



# Annex I

## Description of the Action

### **Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All**

## CONTENT:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	77
II. SITUATION ANALYSIS AND RELEVANCE OF THE ACTION .....	1111
2.1. OVERALL BACKGROUND.....	1111
2.2. EU ENGAGEMENT .....	1515
2.3. INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE, DONOR COORDINATION AND SYNERGIES .....	1818
3.1. PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND KEY RESULTS .....	2323
3.1.1. Objectives .....	2323
3.1.2. Key Results .....	2323
3.1.3. Theory of Change.....	2424
3.2 IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH AND INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES .....	2626
IV. RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, LESSONS LEARNT AND INTERVENTIONS RATIONALE.....	3939
IV-A: UNICEF MOLDOVA RELEVANT EXPERIENCE .....	3939
IV-B: UNDP MOLDOVA RELEVANT EXPERIENCE .....	4343
4.1. Methodological Approaches .....	4545
V. SUSTAINABILITY .....	4848
VI. RISK LOG .....	5151
VII. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS.....	5252
Programme Management Structure .....	5353
VIII. MONITORING AND EVALUATION.....	5858
ANNEX B. THEORY OF CHANGE DIAGRAM .....	6769

## ACRONYMS

**AAC** - augmentative and alternative communication  
**ADA** - Austrian Development Cooperation  
**AA-DCFA** - Association Agreement Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area  
**AT** - Assistive Technologies  
**AWP** - Annual Work Plan  
**CA** - Contracting Authority  
**CFM** - Complaints and feedback mechanism  
**CFM** - Complaints and feedback mechanism  
**CPD** - Continuous Professional Development  
**EaP** - Eastern Partnership  
**ECE** - Early Childhood Education  
**ECW** - Education Cannot Wait  
**EIP** - Economic and Investment Plan  
**EMIS** - Education Management Information System  
**ESP** – Education Sector Plan  
**ESPIG** - Education Sector Programme Implementation Grant  
**FCDO** - Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office  
**FTA** - Future Technologies Activity  
**GA** - Grant Agent  
**GAP** - Government Action Plan  
**GIZ** - Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit  
**GPE** - Global Partnership for Education  
**HDI** - Human Development Index  
**ICF** - Internal Control Framework  
**ICT** - Information and Communication Technologies  
**IE** - Inclusive Education  
**IOM** - International Organization for Migration  
**IREWG** - Interagency Refugee Education Working Group

**JMP** - Joint Monitoring Programmes

**KAP** - Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices

**LPA** – Local Public Authorities

**LEG** - Local Education Group

**MCO** - Moldova Country Office

**MER** - Ministry of Education and Research

**MHPSS** - Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

**MSNA** - Multi-Sector Needs Assessment

**NEET** - Not in Education, Employment or Training

**NBS** - National Bureau of Statistics

**NIEL** - National Institute of Education and Leadership

**OECD** - Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

**OER** - Open Educational Resources

**PASs** - Services for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance

**PISA** - Programme for International Students Assessment

**PLHs** - Play and Learning Hubs

**RCPA** - Republican Center for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance

**ROM** - Results Oriented Monitoring

**SC** - Steering Committee

**SDGs** - Sustainable Development Goals

**SDC** - Swiss Development Cooperation

**SEN** - Special Education Needs

**SIDA** - Swedish International Development Agency

**STEEAM** - Science, Technology, Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Arts and Mathematics

**STEAM** - Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics

**STEM** - Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

**TAPs** - Technical and Administrative Provisions

**UN** - United Nations

**UNDAF** - United Nations Development Assistance Framework

**UNDP** - United Nations Development Programme

NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/449-040 - Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All

**UNFPA** - United Nations Population Fund

**UNESCO** - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**UNHCR** - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

**UNICEF** - United Nations Children's Fund

**VET** - Vocational Education and Training

**WB** - World Bank

IG

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

<b>Title of the Action:</b>	<b>Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All</b>
<b>Location(s) of the Action:</b>	Republic of Moldova
<b>Total duration of the Action (months):</b>	42 months
<b>Budget</b>	EUR 10 million (USD 10,817,100)
<b>Objectives of the Action</b>	<p><b><u>Overall Objective (Impact):</u></b></p> <p>Contribute to human capital development in the Republic of Moldova, improving quality and relevance of education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, for better matching the labour market demands.</p> <p><b><u>Specific Objectives (Outcomes):</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthen institutions and system for teachers' and school leaders' professional development and support the implementation of education policies to enhance quality of teaching and learning (Development Strategy "Education 2030" (DS-2030) General Objectives 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9)</li> <li>2. Improve equitable access for all children to quality education, promoting the development of an inclusive, digital, and resilient education system (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9)</li> <li>3. Upgrade learning environments through renovation of selected school infrastructures and facilitate the development of the 21st century skills, contributing to better education opportunities for pupils/students and improved efficiency of the school network (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 6 and 9)</li> </ol>
<b>Key outputs/results</b>	<p>The Action aims to achieve the following outputs:</p> <p><b>Outputs linked to Specific Objective 1:</b></p> <p>Output 1.1: The reconceptualization of the teachers' and school leaders' professional development system is supported through the newly established National Institute of Education and Leadership (NIEL) and assistance to the development of the normative framework regarding the continuous professional training of teachers, managers, and mentors (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 3, 5, 6, 9)</p> <p>Output 1.2: The revised continuous professional development - CPD package (in-service teacher training) is implemented nation-wide and validated (DS-2030, General</p>

	<p>Objective 3, 6), based on the EU policies<sup>1</sup> and best practices in the provision of tailored high quality development programmes, (DS-2030, General Objective 6, 7) and equipping the teaching workforce of the country with Science, Technology, Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Arts and Mathematics (STEEAM) education skills. (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 6)</p> <p>Output 1.3: Lifelong learning opportunities for adults are enhanced and promoted, equipping adults with indispensable digital skills, and support their empowerment in the digital age. (DS-2030, General Objective 7)</p> <p><b>Outputs linked to Specific Objective 2:</b></p> <p>Output 2.1: Improved preparedness of the education system including Republican Center for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance (RCPA) and rayons' Services for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance (PASs), to provide education services targeting children with disabilities and special education needs (SEN) (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 4, 5, 6, 9)</p> <p>Output 2.2: Inclusive digital pedagogy skills and STEEAM education skills of teachers are enhanced based on the EU policies, best practices of school digitalization and development of digital content (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 6, 7)</p> <p><b>Outputs linked to Specific Objective 3:</b></p> <p>Output 3.1: Modernization of 10 model/aspirational schools. This includes targeted infrastructural support of variable nature, equipment with educational technologies, support to the establishment of an integrated school transport system, which is instrumental for the consolidation of the school network, and strengthening of STEEAM education and digital skills of teachers (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 6, 7)</p>
--	---

<sup>1</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/education\\_training\\_youth.html?root\\_default=SUM\\_1\\_CODED%3D%5&locale=en](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/education_training_youth.html?root_default=SUM_1_CODED%3D%5&locale=en)



<p><b>Main activities</b></p>	<p><b><u>Activities under Specific Objective 1:</u></b></p> <p>The Specific Objective 1 aims at supporting MER's efforts to improve teachers' professional development system through the establishment of the NIEL and remodeling of continuous training of managers and teachers, establishment of a CPD framework for teachers covering educational leadership, mentoring, and coaching, and innovative pedagogic approaches. These activities will also contribute to enhancement of the attractiveness of teaching profession and reduction of sectoral brain-drain.</p> <p><b><u>Activities under Specific Objective 2:</u></b></p> <p>The activities under this Specific Objective will support MER to further reform the RCPA and rayons' PASs aimed at supporting the enrolment and retention of vulnerable children (with physical impairments, from social or economic vulnerable families) into preschool, primary and secondary schools. The activities contributing to this objective will focus on strengthening the capacities of the system to provide inclusive education (IE) services nationwide. To ensure equitable access to and participation in education of children with SEN, mobile teams will be set up by RCPA and PASs, the infrastructure will be upgraded, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) will be provided, trainings on the use of Assistive Technologies (AT) and new models of planning, decision-making and educational management will be organized. Inclusive digital pedagogy skills will be enhanced and supported by the Digital School project, integration of STEEAM concepts in teaching/learning process and development of digital contents. These interventions will also reinforce the commitments of MER to facilitate the inclusion of Ukrainian refugee children into Moldovan education system regardless their legal status or abilities. This complements and builds upon the support already provided (in 2022-2023) by UNICEF and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to the MER for the development of the recently approved Governmental Order regarding the enrolment of Ukrainian children in Moldovan schools<sup>2</sup>, supporting education services capacities for the integration of Ukrainian children. Furthermore, the activities under Specific Objective 2 of the project reinforce the UNICEF-implemented "Back-to-School Campaign" targeting all refugee children, including children with disabilities, and their caregivers/parents.</p> <p><b><u>Activities under Specific Objective 3:</u></b></p> <p>This component aims at increasing quality, relevance, and efficiency of learning. It will support MER in enhancing the learning environments and improving the teaching-learning conditions by setting up modern learning spaces and improving the school</p>
-------------------------------	--

<sup>2</sup> [https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/05092023131733\\_3719.pdf](https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/05092023131733_3719.pdf)

	<p>infrastructure. In the framework of wider rationalization/ consolidation plans of the school network that the Ministry intends to pursue in the upcoming period, the current project will support the transformation of 10 educational institutions into model/aspirational schools, in opportune selected locations, which may become a benchmark for further consolidation later, that have the capacity to ensure higher quality of educational process. The selection of schools will take place in coordination with MER and will be approved by the Steering Committee (SC) of the Programme. The specifications of the infrastructural refurbishment will be defined based on the schools' needs, also considering complementarities with other ongoing programmes. The intervention will also aim at redesigning existing STEEAM learning spaces (education technical labs (-hLabs) and similar) to facilitate better learning, provision of modern technologies and teaching-learning resources and support the roadmaps for continuous development of digital learning space. To accompany the efforts of the MER to ensure continued equitable access to quality education in view of the school network consolidation, the interventions under this component will facilitate the accessibility of students from remote areas to the model/aspirational schools through the purchase of 10 school buses and support the development of an integrated national system for school bus management. In addition, this component aims at designing and roll-out a digital transformation &amp; STEEAM model in upper-secondary education focusing on teachers' mentorship in using new educational technologies, adopting new pedagogical approaches, support the development of digital educational resources for science disciplines, and support the capacity of school managers to embark upon the process of e-transformation in education.</p>
<p><b>Target group(s)</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. General education schools</li> <li>2. Local governments and local communities</li> <li>3. Private sector in need for skilled workforce</li> <li>4. Teacher training organizations/universities</li> <li>5. Other economic actors</li> </ol> <p>Central government authorities, including MER, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Finance (MoF), National Agency for Public Health, RCPA, Academia, CSOs, etc.</p>
<p><b>Final beneficiaries</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Students</li> <li>▪ Teachers, school management</li> <li>▪ Adult learners in need for upskilling</li> <li>▪ Local governments in need for high-quality education service in their regions</li> <li>▪ Education innovators (universities, EdTech community)</li> </ul>

## II. SITUATION ANALYSIS AND RELEVANCE OF THE ACTION

### 2.1. OVERALL BACKGROUND

Moldova is a lower middle-income country, with a population with habitual residence<sup>3</sup> of only 2,603,800 people (as of 2022), of which 1,102,000 people (42,3%) make up the urban population and 1.501 million (57,7%) people – the rural population<sup>4</sup>. The population is distributed evenly between men (48.1%) and women (51.9%). Moldova is facing high demographic pressures – according to the official estimates of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), about 352,000 people older than 15 were working abroad in 2021. In addition, according to the estimates of the International Organization for Migration, the number of Moldovan migrants reached 1 million people in 2019 (6 – 'Moldova 2030' NDS). The estimates of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are that by 2035, Moldova's population will drop to two million, one in three people being older than 60. Moldova ranks 80th out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI-0.767).

Even though the Moldovan economy has grown over the last two decades – in 2001-2010 the GDP increased on average by 5.2% annually while in 2011-2020 it grew by an average of only 2.9%<sup>5</sup>. In 2021, the economy has shown an unprecedented growth of 13.9%. At the same time, the multiple crises in 2022 have brought the country to stagflation – a combination of stagnating economic growth and high inflation, which in August 2022 equaled 34% as compared to the previous year. This unprecedented turmoil negatively affects consumption, investment, and jobs, which puts even more pressure on the human capital formation in the country. The structural deficiencies of the economy are emphasized by the low potential of industry, lack of competitiveness of agriculture, low export potential and declining private sector investment. Moldova's private sector has struggled due to low investment and the resulting inadequate levels of productivity and export competitiveness. The regulatory burden and limited access to finance have further restrained the competitiveness of domestic enterprises.

Despite certain improvements in the past decade, the quality of general education in Moldova lags behind. Provided the shrinking population, education enrolment at all levels of education has been steadily declining, while adjustments to the network of education institutions have been slow in catching up. Moldovan students score consistently less than the average Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries across all PISA scores. The average score for science for 15-year-olds is 428 points compared to the average 489 in OECD countries, with a considerable gender discrepancy of 11 points – girls scoring better than boys (in OECD countries the difference is only 2 points)<sup>6</sup>. Similar differences are noted across the other two subjects assessed: reading literacy – 424 points for Moldova compared to 487 for OECD, with girls outperforming boys by 40 points, and in mathematics, with 421 points compared to the average OECD level of 489, and girls outperforming boys by 11 points<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, there is significant difference in student performance based on the socio-economic status: advantaged students outscore less advantaged students across all measured competencies. According to the World Bank Human Capital Index (2020), a child born in Moldova today can expect to achieve only 58 percent of their human capital potential than if they enjoyed complete education and full health<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, low learning outcomes reveal an opportunity to improve the human capital base in the country.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the challenges faced by the education system. Updated OECD-PISA data are expected by the end of 2023. However, provided that the schools were closed for a period of four months in 2020, and

<sup>3</sup> *Habitual residence* is defined as the place where a person has lived predominantly for the past 12 months regardless of temporary absences (for the purpose of recreation, vacation, visits to relatives and friends, business, medical treatment, religious pilgrimages, etc.)

<sup>4</sup> National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova (2022). <https://statistica.gov.md/newsview.php?en&id=7473&idc=168>

<sup>5</sup> Expert-Grup (2022) MEGA 2022 MEGA, the XXIII-rd edition: "The economy in 2022: from recovery to stagflation?" ([expert-grup.org](http://expert-grup.org))

<sup>6</sup> Education GPS (2018). *Moldova Country Reports - Education GPS - Moldova* ([oecd.org](http://oecd.org))

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> World Bank Human Capital Index 2020. *Moldova. Human Capital Index (HCI) (scale 0-1) - Moldova | Data* ([worldbank.org](http://worldbank.org))

assuming that the effectiveness of online learning in Moldova was only half of in-class learning, it is estimated that learning outcomes for Moldova have dropped on average by 8 PISA points during the pandemic, which represents about 20% of the expected learning gain, reversing the improvements made over the past 6 years. As a result, the learning gap after the pandemic is estimated to have raised from 2.87 years to 3.07 years, widening further the inequalities because of inequalities and digital divide<sup>9</sup>. Additionally, the inflow of refugee children in the Moldova education system after the outbreak of the Russian aggression to Ukraine in 2022 has created additional challenges with repercussion also on the learning outcomes of pupils.

In the period 2016-2020, the share of government expenditure on education in GDP increased from 5.3% to 6.1%, with a decrease by 5,5% in 2021. In 2022, the share of government expenditure on education was 5,2%, while the estimation for the next years tends to decrease from 4,9% for 2023 to up to 4,0% for 2025 of GDP.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, the share of government expenditure on education in the total Government expenditure fluctuated from 17.7% in 2016 to 18.4% in 2019 and decreased to 15,8% in 2022.<sup>11</sup> Although, in absolute terms, government expenditure on education kept increasing (from MDL 13,398 million in 2021 to 15,833 million in 2023), the investments made in recent years have failed to cover the needs of a sector that aims at educating a competitive workforce for a global economy<sup>12</sup>.

Skills gaps and mismatches with labor markets demands represent one of the major issues for employers and graduates from vocational education and training and from higher education institutions. A significant number of young Moldovans (ages 15–34) are not in education, formal employment, or training of the age 15-39 years old (Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) – 30.8% as compared to the EU average of 15% in 2020. On the background of very high NEET rates, Moldova is showing a comparably lower unemployment rate than the OECD average – 3.2% as compared to the EU average of 5.7% in 2021<sup>13</sup>. On average, women earn 14.4% less than men.

In the current socio-economic conjuncture, underpinned by important demographic factors like migration and provision of skills that do responds to modern socio-economic demands, Moldova has lost its reputation of relatively cheap and skilled labour<sup>14</sup>. Workers in the rural areas, occupied in agriculture, are among the most vulnerable and tend to migrate towards urban areas and abroad, as they are confronted with very low wages and lack of employment opportunities. Mothers of children under five years old, as well as those having more than two children of pre-school age face a significant labor force participation penalty, most likely due to a lack of childcare facilities and of part-time "child-friendly" jobs<sup>15</sup>. The skills shortages represent a major challenge for employers, with more than 25% of companies experiencing labor shortages mostly due to difficulties in finding qualified staff<sup>16</sup>.

With the above in mind and constantly increasing expectations on education delivery, it is crucial to introduce policy changes, increase the capacity of educators and facilitate innovation for empowering teaching and learning with digital technologies. Digital technologies enable endless data and information, providing new, powerful means to make decisions and solve problems. Governing knowledge effectively is central to each country, society and individual. The teachers and school leaders are the primary agents of educational change be that at the classroom, school, regional or national level. Until now the teachers have been mainly in focus for the majority of the initiatives. However, considering that the school management bears the responsibility for creating the working and learning environment for teachers and students, as well as facilitating

<sup>9</sup> World Bank (2022). MOLDOVA – Digital Education Readiness Assessment 2021-2022  
<https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099120006252220689/pdf/P17773104ea6f2040a88e02bdf9bbd04f6.pdf>  
<sup>10</sup> <https://gov.md/sites/default/files/document/attachments/subject-08-nu-731-mf-2022.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> National Bureau of Statistics (2022). Education Statistics [https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii\\_electronice/Moldova\\_in\\_cifre/2023/Moldova\\_cifre\\_eng\\_2023.pdf](https://statistica.gov.md/files/files/publicatii_electronice/Moldova_in_cifre/2023/Moldova_cifre_eng_2023.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Development Strategy Education -2030 (2022). Ministry of Education and Research of Moldova. Draft government strategic policy document.

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/countries/moldova/Youth\\_Well-being\\_Policy\\_Review\\_Moldova.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/countries/moldova/Youth_Well-being_Policy_Review_Moldova.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Human Capital Report 2016, World Economic Forum.

<sup>15</sup> World Bank (2018). Moldova Labor Market Gender Inequality.

