.

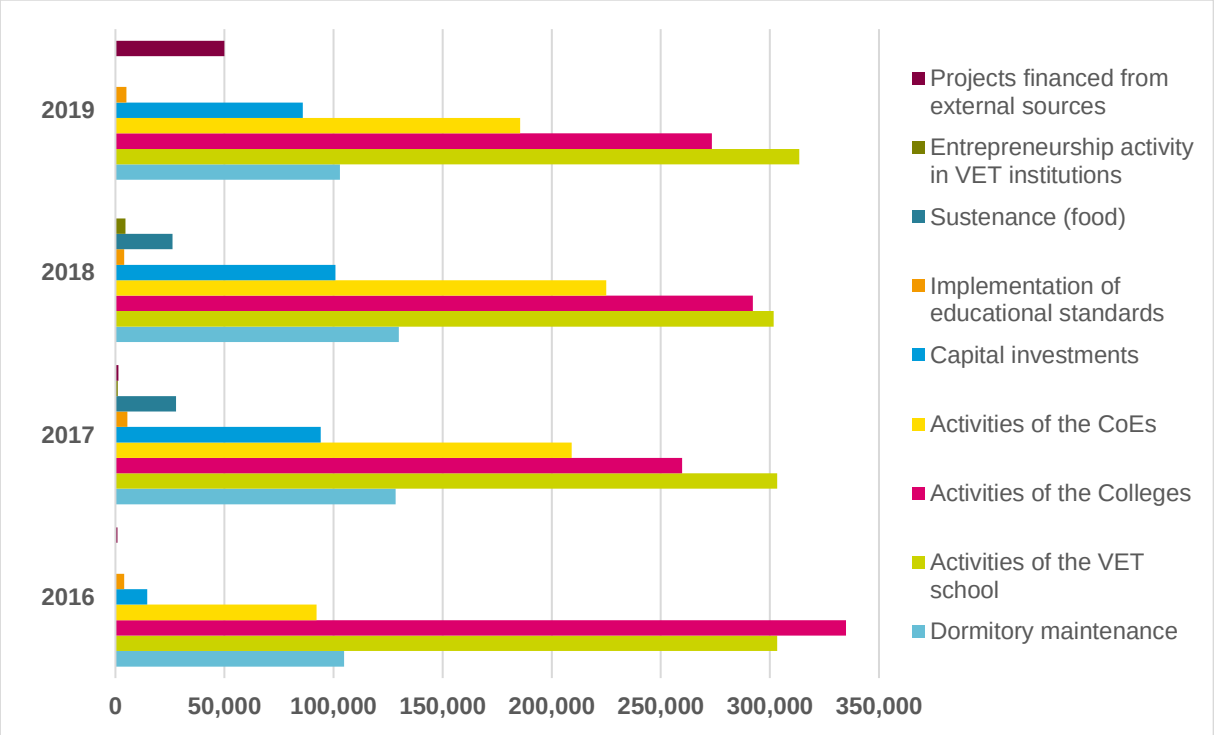
The amounts of the real expenditures VET before introduction of the formula (2016) and after that are presented in the Table 2 and the Diagram 1 below:

TABLE 2. VET EXPENDITURES AS BY THE COST CATEGORIES, 1000 MDL

Cost Category	2016	2017	2018	2019[4]
TOTAL VET EXPENDITURES	**854,654.0**	**1,030,419.2**	**1,084,454.2**	**1,052,310.3**
Dormitory maintenance	104,780.0	128,498.1	129,909.9	102,908.4
Activities of the VET school	303,280.6	303,396.2	301,671.8	313,481.3
Activities of the Colleges	334,872.4	259,735.7	292,157.4	273,438.8
Activities of the CoEs	92,149.7	209,078.2	225,031.7	185,575.6
Capital investments	14,646.5	94,137.9	100,860	85,856.8
Implementation of educational standards	3,980.4	5,467.8	3,984.4	5,000.0
Sustenance (food)	-	27,743.1	26,212.9	36.049.4
Entrepreneurship activity in VET institutions	-	1061	4,587.9	-
Projects financed from external sources	944.4	1,301.2	38.2	50,000.0

[3] It was equal to 17.0 thousand MDL (~ € 850) in 2019.
[4] Planned.

DIAGRAM 1. VET EXPENDITURES AS BY THE COST CATEGORIES, 1000 MDL



Recently, amendments to the financing mechanism were prepared by the MoECR VET Department. They are intended to increase the financing in general, and also encourage initiative of the institutions to apply for development projects. Thus, every year, additional funding equal to 3% of the State Order financing, is proposed to be allocated to the institutions unconditionally; and 3% more may be obtained by the institutions for development projects, on a base of competition. Instead, it is proposed to exclude the multiplier "**E**" from the funding formula and abolish the competitiveness fund wherefrom presently, the institutions, not often than once in 3 years, *might* receive 50% of co-funding from the state budget for different cooperation (mainly with private sector) projects.

For receiving the state funds, every VET institution annually concludes with MoECR a financing contract which stipulates that the institution shall provide educational service for performing the State Order, i.e. prepare a certain number of specialists according with the list of professions (qualifications) defined in the same contract. The funds cover expenditure for conducting the training, students' scholarships and other forms of social assistance, maintenance of the institution building and dormitories, as well as meals for secondary VET students only. The institution is obliged to submit to MoECR quarterly and annual reports on performance, accompanied with a defined set of proving documents.

Allocation of funds to the institution from the State Budget is done on a monthly basis.

BOX 1. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON THE VET FUNDING AND FINANCING MECHANISM

Representatives of the Administrative and Financial Section, MoECR: Financial autonomy makes VET institutions more responsible for their expenditures. Now they have to keep detailed registers where they record every spending. <…> The Government spends too much money on financing colleges, and we have already too many colleges, while the number of students is very small.

Representatives of Administrative and Financial Section, MoECR: There is a problem in the per student funding mechanism: funding should not be only based on the number of students but also to consider the number of teaching hours. Financial autonomy makes things more complicated for us, as there is no transparency at all. We have to present e.g. to MoF data that we cannot see, but just have to take their [VET institutions] word for it. We have no tools to check the data they present to us. <…> But there is a benefit for the institution as they do not need the Ministry's approval to make some expenses, or to make funds reallocation from one budget line to another: an internal order is sufficient for that. This formula per student is good for large VET institutions, who have many students, while the small ones lose. There are some small VET Schools (about 100 students) that do not have enough money to pay the salaries to teachers by the end of the year.

Head of VET Department. MoECR: The existing VET financing and funding mechanisms is not probably 100% perfect but it is good. Now we try to define the real training cost for using it from the next year.

Head of LLL Service, MoECR: The VET institutions need more funding to be more efficient, they also need modern equipment. There are sectors which are funded even more poorly, for example, the culture. <…> Financial autonomy of VET institutions is a something positive. The only problem is that some VET institutions were not well prepared for this autonomy. They also have to conduct additional activities for income generating but this is not possible in all sectors. In these cases, they need to be financially supported.

Country Director, LED Moldova: Funding system is improving, but the reality still seems to differ from the paper. <…> I am not aware whether there is a mechanism for paying e.g. the additional tasks of CoEs. <…> In reality [*due to per capita funding mechanism*], the overall funding was proportionally reduced. Everyone has this percentage less. The per capita funding might lead to the situation when the small schools starve to death instead of being closed by a decision. <…> A lot of money is spent on institutions which are not used to its full capacity. <…> If one school is closed the money should stay within the VET but not be taken by MoF for other needs.

President of Pro Didactica: Some institutions have been more trained, but most of them are not trained and it is difficult for them. They are afraid to take decisions, to take responsibility. They were used to be obedient and ask permission for each and everything. But this is a good mechanism.

Director of CEDA: The financial autonomy is a good thing but we cannot change the mentality overnight. We trained the VET institutions managers and accountants on finance management and income generating activities but yet, this is far from being sufficient. They

need much more skills and continuous support. It is good to have state funding, but the institutions should generate additional income by providing also Adult Education courses. This, however, should not lead to reduction of the state funding.

Specialist in the USAID project: The financial autonomy gives the institutions right to establish positions and units, but this is just on paper. I think per capita funding is wrong due to different importance of different professions.

Head of SME Funding Department, OSMED: We need more finances for VET, but not only from the State, but also from large companies.

Director of CRDÎP: The financial self-administration of VET institutions is not a good idea for Moldova, yet. We don't have financial self-management, we have a funding per student mechanism, which is a different thing. <…> In order to have financial self-management of VET institutions, the whole approach should be changed. VET institutions should have production workshops where they could produce and then sell their production. If we have at least several such VET institutions where we could pilot this mechanism for several years, we could assess how efficient they are.

Head of the Social and Economic Protection Department of the Confederation of Trade Unions: The existing VET financing and funding mechanism is unsatisfactory because it does not allow the VET institutions to build capacity and attract modern technology and equipment to education.

Vice-President of the Sector Committee for Trade, Hotels and Restaurants: For improvement of VET financing and funding, there should be open discussions with VET institutions about their needs. I don't think this mechanism (current principles of granted financial autonomy of VET institutions) is good for VET institutions because it makes their activities very difficult. They were not ready for this shift.

Director of the Centre of Excellence for Wine and Viticulture: Self-financing is good as the Centre is free to spend its money and is not depending on the Ministry.

Director of the Centre of Excellence for Services and Food Processing: There is a Lack of financial resources for implementation for new tasks. The teachers do much work beyond the official tasks on voluntary basis due to the lack of state funding. The entire staff does a lot of additional work and is only "morally" motivated by the Director. There are institutions with small number of students and the current mechanism of funding isn't favourable for them.

Director of the VET School № 5 in Bălți: I think that per student formula should be reviewed. In 2017, when it was introduced, the amount of money for the same number of students was higher, while now, the expenses for the VET institutions maintenance services have increased. <…> The formula should not only take into account the salary of the staff and the maintenance of the institution, but also the development of the institution and its performance.

2. VET PRACTICES

The business processes (including decision-taking processes) are analysed below for such particular VET clusters (practices) as: ***Identifying and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education*** (NQF, standards and curricula); ***Annual Enrolment Planning*** *(State Order);* ***Monitoring and Evaluation***; ***Strategic planning***; ***Social Partnership***; ***Dual Education and Work-based learning***; ***Tracer Studies***; ***Lifelong learning***; ***Quality Assurance***.

2.1. Identifying and Defining the Learning Outcomes and the Content of Education (NQF, Standards and Curricula)

2.1.1. The Regulatory and Methodological Base of NQF

The **National Qualifications Framework** was adopted in 2017, by the Government Decision № 1016, 23rd November 2017. This document defines that the goal of the NQF in Moldova, is *'the formation of a unified, holistic, open and flexible national system of qualifications, which would include all levels and forms of professional education, focused on satisfying specific needs of the labour market in qualified personnel, on Lifelong learning, on the country economic development and supporting national education and vocational training policies and strategies in line with the corresponding European policy (provisions of the European Qualifications Framework, Qualifications Framework of the European Higher Education Area)'*.

The NQF levels are determined on the basis of professional knowledge, skills and competencies, and the structure of the level descriptors shall be similar to the structure of EQF. The learning outcomes shall be consistent with the competencies required for carrying out professional activities at the corresponding qualification level that are defined by ***occupational standards***[5]. The latter serve as the basis for:

1) a uniform description of the qualification requirements for graduates and employees (within the framework of professional and educational standards);
2) development of criteria for assessing the qualifications of graduates and employees at all levels of professional education;
3) development of requirements for professional functions;
4) planning various flexible ways of training in professional education;
5) providing mechanisms for assessing, defining and confirming qualifications;
6) recognition of knowledge and competencies acquired in the context of formal, informal and non-formal learning.

The authority of developing and approving methodologies and procedures necessary for the NQF application, particularly those related to the development, certification and registration of new qualifications, is given to MoECR and all costs associated with the NQF implementation shall be covered by the State Budget.

[5] Occupational Standard for *'working professions'* is defined as document that describes professional duties and tasks inherent in a particular craft / profession / specialty / occupation within a particular field of activity, as well as quality indicators associated with successful implementation thereof, in accordance with the requirements of the labour market.

Introduction of NQF foresees establishment of a **National Register of Qualifications** (NRQ), which is a national database that includes descriptions of qualifications of the Republic of Moldova recognised at the national level, included in a) NRQ for professional education which corresponds to the 3rd, 4th and 5th qualification levels, as well as to the initial and continuing professional training; b) NRQ for higher education which corresponds to the 6th, 7th and 8th qualifications levels, related to higher education. MoECR is responsible also for designing, introducing and permanent updating of the NRQ.

According with the Government Decision № 1199, 2nd December 2018, the Technical Concept[6] and the Regulation of NRQ were approved. These document defines and describes all necessary aspects and procedures for effective functioning of NRQ, such as: functional components and organisational structure; the basic documents contained in NRQ, the information area, informational objects, identifiers of informational objects and scenarios associated with them; the NRQ data and classifiers; interaction with other information resources; technology area and information security assurance; as well as subjects of legal reports related to the NRQ creation and operation; administration and updating; control and responsibility.

The **lists of qualifications according with education fields and professions** are defined by the corresponding **Nomenclatures** approved by Government Decisions № 425, 3rd July 2015[7] for *Secondary VET*; № 853, 14th December 2015[8] for P*ost-Secondary* and *Post-Secondary Non-tertiary VET*; and № 482, 28th June 2017 for *Higher Education*.

There are a number of methodologies which also constitute a part of the NQF. In 2019, based on the Annex 3 of the above mentioned Government Decision on establishing Moldovan NQF, MoECR by its Order № 1703, 26th December 2019, approved the **Methodology for Establishing the Correspondence of the Education Levels with the Qualifications Obtained Before the Approval of NQF**. Besides, a **Methodological Guide for the Elaboration of the Qualification Evaluation Procedure** was approved by the MoECR Order № 1618, 10th December 2019, and the **Methodology for the Elaboration, Revision and Validation of the Qualification Standards** by the MoECR Order № 1617, 10th December 2019. The latter is of our specific interest and some details are presented below.

According with this Methodology, the qualification standard (QS) is the basis for development of a curriculum, for assessment, validation and recognition of learning outcomes obtained in the formal and non-formal education environment, and includes a large number of elements such as: description of the field of professional training; mission and specific requirements of the field of professional training; list of typical occupations corresponding to the given qualification; description of competences relevant to the qualification (including transversal, general professional and specific professional competences); detailed description of learning outcomes in terms of knowledge, skills, responsibility and autonomy and minimum level for recognition of a competence as well as requirements and criteria for assessing those learning outcomes. Indicators for quality assurance of the qualification development cycle, is are also part of the standards.

The Methodology defines all procedures from the initiation of the qualification standard development to its final approval and the further periodical revision. This is a rather complicated process and consists of the following steps:

1) Examination of the request (proposal) for elaboration or revision of QS;

[6] Before, a Technical Concept for the National Register of Qualifications in the Republic of Moldova was approved by the MoECR Order № 782, 23rd May, 2018.
[7] Amended by the Government Decisions № 842, 07.07.2016; № 585, 24.07.2017; and № 648, 10.07.2018.
[8] Amended by the Government Decisions № 842, 07.07.2016; № 648, 10.07.2018; and № 710, 18.07.2018.

2) Creation of a working group for the elaboration or revision of QS;
3) Elaboration or revision of QS [by a Working Group];
4) Validation of QS [by a Validation Committee established by the Sector Committee or Professional Association and the line Ministry];
5) Coordination (agreeing) of QA [with the line ministry];
6) Endorsement of QS [by the National Qualifications Council];
7) Approval of QS [by MoECR].

If the initiative of the QS elaboration/revision is accepted according with a specific procedure, MoECR by its Order establishes a Working Group (WG) which normally consists of 5 people including teachers, trainers, managers with at least 3-year experience in the given field – 2 members; representatives of the corresponding Sector Committee (or in its absence, of the appropriate professional association(s)) – 2 members; and a Coordinator who is expert specialised in occupational analysis, elaboration of qualification standards or occupational standards.

The WG shall develop the QS on the basis of the corresponding *Occupational Standard* (if the corresponding Occupational Standard does not exist or outdated, an occupational profile (OP) is required to be elaborated first, according with the Methodology of the Occupational Standards Development (see below)). Every activity and the manner in which it should be carried out, are also defined by the Methodology of the QS development. This is followed by validation of the draft QS which means: verifying if the qualification is relevant to the labour market and if there is a need to develop this QS; verifying if the functional tasks and duties reflected in the occupational profile or the descriptors from the competence standard, correlate with the labour market requirements; assessing if the content of the QS would ensure achieving the proposed objectives.

The qualification standard shall be reviewed at least every five years, or in the event of a change in the occupational standard / occupational profile / competence standard for that qualification, within six months after its approval.

As mentioned above, there is also a **Methodology for Elaboration of Occupational Standards** (OS), approved by the Government Decision № 863, 8th October 2014[9]. This document sets 5 stages for developing an OS:

1) Elaboration of the OP;
2) Assessment and validation of the OP;
3) Development of the OS;
4) Assessment and validation of the OS;
5) Approval of the OS.

This Methodology too, defines in details all procedures and actions, methods and techniques, as well as responsible bodies for every step. In this process, MoHLSP is the main actor, which shall cooperate with line ministries and other central governance bodies, as well as with the Sector Committees. For all these structures, specific tasks related to the OS development and validation, are foreseen.

Thus, a number of stakeholders are involved in different processes related to NQF. Distribution of the corresponding responsibilities as by those actors is presented in the Table 3:

[9] Amended by the Government Decision № 1091, 27th September 2016.

TABLE 3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD OF NQF

Body	Responsibility
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection[10]	1) **Improves the normative framework necessary for developing OS**; 2) **Monitors at national level the process of OS development** through cooperation with representatives of central sectoral public administration bodies, Sector Committees, institutions and other involved organisations; 3) **Coordinates OS development** in terms of compliance with the development procedures and the format in accordance with the Methodology; 4) **Justifies draft budget** and **manages the annual budget allocations for the OS development** processes; 5) **Implements public procurement for acquiring OS development services** funded from the State Budget and **monitors this process**; 6) Maintains **electronic register of approved OS**.
Ministry of Education, Culture and Research	1) **Develops the NQF with involvement of social partners**: line ministries, educational institutions / VET programmes providers, economic agents, Sector Committees, and other stakeholders; 2) Ensures the transparency of NQF at national and international levels; 3) **Organises development of QS** for all NQF levels; 4) **Approves the QS** and **orders the registration of qualifications in the NRQ**; 5) Repeals qualification standards / qualifications that have become obsolete.
NQF Department at MoECR	1) **Elaborates the normative framework** regarding the **development of NQF and RNC**; 2) **Coordinates development of NQF** and ensures its correspondence with the concepts, strategies, programmes and national action plans and recommendations at European level, in collaboration with other corresponding MoECR units; 3) **Monitors the compatibility and connection between the NQF, the EQF and the QF-EHEA**; 4) Creates and/or participates in the networks of national/international experts as a national coordination centre for NQF; 5) *Ensures the dialogue platform between the social partners* for the development of NQF: state authorities and institutions, Sector Committees, Trade Unions and employers' associations, employers and non-governmental organisations, etc.; 6) Consults all stakeholders on qualifications in the national education system; initiates, organises and promotes regular activities to strengthen the capacities of the social partners in the field of NQF; 7) Implements the policies and strategies for ensuring the quality of professional education through elaborating the criteria and mechanisms for evaluating qualifications and imbedding them in the NQF; 8) **Develops, implements and ensures the maintenance of NRQ**.
The line Ministries[11] **and other Central bodies**	1) Participate in the **development of NQF**; 2) **Initiate elaboration of QS** in the field of competence; 3) **Coordinate (agree on) the QS** in the field of competence; 4) **Monitor the implementation** by the subordinated professional training institutions **of NQF** on the field of competence; 5) Promote quality policies in the field of professional education. 6) **Ensure quality of the OS** developed for the relevant sector; 7) Approve OS developed by the Sector Committees in the corresponding field; 8) Collaborate with Sector Committees regarding initiation of OS development processes based on economic development trends and continuing training policies of the sector; 9) **Facilitate establishment of Sector Committees** and provide assistance in organising their works; 10) Facilitate **organisation of training for OS development**.

[10] More specifically – the Department for Educational and Migration Policies.
[11] Including MoECR in the sense of OS.

Body	Responsibility
National Council for Qualifications	1) **Elaborates proposals for normative acts** regarding the implementation of NQF in the initial and continuous professional education institutions; 2) Collaborates with working groups for the elaboration, implementation and updating of QS; 3) **Endorses the QS**; 4) Participates in the elaboration of studies, analyses and forecasts regarding the evolution of NQF; 5) Participates in *ensuring dialogue between stakeholders*: vocational training institutions of all levels, central specialised bodies, the business environment, Sectoral Committees, Trade Unions, non-governmental organisations.
Republican Centre for VET Development	1) Participates in the **development of NFQ for VET**; 2) Jointly with the Sector Committees, organises activities for disseminating good practices of NQF implementation for VET; 3) **Elaborates methodological recommendations** for the development of programmes for the new qualifications in VET.
Sector Committees for VET, Employers, Trade Unions, Professional Associations, Economic agents	1) Participate in **development of NQF**; 2) **Identify the need for qualifications** in the corresponding sector; 3) **Initiate and participate in the elaboration / revision of QS** in the field of competence; 4) Participate in **updating qualifications**; 5) Participate in the **validation of the OP / OS / QS**; 6) **Endorse the curricula**; 7) Through representatives, participate in the regular consultations for the consolidation of NQF; 8) Study the labour market in the corresponding sector and define the **list of crafts / professions / specialties / occupations for OS development**;[12] 9) **Decide on the development of a specific OS** for the relevant sector; 10) **Manage development of the corresponding OS**; 11) **Establish OP and OS developing Working groups** for the Commission assessing and validating OS; 12) **Identify financial resources for OS development**.
Educational institutions / educational service providers	1) Participate in the **elaboration / revision and implementation of QS**; 2) **Develop curricula, elaborate / update study programmes / professional training programmes** in accordance with the requirements of the QS; 3) Ensure the **evaluation of learning outcomes and certification of qualification**, according to the requirements of the QS; 4) Participate in the **development of NQF** and in the continuous **dialogue with the labour market**.

2.1.2. Analysis of the Situation

Presently, although NQF seems well regulated and the roles of the different players are clearly defined, there are several issues in this field, related specifically to the effectiveness and efficiency of the OS – QS – Curriculum development and introduction chain. They are conditioned by different factors:

- As mentioned above, Occupational Standards are the base for the further development of qualifications, and define duties and tasks, as well as indicators associated with the successful implementation of specific occupation, in accordance with the requirements of the labour market.

[12] The points 7-11 relate to the Sector Committees only.

The corresponding information is expected to be obtained from the LM analysis implemented by the MoHLSP (which is responsible for coordination of the OS development) thorough its NEA and LMO. However, the existing tools do not allow the surveys to provide the entire picture of the labour market situation due to various reasons: only short-term (12 months) LM forecasts are done; they cover only a small cohort of the employed population, while the self-employed and those involved in family businesses remain beyond the statistics; only a limited part of unemployed are registered at the employment agencies but many of them may periodically have occasional/temporary jobs[13]. Another challenge is the large segment of the informal economy in many sectors, particularly in Construction and Agriculture (in 2018, 62.5% and 85.3%, respectively)[14]. As it was discussed above, neither other structures, such as Sector Committees or Employers' Associations, can make any considerable contribution in anticipating the LM demand, due to limited financial and human resources. Thus, already the "primary information" about the skill needs which should be a ground for defining the OS content and its feasibility, is not credible enough.

- Presently, there are only 38 approved Occupational Standards, while the number of qualifications is 200 (only 89 have Qualification Standards). In the absence of the respective OS, most of the existing qualifications were not developed on the base of them (as explained above, for some of them Occupational Profiles were developed by the same WGs developing QSs), therefore, the compliance of the contents of Qualifications and Curricula with the labour market needs is again questioned[15].
- In addition, even when the occupational and qualification standards are in place, there is no entity verifying whether the learning outcomes specified in the curriculum are in accord with the professional competences defined by the qualification which in turn, would reflect the occupational standard. The reason is that the process of elaboration of these documents is fragmented and performed by different institutions. Thus in fact, there is no real control over implementation of the approved standards in the country.
- The process of any new Qualification introduction or revision of an existing one – from initiation of OS development to approval and deployment of a "new" curriculum – is extremely lengthy and may take up to 3 years. At this moment the curriculum is already outdated. Different stakeholders explain this by a very complicated formal procedure and/or involvement of too large number of different actors.
- At the same time, the VET institutions have very limited in adapting the curricula or creating new VET courses/programmes by themselves.
- In addition, there is no regulation for awarding and recognising partial qualifications.

Important statements of some interviewed stakeholders about the standards and curricula development and introduction process are presented in the box below:

[13] Torino Process 2018-2020. Moldova.
[14] National Bureau of Statistics (follow this link, then click "Continue").
[15] See also: Torino Process 2018-2020. Moldova.

BOX 2. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON THE STANDARDS AND CURRICULA DEVELOPMENT AND INTRODUCTION PROCESS IN MOLDOVA

President of ANACEC: By the time they [occupational standards] are developed, they get already outdated. <…> I believe that the development of occupational standards would be more effective by involving professional associations, instead of the Sector Committees. Besides, there are many occupational standards from other countries that could be adjusted for Moldova.

Head of SME Funding Department OSMED: Professions are outdated. Curricula are to be updated.

Programme Manager, ADA project: The process of elaboration of the occupational standards – qualification standards – curriculum, is too long (up to 3 years) and too costly and inefficient: when all these are developed, they are already obsolete and we have to start the entire process again. <…>

In agro sector, people do not want to study 3 years, it is too long. Our education system is very heavy and not flexible to adapt to the reality.

President of Pro Didactica: When we have good occupational standards, it is easy to develop quality standards… otherwise we use different ways. People who develop standards, should be paid. We pay some people.

The private sector does not understand that the standards are for them. The problem is in the attitude, mentality

We participated in development of methodology on curricula and standard development and proposed to simplify the methodology, and harmonise the normative acts. Some of our proposals were considered, others not, as some members of the working group continued insisting to keep some time-consuming steps, but it is a participatory process and we had to accept their proposal, too. I do think that the process remains to be very long, time-consuming. Development of standards takes from 6 months to 1.5 year; it is too slow. At the end of the process, they become irrelevant as the changes in the LM are very quick.

Country Director, LED Moldova: Curricula development becomes more and more difficult. Among the Donors, there is a growing concern and unwillingness to engage in the process of curricula development. <…> There are too complicated procedures for different things: occupational standards, educational standards, qualifications. <…> The processes are very heavy and now they try to cut them. If a stamp [on curricula or a similar document] is needed, the stamp is there, but I am not sure that is the quality assurance.

One more issue relates to the short-term courses. Many stakeholders are convinced that accreditation of the non-formal training programmes is an unnecessary complication which actually holds back many VET institutions from introducing and offering short-term modular courses for both youth and adults.

BOX 3. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON ACCREDITATION OF NON-FORMAL EDUCATION COURSES

Specialist in the USAID project: All schools and professions should be accredited. But this is a problem when it comes to the short-term Adult Education courses. This blocks the process because it takes too much time and is costly. More flexibility is needed.

Country Director, LED Moldova: We have an issue with short-term courses: they are required to be accredited, even very targeted courses for small group of people. It does not make any sense. It takes much time and is costly. No one wants to go through all these steps for just few people.

2.2. Annual Enrolment Planning (State Order)

There is only one clause in the legislation about the annual enrolment planning for VET. This is the provision of the Education Code (Article 139, point "g") stating that the Government approves enrolment plans with funding from the state budget (State Order) for professional (VET and Higher) education by professions, specialisations and general fields of study[16].

Draft Government Decision on annual enrolment plan is designed by MoECR and considers the results of the previous academic year admission as well as the available information on the labour market needs. This plan, which includes both numbers of seats for free of charge (State Order) and for fee paid education, is mainly based on the proposals of the VET institutions.

According with the formal procedure, draft Government Decision, before submission to the Government approval, is circulated among the relevant national authorities (those with responsibilities in the field): MoARDE, MoHLSP, MoIA, MoF, Centre for the Implementation of Reforms, National Anticorruption Centre, Ministry of Justice, and State Chancellery. Their proposals can be accepted by MoECR and integrated into the draft Decision or rejected with corresponding justifications reflected in the proposals summary (a subject to submission to the Government along with the draft Decision).

Draft Government Decision is mandatorily placed on the MoECR web-page, which is the requirement of the Law on Transparency in the Decision-Making Process (№ 239, 13th November 2008).

The Government approves the numbers of admission seats as by professions (specialisations) and then MoECR distributes those seats by the VET institutions.

For the 2019-2020 academic year submission, 87% of the seats allocated by the corresponding Government Decision for secondary VET, were for the State Order, and the other 13% for paid education. For post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET, those indicators were equal to 37% for State Order and 63% for paid education.

[16] The point 5 of the Article 60 of the Education Code repeats this statement, saying that 'The admission plan in the technical and vocational education and training with financing from the state budget shall be established by the Government'.

BOX 4. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON THE ANNUAL VET ENROLMENT PLANNING

Head of VET Department, MoE: In some respect, the system is "blocked", and the institutions cannot react to the LM needs quickly. <…> Therefore, I proposed to approve plans (State Order) for 3-5 years.

Head of Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel, MoHLSP: We are directly involved in the VET planning. Annually we ask public medical institutions to collect and sum up the information on vacancies by professions, in the entire country (we have SIERUSS informational system of record of human resources in health). Thus, considering the demand and trends, together with Methodological Cabinet, we assess the situation, then come up with proposal to MoECR on the number of enrolment.

Head of Division for Finance in Education, Culture and Research, MoF: There is a tendency to increase the number of students, instead of aligning the plan to the labour market needs and developing a realistic enrolment plan. Due to lack of time and loads of work, MoECR does not manage to make a full and comprehensive analyses on labour market needs.

Head of LLL Service, MoECR: Planning the needs for the private sector is still in the early stage of development. <…> It would be good to have a mechanism for a systemic and systematic identification of labour market needs. Forecasts on future needs for skills, and not just for private sector but, in general, skills which will be needed in the Republic of Moldova are also to be made.

Director of CRDIP: We have a collaboration agreement with the National Employment Agency and we are involved in the LM analysis to some extent. Nevertheless, we would like to be more involved in this process. We have necessary human resources, capacities and willingness to conduct labour market analysis but we cannot provide support to companies without the involvement of the MoECR. They should become an intermediary between our Centre and employers in this process. For the last 2 years we haven't been much involved in this process.

Director of the Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet, MoHLSP: We do not do identification of LM needs. Proposals for Annual Enrolment Plan come from VET institutions, we conclude and send it to the Ministry of Education.

Head of the Social and Economic Protection Department of the Confederation of Trade Unions: Every year the MoECR in cooperation with the Ministry of Economy and other ministries develops VET enrolment plan, which is submitted for the Government approval. We distribute the draft plan through our union structures. Sometimes we get suggestions from them, but they are not always taken into account. I think the enrolment plans reflect mostly the proposals of the educational institutions.

Head of the Social and Economic Protection Department of the Confederation of Trade Unions: There is a problem with LM forecasts. Although employers recognise the need for continuous training of staff, but hardly accept to be involved in this process. There are few companies that engage more actively.

The Employment Agency has created the Labour Market Observatory and there are very few specialists there, who could cover more areas and aspects of labour market analysis and forecasts, findings, developments.

Executive Director of the National Confederation of Employers: We comment on Annual Enrolment Plan: we give the document to our members and collect their opinions. Our suggestions are considered to a large extent, if it is well justified.

President of the Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry: We are not involved in the planning of VET enrolment. Three years ago we were given a ready plan and should just endorse it. We don't know what was the methodology of developing the plans. <…> Our role was only to approve it but we didn't want just to sign it. Now the Annual Enrolment Plan is fully on the MoECR and it is not consulted with the Sector Committees.

Director of CEDA: There is no link between VET and LM, thus the youth leaves for abroad. There is a lack of complex approach and coherence in our activities. <…> The schools to be adapted to the needs of the LM. Unfortunately, the soviet approach of associating the VET system with the large companies is still in the minds and this should be changed.

President of Pro Didactica: There is not a good mechanism for LM need identification at country level.

Director of the Centre of Excellence for Services and Food Processing: There is no organisation covering the task of transition from school to work.

Director of the VET school № 5 in Bălți: There should be a link between the business sector and VET institutions to ensure congruence between the curricula framework and LM needs.

In fact, the Government (via MoECR) single-handedly decides the VET institutions enrolment. While positions of MoHLSP and MoARDE are mainly considered by MoECR in drafting the Government Decision on the annual admission plans, proposals of the social partners are not necessarily taken into account due to absence of any effective social dialogue mechanism (in fairness to MoECR, those proposals are not always justified and based on factual data). Moreover, the local authorities too, are not properly involved in annual VET planning.

2.3. Monitoring and Evaluation

According with the legislation, several bodies have duties related to monitoring and evaluation in the field of VET and skills development. Particularly:

- The ***Government*** – to monitor the activities of MoECR Ministry;
- ***MoECR*** – to carry out monitoring and assessment of the education system, monitor the position of the country in the framework of international indicators and ratings, as well as the perception of public policies, regulations and state activities by citizens and economic agents; monitor the quality of public policies and regulations;
- MoECR ***VET Department*** – to coordinate and monitor the implementation of national programmes and strategies in the field of VET; evaluate the level of achieving the state educational standards;

- MoECR ***Lifelong Learning Service*** – to monitor: implementation of national strategies, legal and normative acts in the field of LLL; implementation of continuous training programmes, including creation of the database of the providers of continuous professional training for adults; the process of continuous professional development and certification of teaching and managerial staff in general and vocational education; implementation of the legislative/normative acts and the methodological benchmarks in the field of LLL;
- MoECR ***Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department*** – to monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of public policies, developed by other internal units;
- MoHLSP ***Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel*** – to evaluate and monitor implementation of policies in the field of medical and pharmaceutical education;
- MoARDE ***Science, Education and Rural Extension Service*** – to monitor and evaluate the activities of the subordinated educational institutions, particularly the agricultural Colleges and Centres of Excellence; monitor and improve the quality of agricultural vocational and higher education, in general.
- MoECR ***National VET Development Centre*** – to monitor and update development policies for VET; approve and monitor VET programmes;
- MoHLSP ***Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet*** – to monitor the process of continuous training and certification of the teaching and management staff of medical educational institutions;
- MoARDE ***Methodical Training Centre*** – to study and evaluate methodical activities in educational institutions for providing necessary assistance; participate in evaluation and certification of the teaching staff for confirming and granting teaching grades;
- ***ANACEC*** – to carry out quality assessment and external evaluation of training programmes and VET providers;
- ***National Coordination Council for VET*** – to coordinate the process of elaboration, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and revision of the policies for reforming, developing and modernising the VET system; implement and monitor the VET reforms from the perspective professional training and employment of the skilled workers/specialists; ensure monitoring of VET reforms transparency in terms of broad participation of the stakeholders in the elaboration, deliberation, monitoring, evaluation and revision of VET modernisation policies.

At the policy level, there was an attempt to establish a monitoring and evaluation framework within the VET Development Strategy 2013-2020. In the corresponding section of this document, it is defined that the institutional framework for the Strategy monitoring and evaluation should include:

- MoECR Board, which would supervise the Strategy implementation, monitoring and evaluation process, analyse the progress and problems and put forward solutions for overcoming the barriers and ensuring the appropriate implementation of the Strategy;
- Representatives of the National Coordination Council for VET, Sector Committees, businesses;
- Civil society, development partners, which should independently monitor the Strategy implementation process and intervene with proposals aimed at its improvement.

No witnesses of such involvement have been found. Particularly, as mentioned above, the NCCVET is non-functional since 2017 and had never contributed in the VET Strategy monitoring before. Besides, no event of discussing any monitoring report at MoECR Board meeting is known.

For the Strategy monitoring reports, the following time-frame was established:

(I) annual monitoring and reporting, which supposes a detailed reporting for a one-year period;

(II) bi-annual monitoring and reporting of results;

(III) final monitoring and reporting on achievement of the Strategy objectives during the entire implementation period.

From the practical point of view, it is completely unclear how the monitoring scheme should work. It is stated that *'the annual, semi-annual and final monitoring reports on Strategy implementation will be submitted to the authorities responsible for Strategy implementation for review and approval by the Ministry of Education's Board'*, however, it is not specified who produces those reports and what is the methodology. Moreover, the MoECR Board is defined as the final "destination" of the monitoring reports, while the Government is not considered as a player within this framework. At the same time, the Government Decision on the approval of the VET Development Strategy (№ 97, 1st February 2013) requires that MoECR submits to the Government, before 1st February of each year, the information on the implementation of the Strategy Action Plan.

Furthermore, the Strategy foresees that the *'overall monitoring and evaluation system will be developed in a consistent manner, aligned to reporting process for the National Development Strategy "Moldova-2020" …'*. The mentioned document, indeed, proposes slightly more detailed (although again far not precise and practical) monitoring scheme with a different reporting framework: Quarterly progress reports; Annual implementation reports; Thematic evaluation reports (optional, based on a need); Intermediate implementation report; and Final implementation report. Nevertheless, no similar monitoring system for the VET Strategy 2013-2020 was developed. In addition, no monitoring or evaluation reports were posted on the MoECR website, as it is required by the corresponding clause of the same document.

At the institutional level, the situation with monitoring seems more appropriate. The VET institutions have a section on Monitoring and Evaluation in their Strategic Development Plans (SDP) and many produce annual monitoring Reports. In some institutions there are also separate plans for internal monitoring of the performance within specific strategic directions and aspects of the institutions' activities. The concept and the purpose of monitoring is mainly understood correctly. An example of corresponding formulation in the SDP of one of the VET institutions: *'The purpose of monitoring is to provide information through which the management team can identify and resolve the implementation issues and assess progress against the originally planning. The SDP manager will constantly compare its time frame, expenses and achievements with the activities performance deadlines, the costs provided in the budget and the performance indicators defined in the Plan'*.

Evaluation of performance is also planned as a mandatory action at the end of SDP implementation period and is defined as e.g. *'appreciation of the progress made in achieving the proposed objectives and is a measure of the success of the SDP'* or *'comparing the results obtained at different stages of implementing the plan with the expected results'*. Nevertheless, it is unclear if the institutions have appropriate capacities for carrying out an effective evaluation and how its results have ever been used for the next planning period.

What is completely missing, is the external monitoring and evaluation of the institutions. Although they submit quarterly financial reports to MoF and annual activity reports to MoECR[17] (in the case of "double subordination", also to MoHLSP or MoARDE), but the latter has no formal authorities or practical tools for taking any administrative decision depending e.g. on the level of the institutions' Strategic Plan performance.

[17] Required by the clause 8, article 69 of the Education Code.

At the same time, the effective monitoring and evaluation system should not be substituted by the permanent control or inspection and oversight of the institutions' daily activities. M&E should not become a tool for decreasing the level of the VET institutions autonomy but for only identifying the challenges and any underperformance and suggesting corrective measures to overcome those shortcomings. The evaluation results should also contribute to making informed policy decisions on individual institutions and on the VET system, in general.

BOX 5. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

Head of VET Department, MoECR: We do not have a mechanism for comprehensive monitoring and evaluation of the VET institutions, moreover, the entire VET system.

Head of LLL Service, MoECR: There are few data on continuing training, i.e. only the information provided by VET institutions. They should be more open to share their experience. The Regulation on adult continuing training stipulates that every provider of such services should share the information with the beneficiaries. It would be good for us to have this information for intervening with some market strategies. Free access database should be available containing all necessary information on continuous training needs. Such a database would facilitate the work of our Service and also support our colleagues in this field.

Representatives of the Administrative and Financial Section, MoECR: There is a lack of transparency and no access to the information on money, no tools to check.

Head of Division for Finance in Education, Culture and Research, MoF: Monitoring and evaluation should be conducted in order to see how the budget money are spent. Government spends about 1 billion MDL on VET system, which is almost equal to the expenditures of the Higher Education. If we have better feedback from students, teachers, directors, tracer studies, employers side, LM, we could perform better, be more targeted. This is a key point

Director of VET school № 5 in Bălți: The monitoring and evaluation in VET is adequately organised and effectively functioning at systemic and institutional levels. We are still at the beginning of the external evaluation procedure. Of course, the process will have further changes.

Country Director, LED Moldova: Feedback mechanism is lacking. The lack of a good feedback for the Ministry is one of the central points. <…> Reporting is sometimes an end in itself. <…> We propose to the Ministry that the reporting comes from the performance evaluation, but the Ministry does not want to change anything at the moment.

Director of CEDA: Monitoring of performance is missing. <…> Monitoring and evaluation should be done not for punishing. The external audit should also recommend how to improve the things.

President of Pro Didactica: It is necessary to develop a meaningful set of indicators for Monitoring and Evaluation, so that at all levels we speak the same language and use the same indicators when monitoring, implementing, analysing, etc. And they are to be reflected in the information system.

Programme Manager, ADA project: The VET Institutions are evaluated based on the existing criteria, but those criteria are to be changed. <…> Other criteria for the VET institutions assessment should be: the degree of the graduates' employability (to do tracer study); the range of services provided by them, including the short-term LLL courses; their cooperation with the business and whether it converts into something.

Director of Resources Department, "Premier Energy Distribution": I do not see any monitoring and evaluation system at all, or if it exists, it doesn't function.

2.4. Strategic Planning

The system of Strategic Planning is mandatory for all VET institutions. In 2015-2016, the latter, enjoyed a considerable support from an EU Technical Assistance Project for developing effective and efficient Strategic Development Plans.

The Strategic Development Plans (SDP) are based on a model template and have the following indicative structure:

1. General information about the institution, including short history, present profile, data on students, on human, material and financial resources;
2. Mission Statement;
3. Vision;
4. SWOT Analysis;
5. Identified Priority Problems;
6. Strategic Development Directions;
7. Specific Objectives;
8. Action Plan;
9. Monitoring and Evaluation.

For all interviewed institutions, the SDPs and annual Work Plans were available[18]. There were also Plans or Reports on monitoring of the SDPs implementation for which Directors of the institutions are responsible. They are also in charge of coordinating the evaluation of the SDP results and applying any recovery measures when necessary.

In addition, the institutions have Human Resource Development Strategies which are targeted at addressing such issues as: ensuring the necessary personnel; motivation of the staff; ensuring decent working conditions; continuous professional development; increasing the social status of the teaching staff, and so on.

At the systemic level, the Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy for 2013-2020 is the main policy planning document. Its content is thoroughly analysed under the Section 1.2, Part 1 of this Report. Another important aspect is how this document was developed, how participatory and transparent that process was and if the ownership was ensured.

[18] Analysis of the quality and feasibility of the institutions' Strategic Development Plans or HRD Strategies is not a subject to this review. Therefore, we do not discuss here whether those documents fit to purpose or to what extent they are performed.

In the context of the national strategic planning document “Moldova -2020” and for the purpose of integrated coordination at national and sectoral level, development of the policy framework for education and ensuring continuity in the conceptual and strategic approach of VET reforms and development, the Ministry of Education coordinated the development of the draft VET Strategy for 2013-2020.

In the course of the VET Strategy elaboration and coordination, the main stakeholders were involved for accumulation of complex information, recourse to various suggestions for improving the document, estimating risks and impacts. Thus, the transparency in the manner established by law, was ensured. Besides, a "live" consultation mechanism was used through organising working meetings and public discussions in order to minimise the divergences of opinions, the contestations and the subsequent modifications. The consultations were not limited to the interest groups: inclusion of civil society was an essential condition for ensuring transparency and participatory character of the document development. Furthermore, the draft document was placed on the government’s website, so that all stakeholders, including the civil society had opportunity to comment.

Finally, the results of the consultations were systematised and used for finalisation of the document and subsequently, to its implementation.

The VET Strategy also provided for the monitoring activity of a permanent character, which was to be carried out throughout its implementation period. This includes both collection and processing of monitoring data, identification of errors or unforeseen effects and proposals for possible content and form corrections.

During the first three years, i.e. 2014-2016, evaluation reports on the VET Strategy implementation progress were prepared and presented annually[19]. The structure of the reports was determined by the structure of the Strategy, informing about the results recorded at the appropriate stage of implementation, against the specific objectives, as well as the difficulties encountered.

However, the reports did not contain:

- proposals for improving or modifying the implementation process in order to achieve the performance indicators specific to each activity;
- any institutional reshuffles occurred in the implementation process;
- the expected/possible impact following the implementation (economic, legal, social, ecological, etc.); and
- the implementation costs.

Thus, the monitoring activity did not apply the control mechanism over the execution of the Strategy, neither quantitatively (statistically), nor qualitatively (with the impact analysis), ensuring the consecutive and full realisation of all the activities of the Strategy.

The monitoring and evaluation process has encountered some barriers, particularly due to ambiguity of some indicators. Inadequate planning of some actions carried out unrealistically, with the establishment of too short deadlines, or with the absence of clear indicators of measuring, were among the other reasons. Although in general, the Strategy is assessed relevant (see the Section 1.2.1, Part 1 of this Report), there were performance indicators not always correlating with expected results.

[19] In addition, three annual reviews (2015-2017) of the EU Budget Support Programme "Support for the Implementation of VET Reform in Moldova” identified and illustrated important challenges that created difficulties and delays in implementing the planned reforms.

2.5. Social Partnership

Social partnership in VET, which is understood as cooperation and interrelationship of functions and responsibilities among the state, employers and employees, is achieved through the participation of the principal key social partners, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, National Confederation of Employers, Trade Unions, Sector Committees, Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development and private companies.

2.5.1. The Legal and Process Dimensions of Social Partnership

Social partnership in VET can be divided into legal (laws and legal regulations) and the process (experiences and models of cooperation) dimensions.

The ***Concept of the Social Dialogue Platform***[20] in VET specifies its mission and purpose and indicates the organisation of the social dialogue platform built on 3 levels (national, sectoral and institutional). The structure of the dialogue platform in VET represents the way of organising and realising the dialogue between the partners (see Diagram 8).

At the *national level*, the role of coordinator in the mediation process between the educational institutions and the labour market is assigned to the National Coordinating Council for VET (NCCVET). It aims to establish directions for permanent collaboration between the main partners in the development of the VET system: MoECR, which is responsible for preparing the supply of staff for the LM; the Ministry of Economy, which is responsible for creating the conditions for development the real sector of the national economy as the main factor of economic growth and increasing job demand; the line ministries; employers (business environment), academic institutions, employers, unions.

