

## **RESTART IN EDUCATION**

*Reforming the governance of general education in the Republic of Moldova*

# **Moldova – Education governance reform Setting up Regional Education Agencies**

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**Policy Lab — Education Reforms in the Eastern Partnership: Shared Lessons, Shared Future**

EaP Case Study 2 · Education governance reform

24–25 June 2026 · Stresa, Italy · Organised under the EU-funded ETF–SER programme

**Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova**

# Presentation roadmap



## 1 Why reform?

The governance problem identified through the Rapid Education Diagnosis (RED)



## 2 Rationale for REAs

Why a new model is needed and what it is expected to solve



## 3 Design of the reform

Functions, relationships, staffing, financing and accountability



## 4 Implementation

Phasing, legislation, capacity, risks and engagement



## 5 Expected results

How success is measured and the long-term vision

# A governance reform anchored in the national agenda



## Strategy “Education 2030”

The reform implements the strategy's priorities: good governance, network efficiency, infrastructure modernisation and stronger managerial capacity.



## EU modernisation & integration

Compatible with European standards for public-service administration, quality and equity of education — while respecting local autonomy and minority rights.



## Local public-administration reform

Complementary to territorial consolidation: right-sizing administrative structures, strengthening local authorities and bringing decisions closer to citizens.



## The “Restart” logic, already applied

Same rationale as the Restart reform in the social sector and the transfer of district hospitals to the Ministry of Health: align responsibility with the tools to act.

# The public problem: three structural weaknesses



## Problem 1

### Fragmented responsibility

The Ministry sets policy, but operational management runs through district bodies (OLSDI) under second-level local authorities. Responsibility for results is detached from the tools to manage.



## Problem 2

### Weak, unequal capacity

Most district education bodies have limited and uneven administrative capacity — vacant posts, uncompetitive pay and patchy digitalisation.



## Problem 3

### Territorial inequality

The same national policies produce different results by district; a pupil's outcomes depend too much on where they study.