<sup>16</sup> Rutkowski, Jan, Victoria Levin, and Ali Bargu (2017). Missing Skills: Results of the Skills Module of the Moldovan Labor Market Forecast Survey. Washington, DC: World Bank.

continuous professional development of teachers, school management must be addressed with bigger emphasis than before. The entire school culture needs to support individual student learning. This is only possible if teachers and school leaders continue to learn and grow. This also includes the learning space to be supportive and inspiring for all parties. These enhancements can be improved in a comprehensive approach, ranging from improved school infrastructures to efficient use of digital services and tools for administrative purposes and teaching/learning practices.

There is the need to prepare educators better to apply a student-oriented approach into their learning practices to improve learning outcomes as well inspire continuous learning after finishing basic education. For teachers to be able to contribute with their professionalism diverse supportive mechanisms are needed based on the level of competence, content specifics, as well as their students' possible particularities (SEN, refugees, etc.). While investing in developing teachers' professionalism as well as their working environment and conditions, the image of teacher professions improves and brings along long-term positive impact for education.

More than ever before the students need to develop a wide range of learning skills, including collaborative, self-regulation, entrepreneurship, digital skills etc. Ultimately, education must lead students to a sense of well-being. Those learning objectives are meant to serve the long-term goal of students becoming open and accomplished lifelong learners who can create new values for themselves and others. Computer Science education introduced from early age is regarded as a key enabler for the digital transformation of Moldova's society and economy. Societal needs have become more evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the teaching of Computer Science concepts in formal school education has increasingly been supported and implemented by the Ministries of Education of European countries, as well as internationally.

Despite efforts and some undertaken measures, the national curricula are still being perceived as lists of facts or information which students need to memorize and repeat in examinations and provide little autonomy. The transitioning to key-competences based curricula enables learners to develop competences that correspond to the demands of the labour market for meeting challenges and taking up opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and equip the youth with the skills and abilities that they need to become competitive in the global labour market<sup>17</sup>. Based on international studies the need to shift from fact-teaching towards creating comprehensive understanding and developing key competences is obvious at all levels of education and especially in the post-primary. The quality of teaching and learning outcomes remains a serious concern. Students in Moldova score low compared to OECD average in reading, mathematics, and science. Based on the 2018 Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA), 43% of students didn't achieve minimum proficiency levels in reading and science, and 50% in mathematics. Huge disparities persist in learning outcomes between schools in rural and urban areas. Almost 56% of rural students didn't reach minimum levels of competency in science, 58% in reading, and 63% in mathematics. Disparities in academic performance also correlate closely with the students' socioeconomic status and sex, which means that in Moldova socio-economically advantaged students and girls perform better than disadvantaged students and boys, who also hold lower ambitions than would be expected given their academic achievement. Also, boys and disadvantaged students are more likely to be truant than girls and students from advantaged backgrounds.<sup>18</sup> More flexible and blended learning models and designs must be elaborated and explored to increase the readiness to align with the rapidly changing needs of societies.

As Moldova is currently facing the challenge with lower qualification level of adults than desired, increasing number of NEET, and recent signs of the brain drain due to the decreasing attractiveness of economic environment, there is urgent need for creating flexible and diverse training programmes for upskilling and reskilling people for the sectors in need for qualified

<sup>17</sup> <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/165681548705998410/pdf/Final-version-of-report-on-digital-jobs-in-Moldova.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018\\_CN\\_MDA.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN_MDA.pdf)

work force. Promoting and supporting platforms for innovation for education would empower talents and bring along sustainable development of education in Moldova.

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, and considering the war in Ukraine, in September 2023 the total number of Ukrainian refugees staying in Moldova was estimated to be 109,159 of which 48,929 are children (25,258 boys and 23,671 girls) according to UNHCR Data Portal<sup>19</sup>. Out of the total number of refugee children registered and staying in Moldova, only 2,015 children (including 614 in preschools) children are officially enrolled in schools according to the data provided by MER on 11 September 2023. Most of the Ukrainian refugee children in the territory of Moldova are believed to be connected online with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education Platform (around 62%) or offline according to the Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA) 2022.<sup>20</sup>

Ukrainian children continuing their online education are lacking ICT equipment and AT, especially children with disabilities, potentially leading to systematic exclusion from education and dropping out. The quality of online learning for Ukrainian children might be compromised by the frequent interruption of the online classes due to bombing and/or electricity shortage as well as cost and availability of Internet connection. Continuing education online, without children interacting with their respective peers, might impact children's emotional and social growth and development. Children out of school might be prone to more protection risks and difficulty accessing available protection services.

To facilitate Ukrainian children, boys and girls, access to education, MER established an Inter-Agency Refugee Education Working Group to enhance and strengthen the coordination in the interventions of education stakeholders in Moldova and to support the Government of Moldova in providing access to quality and IE in a safe and protective learning environments for refugee children living in Moldova. The Refugee Education Working Group is chaired by MER and co-chaired by UNICEF and UNHCR. Also, MER in cooperation with UNHCR and UNICEF developed and issued an Order supporting the inclusion of Ukrainian children into formal education system regardless their legal status or abilities, which was shared nationally with all departments of education<sup>21</sup>. It describes in detail the procedure of enrolment, responsibilities of public authorities, the certification process.

The Ministry also updated all the relevant documents including schools and preschools lists available for enrolling Ukrainian children as well as the application templates for both schools and preschools on their webpage for the school year 2023/2024 as was discussed and advised.

Against this background, in March 2023 the Moldovan Government approved the DS- 2030 (Government of the Republic of Moldova, 2023)<sup>22</sup>. The development of the strategy and supporting implementation plan included a consultative process in which a wide range of education stakeholders were given opportunities to participate, including students, parents, youth organizations, local public education authorities, and international development partners, among others. The current Action by the EU, UNICEF and UNDP is aligned with the Government Strategy, and aims at supporting its implementation in complementarity with initiatives by other international development partners. The National strategy sets out a medium/long-term vision for the development and transformation of the education sector, covering early childhood education and care, primary, secondary, tertiary, and vocational education, and including non-formal education, as well as adult literacy and lifelong learning. It aims to realize the following strategic objectives:

- Connecting education to the requirements and needs of the labour market from the perspective of sustainable development by restructuring the mechanisms for the development of human capital.
- Ensuring access to quality education for all throughout their lives.

<sup>19</sup> <https://data.unhcr.org/en/dataviz/248?sv=0&geo=680>

<sup>20</sup> file:///C:/Users/iginicu/Downloads/REACH\_Moldova%202022%20MSNA%20Factsheet.pdf

<sup>21</sup> [https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/05092023131733\\_3719.pdf](https://mec.gov.md/sites/default/files/05092023131733_3719.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=136600&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136600&lang=ro)

- Providing the educational system of all phases and forms of education with qualified, competent, motivated, and competitive teaching, scientific-didactic and leadership staff.
- Strengthening socio-educational cohesion for quality education by combining the efforts of all actors of the educational process.
- Creating new, effective, and motivating environments for the development and lifelong learning of all citizens.
- Improving the functionality, quality, and sustainability of the education system through the efficient implementation of digital technologies.
- Ensuring for all citizens, throughout their lives, opportunities for learning and education in a formal, non-formal or informal context.
- Promoting innovations and changes in education through the development of scientific research.
- Increasing the performance of the educational system by streamlining the network of educational institutions, modernizing the infrastructure, strengthening the leadership and managerial capacity, and developing a culture focused on quality.

## 2.2. EU ENGAGEMENT

Human Capital Development, education and skills are core areas of the EU external assistance worldwide. For decades the EU has been actively engaged in supporting education system development across its member states and partner countries, including in Moldova<sup>23</sup>, promoting policy advisory services, teacher capacity building, equitable access to quality education, and upgrading school infrastructure. These efforts align with the EU's commitment to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all.

Since 2014, the bilateral relations between the EU and the Republic of Moldova have been based on the EU-Moldova Association Agreement and its annex Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (AA-DCFA) which provides the foundations for stronger political association and economic integration. The agreement focuses, inter alia, on cooperation to promote lifelong learning, transparency at all levels of education and modernizing education and training systems, enhancing quality, relevance and access, and all children's rights.

The process of integration in the EU received a significant acceleration boost in 2022, with the EU candidate status granted to Moldova during the European Council on 23 June 2022. Education, which together with Culture is the subject of the negotiating Chapter 25 within the cluster "Competitiveness and inclusive growth" is an area that does not require transposition of legislation. However, the national authorities of Moldova are committed towards a process of alignment with the *Acquis Communautaire*, in terms of approximation the best practices in place in education systems in the EU.

The EU strategic support to the education sector is reflected in the EU bilateral assistance to the Republic of Moldova, which is currently nearing the mid-term of the multiannual programming period 2021-2027 that entered into force in 2022 following the adoption of the EU-Republic of Moldova Association Agenda, with a focus on 5 broad priorities:

1. Resilient, sustainable, and integrated economy, to support economic development, economic integration, create decent jobs and economic opportunities for both women and men.
2. Accountable institutions, the rule of law and security, to promote good governance and democratic institutions, the rule of law, effective anti-corruption policies, fight against organized crime, respect for human rights and strengthening security. This entails support to reforms across the board and promoting public administration

---

<sup>23</sup> [Moldova factograph.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

transparency, accountability, inclusive, evidence-based and gender-sensitive policymaking and integrity in both the public and private sector.

3. Environment and climate resilience, to address climate change and strengthen environment and climate resilience as well as to tackle major environmental challenges by stimulating a circular economy, enhanced sustainable transport, green and blue economy, in line with the zero-pollution ambition of the European Green Deal.
4. Resilient digital transformation, to support digital transformation, including e-government, broadband infrastructure, e-trade, e-health, digital skills, digitalization of traditional sectors and public services to help the country integrate into the EU digital single market, ensuring a wide territorial coverage.
5. Resilient, gender equal, fair, and inclusive societies, to invest in human capital development and to improve the living conditions of the population, with a special focus on support to civil society organizations, mobility, youth participation, media, gender equality and social inclusion.

Additional EU support to socio-economic resilience and recovery from the multiple crises of the early 20s is channeled also through other complementary financial resources, such as the implementation of the Economic and Investment Plan for the Eastern Partnership (EIP), annex of the Joint Staff Working Document Recovery, resilience, and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities <sup>24</sup>, which identifies five “flagship” initiatives for Moldova, as follows:

Flagship 1: Supporting a sustainable, innovative, green, and competitive economy

Flagship 2: Boosting EU-Moldova trade

Flagship 3: Increasing energy efficiency

Flagship 4: Improving connectivity

Flagship 5: Investing in human capital and preventing ‘brain drain’ — modernization of school infrastructure and implementation of the national education strategy.

Investing in human capital underpins the sustainability of economic recovery and competitiveness. The EU is committed to providing concrete assistance to the MER in its efforts to implement the national education strategy until 2030. Modernizing the education system, improving school infrastructure, matching skills development to labour market demands – with a focus on green and digital jobs- and ensuring the attractiveness of teaching profession are key. The aim is to improve access, relevance, and quality of education via technical assistance, supply of equipment (analogic and digital learning materials in line with the updated curriculum) and the refurbishment of schools’ infrastructure.

Despite a rapidly evolving context in which the Multiannual Indicative Programme 2021-2027 has been developed and adopted, the EU assistance has provided support for important reforms in the sectors of energy, justice, public administration, public finance management, private sector development, and approximation of several environment laws, among others. In addition, in response to the energy crisis, the EU has mobilized over EUR 1.2 billion in grants and loans to help Moldova face the multiple crises since October 2021, when the energy situation significantly worsened. Moldova also benefits from several regional programmes covering the Eastern Partnership (EaP) region, designed with largely the same priority areas. This support also helped Moldova stay afloat and focus efforts on further enhancing the country’s energy resilience, addressing the consequences of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, and most notably progressing on the reform path to EU accession.

Building upon this general cooperation framework, the EU has planned the current intervention as part of the Annual Action Programme 2022, with operational implementation as from 2023. This will enable effective assistance to the implementation of the DS-2030, which was formally approved by the Parliament in March 2023<sup>25</sup>. The DS-2030 is the result of a lengthy

<sup>24</sup> SWD(2021) 186 final. JOINT STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities

<sup>25</sup> [https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc\\_id=136600&lang=ro](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136600&lang=ro)



preparation process, which over a couple of years involved multiple stakeholders from the national institutions and the development partners. In addition to the EU, the DS-2030 and its short-medium term operational plan for the first few years of implementation attracted pledges from international donors, including two consecutive Multiplier Grants from the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) and a major development project from the World Bank. (Please see the section of this DoA on synergies and complementarities).

The legal base of the EU support to Education presented in this DoA is the Commission Decision NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2022/ACT-61535, implementing the Annual Action Programme 2022, and the subsequent Financing Agreement "EU4Resilience and Governance" with the Government of Moldova. The Action Document of that Decision (reflected in the Technical and Administrative Provisions – TAPs - of the Financing Agreement), provides for a component (Output 1.1.) named *"Improved quality and relevance of education and lifelong learning opportunities for all"*. This component (or output in the language of the Action Document) contributes (together with others in the domains of employment and gender equality) to the 1<sup>st</sup> Specific Objective of the Action, which is: *"Support the country's human capital development and advancing gender equality and women's empowerment for better matching the labour market demands through inclusive and gender-responsive policies and improved employment and labour policies and institutional capacities"*.

The Action Document identifies the two pillar assessed international organizations UNICEF and UNDP as implementers of the Output 1.1 "Improved quality and relevance of education and lifelong learning opportunities for all", in indirect management modality, and provides an indicative list of tentative activities which guided the formulation of the operational plan of the present project, along with a necessary adaptation to take into account complementarity and synergies with actions by other stakeholders and partners.

Additionally, the current action comes particularly timely with the year 2023 that has been designated as the European Year of Skills. Throughout this year, the EU and its Member States seek to emphasize the significance of knowledge, continuous learning, and skills development for all Europeans. A skilled human capital - including the one educated in universities - equipped with competences and abilities to tackle the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a key-driver for socio-economic development, innovation, and improved competitiveness. Also, skills have a pivotal role in the economic recovery after the multiple crises of these years, which affected not only Moldova but the whole Europe, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, the unjustified Russian aggression to Ukraine and all its consequences on the neighboring countries, from the energy supply to the refugee emergency). Education system strengthening, as well as modern pedagogical approaches to quality teaching and learning are at the center of the external assistance of the EU and its Member States, and not only in the typical STEEAM disciplines but horizontally across all domains. As concerns digital education in particular, the bilateral project EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul, in the South of the Country, achieved very good results in promoting STEEAM education. Digital laboratories were created in 15 schools, and adults with different backgrounds have been taught to use IT technologies. This was done also through the Tekwill in Every School initiative, which the EU and other donors have actively supported.

The European Commission is deploying all its toolbox to equip students with appropriate skills and knowledge, working closely with the National Government, the national education system and other development partners, in a number of initiatives to improve quality and relevance of education and lifelong learning.

In addition to the bilateral programming of which this Action is a component, which is managed in-country at the EU Delegation level for the European Commission DG NEAR (Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations), Moldova is beneficiary also of wider regional initiatives to support human capital development, skills

development, and digital transformation in line with EU policies. Among others, for instance the EU4Digital umbrella initiative aims at facilitating the integration of Moldova in the Digital Single Market. The core of the Initiative relates to the development of key areas such as telecommunications, e-governance, e-commerce, e-customs, digital skills, and support to start-up ecosystems.

Farther than the bilateral and EaP regional channels, valuable contributions to Education and Human Capital Development are available to Moldova under EU global programmes, administered centrally by the European Commission or Executive Agencies of the Commission. These include the Erasmus+, the iconic the EU programme for Education and Youth, and Horizon Europe, successor of Horizon 2020, the framework programme for Research & Innovation, to which Moldova is fully associated for the period 2021-27 after successful participation in the previous periods. These programmes offer several opportunities to promote cooperation between Moldovan and European educational and research institutions, facilitating exchanges and study programmes, and encouraging the recognition of qualifications and diplomas across borders.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of digital education. The EU has been investing in digital infrastructure and ensuring that students have access to technology for remote and blended learning. The key area Supporting solidarity and inclusion includes the field "Digital education, training and skills", in which everyone's right to education, training and lifelong learning and the possibility to acquire all basic and advanced digital skills is declared. To guarantee this right, the European Union commits to:

- promoting high-quality digital education and training, including with a view to bridging the digital gender divide
- supporting efforts that allow all learners and teachers to acquire and share the necessary digital skills and competences, including media literacy, and critical thinking, to take an active part in the economy, society, and in democratic processes
- promoting and supporting efforts to equip all education and training institutions with digital connectivity, infrastructure, and tools
- giving everyone the possibility to adjust to changes brought by the digitalization of work through up-skilling and re-skilling.

Since the start of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, Moldova has been tackling significant challenges, including large numbers of refugees, inflation, threats to its energy supplies, violations of its airspace, as well as a multitude of hybrid actions such as disinformation and cyber-attacks. The EU has already mobilized €1.2 billion to help Moldova face multiple crises since the autumn of 2021. Despite all challenges, over the most recent years Moldova has increasingly shown its resilience and commitment to advance on its pro-European reform agenda.

### 2.3. INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE, DONOR COORDINATION AND SYNERGIES

The Action "Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All" is designed in close alignment with the country strategic development priorities, particularly those from the DS-20230 and its implementation plan (also known as ESP – Education Sector Plan) as well as synergies with other on-going actions implemented by other international donors and development partners. Considering the complexity and magnitude of the current intervention, donor coordination and policy dialogue at several levels will be strengthened.

Among other primary and secondary research sources, the rationale of the current Action is informed by a diagnostic study conducted in 2022-23 by the OECD and UNESCO-IIEP under the project "Support to the Implementation of Education Policies in Moldova", financed by the EU. That diagnostics was meant to help the Ministry of Education and Research of

Moldova identify bottlenecks in the nexus policy formulation vs policy implementation in the context of the recently National Education Development Strategy 2030, with an emphasis on:

1. Teachers and School Leaders Professional Development,
2. Curriculum and teaching and learning resources,
3. Vocational Education and Training.