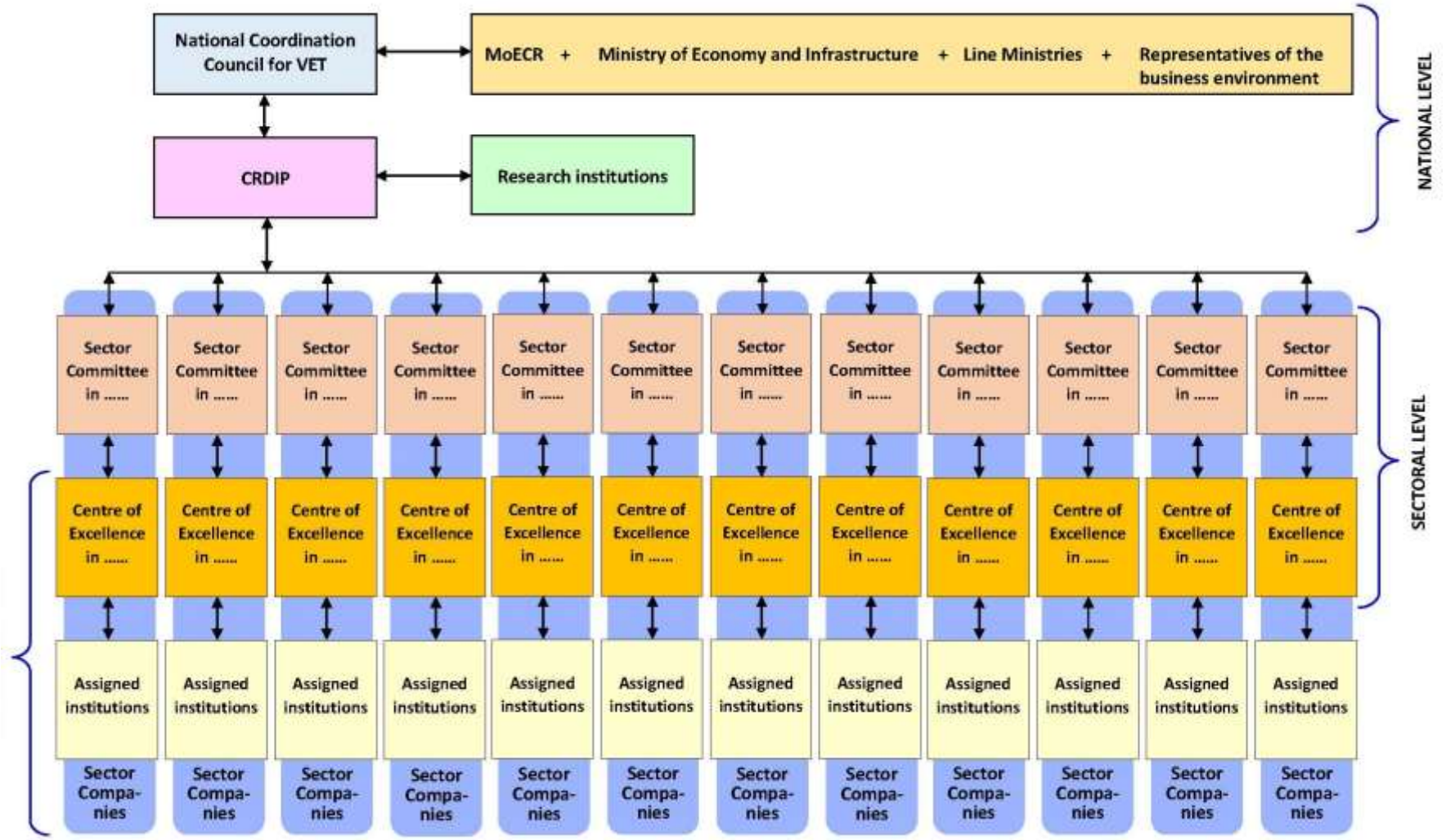
As mentioned above, CRDÎP acts as the Secretariat of the NCCVET. CRDÎP's mission is to facilitate the relationship between the national economic environment, the labour market and the VET system. The Centre is also to complement the activity of guidance, social control and participation, exercised by the NCCVET, by ensuring the theoretical and methodological basis of the VET system, developing mechanisms for implementing the recommendations of the NCCVET, by ensuring the theoretical and methodological basis for implementing policies and educational programmes, by developing occupational standards, qualifications and curricula.

Within this platform, CRDÎP has to provide relevant operational information on the labour market (medium and long-term forecasts of labour demand, comparative analyses with other states, analyses at regional level (inter and intra), including the demand for training), studies to monitor the insertion of graduates, statistical data and reporting from the system, anticipation of demand for new skills, by conducting studies, research, carried out independently or in collaboration with research institutes (institutions) in the field and information from the perspective of educational offer (analysis of the school network and infrastructure, human resources, the offer of training and retraining of teachers, school-enterprise partnerships). Studies, analyses, and results can be used to substantiate public policy proposals.

The Concept also specifies the tools for maintaining social dialogue and mechanisms for identifying, recognising, and disseminating good practices in the field of social partnerships in the sector.

[20] Developed on the basis of the Action Plan for implementation of the VET Strategy 2013-2020 and approved by MoE Order № 1179, 26.11.2014.

DIAGRAM 2. ORGANISATION OF THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE PLATFORM IN VET (*CONCEPT OF THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE PLATFORM, MOE ORDER № 1179, 26.11.2014*)



At the *sectoral level*, the Council is to be represented by the Sector Committees. At the same level, CRDÎP is closely linked with, and coordinates the activity of the Centres of Excellence which have the functions of social binders, assuring initial and continuous professional training, didactic, curricular and methodological provision of the VET system, coordination and support of ascribed institutions by didactic and methodological guidance for standardising the quality of VET, the function of training of teachers and managers and the function of validating professional skills acquired in a formal, non-formal and informal environment, and other functions.

The *institutional level* includes colleges and VET schools assigned to the Centres of Excellence, as well as the local economic agents. At this level, the transfer of knowledge, information and innovations takes place from the Centres of Excellence to their group of assigned institutions.

There is a number of regulations and methodologies which also require the involvement of social partners in the VET activities.

The ***Regulation on the Organisation of VET Programmes for Dual VET*** (Government Decision № 70, 22nd January 2018) specifies the role and the relationship between the state, the economic agent and the CoCI in the training process in Dual education.

Other regulatory documents are the ***Framework Regulation for the Organisation and Functioning of the Centre for Excellence*** (MoE Order № 1158, 4th December 2015) and **the Regulation on the organisation and functioning of CRDÎP (**MoE Order № 825, 1st December 2009), which specify the role of these institutions in the social partnership process, as social binders. The ***Framework Regulation on the Organisation and Functioning of Non-Tertiary and Post-Secondary VET Institutions*** (MoE Order № 550, 10th June 2015) and the ***Framework Regulation on the Organisation and Functioning of the Secondary VET institutions*** (MoE Order № 840, 21st August 2015) make it obligatory to include representatives of the economy in the administration board of a VET institution. The ***Regulations on the Organisation of the Qualification Examination*** (MoECR Order № 1127, 23rd July 2018) indicates as chairman of the Evaluation and Qualification Commission, the representative of an economic agent in the field of certified professional qualifications. The ***Methodology for the Elaboration, Revision and Validation of the Qualification Standards*** (MoECR Order № 1617, 10th December 2019) and the Method***ological Guide for the Elaboration of the Qualification Evaluation Procedure*** (MoECR Order № 1618, 10th December 2019) also require the involvement of the representatives of the business environment.

Within the ***process dimension*****,** the involvement of social partners, is achieved through their participation in different councils and work groups and/or through direct cooperation with individual VET institutions, e.g. by providing the internship places for VET students.

Overall, the main role of the Social Partners is to assist the development of Occupational and Qualification Standards, to facilitate the transition to the labour market and to strengthen the link between the private sector and the VET system.

The mission of the NCCVET is to ensure the synergy between VET, labour market and national economy. The Council, is assigned inter alia to make recommendations regarding the consolidation of partnership between the VET institutions and the economic environment and promote collaboration between ministries, other central administrative bodies, employers and trade unions aimed at VET modernisation. Another structure heavily applying social partnership schemes in its activities, is the National Qualifications Council. One of its tasks is participation in ensuring dialogue between stakeholders, i.e. VET institutions, central specialised bodies, the business environment, Sector

Committees, Trade Unions, non-governmental organisations (see also the Section 3.3, Part 1 of this Report).

Important actors are to be the **Sector Committees**. These are set up at the level of the branches of the economy for general consultations and negotiations. Through sectoral organisations and associations, social partners are meant to be an integral part of the Sector Committees. Responsibilities of the Sector Committees as well as of the another main actor, i.e. the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, including those related to the social partnership, are presented in details under the Sections 3.4 and 3.6, Part 1 of this Report, respectively.

2.5.2. Analysis of the Situation

The legal dimension of the Social partnership in VET seems properly defined while within the process dimension there are some issues, e.g. distribution of functions and responsibilities between the government and private sector is still shaped by a state-dominant system; a supply-driven VET, where the state decides upon the type of training and skills needs, does not ably react to the requirements of the labour market.

During the last 5 years a new form of cooperation has been established through dual VET, which strengthens the relationship between VET system and private sector. However, the VET sector cannot yet claim to be a system that is demand driven, as it is not directly influenced by the changes of the economy and does not have a corresponding structure and capacity to adequately react to the LM needs.

The cooperation between the government, employers and trade unions and their capacities to work together in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating VET, all remains challenging.

The analysis built on the outcomes of the work with secondary sources as well as the information from primary sources (key stakeholders interviews) reveal that the current situation with the process dimension of Social Partnership in VET is conditioned by a summary of several reasons, and up to now is far from being in line with the targets defined by the strategic documents:

- The mission of the NCCVET is to ensure the synergy between VET, labour market and national economy and the Council has to meet at least four times a year or whenever necessary. However, it has not been functional since the public administration restructuring. This is due to the fact that many entities do not exist anymore and the composition of the NCCVET was not revised till present. Thus, the collaboration between VET stakeholders lacks coordination, systematic and systemic approach to facilitate the relationships between the key stakeholders.
- Out of the needed 12 sector committees at the moment there are just six and even the existent ones are not yet in a position to play their role efficiently due to the lack of finances and personal and institutional capacities.
- CRDÎP is supposed to provide a solid technical support to VET system and coagulate social partnership. However, this entity faces difficulties in fulfilling its attributions due to the lack of financial and human capacities, being understaffed because of the low wages, and due to the lack of political will and some other not entirely clear reasons.
- Very few employer and/or employers' organisations demonstrate willingness to take an active role in VET but most of the time their position remains to be more reactive. Thereby, there is a need of a functional mechanism on social cooperation to transform the role of social partners from a reactive to active and pro-active participation in VET.

- At the moment, a real shortcoming is the fact that, none of the existent structures, i.e. Sector Committees, CoCI, CRDÎP, NEA with its LMO or employers' associations, produce substantial and systematic analysis and information on anticipating the LM demand, due to limited financial and human resources and proper coordination.
- As mentioned above, there exist some other cooperation structures in the country, but their capacities are not always fully exploited.

Thus, the created circumstances leave it with the government alone to decide upon the type of training, number of annual enrolment in VET, type of qualification and skills needed. All the above sum up to conclude that the collaboration between VET stakeholders lacks coordination, systematic and systemic approach because there is no acting entity that would fulfilling the role of a coagulator, to facilitate the relationship between the key stakeholders.

Important statements of some interviewed stakeholders about the social partnership in VET are presented in the box below:

BOX 6. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON THE SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN VET

Head of VET Department, MoECR: The system is blocked, and VET institutions cannot react on the labour market needs quickly. Therefore, I proposed to approve enrolment plans (State Order) for 3-5 years. <…> The methodology of LMO is not good and we cannot use the surveys from NEA from LMO. We do not receive any report or survey.

Head of LLL Service, MoECR: There is a need to improve the communication with big companies providing continuous training for their own workers, to find out what are their needs. <…> The degree of their involvement is quite low. The LLL Service, still faces problems in attracting big companies to participate in their activities. <…> There is a collaboration with SCs, but they work mainly the NQF and VET Departments, yet, due to their limited capacities, they cannot meet the number of requests from various departments and get involved in so many activities. <…> Private sector should have an increased role in the process of improving the quality of VET. Only a few companies are involved now in dual education and traditional education. There is a need of mentoring programmes, improve their collaboration with private sector, for example, by inviting them to VET institutions to share their experience. Or to invite VET teachers in companies and show them how they work.

Head of NQF Department, MoECR: National Council of Qualifications consists of 21 members, including representatives of all social partners. This Council is rather active and efficient in the development of NQF and it also gets involved in development of normative framework, approval of qualification standards and other activities.

Head of Department of Educational and Migration Policies, MoHLSP: The Social partners, i.e. trade unions, employers' associations, Chamber of Commerce and Industry are involved, they participate in workshops, meetings and they are members of the committee for evaluating the Sector Committees' projects. VET Council for National Employment Agency is also a tri-partite entity, but the participation is formal. <…> I think that between the VET institutions and MoECR there should be an intermediate entity similar to CRDÎP, which would be keeping strong collaboration with the Sector Committees and labour market. CRDÎP, after having their tasks and duties revised and updated, should

become a perfect candidate for this role.

Executive Director of the National Confederation of Employers: SCs are very much necessary, this is the only way for employers to be engaged in VET processes – to align the needs to the offer. Another way is involvement of CoCI. SCs are not very much efficient but shall continue improving and also involving other stakeholders, but not only employers. Many things should be done by SCs. <…> When you ask employers, what are the skills needed, they are not always ready to answer. <…> The SCs have to be more active and contribute to skills needs identification, particularly on a specific sector/ subsector, but not alone. Also Ministries, sector associations, individual companies, all together should do that and the state has to support financially SCs but the problem here, is that those who are not public servants, can't be financed from the state budget.

Vice-President of the Sector Committee for Trade, Hotels and Restaurants: Due to the lack of capacities and time, the SC members cannot make a Labour Market Analysis, and due to a lack of financial resources we cannot pay a good expert to do LMA. We do not manage to monitor the transposition of occupational standards into qualification standard and curricula. <…> Employers are not very eager to collaborate with Sector Committees because of a lack of credibility. <…> Unfortunately, employers prefer employing trained staff and they are not very keen to invest in students. They explain that they invest time and money in these students which later leave their companies for other jobs abroad.

Vice-President of the Sector Committee for IT and Communication: The private sector is not interested in establishing partnerships with sector committees and taking part in joint activities. The main reason is the lack of awareness about the importance of the Committee. <…> So far, we have worked on enthusiasm, we volunteered, with no funding for our activities. Usually funds are granted for a particular activity, for example, development of occupational standards, but the work of the sector committee is not only developing occupational standards.

President of the Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry: It is a real challenge to activate business, to raise their awareness for getting actively involved in IVET and CVET. The most important is to raise the business awareness that it is important for them to get actively involved, but it is not as simple for them as most of the companies struggle to survive, there is no certainty in tomorrow, and they invoke the lack of time to get involved in the Committee's work and VET. We are happy to have among the members of the SC the representatives of business from large and medium companies. But it is much more complicated to involve and motivate companies at regional Level.

Programme Manager, ADA project: Many SCs do not do what they should. The SCs are not functional, as the members are acting on voluntary basis. <…> In the process of development of occupational standards, educational standards and curricula, the private sector is not properly involved.

President of Pro Didactica: VET Department has too many tasks, and they do not manage to focus on the needs analysis. Here the problem is the entity, CRDÎP, which should take on a number of tasks, including needs analysis, scientific, methodological, policy implementation, coordination of CoEs, etc.

Director of Resources Department, "Premier Energy Distribution": The task of the

institutions involved in VET should be clearly defined. Very often we do not know whom to apply with the problems and questions. It is not clear what is the responsibility of the CoCI, who is responsible for what, up to now we resolve all the issues directly with the educational institution.

Country Director, LED Moldova: Probably we do not have clarity on who should built bridges between the actor – CoCI? SC? MoECR? Schools? <…> The lack of a good feedback for the Ministry is the main point. Without feedback you are flying blind. If we have better feedback from students, teachers, directors, LM, we could perform better, be more targeted. <…> Representation of economy is really hard and MoECR is not addressing it well.

Director of Professional School № 5 Bălți: The relationship with the business environment cannot be governed by MoECR. VET institutions provide educational services and need to be focused on doing quality training. It is necessary to have an entity dealing with the private sector and the modification of the curriculum. The private economic agents are busy with the development of their business, they do not want to "waste time" for the elaboration of occupational standards and curricula and want a readymade skilled workers or a well-trained intern. The VET institution develops the curricula based on what they think the employer needs. We need an institution to link the business environment and the VET institution, that would deal with the curricular development. CRDÎP could fulfil this role.

2.6. Work-based Learning Including Dual Education

The Work-based learning (WBL) which is foreseen for development of practical skills in real working conditions, is a mandatory part of the VET at all levels: secondary, post-secondary and non-tertiary post-secondary, for both initial and continuous VET.

2.6.1. The Regulatory Base of WBL

The mandatory status of the WBL in VET is pinned down by the following normative acts:

- Framework Regulation on Internships and Practical Training in Secondary VET (MoE Order № 233, 25th March 2016);
- Regulation on the Organisation and Functioning of Internship and Practical Training in Post-secondary VET and Post-Secondary Non-tertiary VET (MoE Order № 1086, 29th December 2016);
- Regulation on the Continuous Training of Adults (Government Decision № 193, 24th march 2017);
- Regulation on the Organisation of VET Programmes for Dual VET (Government Decision № 70, 22nd January 2018).

These regulations are based on a number of legal acts, i.e. the RM Education Code and Labour Code; VET Strategy 2013-2020; the Nomenclature of the Fields of Professional Training, of the Specialties and Qualifications (Government Decision № 853, 14th December 2015); the Nomenclature of Professional Training and Trades/Professions (Government Decision № 425, 3rd June 2015); the Reference Framework of the Curriculum for VET (MoE Order № 1128, 26th November 2015); the Framework Plan for Post-Secondary and Non-Tertiary Post-Secondary VET Based on the System of Transferable Study Credits (MoE Order № 1205, 16th December 2015); Regulation on the

Organisation of Studies in Post-Secondary and Non-Tertiary Post-Secondary VET Based on the Transferable Study Credit System (MoE Order № 234, 25th March 2016); and the Regulations of the VET Institutions (MoE Orders № 550, 10th June 2015; № 840, 21st August 2015; № 1158, 4th December 2015).

The regulations establish the normative framework regarding the planning, organisation, development and evaluation of the internships within the VET programmes in accordance with the National Qualifications Framework on vocational training fields. The Regulations also define the types of WBL and their objectives, obligations of the involved parties and the financial aspects.

The main types of WBL are: on-the-site learning or in-school practical training, carried out mostly in the VET institution (workshops, labs, production sites, mini-factory, greenhouses etc.); on-the-job training – internships in companies, ordinarily conducted in a business unit; and dual education, organised mainly in the companies[21].

All types of WBL are compulsory and are conducted under the legal framework in force, mentioned above. The VET institutions are liable for organisation of the practical training. Businesses provide WBL places for students under the contract and/or agreement signed between them and the VET providers. The contracts are periodically renewed and serve as a practical and legal basis for conducting WBL.

Distribution of places for internship / practical training is done by the VET institution Director's Order defining the period, type and the place of the WBL. The internships carried out within the economic units are organised and conducted on the base of Internship Contract or the Partnership Framework Convention. Identification of the economic unit for the internship is usually made by the student and followed by the analysis and validation of the selected place, or the place for internship is proposed to the student by the VET institution.

Distribution of the responsibilities between the main actors during internship period / practical training, is presented in the Table 4:

TABLE 4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD OF WBL

Body	Responsibility
Ministry of Education, Culture and Research	1) **Elaborates the normative framework** regarding WBL; 2) **Monitors the implementation** of WBL by the VET institutions.
The line Ministries, and/ through their subordinated entities (Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet under and Methodical Training Centre)	1) **Participate in the development of the normative framework** regarding WBL; 2) **Monitor the implementation of WBL** by the subordinated VET institutions of WBL on the field of competence; 3) **Facilitate organisation** of WBL.
Republican Centre for VET Development, Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet and Methodical Training Centre	1) **Elaborate methodological recommendations** for the development of programmes of WBL; 2) **Participate in the development of the normative framework** regarding WBL.
Sector Committees, Employers, Trade Unions	1) **Participate in the development of the normative framework** regarding WBL.

[21] Torino Process 2018-2020. Moldova.

Body	Responsibility
VET institution / VET provider	1) **Develops curricula**, **update study programmes** / professional training programmes in accordance with the requirements of the QS/OS; 2) **Plans, organises, coordinates and evaluates** students' internships / practical training according to the curriculum; 3) **Ensures compliance with the deadlines** for carrying out internships in accordance with the curriculum; 4) **Organises and supervises directly the fulfilment of the designed activities** in the best conditions, including ensuring conditions adapted to the students with special educational needs; 5) **Concludes contracts** for students' internships and framework partnership agreements with relevant economic units; 6) **Appoints the internship manager within the educational institution**, responsible for the internship carried out in economic units.
Economic Agent	1) **Ensures the observance of the provisions of the contract** / framework partnership agreement regarding the performance of the internships of the students; 2) **Organises and ensures appropriate conditions for the efficient development of the internship** in accordance with the internship curriculum; 3) **Appoints the internship manager within the economic unit** from among the highly qualified and experienced specialists in the field; 4) **Ensures the students' access to the specialised literature** fund available to the economic unit, various **development projects**, other materials, to the **corresponding machinery and equipment**, in accordance with the internship curriculum; 5) **Conducts training of students on organisational issues and norms** of protection / safety at work; 6) **Evaluates the level of professional competencies obtained by the student**, as well as the behaviour and the way of his integration in the activity of the economic unit.

The Local authorities, apart from some exceptions, are not trained in the process of WBL in any form.

A new model of WBL, **dual VET**, emerged in 2014. Dual VET is organised on the basis of a cooperation agreement concluded between a VET institution or a consortium of a VET institution and respective CoE or a penitentiary institution, on one hand, and an economic agent, on the other. Those agreements establish the terms and conditions of collaboration, the rights and obligations of the parties.

Initially, the responsibility for dual VET was mainly on the MoECR and the VET institution. Commencing the year 2015, the GIZ (through the project "Structural Reform in VET in Moldova"), and later ADA, LED and SDC joint their efforts to support and promote the implementation of dual VET. These resulted in an increased number of enrolled apprentices, reaching the share of 8.5% of the total number of students enrolled in secondary VET in 2018. Then, with the approval of the Regulation on the Organisation of VET Programmes for Dual VET (Government Decision № 70, 22nd January 2018), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry became an important player, sharing the responsibilities for the provision of Dual VET.

The mentioned regulation establishes the organisation and development of Dual VET programmes, defines its specific characteristics, the processes of organisation, development, monitoring, evaluation and financing, responsible bodies for every process, as well as, the rights and obligations of the training companies and the VET institutions, of the in-company trainers, the teachers within VET schools, and the apprentices.

Thus, if we compare dual VET with other types of WBL, it is obvious that a larger number of stakeholders are involved in different processes of dual programmes provision (Table 5):

TABLE 5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS IN THE FIELD OF DUAL VET

Body	Responsibility
Ministry of Education, Culture and Research	1) **Establishes the process of organisation, development and monitoring of dual education**, in coordination with other specialised central public authorities and the economic agents; 2) **Coordinates the admission plan in dual education** according to the requests of the economic agents and the capacities of the VET institutions, specifying the number of places (by trades / professions / specialties) necessary for the next school year, as well as the duration of training; 3) **Coordinates the curriculum for dual education**, developed based on occupational standards or occupational profiles for the prospective profession / trade and specialty; 4) **Monitors the organisation and conduct of admission and enrolment** in dual education; 5) **Funds the training in VET institutions**; 6) **Establishes the organisational conditions**, as well as the **monitoring** of the development of the qualification exams in dual education.
Chamber of Commerce and Industry	1) **Performs the activity of support and monitoring** of dual education; 2) **Organises**, at the request of the economic agent, **courses of continuous training of foremen-instructors in production at enterprises**; 3) **Organises**, at the request of the MoECR or the VET institution, **continuous training courses for master instructors from VET institutions**; 4) **Endorses the curriculum** for the profession / trade / specialty for dual education; 5) **Establishes the Commission for ascertaining the degree of compliance of the economic agent** necessary for carrying out the training activity in dual education; 6) **Recommends to the MoECR the appropriate economic agents** for the provision of dual training; 7) **Keeps track of the economic agents** – providers of the training programmes in dual education; 8) **Delegates representatives as members of the evaluation and qualification commissions** in dual education; 9) **Provides support and assistance to economic agents** interested or involved in the implementation of dual VET programmes; 10) **Provides support and assistance to students in concluding or terminating apprenticeship contracts**, at the request of the apprentice / economic agent; 11) **Provides support and assistance to economic agents in the process of setting up consortia**.
ANACEC	1) **Performs the external evaluation of the quality** of dual education training programmes and VET institutions in order to authorise temporary operation and / or accreditation.
Economic Agent	1) **Provides the training of the apprentices** in order to ensure the acquirement the necessary competences for the trade / profession / specialty; 2) **Complies with the training plan and ensures all the conditions** for the objective of the training process to be achieved within the period established by the parties; 3) **Appoints a qualified person** to perform the position of master foreman in production; 4) **Makes available to the apprentices**, free of charge, **all the materials necessary for practical training, in particular tools and consumables**;

Body	Responsibility
	5) **Ensures compliance with occupational safety and health requirements**, as well as compliance with applicable provisions of labour law; 6) **Provides the apprentices**, as far as possible, **with accommodation, transport and food, free of charge**; 7) **Informs the VET institution about the evolution and the realisation of the apprenticeship training programme**; 8) **Ensures**, at the request of the VET institution, **the access of its representatives to the apprenticeship training place**; 9) **Presents**, at the request of CoCI, a **report on the apprentices**; 10) **Participates in the elaboration of curricula**, **elaboration / updating of study programmes** in dual VET together with the VET institution; 11) **Ensures the evaluation of learning outcomes** together with the VET institution. 12) **Participates in the development of the normative framework** regarding dual VET.
VET institution	1) **Provides the theoretical training** necessary for the exercise of the profession / trade / specialty, as well as general and optional training; 2) **Keeps track of students enrolled** in dual education programmes, apprenticeship contracts concluded between students and economic agents, collaboration agreements concluded with economic agents; 3) **Participates in the development of the normative framework** regarding dual VET; 4) **Develops curricula, elaborates / updates study programmes** in dual VET. 5) **Ensures evaluation of learning outcomes and certification** of qualification.
Line Ministries and/ through their subordinated entities (Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet under and Methodical Training Centre)	1) **Initiate the coordination of the admission plan** in dual education according to the requests of the economic agent and the capacities of the VET institutions, **specifying the number of places** (by trades / professions / specialties) necessary for the next school year, as well as the duration of training and present the draft to the MoECR; 2) **Participate in the development of the normative framework** regarding dual VET.
Social Partners	1) **Participate in the development of the normative framework** regarding dual VET.

2.6.2. Analysis of the Situation

Currently WBL is institutionalised and seems well regulated. The roles of different players are also defined by the normative acts. However, there are various issues related specifically to the quality, the effectiveness and efficiently of the WBL development. These are conditioned by different facts. The active involvement of the private sector is essential for the WBL but the VET institutions still face difficulties in establishing long-term partnerships with the companies and the latter miss the mechanism for ensuring the quality of WBL. They lack also pedagogical know-how to train efficiently. Despite the well-built recognition of the WBL, the cooperation with economic agents is mostly limited to the provision of places for internships, with scant or non-participation in other VET processes. It is only the field of healthcare where the WBL is much more efficient due to the strong partnerships between the VET institutions and hospitals and medical clinics, being also facilitated by the line ministry, their subordinated bodies and the Centre of Excellence in Medicine and Pharmacy “Raisa Pacalo”.

It is also to mention that, due to the shortage of funds, neither the VET institutions nor any other bodies perform monitoring and evaluation of the process and the quality of WBL within the company. Moreover, despite the fact that the normative documents and the regulations assign responsibilities to many actors (like Sector Committees, CRDÎP) to facilitate the partnerships and coagulate effective cooperation between the private sector and VET institutions, their contribution is not perceived at the moment, due to the fact that these entities are very weak to fulfil their mission and functions according with the requirements of the regulatory acts. The support of the local authorities is rather an exception in a few regions of the country. Thus, all these summed up cannot but effect negatively the quality of the WBL.

Dual VET has had a positive trend in the last four years. This is largely due to the essential support from the development partners. However, training and learning environment differs a lot from one case to another. This situation is conditioned by the fact that dual VET requires investments and shared responsibilities between companies and VET institutions, and it depends on the companies' desire and readiness to assume a high level of responsibility, and on their technical and human capacity. In this context, dual VET remains to be a challenge for small companies, and it is in little demand in the agriculture area, where small businesses[22], and individual farms, are not motivated and fully prepared to provide dual VET. Moreover, even when dual VET is provided by a large enterprise with adequate human resources and training potential, there are some peculiarities here that have to be considered, as in the absence of consortia, apprentices are strictly trained in line with the individual need of the specific enterprise, thus acquiring a range of limited skills, that in the future might hinder their employment by other companies.

All the aspects mentioned above joined with the growing number of enterprises and VET institutions providing dual VET, lead to an imperious need to set up an entity/department which would bear the responsibility of the dual VET governance. Given the facts that the number of people in MoECR VET Department is very limited, the CoCI does not receive any funding from the state for the activities related to dual education, the Sector Committees are too weak and the involvement of the line ministries in the process of facilitating sectoral dual education is practically lacking, the establishment of a Dual VET governing body would be very opportune for its further development as well as for ensuring the sustainability of the activities that are currently carried out by the development partners.

Important reflections of some interviewed stakeholders about the WBL and Dual education are presented in the box below:

BOX 7. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON THE DUAL EDUCATION

Head of VET Department, MoECR: Dual education functions properly. Private companies should be engaged more actively. It would be better to combine two types of dual training: with schools and without schools.

Mayor of the Ceadîr Lunga City, Gagauzia: We provided students with transport for the dual education on tractor driver. We helped to establish cooperation with local companies for practical training and potential job-placement.

[22] The National Bureau of Statistics announces that in 2018 the number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) accounted for about 98.7% of the total number of enterprises. See more on: https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?l=ro&idc=168&id=6408&parent=0

President of Chamber of Commerce and Industry: The Companies are open to cooperation, but they are less motivated to be involved in dual education. However, the draft of the Law on Apprenticeship and Vocational Training defines some fiscal incentives which makes dual education to a certain extent attractive for some companies. At the same time, there are not so many enterprises which are able to meet the criteria defined for certification, that is, they do not have the conformity finding for carrying out the professional training activity. If we refer to dual education, the vast majority of companies that are in dual cooperation, have gone through this process.

There is a number of other challenges related to dual education. In terms of financing, the State only contributes to the financing of training in the VET institution (MoECR is only observing and supervising the process), while most of the expenses, 50-70% of the training period (practical training), rather considerable, are supported by employers, dual partners, future employers. Moreover, CoCI as the first partner of the Government in the implementation of Dual Education, fully covers the expenses of its own staff involved in the activities of support and monitoring of practical training within companies that provide dual education. The Chamber is also responsible for the quality of practical training, at the second place of training – in-company training, while the Ministry is only concerned about the admission and enrolment process, the coordination of the admission plan, the coordination of the curriculum and the establishment of the conditions for organising the Qualification Exam.

Unlike dual education, the practical training of the students at the enterprises within the traditional VET programmes, was assessed by the CoCI as unsatisfactory. One of the reasons is the fact (well known for the CoCI) that many companies where the students are sent for internship, have even no staff able to provide any training.

In the diploma it shall be mentioned that the student graduated dual education, and also the name of the company to be mentioned.

Executive Director of the National Confederation of Employers: The CoCI should not be the only organisation coordinating dual education. The SCs are more relevant to this.

Head of the Social and Economic Protection Department of the Confederation of Trade Unions: In general, dual education system is improving; there are many educational institutions where such processes take place. But also, they lack tools and technologies.

There are many VET institutions seeking employers and convincing them to get involved in the process. Many employers are involved, but when they become aware that there are so many regulations, requirements, responsibilities, they are forced to give up. The problem with employers persists in their ignorance of the requirements and obligations.

We should draw on the experience of Germany in promoting dual education: educational plans, curricula, hours are coordinated with state structures, funding is made by employers, so they are interested that everything works well. It is a good model for VET management.

If we talk about dual education, stimulating and motivating young people is that they can receive salaries.

Vice-President of the Sector Committee for IT and Communication: <…> when companies train specialists, they provide a more specific/narrow training, focused on a particular area.

GIZ Project Director: Dual education is expensive for companies. But there is no real data and analysis to assess if and what is expensive. It is necessary to have a sectoral approach and even a context approach and support training companies. There is motivation of companies. Those 80+ companies which are involved in dual VET, eager to do this also next year (do not know what happens after the crisis COVID 2019). <…> The annual Report on Dual Education of the MoECR relies entirely on the Project's Report. <…> VET system still doesn't respond the real needs of LM because of the lack of tripartite dialogue which should be at the bases of the governing. There is a lack of trust from the private sector and there is not enough involvement of the private sector to correlate VET to LM.

Programme Manager, ADA project: The companies are not interested in LLL and dual education and these fields are underdeveloped.

Director of Resources Department, "Premier Energy Distribution": We don't have any benefit of CoCI being responsible for dual education.

Dual education is costly for our company considering that 50-70% of training process is the responsibility of the company and students / apprentices do not produce anything like in other fields, textile for example. The benefit is to come only when the students graduate and come to work in the company.

CoEs are very poorly equipped. They try to find money here and to get good equipment. We try to support them, but the CoEs are not in a good situation. Different companies have their specific requirements someone trained in one company can hardly work in other companies. So, we can't train the students for all companies.

It would be good to have modification in the normative acts, Draft law on apprenticeship and consider the fact that companies involved in the dual training have different costs and benefits thus it is good to have a sectoral if not individual approach.

There should be an entity to provide support to VET institutions and companies, but I don't know where.

The task of the institutions should be clearly defined. Very often we don't know whom to apply with the problems and questions. It is not clear what is the responsibility of the CoCI, who is responsible for what, up to now we resolve all the issues directly with the educational institution.

Director of the Centre of Excellence in Medicine and Pharmacy "Raisa Pacalo": There is a very good collaboration with the economic agents which provide training sites for our students' internship. Firstly, they participate in developing occupational profiles and occupational standards. All educational plans and curricula are approved by economic agents and by the Medical University. The economic agents are also members of the Administrative Council and Teachers' Council. There are part-time teachers in the CoE who work in medical institutions. Students' internships are monitored not only by the school masters-instructors, but also by the methodological staff from companies which are funded by the CoE. The latter has strong partnerships with the social partners. They often organise round table discussions on various topics. Every year, they develop employer's satisfaction surveys, conducted jointly by CoE staff and representatives of economic agents. These surveys provide information on how well students are trained, what are the strengths and weaknesses of the educational process.

Director of the Centre of Excellence for Wine and Viticulture: Practical training is not very good due to lack of laboratories and that the places of practices are far away. It is not so easy to do practical training in companies. The companies are willing to accept students for internship as they lack qualified employees. <…> This year, for the first time we provide Dual education – mechatronics technician for agricultural machinery – but the company is not much interested and it is organised in a bit different way.

Director of the VET School № 5 in Bălți: The economic agent, is busy with the development of the business, does not allow itself to "waste time" for the elaboration of occupational standards or curricula. On the other hand, they expect a skilled worker, or a well-trained trainee. The VET institution elaborates the curriculum based on what they think the employer needs. If there were a link between the business environment and the VET institution, that would deal with the curricular framework would not be these divergences. Maybe Republican VET Centre could have this role, why not? But the tasks must be clearly stated.

Director of the Polytechnic College in Bălți: Private companies are not willing to participate in decision-making processes.

2.7. Tracer Studies

"Increase attractiveness and access to the VET, so that by 2020, the number of students increases by 10%" is the objective № 6 of the VET Strategy for 2013-2020, and development and implementation of a Tracer Study mechanism is among the expected results. It is perceived as a tool for monitoring and evaluating the VET quality targeting to improve the relevance of the VET system.

The Methodology of Tracing the Professional Track of Vocational Education Graduates was approved by the MoE Order № 1187, 10th December 2015. This document represents the normative grounds for studying the professional integration trajectory of persons that graduated from a VET institution. The tracing process has the goal to determine the degree of professional integration into the labour market and the transition rate of accession to the next education level.

The objectives of the methodology are to:

- analyse the general data about graduates;
- analyse the conditions pertaining to the graduation of the VET institution in the reporting year and the level of satisfaction with them;
- analyse the conditions pertaining to the period immediately following the graduation from vocational education;
- find the preferential degree of obtaining access to another education level;
- find the employment degree;
- analyse the process related to job search and employment;
- identify the conditions related to keeping the first job;
- determine the compliance of competences acquired during the vocational education to the job requirements;
- identify the obstacles to employment according to qualification;

- establish the preferential degree for continuing professional development;
- analyse the career growth possibilities for vocational education graduates;
- make a comparative analysis of incomes of vocational education graduates at first and current job; and
- analyse the job quality.

The tracing leads to a study that includes an analytical report on the degree of professional integration for each investigated category of graduates as well as the rate of VET graduates accessed to the next level of education.

The Methodology defines in detail the process of tracing the professional progression of VET graduates, indicates the responsibilities and the roles of all actors involved in this process, as well as the beneficiaries. It also includes a Questionnaire. According to the methodology, the VET institutions have to collect and process the data, and the latter are to be stored by centralised managed software. CRDÎP is provided here with a central role in implementation of the Methodology, and the representatives of this Centre were also members of the working group for the elaboration of the Methodology.

In 2016, MoE initiated a piloting process of the Tracer Study, supported by the ETF[23] and LED. In total 26 VET institutions (out of 86) of different size, type, field, from different regions of the country implemented the tracer study[24]. The purpose of the pilot was to test the methodology, build the capacity of VET institutions for implementing this exercise and to set grounds for establishing an institutionalised tracer study system in Moldova.

However, after 2017, the pursuit of the tracer study has no continuity so far and presently there is no valid information on data regarding the job placement of VET graduates. Thus, the indicator on the relevance and quality of the VET remains unmeasured.

The situation is slightly more advantageous in the sector of healthcare: for graduates of medical VET institutions, who learned by the State Order (free of charge), it is mandatory to work for three years in the institution assigned by the MoHLSP. Therefore, this Ministry keeps record of the number of all medical graduates (except the fee-paying students/graduates) and medical workers (in the public institutions) via SIERUSS system (Informatics System for Recording Human Resources from the Health System of the Republic of Moldova), managed by the Agency for Public Health.

Some VET institutions may carry out tracer studies of their graduates to gather information on the level of their employability as well as the degree of the employers' satisfaction targeting to improve the quality of the provided VET services.

It is anticipated that the Education Management Information System (EMIS) module for VET, which is being developed by MoECR with the WB support, will contain a domain with statistical data about the graduates' job and further education.

At present, the data obtained from existing platforms are not used or analysed in the institutional planning process, and their usefulness is often finite and formal.

[23] ETF particularly provided a capacity building for the representatives of MoE, CRDIP and VET institutions, which were directly involved in the implementation of the pilot. A free-of-charge application QTAFI for data collection was also provided by ETF.
[24] Piloting of the tracer study was implemented during the period of March-May 2017. The gross response rate accounted 35.3%.

Important statements of some interviewed stakeholders about the tracer study are presented in the box below:

BOX 8. ON STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON TRACER STUDY

Head of VET Department, MoECR: We developed and piloted the Tracer Study Methodology 3 years ago but there is no continuation. EMIS may help (from September 2020). VET institutions will collect data for EMIS.

Head of Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel, MoHLSP: The Ministry finds a work place for every graduate (VET and University). It is mandatory for the student that had their studies financed from the state, to work 3 years at a specific institution, then they are free to select where to work.

Then, we have SIERUSS managed by the Agency for Public Health. We permanently keep record of number of all medical workers in the system.

Country Director, LED Moldova: Feedback mechanism is lacking. Tracer study <…> disappeared… EMIS is not a tracking tool, it shows what are the inputs, how many students are in each class <…>. EMIS stared about 3 years ago, but we still do not have it in VET.

The lack of a good feedback for the ministry is one of the central points. Without feedback you are flying blind. You do not know how to really better improve.

If we have better feedback from the students, teachers, directors, tracer studies, employers' side, LM, we could perform better, be more targeted. This is a key point. <….>

Who shall do the tracer study? It is a very valuable instrument and necessary to be done regularly. A bit sceptical on putting this on the VET institution as they might be biased, and they need capacity to process and analyse the data.

Programme Manager, ADA project: Criteria for the VET institutions assessment should be the degree of employability of the graduated (to do tracer study and find out these).

President of Pro Didactica: Tracer Study is very important. This will help to take decisions. But as far as I know it is not well developed. Only some institutions do tracer studies.

Director of CEDA: We want to find out how the students select the school and profession and we try to do Tracer study, particularly in terms of entrepreneurship, in order to improve the curricula on the Basis of Entrepreneurship:

- How many graduates establish their own businesses?
- How do they know about legislation?
- Are the employers satisfied with the graduates and provide to MoE this information?

Over the last 2 years we did it twice. We included all VET schools in this activity, but this tool is expensive, and we can't use it too often.

The Ministry of Education did Tracer Study some years ago but now we don't know who and how and what they do.

Director of the Centre of Excellence in Medicine and Pharmacy "Raisa Pacalo": It is our duty to monitor the professional path of our graduates. For a three-year period after the graduation from our school, we monitor their employability on the labour market. To do so,

we use a questionnaire and ask our graduates' employer to fill it in. Completed questionnaires are sent back to us, where the heads of departments analyse them and finally provide the results. Both the satisfaction surveys and the questionnaires help us to see if we are on the right direction. I would like to say that satisfaction surveys represent a very efficient mechanism for making decisions on improving the situation.

Director of the VET School № 5 in Bălți: The employment inclusion after graduation is monitored by the school master-instructors, via telephone / social networks. Many graduates are enrolled into the National Army Forces (compulsory military service) immediately after completing their studies. The biggest problem is migration, because young people are attracted by the salaries in the EU countries.

2.8. Lifelong Learning (LLL)

The ***Lifelong Learning Service*** at the MoECR is the principal LLL governing body at the national level. Its functions are presented in details under the Section 3.1, Part 1 of this Report. Another important actor in the field of LLL is ***ANACEC***, which is in charge for carrying out quality assessment and external evaluation of CVET programmes and CVET providers. The ***Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet*** under the MoHLSP monitors the process of continuous training and certification of the teaching and managerial staff of the medical educational institutions.

Public and private VET institutions, universities, OSMED, and individual companies can be listed as the main providers of continuous professional training. In addition, NEA (subordinated to MoHLSP) is also responsible for some activities related to the professional training of unemployed. The Agency supports jobseekers through its territorial subdivisions, and through VET institutions, provides vocational training courses, including those on the basics of entrepreneurship.

With regard to VNFIL, its launching pad became the approval of the Regulation on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Education by the MoECR Order № 65, 24th January 2019, authorisation of four VET institutions (Colleges and CoEs) to pilot the VNFIL mechanism the same year. The Regulation establishes the normative framework regarding the functioning of the national VNFIL system, through which the process of identification, documentation, evaluation and certification of knowledge and skills acquired in the non-formal and informal education contexts is carried out in line with European recommendations on Lifelong learning.

Overall, it can be stated that LLL has gained prominence in development in the last years. However, continuous professional training is intermittently provided by a limited number of institutions on request, and some companies provide short courses for their own needs, i.e. to train new workers or upgrade the qualifications of their own employees.

The small number of VET institutions providing CVET programmes is also explained by the fact that the accreditation of those programmes is a long and expensive process as it must follow an accreditation path similar to the integral IVET programmes awarding qualifications.

Provisions of the Framework Regulation of the CoEs, makes them responsible for supplying continuous training of teachers and managers of the VET schools and colleges and for the certification of professional competences, acquired in formal, informal and non-formal environment. However, very few of the Centres are capable to fulfil their role appropriately. Up to now, apart from the two CoEs

that piloted VNFIL, none of them offers certification of professional competences acquired in informal and non-formal environment, and few offer CVET and professional training courses.

The findings of the study reveal that there is still a lack of clarity about how LLL can be operationalised, systematically and systemically. There exists a good evidence of LLL data and coordination of the continuous professional training process in the medical field and the continuous training of teachers, but things are far from being the same in other sectors.

Additionally, despite the fact that numerous young people and adults benefit from continuous professional training, there is no coordination between the providers and no mechanism to measure and evaluate the impact of the trainings. This is largely due to the fact that the only structure responsible for governing the LLL, i.e. the Lifelong Learning Service at the MoECR with its staff of only 3 people and no subordinated intermediate bodies, has very limited capacities and resources both financial and human to properly implement its mandate.

The MoECR aspires to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and LLL opportunities for all, yet in the targets and indicators, the emphasis is still on the formal education.

Important statements of some interviewed stakeholders about the continuing professional training process are presented in the box below:

BOX 9. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON LLL PROCESS IN MOLDOVA

Head of the Social and Economic Protection Department of the Confederation of Trade Unions: The statistical data show that some financial resources have been allocated for that and a number of staff made courses in their enterprises. The Labour Code provides for the allocation of 2% by the employer for training within the enterprise. But if we check the statistics, they show that only 0.4% of the financial resources are used for this purpose. Also, statistics show that specialists benefit more than simple workers, depending on the activity. As previously mentioned, we negotiated and signed the Convention on Sample Training Contract. We advocated for including a separate chapter on training, specifying categories of employees, training plans, and resources. The Labour Code provision acts as a threat on employees, stipulating they can be fired in case their knowledge/skills do not meet the required level. Often employers abuse of this provision. There were cases when the employer has assessed the workers, without any previous training. It happened to people of retirement age that were to be dismissed without receiving compensation for staff reduction. The employer applies this provision, saying that the worker does not match the skill levels. There have been attempts by the Ministry of Labour to draw up a draft regulation on testing/assessing employees approved by Government Decision, but it did not pass because we believe that in this case we need a law, not just a government decision. The provision of the Labour Code is very broad and there are no clear procedures and mechanisms for its implementation. We consider *it necessary to elaborate a legislative or regulatory act, which details the process and mechanisms for testing/assessing employees. In our opinion, the employee can be tested only as a result of training.*

President of the Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry: MoECR is not focused on continuous training.

Programme Manager, ADA project: Despite the fact that we are talking about LLL and Dual education for such a long time, the companies are not interested and these fields are underdeveloped, LLL is not consistent… The society is changing quickly, and we have to look forward, not back … so the LLL is more and more improved. LLL is to be promoted widely. There is no information about the adult learning, short-term courses provided by the VET schools. Adult Education courses should be offered (short-term courses).

Specialist in the USAID project: All schools and professions should be accredited. But this is a problem when it comes to the short-term Adult Education courses. This blocks the process because it takes too much time and is costly. More flexibility is needed.