# The problem in numbers

**-47%**

**pupils since 2000**

629k → 333k; a further -46% projected by 2040

**67% vs 99%**

**gymnasium pass rate**

Fell from ~98.9% (2023) to 67.4% (2025) once external monitoring was introduced

**6.64 → 7.61**

**BAC average by district**

Same exams, very different results across territories

**18.5%**

**schools on e-payments**

Only 217 of 1,172 schools; 10 districts with none — uneven digitalisation

**~30%**

**posts unfilled**

District bodies run at ~70% staffing; some as low as 25%

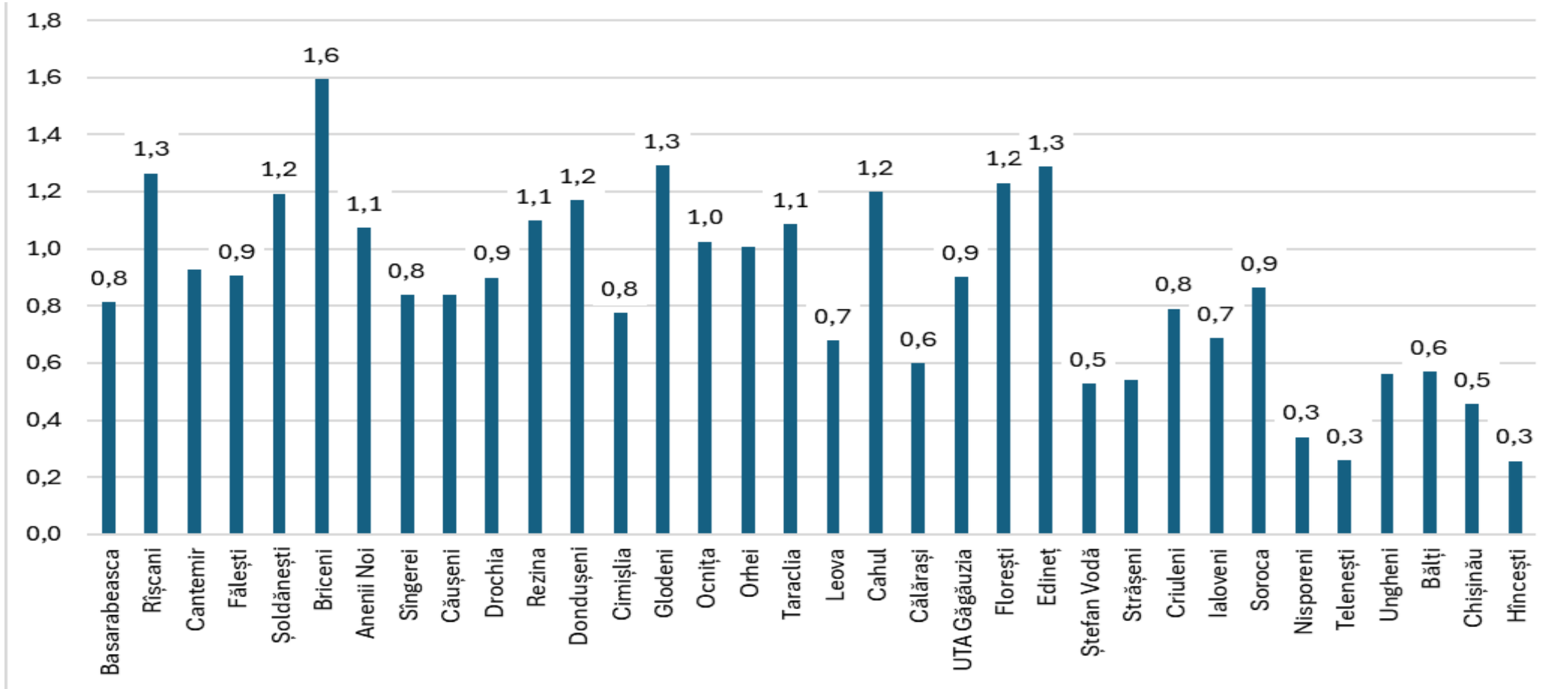
**5 / 35**

**districts with funding rules**

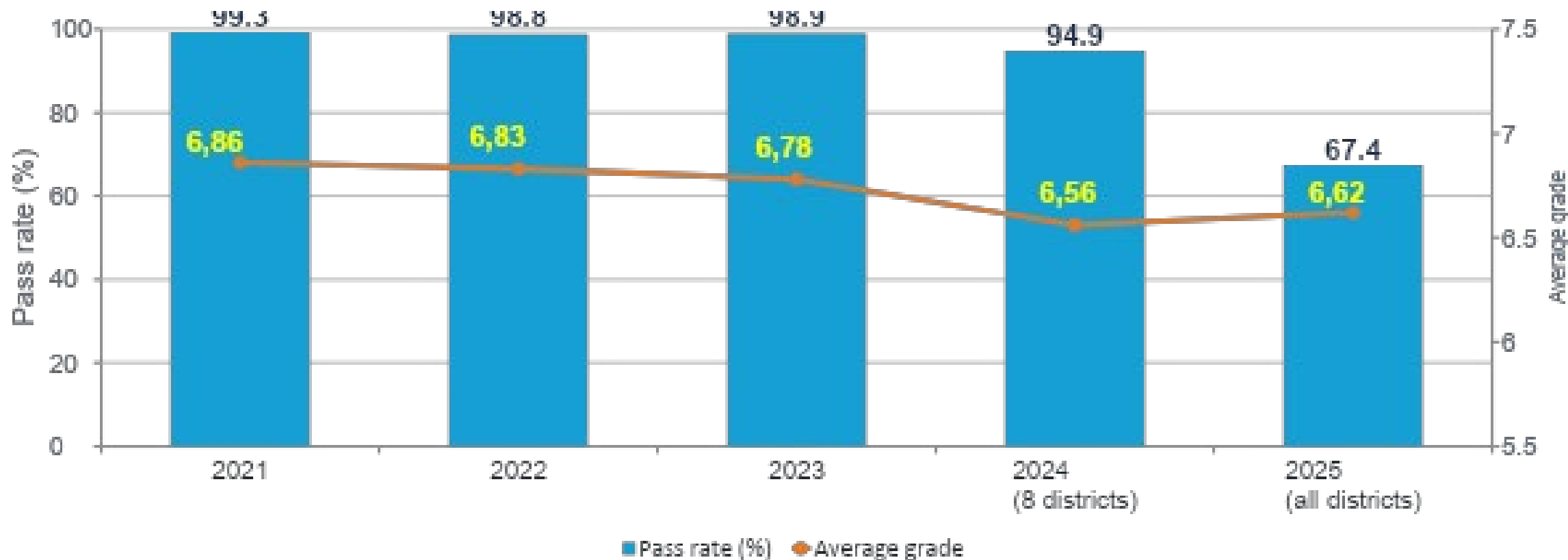
Only 5 of 35 district bodies have rules for allocating their budget share

# Internal vs external assessment gap, by district (2025)

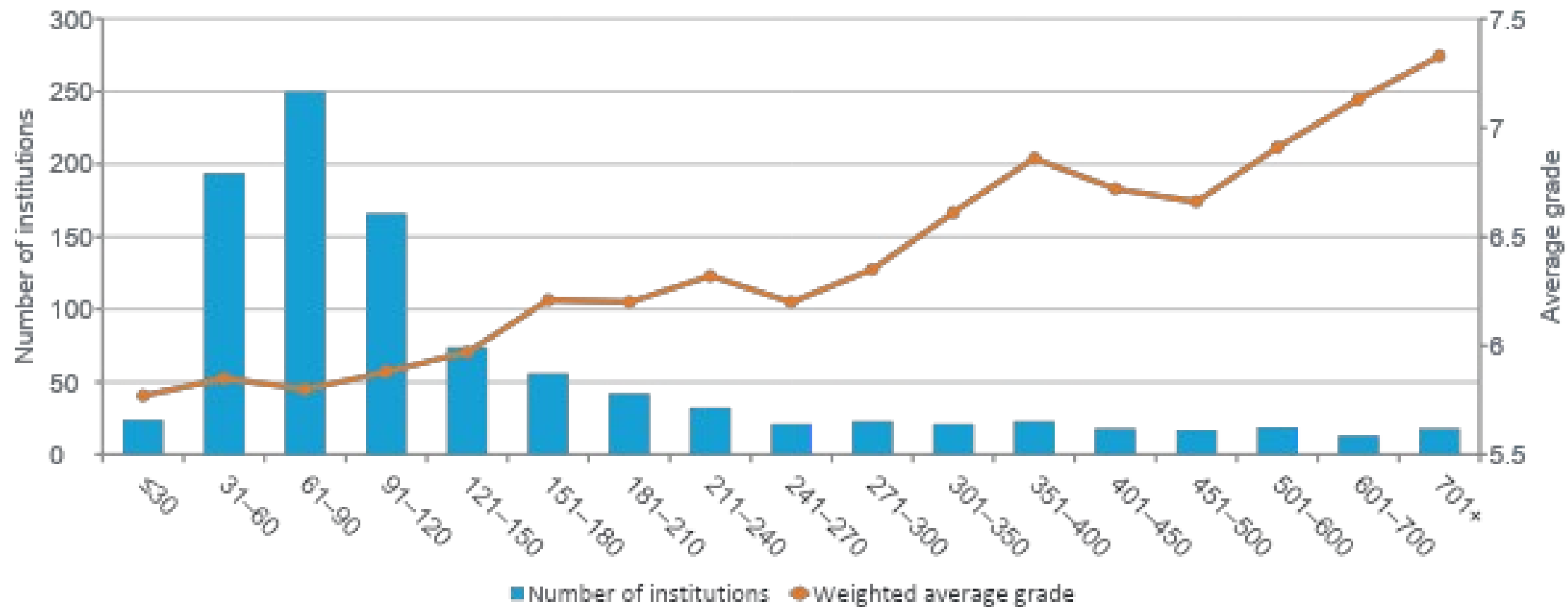
Difference between internal averages (grades earned during the lyceum years) and external results (national Bacculaureate), theoretical lyceums, 2025 cohort. A larger gap signals weaker assessment integrity.