The findings of the study and the corresponding policy recommendations are presented in two analytical reports that have been published as part of the "OECD Education Policy Perspectives series" in September 2023<sup>26</sup>. The current EU Action implemented by UNICEF and UNDP will effectively contribute to implement some of these recommendations to help advance the Moldovan education reform agenda and, where possible, "leapfrog" (i.e. make non-linear, rapid progress). The main policy recommendations from that study that the current project will contribute are (in summary and non-exhaustive):

- Reconceptualization and strengthening the professional development of teachers and school leaders, with emphasis on: i. Promoting collaborative learning within schools, ii. Systematic promoting collaboration and peer learning between schools, iii. Digital/online and/or blended professional development, including promotion of self-learning and collaborative learning, iiiii. Recognition of the pivotal role of school leaders and other system leaders in school improvement and innovation in education.
- Participation in professional development based on identified needs, informed by: i. systematic in-depth analysis of the national and international student assessment data to identify students' strengths and areas for further improvement, ii. surveys and other research to support the identification of teachers' and school leaders' professional development needs at regular intervals. iii. regular feedback and appraisals to identify professional development needs, through teacher and school leader appraisal systems with solid linkages between the teacher accreditation process and participation in professional development.
- Use of classroom observations to feed into the evidence base for teacher appraisal – together with other sources of evidence
- Sensitization on the use of professional standards for supporting their professional development and growth
- Investment in the continuous professional development of teacher- and school leader appraisers.
- In line with the directions set out by the DS-2030, support to developing a comprehensive teaching and learning platform that includes a set of the latest digital solutions and resources to support teachers and school leaders in their professional development and in improving teaching and student learning.
- Investing in capacity development of school leaders and other system leaders for providing educational leadership and leading data-informed school improvement. The National Institute for Education and Leadership could play a vital role in advancing the much-needed capacity development of school leaders and other system leaders in Moldova.
- Transition towards a competency-based curriculum and assessment practices.
- Exploring suitable digital technologies for supporting teaching and student learning.
- Enhancing the attractiveness and prestige of the teaching profession, including preparatory research work for a reform of the career structure and salary scale of the education profession of Moldova.
- Actions to advance the school network reorganization, including incentives for consolidation and studies for defining a package of suitable and affordable incentives. After defining the package of suitable and affordable incentives, the MER would be well-positioned to initiate dialogues with those schools that have been identified for reorganization.

---

<sup>26</sup> Report 1: [An assessment of the professional development of teachers and school leaders, and curriculum and learning resources in Moldova](#)  
Report 2: [Enhancing the evaluation of VET programmes and institutions in the Republic of Moldova](#)

- Investment to strengthen the organizational capacity of the Ministry and other national level agencies.

In addition to the European Union and the UN organizations implementing this Action, support to the area of education and skills in Moldova is currently provided by the World Bank (WB), the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), which is a multi-donor trust fund administered by the WB, as well as various agencies and operating structures of the United Nations network, and various countries' cooperation agencies such as the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), USAID, Swedish Development Agency (SIDA), Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), Austrian Development Cooperation (ADA), and others.

The "Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All" project does not intend to start from scratch, but rather seeks to make the best use of and rely upon previous development work and assistance by the national and the international community. The project envisions areas of synergies, and in some cases operational complementarities, with the following (inter alia) actors and actions:

- USAID: In the area of advancing digitalization in education, the Action will coordinate its activities with Future Technologies Activity (FTA) funded by USAID and Sweden, which aims at connecting Moldova's innovative sectors to global markets through Clasa Viitorului (Future Classroom). Clasa Viitorului complements other donors and activities by offering inspirational learning spaces with interdisciplinary and innovative approaches, through the educational robotics programme. For this purposes, 61 educational institutions are equipped for STEAM education projects. FTA works with business associations and similar organizations to increase their organizational capacity, financial sustainability, and advocacy effectiveness and to improve the ecosystems for workforce development and investment. The activity also collaborates with small and medium enterprises to increase their competitiveness, value-added exports, workforce skills for employment opportunities, access to finance, and climate resilience.
- World Bank: The WB is expected to launch the "World Bank's Education Reform Project for Moldova" with a budget of over 40 million USD in the end of 2023, with the objective to strengthen the quality of education while supporting the efficiency reforms being implemented in the education sector. The project has three components. (1) Strengthening the quality of education (2) Improving the efficiency of the education sector to improve the efficiency of the sector by eliminating excess capacity and creating a leaner education system; and (3) Improving the MER capacity to monitor the reform component. All newly approved interventions in education will be coordinated by the Local Education Group (LEG) and the MER donor assistance coordination platform, which was set up to ensure the articulation between the projects, activities, and interventions in the education sector. Within this project 3 modern schools will be built, 15 schools and 15 kindergartens will be renovated, 200 general education institutions will be equipped, etc.<sup>27</sup>. Additionally, the WB has been implementing in recent years the "World Bank's Higher Education Project for Moldova" aiming at improving the labor market orientation of selected higher education institutions and the quality assurance mechanisms. The first component of this Project – Improving the Quality Assurance Mechanisms, has the sub-component "National Qualifications Framework and Quality Assurance". This sub-component supports the updating of the curriculum of tertiary, and higher education teacher training programmes, a fact that offers opportunities for the implementation of digital pedagogy in the education system of the Republic of Moldova. The project foresees systemic interventions in the areas of quality improvement, financing, and management of higher education institutions, as well as specific programmes to be implemented in selected higher education institutions and pedagogical colleges to address some of the most urgent needs in terms of labour market orientation. The strategic target areas of the Higher Education Project will be teacher training programmes, engineering, information technology, and medicine.

<sup>27</sup> <https://mecc.gov.md/ro/content/investitii-educatie-de-60-de-milioane-de-dolari-aprobate-de-parlament>

- SIDA: The action will seek synergies in interventions focused on ICT and innovative robotics skills building s within the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) project planned under EU Annual Action Programme 2018 intervention in Cahul (EU4Moldova: Startup City Cahul).
- GIZ: Synergies and close cooperation with GIZ 's Dual VET programme will be sought with specific focus on youth mobilization and outreach and linking vulnerable adolescents and youth to Dual VET opportunities.
- ADA: Synergies will be sought with the EU funded EU4Moldova Local Communities project, particularly with the component of it implemented by ADA, which is supporting objectives in VET curriculum and VET school infrastructures.
- SDC: the Action will reinforce the outcomes of UNDP's project "Migration and Local Development", which was funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and ended in 2022, in terms of developing new training programmes for inter-sectorial ICT professionals,
- Global Partnership for Education: The GPE financed the comprehensive Education Sector Analysis carried out by Expert Group on mandate by UNICEF in 2018-19, which served as a basis for the development of the long-term DS-2030, mid-term Action Programme/Plan 2027 and Simulation Models to these policy and operational documents. One of the objectives of the recently approved Education-2030 Development Strategy, notably the digital transformation of the education sector, is currently being further supported by a GPE Multiplier Grant worth 5 million USD through in the period 2022-25, managed by UNICEF as Grant Agent (GA) and Coordinating Agent on behalf of the Ministry of Education and Research with endorsement of the Local Education Group (LEG). The GPE Multiplier Grant supports MER in establishment of the education ICT/Digitization policy and strategic framework which will allow for a prioritized approach to providing ICT resources to the most disadvantaged, to improved learning outcomes, retention of children in the system, increased enrolment of minorities and greater system efficiency through timely evidence-based decision making, improved access for the most vulnerable, as a result more children accessing better digital learning materials managed by trained teachers. Also, the system efficiency will be improved by better data collection and use by officers and administrators, through strengthening the current Education Management Information System (EMIS) and building the data management capacities of relevant staff. This Action will complement the activities under the Multiplier Programme.  
The GPE has made available a second 5 million Multiplier Grant for the period after 2025, which will be implemented by the World Bank as Grant Agent and Coordinating Agency endorsed by the LEG and will complement the above-mentioned "WB Education Reform Project for Moldova".
- This Action is also aligned with the UNICEF Moldova Country Office (MCO) intervention in setting up 70 EduTech Labs in targeted localities identified jointly with MER and local authorities (municipalities), with funds from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), Italian Government and Education Cannot Wait (ECW), the United Nations global fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises. The project supported the endowment of these Tech Labs in Moldovan schools which host Ukrainian children, providing safe connectivity to access for online learning platforms and an enabling learning environment for equitable opportunities and advancement of digital skills. In parallel, the Tech Labs will be used for provision of Romanian bridging classes and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) sessions to encourage Ukrainian students to collaborate, create, learn, and work on the technical projects in cooperation with their Moldovan peers facilitating their inclusion into Moldovan society as part of social cohesion activities. In the longer term, they will dovetail into the digital transformation of education process.

To better coordinate the interventions in education sector, ensure synergy between various partners and efficiently support the reform of the education sector, MER has established a donor assistance coordination platform which meets monthly to discuss and inform each other of current and future actions. This Action complements the activities funded by other donors and development partners and will ensure an expansion and deepening of these activities by strengthening the digital

infrastructure of schools, training teaching and managerial staff on innovative education approached and implementing inclusive digital pedagogy.

In the spirit of aid effectiveness and following usual practices in place for GPE procedures, the MER has also established the Local Education Group (LEG), which has the role of supporting the Ministry in policy and strategic discussions as well as ensuring that there is coherence, complementarity, and coordination around different activities. This includes providing feedback on policy proposals, identifying areas where further research or consultation may be required, and ensuring that policies are coherent, complementary, and well-coordinated with other initiatives in the education sector. The LEG is also a forum for lobbying for resources to support the education sector plan, and includes representatives from the MER, local government, civil society organizations, and development partners.

At the country level, the LEG includes representatives of Government, donors, agencies, non-governmental organizations (including international and local CSOs), representatives of the teaching profession, the private sector and private foundations, and other stakeholders supporting the education sector.

The complementarity and coordination of the digitalization activities of the education sector is supported by the recently approved Digital Transformation Strategy of the Republic of Moldova, which identified as priorities the improvement of digital competences and equipment of all public institutions. Accordingly, a national programme on digitalization of the education sector will be developed under the GPE Multiplier Programme, along with a mid-term Action Plan and will be aligned to the approved DS-2030 and Digital Transformation Strategy of the Republic of Moldova. This document will integrate all the factors enabling the digital transformation of the education sector, ongoing developments and interventions, Monitoring and Evaluation, and coordinating activities.

### III. STRATEGY

#### 3.1. PROGRAMME OBJECTIVES AND KEY RESULTS

##### 3.1.1. Objectives

###### Overall Objective:

Contribute to human capital development in the Republic of Moldova, improving quality and relevance of education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, for better matching the labour market demands

###### Specific Objectives:

1. Strengthen institutions and system for teacher and school leaders' professional development and support the implementation of education policies to enhance quality of teaching and learning (Development Strategy "Education 2030" (DS-2030) General Objectives 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9)
2. Improve equitable access for all children to quality education, promoting the development of an inclusive, digital, and resilient education system (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9)
3. Upgrade learning environments through renovation of selected school infrastructures and facilitate the development of the 21st century skills, contributing to better education opportunities for pupils/students and improved efficiency of the school network (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 6 and 9)

##### 3.1.2. Key Results

**The Action aims to achieve the following outputs:**

###### **Outputs linked to Specific Objective 1:**

Output 1.1: The reconceptualization of the teachers' and school leaders' professional development system is supported through the newly established NIEL and assistance to the development of the normative framework regarding the continuous professional training of teachers, managers, and mentors (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 3, 5, 6, 9)

Output 1.2: The revised continuous professional development - CPD package (in-service teacher training is implemented nation-wide and validated (DS-2030, General Objective 3, 6), based on EU policies and best practices in the provision of tailored high quality development programmes (DS-2030, General Objective 6, 7) and equipping the teaching workforce of the country with STEEAM education skills. (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 6)

Output 1.3: Lifelong learning opportunities for adults are enhanced and promoted, equipping adults with indispensable digital skills and support their empowerment in the digital age (DS-2030, General Objective 7)

###### **Outputs linked to Specific Objective 2:**

Output 2.1: Improved preparedness of the education system including RCPA and rayons' PASs, to provide education service targeting children with disabilities and SEN (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 4, 5, 6, 9)

Output 2.2: Inclusive digital pedagogy skills and STEEAM education skills of teachers are enhanced based on the EU policies, best practices of school digitalization and development of digital content (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 6, 7)

### Outputs linked to Specific Objective 3:

Output 3.1: Modernization of 10 model/aspirational schools. This includes targeted infrastructural support of variable nature, equipment with educational technologies, support to the establishment of an integrated school transport system, which is instrumental for the consolidation of the school network and strengthening of STEEAM education and digital skills of teachers. (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 6, 7)

### 3.1.3. Theory of Change

To move towards the long-term vision by 2030, it is considered that the education system is the most significant factor that determines the success of people at all stages of life. A better education system will lead to improved educational outcomes for children, and consequently higher rates of return to the individual and society, creating a skilled workforce for the rapidly growing demand for advanced cognitive skills, socioemotional skills, and digital skills.

The aim of the Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All is to contribute to human capital development and improve the quality of education, which is a national priority. The Action Theory of Change is based on the premises that better quality of education, as envisioned in the DS-2030, can be achieved if there are sustained policy and joint efforts for building advanced and quality education ecosystems, based on capacity building, and strengthening the learning environment. Enhanced human capacities upgraded learning environments, relevant lifelong opportunities, increased digital literacy skills and sustainability of the activities are important preconditions to empower all stakeholders to contribute to the advancement of the quality of education.

The Theory of Change of the Action is articulated on the above concepts and targets the necessary improvements in two areas: (1) at the level of the government: to strengthen institutions and system for teacher and school leaders' professional development, and (2) at the regional level: to improve equitable access for all children to quality education, promoting the development of an inclusive, digital, and resilient society and upgrade of learning environments through renovation of infrastructures to facilitate the development of the 21st century skills.

Assumptions:

➤ **Change in professional development system for teachers:**

**IF** the professional development system for teachers and school leaders is reimagined and strengthened through the establishment of the NIEL and

**IF** a comprehensive normative framework is formulated for continuous training of teachers, managers, and mentors

**THEN** the teaching workforce and school management leaders will gain advanced skills, thus contributing to higher quality of education and leadership capabilities.

➤ **Change in continuous professional development implementation:**



IF new in-service teacher training programmes and materials for all school levels are developed, approved, and implemented according to the national quality standards and

IF the programmes and materials for all school levels are designed based on the EU education policies<sup>28</sup> and best practices, aimed at enhancing teaching and learning quality while equipping educators with STEEAM education skills, and

IF a National Platform of Open Educational Resources is developed and implemented, and

IF the DigComEdu is adopted and applied

**THEN the implementation of the newly created impactful training programmes and educational content (digital, STEEAM, etc.) will contribute to the professional growth of the teaching workforce and ultimately enhance the quality of education.**

➤ **Enhancement of lifelong learning opportunities:**

IF a national programme of digital skills for adults is strategically designed and supported

**THEN** the strengthening of adult digital competencies will be initiated and adult learners' empowerment in the digital era will be enhanced.

➤ **Change in education access for children with special needs:**

IF the RCPA and PASs are strengthened in the 35 rayons/districts through the development of regulations, improved infrastructure, and provision of ICT/AT including for mobile teams, and

IF the capacities and skills of 40 managerial staff of RCPA and PASs, as well as 3000 teaching didactical cadre, are enhanced to effectively improve their capacities and skills in IE and the utilization of digital materials and assistive technology (AT), and if 2500 parents/caregivers are educated on the proficient use of digital and assistive devices, and

IF access to education for all children with SEN will be improved by establishing accessibility and AT standards, procuring necessary ATs, training teaching cadre and equipped with on ATs, and making infrastructure adjustments in 10 schools to boost overall accessibility

**THEN, the education system's preparedness to provide inclusive education services adjusted to the individual needs of children with disabilities and SEN will be elevated.**

➤ **Change at the level of digital pedagogy skills:**

IF a Digital School framework is developed, transforming 10 schools, and integrating STEEAM concepts into teaching, benefiting up to 4000 students, and

---

<sup>28</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/education\\_training\\_youth.html?root\\_default=SUM\\_1\\_CODED%3D15&locale=en](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/chapter/education_training_youth.html?root_default=SUM_1_CODED%3D15&locale=en)

IF guides for digital content creation are produced for various educational levels and a STEEAM programme is launched in 10 institutions through INEL mentorship, and

**THEN, teachers will become more knowledgeable about inclusive digital pedagogy and apply practical digital and STEEAM skills to improve the learning outcomes including of most vulnerable students, boys, and girls.**

### 3.2 IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH AND INDICATIVE ACTIVITIES

During the course of the implementation of the Action, the following division of responsibilities is planned:

- UNICEF, the Organization, will be in charge for the implementation of the Activities 1.1.1 - 1.1.5 under the Output 1.1, Activities 1.2.1-1.2.3 under the Output 1.2, Activities 2.1.1 - 2.1.3 under the Output 2.1, and the Activities 2.2.1 - 2.2.2 under the Output 2.2.
- UNDP, the partner, will co-implement Activity 1.2.1 under Output 1.2 in partnership with UNICEF, and will be in charge for the implementation of the Activity 1.3.1, under the Output 1.3, and the Activities 3.1.1 - 3.1.4 under the Output 3.1, improving quality, relevance, and efficiency of teaching and learning process at school level.

#### **Specific objective 1: Strengthen institutions and system for teacher and school leaders' professional development and support the implementation of education policies to enhance quality of teaching and learning**

The Specific Objective 1 aims at supporting MER's efforts to improve the teacher professional development system in the framework of the establishment of the National Institute for Education and Leadership (INEL) and restructuring of continuous training of managers and teachers, establishment of a CPD framework for teachers by covering educational leadership, mentoring, and coaching, and innovative pedagogic approaches. These activities will also contribute to enhancement of the attractiveness of teaching profession and reduction of sectoral brain-drain. This Specific Objective is mainly aligned to General Objective 3 of the DS-2030, and includes activities related to General Objectives 7. These activities will support the Ministry in the implementation of priority actions foreseen in the National Development Plan for the years 2023-2025 (NDP 2023-2025).

The following outputs and tentative activities will contribute to Specific Objective 1:

**Output 1.1: The reconceptualization of the teachers' and school leaders' professional development system is supported through the newly established NIEL and assistance to the development of the normative framework regarding the continuous professional training of teachers, managers, and mentors (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 3, 5, 6, 9)**

#### **Activities under Output 1.1:**

**Activity 1.1.1:** Provide technical assistance support for the reconceptualization of the professional development of teachers and school leaders' system, and the establishment of the NIEL (Government Action Plan 2023 (GAP 2023), Action no. 14,36; NDP 2023-2025, Action no. 3.2.13), including the development of the normative framework regarding the continuous professional training

The Project foresees the establishment of the public institution "National Institute for Education and Educational Leadership" (NIEL), of the "Delivery Unit" type, founded by the Government. Its aim is to ensure continuous improvement of the quality

of teaching and leadership in the education system. NIEL will have administrative and financial autonomy. Main functions of the NIEL will include:

- provision of theoretical and practical expertise needed to establish the framework for the pre-service and in-service training system for teachers and managers
- ensuring the provision of high standards of in-service training for teachers and managers
- continuous monitoring of the relationship between pre-service and in-service training and the realities of implementation of classroom learning
- setting up and organizing the work of the network of mentors in the territory on three levels: i) mentoring for teacher traineeships; ii) mentoring for young specialists and iii) mentoring for professional development in the workplace
- monitoring and improving the professional integration of young specialists and their career progression
- guiding and supporting the dissemination of successful teaching and leadership methods in the education system
- carry out of needs-based research into the training, professional integration, and career development of education staff
- developing methodological materials and guides for the work of teachers
- carrying out activities to promote the status of education staff in society
- identifying and encouraging young people with a vocation to pursue a teaching career
- initiating and carrying out international projects and collaborations in the field of activity
- drafting and proposing legislation in the field of teacher and management training

The activities will also focus on the development of a normative framework for the continuous professional training of teachers, a complex and multifaceted process that involves various stakeholders, including government bodies, educational institutions, teachers' organizations, and experts in the field of education. This framework will ensure that teachers receive ongoing training and support to enhance their skills, stay up to date with the latest educational research and pedagogical practices, and ultimately improve the quality of education they provide to students. Policies and regulations that mandate continuous professional training for teachers will be formulated and approved. These policies will outline the goals, objectives, and expectations for teacher development, define clear standards and competencies that teachers should possess at different stages of their careers. The normative framework will also foresee a system for assessing and evaluating the effectiveness of professional development programmes. This will include evaluating changes in teacher practices, student outcomes, and overall improvements in the education system.