Director of CEDA: In Lithuania, 50% is paid by the government and 50% by the employer, they offer short-term courses but this is not the case in Moldova

Country Director, LED Moldova: We have an issue with short-term courses: they are required to be accredited, even very targeted courses for small group of people. It does not make any sense. It takes much time and is costly. No one wants to go through all these steps for just few people.

Head of LLL Service, MoECR: The role of LLL Service is to develop policies and there should be another entity responsible for the implementation or coordination of those processes, providing consultation services, etc. Now these tasks are performed by the LLL Service.

Thus, some of these tasks are not implemented as they should, because in the LLL Service and in the Ministry, there are no experts who could develop efficient forecasts or analysis. The LLL Service spends too much time on answering phones and emails, similar to the other colleagues from other departments in the MoECR. This hinders the focusing on more important things, such as analysis and research tasks. So, the actual role is opposite to the one it should be. We are too much involved in performing routine and technical tasks, instead of doing value-added activities. <….>

There is a need to improve the communication with large companies providing continuous training for their own workers, to find out what are their needs. There is a collaboration with Sector Committees, but they work mainly with the National Qualification Department and VET Department. Private sector should have an increased role in this process, only a few companies are involved now in the process of improving the quality of VET training. There is a need of mentoring programmes, improve their collaboration of VET schools with private sector.

2.9. Quality Assurance

Two main documents lay the legal base for the education quality assurance in Moldova. These are the Regulation on organisation and functioning of the ANACEC[25] and External Quality Assurance Methodology[26]. The former defines the status, mission, tasks and functions of the Agency (see Section 3.2, Part 1 of this Report), while the latter sets a complete methodological and procedural framework

[25] Approved by the Government Decision № 201, 28th February 2018.
[26] Approved by the Government Decision № 616, 18th May 2016.

for the quality assurance including internal and external quality assessment. The main goal of the Methodology is regulating the process of monitoring the educational institutions and their programmes against the requirements towards the education quality defined by the state educational standards. Accordingly, the following objectives are defined:

1) for the educational and academic community, beneficiaries, employers and the wider society, ensuring that the educational programme and the educational institution meet the minimum level of quality stipulated by national basic standards and the best national and international experience;
2) supporting the educational institutions in development of an effective system of management and a true culture of quality, as well as for presenting their status through factual and relevant evidence and documents;
3) providing support to the educational institutions in the process of joining the values of the European Higher Education Area, the European Research Area and the European Vocational Education Area;
4) stimulating the participation of educational institutions in the continuous promotion of the quality of education, scientific research, innovations, artistic creativity, proven by the results corresponding to the labour market needs;
5) supporting the educational institutions in creating conditions for academic mobility and mutual recognition of documents on education;
6) promoting cooperation between the educational institutions for the implementation, monitoring and comparison of the quality of the educational process;
7) identifying, publicising and preventing any attempt of operating an educational programme or educational institution which do not meet the minimum quality standards.

The quality assurance in VET relates to:

- institutional capacities;
- education effectiveness including the academic progression;
- quality of vocational training programmes;
- institutional management of the quality;
- conformity of the internal evaluation with the actual state of play.

The external evaluation is applied for authorisation of temporary functioning of the institution or a programme or for their accreditation. For this, the following 10 Standards of external evaluation effectiveness are used (for criteria and indicators as by standards, see the **Annex 12**):

1. Quality Assurance policy;
2. Development and approval of vocational training programmes;
3. Learning, teaching and academic assessment, focus on learner/student;
4. Enrolment, academic progression, recognition and certification of learners/students;
5. Teaching staff;
6. Educational resources and learners/students support systems;
7. Information management;
8. Public relations;
9. Continuous monitoring and systematic evaluation of the vocational training programmes;
10. Periodical procedures of external quality assurance.

For supporting the VET institutions, in 2017 a Manual on Internal Quality Assurance in the VET System was published by ANACEC.

VET institutions and study programmes (initial and continuous) offered by them are subject to external quality evaluation by ANACEC every five year. The procedure of external quality evaluation of VET institutions (both public and private) and their programmes was launched by ANACEC in 2017, for accreditation purposes. In 2018, 16 programmes[27] of four VET institutions were evaluated by ANACEC. This constitutes around 5% of the total number of VET programmes / institutions in the country[28].

Overall, the existent quality assurance mechanisms can be described as an input tool or a "show-window", which ensures the quality and relevance of VET providers and VET programmes and qualifications, achieved through:

- accreditation of VET training programmes and VET providers;
- mechanisms to secure unity and transparency in qualifications across VET system, national qualifications framework and transferable credit framework (for VET level 4 and 5) and certificate/ diploma supplements;
- mechanisms to ensure that VET institutions have the capacity to deliver the VET programmes to the required standards.

However, it does not include assessment of final results produced by the VET providers to ensure the appropriateness of those VET products, through e.g. VET students'/graduates' or company satisfaction surveys.

BOX 10. STAKEHOLDERS' STATEMENTS ON QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

President of Pro Didactica: We have ANACEC now, which is good. For ANACEC the exercise of external evaluation, as well as the self-evaluation for the VET institutions, was for the first time and we, together with Consept Project want to have a follow up exercise. The Quality standards should be improved to have the same criteria on evaluation and self-evaluation. Currently there are 10 quality standards that serve as indicators for external evaluation but based on these more indicators are needed for self-assessment. We need the same landmarks so all of us speak the same language when monitoring, evaluating, making analysis.

GIZ Project Director: In our particular case, we are involved in QA, mainly through the CCI (but not only), in the companies to ensure that the dual training is provided properly and minimal standards are maintained.

Country Director, LED Moldova: Can Moldova itself pay and resource the process they have set up themselves in the name of quality assurance? There are too complicated procedures for different things: occupational standards, educational standards, qualifications… You should be a bit slow down, there is a need of a reasonable balance between quality assurance and what schools can do. The processes are very heavy and

[27] Of these, 3 programmes (offered by 2 VET institutions) are in dual education.
[28] Torino Process 2018-2020. Moldova.

now they try to cut them. You need the stamp and you get the stamp, and I am not sure that is the quality.

Director of CRDÎP: As for quality assurance component, we are always ready to provide any methodological support, provide trainings to VET staff, continuous training for VET teachers and managers, workshops and seminars, coordinate curricula development, etc.

Director of VET School № 5 in Bălți: The internal quality is monitored by the Commission for Internal Evaluation and Quality Assurance, the external – by ANACEC.

3. THE REGIONAL/LOCAL LEVELS EXPERIENCE FORGING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS

At present, there is no regional dimension of VET governance in Moldova. The country has only one level of administrative division, i.e. Municipalities of Chisinau and Bălţi, Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia and 32 districts[29] of which the largest (Cahul) has a territory of 1,546 km^2 and only 124,091 inhabitants[30]. Due to the large number of districts, their limited size and small population as well as the fact that in most of the districts there are no more than 2 VET institutions (12 districts have only 1 and other 8 districts have no institutions), the sub-national level of VET governance was considered in the country as not relevant and non-effective. This position was expressed by the national authorities also during the Launching Workshop.

As explained above, the VET institutions are subordinated to the central bodies (ministries), and the local authorities (local self-governance bodies) have no any responsibility in the field of VET. Under these circumstances, in most of the cases, none of the two parties – VET institutions and the Municipalities – see any purpose to establish a cooperation, most likely, due to a seeming absence of "common interests".

The case of partnership between the VET School in Ceadîr Lunga municipality and the City Hall[31], proves the opposite. Without having any formal obligations towards each other or even a signed document, the School and the Mayor's Office collaborate effectively as they both clearly see a common goal to which they should jointly serve: to equip the local youth with adequate vocational skills for making them competitive particularly in the local LM and encouraging to stay in their own town and contribute to its development. Therefore, the City Hall, to a possible extent, supports improvement and promotion of the VET Scholl, although cannot provide e.g. direct funding due to its subordination to the central authorities. The Strategic Development Plan of the community includes concrete activities related to the VET institution and the latter's representatives were invited to participate in the development of that Plan. Particularly, the municipality provided transportation means for the Dual education students in the field of agriculture, who should reach a remote training site; equipped dormitories with furniture as the number of student at the School doubled within the last 5 years; helped to establish cooperation with local companies for practical training and potential job-placement of the School's seamstress- and cook-students; hosted the students of the plumber's and carpenter's qualifications to pass their practical training e.g. in the local kindergartens (under the subordination of the City Hall).

In addition, the City Hall facilitates training sessions for students on how to start business, supports establishing partnerships with national and international development partners, conducts LM analysis in the region. As a result, 4 new professions were introduced in the VET School and the graduates are assisted with job placement.

On its side, the School makes efforts to satisfy the skill needs of the city, improving the quality of training delivery, providing consultancy to the municipality and helping with its own specialists in different projects initiated by the city.

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[29] The districts are clustered into three groups – North, Centre and South – but these are not formal regions (organisational units) and have no administration.

[30] Statistical Yearbook of the Republic of Moldova, 2019: http://statistica.gov.md/public/files/publicatii_electronice/Anuar_Statistic/2019/2_AS.pdf.

[31] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Anatolii Topal, Mayor of the Ceadîr Lunga city, and Ms Vera Balova, Director of VET School in Ceadîr Lunga.

Both parties believe that the cooperation would be even more effective if a certain formal framework for that is established, e.g. the City Hall could have representatives in the Scholl's Administrative Council, or some funding opportunities would be foreseen by the legislation.

European Training Foundation

VET GOOD MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA

Assessment Report[1]

Part 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

[1] Final working document November 2020

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
ASOO	Agency for VET and Adult Education
CNSM	National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova
CoCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CoE	Centre of Excellence
CRDÎP	National Centre for VET Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
EKKA	Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HR	Human Resources
IES	Institute of Education Sciences
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LM	Labour Market
LMO	Labour Market Observatory
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCT	Methodical Centre for Training
MDL	Moldovan Leu
MoARDE	Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment
MoECR	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
MoEI	Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure
MoER	Ministry of Education and Research
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Policy
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoSA	Ministry of Social Affairs
MoSE	Ministry of Science and Education
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova

NCCVET	National Coordination Council for VET
NCTVETD	National Centre for TVET Development
NEA	National Employment Agency
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OS	Occupational Standard
OSCA	Estonian Skill Forecasting System
PA	Pre-accession
PAME	Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation
QA	Quality Assurance
QS	Qualification Standard
RM	Republic of Moldova
RMIC	Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet
SC	Sector Committees
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SDP	Strategic Development Plans
TNC	Teachers' National Council
TU	Trade Union
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning
WB	World Bank
WBL	Work-Based Learning

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

The main purpose of the primary phase of the review was to identify the actors at national and sectoral levels, directly or indirectly involved in Moldovan VET governance, their structure, tasks and responsibilities, institutional and HR capacities, subordination and accountability, performance, funding, and the links between them.

In addition, the policy and legal frameworks of the VET in Moldova were studied in details.

Furthermore, an inventory of opinions of the stakeholders about different VET practices and issues was formed.

The critical analysis of the above issues as well as development of recommendations on the possible options of the VET governance restructuring was the purpose of the follow-up phase of this review.

For the assessment, the following hypothesis was put forth: ***"The Moldovan VET and skill policies in LLL perspective, are implemented through a*** *[governance]* ***architecture which might be more effective and efficient through revisiting the key segments of its current institutional arrangements addressing stakeholder performance whilst using legal and fiscal (financing, funding and budgetary) practices for steering the system change"***. This hypothesis was tested in the framework of the review, and was mainly confirmed.

The conclusions presented in the Section 2 of this Report, are based on both findings of the implemented study accompanied with the results of the analysis carried out by the Experts, and the generalisation of statements made by the VET system key stakeholders. It is not surprising that the non-state actors were more critical in their judgements compared with the representatives of the governmental structures and public institutions who, however, have also expressed a number of concerns related to the situation in the VET system and specifically its governance. The results of the self-assessment exercise (see the Section 4, Part 1 of this Report) were also taken into consideration.

While formulating the conclusions, the experts attempted to do it objectively to a possible extent, and keep a balanced approach to both positive aspects and the existing challenges.

During the implementation of this review, the authors arrived at a firm conviction that the principal need of the Moldovan VET governance and the system in a whole, is not only its optimisation for ensuring cost-efficiency, but more importantly, making it effective and fit for purpose which presently can hardly be considered as the case. Therefore, the actions recommended in this Report, although will most likely cause additional costs but if done properly and comprehensively, will return the expenses and lead to tangible results.

The following ***7 objectives*** are defined as priorities at which the recommendations are targeted:

1. **Establish an effective VET policy making scheme**, **based on social partnership** and equipped with operational Monitoring and Evaluation system for policy implementation and system performance;
2. **Rationalise the VET governance institutional settings**, including VET support structures;
3. **Optimise the VET providers network**, including VET institutions reorganisation, revision of their subordination, profiles, functions and the level of autonomy, introduction of a licensing system, as well as revision of the VET institutions internal governance scheme by means of introducing multi-stakeholder management structures. A special focus is on the Centres of Excellence;

4. **Increase effectiveness of** business processes related to the specific **VET practices** such as: Standards and curricula, Career guidance, Tracer studies, Quality assurance, Work-based learning and Dual education, Teacher training;
5. **Increase VET funding and optimise the financing scheme**;
6. **Improve the VET legislation**;
7. **Optimise international support** *via* better coordination and communication.

The table below provides summary of the ***main*** 16 Recommendations according with the objectives, as well as the corresponding challenges and the expected results.

In the Section 3, those Recommendations are presented in details and necessary justifications are given. Implementation options which include the proposed timeframe, required financial resources and the variables to be defined locally, are proposed as well.

In addition, a set of ***accompanying*** recommendations are made. They are not less important than the main ones but relate to the structures responsible not solely for VET or not directly involved in the VET governance.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

№	Objective	Main Challenges	Recommendations	Expected Results
1	**Establishing an effective VET policy making scheme, based on social partnership and equipped with operational Monitoring and Evaluation system**	• Non-public VET stakeholders do not effectively participate in VET policy making and decision-taking processes, which results in lack of acceptance and ownership of the VET policy and strategy by a wider VET community and limits the latter's political and practical support to the VET development. • The SCs are not effective enough and have no any considerable impact, while businesses are not always motivated to closely cooperate with the SCs. • The VET teachers have no any influence on policy-making or forming the VET legal base. • The monitoring and evaluation framework for the policy level, defined by the VET Development Strategy, has never become a reality. • External monitoring and evaluation of VET institutions is entirely missing. • The internal monitoring reports produced by VET institutions do not result in any administrative decisions.	***R.1: Establish a tripartite** (or quadripartite) **National VET Council*** ***R.2: Assign coordination of the Sector Committees' activities to the VET Council*** ***R.3: Establish VET Teachers' National Council*** ***R.4: Operationalise the system of Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET policy implementation and external Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET institutions and the entire VET network performance***	➢ Opportunity to develop an informed and balanced VET policy which is relevant and credible and considers the needs and interests of all key stakeholders. ➢ Increased effectiveness of the Sector Committees and improved motivation of the private sector representatives to support VET. ➢ The VET teachers' voice is heard while developing VET policies and drafting corresponding legal acts. ➢ Platform for experience and best VET practices sharing among VET teachers. ➢ A system for collecting and analysing credible and trustworthy information to be used for management and informed decision-making at institutional and policy levels, is in place.
2	**Rationalising the VET governance institutional settings**	• The VET system does not enjoy necessary methodological support, and the VET players' activities are poorly coordinated due to the fact that the existing VET support structures – CRDÎP, RMIC and MCT are underfunded and understaffed. Moreover, they are assigned to implement some ministerial tasks, which are beyond their mandates, thus, demonstrating low functionality and being mostly inefficient. • The staffs of the Ministries dealing with VET, including the VET Department of MoECR, are extremely limited and their workload includes a large portion of functions non-relevant to the ministerial activities, which results in insufficient effectiveness of VET governance.	***R.5: Establish an effective national structure assigned for complete scope of VET support activities*** ***R.6: Expand the capacities of the VET Department at MoECR and revise its tasks***	➢ Full-scale and effective methodological support provided to all VET aspects (practices) and VET institutions by a professional independent structure subordinated directly to MoECR. ➢ Appropriate coordination of all VET players' activities. ➢ MoECR VET Department is released from the VET institutions daily management and supervision functions and is solely responsible for policy developing and implementing, having also tasks of coordinating the VET providers' network and providing administrative support. ➢ The VET Department has all necessary capacities to fulfil its functions effectively.

№	Objective	Main Challenges	Recommendations	Expected Results
3	**Optimising the VET providers network**	• Compared with the students' population, the number of the VET institutions over the country is too large and many of them are not cost-efficient. • The offer of qualifications in many VET institutions is not rational. • The VET network is fragmented between different ministries which complicates implementation of the unified state VET policy. • Existence of three types of institutions is an unnecessary complication and this segregation specifically affects attractiveness of the VET Schools. • At present, none of the Centres of Excellence is capable to exercise its role effectively according with the statute and fulfil all its functions due to the lack of human capacities, managerial and didactic, and financial scarcity. • Many tasks that are supposed to be performed by a meso-level VET structure and/or sectoral entities, are put on the CoEs' shoulders which has already proven its bankruptcy.	***R.7: Revise subordination of the public VET institutions*** ***R.8: Rationalise the public VET institutions' network*** ***R.9: Unify the types of VET institutions and revise the concept of Centres of Excellence*** ***R.10: Introduce a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance and management of VET institutions*** ***R.11: Introduce a system of licencing for the offered qualifications***	➢ Increased effectiveness of a unified state education policy implementation through defragmentation of the responsibility for VET provision and for the management of the public VET providers network. ➢ Concentration of resources and increased efficiency of their allocation and use which is supposed to result to improved cost-effectiveness of VET provision in general. ➢ Optimisation and consolidation of various methodological support structures which are also presently scattered among different ministries. ➢ Increased effectiveness of VET institutions management and due involvement of non-public stakeholders in decision making processes at institutional level. ➢ Increased flexibility and attractiveness of all VET institutions. Considerably improved appropriateness of CoEs and increased motivation of VET institutions to be(come) CoEs. ➢ Increased relevance of the offered qualifications to the Labour Market and existence of at least minimal pre-requisites for quality of the training process.
4	**Increasing effectiveness of VET practices**	• Decision-taking procedures and the business processes are not efficient and effective for many VET aspects or practices, such as Standards and curricula development, Career guidance, Tracer studies, Quality assurance, Work-based learning, Dual education and Teachers training, etc.	***R.12: Include optimisation of the VET practices in the new VET Strategy as expected outcomes***	➢ Increased effectiveness of the VET practices through optimisation of business processes and simplification of bureaucratic procedures.

№	Objective	Main Challenges	Recommendations	Expected Results
5	**Increasing VET funding and optimising VET financing scheme**	• The VET funding as a share of the total State budget is decreasing and its absolute amount is not increasing over years. • The new per capita VET financing mechanism is applied only partly as the rates are calculated with consideration of the budget ceiling but not based on the real cost of training as by the categories of professions/qualifications.	***R.13: Increasing the VET funding*** ***R.14: Ensure full-fledged and consistent per-capita VET financing mechanism***	➢ Continuously improved VET institutions' facilities, equipment and the methodological base, developed HR capacities and increased remuneration ensuring highly proficient VET staff. ➢ Established and effectively running VET support structure providing high quality expertise; ➢ Expanded capacities of the VET governance structures and increased quality and widened scope of measures serving good governance (data collection and analysis, research, consultations, VET advocacy and promotion, etc.). ➢ Improved quality of VET provision due to appropriate funding as per qualification.
6	**Improving VET legislation**	• Some VET aspects and practices are poorly regulated by normative acts, there are legal acts and normative documents which are ambiguous or contradicting each other. • In several cases, practical implementation of the legal acts' requirements is complicated particularly due to lack of funding, limited capabilities of human resources, etc.	***R.15: Revise the legislation so that it serves best for effective implementation of the VET policy and strategy***	➢ VET legislation serves concrete objectives established by the VET Strategy. ➢ Provisions of the legal acts corresponds to the available financial, institutional and human resources necessary for implementing those provisions.
7	**Optimising International Support**	• International support to VET has room for improvement.	***R.16: Establish a VET donors' coordination platform***	➢ Better coordination of the donors' activities, increase of the projects' effectiveness and improvement of their targetedness.

2. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions are presented according with the VET system clusters.

Institutional Setup of the VET Governance and the VET Institutions Network

- The VET system in Moldova has a **complicated structure** with involvement of numerous players both public and non-public. There are many horizontal and vertical links, including administrative and methodological. However, some of them **do not work properly** due to different reasons including **poor regulation or low motivation**. Some examples are: the Coordination Group of LMO that includes representatives of all ministries and the Administrative Council of NEA which is a tripartite body, but the members of both collective structures demonstrate low motivation to participate and work effectively; the Sector Committees, where mainly the lack of funding does not encourage their members' motivation to contribute to the Councils works; the Centres of Excellence are not specifically motivated (and also not capable) to perform their role of mediation between the local economic agents and Colleges and VET schools.
- Some **forms of cooperation between the stakeholders are formalised and institutionalised**, while others are **based on memoranda or similar documents, or on merely non-formal agreements**. For example, the LMO operates on the basis of a partnership agreement between MoHLSP and NEA on one side and the MoEI, MoF, MoECR, MoARDE, NBS, the National Institute for Economic Research, the National Confederation of Employers, the National TU Confederation, the CoCI, the Bureau of Migration and Asylum, on the other; businesses provide WBL places for students under the contract and/or agreement signed between them and the VET providers; Dual VET is organised on the basis of a cooperation agreement concluded between a VET institution and economic unit.
- Although certain non-state actors do participate in VET governance, but their role is predominantly consultative, while the **decision-making authority almost solely belongs to the governmental bodies.**
- The **VET system of Moldova and its governance are centralised at the national level**. No regional or local bodies have tasks in this area. At the same time, there are specific examples of good cooperation between the public VET institutions and the local authorities, which are at least worth to be considered and disseminated.
- At the same time, there are **numerous Social Partner organisations**, which are formally involved in different VET processes, in accordance with the corresponding legal acts.
- A **large number of donors** are providing considerable assistance to the Moldovan VET system development, and the EU, with its Budget Support, remains the largest among them.
- **Many CSOs** are also active in supporting the VET system improvements.
- The public VET institutions are subordinated to four different ministries which are directly responsible for VET governance and are accountable to the Prime Minister's Office. This **fragmentation of the VET network between the ministries** is not unequivocally accepted by all VET players as being efficient.
- The **Ministry of Finance participates in the VET governance through different processes of the VET institutions' funding**, while other line ministries have indirect relations to the VET

Governance, e.g. through participation in elaboration of qualification standards and modification of the Nomenclature of fields of professional training and specialties.

- There are a **number of support structures under MoECR, MoHLSP and MoARDE** as well as **various Councils but the levels of their functionality and effectiveness are different**. The key structure which should ensure social partnership in the field of VET, i.e. National Council for VET Coordination is not functioning since 2017, while the Republican Centre for VET Development is under-staffed and under-funded and in fact, almost non-operational. At the same time, the Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet of MoHLSP and Methodical Centre for Training of MoARDE cannot effectively fulfil their primary tasks, due to the shortage of staff and also because of being loaded by some other ministerial duties.
- The **effectiveness of VET system governance is assessed as average**. It is **slow *('behind the time')* and cannot ensure that VET meets the modern LM requirements.** There is also a significant bureaucracy. The main reasons of that particularly are the political instability which leads to high level of turnover in the Government, ministries and other state institutions; as well as the lack of funding which results in considerable shortage of workforce at the level of the ministries and public support structures. For example, the VET Department at MoECR, with its extremely limited number of employees, has a wide range of functions many of which are beyond the policy and strategy development, monitoring, evaluation, planning, etc., and very often relate to daily management of the VET institutions functioning, to which the majority of the staff's time is allocated. In MoARDE, there is only one person responsible for Vocational education, who evidently cannot be able to coordinate the activities of the entire agricultural VET with its 8 institutions.
- Another issue is, that **according with the opinion of many stakeholders, the VET governance tasks are not clearly and properly distributed among the corresponding bodies.** In addition, there is an obvious lack of HR capacities to organise and implement the VET governance effectively.
- The dominating position of the stakeholders (fully shared also by the ETF Experts) is that **there is no need of establishing new structures or making radical changes in the institutional setup.** Nevertheless, **certain mergers are necessary but most importantly, new mechanisms and relations (administrative and legal) should be established to make the existing instructions effectively functional.** This may require amendments to the legislation, changes in the statutes of the institutions involved in the VET governance, as well as considerable renewal of managerial staffs in many public structures and revised requirements to their appointment.
- Another important deficiency, which was also one of the stakeholders' main concerns, is that **in the country, there is no structure playing an intermediate role between the policy-making level (Government, Ministries) on one hand, and the VET institutions and other players (e.g. Sector Committees, Social partners, NGOs, Donors and other partners),** on the other.
- **At the institutional level, the management effectiveness is also questioned**. In the VET institutions, there are four management bodies: the Teachers' Council (*'collective management body'*), the Administrative Council (*'executive management body'*), the Scientific-Methodical Council (except Secondary VET Schools), and the Director (*'executive manager'*). The distribution of the tasks between the two Councils is not really based on clear principles; moreover, the scope of functions of every type of Council differs as by types of institutions (VET Schools, Colleges, Centres).

- The above-mentioned three types of **Councils do not seem effectively independent bodies**, and the fact that the Director is chairing both of them, strongly questions their actual collective decision-making role[2]. The Social partners have a very limited representation in the Administrative Councils: 1 or 2 people of the total ~20 members.
- According with the position of many stakeholders (including MoECR), **there are too many VET institutions in the country, compared with the number of students and the total population** (89 VET institutions with total of 44.3 thousand students for a country with population of ~2.7 million, in 2019). The VET Department has already developed a set of criteria for optimising the VET network and is about launching this process.
- As mentioned above, **there are two groups of VET institutions subordinated to MoARDE and MoHLSP, respectively, and this creates a number of issues in terms of effective governance and execution of unified state VET policy**. Extensive number of stakeholders expressed their support to transferring the agriculture colleges to the jurisdiction of MoECR, justifying this particularly by the fact that the agro-institutions are somewhat isolated from the entire VET system, and also that there is no public agriculture sector in the country, therefore, also no public employers for those institutions' graduates. Besides, due to limited attractiveness of the agro-VET among youth, all 8 agricultural institutions provide VET programmes not solely for the agro-food sector but also for other fields, in order to maintain a relatively stable number of students' population.
- Some of the stakeholders propose to **transfer also the medical VET institutions to MoECR.**
- Existence of a functioning ***National Council of VET Students*** and its members' active participation are inspiring. The patronage of the Council by the VET Department is also commendable. At the same time the voice of the students is still to be better heard and the matters related to their issues and interests, should be more thoroughly considered by the authorities.

Centres of Vocational Excellence

- Centre of Excellence is a new type of VET institution introduced in 2015. The CoEs are established on the base of selected VET Colleges and VET Schools and assigned to executing a number of additional tasks compared with other VET institutions. However, **at present, none of the CoEs is capable to exercise its role according with the statute and fulfil all its functions, due to the lack of human capacities, managerial and didactic, and financial scarcity**. This opinion is fully shared by almost all the stakeholders. There are only solitary good examples of CoEs fulfilling some of the specific functions, which are worth to be considered and disseminated.
- A **large number of donors are providing considerable assistance to the CoE**, technical and financial support for strengthening the human resource capacities, renovation of the buildings and procurement of relevant equipment, curricula and teaching materials development, etc. However, considering the present mission of CoEs, they still need much more for and the support has to be systematic, coming chiefly from the national system (not merely relying on donors' assistance), in order to assure sustainability.
- Another issue is that **many tasks** that are supposed to be performed by a VET meso-level institution (a VET support structure, e.g. VET Centre) and sectoral (national or regional) entities, **are put on the CoEs' shoulders** which has already proven its bankruptcy.

[2] In certain countries, the Executive is not a member of the institution Board.

VET Policy, Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

- The main sector policy document, the **Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy 2013-2020, is relevant and credible.** All conditions for the stakeholders' participation in the VET Strategy development and transparency of this process were ensured, at least as it is required by the law.
- During the period of 2013-2020, **considerable achievements in implementation of the VET Strategy and developing the system were registered**. Situation in many VET clusters have been improved and some VET practices strengthened.
- **Nevertheless, none of the challenges could be considered as fully or significantly overcome**, therefore they are to be considered in the next VET Strategy.
- Presently, a **new National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030"** is under elaboration, and the Education Strategy 2030 covering also the VET sector, will be derivative of it. Therefore, the present period selected for this review, seems exceptionally opportune, and the proposed options for restructuring the VET governance and increasing its effectiveness, may be well-timed.
- A **number of bodies are formally responsible for monitoring and evaluating different aspects (practices) of VET as well as the functioning of the entire system**. Particularly, the MoECR Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department shall monitor, evaluate and report on the implementation of public policies, including the one for VET.
- The **VET Development Strategy 2013-2020 defined a monitoring and evaluation framework for the policy level,** where the MoECR Board, NCCVET, Sector Committees, businesses, as well as CSOs and development partners, should be involved and independently monitor the Strategy implementation. This has never become a reality.
- At the institutional level, the (internal) monitoring system is established appropriately and the VET institutions regularly publish annual monitoring reports. Evaluation of performance is also planned as a mandatory action at the end of the institutions' every SDP implementation period. No such reports are available yet and **it is unclear if the institutions have appropriate capacities for carrying out an effective evaluation and how its results have ever been used for the next planning period.**
- At the same time, **the external monitoring and evaluation of the institutions is entirely missing.** Although the public VET institutions submit annual activity reports to MoECR, no any administrative decisions are taken based e.g. on the level of the institutions' Strategic Plan performance.
- The **system of Strategic Planning is mandatory for all VET institutions.** They all have acting Strategic Development Plans, which include such aspects as Mission Statement and Vision; SWOT Analysis; Priority Problems; Strategic Development Directions; Specific Objectives; Action Plan, etc.
- There are no mechanisms of the **VET teachers' participation** in, or **making contribution** to the VET policy and legislation development. No any feedback from them about the practical VET provision is received and their voice is not heard at all. There are also no effective tools for professional communication between the VET teachers.

VET Funding

- The **VET funding as a share of the total State budget is slowly decreasing** (from 2.8% in 2018 to 2.1% in 2020), however, **in absolute amount it is relatively stable** (~1.1 billion MDL).
- A **new *per capita* VET financing mechanism** was introduced in 2017. It is based on rational, equitable and transparent allocative methodology, **however, it is applied only partly as the rates are calculated with consideration of the budget ceiling but not based on the real cost of training as by the categories of professions/qualifications**[3].
- This new funding mechanism foresees also a **considerable level of autonomy for the institutions in managing the allocated financial means.** Particularly, the institutions do not need the Ministry's approval for making some expenses anymore, or for reallocating the funds from one budget line to another: an internal order is sufficient for that. Nevertheless, there are many issues related to the capacities of the VET institutions to work under this new mechanism, which means also a high level of responsibility and requires a certain business way of thinking. According with the opinion of some stakeholders, including the **VET institutions, they were not well prepared for this autonomy**.
- The new mechanism provides the VET institutions with wide opportunities of additional activities for income generation but almost no such cases were identified during the study. In some cases, the reason is the institutions' profile, but more often the **lack of school managers' capabilities and motivation (moral and fiscal) to initiate any entrepreneurial activity.**
- The other challenge related to the new per capita funding mechanism is that the **institutions with small number of students are at risk of being closed, because of low cost-effectiveness**.

VET Legislation

- The normative acts seemingly cover and regulate almost all aspects of the VET system functioning, nevertheless, there are many issues related to the legislation. **Some aspects are poorly regulated, there are legal acts and normative documents which are ambiguous or contradicting each other**. For example, there is contradiction between the Labour Code and the Education Code; the legal acts related to financing still need to be harmonised for excluding the misunderstandings; there are a number of normative documents issued between 1999 and 2005 which are still in force but have never been updated according with the other legal acts appeared later, thus leaving room for double interpretations. Another specific example is the Government Decision of 2003 on free meals for students in schools which required that the MoECR had to develop a regulatory act clearly specifying the criteria for selecting children from socially vulnerable families to benefit from free meals, but this regulatory act again has never been issued.
- In several cases, practical **implementation of the acts' requirements is difficult** due to numerous reasons, particularly lack of funding, limited capabilities of human resources, etc.
- There are legal acts defining too **complicated and bureaucratic procedures** for some VET practices such as e.g. development of Occupational Standards, Qualification Standards and Curricula (see also below, under NQF).

[3] Presently, MoECR is calculating the real cost of VET courses, to be applied from 2021.

Social Partnership

- The **legal dimension of the Social partnership in VET seems properly defined,** and the Concept of the Social Dialogue Platform in VET specifies its mission and purpose and indicates the organisation of the social dialogue platform built on 3 levels (national, sectoral and institutional). However, **in practice the situation is not much encouraging.**
- At the national level, the role of coordinator in the mediation process between the educational institutions and the labour market is assigned to **NCCVET, which has not been active since 2017. CRDÎP** should serve a *secretariat* of this Council and is supposed to facilitate the relationship between the national economic environment, the labour market and the VET system, but this structure (as mentioned above) does not execute its functions properly, as required by the corresponding normative acts.
- At the sectoral level, the **Sector Committees for VET are responsible for the Social partnership but their effectiveness is still far from being satisfactory** (see below). The institutional level is about the relations between the local economic agents and Colleges and VET schools by mediation of the Centres of Excellence, but the latter ones are not fully capable to perform their role yet.
- In general, the **cooperation between the government, employers and trade unions** and their capacities to work together in developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating VET, all **remains challenging**.
- Nevertheless, **particularly introduction** of **dual education** supports enhancing the direct links between the VET institutions and certain companies, sometimes bypassing the formal and formalistic way of establishing the social partnership relations.

Sector Committees

- The sectoral dimension of VET is limited to the Sector Committees for Professional Training, which are composed of social partners' representatives. Those Committees have only a **consultative role** within the corresponding sectors of economy.
- In total, **12 Sector Committees are to be functioning**. Presently, there are nine SCs, established in the period of 2008-2018[4]. Of them, six have already been registered as legal entities, two are in the process of formalisation and one is non-active.
- The Committees are acting in accordance with the **Law on Sector Committees for Vocational Training, adopted by the Parliament on 23rd November 2017,** i.e. around nine years after establishment of the first SC. The Law defines that the SCs are associations with the status of legal entity, which are established voluntarily by the corresponding employers' unions and trade unions at the level of economic sectors. The two main goals of the SCs are:
  - ***Develop social partnerships*** in the field of vocational training at the level of the economic sectors in order to support vocational, technical and continuing education, as well as ensure compliance of the workers' and specialists' training with the labour market requirements;
  - Based on the needs of the labour market, ***participate in the creation of a system of information and analytical support*** in the field of vocational education.

[4] In fact, four Sector Committees were existent before adoption of the VET Strategy

- The **Committees do not always manage to execute their functions properly** and achieve the goals. The main reason is busyness of the members with their primary jobs and lack of time to be allocated for the SC activities, and probably also a certain deficiency of commitment. Other main issues are the shortage funds and human resources including absence of technical secretariat, which results particularly in inability to apply for, and implement projects funded by NGOs or donors.
- The representatives of some Committees believe that the **businesses are not always motivated to closely cooperate with the SCs** due to the latter's low credibility. In order to improve the situation, there are proposals to include in the Committees also representatives of MoECR and the corresponding line ministries, as well as the VET institutions. This, however, will require changes in the legislation.
- The aggregated (generalised) opinion of the key stakeholders about the **SCs is that they are *not effective enough yet* and have *no any considerable impact*.**
- The two main proposals of the stakeholders are to ***reorganise the SCs with revising also their membership*; and to *assign the CRDÎP for coordinating the Sector Committees activities and supporting their development*.**

NQF

- In **2017, Government adopted the National Qualifications Framework**, the levels of which are determined on the basis of professional knowledge, skills and competencies, and the structure of the level descriptors shall be similar to the structure of EQF. **MoECR** is authorised to develop and approve methodologies and procedures necessary for the NQF application, particularly those related to the development, certification and registration of new qualifications.
- All **NQF-related procedures are well regulated** and the roles of the different players are clearly defined. However, there are several issues in this field, related specifically to the effectiveness and efficiency of the following chain: **development of Occupational Standards – development of Qualification Standard – development, introduction and implementation of a Curriculum**:
  - due to a ***complicated formal procedure*** and involvement of too many different actors, this process is extremely costly and lengthy (up to 3 years), and at the moment of introduction, the curriculum is already outdated;
  - the ***existing mechanisms, tools and the capacities of the corresponding strictures do not allow to identify the real picture of the labour market*** – current and future, formal and informal – and the standards are not always reflecting the actual skill needs;
  - the process of ***OS, QS and Curriculum elaboration is fragmented and performed by different institutions and there is no mechanism for ensuring that this documents are in full compliance***, i.e. the learning outcomes specified in the curriculum are in accord with the professional competences defined by the qualification which in turn, should reflect the occupational standard.
- Other challenges in this field are:
  - The **VET institutions' limited capacities** to adapt the curricula or create new VET courses/programmes by themselves;
  - **absence** of any **regulation for awarding and recognising partial qualifications**;
  - the **requirement of accrediting the non-formal training programmes**, including the short-term courses, which almost by all stakeholders is considered as an unnecessary complication

actually holding back many VET institutions from introducing and offering short-term modular courses for both youth and adults.

Quality Assurance

- At the national level, **ANACEC (under MoECR),** is the structure having a mission to develop and promote the culture of quality in the field of IVET, CVET and Higher education. At the VET institutional level, the **internal quality is monitored by the Commission for Internal Evaluation and Quality Assurance,** while in the enterprises involved in VET process, there is no body responsible for quality assurance.
- According to the provisions of the Education Code, ANACEC is an administrative authority of national interest, autonomous from the Government, independent in decisions and organisation, financed from the state budget and from its own revenues. In reality, ANACEC is under MoECR and does not have full independence which leaves financial limitations and **the paradox is that ANACEC has to evaluate the curricula and educational programmes that have been approved by MoECR**.
- The two main documents laying the legal base for the education quality assurance in Moldova, are the **Regulation on Organisation and Functioning of the ANACEC and External Quality Assurance Methodology.** These acts define the status, mission, tasks and functions of ANACEC and set the methodological and procedural framework for the quality assurance including internal and external quality assessment.
- VET institutions (both public and private) and their programmes (initial and continuing) are subject to **external quality evaluation by ANACEC every five year, for accreditation purposes.** This procedure has been launched in 2017 but presently, the accreditation process continues in the conditions when not all VET institutions have passed through the external evaluation yet.
- Currently there are **10 quality standards used for external evaluation**. However, **there is a need of more indicators for the self-assessment** in order to facilitate the processes of monitoring, evaluating and analysis.
- **ANACEC** only develops the quality assurance policies but **not directly evaluates the quality at each institution in terms of the performance results,** e.g. the achieving the learning outcomes (which would be a function of a specialised body). Being subordinated the MoECR, ANACEC does not evaluate the quality of curricula already approved by MoECR but only the compliance to the requirements towards the development process.
- The existent quality assurance mechanisms can be described as an **input tool** or a “show-window”, which ensures the quality and relevance of VET providers and VET programmes and qualifications, achieved through: accreditation of VET training programmes and VET providers; mechanisms to secure unity and transparency in qualifications across VET system, national qualifications framework and transferable credit framework (for VET level 4 and 5) and certificate/diploma supplements; mechanisms to ensure that VET institutions have the capacity to deliver the VET programmes to the required standards. However, **it does not include assessment of the final results produced by the VET providers for ensuring the appropriateness of those VET products, through e.g. VET students’ and graduates’ or company’s satisfaction surveys.**

Work-based Learning Including Dual Education

- Currently **WBL is institutionalised** and seems well regulated. Its mandatory status at all VET levels, for both initial and continuous VET, is pinned down by the normative acts.
- The responsibilities of different stakeholders are also defined by normative acts. However, the reality regarding the degree of involvement and the role of different actors differs from those stipulated by those acts. **MoECR is the dominant body** in the process of developing the legal framework, while the participation of other actors, e.g. Sector Committees, CRDÎP, CoCI, in elaboration of methodological recommendations for WBL programmes, facilitation the organisation of WBL, quality assurance, etc., is missing completely.
- Another issue is that due to the ***shortage of funds***, neither the VET institutions nor any other bodies performs monitoring and evaluation of the process and the quality of WBL within the companies. Although the regulations assign responsibilities to many actors (Sector Committees, CRDÎP) to facilitate the partnerships and coagulate effective cooperation between the private sector and VET institutions, their contribution is not perceived at the moment, due to the fact that **these entities are very weak to fulfil their mission and functions**.
- The **support of the local authorities is rather an exception in a few regions of the country.** According to the opinion of the stakeholders, shared also by the experts, the support and involvement of the local authorities is necessary both for **increasing the quality and impact of WBL and for the developing the regional sector economies and increasing employability in the community.**
- There are also **challenges related specifically to the quality,** the effectiveness and efficiency of the WBL development, which are conditioned by different facts. VET institutions face difficulties in establishing long-term partnerships with the private sector. The latter misses the mechanism for ensuring the **WBL quality and lacks pedagogical know-how to train efficiently.**
- The **WBL has a well-built recognition in the country** but the cooperation with economic agents is mostly **limited to the provision of places for internships**, with **low or non-participation in other VET processes.** There are good practices in the field of healthcare where WBL is much more efficient due to strong partnerships between the VET institutions and hospitals and medical clinics, being also facilitated by the line ministry and the Centre of Excellence in Medicine and Pharmacy.
- **Dual VET** has been introduced in 2014 with a gradual positive trend in the last four years. This is largely due to the essential support from the development partners. However, **training and learning environments differ** a lot from one case to another, depending on the sector and the region as well.
- **Dual VET requires investments and shared responsibilities between companies and VET institutions,** and depends on the companies' desire and readiness to assume a considerable responsibility, and on their technical and human capacity. In this context, it remains to be a challenge for small companies, and it is in little demand particularly in the **agriculture area**, where **small businesses and individual farms are not motivated and fully prepared to provide Dual VET.**
- Even when dual VET is provided by large companies with considerable capacities of human resources and training potential, there are a number of aspects to be considered. For example, **in the absence of consortia, apprentices are trained strictly in line with the individual needs of**

a certain company, thus acquiring a limited scope of skills, that in the future may hinder their employment by other companies.

- Growing number of Dual VET partnerships brings new challenges, specifically in the absence of a structure which would bear the responsibility of the **Dual VET governance and coordination**. The VET Department at the MoECR with its very limited number of employees, cannot and should not play this role, while CoCI does not receive any funding for the activities related to Dual education. The **Sector Committees are too weak** and the involvement of the line ministries in the process of facilitating sectoral Dual education is practically lacking. The activities related to the **Dual VET are currently carried out mainly by the development partners, and the issue of ensuring sustainability remains of high urgency.**

Tracer Studies

- Tracer Study mechanism, as a tool for monitoring and evaluating the VET quality targeting to improve the relevance of the VET system and its development and implementation, was among the expected results of the VET Strategy for 2013-2020. Accordingly, MoECR developed and piloted Methodology of Tracing the Professional Track of Vocational Education Graduates in the period between 2015 and 2017. However, after 2017, t**his mechanism was no longer implemented due to lack of resources and capacities, and presently there is no valid information on data regarding the job placement of VET graduates. Thus, the indicator on the relevance and quality of the VET remains unmeasured.**
- **VET Institutions do not have functional and sustainable mechanisms for conducting Tracer studies** of the graduates which is a difficult task for them in the absence of a systemic approach.
- The **situation is more advantageous in the sector of healthcare where the MoHLSP keeps record of the number of all medical graduates** (except the fee-paying students/graduates) and medical workers (in the public institutions) via SIERUSS system managed by the Agency for Public Health.
- It is anticipated that the EMIS module for VET, which is being developed by MoECR with the WB support, will contain a domain with statistical data about the graduates' job placement and further education. However, **EMIS is a source of statistical information and should be fed by data received from the Tracer studies.**
- Presently, the **data obtained from existing platforms are not used or analysed in the institutional planning process**, and their usefulness is often finite and formal.

Lifelong Learning

- The LLL Service at the MoECR is the LLL governing body at national level. Its main role is the development of policies. Even though many people benefit from continuous professional training, **there is no coordination between the providers and no mechanism to measure the impact of those trainings,** due to the fact that the above Service has very limited capacities and resources both financial and human, to properly implement its mandate and cover all the activities, while an intermediate entity which would be responsible for the implementation of the LLL processes, monitoring, providing consultation services, etc., is non-existent.
- Another important actor is **ANACEC**, which is in charge of external evaluation of CVET programmes and CVET providers, and RMIC under the MoHLSP that monitors the process of continuous training and certification of the teaching and managerial staff of the medical educational

institutions. In addition, **NEA subordinated to MoHLSP**, is responsible for some activities related to the professional training of unemployed.

- **LLL has gained prominence during the last years.** However, continuous professional training is intermittently provided by a limited number of institutions on request, and some companies provide short courses for their own needs, i.e. to train new workers or upgrade the qualifications of their own employees. There is **small number of VET institutions providing CVET programmes**. This is conditioned by the fact that the accreditation of those programmes is a long and expensive process as it must follow an accreditation path similar to the formal IVET programmes awarding qualifications.
- The Regulation of the CoEs makes them responsible for supplying continuous training of teachers and managers of the VET institutions and for the certification of professional competences, acquired in formal, informal and non-formal environment. However, **very few CoEs are capable to fulfil their role appropriately and none of them offer the mentioned certification** (an exception are the two CoEs that piloted VNFIL in 2019).
- The MoECR aspires to promote inclusive and equitable quality education and LLL opportunities for all, yet in the targets and indicators, the emphasis is still on the formal education. In general, there is still *a **lack of clarity about how LLL can be operationalised, systematically and systemically***.
- Currently, **adult training is limited, and its financing remains low**. The stakeholders' opinions indicate that companies underinvest or do not invest at all in the training of their workers and most of the time the access to, and financing of continuous professional training is left to individuals alone. There is a **need of public policies to implement a well-resourced, learner-centred, coordinated and rights-based approach to LLL systems.**

* * *

Summarising the above conclusions, it can be stated that the most disadvantaged clusters of the VET system are:

- **Social partnership** which does nor exists *at the national level* due to dysfunction of the VET Council. Even if acting, NCCVET would not properly ensure social dialogue as among its members the public structures are strongly dominating;
- Any mechanism of **Monitoring and evaluation** of: 1) *VET policy and strategy implementation* and 2) performance of the *VET network* and individual *VET institutions* does not exist. Only internal monitoring system of the VET providers is in place.
- No structured system of **Career guidance** (and development) and **Tracer studies** is established. Only ad hoc or fragmented activities take place.
- Not only the **VET funding** is limited but also the **financing mechanisms** are not effective enough. The situation is complicated with the low capacities of many administrators to manage even the available funds efficiently and with the existence of serious obstacles specifically for the VET institutions, to generate additional income.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations made in this section, relate not only to the aforementioned most problematic aspects but cover many other areas where improvements seem particularly urgent.