# Gymnasium exam: pass rate and average grade, 2021–2025

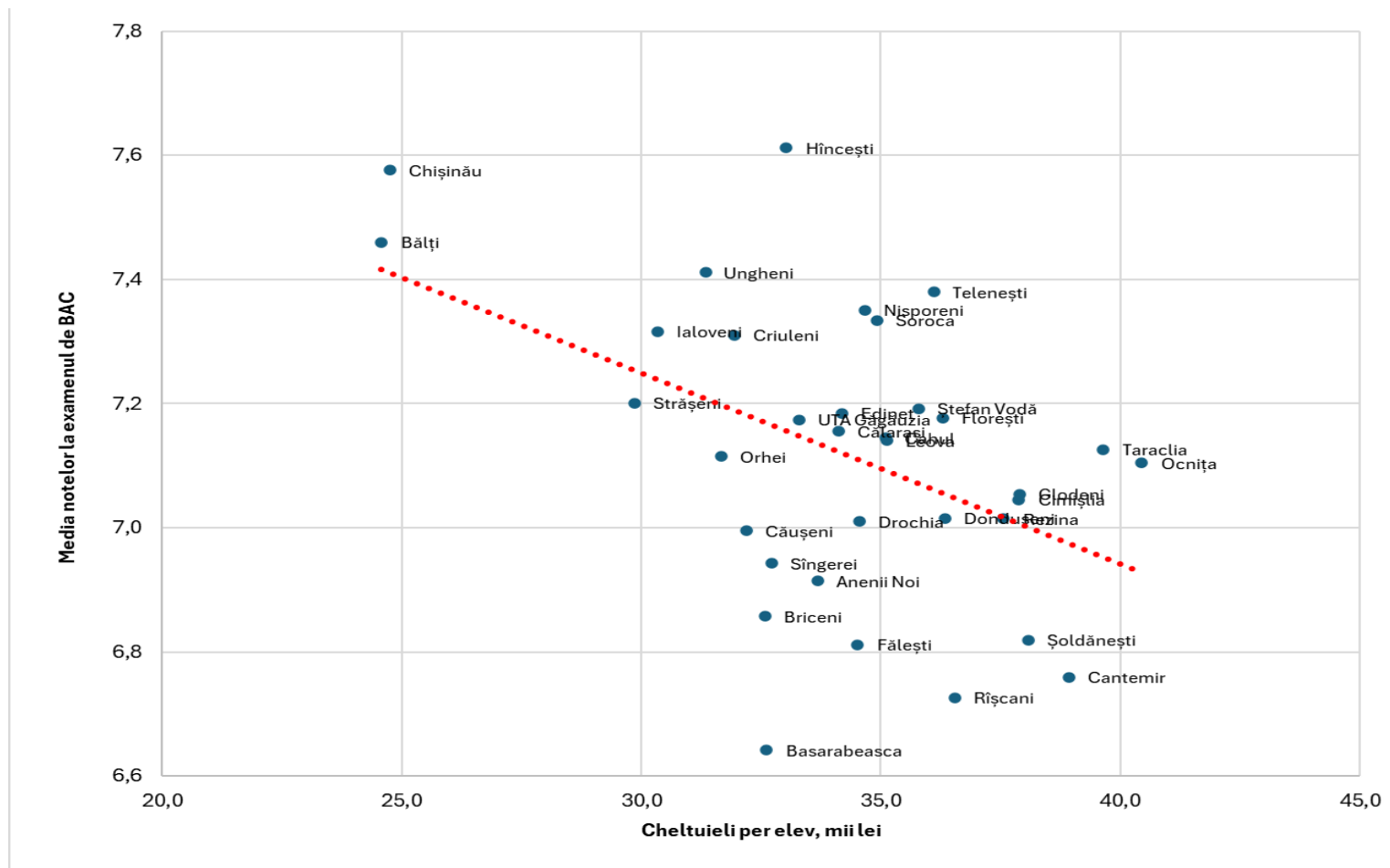


# School size vs gymnasium exam average grade



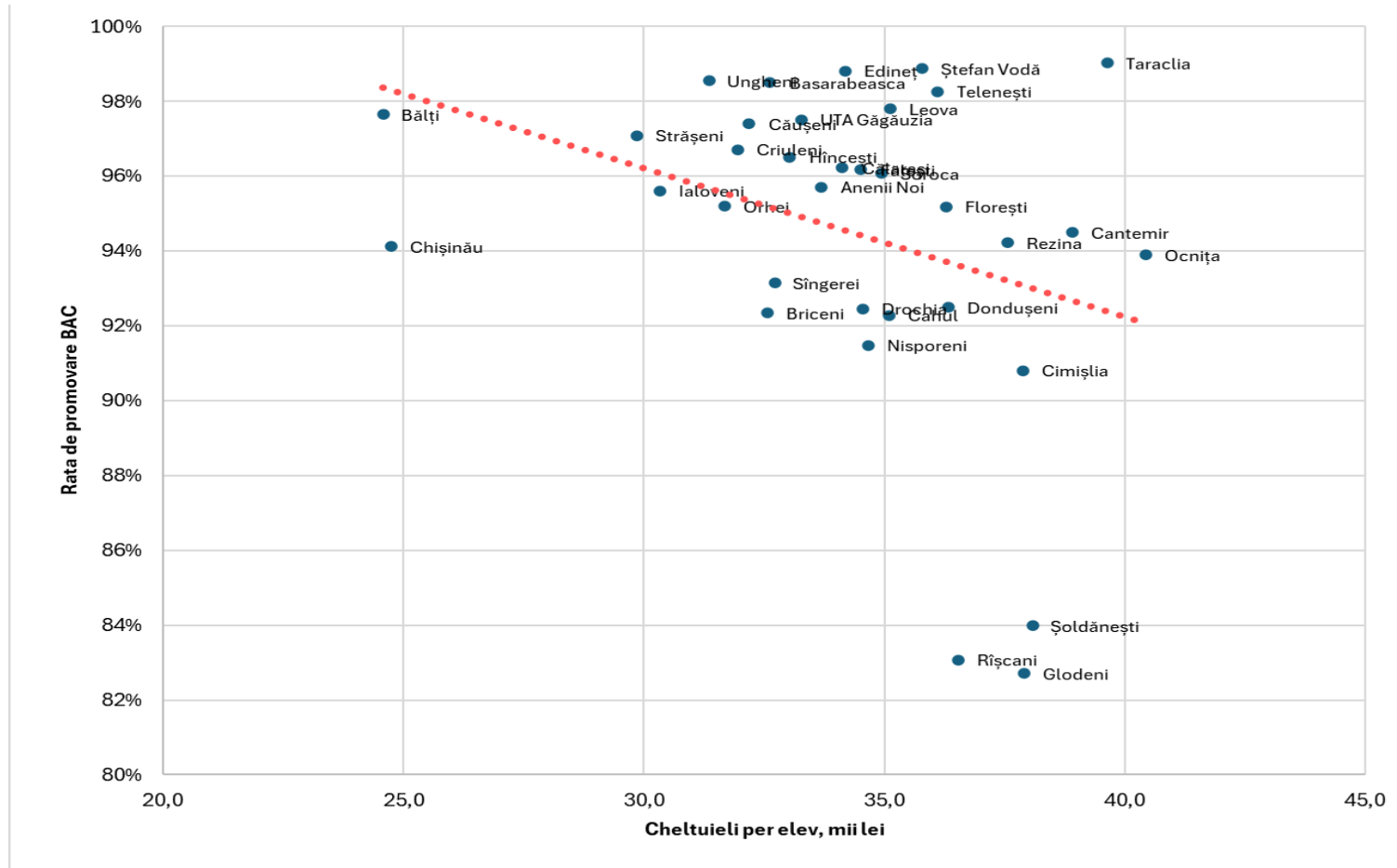
# Spending per pupil vs Bacalaureate average (2025)

Each point is a district. X-axis: spending per pupil (thousand MDL); Y-axis: average BAC grade; red dotted line: trend; national average grade 7.35.