**Activity 1.1.2:** Development of new pre-service and in-service curricula for teacher training programmes

Under this action, the activities will focus on technical support to the reconceptualization of the pre-service and in-service training system to contribute to the development of new programmes that are linked to the individual training needs of teachers and to ensure continuous monitoring of the relationship between the initial and in-service training of teachers and the real acquisitions obtained in the classroom. Mechanisms to motivate teachers to participate in more attractive in-service training programmes and to ensure the dissemination of their own experience with colleagues will be provided through the NIEL which, by involving the best specialists in the country and abroad, will be supported, including:

1. support the pre-service training carried out in colleges and universities through qualified expertise
2. boost continuous training/ including interpersonal communication by ensuring its provision according to the specific needs of each individual and monitoring its effect in the classroom, and
3. operationalize the three-tier mentor network, according to Art 58 of the Education Code.

NIEL will also be responsible for implementing a monitoring mechanism to ensure that every teacher is applying the current curriculum and is aware of the latest developments in methodology and many other aspects that confirm that every teacher is well informed and prepared to bring the change into the classroom.

This activity generally aims at integrating NIEL into the educational ecosystem through the collaboration with universities, colleges, and other lifelong learning providers to support them in achieving their goals and the common objective: better prepared teachers, more highly valued in society and young people more eager to embrace teaching as a career.

#### **Activity 1.1.3: Equipment for NIEL**

The proposed interventions will focus on raising the sustainability and capacity of NIEL to deliver public services through modern methods and techniques, including smart service provision. In addition, the necessary equipment and infrastructure will be procured, built, or rehabilitated so that the access to and quality of services improves. The essential equipment and technology might include office essentials (desks, chairs, whiteboards, projectors, screens, computers, laptops, printers, scanners, copiers, etc), audio-visual equipment, video conferencing tools, workshop and training equipment, functional furniture, and décor.

Interventions under this result will seek an improved access to quality education services within a friendly modern social infrastructure and delivered by a well-trained workforce.

#### **Activity 1.1.4: Support capacity building and skills development (training) of the mentors managed by NIEL in results-based management, diagnosis of needs, educational leadership etc. (Complementary to MP, Objective 2.1)**

Impactful strategic planning involves supporting capacity building and skills development of mentors in the Moldovan education system. Here are some steps and strategies that will be employed to achieve this goal:

- **Assessment of Mentor Needs.** Surveys, interviews, and focus groups will be conducted to understand the specific areas where mentors might require skill enhancement. This will help in tailoring the training content to address their actual needs.
- **Development of a Comprehensive Training Plan** to include:
- **Pedagogical Training:** Diagnoses/assessment of knowledge gaps and guidance on training needs. Provide mentors with pedagogical training, focusing on modern teaching methodologies, learning styles, curriculum design, and student-centered approaches.
- **Mentoring and Coaching Skills:** Equip mentors with the skills needed to effectively guide and support teachers and students. This includes interpersonal communication, active listening, giving constructive feedback, and problem-solving.
- **Technology Integration:** In today's digital age, mentors should be trained to integrate technology into teaching to enhance engagement and learning outcomes.
- **Classroom Management:** Offer strategies for maintaining discipline, creating a positive classroom environment, and managing diversity.
- **Emotional Intelligence and Empathy:** Train mentors to understand and address the emotional needs of both teachers and students, promoting a supportive learning environment.
- **Assessment and Feedback:** Teach mentors how to design assessments, analyze student performance data, and provide actionable feedback for improvement.
- **Use various training modalities:** workshops and seminars, online learning platforms, peer learning and communities of practice, experiential learning, microteaching, etc.
- **Offer ongoing support and feedback** through regular workshops and refreshers

- Recognize and reward excellence
- Career advancement opportunities: Provide mentors with opportunities for career advancement, such as becoming teacher trainers or curriculum developers.
- Collaborate with educational institutions: Partner with universities and educational institutions to leverage their expertise and resources in designing and delivering mentor training programmes.

This activity will contribute to the implementation of a well-structured and tailored mentor training programme, resulting in improved teaching practices, better student outcomes, and a more positive learning environment.

**Activity 1.1.5:** Support the inception of the mentoring system and the deployment of 1,000 mentors for 6 months

The Action will support MER by covering the costs for 1,000 mentors for a period of the first 6 months of their activity. Initially, the institution will have 2 major cost categories, salaries for NIEL staff and salaries for the mentoring network to become operational in September 2024, when 1,000 mentors will have been recruited and trained for this role.

Meanwhile, MER and MoF have already engaged in consultations to secure funding to cover mentoring costs within the NIEL. Once there is a clear understanding of the resources needed, a budget will be allocated for the mentoring programme by the MoF and take over the initial support provided under this Action. The action budget will include expenses related to communication, materials, training, and any other costs associated with the mentoring relationship secured in the MTBF.

**Output 1.2: The revised continuous professional development - CPD package (in-service teacher training is implemented nation-wide and validated (DS-2030, General Objective 3, 6), based on the EU policies and best practices in the provision of tailored high quality development programmes (DS-2030, General Objective 6, 7) and equipping the teaching workforce of the country with STEAM education skills (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 6)**

**Activities under Output 1.2:**

**Activity 1.2.1:** Development of new in-service teacher training programmes and materials for preschool, primary, lower secondary levels, and upper secondary levels according to the national standards of teaching quality and based on the needs for in-services training determined by INEL (complementary to MP, Objective 2.1)

Interventions under this result will seek an improved access to quality new in-service teacher training programmes and materials tailored to different levels of education (preschool, primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary) and aligned with national standards of teaching quality.

In this regard, the project will facilitate the:

- Needs assessment to understand the specific challenges and requirements of teachers at each level. This can involve surveys, focus groups, interviews, and observations to identify the areas where teachers need improvement.
- Alignment with national standards to ensure that training programmes and materials are designed to address these standards, focusing on key competencies and skills expected from teachers.
- Alignment of each programme's goals and objectives to the needs assessment findings and the national teaching standards.
- Development of interactive and engaging training materials that cover a range of topics relevant to each level of education. This will include pedagogical approaches, subject-specific content, classroom management strategies, assessment techniques, and technology integration, etc.

- Differentiated instruction will recognize that teachers have diverse backgrounds and levels of experience and learning styles.
- Collaboration with experienced educators, subject-matter experts, and curriculum specialists to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the training materials.
- Assessment and feedback to measure the participants' progress through quizzes, assignments, or peer evaluations to help teachers understand their strengths and areas for improvement.
- Long-term support offered beyond the training sessions. This will involve mentorship, online resources, and communities of practice where teachers can share experiences and continue their professional development.

The supported activities will focus tailoring approaches to the specific needs of each education level and aligning with national teaching standards to create impactful programmes that contribute to the professional growth of teachers and ultimately enhance the quality of education.

**Activity 1.2.2:** Development of the National Platform of Open Educational Resources (Government Action Plan (GAP) 2023, Actions no. 14,38)

This action will support the MER in developing the National Platform of Open Educational Resources, i.e., an online portal that hosts a wide range of educational materials that are freely available for educators, students, and the public.

The design and format of the Platform will consider Recommendation on OER, adopted by UNESCO, the first international normative instrument to embrace the field of openly licensed educational materials and technologies in education.

The resources can include textbooks, lesson plans, videos, interactive simulations, and other educational content that is openly licensed and can be used by anyone. Its creation and concept will involve various stakeholders, including educators, curriculum developers, subject matter experts, students, parents, and policymakers. Special attention will be paid to the design that should be accessible and inclusive for all children, including children with SEN.

The platform will have features such as easy navigation, robust search capabilities, and metadata tagging to aid resource discovery. A quality control system will be established to ensure the quality and accuracy of the resources on the platform. Also, mechanisms for gathering feedback and insights from users to make regular updates and improvements to the platform will be established.

A sustainable funding model will be envisaged for the platform's maintenance and growth. This could involve partnerships with government agencies, educational institutions, foundations, and private sector entities.

Developing a National Platform of Open Educational Resources is a complex endeavor that requires collaboration among various stakeholders, technical expertise, and a commitment to open and accessible education. The design and format of the platform will be based on MER priorities and will also include resources for teacher professional development, certification of teachers' competencies, and will generally encompass the following functionalities and aspects:

- Storage of digital educational content.
- Storage of digital school manuals.
- Mechanisms for digital assessment/testing of students, educators, etc.
- Collection of feedback on digital content.
- Communication between users through the Platform.
- Self-assessment of knowledge.
- Diversification of teaching/learning processes.
- Access to quality educational content for minorities.
- Adapted functionalities for access by students with SEN.

- Unlimited and continuous access to digital educational resources.
- Access from any relevant ICT device.
- Teachers' ability to store their own educational resources.
- Ensuring confidentiality and security of personal data and content.
- Collaboration with other institutions (universities, private sector, etc.) for content development.
- Providing support and assistance for platform usage, etc.

The goal of the activity is to ensure free access to quality educational materials and support innovative teaching and learning practices.

**Activity 1.2.3:** Adopt and apply DigCompEdu (EU Digital Competence Framework for Educators) to complement the programme on digitalization of the education sector (developed under Multiplier) (NDP 2023-2025, Action no. 3.2.19 and complementary to MP, Objective 1.1) (GAP 2023, Action no. 14,14, NDP 2023-2025, Action no. 3.2.2, 3.2.21)

Under this activity, the DigCompEdu, developed by the European Commission, will be adjusted to Moldovan context, approved, and applied. To achieve the rapidly changing demands for teachers, which require a broader set of digital competences, the DigComEdu is intended to support efforts in fostering educators' digital competence, by offering a common frame of reference, with a common language and logic. A structured approach to professional development opportunities will help establish areas and components of teacher pre-service and in-service training programmes for developing digital competencies, based on the DigCompEdu.

First, the DigCompEdu will be approved by MER Order to familiarize teachers and managers with the DigCompEdu, its components, and its purpose. Next step will be the possibility for teachers to assess their existing digital skills and competencies and identify areas that need improvement. A robust methodology for the assessment of digital competencies among the teaching staff will be developed including the assessment criteria and tools that comprehensively gauge the digital competencies of teaching staff, and the establishment of the certification process that validates the digital competencies acquired by the teaching staff, providing recognition for their achievements. Based on the identified gaps, teachers will set specific and measurable learning objectives for each competence area and level.

Accordingly, the training materials will be developed to match the planned activities under the 22 competencies, within the 6 areas. The training materials/content and resources will be correlated with level descriptors (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) of the DigCompEdu and will allow targeted teacher trainings to help teachers develop their digital competencies progressively.

This action targets adopting and applying DigCompEdu, a non-linear adaptive process, which will involve active and peer learning, continuous practice using various digital tools and platforms to build confidence and proficiency, insights into the impact of the digital competencies on educational outcomes, validation through certifications or assessments that align with the DigCompEdu, mentorship, and peer support.

**Output 1.3: Lifelong learning opportunities for adults are enhanced and promoted, equipping adults with indispensable digital skills and support their empowerment in the digital age**

**Activities under Output 1.3:**

**Activity 1.3.1:** Design and support the implementation of a national programme of digital skills for adults

By supporting human capital development through lifelong learning opportunities, this activity aims at creating an enabling environment for promoting digitalization both at school and educational system level, as well as community level (parents/family members, caregivers, etc). This activity responds to the Government's priority of promoting digital literacy

among adults, as mentioned in the DS-2030 and National Digital Transformation Strategy. The implementation of this activity will involve adapting and adopting the European Framework for Digital Competence, DigComp 2.2. Following the approval of the framework, the next step will be conducting an assessment of the current digital skills, designing a tailored programme for various target groups among adults, and rolling out the programme for one of the groups. The assessment will help identify gaps, while piloting the programme with a specific demographic will provide valuable feedback which could be obtained before scaling up. Efforts will be made to secure additional funds for sustainability and expansion, involving engagement with relevant stakeholders (i.e. MER, development partners, private sector, civil society organizations, etc). This comprehensive approach aims to bridge the digital skills gap among adults and empower them for success in the digital era.

The proposed activities are complementary to other ongoing assistance from external partners or forthcoming support, notably (not exhaustive though) the various grants from the GPE and the planned World Bank Development Programme.

### **Specific Objective 2: Improve equitable access for all children to quality education, promoting the development of an inclusive, digital, and resilient education system**

The activities under this Specific Objective will support MER in further reforming the RCPA and PASs aimed at supporting the enrolment and retention of vulnerable children (with physical imparities, from social or economic vulnerable families and ethnic minorities) into preschool, primary and secondary schools. The activities will focus on the upgrading the infrastructure, strengthening the capacities of RCPA and PASs professionals through the provision of ICT for RCPA and mobile teams, trainings on the use of AT and new models of planning, decision-making and educational management. Inclusive digital pedagogy skills will be enhanced and supported by the Digital School project, integration of STEEAM approaches in teaching/learning process and development of digital contents.

This Specific Objective is aligned to General objectives 2, 4, 5, 6, 9 of the DS-2030, and the foreseen activities will support the Ministry in the implementation of the NDP 2023-2025. It will in addition aim at supporting the education sector response to the needs of the refugee children, and particularly activities aimed at facilitating the integration of refugee children into the Moldovan education system. Potential activities on these specific aspects will be informed by the ongoing assessments, which should provide information regarding the possible needs to reinforce the school's capacity to integrate children for the next school year, or for the implementation of other activities to support refugee children continuity of access to education.

#### **Output 2.1: Improved preparedness of the education system including RCPA/PASs, to provide education service targeting children with disabilities and SEN (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 4, 5, 6, 9)**

##### **Activities under Output 2.1:**

**Activity 2.1.1:** Strengthen the RCPA and PASs in 35 rayons/districts (development of by-laws and regulations, up-grade of RCPA's infrastructure, mobile teams, provision of ICT/AT, etc.) for increasing access, engagement, and participation of children with SEN in education (Complementary to MP, Objective 2.3)

This activity aims to support the re-organization of the RCPA and PASs to improve the quality, accessibility, and effectiveness of services aimed at supporting individuals' psychological and educational needs.

The activity will contribute to the development of a comprehensive framework that will outline the standards, procedures, and guidelines for delivering effective psycho-pedagogical support in the context of the re-organized RCPA and PASs. Mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of psycho-pedagogical services will be established.



The infrastructure of RCPA and PASs will be upgraded to improve the efficiency, reliability, and functionality of various systems. Infrastructure upgrades will focus on technology, and equipment (hardware, software, networking components, or machinery) utilities based on the previously identified areas for equipment.

Mobile teams for psycho-pedagogical support or specialized groups of professionals who provide psychological and pedagogical assistance to children and adolescents, who are facing emotional, behavioral, or educational challenges will be set up by RCPA and PASs. These teams are designed to be flexible and responsive, as they can travel to various locations, such as schools, community centers, or even homes, to deliver their services. These teams consisting of pedagogues, psychologists, therapists, social workers will take a holistic approach to address the individual's needs. They will consider psychological, educational, social, and familial aspects, recognizing that these factors are interconnected and can influence each other. Mobile teams might offer both preventive and intervention services. They can help individuals build coping skills, emotional resilience, and effective communication, as well as provide immediate support in times of crisis.

The activity also targets the provision of ICT and AT like tools, devices, software, and resources designed to help children, including children with physical, sensory, cognitive, and communication impairments overcome challenges and improve their quality of life. The provision will follow an assessment of the individual needs, abilities, and existing level of equipment to ensure the most suitable device for the person's unique circumstances. The selection of the appropriate device will depend on the children's needs and preferences. Providing effective AT will involve collaboration between various professionals, including occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, physical therapists, and technology experts.

**Activity 2.1.2:** Strengthen the capacities and skills of 40 managerial staff of RCPA and PASs and 3000 didactical cadre nation-wide working on IE and use of digital materials and AT and 2500 parents/caregivers on use of digital and assistive devices (technologies) (Complementary to MP, Objective 2.3)

The action targets strengthening capacities and skills on IE and using digital materials and AT for creating an inclusive learning environment that caters to the diverse needs of all children.

The comprehensive approach to achieve this goal will include:

- Teacher training on inclusive education principles, strategies, and practices. This will include understanding diverse learning needs, adapting teaching methods, and fostering a supportive classroom environment.
- Ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers to stay updated on the latest advancements in assistive technology and digital resources.
- Curriculum and instructional design for the development of curriculum materials that are adaptable to different learning styles and abilities. These materials will incorporate a variety of formats, such as text, images, videos, and interactive elements designed to promote collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving, utilizing digital platforms and tools.
- AT Integration and training of teachers, parents, and caregivers on the various types of AT available, such as screen readers, speech-to-text software, and communication devices. Ensure that teachers, parents, and caregivers are proficient in selecting and integrating the appropriate AT based on students' specific needs.
- Development of a repository of digital resources, including textbooks, educational apps, videos, and interactive simulations, which cater to different learning preferences and abilities. Ensure that digital materials are accessible to all students by adhering to accessibility standards, such as providing alt text for images and closed captions for videos.
- Encourage collaboration between general education teachers, special education teachers, and other specialists.
- Promote peer learning and support within the classroom, where students can help each other use AT and navigate digital resources.

- Involve parents and caregivers in the education process by providing them with information about inclusive education practices and AT.
- Facilitate media and social media campaigns, community engagement and promote materials that highlight the importance of diversity and inclusion.
- Organize workshops and seminars to raise awareness and understanding about the benefits of inclusive education and the use of digital tools.
- Establish mechanisms for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of inclusive education practices and the impact of assistive technology usage.
- Collect feedback from students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to make informed improvements.

**Activity 2.1.3:** Support MER to ensure improved access to education at preschool, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels for all children with SEN through the development and approval of accessibility standards, AT standards, procurement of ATs, training of didactical cadre and caregivers on use of ATs and infrastructure adjustments in 10 model/aspirational schools to increase accessibility (Complementary to MP, Objective 2.3)

This activity aims to support MER with the development and approval of accessibility standards for children with SEN) to ensure improved access to education and promote inclusivity in educational settings. These standards are designed to provide a framework that educational institutions can follow to create an environment that accommodates the needs of all students, including those with SEN. Before defining the standards, MER will engage with educators, parents, students, special education experts, disability organizations, and other stakeholders to understand the diverse needs and challenges faced by children with SEN. Key areas where accessibility standards are needed, such as physical infrastructure, technology, transportation, and support services will be identified and clear and comprehensive standards that address these areas will be developed.