The proposed options are specific to possible extent and to our firm belief, provide a clear guidance for the Moldovan policy makers on what and how should be changed in order to improve the VET system governance. However, it is not the task of this exercise to suggest all details and possible technical solutions for implementing those recommendations. These issues shall be discussed and defined locally, desirably with external assistance, and many of them can be subjects of specific projects.

Below, the recommendations are presented according with the 7 defined objectives (see Section 1 above):

3.1. Establishing a Policy Making Scheme Based on Social Partnership

For developing an informed and balanced VET policy which is relevant and credible and considers the needs and interests of all key stakeholders, the latter should be directly involved in its development. This will ensure the *acceptance* and *ownership* of the VET policy and strategy not only by the governmental structures but also by a wider VET community which is a precondition for their political and practical support for implementation. In many countries this is reached *via* multi-stakeholder bodies established according with the principles of social partnership, i.e. VET Councils.

SELECTED INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

Croatia[5]:

The ***Council for VET*** which has 21 members representing different stakeholders, coordinates the activities of all VET stakeholders, initiates the development of new curricula and revision of existing curricula, recommends general directions of VET development, and provides its assessment for the establishment of the network of regional centres of competence.

In 2009, 13 ***Sector Skill Councils***[6] (SSC), oriented at giving strategic advice on the development within their sector, were established. These were advisory but not decision-making bodies. The nomination of the members was made by various groups of stakeholders. The councils had around 200 members, of which more than 100 were employers from companies, others were from different chambers, ministries, etc. In 2013, new SSCs were established. Presently, their jurisdiction stands for the full education structure. They carry out validation of learning outcomes, occupational and qualification standards. The Councils cooperate with National Council for Human Resource Development which is an overarching multi-stakeholder body dealing with Qualification Framework development.

SSCs are established by the Ministry of Science and Education but for each sector, there is a responsible line ministry. The councils involve representatives from the Unemployment Bureau and the Agency for VET and Adult Education. There are 8 sectoral Experts in every

[5] The authors are thankful for the interview with Mr Nino Buić, Assistant Director for European Affairs, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, Croatia.
[6] In total, there are 26 Sector Skill Councils in the country but only 13 relate to VET.

SSC appointed on the base of a public call. The SSCs are actually coordinated and financed[7] by the Ministry of Science and Education, which runs also an administrative secretariat of the councils.

Estonia[8]:

At the national level, there is a ***VET Council***, which is an advisory body to the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER), particularly in terms of VET policy advice and dialogue. In the Council both representatives of the public structures (ministries and agencies) and social partners are represented. Through this council, the stakeholders have right to advise, vote and react on legislative measures, make suggestions[9].

There are 14 ***Sector Councils*** which are dealing with developing occupational and qualification standards and also governing the processes of assessing, validating, certifying students' competences. These standards are used for developing study programmes in formal and non-formal VET. In the Sector Councils, three parties are involved: employers, employees and Government (MoER, line ministries) and education providers. The Sector Councils are established under the Professions Act (2001) and are presently funded from the state budget on the basis of annual contracts with MoER. At the initial stage (since 2005), considerable funding was provided by the European Social Fund and partly by some enterprises, mainly for the activities related to assessment, validation and certification processes.

Romania[10]:

Under the Ministry of Education and Research (MoER), there is a ***Committee for Social Dialogue*** which involves representatives of MoER, Trade unions, the most important employers and the 16 Sector Committees, as well as the Students' Council and the National Committee of Parents. Nevertheless, this Committee is not an actual permanent platform for policy dialogue particularly in VET. This is probably one of the reasons why there is also no coherent approach to VET policy development in the country. For example, in 2014-2015, the VET Strategy 2016-2020 was drafted by the National Centre for TVET Development (NCTVETD), in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, through consultations at the regional level (8 regions and 42 countries) and meetings with different social partners. Only the final draft of the Strategy was presented to, and discussed at the above Committee.

Social partnership at the regional level is ensured through the ***Regional consortia*** which are advisory bodies of NCTVETD, responsible for drafting regional education action plans in VET. The consortia include representatives from: Regional Development Agency, County Councils, County Employment Agencies, School Inspectorates, employers' associations, chambers of

[7] The Ministry pays Around 100 Euro per council Expert per month in the event of his/her full workload. The travel expenses (e.g. for meetings) are also covered by the Ministry.

[8] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Külli All, Deputy Head of Adult Education Department, Ministry of Education and Research of Estonia; Ms Rita Kask, Adviser at the Vocational Education Office in the Department of Secondary Education, Ministry of Education and Research; Mr Olav Aarna, Academic Adviser at Kutsekoda; Ms Kaie Piiskop, Chief Specialist at the Department of Internalisation at HarNO.

[9] There is also Adult educational advisory body, which discusses different issues of Adult education. It comprises 15 members representing Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Employers' Confederation, Confederation of Trade Unions, VET Associations (leaders of VET school).

[10] The authors are thankful for the interview with Ms Dana Stroie, Director Adjunct / Deputy Director of the National Centre for TVET Development, Ministry of Education and Research.

commerce, trade unions, universities, and NCTVETD. There are also ***Local Committees for the Development of Social Partnerships*** at the county level. Those committees comprise representatives of local authorities, the county employment agency, employers' associations, trade unions, school inspectorates and NGOs.

Formally, a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) mechanism does exist. Particularly, one of the ***National M&E Committee's*** groups is responsible for monitoring the VET Strategy implementation according with its Monitoring Plan. In reality, again the NCTVETD, through its Working group which includes representatives of the institutions responsible for the VET Strategy implementation, collects and processes information from those institutions about meeting the Strategy indicators and targets. For evaluation of VET system performance, there is no structured system. From time to time, only external evaluations are done through the projects dealing with VET system development (e.g. by the World Bank, in 2019). Issues of M&E were considered by the European Commission as one of the main weaknesses of the VET system in the country.

As mentioned above, the NCCVET established in Moldova in 2014, which should take the role of *'coordinator in the mediation process between the educational institutions and the labour market'*, is not only dysfunctional since 2017 but in its composition, the representatives of the public bodies and institutions are dominating: only around 40% of members are social partners – employers, trade unions and CSOs. Thus, in fact, there is no social partnership/dialogue in VET at the national level.

Therefore, the main recommended option in this content is:

R.1: Establish a tripartite (or quadripartite) National VET Council

The National VET Council (or National Council for VET Development or similar, hereinafter – VET Council) is to consist of equal number of representatives from the Government, Employers' organisations and Trade Unions (and Civil Society Organisations as the forth party, if the quadripartite option is selected). It is advised to form this Council not *via* reorganisation or restructuring the existing NCCVET but to officially dissolve it and found a completely new body through a wide consultancy process with a range of corresponding stakeholders.

The number of members is not to be more than 27 or 28, i.e. maximum 9 members from each party for the tripartite option or 7 members for the quadripartite option. The most optimal number for ensuring relatively full-fledge representation from each party but also practical workability of the VET Council, is 21 (24 for the quadripartite option).

The following possible structure of the membership can be proposed:

- Government: **MoECR** (3 members – Minister, *ex officio* Chair of the Council; State Secretary for Education; Head of VET Department as the Secretary of the Council[11]), **MoARDE** (1 member – State Secretary having tasks related to education), **MoHLSP** (1 or 2 members – State Secretary having tasks related to education; and Head of Department responsible for employment)[12], **MoEI** (1 member – State Secretary having tasks directly or indirectly related to education), **MoF** (1 member – State Secretary responsible for education funding);

[11] Do not mix up "Secretary" and the "Secretariat". Here, under the "Secretary", an official position within the Council membership, is meant, while the VET Centre proposed under R.5, will serve as the Secretariat of the Council.
[12] If the VET institutions presently subordinated to MoARDE and MoHLSP are transferred to MoES, as it is proposed in the Section 3.3 below, the representation of those two Ministries in the VET Council will become unnecessary.

- Employers: **Chamber of Commerce and Industry** (2 members – President and an officer responsible for VET issues); **National Confederation of Employers** (2 members – President or Executive Director and an officer responsible for VET issues); Sectoral Unions of Employers (3-5 members in total – Presidents or Executive Directors);
- Trade Unions – **National Trade Union Confederation** (1 member – President or Executive Director); **Branch Trade Unions** (6-8 members – Presidents of Branch unions);
- Civil Society Organisations: ***NGOs*** and other similar structures, e.g. dealing with different VET-related subjects or advocating and/or promoting social issues and/or the rights of special category people, such as women, migrants, minorities, those with special educational needs, and other vulnerable groups (6-7 organisations – Presidents or Executives (Directors))[13]. It is recommended that one of the sits within the CSO's quota, is allocated to the President of the VET Teachers' National Council, if established (see ***R.3***)

The representatives of the non-governmental structures, within the quota, should be nominated for the membership in the VET Council by their own organisations and should not be a subject for the Government approval or endorsement.

It is evident that the scope of VET system stakeholders and beneficiaries is rather wide, and includes the VET providers and different public institutions such as VET support structures, state agencies, research institutes, regional and local authorities, expert and academic communities, and international and bilateral organisations and development partners, too. Their involvement in the VET policy and strategy processes can be ensured *via* participation at the Council's meetings, when appropriate, but the membership is not advised.

The VET Council will act as a *body leading the policy discussions on VET development and its reforms* and have the following objectives:

- determine the strategic directions of VET development;
- contribute to the elaboration and endorsement (validation) of VET sector development programmes, strategies and concepts;
- participate in development and discussion of draft legal acts regulating different VET aspects;
- contribute to increasing the effectiveness of reforms and strengthen and deepen social partnership;
- participate in the monitoring and analysis of VET reforms, particularly implementation of VET Strategies and Action Plans.
- contribute to the continuous development of the VET system;
- provide advice to the Government (MoECR) for decision-making related to the VET policy and support (including political) for VET policy and strategy implementation.

Depending on its composition (membership) and on the mandate, this council may have some additional tasks, e.g.:

- support to establishment of new mechanisms, networks, structures for relevant stakeholders' involvement at national, regional and local (institutional) levels;

[13] The members of the Council are *not* expected to be remunerated, and this is mainly in line with the international practice. The direct participation in the decision making processes is supposed to be the main motivation factor for the membership in the Council.

- different functions related to the education funding, e.g. providing recommendations on, or endorsement of, draft State Budget on education; support to fund raising and investments in education; participation in financial audit, etc.

The VET Council may have different sub-structures, such as (sub-)committees responsible for different clusters and cross-cutting issues of VET policy and strategy and/or thematic groups dealing with the technical aspects of policy development, provision of research, data collection, fact-finding, analysis, development of documents which will be extremely important for informed and evidence-based policy design as well as for appropriate monitoring and evaluation of its implementation and for measuring the impact. Nevertheless, the above bodies are not necessarily to be structural units of the Council or to be attached to it. The VET Council may be authorised to coordinate or supervise the activities of similar structures established independently. In addition, the VET Council may establish temporary bodies, such as working groups or task forces for different ad hoc work issues.

Establishment of the Council shall be preceded by a wide cycle of consultations with the stakeholders at least on the following aspects: the membership structure of the Council, the scope of the objectives and functions, the frequency of the meetings (at least 4 meetings per year are recommended), the principles of decision taking (e.g. by consensus or by majority), the possible substructures and the relations with them, etc. Only having at least principal initial agreement around all these issues (which will later be formalised in the VET Council's Statute), the official establishment process can be started.

It is recommended also that establishment and development of the VET Council and ensuring its proper functioning are made outputs of the VET Strategy 2030[14], and then the Council's tasks are vested by the law.

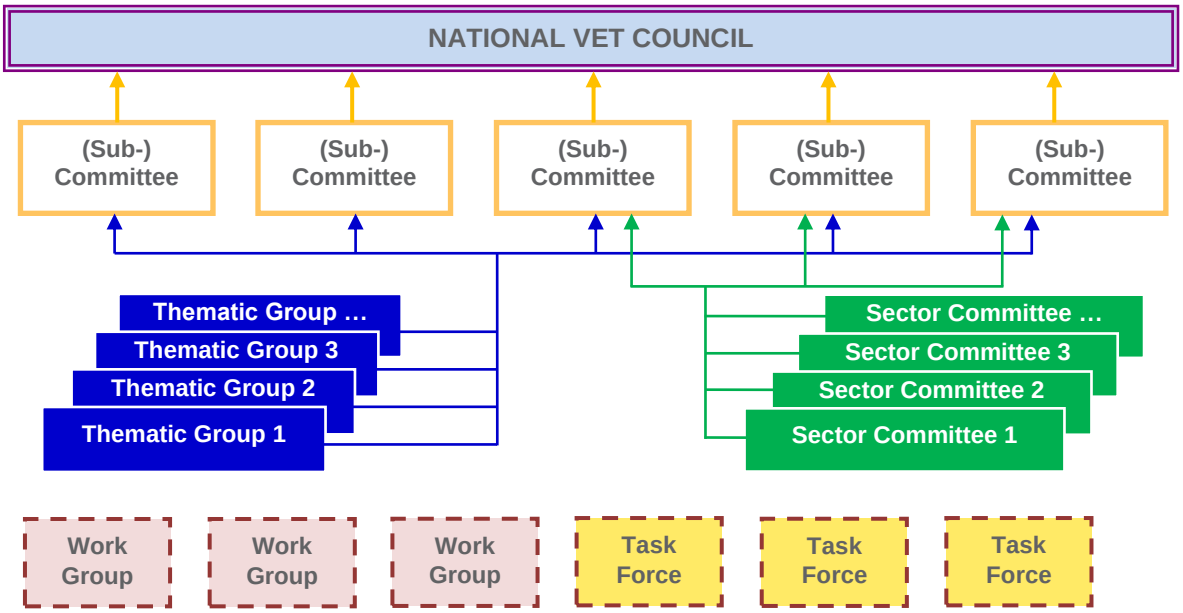
R.1 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within one year**
Required financial resources:	**none**
Variables to be defined:	■ **membership structure (tri- or quadripartite)** ■ **number of members and their representation** ■ **the scope of responsibilities and functions**

Thus, the possible architecture of the VET Council and its "surroundings" may be as it is presented on the Diagram 1.

[14] Or as a part of the Education Strategy 2030.

DIAGRAM 1. ARCHITECTURE OF THE VET COUNCIL AND ITS SATELLITE STRUCTURES



At the sectoral level the social partnership is implemented *via* Sector Committees but the effectiveness of many of them is seriously questioned. In some sectors they are not established at all. As a results, the social dialogue platform (see the Diagram 2, Part 2 of this Report) does not actually work.

This study identified and clearly formulated a number of challenges related to the activities of the Sector Committees (see the Conclusions under the Section 2 above) which will help the national authorities to address them by taking appropriate actions. The methods and tools for that, are to be decided locally.

Hence, it is recommended to:

R.2: Assign coordination of the Sector Committees' activities to the VET Council

In practice, this may mean (*all points are optional and are up to MoECR and VET Council to decide*):

- the VET Council discusses and proposes measures for addressing the present and any possible future challenges related to the SC's functioning;
- the SC's agree their Action plans (e.g. annual) with the VET Council;
- the SC's report about the results of their performance to the VET Council, annually, bi-annually or quarterly; and the VET Council makes recommendations to MoECR, and also to MoHLSP, MoEI, MoF, on necessary administrative, methodological, legal or strategic actions;
- the VET Council provides permanent policy (if necessary, also administrative, methodological or legal) support to SC's;
- the VET Council takes responsibility for establishing the missing Sector Committees.

The SCs will keep their daily working relations with the VET Council through its corresponding (sub-) committees, while the current monitoring of the SCs activities can be implemented by the VET Centre which will report to those (sub-)committees or directly to the VET Council according with the latter's decision.

R.2 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**immediately after implementing R.1**
Required financial resources:	**none**
Variables to be defined:	■ **the level of the SCs accountability to the VET Council** ■ **the mechanisms of communication with the VET Council's committees**

R.3: Establish VET Teachers' National Council

The concern about the absence of any feedback from the teachers on the situation in the VET institutions, as well as about their isolation from discussions of, and contribution to any system-level issues was voiced by some stakeholders, specifically by the VET students interviewed within this study. The VET teachers also have no effective tools for professional communication between themselves.

Establishment of this Council is proposed with a purpose to make the voice of the VET teachers, master-trainers and instructors (both from public and private institutions, as well as from the enterprises providing WBL) heard while making VET policies and developing legal acts, specifically those related directly to the VET provision.

The Teachers' National Council (TNC) will promote all that is best about teaching in VET, i.e. good practices, new ideas, targeting to boost the status of VET teachers, strengthening accountability and bringing consistently high standards across the VET system, as well as strengthening the regulatory and disciplinary framework for teaching in VET. The Council could communicate to policy-makers also the VET students' needs and concerns.

Thus, the main ***objectives*** of the TNC will indicatively be:

- Representing and advocating the interests of all the VET teachers;
- participate in decision-making process regarding the issues and aspects that concern the VET teachers;
- oversee the observance of the rights of VET teachers at institutional and national level;
- encourage the exchange of experience and good practices;
- setting expectations of VET teacher practice and behaviour (Code and Standards)
- promote VET teaching and learning and the VET teacher's status, etc.

Different options for the VET Teachers' National Council are possible. It can nominally cover all teachers of the system or only a specified number of teachers from each institution, within a defined quota. In any case, TNC will operate through its ***General Assembly*** which meets twice a year, and will have a permanently acting ***Executive Board*** consisting of a small number of elected members (e.g. 9 or 11 people), which would be authorised for representing the entire VET teachers' population and for communications with the VET authorities and other stakeholders, as well as ensure communication between the Council members.

The Council ***President*** can be elected directly by the Council members or by the Executive Board members for 3- to 5-year term.

The TNC is proposed to have a National ***Ethics Commission*** consisting of 3 members elected annually by the General Assembly. The main tasks of the Commission are monitoring the conduct of the VET Teachers' Council members, providing advice and consultations, supervising implementation of the Internal Regulations, decisions of the General Assembly and the Executive Board.

It is strongly recommended that existence of the VET Teachers' National Council and its general scope of responsibilities are stipulated by law. Other details, such as criteria for defining quotas per institution (if any), election procedures, authorities of the Council President, relations to, and modalities of communication with the national and other authorities, can be defined by sub-legal acts, e.g. Ministerial Orders. Nevertheless, any internal affairs within the Council, including nomination of representatives, election processes, etc., should be absolutely free from the national authorities' influence.

R.3 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within a year**
Required financial resources:	**limited (for organisation of bi-annual General Assemblies of the Council and some administrative expenditures)**
Variables to be defined:	■ **form and composition of the Council** ■ **establishment and election procedures** ■ **scope of responsibilities and communication modalities** ■ **the President's authorities, etc.**

For equipping the proposed VET policy-making scheme with a proper Monitoring and Evaluation system, in addition to the existing (although with certain reservations) mechanism of internal monitoring of the VET institutions, it is recommended to:

R.4: Operationalise the system of Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET policy implementation and external Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET institutions and the entire VET network performance

In this recommendation, the word "operationalise" but not e.g. "introduce", is used, as formally the monitoring and evaluation in the field of VET are prescribed by different legal acts, and a number of bodies and/or their units have functions related to M&E (see the Section 2.3, Part 2 of this Report). Nevertheless, the Monitoring and Evaluation system does not work.

Two aspects of M&E are discussed here. The first is the Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET Strategy implementation, for which the VET Council will bear the overall responsibility.

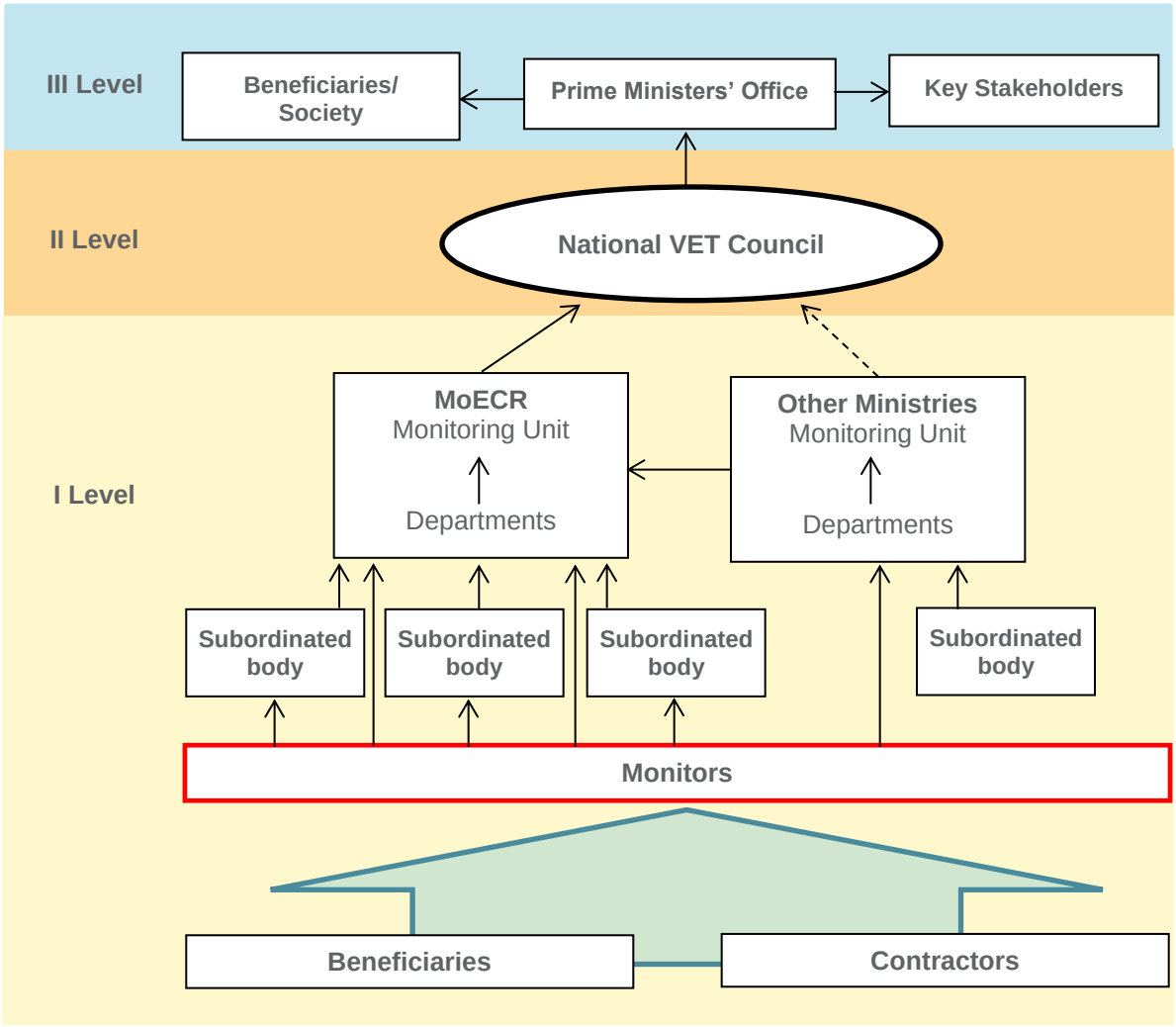
For practical implementation, a three-level monitoring structure is proposed (see Diagram 2). To each level, a specific type of monitoring report will correspond:

I. Current monitoring reports produced typically *monthly*[15];

II. Integrated (consolidated) *quarterly* monitoring reports;

III. Comprehensive *yearly* monitoring reports.

DIAGRAM 2. STRUCTURE OF THE VET POLICY MONITORING SCHEME



The ***current*** monitoring reports are to be produced by those structures which according to the Action Plan of the VET Strategy will be responsible for the given activity (set of activities) and/or measures:

- VET Department and other corresponding units (e.g. LLL Service, Administrative and Financial Section, NQF Department) of MoECR and other relevant Ministries,
- subordinated institutions (e.g. VET Centre, ANACEC),
- educational institutions[16],
- the monitors (individuals or groups).

The ***integrated*** (*consolidated*) monitoring reports are based on the current monitoring reports but are not a mechanical synthesis of the latter ones. They have to be produced as a result of a compilation

[15] When necessary, extraordinary monitoring reports can also be produced.
[16] The educational institutions may submit the monitoring repots to the Ministry through the designated public bodies e.g. the VET Centre, which will ensure the quality of those reports.

and thorough analysis of the current reports' findings and by making independent systemic judgements. Development of these reports may require additional information which should be requested directly from the responsible bodies or additional monitoring missions can be organised for this purpose. The VET Department of MoECR (along with the Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department) should be responsible for producing the consolidated monitoring reports. However, the highest officials of MoECR will bear overall responsibility for their quality and timeliness.

These quarterly reports should cover all priorities (directions, specific objectives) of the Strategy and clearly indicate efficiency and effectiveness of its implementation. Besides, they have to provide key conclusions and recommended corrective/supportive measures for the next quarter, preferably with indication of concrete dates and responsible parties[17] (persons).

The integrated monitoring reports are to be submitted to the VET Council which, within maximum two weeks after receipt, examines them, takes decisions on any corrective and/or supportive measure and on proposing amendments to the Action Plan (when necessary), and recommends the MoECR to submit them to the Prime-Minister's office along with its own recommendations[18].

The yearly ***comprehensive*** monitoring reports are to be produced and published by the Prime Minister's office. They may have two versions: one – more technical, addressed to the governmental structures, public institutions, donor organisations and other stakeholders, and another – "citizens' version", targeted to the wider scope of beneficiaries or to the society in general.

If necessary, meetings, discussions and other information events with the stakeholders will be organised. In addition, regular (quarterly) meetings of the monitors for sharing information about the findings of their monitoring activities, lessons learnt and the experience in general, have also to be carried out.

A database (in electronic and paper forms) which will include information collected during the monitoring activities and all monitoring reports, should be established.

The second aspect, is the external Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET institutions and the entire VET network performance. All tasks related to this, can be assigned to the VET Centre (see ***R.5***) which will produce periodical monitoring reports and submit them to MoECR for taking corresponding administrative decisions. The set of criteria for monitoring and also evaluation of the VET institutions and the entire VET system performance, is to be defined by MoECR, in consultation with the VET Council. A specific technical assistance project is proposed to be launched for designing those criteria, piloting and operationalising this M&E mechanism.

R.4 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 1 year after approving the VET Strategy 2030**
Required financial resources:	**limited (for remunerating independent monitors and assessors)**
Variables to be defined:	■ **distribution of monitoring responsibilities among different structures**

[17] It is possible that in some specific cases, actions not only on the part of the direct executors but also interventions at the ministerial and/or higher levels would be required.

[18] The integrated monitoring reports can be discussed at the VET Council's regular quarterly meetings (as it is proposed in the R.1) and no specific meetings will be required for that. However, extraordinary meetings are also possible, if necessary.

3.2. Rationalising the VET Governance Institutional Settings

There are at least four VET supporting structures in the country. Effectiveness of only one of them – National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) – is proved while the three others – Republican Centre for VET Development of MoECR (CRDÎP), the Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet of MoHLSP (RMIC) and the Methodical Centre for Training of MoARDE (MCT) are understaffed (only 5 people are working in CRDÎP and only 1 person is dealing with VET in RMIC and MCT), underfunded and either non-operational or at least inefficient. Moreover, the "spheres of influence" in terms of VET methodology and to some extent also the policy, are divided between those three Centres: agricultural VET, Medical VET and the "remaining" VET. This does not seem appropriate.

SELECTED INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

Croatia:

Ministry of Science and Education (MoSE) is responsible for the overall VET policy and particularly monitors the compliance of the VET system with legislation and coordinates executive agencies in the field of education. The Ministry has a Service for VET composed of two departments: for improvement of VET and for promotion of VET. The total Number of employees is about 10.

The ***Agency for VET and Adult Education*** (ASOO) is an executive body in charge of the overall development and organisation of the VET system: development of VET programmes/curricula; ensuring stakeholders' involvement in VET; supporting and follow-up the self-assessment of VET schools; monitoring the work of VET and adult education institutions; provision of advice and counselling services for VET and adult education institutions; professional exams for new, and promotions for experienced VET teachers; continuous professional development opportunities for VET teachers; foreign VET qualification recognition process; organising national skills competitions.

The ASOO has 170 staff of which 40 are dealing directly with VET including those working on promotion of VET and providing support to different projects, e.g. European Social Fund's projects.

ASOO is in charge of implementing entrance exams for novice teachers and conducts monitoring of their career progression, deals with education programmes in Adult education, organises trainings for andragogues (adult teachers), is in charge of development of system of Quality Assurance in VET. The Agency organises students' skills competition, and is responsible for recognition of foreign qualifications. It also closely cooperates with MoSE, to which gives a strategic advice.

ASOO is responsible for expert monitoring of educational process. This monitoring can be conducted based on the decision of the Agency itself or upon request of MoSE, and results in specific recommendations.

There are 13 expert adviser in the ASOO, according with the number of sectors.

Numerous other bodies are also involved in VET issues: ***Education and Teacher Training Agency*** is responsible particularly for general education subjects' content in VET curricula; the ***National Centre for External Evaluation of Education*** implements state Matura exams, which are obligatory for those VET graduates who wish to proceed to Higher education; the

Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes deals with mobility projects for VET students.

According to the recent amendments to the Law on Crafts, ***Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts*** is responsible for approving VET curricula for crafts-related programmes. The ***Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts*** licenses the crafts and legal entities for implementing practical teaching and training. ***Croatian Chamber of Commerce*** has the similar responsibilities in Dual education.

Estonia:

The ***Parliament***, the ***Government***, and the ***Ministry of Education and Research*** (MoER) jointly oversee the VET system at the national level. Government approves the national education policy, as well as the Higher education and VET standards and framework requirements for teacher training. MoER delivers education strategy, including the vocational education programme and approves national VET curricula.

There is a specific body between the Ministry and the VET providers' network. In 2003, *Foundation "Innove"* was established by the MoER with a purpose to coordinate the allocation of EU funds and in 2012, it was designated to implement the national education policy, particularly coordination and promotion of general and vocational education, offering career and educational counselling services, organising development of national VET curricula, supporting implementation of VET teacher training. In 2015, "Innove" had around 5,000 employees (including all the career counsellors in Estonia). In June 2020, this foundation was reorganised into a public ***agency "HarNo"*** and some public institutions, such as Foundation Archimedes and Foundation of Digitalisation of Education and Youth activities, were merged to it. "HarNo" continues to be responsible for all aspects of the educational policy implementation, including VET: advising and supporting VET schools in curricula implementation is one of the most important tasks of the HarNo's VET specialists.

Presently, HarNo has around 500 employees who are working at its a Central office, Tartu office in Tartu, and at the study support centres in different counties. Of them, at least 40 people are working solely with VET. The central office is composed of departments for curricula development; for innovation; for IT in education; for internationalisation and mobility; for students with special educational needs; as well as supporting units. HarNo is funded from the state budget and also from the European Structural Found. According to the key representatives interviewed within this study, the allocated financial means fully ensure decent conditions for the agency's appropriate functioning and competitive remuneration of the employees.

Estonian ***Quality Agency for Higher and Vocational Education*** (EKKA) along with the employers, participate in the assessment processes. There are 2 parallel Quality Assurance bodies for Higher education institutions and VET institutions. Employers' and students' representatives are involved in both. The same is valid for the Assessment Committee which is working with every particular school.

Occupational or qualification standards are the responsibility of the Estonian qualification authority – ***Kutsekoda***[19], which is a private legal entity established by 3 parties: Government (MoER, Ministry of Social Affair, Ministry of Economy and Communications), Chamber of Commerce and Industry and two Trade union organisations.

[19] For more information, see: https://www.kutsekoda.ee/en/.

Romania:

Ministry of Education and Research (MoER) is responsible for national policies and strategies in VET and coordination of Initial VET system. It designs legislation in cooperation with stakeholders; approves financing and enrolment plans; methodology for teacher enrolment; monitors, evaluates and controls the education system and the functioning of education providers; and coordinates the work of inspectorates.

The ***National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development*** (NCTVETD) which has around 50 staff and is accountable to MoER, evaluates and suggests changes to policies and strategies, national curricula, assesses initial VET component, supervises the development of professional training standards for qualifications, ensures the development and functioning of stakeholder partnerships at national, regional and local levels; develops methodologies for the quality assurance and monitoring of programmes; implements continuing professional training programmes for teachers/trainers.

At the pre-accession (PA) period, the VET centre was established to manage the PA funds allocated to the VET development. Since 2009, the Centre has receiving funds as for a member state.

The Centre is a pool of experts, who are flexible and proposing all the most important decisions to MoER. The structural units of the Centre are: Qualifications, Certifications and Quality Assurance Department; Department for Correlation with Labour Market (has experts in every region); Counselling and Entrepreneurship Department; and Financial Department. NCTVETD has a Steering Committee composed of the Director, Deputy Director and the Heads of Departments; thus the Social partners are not involved in the Centre governance.

The main challenges of NCTVETD are not very much competitive salaries (lower than e.g. in the Ministry) which complicates attraction and retaining of good experts; absence of funds for hiring external experts (this is possible only in the framework of certain projects); and poor links with the “economic side” for making e.g. proper Labour market forecasting.

There are other bodies directly or indirectly related to VET, too: Romanian ***Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education***; ***Institute for Educational Sciences; Regional consortia*** (advisory bodies of the VET Centre); ***Local Committees for the Development of Social Partnerships; Teaching Staff Resource House; County Centres of Resources and Education Assistance.***

The staffs of the Ministries dealing with VET, including the VET Department of MoECR, are also extremely limited and their workload includes a large portion of functions non-relevant to the ministerial activities, which should mainly be the policy and strategy development, monitoring and evaluation, etc.

For overcoming this situation, first of all the types of VET-related activities (functions) should be strongly distinguished as by the types of bodies, and then those bodies should be restructured and optimised. In practical terms this would mean:

R.5: Establish an effective national structure assigned for complete scope of VET support activities

Reorganisation of the CRDÎP which is presently acting within the IES structure, can be technically complicated. Therefore, it is advised to liquidate the Centre and establish a new independent

institution. This can be a National[20] VET Centre or VET Agency (or National VET Development Centre/Agency) which would deal with all VET aspects, from organisation of standards development, teachers' training and publication of text-books, to the development of social partnership including coordination of Sector Committees' activities (see below). Thus, the main objective of this new structure (hereinafter – VET centre) will be supporting the Government (more specifically, MoECR and its VET Department) in implementing the unified state VET policy and carrying of VET reforms and the system development.

After or even before establishing the VET Centre, RMIC and MCT are also to be liquidated or merged with the appropriate structures under MoHLSP and MoARDE, respectively. At the same time, the specialists of those two centres who are presently dealing with VET, may be offered to join the new VET Centre along with the selected representatives of former CRDÎP.

The following functions (an indicative and non-exhaustive list) can be proposed for the VET Centre:

a) Support to development and implementation of an effective VET policy and strategy;
b) Coordination of social partnership at the national and sectoral levels and support to its further expanding and strengthening (coordination of the social partnership platform);
c) Support to development and introduction of National Qualifications Framework in VET, compatible with the European Qualifications Framework;
d) Organisation of development (and when relevant, publication) of state educational standards, textbooks, subject programmes, curricula, methodological and other educational resources/materials;
e) Coordination of evaluation and recognition of the outcomes of formal, non-formal and informal learning (validation of non-formal and informal learning – VNFIL);
f) Support to development of professional capacities of the VET institutions' teaching staff and managers (including the Board members) and other human resource related to the VET system (including representatives of central and local authorities, experts and other specialists) through the organisation and delivery of relevant training courses;
g) Development and coordination of the vocational guidance and career development (counselling) system for youth and adults; support to introducing the corresponding mechanisms and structures in the VET institutions;
h) Accumulation, coordination and analysis of up-to-date, reliable and full information on the VET systems of the Republic of Moldova and VET practices of other countries; dissemination of relevant information within and outside the country;
i) Support and provision of expertise to VET institutions in improving the VET content, all aspects of teaching and learning methodologies and techniques;
j) Support to introduction and operationalisation of internal quality assurance mechanisms in the VET institutions (in collaboration with ANACEC);
k) Developing, piloting and introducing innovations related to all VET practices;
l) Support the VET institutions for introducing and expanding own income generation activities;
m) Participation in the processes of monitoring and evaluation of the VET strategies and policies implementation, VET system and VET institutions performance;

[20] The word "Republican" is not advised as it bears a resemblance to the times when there were "republican" and "union" bodies.

n) Support establishing links and collaboration between the VET providers, other educational and relevant institutions, contribute to their networking in Moldova and abroad;

o) Managing the functioning of the donors' coordination platform (see also ***R.16*** below) and keep working communications with the donors;

p) Serving as a Secretariat to the VET Council (see ***R.1***);

q) Organisation and implementation of events and other measures for promoting, advocating and increasing visibility of VET and improving its image among the population in Moldova and abroad;

r) Support the wide spread dissemination of the principles of Lifelong learning in the Republic of Moldova;

s) Supervision of the VET institutions' activities in terms of meeting the requirements of the MoECR (or Government) decisions except those, supervision of which is assigned to other public bodies (fiscal and tax inspection, labour inspection, etc.), and reporting to MoECR on the identified violations;

t) Developing and submitting proposals on:

- optimisation of the VET system governance and VET institutions management;
- optimisation of the VET providers' network;
- VET system development programmes and plans;
- revision of the classifier of VET professions and qualifications in accordance with the actual Labour market needs;
- necessity of developing or revising the occupational and educational standards;
- need of amending or adopting legal acts regulating the VET system functioning and its specific aspects;
- improvement of the VET financing mechanism.

This list can be completed by a number of functions presently attached to the CRDÎP (see **Annex 9**).

It is recommended that the VET Centre has at least four units, indicatively:

1. Division of VET Development Programmes, *dealing with development of VET reforms programmes and action plans, optimisation programmes, supporting MoECR in designing the VET policies and strategies, their monitoring and evaluation, as well as preparing recommendations on improvement of different VET practices.*
2. Division of VET Content and Methodology, *dealing with organisation of standards and curricula development, introduction of new teaching, learning and assessment methodologies and techniques, organisation of teachers' training, NQF, VNFIL, QA.*
3. Division of Social Partnership and International Cooperation, *dealing with all aspects of social partnership (including coordination of the Sector Committees' activities) and international cooperation of the VET system, including management of donors' coordination platform (see* ***R.16*** *below).*
4. Division of VET Promotion and Career Development, *dealing with promotion, advocacy and visibility of VET, information and experience exchange within Moldova and with other countries, establishing links with foreign partners, promotion of LLL.*

There can be also an administrative unit with functions related to the accountancy, procurement, legal issues, public relations, etc., if the total number of staff is large enough.

In general, for the inception period, at least 17-18 staffs will be necessary for the VET Centre, to effectively launch the assigned tasks. Within the period of 2-3 years, the number of staff is likely to reach 20-22 people or more, if necessary resources are available.

For ensuring highly proficient staff for the VET Centre, competitive salaries are *sine-qua-non*.

In order to ensure the VET Centre's effectiveness and appropriate performance of the functions, it is supposed to be an *autonomous institution (a legal entity) subordinated to MoECR and directly managed by the corresponding State Secretary*, at the same time, having the VET Department as well as other MoECR units (LLL Service, NQF Department, PAME Department) and, where relevant, other ministries and institutions, as counterparts. For the inception period of e.g. 6 to 12 months (a time necessary for appropriate formation of the staff, allocation of a proper office, equipment, communication means, etc.), the Centre may be functioning within an existing organisation, e.g. ANACEC or MoECR. However, it is *strongly not recommended* to give the VET Centre a status of any other institution's structural unit, regardless the quality of this institution and its relations with MoECR or VET Department. The recent experience (and experience of other countries, too) proved that this was a mal-functioning option, and there are no guarantees that the situation with CRDÎP will not repeat.

R.5 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 1.5-2 years**
Required financial resources:	**very considerable (for ensuring the Centre's establishment and its capacities)**
Variables to be defined:	■ **scope of the tasks and functions (to be selected from the list proposed above)** ■ **structure and the number of employees (to be relevant to the scope of tasks and functions)** ■ **the legal form**

R.6: Expand the capacities of the VET Department at MoECR and revise its tasks

The VET Department of MoECR should become a solely policy developing and implementing structure, released from the functions of the VET institutions daily management and supervision. Nevertheless, the Department cannot be completely disengaged from the coordination of the institutions' functioning and from a certain scope of administrative support. Therefore, it is proposed to organise two units within the Department which could indicatively entitled: 1) Division for VET Policy and Strategy; and 2) Division for VET Provision. The following framework of functions is proposed for those Divisions:

- **Division for VET Policy and Strategy**
  a) Organising, coordinating and participating in the works related to the development and regular revision of the VET policy and strategy;
  b) Developing and managing the medium-term and long-term programmes of VET development and reforms;

c) Developing and introducing a unified policy on the VET implementation process and on monitoring, assessment and certification of its results;

d) Developing policies on the strengthening and institutionalisation of social partnership;

e) Developing policies and procedures of conducting different VET practices and their business processes;

f) Organising and participating in the monitoring and evaluation of the VET Strategy implementation, VET system and VET institutions performance, their effectiveness and efficiency;

g) Implementing activities contributing to the international integration of Moldova's VET system, cooperating with relevant foreign and international organisations and institutions;

h) Developing project proposals on supporting the VET system; identifying sources of technical and financial assistance, other sources of funding (internal, external, social partners, orders for preparing professionals);

i) Drafting legal acts related to introduction and/or proper implementation of the VET policy measures;

j) Discussing the VET Centre's proposals related to the Division's scope of responsibilities and formulating recommendations for their implementation.

- **Division for VET Provision**

a) Coordinating the activities of VET institutions and providing any necessary administrative support;

b) Developing proposals on optimisation of the network of public VET institutions and other organisations within the VET system, including their establishment, reorganisation, liquidation, allocation and the review of the assigned tasks and functions (profile, level of offered qualifications, creation of Centres of excellence, etc.);

c) Developing proposals on improving the VET institutions management, on optimising their funding system and on the mechanisms of supervising the VET institutions functioning and reporting;

d) Supervising and supporting implementation of different VET practices, such as standards development, vocational guidance and career development, VNFIL (in cooperation with the LLL Service at MoECR), QA, establishment and use of EMIS, students' enrolment and graduation procedures, Work-based learning, etc.; developing proposals on their improvement;

e) Coordinating the activities aimed at the improvement of the facilities of the VET institutions and at the provision of educational-materials base and educational methodological documents;

f) Supervising and supporting the activities aimed at the development of the VET system human resources;

g) Organising and coordinating the activities aimed at the promotion and development of Lifelong learning (adult education) within and outside the formal VET system;

h) Drafting legal acts regulating the operation of the VET system and VET institutions;

i) Discussing the VET Centre's proposals related to the Division's scope of responsibilities and formulating recommendations for their implementation.

j) Considering the VET institutions Boards' recommendations on rewarding or fine the Institutions Executives or on early termination of their duties, and other information on violations of regulations in the VET institutions, and preparing respective proposals.

In addition, the VET Department will have a number of common functions, such as:

- Establishing contacts and collaborating with structural subdivisions of the Ministry as well as with the relevant subdivisions of RM state governance bodies and organisations, social partners (including state and municipality/district governance bodies; public, private and non-governmental organisations, professional and other associations, educational and research organisations), as well as the relevant bodies of foreign countries and international organisations on VET issues;
- Coordinating the activities of bilateral and multilateral donor organisations in the field of VET;
- Organising various events (conferences, forums, seminars, etc.) on VET issues.

The total number of VET Department's employees should be 10-12, of which 4-5 in the Policy Division, 5-6 in the Provision Division, and the Head of the Department, who ideally should have also a Deputy.

R.6 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 1 year**
Required financial resources:	**limited (for salaries of additional staff)**
Variables to be defined:	■ **scope of the tasks and functions (to be selected from the list proposed above)** ■ **structure and the number of employees (to be relevant to the scope of tasks and functions)**

3.3. Optimising the VET Providers Network

The number of the VET institutions over the country is considered too large compared with the number of students, and the offer of qualifications is not rational. Moreover, the VET network is fragmented between 4 different ministries which complicates implementation of the unified state VET policy. There are also a number of issues related to the types of the VET institutions, specifically the Centres of Excellence.

SELECTED INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

Croatia:

There are more than 300 VET schools in Croatia, enrolling on average around 300 students. Majority of those schools are public. In 2000, as a result of decentralisation process, the authority of establishing VET schools was transferred from the Government to local and regional authorities.

VET school ***Managing Boards*** comprise from 7 to 13 members, according to the size of the school. The Boards members, including also representatives of the social partners (normally 3

members), are appointed by the founder, therefore, usually reflect the local interest and the political landscape. The Boards approve institutional development plans, local/school-based curricula and teacher training plans proposed by their schools, as well as nominate school Director for the Ministry approval.

Schools are mainly financed by the state budget, while a certain funding can be decentralised (material cost related to supply of the school, transportation of employees, etc.). The Director is authorised to manage the budget and make bargains up to a certain amount. Larger bargains shall be approved by the Board.

In each VET school, a ***Quality Assurance and Evaluation Commission*** is appointed to supervise all quality assurance processes and activities.

Almost 200 VET schools are also Adult education providers, hence they can offer training, retraining, reskilling programmes. Schools may also implement EU funded projects which can provide additional finances for the schools' development. After Croatia became a EU member, number of EU funded projects implemented by the schools increased. Most recently, a contract of 100 mln Euro was signed for establishing regional centres of competence. The schools can also receive additional income by producing and selling goods at their own premises (reinvestment).

For every curricula school wants to offer, approval from MoSE is needed. Based on the school application, the Ministry verifies whether the school has the material and human resources necessary for implementing the programme. Sufficient evidence that the qualification is relevant to the Labour market needs is also required. The Ministry gives approval of the enrolment numbers based on the founder's proposal.

Estonia:

There are 32 VET institutions in the country, of which 26 are public, 2 are municipal (in Tartu and Tallinn) and 4 are private. The public VET schools are acting under jurisdiction of MoER[21]. In addition, 5 universities also provide VET.

All VET schools have ***Boards***, which are advisory bodies, comprising 7 members including social partners. These boards link VET schools and society, advising the school and its management on planning and organising educational and economic activities.

The highest collegial decision-making body of the school is the ***Council***, which organises the activities, and plans school development. The head of the school (*Director*) is also the head of the council, managing the school according to the plan, including financial resources.

VET schools also provide non-formal education for unemployed people. ***Ministry of Social Affairs*** (MoSA) has a learning centre, which provides courses for disabled people.