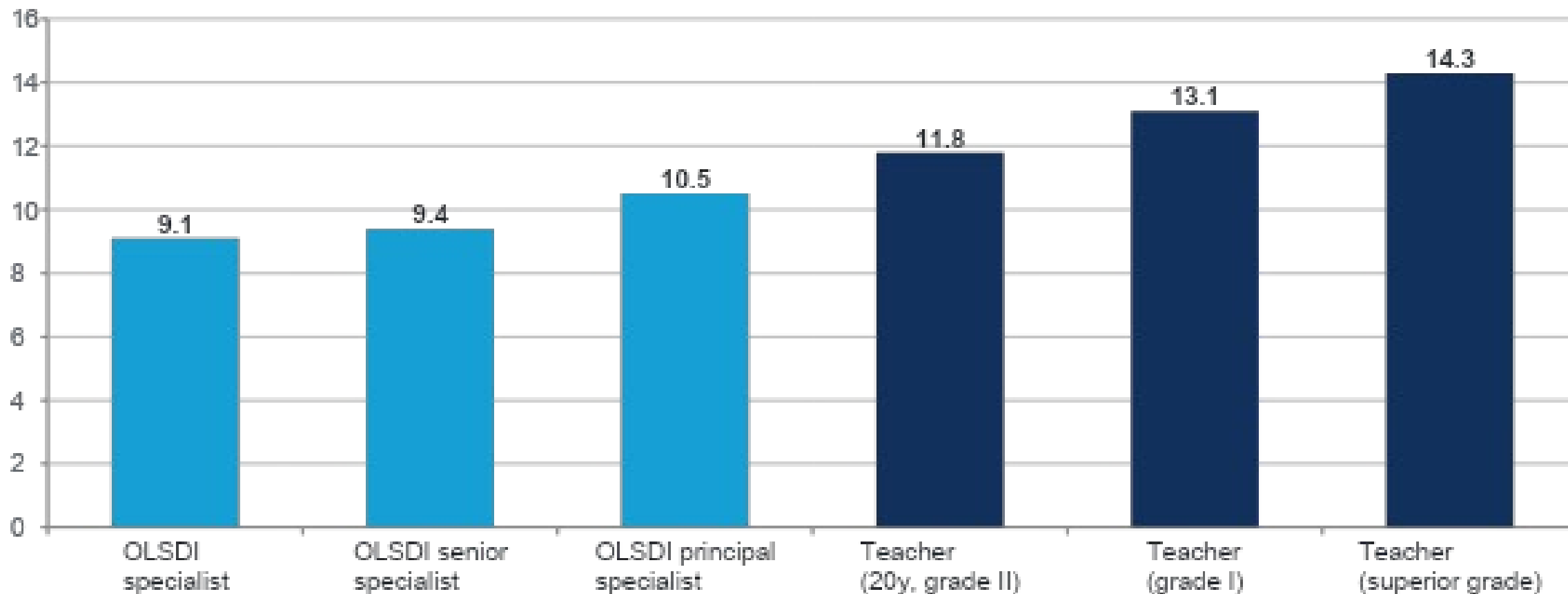


# Spending per pupil vs Bacalaureate pass rate (2025)

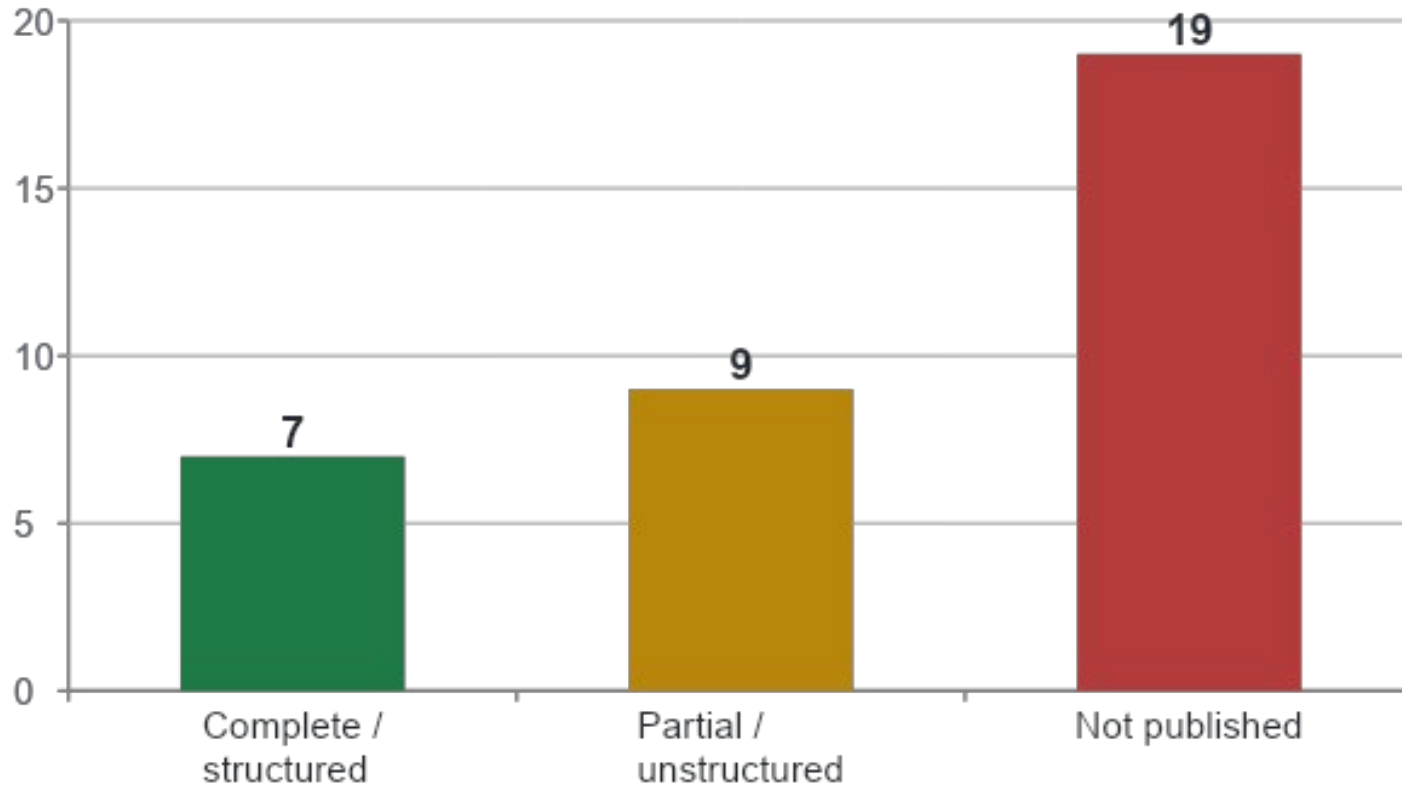
Each point is a district. X-axis: spending per pupil (thousand MDL); Y-axis: BAC pass rate; red dotted line: trend.



## District-body specialist pay vs teacher pay



# Financial transparency of district education bodies



**More than half of district bodies** publish no budget information at all.

**Only 7 of 35** publish complete, structured budget documents; another 9 only partial and unstructured.

# Who does what today — and where the gap is



## Ministry of Education & Research

Develops policy, standards, the National Curriculum, methodologies and the financing formula; monitors and evaluates the system.



## District education bodies (OLSDI)

Under second-level local authorities. Run day-to-day management of schools, networks, HR, reporting — with very unequal resources.



## Local governments (LPA I & II)

Founders of institutions; finance and develop infrastructure and ensure operating conditions.



## Schools

Institutional management and quality assurance, through school directors.

**The gap:** the Ministry has no strong territorial arm of its own for monitoring, intervention and direct accountability — so national policy is implemented unevenly.