The accessibility standards will be aligned with existing laws and policies related to education and disability rights and policymakers/legislators will ensure that the standards become an integral part of educational policy.

Next step will envisage equipment of 10 schools with the necessary resources and tools to meet the standards, including AT and support services. Part of this activity will be raising awareness among the public, educators, and parents about the importance of inclusive education and the benefits of accessibility standards for children with SEN.

Infrastructure adjustments will take into consideration the physical accessibility (ramps, wider doorways, and accessible restrooms, etc.), sensory environment (appropriate lighting, acoustics, and calming elements for children with sensory sensitivities like autism), adjustable desks and chairs, to accommodate children with physical or sensory challenges, visual aids like clear signage, visual schedules, and color-coded cues to help children with communication and organizational difficulties navigate the environment, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices for children with communication disorders who may have difficulty expressing themselves verbally.

The development and approval of AT standards will help provide educational software and apps that cater to different learning styles and abilities, allowing children with SEN to engage with content at their own pace. In this context, training to educators, parents, and caregivers on how to effectively use AT devices and software to support children with SEN will be provided. Collaboration with special education professionals, therapists, and parents will envisage the creation of personalized plans that address each child's specific needs and goals.

**Output 2.2: Inclusive digital pedagogy skills and STEAM skills of teachers are enhanced based on the EU policies, best practices of school digitalization and development of digital content (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 6, 7)**

**Activities under Output 2.2:**

**Activity 2.2.1:** Development of the conceptual project for the Digital School and endowment of 10 model/aspirational schools including renovations (for up to 4000 children) for integrating STEEAM approaches in teaching/ learning process. This intervention will complement the education digital ecosystem developed under the Multiplier Grant (complementary to MP, Objective 2.1)

The action refers to the digitalization of the education process based on the implementation of digital pedagogy and STEEAM education approaches. The vision and mission of the Digital School will be clearly articulated, by outlining the structure, goals, curriculum design, technology integration. The curriculum will include the core subjects that will horizontally promote and develop digital literacy, problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, and soft skills. The principles of integrating technology into the learning process will be outlined and will include using tablets, laptops, educational software, virtual reality, and online collaboration tools to enhance learning experiences. Also, the qualifications and roles of the teaching staff, technology experts, administrators, and support personnel will be described.

The concept of Digital School will guide the process of endowment of 10 model/aspirational schools with the physical and digital infrastructure required and minor physical upgrades if it is necessary, including classrooms, labs, high-speed internet, devices, and any specialized equipment needed for inclusive digital education. Main steps will include:

- Evaluate the existing infrastructure, such as classrooms, labs, technology, and equipment, to determine what can be repurposed or upgraded for STEEAM activities.
- Collaborate with educators, curriculum specialists, and STEEAM experts to design a comprehensive and integrated STEEAM curriculum that aligns with national educational standards.
- Develop project-based learning modules that encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration and hands-on experiences.
- Provide professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance their understanding of STEEAM concepts and teaching methodologies.
- Offer workshops, seminars, and online courses to help teachers effectively implement STEEAM activities in their classrooms.

The school curriculum will be reviewed to identify opportunities to infuse STEEAM elements and the teaching staff will be familiarized with the core principles of STEEAM education and how each component (Science, Technology, Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Arts, and Mathematics) contributes to holistic learning. Purely theoretical seminars shall be avoided. Only practical, tailor-made, and opportunity-oriented measures will be pursued, fully synchronized, and correlated with the implementation of the activities under this component.

Thus, this activity aims to develop, promote, and highlight the concept of Digital School, its unique features, benefits, and innovative approach to education. The long-term sustainability of the school and the strategies for adapting to technological changes will help scaling up the project over time.

The targeted schools will later become model/aspirational schools, as foreseen by the DS-2030 and Government Decision No 916/2020 on the Approval of the National Programme on Cities' Poles of Regional Growth. The above legal framework will further ensure the institutionalization and sustainability of this intervention.

**Activity 2.2.2:** Development of Guides for elaboration of digital contents (teaching and learning design) for preschool, primary, lower secondary levels. Design and piloting of a STEEAM programme in at least 10 model/aspirational schools covering preschool, primary and lower secondary levels, including STEEAM teacher trainings. This intervention will complement the education digital ecosystem developed under the Multiplier Grant (complementary to MP, Objective 2.1)

The action refers to the development of digital contents for preschool, primary, lower secondary levels by teachers. A Guide for elaboration of digital contents for different school levels will be elaborated to support teachers in creating engaging and effective digital educational materials that cater to the specific needs and abilities of children. Preschool digital content will mainly focus on interactive playing activities - interactive games, puzzles, and activities that promote basic cognitive and motor skill development, use of colorful images, animations, and short videos to convey concepts and creating stories that teach moral values, social skills, and early literacy concepts through relatable characters and situations.

For primary and lower secondary levels multimedia elements such as audio, video, and images to explain complex ideas in an accessible manner, interactive quizzes and assessments that provide instant feedback and reinforce learning, virtual science experiments and simulations that enhance understanding of scientific concepts, design games that teach math, grammar, and other subjects through gamified learning experiences, digital worksheets with interactive elements that help students practice problem-solving and critical thinking skills. etc. will be recommended for elaboration in the Guide. The Guide will also include methodological and practical instructions, tutorials on the stages, actions, and steps necessary for the creation of digital content.

STEEAM teacher trainings will integrate various disciplines to promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity. Teachers need a strong foundation in each of the STEEAM disciplines to effectively integrate them. Training will focus on deepening their understanding of science, technology, engineering, entrepreneurship, arts, and mathematics concepts. Workshops and training sessions that involve creating projects, conducting experiments, and solving real-world problems will be organized to include strategies that promote inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and collaborative activities. An important aspect will be the focus on how different STEEAM disciplines are interconnected. Teachers should learn how to facilitate cross-disciplinary projects and help children see the relationships between subjects. Educators will also be guided on how to assess STEEAM skills because traditional testing may not always be suitable; therefore, alternative assessment methods like portfolios, presentations, and project evaluations should be covered. Peer learning mechanisms will significantly enhance the effectiveness of the training. Also, teachers will be provided with a variety of resources, including lesson plans, activity ideas, and reference materials that they can use in their classrooms.

Finally, this activity also supports designing and piloting of a STEEAM programme in at least 10 model/aspirational schools based on the created educational content.

**Specific Objective 3. Upgrade learning environments through renovation of selected school infrastructures and facilitate the development of the 21st century skills, contributing to better education opportunities for pupils/students and improved efficiency of the school network**

This component aims at increasing quality, relevance, and efficiency of learning. It will support MER in enhancing the learning environments and improving the teaching-learning conditions by setting up modern learning spaces, improvement of school infrastructure of 10 model/aspirational schools. It will also aim at redesigning existing STEEAM learning spaces to facilitate better learning, provision of modern technologies and teaching-learning resources and support the roadmaps for continuous development of digital learning space. The activities will ease the accessibility of students from remote areas to the model/ aspirational schools through the purchase of 10 school buses and development of an integrated national system for school bus management.

**Output 3.1: Modernization of 10 model/aspirational schools. This includes targeted infrastructural support of variable nature, equipment with educational technologies, support to the establishment of an integrated school**

**transport system and strengthening of STEEAM education and digital skills of teachers (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 6, 7).**

**Activity 3.1.1:** Support the development of 10 model/aspirational schools through infrastructure investments and improvement of learning spaces (complementary to MP, Objective 2.1).

This activity envisages the selection of 10 model/aspirational schools, and their transformation into model/aspirational schools through investment into physical and digital infrastructure and quality of educational process. The criteria for the selection of schools will be decided in collaboration with the MER. The exact interventions will vary according to the needs of the selected schools (according to criteria to be agreed at project inception with the MER). Following the selection, the project team will analyze the existing learning spaces for science subjects and will identify the needs and opportunities for upgrading the learning environment for increasing students' interest, engagement, and collaboration. Based on the best practices and models, including the frameworks by the EC Joint Research Centre, this activity will support the creation of a localized concept for digitally enabled modern learning space. Learning spaces in 10 participating schools will be renovated and upgraded as per the concept. This activity will also envisage raising awareness of the public about the modern school environment and best practices in Moldova to increase the image of education and encourage demand for similar development in the areas/schools where such practices might not be implemented yet. This activity will also inform the development of the Digital School concept by offering first-hand evidence on success factors, methodological insights, good practices, and lessons learnt from the schools involved in this specific exercise (Activity 2.2.1).

The 10 schools selected by the project will be supported with digital devices relevant for their innovative practices, enabling diversity in choosing the devices. Equipment will envisage both hardware and software, to be selected in line with the MER requirements and standards. In addition, the project will support the development of recommendations on sustainable development of maintenance of digital infrastructure for schools in terms of connectivity requirements, specifics, and relevance of several digital devices/software etc., including possible consolidation opportunities. Participant schools will be helped to develop roadmaps for continuous development of digital practices and needs, including consolidation of the maintenance of the digital infrastructure. The experience to be generated in the 10 schools will serve as best practices examples and reference for further planning and developments in the education sector.

**Activity 3.1.2:** Roll-out of digital transformation & STEEAM model in 10 model/aspirational schools, focusing on teachers' mentorship in using new educational technologies, adopting new pedagogical approaches, support the development of digital educational resources for science disciplines, and support the capacity of school managers to embark upon the process of e-transformation in education.

Design and roll-out a STEEAM programme in the 10 schools selected under Activity 3.1.1. The programme will focus on improving the quality of the educational process particularly for the science subjects in the upper secondary level. Its implementation will require pacing mentors in each school and providing training, mentoring, and coaching to teachers and management. The programme will be focused on three main components:

- I. Training for science teachers for adopting new pedagogies, integrating active learning methods (constructivist learning) in their daily teaching practice, integrate modern technology in teaching and integrating STEEAM and 21st century competencies. Through professional development initiatives, teachers gain the skills and knowledge to facilitate student-centered learning experiences. Additionally, they are trained in effectively integrating modern technology into their teaching practices, empowering them to create dynamic and engaging STEEAM lessons.
- II. Support the development of digital and non-digital educational resources for science subjects aimed at integrating STEEAM and 21st century competencies, as well as teachers guides. These resources will provide teachers with

the necessary support to effectively implement STEEAM-oriented lessons and activities after the end of the programme, ensuring the sustainability of results on the ground.

- III. Support the elaboration and piloting of career guidance mechanisms and activities in general education, to support students' career orientation and early acquaintance with the labour market. Special focus will be placed on orienting capable students, especially girls, towards STEEAM-related vocational and higher education programmes, as well as supporting initiatives for raising awareness and empowering learning of 21 century skills. By supporting the elaboration and piloting of career guidance initiatives, students will receive guidance and exposure to various career paths. This connection with the labour market will help them make informed decisions about their future and align their educational choices with their interests and aspirations.

The materials, training programmes, together with the lessons learned from the programme implementation will feed into the support to the development of new in-service teacher training programmes under Activity 2.1.1, jointly implemented by UNICEF and UNDP.

**Activity 3.1.3:** Facilitate the access of pupils from remote areas to quality education through endowment of 10 model/aspirational schools with 10 school buses (schools to be identified at project inception according to criteria agreed with Ministry of Education - see previous Act. 3.1.1.)

To support the optimization and consolidation of the school network and allow the reorientation of students from smaller schools from remote areas to the larger schools, this activity envisages the procurement of 10 schools' busses for the 10 model/aspirational schools identified in Activity 3.1.1. This will allow students, particularly from vulnerable groups, to get enhanced access to quality education, particularly in the upper secondary level. Through this investment into development of the transportation fleet, the Action will contribute to ensuring a functional transportation service that is a key element for the school network consolidation.

**Activity 3.1.4:** Developing an integrated national system for school bus management and purchasing GPS tracking technology.

To ensure the efficient and effective management of the school bus fleet, support will be provided for the development of a comprehensive and integrated system for school bus management, incorporating GPS tracking technology. The system would enhance the safety and efficiency of school bus operations, but will also provide real-time monitoring capabilities, ensuring the secure and timely transportation of students. In addition, the system would streamline the bus routes, optimize fuel consumption, and improve overall logistics, ultimately fostering a safer and more organized educational environment for students.

## IV. RELEVANT EXPERIENCE, LESSONS LEARNT AND INTERVENTIONS RATIONALE

### IV-A: UNICEF MOLDOVA RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

For the last three decades, UNICEF supported the key developments of the education sector with a focus on the development of national policy documents on education and positive parenting, national standards for Early Childhood Education (ECE) and general education, piloting and institutionalization of innovation, development of funding schemes for pre-school education, strengthening the system of inclusive education, addressing critical education gaps in coverage and quality of education and others. Thus, UNICEF Moldova has a strong comparative advantage to guarantee the successful realization of SDG 4 targets as lead UN agency working on Education sector strengthening.

Below is a list of some notable results achieved with UNICEF's support to the MER and other relevant stakeholders in Moldova:

- With UNICEF's advocacy, inclusion became a flagship goal of the National Education Strategies 2003-2027. Support provided for the promotion of inclusive education contributed to a four-fold increase in the number of children with SEN and children with disabilities in regular schools. More than 10,000 children with special needs are currently supported to learn in mainstream schools.
- Support to central and local authorities has resulted in the establishment of the "Child-Friendly Schools" model, promoting schools where all children feel safe, secure, and learn in a safe, pleasant, and productive environment. This was achieved by improving policies and by training teachers, strengthening the capacity of psycho-pedagogical assistance services at the central and local levels, and by piloting child-friendly schools in selected localities, and advocating for scaling them up. Consequently, Child-Friendly School Standards and a School Readiness Tool were adopted by all schools and pre-schools in Moldova.
- Psycho-pedagogical assistance services were set up and the capacity of their staff was strengthened to support education of children with SEN and children with disabilities in regular classes and schools.
- Effective advocacy, technical and financial support ensured the first steps towards integration of Roma children in regular schools.
- Educators, health workers and social assistants promoted positive parenting and supported young children's learning. A total of 17 pedagogical profile faculties now prepares teachers for inclusive education based on the child-centered approach.
- The global initiative on out-of-school children "All in School" was launched and schools received instructions on how to prevent and address school dropout. The communication campaign "Come with me, this is your school too" encouraged parents and teachers to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in regular classes.
- With GPE support, significant achievements were reached in the reform of the preschool education sub-sector through the development of the first child centered Curriculum, Early Learning Development Standards and School Readiness Tool; pre-and in-service training of professionals on child-centered methodologies nationally; piloting and institutionalization of alternatives to preschools, Community Centers and their inclusion into the Education Code; renovation and equipment of 50 preschools including their access to WASH; setting up and equipment of around 60 Community Centers in localities without preschools including Roma densely populated villages; increase in enrollment by 12 per cent points within a 8 year period; sharing of the best practices and lessons learned regionally and globally etc.
- UNICEF, as Grant Agent for Education Sector Programme Implementation Grant (ESPIG) under the partnership with Global Partnership for Education (GPE) supported MER to develop a new long-term DS-2030 and the National Programme on Development of Inclusive Education 2023-2027.

- Strengthening the quality of education in pre-schools and schools in Ungheni and Cahul through the provision of child-centred and inclusive learning are undergoing under the EU4Moldova. Thus, 523 preschool teachers, 466 primary school teachers, 22 national trainers-mentors, 24 local (shadow) trainers-mentors, and 46 kindergarten methodologists, educators and preschool inspectors from Cahul and Ungheni are being capacitated in formative assessment.
- About 10,000 (80 %) of educators enhanced their basic and advanced digital skills during the national campaign on digitalization and adjustment to the individual needs launched by MER in cooperation with UNICEF Country Office. The indirect beneficiaries are the 134,158 (89 percent) pre-school age children nationwide.
- With UNICEF's advocacy, the Education Code was amended by the Parliament to regulate bullying in schools. Two interactive e-courses, guidelines, and useful materials to address bullying in schools were developed to build the capacities of education professionals, parents, and adolescents; more than 2,000 teachers, over 600 adolescents aged 10-16 and 1,000 parents were trained to identify and respond to bullying; a national awareness-raising campaign on bullying phenomenon was conducted; an online page [stopbullying.md](#) with useful materials for children, parents and professionals was developed and launched.
- With UNICEF support, 2 new EMIS modules for pre-school and children with disabilities were developed. 3000 early education professionals, including 100 % of national EMIS Focal Points, strengthened their capacities to report via the new EMIS pre-school module by providing real-time information on the situation in pre-schools, including infrastructure and access to WASH facilities.
- UNICEF renovated 2 kindergartens in 2021 under the EU4Moldova: focal regions programme. Joint financing partnerships with LPAs from Cahul and Ungheni were secured for this purpose.
- UNICEF Moldova supported in 2016 the MER in piloting of 10 group creches model based on demand that were internationally evaluated as being cost-efficient and feasible. To build on lessons learnt, UNICEF is supporting now the MLSP and Parliamentary Committee on Health and Social Protection to develop the National Programme on Alternative Childcare Services for 0-3 y.o. and support the local public authorities in setting-up 10 more group creches in preschools to expand ECE services and strengthen ECE capacities.
- To strengthen the ECD component, UNICEF Moldova has undertaken ECD Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) studies in 2006, 2009 and 2018. To compare the results and identify priority areas of intervention, a new ECD KAP study is undertaken and is to be finalized by July -August 2023. To improve parent's practices related to stimulation and child development, UNICEF is launching Bebbbo application designed to reach and support parents with children aged 0-6 years, with comprehensive, evidence-based information and interactive tools to cover a wide range of children's health and development, including: early learning, health, nutrition and breastfeeding, protection and safety, responsive parenting, and wellbeing of parents.
- For the last decade, UNICEF in partnership with Technical University of Moldova supported STEAM learning programmes such as GirlsGoIT, which is an umbrella programme that started in 2015 with a variety of interventions focusing on integrating girls in the ICT sector. The range of activities includes year-long ICT trainings, internship placements with private companies in ICT, summer schools and a "STEAM on Wheels" van, bringing education to rural and remote areas of Moldova. The UNICEF Office of Innovation funding, disbursed in 2022, mainly focused on the "STEAM on Wheels" concept. UNICEF in partnership with implementing partners redesigned a van with equipment for immersive learning with features such as: mini 3D printers, DIY robotics, virtual reality sets and drones, as well as materials for outdoor workshops and learning. The van includes Arduino kits, used to teach hardware STEAM skills and computers, used to present basic concepts in coding. These workshops target girls from 14-24 but are also open to boys' participation. The mobile van workshops coordinate with local public schools (specifically the informatics teachers in the schools) to align this informal skills training with formal education. The workshops aim to spark interest of adolescent youth to learn more about STEM fields; participants are then



provided with an opportunity to participate in additional programmes, such as the summer schools, internship programmes and other GirlsGoIT initiatives.