Every VET school independently decides on introduction of a new curricula and offering a new qualification, which however should be ***authorised*** (licenced) by MoER. For this purpose, the ministry assesses if the school complies with a number of conditions[22]: learning outcomes defined in the curriculum correspond the requirements of the VET Standard and they can be achieved; the number of positions of teaching and other employees complies with the planned qualification requirements is sufficient for the provision of instruction in a curriculum group; the resources necessary for the provision of instruction in a curriculum

[21] There are two VET schools acting under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior.
[22] Vocational Educational Institutions Act, 2013: https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/517072020005/consolide.

group are sufficient; the study to be opened is sustainable pursuant to the development plan of the institution; the study to be opened is purposeful in view of the labour market forecast and existence of potential students, proven by written opinions of the local government association and the social partners corresponding to the curriculum, as well as the evidence-based nature of studies. At the same time, MoER strongly recommends the VET schools to follow OSCA (Estonian Skill Forecasting System) reports on the skills need.

Romania:

There are over 70 VET institutions providing secondary VET, with population of around 90 thousand students; and more than 160 institutions offering post-secondary VET where about 92 thousand are enrolees. All public VET schools are acting under the Ministry of Education and Research. The number of VET providers is presently considered as too large and optimisation measures are under discussion.

Since 2018, due to permanently declining motivation of youth to acquire agricultural professions, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development has been assigned by law to support development of agricultural VET, without, however, taking any administrative supervision of the VET institutions.

The VET governance is rather centralised specifically in terms of funding, and the VET institutions' autonomy is limited. Nevertheless, they are free to generate own income through e.g. conducting paid courses or provision of other services.

For optimising the VET providers' network, the following main actions are recommended:

R.7: Revise subordination of the public VET institutions

It is recommended that all public VET institutions (except the one under MoIA) are transferred to the subordination of MoECR. This process is to be implemented in two phases. During the first phase with a duration of maximum one year, the VET institutions presently acting under the MoARDE will be passed to the MoECR jurisdiction, while within the second phase, which may last from 2 to 3 years, the medical colleges will be transferred.

Centralisation of the VET institutions under the jurisdiction of MoECR is justified by at least the following factors:

- there is a need to sharply increase the effectiveness of unified state education policy implementation particularly through the defragmentation of the responsibility for VET provision and for the management of the public VET providers network;
- there is in fact, no public agricultural sector in Moldova and MoARDE is neither the "customer" ("orderer" and/or "consumer" of agro specialists), nor a bearer of information about the skill needs in the agricultural labour market. Moreover, no any function related to education is foreseen by its regulation (see the sub-section 3.1.4, Part 1 of this Report);
- unlike the agro-sector, the healthcare system is mainly public, but here, there is a need to separate functions of the "customer" (who is also the assessor and acceptor of the trained specialists) and functions of the "performer" (who prepares those specialists). In addition, the MoHLSP regulation also does not include any responsibility in the field of education;

- centralisation of the VET institutions under one body will allow also optimisation and consolidation of various methodological support structures (see the section 3.1) which are also presently scattered among different ministries, have a very little staff and therefore, are completely inefficient;
- analysis of international practices shows (**Annex 13**) that in almost none of the EU or partner-countries, the VET institutions are subordinated to the line ministries. The latter participate in VET policy development, in defining the skill needs and elaboration of standards, in quality assurance issues, etc., but the managerial functions are chiefly given to the Ministries of education or to the regional/local authorities.

At the same time, shift of the jurisdiction does not in any manner mean that the line ministries will lose their relations with, and influence on the VET system or will be released from the responsibility to contribute to the development of VET related to their sectors. Representatives of both Ministries will continue taking part in all relevant structures, such as councils, committees or work groups. Besides, e.g. MoHLSP is expected to continue supporting the WBL for medical colleges' students, and the change of jurisdiction should not affect this good practice.

An Action plan for the VET institutions transfer to MoECR should be developed. This will include clearly scheduled steps related to the organisational, administrative and legal aspects. The change of the subordination may be more optimal to be carried out in parallel with the reorganisation of the VET institutions (see the ***R.8*** and ***R.9***).

After the transferring the VET institutions to MoECR, the respective VET-related functions of the MoARDE Department of Science, Education and Rural Extension and the MoHLSP Department of Educational and Migration Policies, will have to be terminated.

R.7 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 1 year, for MoARDE institutions** **within 3 years, for MoHLSP institutions**
Required financial resources:	**none**
Variables to be defined:	■ **administrative and legal aspects of the institutions transfer (to be decided in the framework of the national legislation)**

R.8: Rationalise the public VET institutions' network

The number of public VET institutions is proposed to be reduced by at least 10%, *via* mergers or acquisition (in some cases even closure), with a view to reach the indicator of e.g. not less than 600 students per VET institution ***on average*** (to be decided by the national authorities). For this, a set of clear criteria for selecting the institution to be reorganised, i.e. number of students and the staff, building conditions, relevance of the offered qualifications to the LM needs (can be identified, e.g. via surveys of economic agents), etc., should be defined beforehand. An indicative list of possible selection criteria is proposed in the **Annex 14**.

Nevertheless, for rural, remote or some other specific ("strategic") areas, the social (but not only economic) and/or other particular factors should be strongly considered, according with the national policy.

Mergers and/or closure of some institutions may create challenges related to issue of the buildings as well as to the staff redundancy.

The possible options of the use of released buildings can be: transfer of buildings to other educational institutions; assignment of buildings to other public organisations; sale of facilities to private companies. Those options will have different relevance and effectiveness in different regions, according with the local context and needs. In any case, this will require considerable administrative work and also legal amendments. Every single case shall be thoroughly studied and justified. Moreover, guarantees shall be provided that the buildings will be properly preserved during the period of transfer to another owner, corruption schemes will be avoided and the funds received from the sales, will serve development of the VET system.

The mergers or closure of institutions, may create also a considerable number of redundant staff. Social guarantees should be provided to those redundant employees. Not only financial benefits or similar passive measures but also support to a new job placement shall be ensured. They could be re-trained with a purpose of their re-skilling or provision of entrepreneurial competences for self-employment.

Nevertheless, for ensuring evidence-based decision taking, a feasibility analysis of the VET providers' performance and effectiveness would be a sound option. This exercise shall provide objective and transparent criteria for deciding on merging and/or closing VET institutions, whilst addressing optimisation of the VET institutions network.

R.8 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 2 years**
Required financial resources:	**very limited (for possible organisational issues)**
Variables to be defined:	■ **criteria for selecting the institutions to be reorganised (can be taken from the list in the Annex 14)** ■ **schedule of reorganisations (gradual or at once)** ■ **use of the released buildings**

R.9: Unify the types of VET institutions and revise the concept of Centres of Excellence

Presently, there are three types of VET institutions in Moldova: VET Schools providing only secondary VET (ISCED 3), and VET Colleges and Centres of Excellence providing secondary, post-secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary VET (ISCED 3, 4 and 5 respectively). This seems an unnecessary complication and can be solved after introducing the licencing system.

It is proposed to abolish the type difference, first of all between the VET Schools and VET Colleges and overcome a kind of segregation which often affects the attractiveness of the VET Schools. All those VET institutions can be titled e.g. Colleges, while not the status of the institution but the licence will define which level of qualifications they are allowed to offer. For example, when an institution presently holding the status of VET school, becomes more advanced and developed enough (e.g. due to donors' or private sector investments) for offering also post-secondary VET, the demand of which may emerge in a certain district or municipality, there will not be a need to change the status of that

institution through a complicated legal procedure, but awarding a corresponding licence will promptly and flexibly address the issue.

The other proposal relates to the Centres of Excellence. In many countries (e.g. in France, Netherlands, New Zeeland, Spain, Sweden, Ukraine, etc.), the Centre of Excellence is considered not a type but a ***status*** of a VET institution which is a subject to periodical renewal depending on the capacities and achievements of the institution. At the same time, those holding the CoE status, have considerably larger financing, enjoy a number of privileges, and therefore many institutions are motivated to permanently improve their own capacities and apply for (or keep holding) this status. The latter is considered an award and honour but not an obligation "issued from the top". The same is recommended for Moldova.

The analysis of the situation shows (see e.g. Box 25, Part 1 of this Report) that many of the institutions transformed into the Centres of Excellence, in spite of the investments made, are still not in a position to fulfil the new tasks assigned to them, and in fact do not serve as real CoEs. Not only their limited capacities but also a lack of motivation due to absence of any "reward" for being a CoE, are the reasons. This situation may continue for a rather long period of time (in some cases even forever) if no radical changes are done. Therefore, it is proposed to:

- transform the concept of the Centre of Excellence from a type of institution into a periodically renewable status;
- introduce a set of incentives (first of all financial) for the institutions to obtain and hold that status; and
- revise the scope of CoEs tasks, considering the functions to be attached to the VET Centre (see the ***R.5*** above);
- systematically monitor and evaluate the activity of the CoEs.

Coordination of the activities related to the awarding the CoE status and its monitoring and evaluation, is meaningful to be attached to the VET Centre (to be established), while the authority of taking the final decisions will remain with MoECR.

R.9 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 1 year**
Required financial resources:	**none**
Variables to be defined:	■ **the new scope of CoEs tasks and functions, with consideration of the functions to be attached to the VET Centre** ■ **schedule of reorganisations (gradual or at once)** ■ **use of the released buildings**

R.10: Introduce a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance and management of VET institutions

As mentioned above, presently there are four management bodies in every VET institution, i.e. three Councils (Teachers', Administrative and Scientific-Methodical) and the Director. The latter is the Chair of all those councils. Distribution of tasks between the bodies (except probably the Director) does not seem rational and well justified. All this obviously results in inefficient management, which is centralised within the institutions but also certainly lacks independence and autonomy in terms of relations with the central authorities. Managerial capacities of the mentioned bodies are also insufficient.

Multi-level and multi-stakeholder management and governance based on the principles of social partnership and implemented *via* dialogue, is seen as one of the solutions. According with this approach, a new type of managerial structures of the public VET Institutions will be necessary and the following managing bodies of the VET institutions are proposed:

- the Founder of the Institution (the Government and the corresponding Ministry as an authorised body; hereinafter – *Founder*),
- the Institution Board (hereinafter – *Board*),
- the Institution Executive Manager (Director, Principal, Head, etc.; hereinafter – *Executive*).

In practical terms, any public VET institutions will have only two managerial bodies: the Institution Board, which is the collegial management body of the Institution; and the Director, who is the Executive. This should be achieved by restructuring the existing managerial bodies of the Institutions and re-defining their responsibilities and tasks, and then followed by the capacity building for the members of those structures. Particularly, the Teachers' Council and the Scientific-Methodical Council, which can evidently be merged (under e.g. *Scientific-Pedagogical Council* or similar) are supposed to be excluded from the management structure and assigned for only taking decisions related to the methodology of teaching process implementation, scientific research, innovations and perhaps also to the teachers' professional development, but not the administrative issues. The following principles and features of the institutions' management structure are advised:

- The **Founder** is the Government who delegates the part of its authorities to the corresponding Ministry. In general, the Founder:
  - based on the Institution's regulation, define(s) the objectives of the Institution, as well as the types of its activities;
  - approves the Institution's Statute and the amendments thereof;
  - establishes, reorganises or liquidates the Institution;
  - defines the property rights that belong to the ownership or use of the Institution;
  - approves the regulation on the competition for selecting the Executive;
  - appoints the Executive according with the results of selection procedure implemented by the Board;
  - ensures Institution's funding according with the approved budget estimate, and supervises the use of provided funds.

- The **Board** (can be titled *'Management Board', 'Governing Board', 'Governing Council',* etc., according with the appropriateness for the local perception[23]) is the supreme governance body and includes representatives of different stakeholders, i.e.:
  - Founders (government, ministry);
  - social partners, nominated by employers and/or their unions and associations, and trade unions;
  - local authorities;
  - territorial Employment Service;
  - the Institution's pedagogical workers and students/learners;
  - different public organisations of the corresponding profile, professional unions and associations, NGOs, etc.
- The Board may consist of 11 to 21[24] members, who are approved by the Founder on the base of the nominations made by the corresponding stakeholders[25].
- The Executive *cannot* be a Board member. This should ensure balance between the collective governance by the Board and sole management of the Institution by the Executive manager.
- The Board's term of office can be 3 to 5 years. It executes particularly the following functions:
  - defines the main directions of the Institution development;
  - discusses and submits draft Statute of the Institution and amendments thereof to the Founder's approval;
  - adopts its own Statute (Regulation), work procedures; from among its members elects the Board Chair (hereinafter – Chair), Deputy Chair(s), and the Secretary of the Board. Chair of the Board *cannot be an Institution employee or a student/learner*;
  - according with the procedures approved by the Founder, organises and conducts competition for selecting the Executive and submits the winning candidature to the Founder's approval and formal appointment;
  - prepares and submits recommendations to the Founder on rewarding or fine the Executive, and initiates recommendations on the early termination of his/her duties;
  - submits proposals about the volume of the Institutions financing to the Founder's approval;
  - defines the fees for different paid courses and other services,
  - defines bonuses and other means of remunerations of the staff members including the Executive and the teachers/trainers;
  - identifies new partners, liaise and establishes cooperation with them, expands the Institution's network and scope of the beneficiaries and clients;
  - supports attraction of new sources of funding (fundraising);
  - approves:
    a) the Institution's Strategic Development Plans and Action plans,
    b) annual budget estimates, financial reports and balance,
    c) curricula and educational programmes,
    d) reports of the Executive,

[23] The term *'Board of Directors'* is not recommended, as it may seem more relevant to the commercial organisations and be not perceived unambiguously.
[24] A smaller number of members might not allow to involve representatives of all key stakeholders, while a larger number might make the Board hardly manageable and ineffective.
[25] The Board members are *not* expected to be remunerated for this work, and this is in line with the international practice. The direct participation in the decision making process is supposed to be the main motivation factor for the membership in the Board.

e) regulations on the Institution's structural units,

f) regulations on provision of different types of activities (e.g. services) by the Institution[26].

- The **Executive**, who is responsible for daily management of the institution and its appropriate functioning, is elected by the Board and appointed by the Founder.
- The list of Executive's functions may mainly remain in accordance with the acting legislation (see the sub-section 3.5, Part 1 of this Report), with necessary adjustments and improvements (for an indicative list of Executive's possible functions, see the **Annex 15**).

R.10 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 1 year**
Required financial resources:	**none**
Variables to be defined:	■ **number of the Board members and their representation** ■ **scope of the Board tasks and functions (to be selected from the list proposed above)** ■ **Board's term of office (from 3 to 5 years)**

R.11: Introduce a system of licencing for the offered qualifications

In the situation when for every non-formal learning short-terms course accreditation is required, absence of the licencing system for formal VET seems incomprehensible.

Introduction of the licencing system is expected to contribute to increasing the relevance of the offered qualifications to the Labour Market and ensure at least minimal pre-requisites for quality of the teaching process. Therefore, the VET institutions should have a licence for every qualification, both the new ones which are proposed to be introduced in the institution and those which are currently offered. For the former, obviously, the VET provider should apply beforehand and announce enrolment of the students only after obtaining the licence, while for the latter, a transition period, e.g. one or two years can be defined for licencing already acting qualifications (educational programmes).

The country will decide on the licencing policy and the structure of the licencing system, its mechanisms and institutional setup based on the national context and specificities. Nevertheless, the following framework principles are proposed to be applied:

- Licencing is based on a set of requirements to be met by the institution for introducing (or continuing to offer) a qualification (educational programme). These can be (a non-exhaustive list):
  - justification of the market demand for the specialists to be prepared according with the proposed qualification;

[26] The Board may also the following functions: taking decision on the Institution's profit management directions and ways; agreeing on large bargains on disposal and purchase of assets; supervision of the Executive's operations; setting up the requirements, job descriptions and selection criteria for the Institution's staffs, approval results of the selection; defining (or organising assessment of) the Institution's staffs and its own members training needs; defining the amounts of the stipends, scholarships and other allowances for the students and learners.

- requirements towards the teaching staff, which can include general conditions, e.g. education, experience, retraining, percentage of those with scientific degree, as well as specific conditions according with the requirements of the corresponding educational standard;
- requirements towards the facilities, again including general ones, e.g. surface per student, conditions of class-rooms, sports hall, canteen, dormitory, library and those required by the corresponding standards, i.e. workshops, laboratories and their equipment, tools and consumables;
- requirements towards the methodological provision, i.e. curricula (education plan), teaching, learning and assessment materials, handbooks, manuals, guides and other materials according with the requirement of the corresponding standard;
- presence of at least an initial agreement with the organisations where the practical training of the students is to be organised;

- The licencing body is a structure independently conducting the licencing process and giving independent conclusions about the correspondence of the VET institution with the terms and conditions of licencing, but the licence is issued by the Ministry;
- The licence is not only permitting introduction of the *qualification* at a *certain ISCED level* and conduction of the teaching process, but defines also the *upper limit of students* who may annually be enrolled, depending on the capacities of the institution;
- Licence can be awarded for unlimited period of time;
- Licence is a pre-requisite but not a guarantee of quality as the quality assurance is a separate process.

R.11 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 2 year**
Required financial resources:	**Considerable (for establishing and running a licencing body)**
Variables to be defined:	■ **the licencing policy** ■ **structure of the licencing system, its mechanisms and institutional setup**

3.4. Increasing Effectiveness of VET Practices

There are many VET aspects or practices, such as Standards and curricula development, Career guidance, Tracer studies, Quality assurance, Work-based learning and Dual education, Teachers training, which are either poorly regulated or most importantly, the decision taking procedures and the business processes are not efficient and effective. Many of them are too bureaucratised and lengthy. Within this exercise, solutions for optimising every VET practice cannot be proposed. Therefore, it is recommended to:

R.12: Include optimisation of the VET practices in the new VET Strategy as expected outcomes

In practical terms, it is proposed that after establishing the VET Council, the Thematic groups (Work

Groups or Task Forces) will be assigned to study the situation with every VET practice (a thorough analysis, which will be used as a basis, can be found in the Section 2, Part 2 of this Report) and develop recommendations for improvements.

Again, a large scope of relevant stakeholders should be involved in the discussions. The VET Council will examine and endorse (or revise or reject) any proposal made for a certain VET practice, and only after that, the final decisions will be made.

R.12 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**instantly**
Required financial resources:	**none**
Variables to be defined:	■ **formulation of the expected outcomes related to the optimisation of the VET practices** ■ **the deadlines for ensuring the above outcomes**

3.5. Increasing VET Funding and Optimising VET Financing Scheme

SELECTED INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

Croatia:

Since 2001, the financing of public upper secondary VET schools has been decentralised. The State budget finances: salaries for teachers and other employees; in-service training of teachers and other staffs; education of at-risk groups (such as ethnic minorities, learners with special needs) and talented learners; teaching materials and equipment; transportation costs of learners; ICT infrastructure and software for schools; school libraries; and capital investments (buildings, infrastructure). The local and regional governments cover: costs related to the school premises and equipment; operating costs of the schools; transportation costs of school; joint financing of food and lodging in learner residences; capital investments (buildings, infrastructure) according with the criteria determined by the MoSE[27].

Estonia:

In 2018, a new model of VET financing was introduced. It includes basic financing and performance financing (for specific achievements such as cooperation with private companies, participation level in WBL, the share of students graduating per nominal year, etc.). However, this new financing model is not entirely working yet, as it was planned.

Romania:

State funding provided to schools by the MoER, is based on the actual enrolment and covers wages, allowances, staff continuous training, learner assessment expenditure, materials, services and maintenance.

[27] Local authorities as the legal founders and owners of the schools can also be investors regarding buildings/infrastructure.

Continuing VET is jointly financed by employers/enterprises; unemployment insurance budget; EU structural and cohesion instruments; personal contributions; other sources. The budget provides subsidies to the employers who provide continuing VET (apprenticeship, traineeship and vocational training programmes).

The funding formula is far from being perfect: it is not based on the real needs but is calculated from the budget ceilings. Therefore, the VET funding remains insufficient.

There is no component related to the rate of performance or achievements. Reportedly, the reason is that 'it is very difficult to measure the value added of the education'. Now, a mechanism of recognising excellence is being developed.

Under this title, the principal recommendation would evidently be:

R.13: Increasing the VET funding

and allocating more financial resources specifically to the following directions:

a) continuously improving the VET institutions' facilities, equipment and the methodological base, developing the capacities of human resources and considerably increasing their salaries in order to attract and retain highly proficient specialists both as teaching and managerial staff;

b) establishing and running an effective VET support structure (VET Centre) equipped with all necessary means and with appropriate number of decently remunerated staff, again for ensuring a high quality expertise;

c) expanding the capacities of the VET governance structures (particularly the VET Department of MoECR), and increasing the quality and widening the scope of measures serving good governance, e.g. data collection and analysis, research, consultations, VET advocacy and promotion, etc.

The points above, are partly discussed also in the framework of the other Recommendations made in this paper.

As a benchmark for the VET funding, e.g. at least 3% of the total State Budget could be established.

R.13 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**started from 2022**
Required financial resources:	**very considerable**
Variables to be defined:	■ **priority areas for the increased funding**

The other recommendation, important for improving the situation with VET financing, is more specific:

R.14: Ensure full-fledged and consistent per-capita VET financing mechanism

The action required for implementing this recommendation is simple: instead of calculating the *per-capita* funding rates "down from the budget ceiling", the real expenditures per student necessary for provision of quality and relevant VET, should be calculated and applied. It is clearly realised that in this

case, the rate may increase by times. Nevertheless, this is the cost to be paid for having an adequate and effective VET system in the country.

R.14 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 1 year**
Required financial resources:	**considerable**
Variables to be defined:	**none**

3.6. Improving the VET Legislation

A number of deficiencies were identified in the present VET legislation and it is evident that various legal acts are to be revised.

R.15: Revise the legislation so that it serves best for effective implementation of the VET policy and strategy

No any legal act shall be an end in itself. It shall be justified in terms of serving concrete objectives, first of all, those established by the VET Strategy. Therefore, the changes in the legislation should only be initiated after adopting the new Strategy for 2030. Moreover, the fallacious approach of "adjusting" the policies to the existing legislation (*'we do not write this in the strategy as this is not in line with the legislation'*), should be avoided: the opposite is the only correct option.

Any draft legal act shall be discussed with all relevant key stakeholders (first of all with the National VET Council – see ***R.1***), specifically those who are expected to implement the requirements of this act in practice. Draft legal acts shall pass expertise not only in terms of correspondence to the existing legislation (although the latter may need to be adapted to the new legal act), which is a normal practice, but also in terms of resource feasibility, i.e. if there are available financial, institutional or human resources necessary for implementing the provisions of this legal act. Moreover, if its implementation foresees any additional expenses, the source and the volume of the resources for covering those expenses shall be clearly defined.

R.15 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**within 1 year after approving VET Strategy 2030**
Required financial resources:	**limited (for possible Technical assistance)**
Variables to be defined:	■ **Prioritisation of the legal acts to be revised or developed**

3.7. Optimising International Support

As mentioned above, many donors, such as the European Union, World Bank, USAID, Austrian Development Agency, Lichtenstein Development Service, GIZ, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation make a tangible contribution to the RM VET system development. It is not to say that

they are acting isolated from each other or their assistance is fragmented. There is also a certain level of communication among them performed through periodical (usually once per quarter) meetings. However, a better coordination of the donors' activities, increase of their projects' effectiveness and improvement of their targetedness seem still necessary. For this purpose, it is recommended to:

R.16: Establish a VET donors' coordination platform

The platform may be of a virtual nature with annual, biannual or even quarterly working meetings. Not only international or bilateral donor organisations but all others making any considerable contribution to the VET development (e.g. private companies, NGOs or individual benefactors, if any) are to be involved.

Besides the multilateral communications about the current and foreseen activities among the donors on one hand, and between the donors and MoECR, on the other, also the discussions on the emerging support programmes and projects, will be the tasks of the platform. The latter is specifically important for effective planning and ensuring effectiveness and future impact of the forthcoming assistance actions.

The VET Centre will manage the functioning of the platform (see also ***R.5*** above) and keep working communications with the donors. The platform is advised to have a database of the donor's projects which would include information according with the following indicative list:

1. Title of the project
2. Implementation period
3. (Co-)Funder(s)
4. Budget (*optional*)
5. Target groups, beneficiaries and stakeholders (key, primary, secondary)
6. Overall and Specific Objectives
7. Expected results (*not specified as outcomes/outputs intentionally due to possible different approaches*)
8. Achievements to date (*outputs, outcomes and/or just activities done – to be discussed*)
9. Planned activities for the next (*to be specified*) period
10. Additional information:
    - Manager, staff
    - Location and contacts
    - *Any other…*
11. Special Notes (*optional*), e.g. lessons learnt, needs, continuation forecast, important comments, etc.
12. Produced materials, resources, links, etc.

The database will be available for all platform participants, while the level of availability to other actors will be defined by MoECR.

R.16 IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS

Proposed timeframe:	**immediately after establishing the VET Centre**
Required financial resources:	**very limited (for administering technical issues)**
Variables to be defined:	■ **the platform configuration**

- **scope of involved parties**
- **forms of communication and information exchange**

3.8. Accompanying Recommendations

In addition to the 16 main recommendations made above for reaching the defined objectives, the experts find it necessary to recommend also:

R.17: Restructure the Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department at MoECR and expand the capacities

The monitoring and evaluation mechanism proposed under the ***R.4***, will not be properly functioning if the structure and the capacities of the PAME Department remain as they are presently. As identified in the analysis of institutional arrangements (Section 3.1.2, Part 1 of this Report), only one employee of this Department is dealing with the entire education sector (with a limited contribution of the Head of Department), therefore, no any appropriate policy monitoring can be expected. To overcome this issue, it is necessary that:

- there is at least one responsible Department employee per education sector, i.e. pre-school, general, vocational (can be combined with LLL), and higher education;
- all those employees are trained on the modern M&E approaches and techniques.

R.18: Review the level of the ANACEC independence

According with the initial version of the Education Code (Article 115, clause 1), ANACEC was supposed to be a body independent from the Government. Later, however, this clause was amended (21st September 2017) and it was defined for ANACEC to be subordinated to MoECR. None of the two options seem entirely rational. On one hand, the Centre cannot be beyond the executive power, i.e. the Government system (otherwise, being a public body, should be accountable to the Parliament), while on the other hand, subordination to a ministry considerably limits its autonomy in making assessments and taking truly independent decisions (see Conclusions above, under the title “Quality Assurance”). Therefore, the ANACEC’s direct subordination of the Government (Prime-minister’s office) seems the most balanced option.

R.19: Expand the capacities of the NQF Department at MoECR and revise its tasks

Like in the case of the PAME Department, the analysis showed that in the NQF Department too, there is only one person who along with the Department Head, is dealing with the issues directly related to the principal mandate of this unit. At the same time, in parallel with the policy-formulation tasks, the Department is responsible also for organisation and coordination of qualification standards elaboration and for monitoring of their performance. These functions, in the context of the recommendations made in this Report, are supposed to be attached to the VET Centre (see ***R.5***), thus releasing the MoECR departments from the responsibilities which are not relevant to the ministerial level. Therefore, along with the improvement of the NQF Department capacities for transforming it into a structure effectively dealing with the NQF policy and legislation, its tasks should also be reviewed considering the scope of the VET Centre’s functions, as well as those of the VET Department.

R.20: Promote the National Council of VET Students

The study proved that there is a functioning National Council of VET Students in the country, and the students are motivated to participate actively in its works. The Council provides students with opportunity to meet and discuss their interests and problems, identify the needs and formulate challenges related not only to their own institutions but to the entire VET system. Therefore, it seems highly probable that, if promoted and further encouraged, the Council can ensure a tangible value added for a more student-oriented VET policy development and system governance.

ETF Working together Learning for life

European Training Foundation

VET GOOD MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA

Assessment Report[1]

Part 4. Bibliography and Annexes

[1] Final working document November 2020

THE EU AGENCY SUPPORTING COUNTRIES TO DEVELOP THROUGH LEARNING

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ABBREVIATIONS

AC	Administrative Council
ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ANACEC	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research
ANQEP	National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training
AP	Action Plan
CEDA	Centre for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Assistance
CIDDC	Child Rights Information Centre
CNSM	National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova
CoCI	Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CoE	Centre of Excellence
CRDÎP	National Centre for VET Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
DEMP	Department of Educational and Migration Policies
DevRAM	Development of Rural Areas in the Republic of Moldova
DGE	Directorate General for Education
DGERT	Directorate for Employment and Industrial Relations
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
ETB	Education and Training Boards
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
FECR	Finance in Education, Culture and Research
FET	Further education and training
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HR	Human Resources
HVAA	High Value Agriculture Activity
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
IEFP	Institute for Employment and Vocational Training
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IT	Information Technologies
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
KLI	Korea Labour Institute
KRIVET	Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training

LED	Liechtenstein Development Service
LLL	Lifelong Learning
LM	Labour Market
LMO	Labour Market Observatory
MCT	Methodical Centre for Training
MoAFI	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry
MoARDE	Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoECR	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research
MoEFP	Ministry of Education and Vocational Training
MoEL	Ministry of Employment and Labour
MoER	Ministry of Education and Research
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoHERI	Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation
MoHLSP	Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Policy
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MoLMSS	Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security
MoLSSS	Ministry of Labour Solidarity and Social Security
MoNE	Ministry of National Education
MoSE	Ministry of Science and Education
MPSV	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
MŠMT	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
NAVET	National Agency for Vocational Education and Training
NBS	National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova
NCTVETD	National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development
NCVETS	National Council of VET Students
NEA	National Employment Agency
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NNCC	National Commission for Collective Bargaining
NQF	National Qualification Framework
OSMED	Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development
RM	Republic of Moldova
SC	Sector Committees
SDP	Strategic Development Plans

SEPE	State Public Employment Service
SME	Small and Middle Enterprises
SNQ	National Qualification System
SOLAS	Further Education and Skills Service
SSG	SkillsFuture Singapore
TC	Teachers' Council
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEVOC	International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WBL	Work-Based Learning
WSG	Workforce Singapore

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ANNEX 1. LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Local Interviews

№	Time	Institution	Person
		18 March 2020	
1	10.30 - 12.00	VET School № 5, Bălți	Ms Lucia Caraiman, Director
2	12.00 - 14.00	Centre of Excellence for Services and Food Processing, Bălți	Ms Silvia Protiuc, Director
3	14.00 - 16.00	National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education & Research	Mr Andrei Chiciuc, President
		19 March 2020	
4	10.20 - 11.55	Centre of Excellence for Wine and Viticulture	Mr Sergiu Zabolotnii, Director
5	12.30- 16.00	Polytechnic College, Bălți	Mr Ion Lisnic, Director
		20 March 2020	
6	10.00 - 11.30	Confederation of Trade Unions	Mr Sergiu Iurcu, Head of the Social and Economic Protection Department
7	13.00 - 15.30	Sector Committee for Trade, Hotels and Restaurants	Ms Valentina Chiriac, Vice-president
		23 March 2020	
8	10.00 - 11.30	MoECR: Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department	Mr Tudor Cojocaru, Head of Department
9	12.00 - 13.30	Sector Committee for IT and Communication	Mr Mihai Grecu, Vice-President of the
10	14.00 - 16.00	Republican VET Development Centre	Mr Octavian Vasilachi, Director
		24 March 2020	
11	10.00 - 15.30	Sector Committee for water distribution, sanitation, waste management, decontamination activities	Mr Marcel Cușnir, President
12		Sector Committee for financial intermediation and insurance, real estate transactions	Ms Angela Lazarenco, President
13		Sector Committee for Light Industry	Ms Nadejda Rusnac, President, Mr Gheorghe Gangura
		25 March 2020	
14	09.00 - 10.45	MoECR: NQF Department	Ms Tatiana Gherstega, Head of Department
15	11.00 - 12.30	MoHLSP: Educational and Migration Policies Department	Ms Anna Gherganova, Head of Department
		26 March 2020	

16	10.00 - 11.30	LLL Department, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research	Ms Cristina Denita, Head of Department
17	11.30 - 13.00	Ministry of Finance	Ms Olga Rusnac, Head of Department
		27 March 2020	
18	10.00 - 11.00	Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Mr Sergiu Harea, President
19	13.00 - 14.30	National Confederation of Employers	Mr Vladislav Caminschi, Executive Director
20	14.30 - 15.30	Organisation for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (OSMED)	Ms Daniela Dascaliuc, Head of SME Funding Department
		31 March 2020	
21	13.20 - 14.20	World Bank	Ms Lucia Casap, Operations Officer in the World Bank's Education Global Practice based in Moldova
		01 April 2020	
22	10.00 - 11.45	Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry	Mr Leonard Palii, President
23	12.00 - 13.30	USAID	Mr Oleg Stiopca
24	14.00 - 15.00	Austrian Development Agency ADA	Ms Otilia Sîrbu, Programme Manager
		02 April 2020	
25	10.00 - 12.00	LED	Mr Pius Frick
		03 April 2020	
26	12.00 - 13.45	CEDA	Ms Sofia Șuleanschi, Director
		06 April 2020	
27	14.00 - 15.00	MoHLSP: Service for Policies in the Field of Medical and Social Personnel	Mr Valeriu Goncear, Head
		07 April 2020	
28	10.00 - 11.10	ProDidactica	Ms Rima Bezede
29	12.00 - 13.15	Republican Methodical Instructional Cabinet under MoHLSP.	Ms Diana Savca, Head
		10 April 2020	
30	10.00 - 11.30	Centre of Excellence for Medicine and Pharmacy “R. Pacalo”	Ms Ala Manolachi, Director
		27 April 2020	
31	14.00 - 15.10	ICS Premier Energy Distribution SA	Ms Diana Doroș, Director Resources Department
		28 April 2020	
32	10.00 - 11.45	GIZ	Ms Oana Vodiță, Project Director
		04 May 2020	

33	14.00 - 15.00	Republican VET Development Centre (second interview)	Mr Octavian Vasilachi, Director
		05 May 2020	
34	14.30 - 15.50	National Employment Agency	Ms Raisa Dogaru, Durector
		06 May 2020	
35	10.00 - 11.15	Finance and Budgeting Service at MoECR	Ms Mariana Grozav
36	13.00 - 15.00	National VET Students Council Facilitator of the NSCVET from the CIDDC	Ms Rodica Caimac, Coordinator of the NVETSC from CIDDC; Ms Romana Vasilachi, former member of NVETSC; Ms Elvira Drangoi, former member of NVETSC; Ms Maria Magalena, member of NVETSC; Mr Zamfir Onofrei, member of NVETSC; Ms Andreea Cazacu, member of NVETSC
		08 May 2020	
37	09.00 - 10.00	VET Department at MoECR	Mr Silviu Gincu, Head of Department
		11 May 2020	
38	09.00 - 10.00	VET Department at MoECR (continuation)	Mr Silviu Gincu, Head of Department
		20 May 2020	
39	09.00 - 10.15	VET School, Ceadîr Lunga	Ms Vera Balova, Director
40	11.00 - 12.00	Municipality of Ceadîr Lunga	Mr Anatolii Topal, Mayor

International Interviews

	Estonia	
41	Ms Külli All	Deputy Head of Adult Education Department, Ministry of Education and Research
42	Ms Rita Kask	Adviser at the Vocational Education Office in the Department of Secondary Education, Ministry of Education and Research
43	Mr Olav Aarna	PhD, Academic Adviser at Kutsekoda
44	Ms Kaie Piiskop	Chief Specialist at the Department of Internalisation at HarNO
	Romania	
45	Ms Dana Stroie	Director Adjunct / Deputy Director of the National Centre for TVET Development, Ministry of Education and Research
	Croatia	
46	Mr Nino Buić	Assistant Director for European Affairs, Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education

ANNEX 2. QUESTIONNAIRES

1. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR VET DEPARTMENT OF MoECR

I. INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE:

1.1. Name: Gender: F ☐ M ☐; Year of birth:

1.2. Position: ; Since

1.3. Previous experience at the Department and/or the Ministry:

a) : from to

b) : from to

c) : from to

1.4. Previous experience in the field of VET at any other organisation (if any).

a) : from to

b) : from to

c) : from to

II. INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT:

2.1. Please provide the list of positions within the Department and the work experience of the specialist occupying those positions:

1) : years

2) : years

3) : years

4) : years

5) : years

6) : years

2.2. Please list the 3-5 most important tasks/functions of the Department:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

2.3. What document defines the tasks of the Department *(the corresponding document to be provided)*

.

2.4. Do you think that tasks of the Department are relevant and comprehensive?

Yes ☐ No ☐

2.5. Are there any tasks which are not relevant?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

2.6. Are there any tasks which could be also assigned to the Department?

Yes ☐ No ☐. If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

2.7. In your opinion, what is the level of the Department performance: %

2.8. Are there any tasks which are assigned to, but are not or poorly performed by the Department?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

What are the reasons?

III. INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION SCHEME AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT:

3.1. What are the consultative and other similar bodies (councils, boards, committees, etc.)?

1)

2)

3)

3.2. Please shortly describe the scope of authorities of each body:

1) <**Name of the body**>: < authorities…>
2) <**Name of the body**>: < authorities…>
3) <**Name of the body**>: < authorities…>

3.3. What are the subordinated and supporting structures?

1)

2)

3)

3.4. Please describe the main duties and responsibilities of each structure:

1) <**Name of the body**>: < main duties and responsibilities …>
2) <**Name of the body**>: < main duties and responsibilities …>
3) <**Name of the body**>: < main duties and responsibilities …>

3.5. Please explain what is involvement of the social partners (or any other "side-actors"), their roles and participation in decision-making processes: .

In the case of limited involvement:

3.6. Please indicate the reasons of their limited involvement:

1)

2)

3)

3.7. Please explain the internal and external reporting systems of the Department:

.

3.8. Do you think that there are clearly defined performance and quality indicators?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Who has defined them?

3.9. Please explain the internal and external monitoring mechanisms of the Department:

3.10. Please explain the performance assessment system of the Department:

3.11. In your opinion, what are the main challenges of the Department?

1)

2)

3)

IV. VET PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES:

4.1. Please explain involvement and participation of the Department in the processes related to the following VET aspects. Please indicate the achievements and obstacles:

1) Identification of skills need (LM analysis) and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education (standards and curricula):
2) VET planning and enrolment: .
3) VET provision quality assurance: .
4) Dual education: .
5) Lifelong learning: .
6) Work-based learning: .
7) Tracer study of the graduates, socio-economic inclusion: .
8) Funds allocation and distribution of funds: .
9) Monitoring and evaluation:
10) Any other: .

V. THE VET SYSTEM:

5.1. In your opinion, how effective VET system governance is? Please indicate the main factors of in/effectiveness:

5.2. In your opinion, which are the VET system governance tasks which are performed best or worst? Please indicate the reasons:

5.3. In your opinion, which organisation involved in VET governance, performs best or worst? Please

indicate the reasons: .

5.4. In your opinion, which are the tasks/functions in the field of VET, not covered by any organisation. Please indicate the reasons: .

5.5. In your opinion, if the monitoring and evaluation in VET is adequately organised and effectively functioning at systemic and institutional levels?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

5.6. In your opinion, if the existing VET financing and funding mechanisms (sources, principles and criteria, amounts, periods, etc.) are adequate and fair?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

5.7. What would you propose on the following issues?

1) Restructuring the VET governance system in general: .
2) Revising the VET-related bodies' tasks and functions: .
3) Revising legislation and regulations: .
4) Involving new actors or excluding some of those which are currently involved: .
5) Improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems: .
6) Improvement of VET financing and funding: .
7) VET schools network organisation/effectiveness/relevance: .
8) Current principles of granted financial autonomy of VET institutions: .
9) Strengthening the role of Centres of Excellence in the VET system: .
10) Specific processes related to different VET working practices discussed above: .

VI. ANY OTHER POINTS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS:

2. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE VET RELATED DEPARTMENTS OF MoECR (EXCEPT THE VET DEPARTMENT)

I. INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE:

1.1. Name: Gender: F ☐ M ☐;

1.2. Position: ; Since

1.3. Previous experience at the Department and/or the Ministry:

a) : from to

b) : from to

c) : from to

1.4. Previous experience in the field of VET at any other organisation (if any).

a) : from to

b) : from to

c) : from to

II. INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT:

2.1. Pleases provide the list of positions within the Department and their relation to VET:

1) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

2) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

3) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

4) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

5) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

6) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

7) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

8) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

2.2. Please list the 3-5 most important tasks/functions of the Department, including those related to VET:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

2.3. What document defines the tasks of the Department *(the corresponding document to be provided)*

.

2.4. Do you think that the tasks of the Department, specifically those related to VET, are relevant and comprehensive?

Yes ☐ No ☐

2.5. Are there any tasks, specifically those related to VET, which are not relevant?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

2.6. Are there any tasks, specifically those related to VET, which could be also assigned to the Department?

Yes ☐ No ☐. If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

2.7. In your opinion, what is the level of the Department performance: %, particularly thereof related to VET %.

2.8. Are there any tasks which are assigned to, but are not or poorly performed by the Department, including those related to VET?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

What are the reasons?

III. INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION SCHEME AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT:

3.1. What are the subordinated and supporting structures which deal also with VET?

1)

2)

3)

3.2. Please describe the main VET-related duties and responsibilities of each structure:

1) <**Name of the body**>: < main duties and responsibilities …>

2) <**Name of the body**>: < main duties and responsibilities …>

3) <**Name of the body**>: < main duties and responsibilities …>

3.3. Please explain what is involvement of the social partners (or any other "side-actors"), their roles and participation in decision-making processes: .

In the case of limited involvement:

3.4. Please indicate the reasons of their limited involvement:

1)

2)

3)

3.5. Please explain the internal and external reporting systems of the Department:

.

3.6. Do you think that there are clearly defined performance and quality indicators?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Who has defined them?

3.7. Please explain the internal and external monitoring mechanisms of the Department:

3.8. Please explain the performance assessment system of the Department:

3.9. In your opinion, what are the main challenges of the Department, specifically those related to VET?

1)
2)
3)

IV. VET PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES:

4.1. Please explain involvement and participation of the Department in the processes related to the following VET aspects. Please indicate the achievements and obstacles:

1) Identification of skills need (LM analysis) and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education (standards and curricula):
2) VET planning and enrolment: .
3) VET provision quality assurance: .
4) Dual education: .
5) Lifelong learning: .
6) Work-based learning: .
7) Tracer study of the graduates, socio-economic inclusion: .
8) Funds allocation and distribution of funds: .
9) Monitoring and evaluation:
10) Any other: .

V. THE VET SYSTEM:

5.1. In your opinion, how effective VET system governance is? Please indicate the main factors of in/effectiveness:

5.2. In your opinion, which are the VET system governance tasks which are performed best or worst? Please indicate the reasons:

5.3. In your opinion, which organisation involved in VET governance, performs best or worst? Please indicate the reasons: .

5.4. In your opinion, which are the tasks/functions in the field of VET, not covered by any organisation. Please indicate the reasons: .

5.5. In your opinion, if the monitoring and evaluation in VET is adequately organised and effectively functioning at systemic and institutional levels?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

5.6. In your opinion, if the existing VET financing and funding mechanisms (sources, principles and criteria, amounts, periods, etc.) are adequate and fair?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

5.7. What would you propose on the following issues?

1) Restructuring the VET governance system in general: .
2) Revising the VET-related bodies' tasks and functions: .
3) Revising legislation and regulations: .
4) Involving new actors or excluding some of those which are currently involved: .
5) Improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems: .
6) Improvement of VET financing and funding: .
7) VET schools network organisation/effectiveness/relevance: .
8) Current principles of granted financial autonomy of VET institutions: .
9) Strengthening the role of Centres of Excellence in the VET system: .
10) Specific processes related to different VET working practices discussed above: .

VI. ANY OTHER POINTS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS:

.

3. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DEPARTMENTS OF GOVERNMENTAL BODIES (EXCEPT MoECR) WHICH HAVE FUNCTIONS RELATED TO VET

Name of the Governmental Body , Name of the Department/Division/Unit

I. INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE:

1.1. Name: Gender: F ☐ M ☐;

1.2. Position: ; Since

1.3. Previous experience related to VET at this or any other organisation (if any).

a) : from to

b) : from to

c) : from to

II. INFORMATION ABOUT THE DEPARTMENT:

2.1. Pleases provide the list of positions within the Department and their relation to VET:

1) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

2) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

3) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

4) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

5) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

6) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

7) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

8) . Deals with VET: Yes ☐ No ☐

2.2. Please list the 3-5 most important tasks/functions of the Department, including those related to VET:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

2.3. What document defines the tasks of the Department *(the corresponding document to be provided)*

.

2.4. Do you think that the tasks of the Department, specifically those related to VET, are relevant and comprehensive?

Yes ☐ No ☐

2.5. Are there any tasks, specifically those related to VET, which are not relevant?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

2.6. Are there any tasks, specifically those related to VET, which could be also assigned to the Department?

Yes ☐ No ☐. If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

2.7. In your opinion, what is the level of the Department performance: %, particularly thereof related to VET %.

2.8. Are there any tasks which are assigned to, but are not or poorly performed by the Department, including those related to VET?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

What are the reasons?

III. INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION SCHEME AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT:

3.1. What are the subordinated and supporting structures which deal also with VET?

1)

2)

3)

3.2. Please describe the main VET-related duties and responsibilities of each structure:

1) <**Name of the body**>: < main duties and responsibilities …>
2) <**Name of the body**>: < main duties and responsibilities …>
3) <**Name of the body**>: < main duties and responsibilities …>

3.3. Please explain what is involvement of the social partners (or any other "side-actors"), their roles and participation in decision-making processes: .

In the case of limited involvement:

3.4. Please indicate the reasons of their limited involvement:

1)

2)

3)

3.5. Please explain the internal and external reporting systems of the Department:

.

3.6. Do you think that there are clearly defined performance and quality indicators?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Who has defined them?

3.7. Please explain the internal and external monitoring mechanisms of the Department:

3.8. Please explain the performance assessment system of the Department:

3.9. In your opinion, what are the main challenges of the Department, specifically those related to VET?

1)
2)
3)

IV. VET PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES:

4.1. Please explain involvement and participation of the Department in the processes related to the following VET aspects. Please indicate the achievements and obstacles:

1) Identification of skills need (LM analysis) and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education (standards and curricula):
2) VET planning and enrolment: .
3) VET provision quality assurance: .
4) Dual education: .
5) Lifelong learning: .
6) Work-based learning: .
7) Tracer study of the graduates, socio-economic inclusion: .
8) Funds allocation and distribution of funds: .
9) Monitoring and evaluation:
10) Any other: .

V. THE VET SYSTEM:

5.1. In your opinion, how effective VET system governance is? Please indicate the main factors of in/effectiveness:

5.2. In your opinion, which are the VET system governance tasks which are performed best or worst? Please indicate the reasons:

5.3. In your opinion, which organisation involved in VET governance, performs best or worst? Please indicate the reasons: .