## The current model: competences and built-in dysfunctions

| Level / actor                                     | Current dominant role  | Key dysfunction  | Effect on the system  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Ministry of Education &amp; Research (MER)</b> | Develops policies, norms and regulations and monitors the national system                    | Has no direct managerial control over the territorial general-education network  | National policies are implemented unevenly and are hard to correct quickly  |
| <b>LPA II / district education bodies (OLSDÎ)</b> | Founds, administers, monitors and reconfigures the network of general-education institutions | Unequal capacity across districts; exposure to local political influence; no managerial standardisation; own objectives, not always aligned with national ones | Large differences between administrative-territorial units in organisation, evaluation, resources and results     |
| <b>LPA I (local authorities)</b>                  | Manages early education and local educational infrastructure                                 | Insufficiently clarified relationship with methodical coordination and systemic planning   | Weak continuity between early education and general education   |
| <b>Education institutions (schools)</b>           | Manage institutional activity in relation to the local founder                               | Dependent on very different territorial practices and decisions; occasionally affected by the misalignment of MER and LPA II visions                           | Unequal educational chances for pupils depending on district / locality; uneven implementation of public policies |

## Why a new governance model — three options weighed

| Policy option   | Main limitation   | Capacity to solve |
|---|---|-------------------|
| 1 · Keep the current model with minor adjustments         | Does not change the architecture that produces fragmentation            | <b>Low</b>        |
| 2 · Strengthen central coordination, no structural change | Adds control without transferring the actual management tools           | <b>Medium</b>     |
| <b>3 · New model through Regional Education Agencies</b>  | Requires a broader institutional transition and greater up-front effort | <b>High</b>       |



**Recommended:** establish REAs — the only option that rebuilds the chain between policy, territorial administration and accountability for results.

## What REAs are expected to deliver



### Better service delivery

Unified, professional territorial administration; organised free school transport; institutional support to schools.



### Stronger policy implementation

A short chain of command that aligns responsibility with management tools; standardised key processes of administration, evaluation and reporting.



### Improved efficiency

Strategic network planning; resources follow responsibility; savings reinvested in quality.



### Better support for schools

REAs become founder and superior authority; methodical coordination; less bureaucratic pressure and clearer rules for managers.

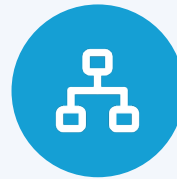
# Regional Education Agencies: status and core functions

**Legal status:** administrative authorities subordinated to the Ministry, with territorial subdivisions, established by Government decision and financed from the state budget.



## Founder & manager

Founder and manager of public primary, gymnasium, lyceum and special-education institutions in the assigned territory.



## Network organisation

Organises the school network, including school districts for primary/gymnasium — in consultation with local authorities.



## Coordination & support

Methodical coordination and support for early education (without taking over the founder role) and free transport for pupils and teachers in rural areas.

*REAs may also set the local component of the curriculum, within the limits of the law.*

## Who does what in the new model

| Segment / function                  | Ministry (MER)  | REA                               | LPA I                           | LPA II                          |
|-------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Primary, gymnasium, lyceum, special | Policy, approval, monitoring                            | <b>Founder &amp; management</b>   | Proposals & local support       | Proposals & local support       |
| Early education                     | Framework & standards                                   | Methodical coordination & support | <b>Founder &amp; management</b> | —                               |
| Extracurricular — local             | Framework   | —                                 | <b>Founder &amp; management</b> | —                               |
| Extracurricular — district          | Framework   | —                                 | —                               | <b>Founder &amp; management</b> |
| School districts (primary/gymn.)    | —   | <b>Sets, consulting LPA</b>       | Proposals                       | Proposals                       |
| Financing of REA-run schools        | <i>State budget → REA → school (direct allocations)</i> |                                   |                                 |                                 |

*UTA Gagauzia retains a distinct regime: its REA is created by, and subordinated to, the People's Assembly.*

# Principles of the reform and their implementation implications

| Principle  | Operational content  | Implementation implication   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Quality of education</b>                          | Any administrative or network change is justified only if it improves learning, management and educational conditions. | Reinvest savings in infrastructure, digitalisation, transport and human resources.                 |
| <b>Territorial equity</b>                            | Pupils must benefit from comparable standards of administration and quality, regardless of the territorial unit.       | Uniform application of policies; reduce unjustified differences between units.                     |
| <b>Clear accountability</b>                          | Whoever is responsible for a result must also hold the management tools needed.  | Clear delimitation of competences, coherent chain of command, no overlaps.                         |
| <b>Close access to early &amp; primary education</b> | The reform must protect proximity for young children, up to the reasonable limit.                                      | Keep access close where justified; organise school districts rationally.                           |
| <b>Protection of pupils &amp; families</b>           | Change cannot transfer disproportionate costs and risks onto beneficiaries.  | Transport, information, educational continuity and support for affected pupils.                    |
| <b>Protection of human resources</b>                 | Existing staff must be integrated, supported and used efficiently in the new model.                                    | Transition, transfer, re-employment, mobility and training measures.                               |
| <b>Respect for minority rights</b>                   | The model must be compatible with continuity of education in the language of instruction.                              | Design reorganisation and access to protect linguistic rights and the distinct regimes set by law. |

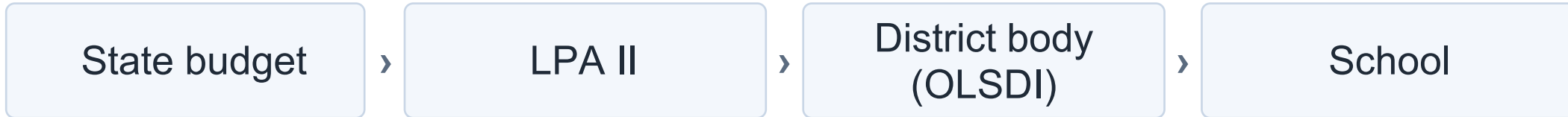
## Specific objectives and intended systemic effects

| Specific objective   | Intended systemic effect   |
|--|--|
| <b>Centralise and professionalise governance</b>               | Unified, standardised, results-oriented territorial administration |
| <b>Explicitly delimit competences</b>                          | Elimination of overlaps and of diffuse responsibility              |
| <b>Strategically develop the school network</b>                | Predictable adaptation to demographic and educational change       |
| <b>Reduce territorial disparities</b>                          | Uniform management and quality standards for all territorial units |
| <b>Adjust financing &amp; administrative capacity to needs</b> | More efficient and coherent use of public resources                |