#### Support provided during the COVID-19 pandemic

In April 2020, more than 190 countries instituted national school closures, putting up to 1.6 billion students at risk of falling behind at great cost to their education and futures. In response, UNICEF co-designed and supports implementation of the "Reimagine Education" global initiative, which aims at addressing the learning crisis and transform education by giving children and young people equal access to quality digital learning.

As a Chair of the United Nations (UN) Coordination Task Force on Education in the country, UNICEF convened and contributed to the coordination of UN efforts in prevention of COVID 19 pandemic in preschools and schools through joint fundraising, leverage of resources and capacity building of didactical and non-didactical cadre, and LPAs representative.

More specifically UNICEF MCO contributed toward:

Development of Regulations for re-opening of pre-schools and schools.

- ✓ Development and implementation of the COVID-19 Education Response Plan.
- ✓ Development of Regulations for re-opening of pre-schools and schools.
- ✓ Development of Guides and Protocols for teachers, students, and parents on prevention of pandemics and application of safe behavior in schools and outside them.
- ✓ Training of all teachers in preschools and schools on the safety measures for prevention of COVID-19 in education institutions.
- ✓ Provision of disinfectants and prophylactic equipment to all schools and preschools to cover the first three months of the new school year (1,000 liters of disinfectants and 4,600 gloves for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance Services in all districts; provision of over 10,000 masks with screen for children with hearing disabilities and staff who work with them).
- ✓ Provision of 295 web cameras for schools and the Republican Centre for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance.
- ✓ Implementation of the second national campaign on digitalization through capacity building of 80% of educators on enhancement of digital skills and all ECE Education Management Information System's Focal Points for preschools nationally.

With GPE support, UNICEF provided 663 education packages for children with SEN from primary school and kindergarten and 105 laptops for school digital libraries in all districts and trained 80% of all preschool teachers on the work with parents.

Support provided to Ukrainian Refugee response:

UNICEF MCO in close collaboration with the MER and implementing partners is ensuring the continuity of learning and equitable access to inclusive, safe, and quality education for refugee and vulnerable children and adolescents in Moldova. Along with the Education sector partners, UNICEF MCO continues to promote school enrolment of Ukrainian and vulnerable children in Moldovan schools, and support children who continue online learning. As part of Ukraine Response interventions and in alignment with the RRP 2023, UNICEF MCO continues to scale up all education interventions to include Ukrainian children in the Moldovan education system including:

- Setting up Tech Labs in Moldovan schools nationally to ensure access to continuous learning for Ukrainian students in a safe learning environment while engaging Ukrainian teachers to monitor and mentor the learning process. In parallel, the Tech Labs will be used for provision of Romanian bridging classes, digital skills,

catch-up classes and MHPSS sessions. Launch of the Back-to-School Campaign in cooperation with MER to increase the enrollment rate of Ukrainian children in Moldovan schools.

- Mapping of the Ukrainian children with disabilities and vulnerable Moldovan children and their learning needs identification; procurement of AT to facilitate equitable access to and participation in education.
- Continue the provision of non-formal education activities through youth business hubs and youth friendly centers that are implementing UPSHIFT programme, STEAM on Wheels and GirlsGoIT training to adolescents including Ukraine young people.
- Support the work of the 15 existing Play and Learning Hubs (PLHs) established at the premises of the Refugee Accommodation Centers and setting up 15 new PLHs in the Community Centers to institutionalize Play and Learning Hubs to increase the capacities.
- UNICEF MCO also continues to co-lead the Interagency Refugee Education Working Group (IREWG) along with MER and UNHCR to enhance and strengthen the coordination of the interventions of education stakeholders in Moldova and the LEG, focusing on coordinating the development programmes in the Education Sector.
- Reach 37,690 refugees and Moldovan children through formal and non-formal education, including early learning, while 1,867 children were enrolled in the formal education system.
- Provide skills-development and resilience programmes for 17,532 adolescents in seven youth centres.
- Establish 15 play and learning hubs and two Blue Dots and youth-friendly spaces in Chisinau and Palanca.
- Reach 43,666 refugee and Moldovan preschool-aged children received didactic, learning, and recreational materials to ensure continuity of learning and enhance social cohesion
- Support the provision of hot meals targeting selected preschools and primary schools attended by refugees and local children, reaching a total of 10,564 boys and girls.
- Working with the Global Education Cluster and UNHCR, UNICEF supported training for local partners on Education in Emergencies, reaching 1,670 teachers, including 22 Ukrainian refugee teachers.
- UNICEF supported MER and UNHCR to develop a directive aimed at boosting the enrollment of Ukrainian children into formal education system of Moldova regardless their legal status or abilities. The directive is in force as of 5 September 2023.

## WASH in Schools

UNICEF works with schools to improve access to water, sanitation, and handwashing facilities and support menstrual health and hygiene in schools by improving WASH infrastructure and providing education, awareness, and communication materials in more than 100 countries. The UNICEF expertise was integrated into the previous WASH in schools' assessments (conducted in 2009 and 2016).

As a management partner of the Joint Monitoring Programmes [Home | JMP \(washdata.org\)](https://washdata.org), UNICEF monitors WASH at the household level and also in schools and health care facilities and reports focus on inequalities in service levels between rural and urban, sub-national regions, rich and poor and other population sub-groups where data permit.

As data availability improves the capacity of financial planning and prioritizing interventions to provide safely managed WASH services, UNICEF can provide the data collection and assessment tools and assist the national institutions in planning, prioritizing WASH interventions in schools.

#### IV-B: UNDP MOLDOVA RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

As the development arm of the United Nations, UNDP supports strategic capacity development initiatives to promote inclusive growth and sustainable human development working in Moldova for 30 years. UNDP's added value in promoting equitable sustainable development and social inclusion resides in applying a holistic approach to strengthening good governance and inclusive development, addressing these issues both horizontally (within and among ministries at the national level, local governments, public institutions, CSOs and businesses), and vertically (between the local and national institutions)

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluation confirmed that impactful results were delivered,<sup>29</sup> highlighting UNDP's comparative advantages, such as the ability to tap into local and international expertise networks, the capacity to swiftly respond to government's requests for assistance, the reputation of convening power<sup>30</sup> and being a credible and impartial partner.<sup>31</sup>

At the core of UNDP's work on promoting inclusive socio-economic growth lies a comprehensive approach to preventing the depletion of human capital, bridging the skills gap, enhancing competitiveness and private sector engagement, support innovation and enhanced access to services, connected to the local communities' development dynamics. As such, until present, UNDP's work in the education area spanned across several decades, going into supporting:

a) the policy changes to support a decentralized approach to educational service provision, as well as policy documents – such as 'Education and Human Development: Actual and Future Challenges', which contributed to the formulation of the Education Code for Moldova; Additionally, over the course of development of the DS-2030, UNDP provided substantial inputs to the strategy from the perspective of digitalization.

b) enhancing transparency, ethics and promoting anti-corruption in the education system – the *Ethics code for teachers* was developed in a participatory manner with the support of UNDP and is enforced since 2016. At the same time, young people from rural schools empowered to identify and test innovation solutions (including using innovative tools like gaming) and led anti-plagiarism and transparency in the education focused awareness raising campaigns (e.g. Aici nu se copiaza!, International Anticorruption Day campaign).

c) supporting (preschool, primary and secondary) educational infrastructure upgrading, including WASH facilities, as an element of community development.

e) Digitalization – fostering access to digital teaching and learning tools, methodologies, and cutting-edge ICT tools. For many years UNDP has been one of the go-to actors when it came to the digitalization in various areas, from justice, to public administration, social protection, education, and other areas of work. A few examples include: *i)* UNDP has supported the development of the National Digital Transformation Strategy, a high-level strategic document aimed at supporting the development of an innovative and inclusive digital society based on a modern infrastructure, with digitally educated people, pro-digital governance, a business community that makes full use of digital opportunities and a collaborative environment for stakeholders that fosters the innovative work of all and ensures sustainable human development. *ii)* In 2018, UNDP supported the development of the first School Management System, [www.studii.md](http://www.studii.md), and in 2021 support the extension of the platform with additional modules. During the pandemic, the system was the only distance management option for schools (in 2021 the platform had over 120 schools connected, with more than 90,000 registered users, among which more than

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)

<sup>30</sup> Highlighted in the final evaluation of the Democracy Programme, operating in a particularly politicized context of Parliamentary Development, February 2017

<sup>31</sup> UNDAF Final Evaluation.

4,000 teachers, 6,000 pupils, and 26,000 parents). *iii*) developing e-learning tools and materials for public servants and justice professionals, in cooperation with the Academy of Public Administration and the National Institute of Justice. More specifically, UNDP supported the Academy of Public Administration in the development of a e-learning platform for online and blending teaching/learning, including the development of dedicated thematic courses for public servants and local elected officials (e.g online course Migration and Development; introductory course for newly elected officials and local public servants). At the National Institute of Justice, UNDP has introduced e-admission and e-testing modules, enhancing the merit-based selection of NIJ trainees (future judges and prosecutors).

*Advancing quality of education in schools through digital means*

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, UNDP designed and piloted a model aiming to support and facilitate a smooth and efficient learning process through the implementation of digital practices and solutions to increase the resilience of schools in crisis situations. More specifically, the project aimed to improve the quality of education by supporting the development of an efficient digital culture in schools with the active participation of school community and emphasizes the importance of STEAM education. As a result, UNDP has provided a quick response structured around two components:

- I) Ensuring the presence of the basic ICT infrastructure, Internet connectivity, and digital tools; and
- II) Training teachers in digital pedagogy, supporting the development of digital resources

As a result, all 46 public schools in ATU Gagauzia received support in terms of modern equipment worth a total of 250,000 USD: UNDP procured 85 notebooks, 110 tablets, 20 smartboards with projectors, 47 interactive screens, and 90 pocket labs for interactive practical science lessons. It is worth mentioning that 55 laptops and 20 tablets were destined to be borrowed from schools by children from vulnerable families for completing projects requiring a computer. In addition, over the course of 2021, more than 140 teachers of science subjects from ATU Gagauzia were trained online in Introduction to Digital Pedagogy, with individual one-to-one coaching sessions provided to them following the training course for the practical application of the training material in class. A teachers' handbook to guide teachers in the implementation of digital pedagogy practices was also developed and made available to the teaching community.

In 2022, having attracted additional funds from the Government of Estonia and created partnerships with the Estonian institutions responsible for digital education, UNDP, following consultations with the MER, supported the extension of the portal [www.educatieinteractiva.md](http://www.educatieinteractiva.md), the first local constructor of digital educational resources. We are currently supporting the development of interactive digital exercises and learning materials for Physics for grades 6-12 in both Romanian and Russian languages, using the newly extended possibilities of the portal.

f) supporting girls' education in STEM areas - UNDP is helping access knowledge and learning opportunities that increase women's literacy, including on digital and STEM topics. Courses on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) were developed, comprised of 10 modules suitable for 11-17-year-olds (e.g. Scratch programming, WEB design, graphic design, robotics), and teachers' capacities were enhanced to deliver new courses based on a multi-disciplinary and applied approach. Over 340 girls from both banks of the Nistru river and refugee children have already gained/are expected to gain skills in programming, website development, and social media marketing, etc.

*Contributing to Tekwill in Every School:* As Moldova is struggling to produce (and retain) all its tech talent to the extent the market needs, the Tekwill in Every School programme, created in partnership with and financially supported by UNDP Moldova, decided to create impactful educational programmes that start with middle and high school students. In five years, since 2020, Tekwill in Every School had over 50,000 students enrol in optional classes learning graphic design, C++ programming, artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship, app development, and web development, and as of 2022, emotional intelligence and video storytelling taught by over 1,000 teachers from 333 schools (52% in urban areas and 48% in rural

areas). Additionally, these schools qualify to get access to modern equipment and refurbished learning spaces (Digital Labs) so that every student can learn in a modern, well-lit, and friendly environment. So far, 35 schools across Moldova have at least one Digital Lab on their premises, accessible to all students and at all times.

Another programme Tekwill in Every School programme launched in 2022 seeks to help Moldovan schools transition from content-based learning to competence-based learning, and broader digital transformation of the school – in terms of the teaching material and approaches. The Digital school programme involves 55 teachers and managers from 25 schools across Moldova learning the OECD Learning Compass methodology to use as supporting material to shift to a skills- or competence-based curriculum and develop customized strategic plans for each school on how to shift to digital pedagogy. This is complemented by STEAM-based learning technologies powered by Corinth to further develop such skills as problem-solving, data analysis, collaboration, etc. – Corinth providing access to their largest 3D models, AR/VR, and Microsoft Office providing access to Microsoft Office 365 for Education to support school's digital transformation of teaching and learning.

d) career orientation and civic education for young people.

h) skills development and labour market integration - i) working in cooperation with IOM, UNDP supported the development and piloting of the *mechanism for validating professional competencies obtained in informal and non-formal settings*, for circa 50 professional competencies, involving 10 Excellence Centers in more than 10 different areas. Together with piloting this mechanism, UNDP supported the development of all connecting procedures and regulations so that the National Employment Agency would be able to identify eligible unemployed candidates for validation and refer them to the validation institutions, as well as cover their costs. ii) At the same time, a *training and validation of the nanny's profession* was piloted with the "A. Mateevici" pedagogical college in Chisinau and is currently being extended to two new regions, while previously the qualification standards have been developed for the same profession. iii) responding to the refugee crisis, UNDP supported the skills and professional development of circa 300 refugees from Ukraine and local communities' members with the view to support their social and economic integration, by facilitating access to VET, Romanian language, and ICT training opportunities.

h) establishing business education systems and engaging the private sector for the development and delivery of the educational offer.

j) as well as supporting education across the conflict divide as a means to promoting trust and cooperation.

#### 4.1. Methodological Approaches

For the implementation of the action, several general development principles will be integrated and undertaken throughout the life of the project. In addition, several more specific approaches will be used, as follows:

Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals will guide the planning and implementation of activities. A three dimensions approach will be integrated, namely:

- All activities implemented within the Action will respect and contribute to the SDGs.
- Encouraging and instructing the development of outputs in a responsible way will be done throughout all implementation stages.
- Special attention will be paid to addressing SDG 4,9,10 throughout any content development or delivery activity.

**Integrated approach to development**, focusing on and adapting to the priorities and building on what already exists. Comprehensive capacity building for all engaged actors is essential and should be embedded throughout the activities of

the project, it is a transversal, multi-dimensional principle inserted in all specific objectives of the project. The action supports the implementation of the DS-2030 and operational plans, and will build on Government efforts in general, and school management at the local level. This is critical to ensure complementarity to the already initiated reforms and changes, alignment to the priorities set by the MER, and to consolidate the existent institutions and local infrastructure. This is critical for the sustainability of the activities supported. The capacity building intervention would tackle a wide range of topics of interest for a modern mentor and teacher.

**Systems-strengthening approach.** The Action will pursue a system strengthening approach, supporting the enhancement of the system capacities at various levels, ensuring alignment with MER policies, strategies, and plans, in compliance with standards and norms. This system strengthening approach aims at ensuring ownership and replicability of the activities by the national Authorities, as well as the sustainability of the investments. The Action will focus on stakeholders' capacities strengthening through two main complementary lenses: on one hand contributing to secure that the rights of all children are better respected, protected and fulfilled; and on the other hand, contributing to the development of a skilled human capital equipped to tackle the modern labour market demands

**Logical sequencing of activities to increase synergies and impact.** The action is designed on a strong logical link between activities, looking for the critical path while pursuing a quality approach for the implemented activities. Synergies, complementarities, and consistency will be sought with the initiatives implemented by other donors and implementing partners (e.g., EU, UNICEF, USAID, UNDP, GIZ, IREX, etc).

**Participatory approach.** Participatory initiatives will focus on transforming the teachers who are sharing knowledge into teachers that create meaningful learning experiences, leverage technology to support learning, act as role models, mentor new members of their profession, making sure that education school graduates are truly ready for the complex challenges of today's classrooms. This principle will be embedded in all the activities and processes of the action, with an emphasis on the participation of teaching staff in development programmes, services design, evaluation of services, etc. which will lead to stronger and more inclusive communities and governance.

Throughout the action, flexibility and adaptability approach will envisage unexpected challenges to accommodate changes while keeping the overall objectives in view. An adaptive and agile project management will allow quality assurance to ensure that the project's deliverables meet the required quality standards.

**Human Rights based Approach (HRBA)** – is related to the principles of leaving no-one behind and reaching the furthest first by meaningfully involving beneficiaries, and by addressing challenges of those facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. It is extremely important to pay special attention on empowering the most disadvantaged groups to be properly engaged into the implementation processes.

**Non-discrimination/equality** - the Action will ensure greater equality between all children, by focusing on the most marginalized children, including gender-based discriminations. It will prioritize the most marginalized to close the gaps for those left furthest behind, by addressing the root causes and proposing lasting solutions.

Based on the specifics and substance of the activities diverse collaboration tools will be applied. Such approaches as literature review followed by the relevant localization/development by experts (e.g. competence frameworks); working groups involving local and international expertise (e.g. standards and guidelines); or engaging stakeholders through education hackathons followed by the acceleration programmes (e.g. possible approach for developing learning materials) will be applied, etc. Any development requiring pedagogical or didactical knowledge will be implemented in partnership with local universities delivering training for educators.

For designing training programmes for educators, the three core designs for pedagogy will be considered:

- Subject-centered design - revolves around a particular subject matter or discipline. Subject-centered curriculum design describes what needs to be studied and how it should be studied. As this type of curriculum design tends to focus on the subject rather than the individual the learner-centered approach needs to be followed simultaneously.
- Learner-centered design - it takes everyone's needs, interests, and goals into consideration. It acknowledges that students are not uniform and adjust to those student needs - which is relevant for the project as there are different kinds of learners in focus. Learner-centered curriculum design is meant to empower learners and allow them to shape their education through choices.
- Problem-centered design is also a form of student-centered design. Problem-centered curricula focus on teaching students how to look at a problem and come up with a solution to the problem. This method is extremely relevant in case attitudes need to be changed.

The cross-cutting digital interventions in education will establish and increase trust and impact of digital transformation on education among relevant stakeholders, aiming at three core objectives: improving access to education, ensuring that society and future generations have the digital competencies essential to the 21st century and the digital era and empowering teaching and learning with the new methodologies and tools enabled by digital technology (how to learn and teach).

Throughout the action, a **human-centered approach** will be followed to clarify or reframe the problems preventing achievement of the objectives set.