5.4. In your opinion, which are the tasks/functions in the field of VET, not covered by any organisation. Please indicate the reasons: .

5.5. In your opinion, if the monitoring and evaluation in VET is adequately organised and effectively functioning at systemic and institutional levels?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

5.6. In your opinion, if the existing VET financing and funding mechanisms (sources, principles and criteria, amounts, periods, etc.) are adequate and fair?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

5.7. What would you propose on the following issues?

1) Restructuring the VET governance system in general: .
2) Revising the VET-related bodies' tasks and functions: .
3) Revising legislation and regulations: .
4) Involving new actors or excluding some of those which are currently involved: .
5) Improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems: .
6) Improvement of VET financing and funding: .
7) VET schools network organisation/effectiveness/relevance: .
8) Current principles of granted financial autonomy of VET institutions: .
9) Strengthening the role of Centres of Excellence in the VET system: .
10) Specific processes related to different VET working practices discussed above: .

VI. ANY OTHER POINTS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS:

.

4. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS RELATED TO VET

Name of Organisation , Location (town, village), year of establishment

Subordination: <Name of the body to which the organisation is subordinated>

I. INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE:

1.1. Name: Gender: F ☐ M ☐; Year of birth: .

1.2. Position: ; Since .

1.3. Previous experience at this organisation (if any):

a) : from to ;

b) : from to ;

c) : from to .

1.4. Previous experience in the field of VET at any other organisation (if any).

a) : from to ;

b) : from to ;

c) : from to .

II. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISATION/UNIT:

2.1. What is the number of employees of your organisation: ; of them, dealing with VET: .

2.2. What is the main goal/mission of your organisation: .

2.3. What are the beneficiaries and/or the target groups of your organisation?

1)

2)

3)

2.4. What is the body and/or the document which defined the tasks/functions of your organisation (*please provide the corresponding document(s)*): .

2.5. Please list the 3-5 most important tasks/functions of your organisation:

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

2.6. Are there any tasks/functions of your organisation which overlap tasks/functions of any other organisation?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

2.7. Do you think that the tasks/functions of your organisation are fully relevant and comprehensive?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

2.8. Which tasks/functions do you think are not relevant (if any):

1)

2)

3)

2.9. Do you think that there are tasks/functions which could be also assigned to your organisation?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

2.10. In your opinion, what is the level of your organisation's performance: %

2.11. Which tasks/functions are not properly performed and why:

1)

2)

3)

III. INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION SCHEME AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT:

3.1. What are the administrative bodies of your organisation *(managerial posts, councils, boards, committees, etc.)***?**

1)

2)

3)

3.2. Please describe the scope of authorities of each body:

1) <**Name of the body**>: < authorities…>

2) <**Name of the body**>: < authorities…>

3) <**Name of the body**>: < authorities…>

3.3. Please explain what is involvement of the social partners (or any other "side-actors"), their roles and participation in decision-making processes: .

In the case of limited involvement:

3.4. Please indicate the reasons of their limited involvement:

1)

2)

3)

3.5. Please explain the internal and external reporting systems of your organisation:

.

3.6. Does your organisation have a Strategic development plan / Action Plan?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please provide.

3.7. Do you think that there are clearly defined performance and quality indicators?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Who has defined them? .

3.8. Please explain the performance assessment system of your organisation:

.

3.9. Please explain the internal and external monitoring mechanisms of your organisation:

.

3.10. In your opinion, what are the main challenges of your organisation:

1) ;
2) ;
3) .

IV. VET PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES:

4.1. Please explain involvement and participation of your institution in the processes related to the following VET aspects. Please indicate the achievements and obstacles:

1) Identification of skills need (LM analysis) and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education (standards and curricula): .
2) VET planning and enrolment: .
3) VET provision quality assurance: .
4) Dual education: .
5) Lifelong learning: .
6) Work-based learning: .
7) Tracer study of the graduates, socio-economic inclusion: .
8) Funds allocation and distribution of funds: .
9) Monitoring and evaluation: .
10) Any other: .

4.2. In your opinion, how effective VET system governance is? Please indicate the main factors of in/effectiveness: .

4.3. In your opinion, which are the VET system governance tasks which are performed best or worst? Please indicate the reasons: .

4.4. In your opinion, which organisation involved in VET governance, performs best or worst? Please indicate the reasons: .

4.5. In your opinion, which are the tasks/functions in the field of VET, not covered by any organisation.

Please indicate the reasons: .

4.6. In your opinion, if the monitoring and evaluation in VET is adequately organised and effectively functioning at systemic and institutional levels?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

4.7. In your opinion, if the existing VET financing and funding mechanisms (sources, principles and criteria, amounts, periods, etc.) are adequate and fair.

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

4.8. What would you propose on the following issues?

1) Restructuring the VET governance system in general: .
2) Revising the VET-related bodies' tasks and functions: .
3) Revising legislation and regulations: .
4) Involving new actors or excluding some of those which are currently involved: .
5) Improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems: .
6) Improvement of VET financing and funding: .
7) VET schools network organisation/effectiveness/relevance: .
8) Current principles of granted financial autonomy of VET institutions: .
9) Strengthening the role of Centres of Excellence in the VET system: .
10) Specific processes related to different VET working practices discussed above: .

V. ANY OTHER POINTS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS:

.

5. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR VET INSTITUTIONS

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION:

1.1. Name **; Location:** town, village, district**; Established in:** year

1.2. Status of the organisation: Public ☐ Private ☐, Subordination

1.3. Profile of the institution:

1.4. Number of employees: of them teachers, both disaggregated by gender: F M

1.5. Number of students as by qualifications, disaggregated by gender:

1) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women
2) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women
3) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women
4) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women
5) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women
6) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women
7) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women
8) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women
9) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women
10) <qualification> : total number of students , of them women

II. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE:

2.1. Name: Gender: F ☐ M ☐; Year of birth:

2.2. Position: ; Since

2.3. Previous experience at this institution:

1) : from to
2) : from to
3) : from to

2.4. Previous experience in the field of VET at any other institution (if any).

1) : from to
2) : from to
3) : from to

III. DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT INSTITUTION ACTIVITIES:

3.1. What is the tasks of your institution, except provision of formal VET?

1)
2)
3)

4)

3.2. Who are the target groups/beneficiaries of the institution?

youth ☐ adults ☐ unemployed ☐ employed ☐ other (explain)

3.3. What document defines the tasks of your institution *(the corresponding document to be provided)*

.

3.4. Do you think that tasks of your institution are relevant and comprehensive?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3.5. Are there any tasks which are not relevant?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

3.6. Are there any tasks which could be also assigned to the institution?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

3.7. In your opinion, what is the level of the organisation's/unit's performance: %

3.8. Are there any tasks which are assigned but are not or poorly performed?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what are the reasons?

IV. INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION SCHEME AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT:

4.1. What are the administrative bodies of your institution (managerial posts, councils, boards, committees, etc.)?

1)

2)

3)

4.2. Please describe the scope of authorities of each administrative body:

1) <**Name of the body**>: < authorities…>

2) <**Name of the body**>: < authorities…>

3) <**Name of the body**>: < authorities…>

4.3. Please explain what is involvement of the social partners (or any other "side-actors"), their roles and participation in decision-making processes: .

In the case of limited involvement:

4.4. Please indicate the reasons of their limited involvement:

4)

5)

6)

4.5. Please explain the internal and external reporting systems of your institution:

.

4.6. Does your organisation have a Strategic development plan / Action Plan?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please provide.

4.7. Do you think that there are clearly defined performance and quality indicators?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Who has defined them?

4.8. Does your institution have HR policy (selection, appointment, professional development, motivation mechanisms, etc.)?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Please present in short:

4.9. Please explain the internal and external monitoring mechanisms of your institution:

4.10. What are the factors that are enabling or blocking the business processes within the institution (performance) or those related to the organisation: *Legislation; Institutional and/or Human Resource Capacities; Funding; Motivation; Conflict of interests; Other*

4.11. In your opinion, what are the main challenges of your institution?

1)

2)

3)

V. VET PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES:

5.1. Please describe the involvement and participation of the institution in the processes related to the following aspects – achievements and obstacles:

- Identification of skills need (LM analysis) and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education (standards and curricula);
- VET planning and enrolment;
- VET provision quality assurance;
- Dual education;
- Lifelong learning;

- Work based Learning;
- Tracer study of the graduates, socio-economic inclusion

VI. THE VET SYSTEM:

6.1. In your opinion, how effective VET system governance is? Please indicate the main factors. In your opinion, how effective VET system governance is? Please indicate the main factors of in/effectiveness: .

6.2. In your opinion, which are the VET system governance tasks which are performed best or worst? Please indicate the reasons: .

6.3. In your opinion, which organisation involved in VET governance, performs best or worst? Please indicate the reasons: .

6.4. In your opinion, which are the tasks/functions in the field of VET, not covered by any organisation. Please indicate the reasons: .

6.5. In your opinion, if the monitoring and evaluation in VET is adequately organised and effectively functioning at systemic and institutional levels?

Yes ☐ No ☐. Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

6.6. In your opinion, if the existing VET financing and funding mechanisms (sources, principles and criteria, amounts, periods, etc.) are adequate and fair.

Yes ☐ No ☐. Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

6.7. What would you propose on the following issues?

1) Restructuring the VET governance system in general: .
2) Revising the VET-related bodies' tasks and functions: .
3) Revising legislation and regulations: .
4) Involving new actors or excluding some of those which are currently involved: .
5) Improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems: .
6) Improvement of VET financing and funding: .
7) VET schools network organisation/effectiveness/relevance: .
8) Current principles of granted financial autonomy of VET institutions: .
9) Strengthening the role of Centres of Excellence in the VET system: .
10) Specific processes related to different VET working practices discussed above: .

VII. ANY OTHER POINTS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS:

.

6. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SOCIAL PARTNERS

I. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISATION:

1.1. **Name** ; Location: ; date of establishment:

1.2. **Status of the organisation:**
Pubic Institution ☐ Private ☐ NGO ☐ other

1.3. **Number of employees (members) , of them, dealing with VET .**

1.4. **Subordination (if any)**

1.5. **What are the principal (economic) activities of the organisation**

1.
2.
3.

II. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEE:

2.1. Name: Gender: F ☐ M ☐; Year of birth:

2.2. Position: ; Since

2.3. Previous experience at this institution:

1) : from to
2) : from to
3) : from to

2.4. Previous experience in the field of VET at any other organisation (if any):

1) : from to
2) : from to
3) : from to

III. DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT ORGANISATION ACTIVITIES:

3.1. What is the main goal/mission of your organisation?

3.2. Who are the target groups/beneficiaries of your organisation?

3.3. What are the main tasks/functions of your organisation, specifically those related to VET?

3.4. What is the body and/or document which defined the tasks/functions of your organisation *(the corresponding document to be provided)*[2]?

[2] In the context of the questions 3.4-3.9, only the tasks related to VET are to be considered.

3.5. Do you think your organisation overlaps tasks/functions of any other organisation?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3.6. Do you think the tasks/functions of your organisation are relevant and comprehensive?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3.7. Are there any tasks which are not relevant?

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

3.8. Are there any tasks which could be also assigned to the organisation?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

If yes, please list them:

1)

2)

3)

3.9. In your opinion, what is the level of the organisation's/unit's performance: %

3.10. Are there any tasks which are assigned but are not or poorly performed?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, what are the reasons?

IV. RELATIONS WITH VET:

4.1. Does your organisation have an Action Plan related to VET?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please provide some details:

4.2. Do you think that there are clearly defined performance and quality indicators?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

If yes, please provide some details:

4.3. Please explain the internal and external monitoring mechanisms of your organisation:

4.4. Please explain the performance assessment system of your organisation:

4.5. Are there any factors that are enabling or blocking the business processes within the organisation (performance) or those related to the organisation: *Legislation; Institutional and/or Human Resource Capacities; Funding; Motivation; Conflict of interests; Other*.

4.6. What are the main incentives for your organisation to cooperate with VET?

1)

2)

3)

4.7. What are the main challenges of your organisation, specifically those related to VET.

1)

2)

3)

4.8. Please explain involvement and participation of your institution in the processes related to the following VET working practices. Please indicate the achievements and obstacles:

1) identification of skills need (LM analysis) and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education (standards and curricula): .
2) VET planning and enrolment: .
3) VET provision quality assurance: .
4) Dual Education: .
5) Lifelong Learning: .
6) Work-based Learning: .
7) Tracer Study of the graduates, socio-economic inclusion: .
8) Funds Allocation and distribution of funds: .
9) Monitoring and Evaluation: .
10) Any other: .

V. THE VET SYSTEM:

5.1. Are you aware how the VET system governance is structured?

aware ☐ Mainly aware ☐ Partly aware ☐ Not aware ☐

5.2. In your opinion, how effective VET system governance is? Please indicate the main factors of in/effectiveness: .

5.3. In your opinion, which are the VET system governance tasks which are performed best or worst? Please indicate the reasons: .

5.4. In your opinion, which organisation involved in VET governance, performs best or worst? Please indicate the reasons: .

5.5. In your opinion, which are the tasks/functions in the field of VET, not covered by any organisation. Please indicate the reasons: .

5.6. In your opinion, if the monitoring and evaluation in VET is adequately organised and effectively functioning at systemic and institutional levels?

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

5.7. In your opinion, if the existing VET financing and funding mechanisms (sources, principles and criteria, amounts, periods, etc.) are adequate and fair.

Yes ☐ No ☐.

Please indicate the reasons and make comments: .

5.8. What would you propose on the following issues?

1) Restructuring the VET governance system in general: .
2) Revising the VET-related bodies' tasks and functions: .
3) Revising legislation and regulations: .
4) Involving new actors or excluding some of those which are currently involved: .
5) Improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems: .
6) Improvement of VET financing and funding: .
7) VET schools network organisation/effectiveness/relevance: .
8) Current principles of granted financial autonomy of VET institutions: .
9) Strengthening the role of Centres of Excellence in the VET system: .
10) Specific processes related to different VET working practices discussed above: .

VI. ANY OTHER POINTS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS:

7. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SECTOR COMMITTEES

I. INFORMATION ABOUT THE SECTOR COMMITTEE AND THE INTERVIEWEE:

1.1. **Sector Committee for**

1.2. **Established in:** Month, Year**; Active since:** Month, Year**; Registered as legal entity in:** Month, Year**.**

1.3. **Number of members:** .

1.4. **The main scope of activities:**

1)
2)
3)
4)

1.5. **Representative**: Name , Position in the Committee Gender: F☐ M ☐

1.6. **Organisation:** Name of organisation , Position in the Organisation; Number of employees of the organisation:

II. THE SECTOR COMMITTEE:

2.1. Does your Committee have a Strategic Development Plan / Action Plan?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please provide.

2.2. Do you think that there are clearly defined performance and quality indicators?

Yes ☐ No ☐

2.3. Please explain the performance assessment system of your Committee:

.

2.4. Please explain the internal and external monitoring mechanisms of your Committee:

.

2.5. In your opinion, which are the tasks which your Committee performs:

Best:

1) <**Committee**>: <the task>
2) <**Committee**>: <the task>
3) <**Committee**>: <the task>
4) <**Committee**>: <the task>
5) <**Committee**>: <the task>
6) <**Committee**>: <the task>
7) <**Committee**>: <the task>
8) <**Committee**>: <the task>

Worst:

1) <**Committee**>: <the task>
2) <**Committee**>: <the task>
3) <**Committee**>: <the task>
4) <**Committee**>: <the task>
5) <**Committee**>: <the task>
6) <**Committee**>: <the task>
7) <**Committee**>: <the task>
8) <**Committee**>: <the task>

The reasons:

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

2.6. In your opinion, what are the main incentives for the employers to contribute to the Committee's works?

1)
2)
3)

2.7. In your opinion, what are the main challenges of your Committee:

4) <Name of the Committee>: <challenge> ;
5) <Name of the Committee>: <challenge> ;
6) <Name of the Committee>: <challenge> ;
7) <Name of the Committee>: <challenge> ;
8) <Name of the Committee>: <challenge> ;
9) <Name of the Committee>: <challenge> ;
10) <Name of the Committee>: <challenge> ;
11) <Name of the Committee>: <challenge> .

III. THE VET SYSTEM:

3.1. How well are you aware of the VET system governance structure and functioning?

Well aware ☐ Mainly aware ☐ Partly aware ☐ Not aware ☐

3.2. In your opinion, how effective the VET system governance is?

Very effective ☐ Mainly effective ☐ Partly effective ☐ Not effective ☐ No answer ☐

3.3. What are the main factors of in/effectiveness?

1)
2)
3)
4)

5)

3.4. In your opinion, if the VET governance tasks are properly distributed among the corresponding bodies?

Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No ☐ No answer ☐

3.5. Which organisations have overlapping tasks? What are those tasks?

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

3.6. Which tasks are not covered by any organisation?

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

3.7. In your opinion, if the existing VET financing and funding mechanisms (sources, principles and criteria, amounts, periods, etc.) are adequate and fair.

Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No ☐ No answer ☐

3.8. Please indicate the reasons and make comments:

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

IV. VET PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES:

4.1. Please explain involvement and participation of your Committee in the processes related to the following VET aspects. Please indicate the achievements and obstacles:

1) Identification of skills need (LM analysis) and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education (standards and curricula): .
2) VET planning and enrolment: .
3) VET provision quality assurance: .
4) Dual education: .
5) Lifelong learning: .
6) Work-based learning: .
7) Tracer study of the graduates, socio-economic inclusion: .
8) Funds allocation and distribution of funds: .
9) Monitoring and evaluation: .

10) Any other: .

3.9. What would you propose on the following issues?

1) Restructuring the VET governance system in general: .
2) Revising the VET-related bodies' tasks and functions: .
3) Revising legislation and regulations: .
4) Involving new actors or excluding some of those which are currently involved: .
5) Improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems: .
6) Improvement of VET financing and funding: .
7) VET schools network organisation/effectiveness/relevance: .
8) Current principles of granted financial autonomy of VET institutions: .
9) Strengthening the role of Centres of Excellence in the VET system: .
10) Specific processes related to different VET working practices discussed above: .

V. ANY OTHER POINTS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS:

8. STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

1. INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISATION/PROJECT AND THE INTERVIEWEE:

1.1. **Name of the Organisation and/or the Project:**

1.2. **Active in VET in Moldova since:** .

1.3. **The mandate (scope of activities):**

1)
2)
3)
4)

1.4. **Number of employees (professional staff): ; of them, directly dealing with VET:**

1.5. **Representative**: Name , Position Gender: F☐ M ☐

2. THE VET SYSTEM:

2.1. **How well are you aware of the VET system governance structure and functioning?**

Well aware ☐ Mainly aware ☐ Partly aware ☐ Not aware ☐

2.2. **In your opinion, how effective the VET system governance is?**

Very effective ☐ Mainly effective ☐ Partly effective ☐ Not effective ☐ No answer ☐

2.3. **What are the main indicators and the factors of in/effectiveness?**

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

2.4. **In your opinion, if the VET governance tasks are properly distributed among the corresponding bodies?**

Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No ☐ No answer ☐

2.5. **Which organisations have overlapping tasks? What are those tasks?**

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

2.6. **Which tasks are not covered by any organisation?**

1)
2)
3)

4)

5)

2.7. **In your opinion, which are the VET system governance tasks which are performed, and the bodies involved in VET governance which are performing:**

Best:

1) <**Body**>: <the task>
2) <**Body**>: <the task>
3) <**Body**>: <the task>
4) <**Body**>: <the task>
5) <**Body**>: <the task>

Worst:

1) <**Body**>: <the task>
2) <**Body**>: <the task>
3) <**Body**>: <the task>
4) <**Body**>: <the task>
5) <**Body**>: <the task>

Reasons:

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

2.8. **In your opinion, is the monitoring and evaluation in VET is adequately organised and effectively functioning at systemic and institutional levels?**

Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No ☐ No answer ☐

Please present the indicators, reasons and make comments:

1)
2)
3)
4)
5)

2.9. **In your opinion, if the existing VET financing and funding mechanisms (sources, principles and criteria, amounts, periods, etc.) are adequate and fair.**

Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No ☐ No answer ☐

Please present the indicators, reasons and make comments:

1)
2)
3)
4)

5)

3. VET PROCESSES AND WORKING PRACTICES:

3.1. **Please explain involvement and participation of your organisation/project in the processes related to the following VET practices. Please indicate the achievements and obstacles:**

1) Identification of skills need (LM analysis) and defining the learning outcomes and the content of education (standards and curricula): .
2) VET planning and enrolment: .
3) VET provision quality assurance: .
4) Dual education: .
5) Lifelong learning: .
6) Work-based learning: .
7) Tracer study of the graduates, socio-economic inclusion: .
8) Funds allocation and distribution of funds: .
9) Monitoring and evaluation: .
10) Any other: .

3.2. **What would you propose on the following aspects?**

1) Restructuring the VET governance system in general: .
2) Revising the VET-related bodies' tasks and functions: .
3) Revising legislation and regulations: .
4) Involving new actors or excluding some of those which are currently involved: .
5) Improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems: .
6) Improvement of VET financing and funding: .
7) VET schools network organisation/effectiveness/relevance: .
8) Current principles of granted financial autonomy of VET institutions: .
9) Strengthening the role of Centres of Excellence in the VET system: .
10) Specific processes related to different VET working practices discussed above: .

4. ANY OTHER POINTS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS:

ANNEX 3. ANALYSIS OF DISTANT INTERVIEW PROVISION

Within the period from the 18th March till the 21st May 2020, 40 interviews with 50 people were conducted. All the interviews were audio recorded.

Considering the preferences of the interviewees, different methods were used:

- via telephone using **Viber** application (audio) – 41 people. This was the most preferable tool. Many people opted for it as appearing in front of camera would attach unnecessary formality to the interviews and make the respondent nervous thus jeopardising the effectiveness of the interviews;
- via **Skype** – 3 people;
- **face to face** interviews (conducted only by the National Expert) – 6 people. This was done just a day before the Moldovan Government declared State of Emergency

Before the interviews, the participants were contacted via email and/or telephone to ascertain if they would be available for interview through Viber or Skype application.

Prior to the interview, each participant was informed about the purpose of the projects, made aware on how the information will be treated, and assured that the anonymity and confidentiality will be protected, unless the participant explicitly agrees to their name being mentioned, or requests publication of their personal information in the Report. Our aim was to minimise the grounds for the participants to refuse participating in the interviews. The respondents were also made aware that they could refuse to answer any question they are averse to discussing, or we could skip or reformulate the question.

Main challenges:

- We had to **change the schedule of the interviews several times** due to unsteady situation and forced holidays for civil servants and VET institutions. Finally, we had to present a lot of flexibility and adapt to the situation, and find the best time convenient to the interviewee. Thus, we dropped the idea of planning beforehand and used to set up the interviews a day before or on the same day as soon as we had the interviewee's consent.
- Some **participants felt awkward to have the interview remotely** and not face-to-face, others were not happy to perform the interview from home as they did not have the needed information available at home and we agreed they send the requested information later when they have access to their work place.
- There were some **technical issues** with the connection, low quality of audio calls, other calls the participants received in parallel or bad internet connection, interruptions, or some pets making noise.
- Most of the participants were not comfortable **answering the following questions**:

  5.2. In your opinion, which are the VET system governance tasks which are performed best or worst? Please indicate the reasons.

  5.3. In your opinion, which organisation involved in VET governance, performs best or worst? Please indicate the reasons.

  This was expected to large extent, but those questions were introduced in the questionnaires intentionally in order not only to obtain the appropriate information but also to test the readiness of the respondents to reply to a “sharp question”.

- The participants faced difficulties to answer the following questions:

  3.7 Please explain the internal and external monitoring mechanisms of the Department (unit, institution).

  3.8 Please explain the performance assessment system of the Department (unit, institution).

Some advantages and **some more challenges** are presented below:

Advantages	Telephone interviews provide **wide geographic access.**
	All the participants **have cellular phones** and **mobile applications** can be deployed with **no extra cost** by using **WiFi** which was **available at home** actually for every participant.
	Telephone and skype interviews are **time-effective**, as there is no need to commute from one place to another.
	The participant's engagement with the interview was very good or even impressive, despite the long interaction with remote interview. The normal duration of interviews varied between one hour and more than two hours, or even longer when face-to-face.
	The longer than usual interview (two hours rather than 90 minutes) gave a huge opportunity for material-gathering.
Challenges/ drawbacks	It was **hard to make the good quality connection with 4 participants** (interviewee, Aram, Vera and Tatiana the interpreter), thus we had to find other solutions.
	WiFi connection was not available at the MoHLSP and MoF, and the participants used their own internet connection.
	Sometimes it was **hard to make a good connection.**
	The connection was dropped continuously with OSMED.
	The connection was lost and dropped several times with Ms Manolachi, Mr Palii, Mr Harea, Mr Vasilachi, Mr Zabolotnii.
	WiFi connection lost connectivity and the Skype call was dropped with ANACEC and after a brief time was taken to re-establish the connection, we connected via Viber again to the participant, explained what had happened, and resumed the interview with minimal trouble, but still the connection was very bad.
	Intrusive for many participants, they would prefer a face-to face interview
	There were few cases when it was **difficult to get people to elaborate on their responses** by phone, as you cannot keep a telephone interview too long. Therefore, we generally kept the questions and answers relatively brief or sometimes we had to **skip some questions**.
	Some calls were done at random, **interrupting people's lunch and holiday** (MoF, MoHLSP, Republican Methodical Instructional Cabinet under MoHLSP, CEDA, USAID, LLL Department, Centre of Excellence for Services and Food Processing in Bălți, Polytechnic College in Bălți).

ANNEX 4. AGENDA OF THE VALIDATION WEBINAR

AGENDA

WORKING TOGETHER ON VET GOOD MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA: DISCUSSING MID-TERM ACHIEVEMENTS FOR MOVING FORWARD AGENDA

WEBINAR

30 JUNE 2020

SUMMARY

1. Background

The Ministry of Education Culture and Research (MoECR) of the Republic of Moldova and the European Training Foundation (ETF) are working together very closely, since the beginning of 2020, on assessing effectiveness -and efficiency- of VET system in Moldova.

This is being done using ETF VET Good Multilevel Governance toolbox[3]. The review of institutional arrangements of VET system in the country addressing the key areas of VET good multilevel governance and financing are key pillars of this -joint- work.

The way of implementing ETF methodological tools to support on conducting a review of VET system in the country addressing its institutional settings and performance, was discussed and agreed with Moldovan high-level stakeholders, during a workshop held in Chisinau (18 February 2020)[4].

A big array of public institutions, bodies, councils, committees, key social partners and development organisations has been consulted and surveyed in the course of this review. In total, about 40 institutions/organisations and/or their units have been engaged in this important exercise for informing on and support of the best future of VET policies and system in Moldova.

The ETF team -and stakeholders in Moldova- had to show resilience to COVID19 crisis. In this respect, the methodology to conduct this review was shifted to be implemented in on-line mode. The review has been implemented via mixture of desk research and field -on-line- work. However, spite these circumstances, a solid report has been delivered providing a strong evidence basis, which can be used by the policy makers for further discussing and, perhaps, to further taking sound decisions.

2. Objectives -and expectations- on the webinar

The ETF review of institutional arrangements in Moldova is opening floor to have a critical view on VET system operations in the country indeed. At this point, it is essential that country stakeholders take stock and appropriate of key mid-term findings.

This should help moving forward for further tailoring advice and supporting dialogue on necessary policy and institutional reforms. This is planned with a view to have a more effective and efficient VET and skills system to serve on socioeconomic development -and labour market dynamics- in the country.

In this respect, the objectives of the webinar are:

- Discussing among ETF and key stakeholders, preliminary findings on the review of VET institutional arrangements conducted in Moldova.
- Introducing and agree on next phase through collection of smart feedbacks from main stakeholders to moving ahead.

Thus, the webinar should help also on validating the work done by ETF experts in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, as well on informing -and agree- on the modality of advice which shall be most useful for the country using the work done so far.

To make this webinar happen, the ETF will manage facilitation of connectivity among participants. ETF proposes open this webinar to around 40 participants.

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[3] Please, ETF kindly invites you to register on: https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/.
[4] See please: https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/news-and-events/events/launching-policy-discussion-vet-skills- good-multi-level-governance-moldova.

AGENDA 30 JUNE 2020

Time	Session
09:30 – 09:40	**Welcome and introduction** - *Silviu Gincu, Head of VET Department of Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) of Republic of Moldova* - *Manuel Galvin Arribas, European Training Foundation*
09:40 – 10:20	**Revisiting the scene: Introduction on background of the initiative, methodology and preliminary findings.** - *Manuel Galvin Arribas, European Training Foundation* - *Aram Avagyan, Independent expert* - *Vera Chilari, Independent expert*
10:20 – 11:00	**Open discussion: feed backs from participants** *Facilitation and speakers: ETF & Key Moldavian Stakeholders*
11:00 – 11:20	*Virtual coffee break*
11:20 – 11:45	**What is next? Moving forward to next phase** - *Silviu Gincu, Head of VET Department of Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) of Republic of Moldova* - *Manuel Galvin Arribas, European Training Foundation*
11:45 – 12:00	**Final feedbacks from participants, wrap-up and farewell**

ETF contact persons:
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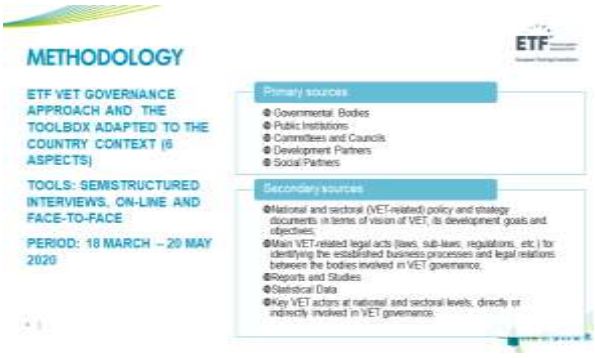
barbara.olent@etf.europa.eu

ANNEX 5. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS OF THE VALIDATION WEBINAR

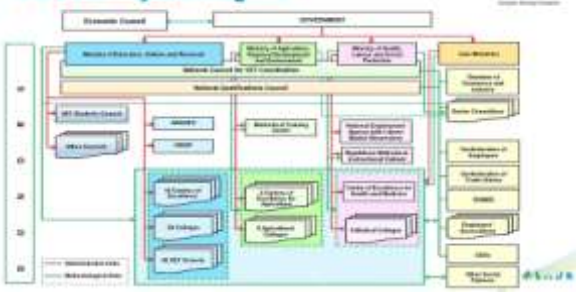
№	Name	Organisation	Position
1	Mr Silviu Gincu	MoECR, Head of VET Department	sgincu@gmail.com
2	Ms Tatiana Gherstega	MoECR, Head of NQF Department	tatiana.gherstega@mecc.gov.md
3	Ms Tatiana Dobrovolschi	Ministry of Finance, Division for Finance in Education, Culture and Research, senior consultant	tatiana.dobrovolschi@mf.gov.md
4	Mr Octavian Vasilachi	Republican VET Development Centre, Director	ovasilachi@mail.ru
5	Ms Diana Savca	Republican Methodical Instructional Cabinet under MoHLSP, Head	diana.savca.93@gmail.com
6	Ms Ludmila Hanganu	ANACEC, specialist in VET	ludmilahanganu3@gmail.com
7	Ms Raisa Dogaru	National Employment Agency, Director	raisa.dogaru@anofm.md
8	Mr Vladislav Caminschi	National Confederation of Employers, Executive Director	caminschi@cnpm.md
9	Mr Mihai Grecu	Sector Committee for IT and Communication, Vice-President	mihai_grecu@yahoo.c
10	Ms Corina Bulat	Sector Committee for Agriculture and Food Industry	korina74@mail.ru
11	Ms Silvia Protiuc	Centre of Excellence for Services and Food Processing in Bălți, Director	cespa.balti@gmail.com
12	Mr Aurel Serdeșniuc	Centre of Excellence in Horticulture and Agricultural Technologies of Țaul, Director	cehta.taul@gmail.com
13	Mr Gheorghii Zvezdenco	Centre of Excellence in Energy and Electricity, Deputy Director	zvezdenco@rambler.ru
14	Ms Vera Balova	VET School in Ceadîr Lunga, Director	profteh-cg@mtc.md
15	Ms Lucia Caraiman	VET School № 5 in Bălți, Director	lucicaraiman@mail.ru
16	Ms Svetlana Caliniac	GIZ, Support to Vocational Education in the Field of Green Economy Project, Adviser on Labour Market & Standards in Dual Vocational Education and Training	svetlana.caliniac@giz.de
17	Ms Ecaterina Ionascu-Cuciuc	GIZ, Support to Vocational Education in the Field of Green Economy Project, Adviser on Labour Market & Standards in Dual Vocational Education and Training	ecaterina.ionascu-cuciuc@giz.de
18	Mr Otilia Sirbu	ADA, Programme Manager	otilia.sirbu@ada.gv.at
19	Ms Rima Bezede	Pro Didactica, President	rbezede@prodidactica.md
20	Ms Diana Doros	ICS Premier Energy Distribution SA, Director Resources Department	ddoros@premierenergy.md
21	Ms Veronica Midari	Independent Expert	veronicamidari@hotmail.com
22	Mr Filippo Del Ninno	ETF, Specialist in VET Policies and Systems - Country Coordinator Macedonia and Moldova	fdn@etf.europa.eu

23	Mr Jose-Manuel Galvin Arribas	ETF, Senior Specialist in Governance and Life-Long Learning	jmg@etf.europa.eu
24	Mr Aram Avagyan	ETF Expert	aram.avagyan1@gmail.com
25	Ms Vera Chilari	ETF Expert	vera.chilari@gmail.com

ANNEX 6. PRESENTATION MADE DURING THE VALIDATION WEBINAR



FINDINGS – System Diagram



FINDINGS – Institutional Arrangements (2)

- A large number of donors providing considerable assistance to the VET system development (EU, with its Budget Support, is the largest).
- Many CSOs also active in supporting the VET system improvements.
- Public VET institutions subordinated to four different ministries. This fragmentation of the VET network is not unequivocally accepted by all VET players as being efficient.
- A number of support structures under MoECR, MoHLSP and MoARDE as well as various Councils with different levels of functionality and the effectiveness:
  - National Council for VET Coordination, not functioning since 2017
  - CNDIP, under-staffed, under-funded and almost non-operational;
  - Republican Methodical-Instructional Cabinet of MoHLSP and Methodical Centre for Training of MoARDE, not effectively fulfilling their primary tasks, due to the shortage of staff and because of being loaded by some other ministerial duties.

FINDINGS – Legislation and Financing

- Normative acts seemingly cover and regulate almost all aspects of the VET system, but there are many issues related to the legislation:
  - some aspects are poorly regulated,
  - there are ambiguous or contradicting legal acts and normative documents,
  - practical implementation of some acts' requirements is complicated due to e.g. lack of funding, limited capabilities of human resources, etc.
- A new VET financing mechanism introduced in 2017. Based on rational, equitable and transparent allocative methodology, however, not fully applied.
- Many issues related to the capacities of the VET institutions to work under this new mechanism.
- The institutions with small number of students at risk of being closed, because of low cost-effectiveness.

FINDINGS – VET Policy

- The main sector policy document – the VET Development Strategy 2013-2020 – relevant and credible.
- Considerable achievements in implementation of the VET Strategy and developing the system.
- Situation in many VET clusters improved and some VET practices strengthened.
- Nevertheless, none of the challenges fully or significantly overcome – they to be considered in the next VET Strategy.
- A new National Development Strategy "Moldova 2030" under elaboration, and the Education Strategy 2030 covering also the VET sector, to be derivative of it.
- The present period is exceptionally opportune, but also crucial for defining the VET development goals and priorities, and for proposing a new VET governance architecture.

SELF-ASSESSMENT – ETF VET GOVERNANCE INVENTORY 4.0

- Key goal: conducting (self) assessments in ETF PCs focusing on governance and financing arrangements engaging different categories of policy stakeholders. At least, a minimum of 7 different type of stakeholders should be involved/engaged (20 interviews minimum).
- Monitoring Gov & Fin areas/functions:
  - Formulation- and implementation-oriented policy framework including strategic policy tools
  - Provision of legal, normative and/or regulatory framework
  - Management of VET & skills provider network
  - Operationalization, alignment and coordination of financial arrangements
  - Management of public-private partnerships for VET & Skills development
  - Monitoring, evaluation and review of VET & Skills policies (This also includes Research & Development)
  - Management of Information Systems (MIS) & Data/statistics
  - Institutional coordination mechanisms (councils, agencies etc.)
- Data Collection Tool (DCT): ~65 indicators (Likert scaled)

Key issues to - self-assessing (& monitoring):

- Understanding better how strengthening dialogue, cooperation and coordination across all governmental stakeholders (ministries, agencies, public bodies, etc.)
- Involving the right mix and balance of non-state stakeholders (social partners, NGOs, employers etc.) are effectively working with state stakeholders on VET & Skills policies for system development.
- Analysing and assessing how VET & skills different coordination mechanisms (legislative, institutional, public-private/financial and knowledge oriented) are in place or not to make system working.
- Enhancing effective coordination of financing arrangements for implementation of adequate and sustainable financial policy mechanisms for funding VET & Skills policies and system.

ANNEX 7. DATA COLLECTION TOOL (DCT)

BACKGROUND INFORMATION	
Are you male or female? ▪ Female ☐ ▪ Male ☐ *Please indicate your age group:* ▪ 20-30 years ☐ ▪ 31-40 years ☐ ▪ 41-50 years ☐ ▪ 51-60 years ☐ ▪ Above 60 years ☐ *What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?* ▪ General secondary education ☐ ▪ Secondary vocational education ☐ ▪ Bachelor ☐ ▪ Master ☐ ▪ Other higher education degree ☐ ▪ Candidate/Doctor of Sciences ☐	*How many years of work experience do you have in Education/VET/Skills policies?* ▪ 0-10 years ☐ ▪ 11-20 years ☐ ▪ 21-30 years ☐ ▪ More than 30 years ☐ *How many years of work experience do you have in positions with management responsibilities?* ▪ None ☐ ▪ 0-5 years ☐ ▪ 6-10 years ☐ ▪ 11-15 years ☐ ▪ More than 15 years ☐ *What is your current position? (Tick one of the following options that best describes your main position)* ▪ Minister/ Deputy Minister ☐ ▪ Director ☐ ▪ Head of department/ Division ☐ ▪ Team leader/ coordinator ☐ ▪ Expert/Specialist. ☐ ▪ Other (please specify)
PLEASE, GO TO BELOW TABLES AND ACCORDING TO YOUR KNOWLEDGE ASSESS YOUR DEGREE OF AGREEMENT ON FOLLOWING INDICATORS -REGARDING PERFORMANCE/OPERATIONS/ SETTINGS (etc.)-	

OVERALL PLANNING, MANAGEMENT & FINANCING of VET & SKILLS: -SELF- ASSESEMENT ON CORE FUNCTIONS		
VET & SKILLS GOVERNANCE FUNCTIONS	**INDICATORS** **PLEASE, ASSESS IN NEXT COLUMN YOUR DEGREE OF AGREEMENT WITH FOLLOWING INDICATORS REGARDING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS, PERFORMANCE, OPERATIONS, INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS (etc.)**	**(1) Strongly Agree** **(2) Agree** **(3) Neither Agree nor Disagree** **(4) Disagree** **(5) Strongly Disagree** **(6) Do not know/ Not Applicable**
A. Formulate and implement VET & skills national policy framework (goals, strategies, plans, etc.)	▪ (A.1) *The national policy for vocational education and training (VET) -and skills- has been developed involving both state and non-state stakeholders.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (A.2) *The policy for VET combines long term objectives and short-term targets.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (A.3) *The policy can be updated to include new developments in both initial training for young people and continuing training for adults.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (A.4) *The national policy for vocational education has a multiyear perspective.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (A.5) *Cooperation and coordination between national and sub-national (regional, local) public departments and agencies are effective.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (A.6) *Cooperation between government and non-government organisations (including social partners) is transparent and effective.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**

A. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee

- Overall, *do you think that current public administration practices allow good multi-level cooperation, flexible, agile as well as -less formal- way of managing policy processes on VET & Skill policies*? *How credible and effective are VET -and skills- strategies*? Please, outline your reasons for the scores that you provided.

Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section:

- Were the question clear to the interviewee.
- Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand.
- Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section.

B. Provision of legal/ regulatory/ normative framework for VET and Skills	▪ (B.1) *Legal framework for VET aims to meet the expectations of both public and private stakeholders.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (B.2) *There is a good understanding on the legal framework for VET by all stakeholders which facilitates policy implementation.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (B.3) *The legal framework responds to the needs of women.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (B.4) *The legal framework support lifelong learning (LLL), not only initial VET (I-VET).*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (B.5) *It is common practice in the country to involve VET stakeholders in the updating of regulations and norms.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
B. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee ▪ Overall, *do you think that the current legal framework is prepared for facing challenges of VET & Skills in XXI Century within LLL perspective*? (e.g. relevant Qualifications, Work Based Learning -WBL-, digitalization of economy and leaning processes, regulating integration of innovation & research, etc.) Please, outline your reasons for the scores that you provided. Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section: ▪ Were the question clear to the interviewee. ▪ Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand. Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section.		
C. Management of VET provider networks.	▪ (C.1) *VET providers are accessible to users, such as students, parents, and employers (etc.).*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (C.2) *The network of VET providers is optimal and based on clear governance structure.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (C.3) *A Quality Assurance (Q.A) policy is in place across, both system and provider levels.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (C.4) *Measuring quality –internal and external –is undertaken to support the performance of VET provider.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (C.5) *VET schools are able to make decisions on curriculum and teaching -and innovation- practices.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (C.6) *VET School financial autonomy is fair enough to support effective and efficient provider operations and partnerships with industry, employers, civil society (etc.).*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (C.7) *VET schools are accountable for the decisions they make.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (C.8) *Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) exist in the country and, overall, these institutions meet stakeholder expectations.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**

	▪ (C.9) *Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) are partnership -based institutions (public-private, university and research, etc.), which are well resourced in terms of both financial and human capacities.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
C. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee ▪ Overall, *do you think that the VET provider network functions effectively*? *Is VET network provision and composition supporting sustainable access to VET*? Please, outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above. Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section: ▪ Were the question clear to the interviewee. ▪ Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand. ▪ Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section.		
D. Financial arrangements (including budgeting, mobilization & allocation processes)	▪ (D.1) *The budget setting process for VET & Skills development is driven by good dialogue among key ministries.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (D.2) *Budget planning is targeted to long-term strategic goals and challenges*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (D.3) *Allocation of financial resources is based on criteria following clear and transparent rules.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (D.4) *Funding mechanisms are well designed in terms of the objectives of budget.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (D.5) *Mechanism in place for mobilization of additional funding resources as required to meet needs of VET & Skills stakeholders.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (D.6) *The need for equity of outcomes is taken into account in decisions about the distribution of funding.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (D.7) *The sources of financing include both public and private sources.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (D.8) *Incentives for employer's participation are in place and adequate to support VET & Skills financing policies.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (D.9) *Employer's financial and/or fiscal incentives are effective and transparent.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
D. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee ▪ Overall, *do you think public VET and skills are well resourced*? A*re fiscal resources available and coordinated for matching the current needs in terms of financing of VET & Skills systems*? Please outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above. Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section:		

▪ Were the question clear to the interviewee ▪ Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand ▪ Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section		
E. Management of public–private partnerships (PPPs) for VET & Skills provision.	▪ (E.1) *PPPs in VET & Skills are supported by relevant legislation.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (E.2) *Fiscal arrangements are adequate for formation and implementation of PPPs.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (E.3) *Social Dialogue plays an effective role at national and, in concrete, sectoral levels for VET & Skills policy formation and implementation.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (E.4) *Financial and non-financial incentives motivate employer's participation in VET & Skill policy development.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (E.5) *Social Partners & Employers cooperation with VET schools is structured and effective, for instance, for having sound Work Based Learning -WBL- policies and practices.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
E. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee ▪ Overall, *what do you think of the potential for public private partnerships in your country*? Please outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above. Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section: ▪ Were the question clear to the interviewee ▪ Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand ▪ Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section		
F. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review of VET & Skills policies.	▪ (F.1) *There is a recognised- and sound-monitoring and research system.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (F.2) *Monitoring is used to support evaluations -and policy review- in the country.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (F.3) *Different type of evaluations (e.g. on different policies such as qualifications, school operations, occupations, adult learning etc.) are conducted to inform VET policy implementation.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (F.4) *Evaluation and reviews of VET & Skills policies, involve the participation of different stakeholders.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (F.5) *Research, development and innovation are used to support VET & Skills policy development.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
F. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee ▪ Overall, *do you think that research, development and innovation functions support country to adapt to changes and preparing the future of VET & Skills within*		

LLL perspective? Please outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above.

Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section:

- Were the question clear to the interviewee
- Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand

Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section

G. Management of Information Systems (MIS) & Statistical provision to support policy making	▪ (G.1) *Management Information Systems (MIS) are used to collect data to support planning and decision-making processes.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (G.2) *Information systems are used to improve governance decisions and reducing uncertainties, for example, for adopting policy options on using of skills for employment/labour market purposes.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (G.3) *Management Information Systems have been designed and upgraded involving different type of VET & Skills stakeholders.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (G.4) *Overall, data produced by information management systems are public accessible to VET & Skills stakeholders and citizens.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**

G. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee

Overall, *how far do you think that data is used in the planning and decision-making processes for VET and skills development*? Please outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above.

Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section:

- Were the question clear to the interviewee.
- Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand
- Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section

ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS FOR VET & SKILLS POLICY MAKING		
TYPE OF INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM	**INDICATORS** **PLEASE, ASSES IN NEXT COLUMN YOUR DEGREE OF AGREEMENT WITH FOLLOWING INDICATORS REGARDING GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS, PERFORMANCE, OPERATIONS, INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS (etc.)**	**(1) Strongly Agree** **(2) Agree** **(3) Neither Agree nor Disagree** **(4) Disagree** **(5) Strongly Disagree** **(6) Do not know/ Not Applicable**
H. National VET/Skills Councils	▪ (H.1) *National Council (NC) for VET exists and, overall, outcomes meet stakeholder expectations.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (H.2) *The NC composition represents key VET & Skills stakeholders at national level.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (H.3) *The NC meets on regular and effective manner in the course of the year coordinating relevant VET & Skill policy agendas.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (H.4) *Advice/feedback processes delivered by the NC is distributed to stakeholders in systematic and transparent way.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
A. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee ▪ Do you think there is scope for more capacity development actions to improve the performance of national council operations? Please outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section: ▪ Were the question clear to the interviewee ▪ Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand ▪ Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section		
I. Sectoral VET/Skills Councils/ Committees	▪ (I.1) *The Sector Councils /Committees (SSCs) exist and, overall, meet stakeholder expectations.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (I.2) *SSCs composition represents key sectoral VET & Skills stakeholders.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (I.3) *The SCs meet on regular and effective manner in the course of the year and they have proper resources to deploy mandate.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (I.4) *SCs sectors are the most appropriate ones to contribute on VET & Skills and economic development.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**

	▪ (I.5) *SCs have sub-committees to address specific issues in different VET & Skills policy areas.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (I.6) *The results of the SSC add value to VET and skills policy development.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (I.7) *Advice/feedback processes delivered by the SSCs is effective and distributed to right stakeholders.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**

B. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee

- *Do you think there is scope for more capacity development actions to improve the performance of sector councils*? Please outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above.

Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section:

- Were the question clear to the interviewee
- Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand
- Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section

J. Regional/ Subnational VET & Skills -Authorities (e.g. Councils)	▪ (J.1) *The Regional/local level is well represented and contributes to the role of VET & Skills socioeconomic and regional development.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (J.2) *The regional / local levels participate on formation and implementation of local partnerships with employers and other key actors.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (J.3) *Overall, regional/local levels should have more responsibilities in supporting national level on VET & Skills policies.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (J.4) *Regional/ local level cooperate with VET schools and this add value to performance of VET institutions.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (J.5) *The Regional Council (RC) composition (if this exists) operates under clear governance structure.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**

C. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee

- Overall, *do you think there is a good level of delegated policies and competences to regional and/or local authorities in the country*? Please outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above

Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section:

- Were the question clear to the interviewee
- Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand
- Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section

K. National VET Agencies and/or other type of executive and supervisory bodies.	▪ (K.1) *The national agency-executive/supervisory body- on VET/Qualifications/Quality (etc.) executes national policies in transparent and accountable manner.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (K.2) *There is a recognised level of expertise and good outcomes provided by National Agency to support VET & Skills policy development/implementation, evaluation and review (etc.).*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (K.3) *Overall, governing board representation in the national agency is composed by key VET & Skills stakeholders.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**

D. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee

- *Do you think there is scope for more capacity development actions to improve the performance of national agency?* Please outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above.

Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section:

- Were the question clear to the interviewee.
- Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand
- Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section

L. Inter-Ministerial Working Cooperation/ Coordination	▪ (L.1) *There is effective cooperation among different Ministries involved on shaping and financing VET & Skills policies.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (L.2) *There are inter-ministerial cooperation mechanisms (e.g. governmental committees, thematic sub-committees etc.) to support VET & Skills policy dialogue and coordination.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**
	▪ (L.3) *VET providers and stakeholders believe there is effective cooperation between different Ministries involved in VET & Skills policies.*	**(1).... (2).....(3).....(4)....(5) ...(6)**

E. Qualitative Assessment by interviewee

- Overall, *do you think there is scope for more cooperation and interaction among different ministries with responsibilities on VET & Skill policies?* Please, outline your reasons for the scores that you provided above

Assessment of the interviewer of the questions in this section

- Were the question clear to the interviewee
- Were there parts of section that the interviewee did not understand
- Any specific changes that you would recommend to the questions in this section

Please, do you wish to add something else? (Use also for experts wrapping up/comments)

THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

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ANNEX 8. MATERIALS OF THE WEBINAR "WORKING TOGETHER ON VET GOOD MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA: MOVING FORWARD FOR IMPLEMENTING ASSESSMENT FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

-WEBINAR (19/20 November 2020)-

WORKING TOGETHER ON VET GOOD MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA: MOVING FORWARD FOR IMPLEMENTING ASSESSMENT FINDINGS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Background

The Ministry of Education Culture and Research (MECR) of the Republic of Moldova and the European Training Foundation (ETF) are working together very closely, since the beginning of 2020, on assessing effectiveness -and efficiency- of VET system in Moldova.

This has been done using ETF VET Good Multilevel Governance toolbox ([1]). The review of institutional arrangements of VET system in the country addressing the key areas of VET good multilevel governance and financing are key pillars of this -joint- work.

Due to COVID 19, the review of institutional arrangements -as mid-term deliverable- was discussed and agreed by Moldovan high-level stakeholders, in ETF webinar (30 June 2020) ([2]). This discussion validated work done in the first phase and allowed to kick starting second one, which has produced three additional types of deliverables:

- An advisory report focusing on VET practices which could support to drive system change in the country
- An assessment report on governance and financing practices based on ETF methodology VET governance inventory 4.0
- A final advisory report with main conclusions and policy recommendations/options, inclucing possible time frame for implementation.

These deliverables prove that the ETF team -and stakeholders in Moldova (about 40 institutions/organisations and/or their units have been engaged in different phases)- have shown strong resilience to COVID19 crisis. Now it is time to share with and present such reports to main stakeholders in the country, in order to identify possible ways and timing for implementing proposed institutional reforms in VET sector within lifelong learning (LLL) perspective.

2. Objectives -and expectations- on the webinar

The ETF review of institutional arrangements in Moldova opened floor for critical view on VET system operations in the country. At this point, it is essential that country stakeholders take stock, discuss and appropriate final findings.

This should help moving forward for further VET systemic reforms. All this has been planned with a view to have a more effective and efficient VET and skills system to serve on socioeconomic development -and labour market dynamics- in Moldova.

Overall, this webinar should help on validating the work done by ETF experts in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, as well on informing -and agree- on the modality of implementation which shall be most useful for the country using the joint work done up to now.
In this respect, the objectives of the 2 half-days webinar are:

- Presenting and discuss ETF main findings with key stakeholders on the review of VET institutional arrangements and practices conducted in the country.
- Share main conclusions and policy recommendations for its validation and appropriation, with a view on identifying and agree next steps to be taken for helping the country moving forward implementing proposed reforms.

To make this webinar happens, the ETF will manage facilitation of connectivity among participants. ETF proposes open this webinar to 60 participants (tbc). The participants shall be split into different on-line working groups for second day.

AGENDA (-DAY 1- 19th November 2020)

Time (CET time)	Session
14:00-14:10	**Welcome: Introduction and Objectives of the webinar** ETF & VET Department of Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) of Republic of Moldova
14:10-14:50	**Introduction to the second phase results: review of institutional arrangements focussing on VET practices to support system change in Moldova and Conclusions.** Speakers: ETF experts
14:50-15:10	**Q.&A/Open discussion: feed backs from participants** Facilitation and speakers: ETF & Key Moldavian Stakeholders
15:10-15:30	Virtual Aperitivo/ coffee break
15:30-16:10	**Presenting and discussing key recommendations for inspiring VET reforms in Moldova** Facilitation and Speakers: ETF
16:10-16:30	**Feedbacks from participants and wrap-up of first day**

AGENDA (-DAY 2- 20th November 2020)

Time (CET time)	Session
10:00-10:30	**Welcome and introduction: Presentation of assessment results based on ETF VET governance inventory 4.0** ETF experts **-Q.& A-**
10:30-11:30	**Split into virtual working groups: Validation of and modalities for implementing conclusions and recommendations.** Group facilitators: ETF experts
11:30-11:50	Virtual Aperitivo/ Coffee break
11:50-12:30	**Reporting back from virtual working groups**
12:30-12:45	**Open discussion: How to move forward agenda for implementation?** Facilitation and speakers: ETF-VET Department of Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR) of Republic of Moldova & other Key Moldavian Stakeholders **Wrap up & Farewell**

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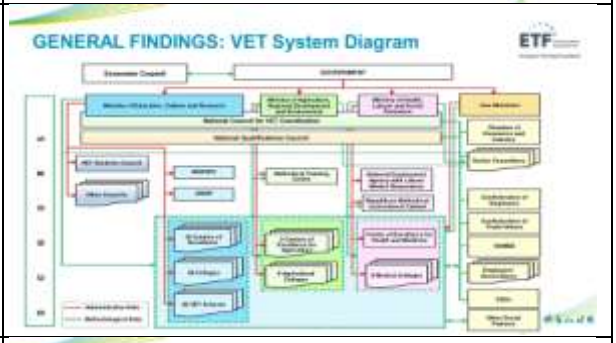
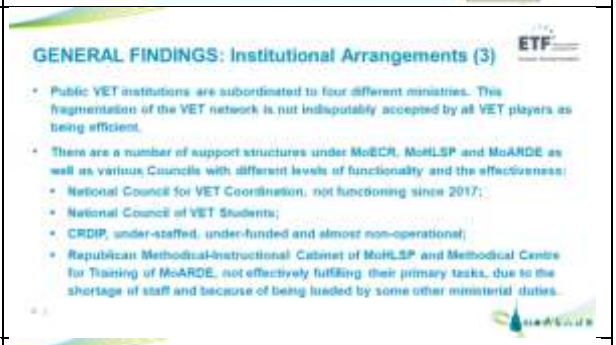
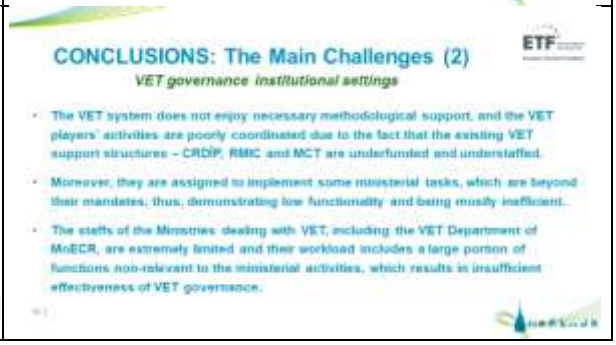
PRESENTATIONS







CONCLUSIONS: The Main Challenges (3)

VET providers network

- Compared with the students' population, the number of the VET institutions over the country is too large and many of them are not cost-efficient.
- The offer of qualifications in many VET institutions is not rational.
- The VET network is fragmented between different ministries which complicates implementation of the unified state VET policy.
- Existence of three types of institutions is an unnecessary complication and this segregation specifically affects attractiveness of the VET Schools.
- At present, none of the Centres of Excellence is capable to exercise its role effectively according with the statute and fulfil all its functions due to the lack of human capacities, managerial and didactic, and financial scarcity.
- Many tasks that are supposed to be performed by a meso-level VET structure and/or sectoral entities, are put on the CoEs' shoulders which has already proven its bankruptcy.

CONCLUSIONS: The Main Challenges (4)

VET practices

- Decision-taking procedures and the business processes are not efficient and effective for many VET aspects or practices, such as Standards and curricula development, Career guidance, Tracer studies, Quality assurance, Work-based learning, Dual education and Teachers training, etc.

CONCLUSIONS: The Main Challenges (5)

VET funding and financing scheme

- The VET funding as a share of the total State budget is decreasing and its absolute amount is not increasing over years.
- The new per capita VET financing mechanism is applied only partly as the rates are calculated with consideration of the budget ceiling but not based on the real cost of training as by the categories of professions/qualifications.

CONCLUSIONS: The Main Challenges (6)

VET legislation

- Some VET aspects and practices are poorly regulated by normative acts, there are legal acts and normative documents which are ambiguous or contradicting each other.
- In several cases, practical implementation of the legal acts' requirements is complicated particularly due to lack of funding, limited capabilities of human resources, etc.

CONCLUSIONS: The Main Challenges (7)

International Support

- International support to VET has room for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PRIORITY 1. Establishing an Effective VET Policy Making Scheme, Based on Social Partnership and Equipped with Operational Monitoring and Evaluation System

R1: Establish a tripartite (or quadripartite) National VET Council

R2: Assign coordination of the Sector Committees' activities to the VET Council

R3: Establish VET Teachers' National Council

R4: Operationalise the system of Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET policy implementation and external Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET institutions and the entire VET network performance

PRIORITY 2. Rationalising the VET governance institutional settings

R5: Establish an effective national structure assigned for complete scope of VET support activities

R6: Expand the capacities of the VET Department at MoECR and revise its tasks

PRIORITY 3. Optimising the VET providers network

R7: Revise subordination of the public VET institutions

R8: Rationalise the public VET institutions' network

R9: Unify the types of VET institutions and revise the concept of Centres of Excellence

R10: Introduce a multi-level and multi-stakeholder governance and management of VET institutions

R11: Introduce a system of licencing for the offered qualifications

PRIORITY 4. Increasing effectiveness of VET practices

R12: Include optimisation of the VET practices in the new VET Strategy as expected outcomes

PRIORITY 5. Increasing VET funding and optimising VET financing scheme
R13: Increasing the VET funding
R14: Ensure full-fledged and consistent per-capita VET financing mechanism
PRIORITY 6. Improving VET legislation
R15: Revise the legislation so that it serves best for effective implementation of the VET policy and strategy
PRIORITY 7. Optimising International Support
R16: Establish a VET donors' coordination platform
ACCOMPANYING RECOMMENDATIONS
R17: Restructure the Policy Analysis, Monitoring and Evaluation Department at MoECR and expand the capacities
R18: Review the level of the ANACEC independence
R19: Expand the capacities of the NQF Department at MoECR and revise its tasks
R20: Promote the National Council of VET Students

VET GOOD MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE IN MOLDOVA
Main findings:
Self-assessments on core VET Skills Governance Functions and Coordination Mechanisms
Vera Chiari
Aram Avagyan
20 November 2020
SELF-ASSESSMENTS ON CORE VET SKILLS GOVERNANCE FUNCTIONS AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS
GOAL - follow up of previous work & objectives focusing on governance and financing arrangements
Keep abreast of ETF analytical and operational actions carried out in good multilevel governance in VET;
Provide analytical information and comprehensive picture of the VET governance in ETF PC in order to complement and strengthening policy analysis and advice provided by ETF TRP;
Implement regular updating and monitoring of VET governance functions & arrangements, to support ETF corporate and operational approaches addressing dialogue, advice and/or policy learning, working with EC and PCs in VET & skills governance issues;
Support ETF on having indications about efficiency and effectiveness of institutional arrangements in place in order to bring regular evidence on performance on VET policies and systems in PCs;
Support showcasing good practices on VET & Skills GMG as drivers to inspire possible reforms;
Facilitate ETF sharing and acknowledging a common analytical and conceptual framework and mutual understanding working with PCs & positioning ETF at international level on GMG in VET
SELF-ASSESSMENTS ON CORE VET SKILLS GOVERNANCE FUNCTIONS AND COORDINATION MECHANISMS
MECHANISM – ETF VET Governance inventory-data collection tool (DTC) –4.0
Two complementary tracks covering 65 process indicators:
Process indicators targeting assessment of seven governance functions on Overall Planning, Management & Financing of VET and skills:
A. Formulation and implementation of overall policy framework, including strategic policy tools;
B. Provision of legal, normative and/or regulatory framework;
C. Management of VET & skills provider network;
D. Operationalization, alignment and coordination of financial arrangements;
E. Management of public-private partnerships for VET and Skills development;
F. M&E and review of VET and Skills policies; R&D;
G. MIS and Statistical provision
Process indicators for assessing effectiveness/ efficiency of stakeholder's performance on Institutional Coordination Mechanisms.
METHODOLOGY
Online survey questionnaires (closed & opened questions)
36 people
28 institutions
6 different categories of VET stakeholders
Key Ministry or Agency in charge of VET skills policies;
Key Ministry participating and/or financing VET & Skill policy making;
Key Employers organisation participating in VET & Skills policy making;
Key representative of relevant national TU organisation
Key representative of National and/or sectoral skill councils/committees;
Key representative of Regional or local departments/ bodies dealing with VET and Skills policy development;
Key experts on VET & Skills working on and/or with leading institutions;
MAIN FINDINGS:
A. Formulation and implementation of policy framework
B. Provision of legal/ regulatory/ normative framework for VET and Skills
MAIN FINDINGS:
C. Management of VET provider networks
D. Financial arrangements | budgeting, mobilisation & allocation process
MAIN FINDINGS:
E. Management of PPPs for VET & Skills provision
F. M & E and Review of VET & Skills policies
MAIN FINDINGS:
G. Management of Information Systems (MIS) and Statistical provision to support policy making
H. National Council for VET
MAIN FINDINGS:
I. SECTORAL SKILLS COMMITTEES
J. Regional/ Subnational VET & Skills - Authorities | Councils
MAIN FINDINGS:
K. National VET Agencies and/or other type of executive & supervisory bodies
L. Inter-Ministerial Working, Cooperation/ Coordination

MAIN CHALLENGES:
VET Governance – centralized, multi-level (including regional) and multi-stakeholder governance and management of VET institutions - predominantly formal or non-existent
Cooperation between VET stakeholders is formalised and institutionalized but non-state actors do not efficiently participate in VET governance, their role is predominantly consultative, while the decision-making authority almost solely belongs to the governmental bodies
The M&E is anaemic, or entirely missing & reports and analysis do not result in policy decisions or actions
R& D - VET system is separated from the innovation service needs of enterprises, being limited to the provision of educational programmes
Effectiveness of VET system governance is assessed as average, as being slow ('behind the time') and cannot ensure that VET meets the LM requirements
MAIN CHALLENGES:
MS fragmented, lacks consistency and coordination
The VET offer is not based on LM analysis & LM demand
Public institutions - with restricted staff, large workload, which leads to insufficient effectiveness.
The VET system at meso level is very weak, not fulfilling their mandate, with limited or no support and coordination to VET institutions.
CoEs have difficulties to exercise its role effectively as per their mandate due to the shortage of financial resources of HR capacities.
The SSCs have no considerable impact, private sector not motivated to closely cooperate with the SCs.
RECOMMENDATIONS
(SEE THE REPORT ON VET GMG IN MOLDOVA)
Thank you

ANNEX 9. EXTRACT FROM THE REGULATION OF THE REPUBLICAN CENTRE FOR VET DEVELOPMENT

Approved by the Order of Ministry of Education № 825, 1st December 2009

<…>

9. The Centre has the following tasks:

a) participation in elaboration and promotion of VET policies;

b) implementation of studies and analyses of VET policies, preparation of reports with recommendations on the situation in the field;

c) assessment of the impact of VET policies;

d) elaboration of the curriculum based on competences, training modules for vocational education in cooperation with the social partners; the support and maintenance of the modular bank;

e) identification of the needs of continuous training for the VET teachers and the managers; adoption and dissemination of continuous training models;

f) conducting studies and analyses of the labour market to support the VET institutions, adapting the courses to the demands of the local labour market, and establishing a link between social partners and respective educational institutions;

g) development of strategies for sustainable development, solutions for reform and implementation of innovative methods of professional/career guidance;

h) elaboration of methodologies for social inclusion of persons with special educational needs and for working with excluded children and those at risk of dropping out of the vocational education system.

i) provision of consultancy, documentary and methodological support, specialised expertise in the field of vocational education;

j) development of cooperative relations between educational institutions, research, public authorities, economic agents, organisations and enterprises of all branches of the national economy, civil society in Moldova and abroad;

k) ensuring of efficient and effective use of the financial means available for the functioning of the Centre;

l) submission of official periodic reports on activities of the Centre, in the established manner, to the Ministry of Education.

10. The Centre promotes and strictly observes the principle of transparency of professional activities and the efficient use of the human, material and financial resources allocated for this purpose.

<…>

14. In order to **develop and implement policies for the development of the vocational education system,** the Centre will carry out the following:

a) analysis of international trends and policies in the field;

b) elaboration of methodology for measuring the efficiency of the vocational education system;

c) elaboration of proposals for the continuous modernisation of the vocational education system;

d) conducting research in the vocational education sector;

e) elaboration and implementation of new strategies and policy measures;

f) training, evaluation and certification of professional competences of adults;

g) training for VET teachers in implementation of new policy measures.

15. In order to **promote and approve occupational standards and modular curricula based on competences for the vocational education system at the national level**, the Centre will carry out the following activities:

a) analysis of international trends and policies in the field;
b) elaboration of the system of VET occupational standards;
c) continuous revision and updating of the approved modular curricular system;
d) elaboration of framework recommendations for the implementation of the system of occupational standards and the modular curricula based on competences for the vocational education sector;
e) revision of the pilot curricula and their dissemination at the national level;
f) elaboration and dissemination of training materials;
g) monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of new standards, curricula and training materials;
h) revision, updating, maintenance and evaluation of the modular bank;
i) organisation of training in modular bank management;
j) organising, monitoring and evaluating continuous training for VET teachers / teachers and managers
k) organisation and monitoring of training for CRDÎP personnel.

16. In order to **ensure the accessibility, availability and efficient use of information on the labour market, adjust the courses held in VET institutions, promote and improve the social partnership in the VET sector**, the Centre must carry out the following activities:

a) analysis of international trends and policies in the field;
b) elaboration of the recommendations on national policies to support more active involvement of the social partners in the professional education sector;
c) contribution to facilitating and simplifying access to labour market information for VET institutions;
d) monitoring the labour market and developing studies and analyses regarding information on the labour market, in collaboration with the interested social partners;
e) dissemination of information to social partners;
f) organising trainings for VET teachers on use of information on the labour market;
g) supporting the process of consolidating partnership between the social partners and the secondary vocational education institutions;
h) monitoring and evaluating the use of labour market information and efficiency of social dialogue;
i) involvement of the social partners in the process of creating sectoral committees to ensure the correspondence between the new and revised curricula and the labour market needs.

17. In order to **reform and systematise methodologies of professional/career guidance**, the Centre will assume responsibility for the following activities:

a) analysis of international trends and policies in the field;
b) elaboration of policy recommendations to support a modernised system of professional/career guidance;
c) ensuring the efficient relationship between the labour market, general and vocational education;
d) elaboration of methodologies for professional/career guidance in general and vocational education;
e) elaboration of measures to facilitate the transition of students from the educational system to the labour market - employment in the field of work or continuation of studies;
f) organising trainings for teachers on professional/career guidance;
g) transfer of experience and assistance in the creation and management of district centres for career guidance within the general directions for education, youth and sports.
h) monitoring and evaluation of professional/career guidance in general and vocational education.

18. In order to **promote the process of social inclusion of persons with special educational needs and to reduce the rate of school dropout within the vocational education system**, the Centre will carry out the following activities:

a) analysis of international trends and policies in the field;
b) elaboration of recommendations on national policies for the prevention of school drop-out and the social inclusion of persons with special educational needs in vocational education;
c) elaboration of a methodology for achieving the social inclusion of the persons with special educational needs - physical, mental or with deficiencies in the learning process - within the vocational education;
d) elaboration and application of the methodological recommendations regarding the curricular adjustment to facilitate the training process for the persons with special educational needs;
e) continuous training of VET teachers, children's homes, boarding schools responsible for students with special educational needs;
f) monitoring and evaluation of measures to reduce the rate of school dropout and activities focused on increasing the degree of social inclusion of vulnerable groups in vocational education institutions.

19. The Centre has the following rights:
a) train, by mutual agreement, representatives of the ministries, other central administrative authorities, local public administration authorities and other actors interested in the evaluation and solution of the problems in the field;
b) request and receive from the central and local public authorities, economic agents and from other authorised institutions necessary information for carrying out its activities;
c) negotiate and conclude, within the limits of competence and on the basis of the legislation in force, agreements and protocols for national and international cooperation in the fields of activity;
d) carry out actions, in the manner established by the law, in order to implement the activity programmes;
e) participate in national and international competitions to obtain projects and grants;
f) benefit from technical and financial assistance within the national and international projects / programmes, which concern the activity of the Centre;
g) develop and adopt special working procedures, which will regulate the internal activities of the Centre, including the departments within it;
h) support the maintenance expenses of the Centre within the budget limit, coordinated as appropriate, with the potential donors (donors);
i) take other actions in accordance with the legislation in force and the Regulation, in order to achieve the objectives of the Centre.

<…>

ANNEX 10. THE EXTRACT FROM THE REGULATION OF THE NATIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR VET

Approved by the Government Decision
№ 1019, 10th December 2014

<…>

III. The powers and rights of the Council

7. The Council has the following competences:

1) coordinates the process of elaboration, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and revision of the policies for reforming, developing and modernising the technical vocational education in order to connect it to the needs of the labour market;

2) makes recommendations regarding the consolidation of the partnership between the technical vocational education institutions and the economic environment, including the modernisation of the technical vocational education institutions, the content of the study programmes, the educational standards, the evaluation and certification system of the qualifications granted in the process of technical vocational education;

3) promotes the collaboration between ministries, other central administrative authorities, employers and trade unions in order to modernise the technical professional education;

4) realises and monitors the reforms in the technical vocational education from the perspective of training, vocational training and employment in the field of the skilled workers / specialists;

5) contributes to the modernisation of the technical and methodological-didactic base of the technical vocational education institutions;

6) contributes, through a participatory approach, to increasing the transparency and relevance of the reforms in the technical vocational education.

8. In order to achieve its purpose, the Council has powers:

1) in the economic field:

a) identifies the priorities of development of the national economy and of the technical and professional capacities that would ensure the economic growth in the short, medium and long term;

b) evaluates the demand for human resources and qualifications on the labour market, in various sectors of the national economy;

c) formulates, with respect to the educational system, requirements derived from the priorities of economic development;

d) facilitates the communication between the economic agents, employers, professional public organisations and the technical vocational education structures;

e) facilitates the process of organising and conducting the internships;

f) offers a framework for including and attracting investors in vocational training projects that are of interest to the national economy;

g) formulates recommendations for connecting the professionalisation curriculum and promotes the piloting of the training processes in the real economy environment;

h) facilitates the integration of the young specialists in the labour market, promotes the development of the system of monitoring the professional path of the graduates of the technical vocational education;

i) promotes globally the competitiveness of the labour force trained in the country, and within the national economy, the fair remuneration for work;

j) promotes the economic activities requested at global level and the training of the skilled labour force for obtaining benefits at national level;

k) supports and facilitates activities of organisational culture development within the sectoral committees, responsible for certain branches of the national economy;

l) other relevant attributions;

2) in the educational field:

a) identifies and examines the problems, as well as establishes the priorities in the field of the development of the technical professional education;

b) coordinates and elaborates the main directions of development and modernisation of the technical vocational education in accordance with the needs of the labour market;

c) makes recommendations regarding the organisation of new technical vocational education institutions and/or the reorganisation of existing ones, to strengthen the partnership between the technical vocational education institutions and the economic units;

d) coordinates the extension of the collaboration between ministries, other central administrative authorities, employers and trade unions in order to modernise the technical professional education;

e) monitors and evaluates the reforms in the technical vocational education, examines the reports of the line ministries regarding their contribution to the training, training and employment in the field of the workers and the qualified specialists;

f) contributes to the improvement of the methods of statistical evaluation of the situation in the technical vocational education from the perspective of the development of the labour market;

g) contributes to ensuring and retraining the methodological-didactic and technical basis of the technical vocational education units;

h) directs the technical assistance offered to the Republic of Moldova by the international bodies and by other states towards the priority needs of the technical vocational education;

i) exercises other duties and obligations, in accordance with the normative acts in the field of activity;

3) to ensure transparency and good governance in the reform of technical vocational education:

a) ensures the inclusion and participation of relevant stakeholders in the process of reforming the technical vocational education system, including public authorities, social partners, representatives of trade unions and employers, economic agents and their associations, civil society organisations and civil society organisations; The National Council for Participation, of the representatives of the technical vocational education institutions in the elaboration, deliberation, evaluation and revision of the policies for modernising and reforming the technical vocational education system;

b) ensures the strategic guidance of the process of reform of the technical vocational education by promoting, on the agenda of the reform, the interests, the society and the business environment, increasing the relevance of the policies for the reform of the technical vocational education;

c) institutionalise the dialogue between the stakeholders and affected by the reform policies, enhancing the legitimacy of the reform process of the technical vocational education system;

d) depending on the issues subject to debate and necessity, it implies, at the meetings of the Council, as guests, with the right to consult, representatives of other central public authorities, non-commercial organisations, the academic environment, development partners. The inclusion of the guests at the meetings of the Council will be coordinated in advance with the members of the Council;

e) ensures the participatory monitoring and transparency of the process of reform of the technical vocational education system by ensuring the broad participation of the stakeholders in the elaboration, deliberation, monitoring, evaluation and revision of the policies of modernisation and reform of the technical vocational education system.

9. The Council has the following rights:

1) to propose the creation of working groups and temporary commissions, with the inclusion of specialists from central and local public authorities, technical vocational education institutions,

profile organisations, economic agents, social partners, sector committees, civil society and experts, for examining and carrying out specific tasks in the field;

2) to establish collaborative relationships with international institutions and organisations active in the field of education;

3) to request relevant information from the authorised institutions.

IV. Council activity

10. The Council is headed by the President, who is assisted by a Vice-President and a Secretary.

11. In the absence of the President, the meetings shall be chaired by the Vice-President.

12. The President of the Council exercises the following functions:

1) he / she manages the activity and ensures the fulfilment of the duties of the Council in accordance with this Regulation;

2) convenes and chairs the meetings of the Council;

3) approves the agenda of the meetings;

4) decides, with the majority vote, on the matters examined, within the limits of its competences;

5) exercise other duties in accordance with this Regulation.

13. The Council has a secretariat, provided by the Ministry of Education.

14. The Secretary of the Council organises the activity of the Council and ensures the preparation of the materials for the meetings of the Council, elaborates the minutes of the meetings, executes the provisions of the President or the Vice-President of the Council, according to the functions of the Council, elaborates reports and information, within the limits of his competences, performs secretarial work.

15. The activity of the members of the Council will not be remunerated from the resources of the state budget.

16. The meetings of the Council shall be convened at least four times a year or whenever it is necessary, more frequently, at the proposal of the President, the Vice-President or at the request of a third of the number of the members of the Council. In the latter case, the Secretary of the Council is informed, who consults the President of the Council and announces the convocation of the Council.

17. The agenda of the meeting shall be made known to the members of the Council at least 5 days before the convening of its meeting.

18. Other persons responsible and interested in the issues discussed may attend the meeting of the Council.

19. Responsible for the quality of the materials discussed at the meetings of the Council is their executor, who prepares them in advance and presents them to the secretary in electronic format and on paper, submitting proposals, at least 7 days before the meeting is convened.

20. On the basis of the presented materials, the secretary prepares and sends to the members of the Council the set of necessary documents, signed in the established way, 5 days before the Council meeting.

21. The members of the Council examine the materials received in advance and submit proposals on their side during the meeting.

22. The meetings of the Council are deliberative, if the simple majority of the members of the Council is present at the meeting.

23. Decisions shall be taken by simple majority of votes of the members of the Council present at the meeting. The decisions of the Council are of recommendation for the central or local public authorities concerned, for the technical vocational education institutions, as well as for other actors concerned.

24. The proceedings of the Council shall be recorded in a minutes signed by the president of the meeting.

<…>

ANNEX 11. EXTRACT FROM THE REGULATION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF STUDENTS FROM SECONDARY AND PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Approved by the MoE Order
№ 331, 30th April 2014

I. General provisions

1. The National Council of Students from secondary and professional secondary education institutions (hereinafter - NCVETS) is a representative and consultative structure of the students, which ensures the students' right to opinion and free expression.

2. The NCVETS is a means by which the students from the secondary vocational and specialised secondary education offer an inverse reaction to the Ministry of Education about the way in which the educational institution, acting according to the legal framework in force, responds to their needs and interests.

3. The NCVETS includes 30 students (except the students from the last year of studies), elected through national open competition, at the proposal of the VET institutions' self-management bodies of the students (Student Council, Senate, etc.).

4. The proposed candidate can be any student who, at the time of admission is a student in year I-II in the secondary vocational education institution or in year I-III in the specialised secondary education institution, whether or not he/she is a member of the body of school self-management.

5. The self-governing body of students from an educational institution can only propose one candidate.

6. NCVETS members are elected for one school year and only for one term.

II. Purpose and duties of NCVETS

7. The purpose of the NCVETS activity is to make the voice of the students heard regarding the respect of the rights of the students in the educational system.

8. NCVETS attributions / functions:

a) Collects, generalises, formulates and proposes to the Ministry of Education the visions and expectations of the students regarding ensuring access to formal and non-formal education, the quality of the educational environment (healthy and protective), educational policies, participation in the decision-making process, etc. through:

- presenting the management, collaborators and experts of the Ministry of Education of the students' opinions on their problems, concerns and desires with reference to all aspects of school life, as well as from other areas of interest;
- making recommendations to the Ministry of Education regarding the organisation of the educational process, including the framework plan, the curriculum, the activity programme of the educational institution, the organisation of extra-curricular activities, etc.;
- Exposure of the point of view on the draft laws and normative acts in the field of education;

b) provides support to the Ministry of Education in monitoring the respect of students' right to education at institutional and republican level;

c) organises activities focused on identifying the needs, problems and interests of the students they represent.

III. NCVETS members: rights and responsibilities

9. NCVETS members have the following rights and responsibilities:

a) participate voluntarily and are informed of the provisions of this regulation;
b) consults and represents the opinions/problems of the colleagues;
c) dedicates time and effort for this activity;
d) benefit from training to work within the council;
e) communicates in network with the colleagues from the council and with the adult coordinators;
f) comply with the rules established in agreement with all the members;
g) voluntarily assumes tasks and responsibilities;
h) propose ideas/suggestions regarding the contents and the process/working methods;
i) expresses its own opinion openly and respects the opinions of others;
j) informs the colleagues, as well as the interested persons/institutions, about the activity of the council;
k) keep confidential the situations/cases discussed;
l) renounces the membership of the council whenever he wishes;
m) are not remunerated for the activity carried out;
n) do not enjoy privileges during the term of office and after its expiry.

IV. Establishment procedure

10. Annually, between April 15 and May 15, the Ministry of Education announces a national competition for the recruitment of NCVETS members.

11. During the established period, any student, with the exception of the last year of studies, without any discrimination, can participate in the contest, by submitting at the indicated address, a file that will contain the following:

a) the candidate's CV;
b) letter of NCVETS from the candidate (why I want to become a member and how I will contribute to the activity of NCVETS);
c) the minutes of the meeting of the self-governing body of the students of the educational institution (description of the selection process, arguments in favour of the proposed candidate).

12. A commission/working group made up of representatives of the Ministry of Education, civil society organisations and students, decides on the candidates, based on the following criteria:

a) argued and realistic personal commitment to contribute to the activity of the council;
b) argued and realistic commitment from colleagues to support the candidate;
c) ensuring a democratic and transparent process in the process of nominating the candidate;
d) ensuring a balance of age, gender, region, ethnicity, special needs, between students with and without participation experience.

13. All candidates who submitted the file will be notified no later than June 15th of the results of the contest.

V. Organisation of NCVETS activity

14. NCVETS members decide on the structure, modalities/procedures and working rules.

15. NCVETS organises its activity in 2 ways, as follows:

a) workshops, convened on a quarterly basis, during holidays or on days off;
b) online/remote communication with and between NCVETS members.

16. Workshops consist of 2 parts:

a) training on certain topics, including human rights, communication and relationships with colleagues and adults, strategies for making their voice heard, developing indicators and applying human rights monitoring methods, as well as others requested by members;
b) discussions/working sessions with the management and employees of the Ministry of Education and/or other ministries/organisations, as well as with experts in various fields.

17. After each workshop, NCVETS members have tasks for the home, agreed upon.

18. The Ministry of Education asks the members of the council to consult with their colleagues the draft laws, normative acts, educational policy documents and to set out their point of view on them.

19. The Ministry of Education appoints a consultant, responsible for organising the activity of the council, maintaining communication with the members and with the institutions/organisations involved in this process.

20. The activity of NCVETS is transparent and is reflected on the website of the Ministry of Education and in the mass media.

21. The workshops of the NCVETS members last 2-3 days, depending on the topics discussed, and require the students to move and accommodate.

22. Students with special needs, in case of necessity, are permanently accompanied by their personal assistant.

23. All costs related to NCVETS activity are borne by the Ministry of Education.

<…>

ANNEX 12. ACCREDITATION STANDARDS, CRITERIA AND INDICATORS OF EFFICIENCY OF EXTERNAL EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONS AND PROGRAMMES OF VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

INSTITUTIONS

Accreditation Standard 1. Quality Assurance Policy

Educational institutions have an open Quality Assurance policy, which reflects the institutional vision and strategy and, thus, is related to the strategic management of the university. Internal stakeholders develop and implement this policy through relevant structures and processes, involving external stakeholders.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
1.1. legislative-regulatory framework for the functioning of an educational institution	1.1.1. Legal status of the institution
1.2. Mission, strategy and policy of the educational institution	1.2.1. Mission and development strategy of the educational institution
	1.2.2. Warranty and Continuous Quality Improvement Policy
1.3. Internal organisation of the educational institution	1.3.1. The effectiveness of the internal organisation of the institution
	1.3.2. Representation of stakeholders in the management of the institution
	1.3.3. Institutional Internationalisation
1.4. Internal Quality Assurance Management	1.4.1. Organisation and effectiveness of the Internal Quality Assurance System
	1.4.2. Application of Internal Quality Assurance Procedures

Accreditation standard 2. Development and Approval/Verification of VET programmes

Educational institutions have procedures for elaboration and verification of VET programmes. The VET programmes are developed in such a way that all of them are consistent with the established objectives, including the training results. The qualifications resulting from the development of the programme are clearly defined and explained, and are in line with a certain level of the National Qualifications Framework and European Qualifications Framework.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
2.1. Organisation of VET programmes	2.1.1. General framework for the planning of VET programmes
	2.1.2. Compliance with the National Qualifications Framework Training Program
	2.1.3. The structure of VET programmes

Accreditation Standard 3. Training, teaching and performance assessment, focus on a student

Educational institutions provide the development of educational training programmes that encourage students to participate actively in the construction of the educational process, and the assessment of students' performance reflects this approach.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
3.1. Teaching and training process	3.1.1. Forms of organisation of the teaching and training process
	3.1.2. Focusing the teaching and training methods on a student
	3.1.3. Use of ICT tools in of teaching - training – assessment process
3.2. Internships	3.2.1. Organisation of internships for practice

	3.2.2. Existence of partnerships with institutions that are basic for practice
3.3. Extracurricular activities	3.3.1. Organisation of extracurricular activities
	3.4.1. Organisation of the training outcomes assessment process

Accreditation Standard 4. Admission, performance, recognition and certification of students

Educational institutions have predefined, published and consistently applied rules governing all periods of the students' "life cycle", i.e. admission, performance, recognition and certification.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
4.1. Admission to study	4.1.1. Enrolment and Admission of students in VET programmes
	4.1.2. Access to education for vulnerable social groups and people with special educational needs
4.2. Students' progress	4.2.1. Student Performance
	4.2.2. Academic mobility
4.3. Recognition and Certification	4.3.1. Qualification and diploma/certificate of qualification and its annexes

Accreditation Standard 5. Teaching staff

Educational institutions guarantee the competence of their teachers, apply objective and transparent processes for hiring and professional development

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
5.1. Recruitment of teaching staff	5.1.1. Planning and recruitment of teaching staff for VET programmes
	5.1.2. Professional qualifications of teaching staff
5.2. Teaching staff development	5.2.1. Strategies/policies/measures for the development of teaching staff
	5.2.2. Planning and implementation of methodological work by teaching staff

Accreditation standard 6. Educational resources and student support system:

Educational institutions finance teaching activities accordingly, and provide students with training resources and adequate and affordable support services.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
6.1. Administrative and support staff	6.1.1. Planning and coordination Administrative and supports staff activities
6.2. Material and learning resources	6.2.1. Existence and use of educational facilities
	6.2.2. Equipment and accessibility of educational facilities
	6.2.3. Equipment, development and accessibility of library funds of the institution
	6.2.4. Provision of curriculum materials and access for students
6.3. Financial resources	6.3.1. Educational funding
6.4. Student social insurance	6.4.1. Providing students with dormitory
	6.4.2. Medical services, food, cultural and sports services for students

Accreditation Standard 7. Information Management

Educational institutions guarantee that they collect, analyse and use relevant information to effectively manage their programmes and other activities.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
7.1. Institutional Information System	7.1.1. Existence and functioning of the system of internal and external communication
	7.1.2. Existence and functioning of the information management system

Accreditation Standard 8. Public awareness

Educational institutions publish information on their activities, including clear, accurate, objective, relevant and accessible data regarding their programmes.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
8.1. Public awareness transparency	8.1.1. Institution website
	8.1.2. Transparency of information on the activities of the institution

Accreditation Standard 9. Continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation of VET programmes

Educational institutions monitor and periodically evaluate the programmes they provide in order to ensure that they are in line with their goals and meet the needs of students and society. The results of these evaluations should lead to continuous improvement of programmes. All stakeholders are informed of any action taken as a result of the assessment.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
9.1. Initiation, monitoring and periodic review of training programmes	9.1.1. Monitoring and revision of educational supply and VET programmes
	9.1.2. Monitoring of teaching - training - assessment and internships
	9.1.3. Public accountability of the institution (internal evaluation)
	9.1.4. Institutional evaluation by students, graduates, employers and other stakeholders
9.2. Employment	9.2.1. Institutional mechanisms for accounting for the employment of graduates of VET programmes in the labour market
	9.2.2. Professional orientation and competitiveness of graduates of VET programmes in the labour market

Accreditation Standard 10. Periodic procedures of External Quality Assurance

External quality assurance procedures of the educational institutions are carried out on a regular basis.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
10.1. External Quality Assurance	10.1.1. Execution of orders and recommendations of the Ministry of Education and other competent ministries
	10.1.2. Implementation of comments, recommendations and orders formulated on the basis of an external assessment by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education/other quality assurance agencies

PROGRAMMES

Accreditation Standard 1. Quality Assurance Policy

Educational institutions have an open Quality Assurance policy, which reflects the institutional vision and strategy and, thus, is related to the strategic management of the university. Internal stakeholders develop and implement this policy through relevant structures and processes, involving external stakeholders.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
1.1. Legislative-regulatory basis, strategy and Quality Assurance policy	1.1.1. Legal status of the institution and implementation of VET programmes
	1.1.2. Strategy and Quality Assurance policy of VET programmes

Accreditation standard 2. Development and Approval/Verification of VET programmes

Educational institutions have procedures for elaboration and verification of VET programmes. The VET programmes are developed in such a way that all of them are consistent with the established objectives, including the training results. The qualifications resulting from the development of the programme are clearly defined and explained, and are in line with a certain level of the National Qualifications Framework and European Qualifications Framework.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
2.1. Development and Approval of VET programmes	2.1.1. General framework for the planning and approval of VET programmes
	2.1.2. Compliance with the National Qualifications Framework Training Program
2.2. Content of VET programmes	2.2.1. Mission, objectives and curriculum of VET programmes
	2.2.2. Curriculum for each discipline

Accreditation Standard 3. Training, teaching and performance assessment, focus on a student

Educational institutions provide the development of educational training programmes that encourage students to participate actively in the construction of the educational process, and the assessment of students' performance reflects this approach.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
3.1. Teaching and training process	3.1.1. Forms of organisation of the teaching and training process
	3.1.2. Focusing the teaching methods on a student
	3.1.3. Use of ICT tools in of teaching - training – assessment process
3.2. Internships	3.2.1. Organisation of internships for practice
	3.2.2. Existence of partnerships with institutions that are basic for practice
3.3. Extracurricular activities	3.3.1. Extracurricular activities
3.4. Assessment of learning outcomes	3.4.1. Organisation of the training outcomes assessment process
	3.4.2. Organising an internship evaluation process

Accreditation Standard 4. Admission, performance, recognition and certification of students

Educational institutions have predefined, published and consistently applied rules governing all periods of the students' "life cycle", i.e. admission, performance, recognition and certification.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
4.1. Admission to study	4.1.1. Enrolment and Admission of students in VET programmes
	4.1.2. Access to education for vulnerable social groups and people with special educational needs
4.2. Students' progress	4.2.1. Student Performance
	4.2.2. Academic mobility
4.3. Recognition and Certification	4.3.1. Qualification and diploma/certificate of qualification and its annexes

Accreditation Standard 5. Teaching staff

Educational institutions guarantee and apply fair and transparent procedures for hiring and development of their teaching staff.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
5.1. Recruitment and management of teaching staff	5.1.1. Planning selection and management of teaching staff for VET programmes
	5.1.2. Professional qualifications of teaching staff
5.2. Teaching staff development	5.2.1. Strategies/policies/measures for the development of teaching staff
	5.2.2. Planning and implementation of methodological work by teaching staff

Accreditation standard 6. Educational resources and student support system:

Educational institutions finance teaching activities accordingly, and provide students with training resources and adequate and affordable support services.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
6.1. Material and learning resources	6.1.1. Existence and use of educational facilities
	6.1.2. Equipment and accessibility of educational facilities

	6.1.3. Equipment, development and accessibility of library funds of the institution
	6.1.4. Provision of curriculum materials and access for students
6.2. Financial resources	6.2.1. Funding of educational process in VET programme framework
6.3. Student social insurance	6.3.1. Providing students with dormitory

Accreditation Standard 7. Information Management

Educational institutions guarantee that they collect, analyse and use relevant information to effectively manage their programmes and other activities.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
7.1. Institutional Information System	7.1.2. Existence and functioning of the information management system

Accreditation Standard 8. Public awareness

Educational institutions publish information on their activities, including clear, accurate, objective, relevant and accessible data regarding their programmes.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
8.1. Public awareness transparency	8.1.2. Transparency of information on VET programmes

Accreditation Standard 9. Continuous monitoring and periodic evaluation of VET programmes

Educational institutions monitor and periodically evaluate the programmes they provide in order to ensure that they are in line with their goals and meet the needs of students and society. The results of these evaluations should lead to continuous improvement of programmes. All stakeholders are informed of any action taken as a result of the assessment.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
9.1. Initiation, monitoring and periodic review of training programmes	9.1.1. Monitoring and revision of educational supply and VET programmes
	9.1.2. Monitoring of teaching - training - assessment and internships
	9.1.3. Evaluation of VET programmes by students, graduates, employers and other stakeholders
9.2. Employment	9.2.1. Institutional mechanisms for accounting for the employment of graduates of VET programmes in the labour market
	9.2.2. Professional orientation and competitiveness of graduates of VET programmes in the labour market

Accreditation Standard 10. Periodic procedures of External Quality Assurance

External quality assurance procedures of the educational institutions are carried out on a regular basis.

Criteria	Efficiency Indicators
10.1. External Quality Assurance	10.1.1. Execution of orders and recommendations of the Ministry of Education and other competent ministries
	10.1.2. Implementation of comments, recommendations and orders formulated on the basis of an external assessment by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education/other quality assurance agencies

ANNEX 13. EU AND INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

Below, short overviews of the VET governance systems and funding mechanisms from several EU member states and other selected countries are presented. This section, however, does not purport to explain in details all peculiarities of the countries' VET systems but has an objective to give a general idea about the different structures and players involved in VET governance, and the ways of VET funding.

1. EU Member-states

The overviews of the VET governance and funding from the EU member-states are presented in this sub-section as adapted extracts from the country reports published by CEDEFOP in 2018-2020[5]. The selection of the 11 countries covers: Western Europe (Spain, Portugal and France); Central Europe (Czech Republic and Croatia); Eastern Europe (Bulgaria, Romania and Estonia) and North (Ireland, Finland and Denmark).