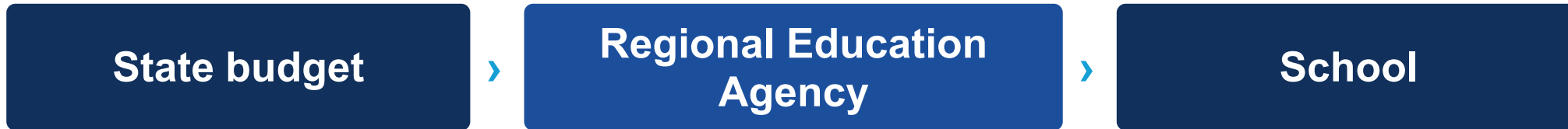
The five specific objectives form one coherent set: professionalised governance is the precondition; clear competences make it work; network development and reduced disparities are the system effects; adjusted financing ensures sustainability.

# Financing: a shorter, clearer chain

NOW — 4 links



PROPOSED — 3 links (direct allocations)



## Standard cost per pupil

Funding ensures state education standards; local authorities may top up from own funds.



## Patrimony stays local

Buildings and land remain public property of local units; transferred to REAs free of charge for use (commodatium).



## Resource follows responsibility

Coherence between competence and resource; more transparent, publicly assessable financing.

# People and accountability



## Human resources & staffing

- Built as territorial expertise institutions — not successors of the old directorates
- Clear professional profiles, competence requirements and performance indicators
- Competitive pay versus the labour market and advanced teaching careers
- Standardised, digitalised recruitment on a national platform; public competition archive
- Staff transfer and integration during transition



## Accountability & reporting

- Schools (primary–lyceum, special) report to the REA; early education to its founder
- Single financial and educational reporting system
- Periodic publication of performance indicators and dashboards
- Transparent selection and evaluation of management
- Coordination with external quality evaluation

# A phased, predictable transition



## Institutional & normative preparation

Establish REAs; approve structure, regulations and territorial delimitation; create the legal and administrative framework.

### Intended result

Creating the legal and administrative framework of the new architecture.



## Full operationalisation

Transfer functions, staff, assets and administrative processes; REAs become operational; the old model ends for transferred domains.

### Intended result

Effective functioning of REAs; the old model ends for the transferred domains.



## Consolidation (from 2027)

Management by objectives and indicators; digitalisation and standardisation of processes; a genuine culture of quality.