#### 4.2. LESSONS LEARNT

Drawing experience from previous and on-going development programmes in the education sector, the main lessons learnt by the partners in indirect management of this EU Action are:

##### UNICEF lessons learnt

- The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the necessity of including separate provisions on response to crises into the new Education Sector Plan 2030 aimed at building a resilient education system. The pandemic expedited the opportunity of mainstreaming digitalization into the education process to ensure participation in learning (on-line, blended, catch up classes etc.) of all children, and the emerging need of advocating with the Government to secure education funding in the new Mid Term Budget Framework, prioritizing and covering the needs of most vulnerable children and young people.
- The findings of the undertaken UNICEF research and evidence-based advocacy convinced the Government and MER to include inclusive education, efficiency and efficacy of funding, digitalization, bullying including cyber-bullying, absenteeism and drop-out as priorities in their biennial programmes and action plans.
- The United Nations (UN) Education Task Force, led by UNICEF, helped to strategize the UN efforts in combating the pandemic in educational institutions, mobilizing additional financial resources, and ensuring access to and participation in continuous learning for children and youth including children with disabilities.
- The organized on-line training highlighted the need for additional training of trainers (TOTs) on two sides of communication aspects.
- The co-lead of the Inter-Agency Working Group for Education for refugee response has enhanced a better alignment of donor's implemented activities and national stakeholder's needs to provide better results for displaced children.

- Adolescent parenting programmes proved to have a greater impact when implemented at local level where LPAs understand the value of parenting for adolescents in difficulty and vulnerable groups of children left behind by migrant or poor parents. LPAs are directly interested in funding and sustaining parenting programmes that are targeting problematic cases of adolescents in their territorial areas because it alleviates the pressure put on other social services.
- The piloting of adolescent parenting programme CONNECT in Singerei, Cahul and Ungheni provided with high returns and increased interest from the local actors such as schools, youth clinics and LPAs as well as caregivers of adolescents in having local integrated services available for children and adolescent. As a result, 1,500 adolescents took part in the awareness raising campaigns on parenting, and more than 800 parents directly benefited from the parenting programmes. In 2021, CONNECT was fully digitized and delivered entirely online which made the programme cheaper for implementation, accessible during COVID-19 pandemic and easier for migrant parents to attend the online courses.

#### **UNDP lessons learnt:**

- Traditional sectors (e.g., publishing houses) in education will not react to the expectations to change without financial or regulatory incentives
- Using ICT in education simply for the sake of using ICT is not an option for education – integrating digital tools in a meaningful way to empower learning and teaching should be outlined as often as possible.
- If feasible, integration of the aspects of digital education into wider activities (e.g.: assessment, satisfaction surveys etc) and frameworks (quality assurance, inspection etc.) for education will create systematic understanding on where and why digital transformation is expected to bring value.
- Empowering the frontrunning schools and teachers (teacher associations, networks) in the field of digital transformation creates remarkable value for mainstreaming best practices across the country as well as creating new innovative practices. Collect and share best practices as much as possible.
- Involving stakeholders (students, teachers, school leaders, parents, local authorities, civil society organizations, community groups, private sector, researchers) at all stages of the intervention processes allows building ownership and accountability for project results and ensures that the assistance is demand driven.
- Shared understanding of the objective and transparency of the problem to be solved is the best ground for building reliable developments and solutions.
- A clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities among the shareholders enables a higher degree of engagement, internalization of good practices and knowledge, as well as ownership for the achieved results.
- Data-driven problem statement as well as setting target indicators structures but also enables experimentation with the means – result-oriented approach encourages autonomy end thereby taking responsibility among stakeholders
- Emphasis on communication is never overestimated when digitalization and education is concerned
- Digital transformation in education needs flexible platforms for experimentation and collaboration. Only after measuring the impact of the initiatives, relevant practices can be mainstreamed with regulation.

## **V. SUSTAINABILITY**

Ensuring sustainability of the project achievements will remain the highest priority of this action.

#### **Ownership and sustainability of partnerships:**

The sustainability of the Action will be ensured through engagement of relevant stakeholders. During the preparation of the project, national strategies, recent developments, as well as input from different stakeholders in Moldova next to international



best practices were considered. Throughout the implementation of the activities, operational models as well as networking platforms will be explored and established for continuous knowledge transfer and building. Within the project, several policy-proposals are planned to support the developments needed for Moldova in preparing for the accession with the EU. The participative approach will ensure ownership among stakeholders and lead to sustainability by promoting education development.

**Institutional sustainability: System strengthening and strengthening of capacities:**

**Systems-strengthening approach.** The Action will pursue a system strengthening approach, supporting the enhancement of the system capacities at various levels, ensuring alignment with MER policies, strategies, and plans, in compliance with standards and norms. This system strengthening approach aims at ensuring ownership and replicability of the activities by the national Authorities, as well as the sustainability of the investments.

One of the main emphases of the Action is the development of the capacities of schools, local and national government. Tailor-made capacity development programmes will increase the ability of all stakeholders to upskill based on their needs, level of skills and objectives. Learning from international best practices, research and creating space for innovation will contribute to smart and efficient pathways towards the objectives for the Action. The comprehensive approach taken with the Programme (addressing infrastructure, digital enablers (digital services, learning materials), teachers' professionalism, students' digital skills and labour market needs) is proven as a best practice in different countries (e.g., Estonia) to build overall capacity of all stakeholders involved.

**Financial sustainability:**

The action supports the implementation of the DS-2030 and operational plans. This is critical to ensure complementarity to the already initiated reforms and changes, alignment to the priorities set by the MER, and to consolidate the existent institutions and local infrastructure. This is also critical for the sustainability of the activities supported. The sustainability of the activities should therefore be ensured by a continued alignment to the Ministry strategy and dialogue on financial sustainability of the actions, ensuring that the MER and MoF will have the capacity to ensure the sustainability of the investments and systems.

The strategies may differ per output. For digitalization, to decrease the costs per school, centralized procurement will be applied. To increase the quality of provided services, national trainings on digital competences, inclusive education and use of AT will be organized for the didactical cadre, including specialists from RCPA and PASs. The development of curriculum and methodology on the assessment teachers' digital competences, developed under the GPE Multiplier Programme, will serve as a basis for the revision of the certification mechanism which will be developed under this intervention. Additional certification will lead to improved teachers' practices and behaviors, increase their efficacy and satisfaction, reinforce transversal as well as subject-based competences, less application of teacher directed instruction and use of adaptive methods that focus on meeting students' individual needs. These approaches will have a positive impact on students' performance and their learning outcomes.

For digital learning materials, the capacity of the EdTech sector, as well as publishing houses will be addressed and increased next to the design of innovative business models for sustainable development of the field and services, following Estonian and other countries successful experience. The project will assist MER in developing the e-learning platform that will support various online learning modalities for all schools' levels and provide accessible and environmentally friendly education and training for teachers. This platform will provide opportunities for teachers to further enhance their skills and competences in digital pedagogy.

Regarding any activity related to the capacity building of school leaders or teachers, the activities will be implemented with the objective of integrating the new programmes into ongoing training delivery portfolios, following the establishment of NIEL and the reconceptualization of the continuous professional development system. Also, the training of educators (e.g., professors in the teacher education universities) will contribute to the sustainability of the project outputs.

Throughout all activities, the exit strategy will be outlined systematically, and sustainability should be part of the dialogue with the MER on the activities of the project while assessing and addressing the responsibilities, capacities, and competences of stakeholders, as well as regulatory landscape of the specific topic.

## VI. Risk Log

The proposed plan is going to be fully aligned with the UNICEF Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Programme Guide.

The project team will promote protection mainstreaming principles to ensure that its programme and staff members do not cause harm to beneficiaries of the action. This includes i) prioritizing safety and dignity and avoid causing harm; ii) ensuring meaningful access; iii) promoting participation and empowerment of the people UNICEF and UNDP serve.

To this end, the project team will promote two-way communication where targeted populations are informed of their rights to access information, consulted in accessible and adequate communication channels and participating in design of the intervention.

Complaints and feedback mechanism (CFM) will be reinforced in consideration of barriers and challenges of different groups for access. Gaps identified through the CFM will be addressed by technical teams together with protection experts with mitigation measures.

Project team will be extensively trained on standards and practical guidance to avoid causing harm.

Risks	Risk level (H/M/L)	Mitigating measures
Low motivation of the stakeholders to be engaged in the project	L	Incentives will be introduced based on each stakeholder groups' interests (as committed by MER, salaries of teachers will be raised as of 1 <sup>st</sup> of January 2024 by 8%); RCPA and PASs will be equipped with ICT and AT; the staff of RCPA and PASs and parents/caregivers will be capacitated on the use of ICT and AT, etc. The types of incentives will vary for different education stakeholders: rewards and performance bonuses, training programmes or apprenticeships, funding of successful education projects, etc.
Low motivation of the school leaders to stimulate or enable teachers to attend trainings	M	Delivery of teacher training programmes will support the daily teaching work of the relevant teachers.: Training modules for school teams (school leader, teachers), including school-based, will be proposed
Modest uptake of the guidelines and frameworks developed	H	Further incentives and activities will be designed to introduce the implementation of the frameworks – teacher and student competition, digitally mature school award etc.
Low level of digital competences among general public for digital transformation in education	M	Examples of the best practices will be combined and disseminated to increase awareness, schools will be guided to share information with parents, researchers will be onboarded for evidence-based discussions
Increased costs of the activities due to the inflation in the world/in the country	M	The budget is calculated considering the inflation rate and possible more cost-effective solutions will be considered as alternatives where feasible (online or hybrid training instead of classroom training etc.)
Insufficient competence in the field of digital pedagogy and digital learning design in Moldova	H	International expertise will be included in the project team. Possible programmes for micro credentials in the field in other EU countries will be considered
The MER initiates changes in the financing mechanism, curricula, training of teachers or other fields related with the project but relevant to the project scope and outputs	L	The Programme is implemented in coordination with the MER to align with the strategic initiatives as well as consider the policies in the development processes

Political willingness to introduce changes in the education field is low due to the other critical matters (e.g., in energy field, etc.)	H	The outputs planned within the project will be developed in collaboration with the government representatives to support the Ministry in the relevant development aspects.
<b>Assumptions</b>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commitment from all stakeholders to work together for the implementation of the project.</li> <li>2. The beneficiary institutions make available the staff and relevant resources for the implementation of the programme.</li> <li>3. Maintaining peace in the country is essential for the successful implementation of the Action.</li> </ol>		

## VII. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Action is implemented in indirect management modality with the international organizations UNICEF and UNDP, pursuant to the legal basis of this budget implementation modality in Article 62.1 (c) and 156 of the EU Financial Regulation (FR 2018), and according to the respective Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement between the European Commission and the United Nations and the ex-ante Pillar Assessment of the two entities.

This project will be implemented directly by UNICEF Moldova in partnership with UNDP Moldova and governmental counterparts. UNICEF Moldova will be the Coordinator (Organisation) of this programme and will be responsible for producing outputs and use of resources. As such, it will bear the overall accountability for delivering the programme in accordance with the GCs and its applicable regulations, rules, policies, and procedures. UNDP, the partner, will co-implement Activity 1.2.1 under Output 1.2 in partnership with UNICEF, and will be in charge for the implementation of the Activity 1.3.1, under the Output 1.3, and the Activities 3.1.1 - 3.1.4 under the Output 3.1 improving quality, relevance, and efficiency of teaching and learning process at school level.

UNICEF will ensure coordination of the action through monthly project team meetings and constant communications with national authorities and stakeholders who are impacted by the project's activities and scope listed in the Description of the Action.

The EU Delegation to Moldova will be closely involved and consulted with regards to strategic decisions taken in the framework of the programme.

For the activities of the Action a multi-stakeholder approach will be followed to ensure wide participation and consensus. The main counterparts of this action will be MER, local stakeholders including representatives of the local educational institutions, civil society organizations, private sector, and academia.

Comprehensive participation, guidance and coordination of Action activities will be ensured through the Steering Committee, co-chaired by the Delegation of the European Union, UNICEF and UNDP, and with a permanent seat for the MER as main National Institutional stakeholder. It will also incorporate other key stakeholders with consultative roles, including representatives from pertinent line ministries on ad hoc basis (e.g., MoF, Ministry of Economic Development and Digitalization, etc.). Additionally, LEG members, E-Government Agency representatives, civil society, academia, school managers and relevant donors' representatives might be invited as observers and for broader coordination purposes.

UNICEF will take on the role of Secretariat for the SC, ensuring the preparation of the agenda for the meetings, coordinating the preparation of presentations, formal meeting minutes that comprehensively document all proposals and decisions. The SC's primary mandate is to provide guidance on the overall implementation of the Action. It will convene at least twice a year, or as deemed necessary to effectively monitor and evaluate programme outcomes, while maintaining continuous cooperation among all programme stakeholders.

The SC will assume responsibility for endorsing annual work plans, evaluating progress, and making informed decisions on proposals and recommendations put forth by its members. Furthermore, it will deliberate on specific implementation issues, ensuring optimal translation of activities into tangible outputs through well-planned monitoring and evaluation efforts. The SC will also facilitate collaboration among relevant partners and stakeholders, ensuring continuous and effective communication and coordination. In addition to its core functions, the SC will serve as a platform for sharing key programme results as well as discussing changes or challenges in the sector and proposing solutions.

**Specific Responsibilities of the SC:**

- Provide comprehensive guidance and direction to the Action, ensuring adherence to established constraints
- Offer guidance and consensus on potential countermeasures or management actions to mitigate specific risks
- Address any issues raised by the UNICEF Programme Manager and UNDP Project Manager
- Endorse annual work plans, appraise and/or review Progress Reports and provide direction and recommendations to ensure the delivery of outcomes in alignment with plans
- Agree on Selection Committees composition and selection criteria of beneficiaries to be supported (regions, schools, categories of teaching staff, etc.)
- Provide ad-hoc advice for exceptional situations
- Assess and agree on Programme substantive changes through revisions.

The SC is a mechanism for consultation and consensus-based steering of the Action.

The LEG will serve as an Advisory Board for the Action that is chaired by the MER, and includes the main counterparts described hereinafter, Delegation of the European Union to Moldova, UNICEF, UNDP, the WB, representatives from relevant central and local institutions, academia, civil society etc.

The LEG will also provide a forum for sharing the key results of the Action, as well as discussing changes or challenges in the sector and proposing solutions.

**Programme Management Structure**

UNICEF Moldova as Coordinator (Organization) will ensure the smooth implementation of the Action in cooperation with UNDP Moldova.

UNICEF Moldova and UNDP Moldova will be responsible for project administration including: organizing implementation of project activities, procurement of goods and services, recruitment of project personnel and national and international consultants, connecting to national and international expertise and knowledge networks etc., in order to ensure the timely and expedient implementation of project activities, including the provision of continuous feedback and information sharing among stakeholders.

The management of the programme will be performed on behalf of UNICEF through a project team lead by a dedicated **Programme Manager** who will be assisted by a project implementation team. The Programme Manager will be responsible for the management and coordination of all Programme activities.

UNICEF will assign the following programme staff to ensure successful implementation of related activities:

Staff Position	Responsibilities
Programme Manager	Responsible for the management and coordination of all Programme activities

*SG IG*

<b>Education Officer</b>	Responsible for overseeing and coordinating all education results under the Action, inter alia
<b>Finance Officer</b>	Responsible for financial management, and reporting
<b>Monitoring and Evaluation Officer</b>	Responsible for the overall monitoring and evaluation activities of the Action, inter-alia
<b>Communication Officer</b>	Responsible for all communication activities and results of the Action, inter-alia
<b>Project Associate</b>	Responsible for the overall administrative, financial, and logistic assistance
<b>UNICEF CO support staff: Operations Manager, HR, Supply and Logistics Officer, Driver</b>	Responsible for quality assurance and monitoring

UNDP Project management structure will include staff carrying out various tasks including technical assistance, administration, and management, such as a Project Manager, two Project Officers, a Finance and Procurement Associate, a Project Assistant/Driver. The tasks listed in the Description of the Action, undertaken by staff assigned to the project team are directly attributable to the implementation of the Action.

Staff Position	Responsibilities
<b>Project Manager</b>	Responsible for the management and coordination of UNDP project activities
<b>Project Officer (2)</b>	Responsible for the implementation of project activities
<b>Project Associate</b>	Responsible for overall financial management and procurement processes
<b>Project Assistant/Driver</b>	Responsible for administrative and logistical assistance
<b>UNDP Moldova Country Office support staff (quality assurance)</b>	
<b>Inclusive Growth Cluster, Programme Officer</b>	Responsible for quality assurance of programmatic interventions
<b>Inclusive Growth Cluster, Programme Associate</b>	Responsible for quality assurance for reporting and monitoring
<b>Gender and Inclusivity Analyst</b>	Responsible for quality assurance, advise and support to the Programme team on gender and inclusion issues

The Programme team will comprise full-time dedicated staff and part-time specialized staff to technically contribute to various project components and activities. The part-time specialized staff will be charged through direct project costs for the time spent directly attributable to the implementation of the Action.

### UNICEF and UNDP Quality Assurance

#### UNICEF assurance activities include:

- a. Programmatic visits: a component of programme monitoring, visits provide assurance that results reported by the partner are accurate. The objective of a programmatic visit is to obtain evidence on the status of the implementation of the programme as well as to review progress towards the achievement of planned results.

b. Spot checks: a review of financial records to obtain reasonable assurance that amounts reported by implementation partners are accurate. Spot checks are performed in the office of implementing partners where financial records are kept. Spot checks involve (1) Checking the IP's internal controls with respect to financial management, procurement and/or other controls required to implement the activities defined in the work plan; and (2) Reviewing a sample of expenditures to confirm that documentation supports the expenditures and that they are in accordance with the work plan and other United Nations regulations

c. Scheduled audit: a systematic and independent examination of data, statements, records, operations, and performance of an implementing partner carried out by an external service provider. For UNICEF, a scheduled audit is an internal control audit. A financial audit is conducted if the implementing partner is shared with another adopting agency and rated high or significant risk. The audit period is defined by the UNICEF office commissioning each audit and is typically one year.

d. Special audit: an audit performed when significant issues and concerns are identified during the programme cycle, often the result of findings of programmatic visits and spot checks.

Financial transactions and financial statements shall be subject to the internal and external auditing procedures laid down in the Financial Regulations, Rules, and Directives of UNICEF. Audits will be conducted in accordance with UNICEFs' audit policy to manage financial risk.

**Project Assurance** is a key element of the project management method, upon which the UNICEF and UNDP Programme Management Arrangements are based.

Specific 'Assurance' tasks are to:

- Ensure that risks and issues are properly managed and monitored, and that the logs are regularly updated
- Ensure that Programme Progress/Financial Reports are prepared and submitted on time, and according to standards in terms of format and content quality and submitted to the LEG and the EU.

**UNDP assurance activities include:**

**Quality assurance is required for all UNDP** programme and projects, regardless of their budget, size, location, duration, characteristics, context, or circumstances. The UNDP Internal Control Framework (ICF) covers key control factors such as planning, monitoring, communication, policies, procedures, segregation of duties, individual authorities and accountabilities that combined, inter alia:

- Safeguard assets from inappropriate use and loss from fraud and error,
- Help ensure the quality of internal and external reporting, through the maintenance of proper records and information flows; and
- Facilitate compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies.

Segregation of duties and control ensure that risks are mitigated and managed and provides clear accountability and appropriate management arrangements.

Expertise of international and national consultants (short and long term) will be sought to advise and support the implementation, as required.