1.1. Bulgaria[6]

In Bulgaria, VET has three governance levels: national, regional, local. At national level, VET governance comprises: the ***National Assembly*** (Parliament) – approves the VET legislation; the ***Council of Ministers*** – set out VET government policy; ***Ministry of Education and Science*** (MoES) – manages, coordinates and implements VET policy; ***Ministry of Labour and Social Policy*** – participates in implementing national VET policy; ***Ministry of Culture***, ***Ministry of Youth and Sports***, ***Ministry of Healthcare***, other ***line ministries*** – participate in development, coordination and updating of the State educational standards for the acquisition of qualifications, the list of professions for VET, and are also involved in coordinating the admission plan for schools, funded by them; ***Social partners*** – are involved in the development, coordination and updating of the State educational standards for the acquisition of qualifications, the legislative framework and policy documents, as well as in updating the list of professions and in organising and conducting qualification examinations; ***Economic and Social Council***; ***National Council for Tripartite Cooperation***; ***National Council for the Promotion of Employment***; ***Human Resource Development Centre***; and the ***National Agency for Vocational Education and Training*** (NAVET). The latter is a specialised body within the Council of Ministers. The agency develops the State educational standards for the acquisition of VET qualifications, maintains the list of professions according to the needs of the labour market, licenses. It also controls the activities of VET institutions for people older than 16 and vocational guidance providers.

At regional level, the VET governance system includes the ***regional administration***, ***directorates of the regional employment services***, ***Regional Management Units*** of MoES situated in the 28 district centres, the ***permanent and temporary employment committees*** to the regional councils for regional development. The MoES Regional management units implement state policy in VET at regional level through projects, programmes and strategies for development, functioning and improvement of VET at the district level.

[5] https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/vet-in-europe-country-reports.
[6] Adapted extract from: Cedefop (2018). Vocational education and training in Bulgaria: short description. Luxembourg: Publications Office. http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/600634.

At the local level, the following structures are involved in the VET governance: ***municipalities*** – participate within their territories in the development of VET policy regarding the employment needs for vocational guidance and training of students, the unemployed and other groups, the equipment needed by schools, vocational training providers and centres for information and guidance, using the municipal budget funds; ***labour offices of the Employment Agency*** – provide career services; ***cooperation councils*** at the labour office directorates – monitor the implementation of programmes and measures included in the national action plan for employment.

The basic principles of financing education, including VET are defined by the Law. MoES, in coordination with the Ministry of Finance and in accordance with the State standards, determines the cost per student for state and municipal schools. This cost covers expenditure for school infrastructure, teacher salaries and additional remuneration (for extra work, achievements, participation in projects) and social security. The schools receive delegated budgets determined by a formula that includes the number of learners in the programme and its type. The sources of the VET providers' funding are: the State budget; the municipal budget, donations, own revenue, national and international programmes, other sources.

Secondary VET is mostly state-financed; the private VET schools may also apply for state funding. The training offered after secondary education is financed by learners, employers, the State budget, EU programmes (mainly ESF). All adult VET providers are private but they may also receive public financing.

1.2. Croatia[7]

Ministry of Science and Education (MoSE) is responsible for the overall VET policy and particularly monitors the compliance of the VET system with legislation and coordinates executive agencies in the field of education.

The ***Agency for VET and Adult Education***, organised through merger of the VET Agency and the Adult Education Agency in 2010, is an executive body in charge of the overall development and organisation of the VET system: development of VET programmes/curricula; ensuring stakeholders' involvement in VET; supporting and follow-up the self-assessment of VET schools; monitoring the work of VET and adult education institutions; provision of advice and counselling services for VET and adult education institutions; professional exams for new, and promotions for experienced VET teachers; continuous professional development opportunities for VET teachers; foreign VET qualification recognition process; organising national skills competitions.

Since 2013, the ***Ministry of Labour and Pension System*** took a more prominent role in anticipating labour market skills needs for the education sector.

Ministry of Economy, Entrepreneurship and Crafts and the ***Croatian Chamber of Trades and Crafts*** are focused on apprenticeship programmes. Particularly, the Ministry defines the conditions for taking learners into apprenticeship, issuing apprenticeship exam certificates, overseeing journeyman exam procedure, while the Chamber is responsible for licensing crafts and legal entities to provide apprenticeships.

The ***Education and Teacher Training Agency*** is in charge of developing general education part of VET curricula.

[7] Adapted extract from: Cedefop (2020). *Vocational education and training in Croatia: short description*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/121008

The ***Council for VET*** which has 21 members representing different stakeholders, coordinates the activities of all VET stakeholders, initiates the development of new curricula and revision of existing curricula, recommends new developments in VET, and provides its assessment for the establishment of the network of regional centres of competence.

The ***Croatian Chamber of Economy*** is a partner in the experimental programme of Dual education launched in 2018/19. The industrial trade unions participate in advisory bodies, such as sector councils.

IVET providers are mostly public secondary vocational schools that can be vocational or polyvalent (offering both general education and VET programmes); the share of private VET schools is 4%. Local authorities are legal founders and owners of the public schools.

Since 2001, the financing of public upper secondary VET schools has been decentralised. The State budget finances: salaries for teachers and other employees; in-service training of teachers and other staffs; education of at-risk groups (such as ethnic minorities, learners with special needs) and talented learners; teaching materials and equipment; transportation costs of learners; ICT infrastructure and software for schools; school libraries; and capital investments (buildings, infrastructure). The local and regional governments cover: costs related to the school premises and equipment; operating costs of the schools; transportation costs of school; joint financing of food and lodging in learner residences; capital investments (buildings, infrastructure) according with the criteria determined by the MoSE[8].

1.3. Czech Republic[9]

Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) is the main body holding executive powers in the field of education (IVET and CVET). At the national level, MŠMT is responsible for the development of the national education strategy and priorities; development of curricular policy; coordination of public administration and funding in the area of education.

The ***Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs*** (MPSV) is responsible for retraining under the auspices of the public employment service. The ***Ministry of Health*** is in charge of training of healthcare staff; the ***Ministry of Interior Affairs*** is responsible for the accreditation of public administration staff training courses, etc.).

The ***Regional Assemblies*** and ***Regional Councils*** are self-governing bodies directly responsible for establishing public VET schools at upper secondary and tertiary professional levels at the regional level. The Regional Assemblies elect Regional Councils (9-11 members), which have decision-making and consulting powers on the number, structure, provision, quality and funding of schools. Regional Council forms expert advisory commissions in various fields, including education.

The ***Regional Authorities*** are responsible for the development of a regional long-term plan for the development of education and a report on education in the region, allocation of resources from the state budget to schools which cover pedagogical staff wages and direct educational costs.

[8] Local authorities as the legal founders and owners of the schools can also be investors regarding buildings/infrastructure.
[9] Adapted extract from: Kaňáková, M.; Czesaná ,V.; Šímová, Z. (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe –Czech Republic*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_Czech_Republic_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf.

The ***Regional Councils for Human Resource Development*** are advisory bodies to the Regional Councils. In some regions, they have a broader approach and beside education issues, they advise on job creation and innovation.

VET schools have a relatively high level of autonomy. There are consultative bodies at school, ***School councils***, that include representatives of the school founding body, pedagogical staff, parents and sometimes students.

Social partners can influence vocational education at national and regional levels. Particularly, they are participating in the curricula development and in the final exam committees of upper secondary vocational programmes.

The MŠMT, regional authorities or in some cases private entities, churches and ministries take responsibility for funding schools at the primary, secondary and tertiary professional level. Regions administer ~81% of upper secondary schools and ~64% of tertiary professional schools.

Most of the education budget (except investments) is provided by the MŠMT. Operational and investment costs are covered by School founders. Funding from the public budget is per-capita and depends on school type and educational field. The per-capita funding motivates the schools to admit more students to reach higher funding levels, which often means lowering selection criteria and decreasing school quality. In 2016, a reform of regional school funding system has been proposed. It suggests new criteria to determine the level of funding: the number of lessons taught, the number of learners with special needs in the class etc. It also transfers the main responsibility for school funding to the MŠMT. The new regulations will be gradually implemented in coming years.

MŠMT may also provide resources to schools for development programmes (about 0.5% out of the total budget). The content and the aim of these programmes are announced by the MŠMT for each fiscal year. Some individual subsidies (e.g. capital investments) may be determined as well, during the process of the budget approval by the Parliament.

The MPSV finances the retraining in the framework of the active labour market policies through the Labour Office. There is no unified coherent system for CVET funding. The training that does not lead to the government-regulated qualification is financed by either participating individuals or employers who provide the training for their employees. Besides that, there are several forms of incentives and grants that (mainly) employers can apply for. These schemes are often project-based initiatives co-funded from the EU structural funds.

1.4. Denmark[10]

VET in Denmark is centralised in terms of providing nationally recognised qualifications (decision-making level), but decentralised from the implementation point of view: the VET providers are free to adapt VET to local needs and demands.

Parliament sets out the overall framework for VET, which is administered by the ***Ministry of Education***. The Ministry has overall financial and legal responsibility for VET, laying down the overall objectives for programmes and providing the legislative framework within which the stakeholders, social partners, colleges and enterprises are able to adapt curricula and methodologies to the needs of both students and the labour market. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Ministry has regulated

[10] Adapted extract from: Andersen, Ole Dibbern & Helms, Niels Henrik (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe: Denmark*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports (2018). http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_Denmark_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf.

VET provision through a system of targeted framework governance based on providing 'taximeter' grants per student[11].

Social partners play an institutionalised role at all levels of VET, from the national advisory council on vocational upper secondary education and training, which advises MoE on principal matters concerning VET, to playing an advisory role at the local level through local training committees comprising representatives of the social partners who advise colleges on local adaptations of VET. Their most important role is to ensure that VET provision is in line with the needs of the labour market.

The ***National Advisory Council*** consists of 31 representatives from the social partners. In its advisory capacity, the council monitors developments in society and highlights trends relevant to VET. The council makes recommendations to the Ministry regarding the establishment of new VET programmes and the adaptation, amalgamation or discontinuation of others.

National Trade Committees constitute the backbone of the VET system. Approximately 50 trade committees are responsible for 106 main programmes. The committees normally have between ten and fourteen members and are formed by labour market organisations (with parity of membership between employer and employee organisations). Inter alia, the National Trade Committees create and renew the VET courses by closely monitoring developments in their particular trade, and formulate the learning objectives and final examination standards; decide the regulatory framework for individual courses within the general legal framework, the duration of the programme and the ratio between college-based teaching and practical work in enterprises; approve enterprises as qualified training establishments, etc. The Committees and their secretariats are financed by the participating organisations.

Local Training Committees are affiliated to each vocational college[12] and ensure close contact between those colleges and the local community, thus improving responsiveness to particular local labour market needs. They consist of representatives of local employers and employees appointed by National Trade Committees, as well as representatives of staff, management and students appointed by colleges. Training committees work closely alongside colleges in determining the specific curriculum of colleges, including which optional subjects are available. They assist and advise national trade committees in approving local enterprises as qualified training establishments and in mediating conflicts between apprentices and enterprises. The training committees also help to ensure that enough suitable local training placements are available.

The vocational colleges are led by a ***Governing Board*** with overall responsibility for the administrative and financial running of the college and educational activities in accordance with the framework administered by MoE. The Board which consists of teachers, students and administrative staff representatives, as well as social partner representatives, takes decisions regarding the programmes to be offered, imposes local regulations and guidelines, guarantees responsible administration of the college's financial resources, including approval of budgets and accounts, and hires and fires the operational management (director, principal, dean or similar). The operational management is responsible for implementing the overall objectives and strategies set out by the Governing Board.

Considerable proportion of the state funding of VET, is distributed to colleges in accordance with the "taximeter" principle, when the funding is linked to some quantifiable measure of activity, e.g. the

[11] The Danish taximeter system links the majority of state funding to grants determined by activity level.
[12] Typically, more than one local training committee is associated with each college, with the various committees covering different fields of EUD.

number of full-time equivalent students, with a set amount awarded per unit. This system provides particularly an incentive for colleges to increase retention within the system.

Besides the 'taximeter' rate, VET providers also receive an annual fixed grant for the maintenance of buildings, salaries, etc. The total state grant is provided as a block grant which institutions use at their own discretion according with the legislative framework and specific institutional objectives.

For ensuring the funding of the training in companies, all employers, both public and private, pay a sum into the "employers' reimbursement scheme", regardless of whether or not they provide apprenticeship placements. This money goes to funding both VET and Adult training. From 2018, all employers are obliged to pay an annual contribution per full-time employee. These funds are then allocated to work places that take in apprentices so that they do not bear the cost of training alone. These employers receive reimbursements for wages paid during apprentices' periods of college-based training.

1.5. Estonia[13]

The ***Parliament***, the ***Government***, and the ***Ministry of Education and Research*** (MoER) jointly oversee the VET system at the national level. Government approves the national education policy, as well as the higher education and VET standards and framework requirements for teacher training. MoER delivers education strategy, including the vocational education programme and approves national VET curricula.

Since 2012, ***Foundation "Innove"*** has been designated by MoER to implement the national education policy. Particularly, the Foundation coordinates and promotes general and vocational education, offers career and educational counselling services, organises development of national VET curricula, supports implementation and organises VET teacher training.

Participation of the social partners in VET is regulated by national legislation and partnership agreements. At the national level, the social partners are represented by the ***Chamber of Commerce***, the ***Employers' Confederation*** and the ***Confederation of Trade Unions***. Employers play an active and influential role in the professional councils and in designing the standards for each occupation. At the local level, social partners participate in ***VET school counsellor boards*** which comprise at least seven members. These boards link VET schools and society, advising the school and its management on planning and organising educational and economic activities.

The VET schools can be owned by central or local government or be private. The highest collegial decision-making body of the school is the ***Council***, which organises the activities, and plans school development. The head of the school (*Director*) is also the head of the council, managing the school according to the plan, including financial resources.

Of total 32 VET institutions, 26 are state-owned and run by MoER, 2 schools are under the municipalities ran, and 4 are private. In addition, five higher education institutions provide VET programmes at the post-secondary level (ISCED 4).

Formal VET is mostly (99% of all learners) state-financed. Since 2019, a new VET funding model has been introduced. It considers not only the number of state-commissioned student places[14] (as it was before) but the school, its activities and performance are financed as a whole. This new model

[13] Adapted extract from: Kaldma, K., Kiilo, T., Siilivask, R. (2019). Vocational education and training in Europe: Estonia. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_Estonia_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf.

[14] Similar to the "State Order" in some other countries.

consists of basic financing and performance financing. The basic financing is fixed for three years and considers the number of learners, the areas taught and specific features of specialties, teachers' salary rates, the students with special needs, the need for support specialists, and the buildings used by the school.

Performance financing, which values the outstanding achievements of schools, is based on performance indicators. The latter comply with the strategic goals important to the state, e.g.: the shares of students who graduate after the nominal period of study; go further in their learning or participate in employment; graduate by taking a professional examination; participate in apprenticeship training. It is expected that the performance financing which is to comprise up to ~20% of all budget money received by the VET schools, will ensure for them funds necessary for cooperating with companies and general schools.

1.6. Finland[15]

Parliament approves the VET legislation, structure of VET qualifications, annual budget allocations to VET, maximum number of student years, and the volume of the VET strategy funding. The ***Government*** is responsible for VET development Programme, structures of common units including the number of competence points. The Ministry of Education and Culture determines the general goals for VET and qualifications structure.

Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) prepares VET legislation, grants licences to the VET providers, decides on study places by field of education.

Finnish National Agency for Education which operates under the auspices of MoEC, is responsible for preparation of the national qualifications requirements, developing VET through funding projects, and also produces long-term (10+ years) national forecasts on the demand for labour and education needs in support of decision-making. It is supported by the ***Skills Anticipation Forum***, established in early 2017.

Finnish Education Evaluation Centre evaluates the outcomes of the education and training system (thematic and systematic).

In Finland, there are 145 VET providers in total, of which ~70% are privately owned[16]. Others are owned by joint municipal authorities (~24%) and by the local authorities (~6%). There is only one VET provider owned by the State.

Education is publicly funded through public tax revenue at all levels. There are uniform criteria for receiving state funding for public and private VET providers. Only 2.6% of all education expenditure is private funding. Public funding is mainly provided by the State (~30%) and local authorities/municipalities (~70%). Funding of VET providers varies by study field. VET providers decide on the use of all funds granted.

Nevertheless, presently a new, coherent funding system is being introduced. The funding is to be divided into core – 50% (based on the number of learners funding), performance – 35% (based on the number of completed qualifications and qualification units); effectiveness – 15% (based on learners' access to employment, pursuit of further education and feedback from both learners and the labour market). This system aims to encourage education providers to redirect education to fields where

[15] Adapted extract from: Cedefop (2019). *Vocational education and training in Finland: short description.* Luxembourg: Publications Office. http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/841614.
[16] Some of the VET providers which are categorised as "private", are foundations or limited companies but municipalities usually have shares in such companies/foundations.

labour is needed; ensure that education corresponds to the needs. This new funding system will be introduced gradually and is expected to become fully operational in 2022.

1.7. France[17]

The vocational training system is currently managed within the framework of the "four-party system" which includes the State, the Regions and the Social Partners (employee representatives and employer representatives). The State is responsible for the development of standards and strategies for vocational training. The ***Ministry of National Education*** (MoNE), ***Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation*** (MoHERI) and ***Ministry of Labour*** (MoL) are responsible for both IVET and CVET.

MoNE designs the standards for professional diplomas in consultation with professionals' representatives, defines the examination regulations, and issues diplomas; recruits, trains and pays teachers; controls the quality of training, and reports on the results and the means used.

MoL prepares and implements the Government's policy in the fields of labour, employment and vocational training. MoNE is also involved in CVET through public schools, which can pool their resources for providing a diversified offer for CVET.

The ***Regions*** define their policies according with their economic and social priorities, in consultation with the State and the social partners. They organise and finance the regional public service for vocational training. Since 2014, the regions have been in charge of training specific audiences previously under the responsibility of the state.

The Social partners are systematically involved in the implementation of professional training, particularly contributing to the elaboration of diplomas, participating in examination boards, training young people in companies, participating in the financing of initial technological and vocational training by paying an "apprenticeship tax". They also play an important role in regulatory policy and financial aspects of Lifelong learning programmes (IVET and CVET).

The ***National Commission for Collective Bargaining*** (CNNC), is responsible for issuing an opinion on draft laws, ordinances and decrees in the field of employment policy, guidance and IVET and CVET.

In 2018, ***France Compétences*** was established to strengthen both national governance and monitoring and evaluation of vocational training. France Compétences is a single, four-party public institution representing the State, trade unions, employers and regions, under the supervision of the Minister in charge of vocational training. France Compétences distributes mutual funds to the various actors, regulates the quality of training and ensures that the reform is properly implemented. The IVET funding includes: teaching and training; administration and educational research; catering and lodging, counselling and medical service; transportation, purchase of books and other educational materials, etc.

[17] Adapted extract from: Centre Info (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe*: France. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_France_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf.

1.8. Ireland[18]

The ***Further Education and Skills Service*** (SOLAS), in conjunction with 16 ***Education and Training Boards*** (ETB) is the body responsible for taking decisions and implementing further education and training (FET), which includes most VET provision. Both SOLAS and the ETBs are agencies of the ***Ministry of Education***. SOLAS is required to submit five-year strategies for FET provision in Ireland.

Funding for VET programmes is included within the funding allocated for FET. Two main sources of the funding are the Exchequer (~57%) and the ***National Training Fund*** (~43)[19]. Most of the funding is allocated through SOLAS to the ETBs. A small income is also generated by the SOLAS.

1.9. Portugal[20]

The central government is responsible for the overall vocational education and training. The educational sector (pre-primary education, lower, upper secondary education and school- based training) is the responsibility of the ***Ministry of Education*** (MoE). Apprenticeship programmes, continuing vocational training and carrying out active labour market measures is the responsibility of the ***Ministry of Labour Solidarity and Social Security*** (MoLSSS).

The ***National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training*** (ANQEP) is a public body under the joint supervision of the MoE and MoLSSS and has a mission to coordinate the implementation of policies regarding the education and vocational training of young people and adults, as well as to ensure the development and management of the National System for the Recognition, Validation and Certification of Competences. ANQEP has administrative and financial autonomy and pedagogical independence to pursue its official activity[21].

At local level, ***Regional authorities*** for non-higher education and VET are responsible for the implementation of policies.

The ***National Qualification System*** (SNQ), established in 2007 and revised in 2017, is also coordinated by ANQEP. The SNQ comprises the main VET stakeholders, i.e. ***Directorate-General for Education*** (DGE), ***General Directorate for Employment and Industrial Relations*** (DGERT), ***Institute for Employment and Vocational Training*** (IEFP), bodies responsible for funding VET policies, ***Sectorial Councils for Qualification***, centres specialised in adult qualifications, primary and secondary education institutions; vocational training and professional rehabilitation centres directly and jointly managed by IEFP, and accredited VET providers, private enterprises that promote the training of their employees, and other institutions that contribute to the same purpose.

Social partners participate in the general council of ANQEP, in the management board of the IEFP, and in the monitoring board of DGERT accreditation of VET providers.

The costs of VET are covered almost entirely by public funding through contributions from the state budget, the social security budget and the European Social Fund. Funding may also be provided by other ministries, the Autonomous Regions of Madeira and Azores, and the municipalities.

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[18] Adapted extract from: Burke N.; Condon, N.; Hogan A.; (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe – Ireland.* Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_Ireland_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf.

[19] The National Training Fund was established in 2000 and is funded mainly by the imposition of a levy on employers.

[20] Adapted extract from: DGERT (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe – Portugal*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_Portugal_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf.

[21] https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/nss/national-support-services-portugal.

1.10. Romania[22]

The ***Ministry of Education and Research***[23] (MoER) is responsible for national policies and strategies in VET and coordination of IVET system. MoER designs legislation in cooperation with stakeholders. It also approves financing and enrolment plans, methodology for teacher enrolment; monitors, evaluates and controls the education system and the functioning of education providers; and coordinates the work of inspectorates.

The ***National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development*** (NCTVETD) is accountable to MoER. The Centre evaluates and suggests changes to policies and strategies, national curricula, assesses initial VET component, supervises the development of professional training standards for qualifications, ensures the development and functioning of stakeholder partnerships at national, regional and local levels; develops methodologies for the quality assurance and monitoring of programmes; implements continuing professional training programmes for teachers/trainers.

The ***Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education*** develops standards, benchmarks and performance indicators for quality assurance, institutional assessment methodology and accreditation of new schools.

The ***Institute of Educational Sciences*** is a national institution for research, development, innovation and training in education and youth issues. It is responsible for coordination of national framework curriculum development, development of curriculum and teaching and resources.

Regional consortia are advisory bodies of NCTVETD, responsible for drafting regional education action plans in VET. The consortia include representatives from: Regional Development Agency, County Councils, County Employment Agencies, School Inspectorates, employers' associations, chambers of commerce, trade unions, universities, and NCTVETD.

School inspectorates are responsible for validation of occupational standards and professional training standards. They propose to MoER the VET enrolment plan for the next school year, taking into consideration labour market needs, defined through direct requests from employers.

The ***Local Committees for the Development of Social Partnerships*** are consultative structures of school inspectorates. They aim at improving VET relevance and quality. The committees comprise representatives of local authorities, the county employment agency, employer associations, trade unions, school inspectorates and NGOs.

The ***Teaching Staff Resource House*** is an institution subordinated to the MoER that organises continuing teacher training in so-called pre-university education. Under the Ministry, also the ***County Centres of Resources and Education Assistance*** are acting in each county and in Bucharest. The centres support learners with special needs, including those in VET.

VET school ***Administration Boards*** comprise from 7 to 13 members (teachers, the director (chair), representative/(s) of the mayor, local authorities and employers) according to the size of the school. The boards approve institutional development plans, local/school-based curricula and teacher training plans proposed by their schools. In each VET school, a ***Quality Assurance and Evaluation Commission*** is appointed to supervise all quality assurance processes and activities.

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[22] Adapted extract from: Cedefop (2019). *Vocational education and training in Romania: short description*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/256780.
[23] Former Ministry of National Education.

Vocational training for the unemployed is monitored, analysed, controlled and evaluated by the ***Ministry of Labour and Social Justice***. It also manages and updates the Classification of occupations in, and the Nomenclature of, qualifications, and since 2017 has been coordinating the authorisation of the continuing VET providers.

State funding provided to schools by the MoER, is based on the actual enrolment and covers wages, allowances, staff continuous training, learner assessment expenditure, materials, services and maintenance.

Continuing VET is jointly financed by employers/enterprises; unemployment insurance budget; EU structural and cohesion instruments; personal contributions; other sources. The budget provides subsidies to the employers who provide continuing VET (apprenticeship, traineeship and vocational training programmes).

1.11. Spain[24]

The ***Ministry of Education and Vocational Training*** (MoEFP) is in charge of defining the national VET policy. It is also responsible for the core legislation on IVET, ensuring equality and equity throughout the state, setting up officially recognised qualifications and their basic curriculum, as well as recognition, validation and approval of foreign studies.

The ***regions*** have executive and administrative competences to manage the education system acting in their own territory. Royal decrees establish and regulate Vocational qualifications (VET diplomas). The regional education authorities may complete the basic curriculum of the VET diploma programmes (up to 45%) according to their needs.

The ***Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security*** (MoLMSS) is responsible for the development of VET policies within the employment system.

The ***National Education Council*** is the main advisory body of the government. All stakeholders within the education sector are represented in this council. The Council publishes an annual report on the state of the education system (including VET), which contains proposals for improvements supported by the council members.

There is another advisory body on VET: ***General Council for Vocational Training***. Education and labour authorities that are responsible for VET at national and regional level, work together within this body with trade unions and employers' associations.

The MoEFP, the ***Sectoral Education Conference***[25], and the 17 regional authorities coordinate education policies to achieve a coherent and inclusive education system.

The ***State Foundation for Training in Employment*** provides technical support to the ***State Public Employment Service*** (SEPE) and to MoLMSS in the strategic development of the system of vocational training for employment in the work sphere. In general, training for the unemployed is developed at regional level within the national framework and managed by the regional labour authorities.

[24] Adapted extract from: Sancha, I.; Gutiérrez, S. (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe: Spain*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018. http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_Spain_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf.

[25] Taking place several times a year according to needs.

The ***National Institute of Public Administration*** manages training for civil servants. Training for prisoners is managed by the ***Ministry of the Interior*** and carried out through the ***General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions***.

There are three main types of VET providers in the country: a) public, publicly-funded private and private institutions approved by the competent educational authority; b) integrated public training centres providing both initial vocational training within the formal education system, and vocational training for employment; c) national (public) reference centres, which are institutions specialised in the different professional branches, in charge of carrying out innovation and experimentation initiatives in the area of VET. On average, 75% of IVET students study in public and publicly funded education institutions.

Public funds for the financing of education are provided mainly by MoEFP and regional education authorities. The quantity for each region is fixed through a multilateral agreement and guarantees solidarity between territories. Funds allocated for vocational training for employment come mainly from the state budget, through the training levy that all private companies must pay as part of the Social Security contribution.

2. Non-member States and Non-European Countries

The VET systems including governance and funding aspects of the ETF partner-countries are presented and analysed in details in numerous publications of ETF which are freely available on its web-site, particularly at ETF Open Space[26]. Therefore, here we refrain from describing the cases of the above countries, confining to a short summary only.

Compared with the cases presented above, the VET governance in most of the ETF partner-countries is more centralised and the regional component is rather weak or even non-existent. In the majority of these countries, the regional and local authorities have almost no administrative functions in the field of VET. This is mainly due to relatively small size of many countries but also is inherited as a tradition from the past.

Involvement of the social partners, specifically in the decision-making process, is extremely limited and their participation has chiefly a consultative nature. Thus, the main decision-making power belongs predominantly to the governments and is executed *via* corresponding ministries, mainly the ministries responsible for education (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, etc.). Only in Algeria, there is a ministry responsible solely for VET – Ministry of Vocational Education and Training.

The Ministry of Labour (in different countries – Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, etc.), the Ministry of Economy (or Ministry of Finance and Economy), as well as some line ministries are directly involved in the VET governance with a different scope of authorities.

From the administrative point of view, the public VET institutions are mainly subordinated to the Ministry of Education. Particularly, in Algeria, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine, all or almost all VET institution are under the jurisdiction of the ministry responsible for education. In these countries, only 1 to 3 public VET providers belong to other governmental structures such as Ministry of Social Policy and Ministry of Energy and Coal Industry in

[26] https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/etf-open-space.

Ukraine, Ministry of Interior and the Department of Civil Aviation in Armenia, or to the local authorities (Kyiv Regional Council in Ukraine).

In Jordan and Israel, a considerable number of VET institutions are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Labour. In Azerbaijan (like in Moldova) a large group of colleges is subordinated to the Ministry of Health, but in this country there are also institutions under the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, too. Albania is a specific case, where all public VET institutions belongs to the Ministry of Finance and Economy.

The summary of the public VET providers' subordination to different governance bodies in a number of selected ETF partner-countries, is presented in the Table 21.

TABLE 1. SUBORDINATION OF THE PUBLIC VET INSTITUTIONS IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

Authority \ Country	Algeria	Albania	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Georgia	Israel	Jordan	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Moldova	Montenegro	North Macedonia	Serbia	Ukraine
Ministry of Vocational Education and Training	◎															
Ministry of Education (and Science)				⊙	◎	◎		⊙	⊙	◎	◎	⊙	◎	◎	◎	◎
Ministry of Culture (and Tourism)			◎	•			◎									
Ministry of (Youth) and Sports				•												
Ministry of Health				○								○				
Ministry of Labour and/or Social Policy								○	○							•
Ministry of Agriculture												○				
Ministry of Finance and Economy		◎														
Other line Ministries and Governmental Agencies			•									•				•
Regional/local Authorities																•

Legend: ◎ - all or overwhelming majority; ⊙ - majority; ○ - several or minority; • - a few (1-3)

Source: ETF publications[27].

In addition, particularly interesting cases of three non-European countries, i.e. Republic of Korea, Singapore and Australia, are presented below as adapted extracts from the UNESCO-UNEVOC country publications[28].

[27] https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications.
[28] https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/TVET+Country+Profiles/lang=en/sort=reg.

2.1. Korea[29]

The formal TVET system in the Republic of Korea has three levels:

- Vocational and Technical Education offered at the upper secondary level (ISCED 3), with duration of 3 years. Graduates are able to continue their education in the vocational colleges at the post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4) and universities and polytechnic colleges (four-year programmes);
- TVET at the post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4) provided by Colleges and polytechnic colleges, with duration of 2-3 years. Graduates are able to go to universities at the tertiary level (ISCED 5);
- TVET provided by Universities and polytechnics at the tertiary level (ISCED 5), with duration from 3 months to 1 year for non-degree courses, or 2 years for industrial degree and associate degree courses.

Vocational education is generally taught in schools, whereas vocational training is based on programmes offered through the employment insurance fund and public or private training institutes. There are six types of VET providers in the country: Specialized Vocational High Schools (495), Meister High Schools (50), and Vocational Colleges (137) acting under the Ministry of ***Ministry of Education, Science and Technology*** (MoEST); and Polytechnic Colleges (34), HRD Centres of the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry (8), and Vocational Training Centres of Korea Employment Agency for Disabled (8) acting under the ***Ministry of Employment and Labour*** (MoEL).

MoEST is mainly responsible for vocational education. Under the Ministry, Human Resource and Competency Policy Division, Lifelong Education Policy Division, Career Education Policy Division, and Secondary Vocational Education Policy Division under the Lifelong and Vocational Education Bureau, are in charge of different aspects of VET.

The ***Korean Council for University College Education*** is in charge of coordinating and managing the vocational colleges and research.

MoEL governs vocational training. Under this Ministry, Skills Development Policy Division, Human Resource Development Division, and Skills Development Assessment Division under the Skills Development Policy Bureau of Employment Policy Office, are in charge of coordinating vocational training.

In the private sector, vocational training is provided through training facilities based on the Act on the Vocational Competency Development of Workers.

The ***Human Resources Development Service*** of Korea under MoEL, is in charge of implementing skills development policies. These policies cover lifelong vocational competence development, national qualification examination, foreign employment support, overseas employment, and skills competitions.

The ***Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education and Training*** (KRIVET) and the Korea Labour Institute (KLI) are responsible for conducting research related to vocational education and training. KRIVET also conducts research on qualification frameworks, development and provision of

[29] Adapted extract from: TVET Country Profiles. Republic of Korea. UNESCO-UNEVOC, November 2018. https://unevoc.unesco.org/wtdb/worldtvetdatabase_kor_en.pdf.

TVET programmes, management of qualifications, assessment of TVET institutes and courses, and the provision of career information and counselling.

The sources of VET financing are the public funds from MoEL, line ministries and municipal governments, as well as private sector contribution made through the Employment Insurance which is obligatory for all companies (the amount depends on the total volume of wages and the company size).

Public funding of the vocational colleges is relatively limited as more than 90% of them are private and the government prefers to focus on the support to the public sector VET providers. Institutions of this type are mainly funded by the students and companies

Training for the unemployed is supported by training account programme (paid by the government and private sector). For some professions, trainees are required to make a financial contribution for their own training while for specific industries selected by the government, training fees are exempted, transportation and accommodation expenses covered, and the trainees receive training benefits.

2.2. Singapore[30]

The formal TVET system in Singapore consists of:

- Technical courses initially offered at the secondary education level (ISCED 2 and 3), with duration of 4 years. Graduates can advance on to courses taught in the Institute of Technical Education or move to the Normal (Academic) track.
- TVET programmes are also are provided at the post-secondary non-tertiary education level (ISCED 4), with duration of 2-3 years. Graduates can be enrolled in Polytechnics;
- TVET programmes at tertiary level at Polytechnics (ISCED 5-8) which offer a wide range of courses that equips students with industry-relevant skills for such fields as engineering, applied sciences and biotechnology, ICT, health sciences, early childhood education, business studies, accountancy, social sciences, mass communications, and digital media. Graduates may be considered for admission to the universities based on their diploma qualifications.

The ***National Manpower Council*** comprising the ***Ministry of Trade and Industry***, the Ministry of Manpower and the ***Ministry of Education*** (MoE), is responsible for national skills manpower planning and training. MoE oversees policy implementations introduced by ***SkillsFuture Singapore*** (SSG).

The SSG drives and coordinates implementation of the national SkillsFuture movement[31]. The SSG Board provides guidance and advice to the SSG Management on all matters under the SSG competency, including its policy, regulatory and promotional roles. It also reviews and approves the strategic plans and budgets of SSG. The Board members come from diverse backgrounds such as the unions, the private and public sectors.

The ***Workforce Singapore*** (WSG) oversees the transformation of the local workforce and industry to meet ongoing economic challenges. WSG promotes the development, competitiveness, inclusiveness, and employability of all levels of the workforce.

MoE provides development and recurrent funds to all educational institutions including TVET institutions like the Institute of Technical Education and the five Polytechnics. The total amount of

[30] Adapted extract from: TVET Country Profiles. Singapore. UNESCO-UNEVOC, may 2020. https://unevoc.unesco.org/pub/tvet_country_profile_-_singapore_revised_may_2020_final.pdf.
[31] For more information on SSG, see: https://www.skillsfuture.sg.

development funds fluctuates according to the yearly needs of the respective institutions. These needs vary greatly depending on type and level of education. However, the general trend is that the expenditures of TVET institutions, as well as the expenditures per student, are continuously increasing.

In general, trainees enrolled in TVET courses are obliged to pay fees. Under certain programmes, courses at Institutes of Higher Learning will be subsidised up to 70% of the course fees for Singaporeans and Permanent Residents. The remainder net fee can be paid through the SkillsFuture Credit, a government- supported initiative that supports individuals in their pursuit of Lifelong learning.

2.3. Australia[32]

TEVT in Australia is organised at 5 levels:

- Certificate I and Certificate II programmes offered at the lower secondary level (ISCED 2);
- Certificate III courses offered at the upper secondary level (ISCED 3);
- Certificate IV programmes offered at the post-secondary non-tertiary level (ISCED 4);
- The Vocational education degree offered at the tertiary level (ISCED 5);
- The Diploma, Advanced Diploma and Associate Degree offered at the tertiary level (ISCED 5).

The VET sector is organised around strong partnerships between governments, VET institutions and industry representative bodies. The ***Australian Government Department of Education and Training*** (national department), ***State*** and ***Territory Governments*** are responsible for the development of VET policies.

At the national level, Australia's VET system is led by a ***Council*** made up of Australian state and territory government ministers responsible for industry and skills. The private sector and industry also play a leading role in the VET system to ensure the sector drives improvements in productivity and competitiveness across the economy. To this end, the ***Council of Australian Governments*** (COAG) and the ***Industry and Skills Council*** (AISC) provide leadership and direction for the sector. The AISC provides advice to ensure training in each industry meets the needs of that industry's employers. In addition, a number of new ***Service Skills Organizations*** (SSOs) have been established supported by Industry Reference Committees (IRCs) to oversee the development of industry Training Packages.

The Australian Government Department of Education and Training (national department) and State Government Education Departments are responsible for the financing of formal and non-formal VET. However, companies and individuals also contribute to the cost of training. Companies contribute by purchasing training for their employees.

VET in the formal education system is not legally free. Students contribute through the payment of course and administrative fees. Some students pay all their fees without receiving any government subsidies. Actual training purchasing decisions are made by governments usually through the provision of skills in demand lists indicating the priority areas for training provision and indicative costs for courses.

[32] Adapted extract from: TVET Country Profiles. Australia. UNESCO-UNEVOC, November 2018. https://unevoc.unesco.org/wtdb/worldtvetdatabase_aus_en.pdf.

ANNEX 14. INDICATIVE LIST OF CRITERIA FOR SELECTING VET INSTITUTIONS FOR REORGANISATION (MERGER OR CLOSURE)

I. Socio-economic profile of the municipality/district and selection of the sector(s) of specialisation

1. If the municipality/district has positive ***demographic trends***, particularly in terms of VET-aged population as potential VET students (*indicators for the last 5 years*)?

1.1. Population dynamics by age groups

1.2. Migration dynamics and structure by age groups

1.3. Urbanisation (share of urban and rural population)

2. If the municipality/district demonstrates positive *economic trends*? (*indicators for the last 5 years*)

2.1. Share of regional GDP vs national

2.2. Gross Regional Product per capita (factual prices)

2.3. Gross Value Added in constant prices

2.4. Business activity (number of active legal entities (enterprises) by sectors, out of which the share of profitable enterprises)

2.5. Production rates (volume of realised industrial production and agricultural production rates)

2.6. Export-import flows, and export volume per capita

2.7. Capital Investments:

- Capital investments rates,
- Direct foreign investment (joint-stock capital) rates
- Capital investments volume per capita (accumulated from beginning of year)
- Direct foreign investment volume per capita (accumulated from beginning of year)

2.8. Innovations (share of industrial enterprises which introduced innovation in the total number of enterprises)

3. If the municipality/district demonstrates positive *employment trends*? (*indicators for the last 5 years*)

3.1. Economic activity rate and structure by educational attainment levels and age groups

3.2. Employment rate and structure by educational attainment levels and age groups

3.3. Unemployment rate and structure by educational attainment levels and age groups

3.4. Economic non-activity rate and structure by educational attainment levels and age groups

3.5. Share of those employed in non-formal economy

3.6. Long-term unemployment (registered unemployed with job searching duration over 6 and/or 12 months) rate

3.7. Inter-municipal (inter-district) employment mobility (share of those employed in others municipalities/districts)

3.8. Partial employment (share of those employed in involuntary part-time employment in the total number of full-time employees)

3.9. Number of vacancies, including for those with VET, offered average wages

3.10. Wages:

- Average wages, including of those with VET
- The share of employees whose wages are credited above the minimum wage
- Wage arrears (the share of unpaid wages in the wage fund)

4. **The main sector(s) of economy of the municipality/district** (indicators for the last 5 years, for every selected sector)

4.1. Share of the sector(s) in the region GDP

4.2. Production rates

4.3. Share in total capital investments in the municipality/district (structure of direct foreign investment; structure of capital investments)

4.4. Number of employed in the sector(s) and their share as % of total employed in the municipality/district, incl. those with VET

4.5. Unemployment rate among those related to the sector(s)

4.6. Long-term unemployment among those related to the sector(s)

4.7. Share of unemployed related to the sector(s) as % of total unemployed

4.8. Number of vacancies and their share in the total number of vacancies in the municipality/district, incl. for those with VET

4.9. Average wages, including for those with VET

4.10. Existence of municipality/district development plan and reference to the sector(s)

II. Institutional characteristics

5. **If the *profile of the institution* is relevant to the main sector(s)?**

5.1. Professions (qualifications) being taught in the institution presently

5.2. Professions (qualifications) which the institution plans to teach in the future

6. **If the institution has *proper facilities*?**

6.1. Land and its use

6.2. Training buildings (number, surfaces, how rational are organised) and their use (how effectively and efficiently are used)

6.3. Effectiveness of the building(s) – useful area, running cost (utilities)?

6.4. Auxiliary facilities, e.g. canteen, sports ground (field), sports hall, garage, medical station, etc.

6.5. Existence of dormitory, guest house, other similar facilities

6.6. Physical conditions of the buildings

6.7. Situation with the training workshops, laboratories, equipment related to the sector

6.8. Situation with the IT and their use in the management and training process (e-library, e-learning, etc.)

6.9. Availability of quality internet in the institution. If not, availability of quality internet in the locality

6.10. Estimation of investments to be necessary

7. **If *management* of institution is effective?**

7.1. Effectiveness of the Administrative and Teachers' Councils

7.2. Existence of Strategic development (business) plan (SDP)

7.3. Rate of the SDP implementation

7.4. Capacities of the managers

7.5. Economic (financial) efficiency of the institution

8. **If the institution has necessary *pedagogic staff* (teachers and master-trainers), specifically those related to the sector (quantity and quality)?**

8.1. Composition of the pedagogic staff and its relevance to the qualifications to be taught

8.2. Competences of the pedagogic staff:

- years of experience
- participation in trainings, specifically in enterprises;
- attestation passed
- ICT skills, etc.

8.3. Existence and effectively functioning of the (pedagogic) staff appraisal system (SAS)

9. If the institution demonstrates positive dynamics (or at least stable number) of ***applicants, students, graduates*** and their job placement and if provides ***career development*** services?

9.1. Dynamics of applicants and students
9.2. Drop-out and graduation rates
9.3. Job placement rates of the graduates, specifically those related to the main sector(s)
9.4. Existence of graduates tracing mechanism
9.5. Existence and effective functioning of the students and graduates career development service

10. If the institution is equipped with necessary *methodological and didactic materials*?

10.1. Existence of modern curricula and programmes (modules) developed with participation of employers
10.2. Existence of necessary methodological and didactic materials

11. If a quality assurance system is applied to the institution

11.1. Existence and effective functioning of internal quality assurance system
11.2. Results of the institution external quality assessment (attestation)

12. What is the institution's *funding* history?

12.1. Dynamics of funding during the last 5 years
12.2. Own income generation – mechanisms, sources and amounts

13. The general image of the institution

13.1. Previous achievements
13.2. Reputation among municipality/district) population (particularly youth), among partners (specifically employers of the municipality/district).
13.3. Awards, certificates of appreciation, feedback from the population and the partners/employers in terms of satisfaction by the institution (can be obtained via independent surveys)

III. Location, territorial coverage and cooperation

14. What is the *role and place of the institution* in the regional and national VET system?

14.1. Cooperation (links) of the institution with other VET providers in the municipality/district (with whom and how)
14.2. Cooperation (links) of the institution with other municipality/district VET providers having similar profile (with whom and how)
14.3. Physical availability of the institution for the possible partner VET providers' staffs and students (distance, quality of roads and/or means of transportation)

15. How does the institution *cooperate with the sector(s)*?

15.1. Cooperation (links) of the institution with the companies of the sector, in the municipality/district and beyond it (with whom and how)
15.2. Participation of the sector(s) companies in defining the "state order" and in different aspects of the institution's educational activities, such as designing the education content, teaching process, formative and summative assessment of the students and graduates, teachers training
15.3. Effectiveness of the institution's students practical training in the companies
15.4. Physical availability of the possible partner companies for the institution's staffs and students (distance, quality of roads and/or means of transportation)

16. Who are the *stakeholders* who could cooperate with the institution?

16.1. Main local / sectoral stakeholders, including those who expressed willingness to cooperate and the possible forms of cooperation
16.2. Out of them, the companies which clearly expressed their demand in the specialists prepared by the institution
16.3. Motivation and capability of the above companies to invest in the development of the institution
16.4. Readiness of the municipality/district administration to cooperate with, and invest to the institution
16.5. Cooperation (links) with other (non-VET) educational institutions, NGOs, non-commercial, international, cultural, scientific and other organisations of the region
16.6. International links and cooperation

ANNEX 15. INDICATIVE LIST OF FUNCTIONS OF THE PUBLIC VET INSTITUTION EXECUTIVE

1) Without a power of attorney, **acts on behalf of the Institution,** represents the Institution's interests and concludes bargains;
2) Ensures the development and implementation of the Institution's **Strategic Development Plan** and Action plans;
3) Manages the **Institution's property**, including financial resources, according with the law, Founder's and the Board's decisions and the Institution's Statute;
4) **Appoints and dismisses the staff** members of the Institution, managers of its representations and branches, applies them reward measures and imposes disciplinary sanctions;
5) Issues **power of attorney** on behalf of the Institution, including power of attorney with the right of re-authorisation;
6) Opens **bank accounts**;
7) Performs **distribution of labour** among his/her Deputies;
8) Submits proposals on the rates of **wages, bonuses and other remunerations** of the staff members, as well as on **stipends, scholarships** and other allowances for the students and learners, to the Board's approval;
9) Establishes the necessary conditions for the Institution's **staff professional advancement**;
10) Supervises the **education content** in the Institution, the quality of mastering the learning outcomes by the students and learners, their behaviour, and the organisation of other training activities;
11) Ensures establishment and effective functioning of the internal **quality assurance** system in the Institution;
12) Initiates **external monitoring** of the quality of education and/or educational activities of the Institution, institutional **audit** and/or public **accreditation** of the Institution;
13) Ensures that internal **labour discipline** rules, sanitary norms, occupational safety and security techniques are met;
14) Promotes, and creates conditions for, the activities of **self-governing** bodies of the Institution;
15) **Reports** to the Founder and the Board;
16) Within the limits of his/her authority issues **orders, directives and instruction** mandatory for the Institution and its subdivisions, and supervises their implementation;
17) Exercises **other powers** reserved for the Institution's jurisdiction by the legislation, which are not reserved to the Founder, the Board or other bodies of the Institution.