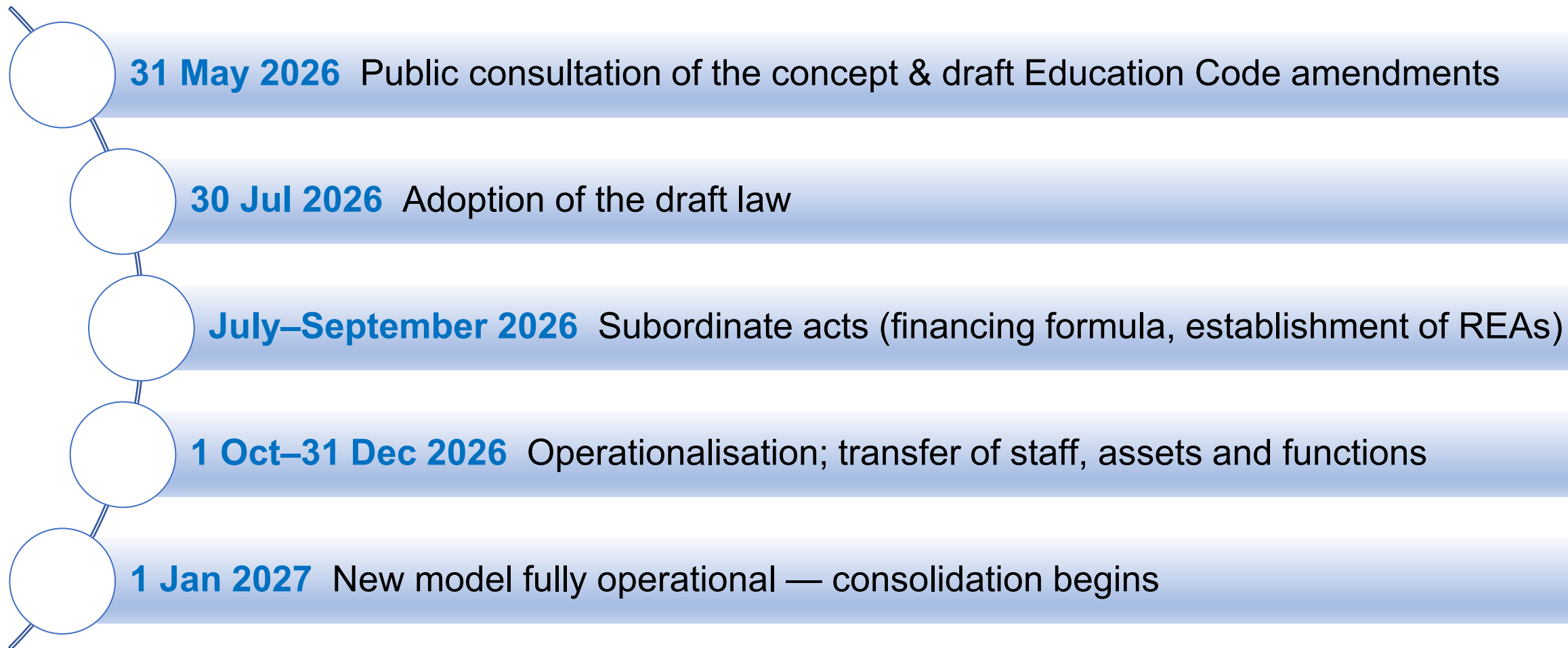
### Intended result

A mature, flexible and sustainable governance model — REAs dynamically adapted to demographic and institutional realities, uniform and predictable processes nationwide, data- and performance-based decisions, and consolidated administrative capacity for improving education quality.

## Anticipating challenges, managing change

| Challenge  | Management measures   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Delays caused by the complexity of the institutional reorganisation</b></p>                                    | <p>Detailed implementation plan with intermediate milestones; regular progress monitoring against the phased timeline</p>                       |
| <p><b>Insufficient capacity of the new Regional Education Agencies (REAs) to take on the delegated functions</b></p> | <p>Assess staffing and competence needs; capacity-building and training; methodological support from the Ministry throughout the transition</p> |
| <p><b>Loss of qualified staff and institutional expertise during reorganisation</b></p>                              | <p>Identify and retain key specialists; transparent staff transfer and integration; structured knowledge-transfer procedures</p>                |
| <p><b>Resistance to change among staff and stakeholders</b></p>  | <p>Comprehensive change-management plan; continuous communication and stakeholder consultation</p>  |
| <p><b>Negative public perception of the reform's goals and benefits</b></p>  | <p>Communication and public-awareness strategy; regular updates on reform progress</p>  |

## KEY DATES



# Legislation, capacity, and managing the risks

## KEY RISKS & MITIGATION



### Legislation & capacity

- Amend the Education Code: define the territorial body & REAs, delimit competences, set founders, financing, patrimony and a phased transition
- Government decisions on the financing formula and the establishment of REAs
- Professional profiles, competence requirements and performance indicators per domain
- Continuous training; digital tools and management dashboards

| Risk  | Mitigation   |
|---|--|
| Recreating weak staffing & uncompetitive pay  | Staffing matched to workload; competitive, standardised recruitment                  |
| Transferring powers without management change | Clear competence delimitation; single reporting; published indicators                |
| Proximity for young children; minority rights | Keep early-education access close; protect language of instruction & Gagauzia regime |

# Benefits for everyone in the system



## Pupils

Safer schools and better learning conditions; qualified teachers; zero tolerance for bullying; support for vulnerable children; no informal payments.



## Parents

Transparency in how schools work; rules applied equally to all; less dependence on informal relations; more trust.



## Teachers

A better-organised system with less bureaucracy; more support for development and career; focus on teaching quality and pupil progress.



## School managers

Clearer rules, fairer evaluation and more predictable decisions; less political and administrative pressure; common standards.



## Territorial staff

Professionalisation, clearer roles, stronger competences and more attractive, better-paid positions.

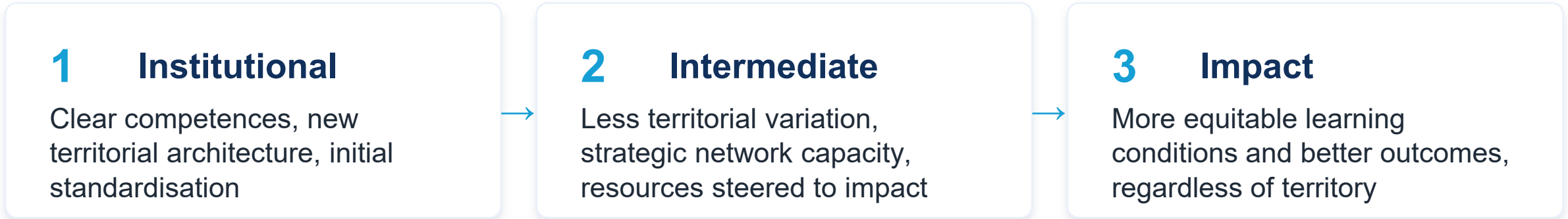


## The system

Less politicisation; professional territorial management; faster digitalisation; smarter use of data; a culture of quality and public accountability.

# Measuring success and the long-term vision

## HOW SUCCESS IS MEASURED — RESULTS BUILD IN SEQUENCE



### Long-term vision

A more equitable, coherent, professional and resilient general-education system — one that gives every pupil the same conditions regardless of territory, reduces territorial inequality, and turns public resources more effectively into learning outcomes and public trust.

## International benchmarking of the model

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Romania</b>          | Closest model — county directorates as deconcentrated ministerial services; inspection/quality moved to a separate national body. |
| <b>Portugal</b>         | AGSE as a single point of administration for resources — but shared tutelage risks keeping accountability ambiguous.              |
| <b>Slovenia</b>         | Centralised model with no regional tier; ministerial consent for appointing school directors.                                     |
| <b>Baltics / Poland</b> | Decentralisation to capable units plus territorial consolidation (Latvia 119→43) and strong national monitoring.                  |
| <b>Austria</b>          | Federal co-management of education authorities — limited relevance for Moldova's unitary state.                                   |



### Cross-cutting lessons

- One clearly identifiable authority to manage institutions
- A short, traceable financial chain
- National standards and external evaluation
- A retained local role for proximity

**Thank You for Your Attention!**

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