During the project implementation, synergies, and linkages with other ongoing projects in relevant areas implemented by UN agencies will be maintained and strengthened.

The project management team will ensure results-based project management and successful implementation of the project within the 42 months programme period, close monitoring and evaluation of project progress, observance of procedures, transparency and efficient use of funds, quality of works, and involvement of local and regional stakeholders and beneficiary communities in the decision-making processes.

Financial transactions and financial statements shall be subject to the internal and external auditing procedures laid down in the Financial Regulations, Rules, and Directives of UNDP. Audits will be conducted in accordance with UNDP's audit policy to manage financial risk.

UNDP's other project office costs that will be incurred as a direct consequence of the implementation of this Project and can be traced and attributed directly to its management and execution, are foreseen as follows:

- Subsistence costs for missions/travel for staff and other persons directly assigned to the operations of the project offices are included in Heading 4 of Annex III- Budget of the Action;
- Travel costs for staff and other persons directly assigned to the operations of the project office are included in Heading 4 of Annex III- Budget of the Action;
- UNDP transportation costs, costs of IT equipment, computers, copying, scanning and printing equipment, network equipment, IT spare parts and supplies, furniture, etc., composing the UNDP project offices are envisaged in Heading 2&6 of the Budget (Annex III);
- Costs for the UNDP office is reflected in Heading 3&6 of the Budget of the Action, including publications costs (procurement of services of design, editing and printing), evaluation costs; translation and interpretation costs, costs of conferences/seminars; visibility actions, office rent, consumables - office supplies, other services (tel/fax, internet, electricity/ maintenance/repairs etc.), vehicle costs;
- Financial transactions and financial statements might be subject to the internal and external auditing procedures laid down in the Financial Regulations, Rules and Directives of the UNDP and the indicative budget allocated for this audit is identified in Heading 3;
- Provisions for staff costs (Inclusive Growth Cluster, Programme Officer, Inclusive Growth Cluster, Programme Associate and Gender and Inclusivity Analyst) will be charged based on the actual time spent in the implementation of this specific project.

### Visibility and Communication

Effective communication and visibility are essential for the Action as they serve as key elements for conveying the programme's objectives, progress, and impact to a wide range of stakeholders.

Transparent and coherent communication enables stakeholders to engage actively, provide valuable feedback, and hold the programme accountable for its outcomes. Through clear visibility measures, the Action can build recognition and credibility, further reinforcing its commitment to transparency and accountability. Ultimately, robust communication and visibility strategies are important tools that not only showcase the Action's commitment to its objectives but also empower communities and institutions to actively participate in the programme's success.

UNICEF and UNDP teams will conduct communication and visibility activities for the duration of the Action, for the development and implementation of multi-faceted communication products and using a variety of channels for their dissemination, to ensure effective targeting, reaching specific and/or broad audiences in accordance with the planned objectives.

Multiple communication channels and visibility actions will be used:

- Media engagement to ensure visibility and support the advocacy efforts of the programme

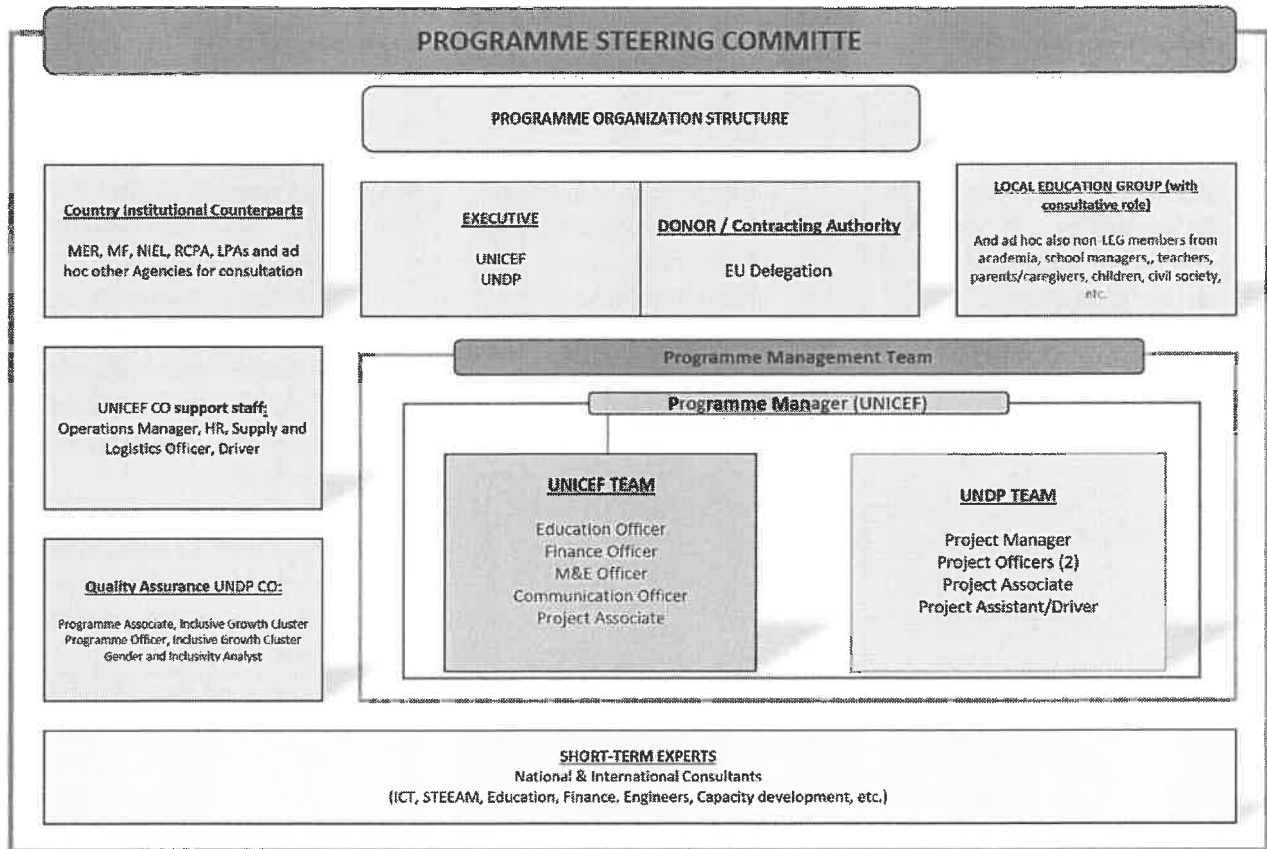


- Human Interest Stories, articles and similar media pieces of the milestones highlighting the role of the donor in this process
- Events and actions will also be a part of this project, and they will be used to share information, key info, and messages, and highlight the visibility of EU.

Objective of the action	Communications goal	Tools and means
Strengthen institutions and system for teachers' and school leaders' professional development and support the implementation of education policies to enhance quality of teaching and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Promote the reconceptualization of the teachers' and school leaders' professional development system and ensure support for the newly-created National Institute of Education and Leadership</li> <li>➤ Promotion of life-long learning opportunities</li> </ul>	<p>At least two press releases will be issued at significant milestones of the project together with updates of the project activities and progress, in which EU funding will be clearly acknowledged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regular updates on project activities and results on social media accounts and websites.</li> <li>➤ At least 5 human interest blogs, photo galleries, testimonies and stories (e.g. of students and teachers)</li> <li>➤ Campaign to promote National Programme for Digital Skills for Adults (testimonial, quote cards, special events for beneficiaries, catalogues)</li> </ul>
Improve equitable access for all children to quality education, promoting the development of an inclusive, digital, and resilient education system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Increase awareness on the need to ensure inclusivity of education and offer qualitative education services for children with disabilities and special education needs</li> <li>➤ Promote digital pedagogy and STEEAM skills</li> </ul>	<p>At least two press releases will be issued at significant milestones of the project together with updates of the project activities and progress, in which EU funding will be clearly acknowledged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Regular updates on project activities and results on social media accounts and websites.</li> <li>➤ At least 5 human interest blogs, photo galleries, testimonies and stories (e.g. of students and teachers)</li> </ul>
Upgrade learning environments through renovation of selected school infrastructures and facilitate the development of the 21st century skills, contributing to better education opportunities for pupils/students and improved efficiency of the school network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure visibility of modernization efforts of 10 model schools</li> <li>➤ Promote digital pedagogy and STEEAM skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Press tours, press releases, video reportages</li> <li>➤ Campaigns on digital pedagogy and STEEAM (press tours, events, video reportages, stories)</li> <li>➤ Campaigns to promote career orientation at schools level (press tours, events, video reportages, stories)</li> </ul>

--	--	--

All visibility and communication content, including printed materials, posters, banners etc. will be coordinated closely with the EU and will be aligned with the EU communication and visibility guidelines for the use of its emblem.



## VIII. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In accordance with UNICEF's and UNDP's programming policies and procedures, the project will be monitored through the following monitoring and evaluation plan. The Plan would be updated upon project inception and, if needed, during the implementation phase, through the approval of the Steering Committee. As provided by General Conditions, representatives of the European Commission shall be invited to participate in the main monitoring and in the evaluation, missions relating to the performance of the Action. The results of such missions shall be reported to the European Commission.

In addition, the Contracting Authority may deploy its own monitoring and evaluation tools, such as Results Oriented Monitoring (ROM) Reviews and Mid Term, Final and/or ex-post Evaluations.

IG

**Monitoring Plan**

<b>Monitoring Activity</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Expected Action</b>
<b>Track results progress</b>	Progress data against the results indicators in the RRF will be collected and analyzed to assess the progress of the project in achieving the agreed outputs.	Quarterly, or in the frequency required for each indicator.	Slower than expected progress will be addressed by project management.
<b>Monitor and Manage Risk</b>	Identify specific risks that may threaten achievement of intended results. Identify and monitor risk management actions using a risk log. This includes monitoring measures and plans that may have been required as per UNICEF's Standards. Audits will be conducted in accordance with UNDP's and UNICEF's audit policy to manage financial risk.	Quarterly	Risks are identified by project management and actions are taken to manage risk. The risk log is actively maintained to keep track of identified risks and actions taken.
<b>Learn</b>	Knowledge, good practices, and lessons will be captured regularly, as well as actively sourced from other projects and partners and integrated back into the project.	At least annually	Relevant lessons are captured by the project team and used to inform management decisions.
<b>Annual Programme Quality Assurance</b>	The quality of the project will be assessed against UNDP's and UNICEF's quality standards to identify project strengths and weaknesses and to inform management decision making to improve the project.	Annually	Areas of strength and weakness will be reviewed by project management and used to inform decisions to improve project performance.
<b>Review and Make Course Corrections</b>	Internal review of data and evidence from all monitoring actions to inform decision making.	At least annually	Performance data, risks, lessons and quality will be discussed by the project board and used to make course corrections.
<b>Programme Summary</b>	A progress summary will be presented to the LEG and key stakeholders, consisting of progress data showing the results achieved against pre-defined annual targets at the output level, the annual project quality rating summary, an updated risk log with mitigation measures, and any evaluation or review reports prepared over the period. Annual progress reports and a final report will be submitted to the EU in line with Article 3 of the GCs.	Annually, and at the end of the project (final report)	

<p><b>Programme Review (Steering Committee)</b></p>	<p>The Program's governance mechanism (i.e., Steering Committee) will hold regular project reviews to assess the performance of the project and review the Multi-Year Work Plan to ensure realistic budgeting over the life of the project. In the project's final year, the Steering Committee shall hold an end-of project review to capture lessons learned and discuss opportunities for scaling up and to socialize programme results and lessons learned with relevant audiences.</p>		<p>Any quality concerns or slower than expected progress should be discussed by the project board and management actions agreed to address the issues identified.</p>
---	---	--	---

- **Annual Progress Report.** An Annual Progress Report shall be prepared by the Programme Manager (in UNICEF) and shared with the Steering Committee. As minimum requirement, the Annual Progress Report shall consist of the standard format covering the whole year with updated information as well as a summary of results achieved against pre-defined annual targets at the output level.
- **Annual Programme Review.** Based on the above report, an annual programme review shall be conducted during the fourth quarter of the year or soon after, to assess the performance of the project and appraise the Annual Work Plan (AWP) for the following year. In the last year, this review will be a final assessment. This review is driven by the Steering Committee and may involve other stakeholders as required. It shall focus on the extent to which progress is being made towards outputs,

**Involvement/monitoring of the contracting authority**

Pursuant to the General Conditions of the contract, "the Organization and the Contracting Authority (CA) shall participate in coordination meetings and other jointly organized common activities, and the Organization shall invite the European Commission to join any donor committee which may be set up in relation to the Action". Those common activities and the level of involvement of the CA will be decided upon the inception period between the Contracting Authority and UNICEF and UNDP.

**ANNEX A. LOGFRAME**

	Results chain	Indicator	Baseline (incl. reference year)	Target (incl. reference year)	Sources and means of verification	Assumptions
Impact (Overall objective)	Contribute to human capital development in the Republic of Moldova, improving quality and relevance of education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, for better matching the labour market demands.	PISA results (OECD - Programme for International Student Assessment) close to OECD average  NEET rate by sex (15-34 years old)	No (2018)	Yes (2027)	OECD PISA reports IMER (Administrative Statistics)	Precondition: Political stability and Government commitment to support policy implementation in the education sector will lead to improved quality of teaching, increased access, and participation in education of all children, including children with SEN in a modern learning environment  Precondition: Political stability and Government commitment to support policy implementation in the education sector will lead to improved quality of teaching, increased access, and participation in education of all children, including children with SEN in a modern learning environment; equipping young people with the necessary skills required on the labour market
Outcome(s) (Specific objective(s))	Outcome 1: Strengthen institutions and system for teacher and school leaders' professional development and support the implementation of education	a. Extent to which the NIEL is established and functional	No (2023)	Full extent (2024)	Ministry of Education and Research, administrative data	Government commitment to support the newly established NIEL and ensure sustainability through secured funding in MTBF

8 16

NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/449-040 - Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All

<p>policies to enhance quality of teaching and learning (DS-2030" (DS-2030) General Objectives 2, 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9)</p>	<p>b. % of teacher (disaggregated by level, region, sex, etc.) attending in-service training/r</p>	<p>24% (2021)</p>	<p>35% (2027) 32</p>	<p>MER Projects' reports</p>	<p>The newly established NIEL is effective and efficient in providing continuous professional development for the education workforce</p>
<p>Outcome 2: Improve equitable access for all children to quality education, promoting the development of an inclusive, digital, and resilient education system (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 9)</p>	<p># of targeted model/aspirational schools with improved digital and inclusive infrastructure and facilities</p>	<p>0 (2023)</p>	<p>10 (2027)</p>	<p>MER Projects' reports RCPA and PAS reports</p>	<p>The education system is strengthened to provide quality inclusive education services for all children including CWD through provision of ATs</p>
	<p># of beneficiaries of the improved inclusive and digital services and infrastructure (pupils, teachers, etc. wherever possible disaggregated by sex, and by urban/rural)</p>	<p>0 (2023)</p>	<p>4500 (2027)</p>		
	<p># of parents and caregivers with enhanced knowledge on the use of digital and assistive devices</p>	<p>0 (2023)</p>	<p>2500 (2027)</p>	<p>RCPA's reports</p>	<p>Parents/caregivers are committed to support improvement of learning outcomes of their children through active involvement in their school life</p>
<p>Outcome 3: Upgrade learning environments through renovation of selected school infrastructures and facilitate the development of the 21st century skills, contributing to better education opportunities for pupils/students and improved efficiency of the school</p>	<p># of targeted model/aspirational schools with improved physical and digital infrastructure to ensure better education opportunities</p>	<p>0 (2023)</p>	<p>10 (2027)</p>	<p>MER Projects' reports RCPA and PAS reports</p>	
	<p># and type of learning environments improved/refurbished under the Action, including WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) facilities</p>	<p>0 (2023)</p>	<p>20 (2027)</p>		
			<p>4000 (2027)</p>		

IG

NIDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/449-040 - Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All

	network (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 6 and 9)	# of beneficiaries of the 10 model/aspirational schools with improved inclusive-education infrastructures (pupils, teachers, etc, wherever possible disaggregated by sex, and by urban/rural)	0 (2023)			
<b>Outputs:</b>	Output 1.1 related to Outcome 1 The reconceptualization of the teachers and school leaders' professional development system is supported through the newly established National Institute of Education and Leadership (NIEL) and through the support to the development of the normative framework regarding the continuous professional training of teachers, managers, and mentors (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 3, 5, 6, 9)	# of policy or legislations developed and institutionalized (qualitative-quantitative indicator)	0 (2023)	1 (2024)	Normative Framework in place MER's order/ Governmental decision	The normative framework is approved, and financial resources are secured for the establishment and sustainable operation of NIEL
	Output 1.2 related to Outcome 1 The revised continuous professional development - CPD package (in-service teacher training) is implemented nation-wide and validated (DS-2030, General Objective 3, 6), based on EU policies and best practices	# of NIEL mentors with strengthened capacity in results-based management, need diagnosis, educational leadership, etc.	0 (2023)	1000 (2025)	Reports, Projects' Monitoring Visits, MER's administrative data	NIEL has the necessary human resources and expertise to ensure continuous professional training of teachers and managers
	Output 1.2 related to Outcome 1 The revised continuous professional development - CPD package (in-service teacher training) is implemented nation-wide and validated (DS-2030, General Objective 3, 6), based on EU policies and best practices	# of revised teaching and learning materials provided through EU support  % of teaching staff with enhanced capacities to apply STEAM programmes	0 (2023)	2027: TBD (qualitative and quantitative)  35% (2027)	Reports, MER administrative data  Project's reports, MER's administrative data	Teachers are motivated and willing to participate in the in-service training programmes to improve their STEAM education skills

S IG

NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/449-040 - Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All

<p>(DS-2030, General Objective 6, 7) and equipping the teaching workforce of the country with Science, Technology, Engineering, Entrepreneurship, Arts and Mathematics (STEEAM) education skills. (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 6)</p>	<p>National Platform of Open Educational Resources (OER) established with contribution of this project and fully functional at the end of it</p>	<p>No (2023)</p>	<p>Yes (2026)</p>	<p>Concept Note, TORs, Project's reports MER's administrative data</p>	<p>Adequate access to technology and digital resources to support the establishment and full functionality of the National Platform of Open Educational Resources</p>
<p>Output 1.3 related to Outcome 1 Lifelong learning opportunities for adults are enhanced and promoted, equipping adults with indispensable digital skills and support their empowerment in the digital age</p>	<p>National programme developed and approved</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>Yes (2025)</p>	<p>MER's administrative data</p>	<p>Government is committed to support the adoption and implementation of the national programme to improve the digital skills of adults</p>
<p>Output 2.1 related to Outcome 2 Improved preparedness of the education system including RCPA and rayons' Services for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance (PASs), to provide education service targeting children with disabilities and SEN (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 4, 5, 6, 9)</p>	<p>% of professionals from RCPA and PASs having benefitted from capacity development support on effective methods of engagement, and participation of children with SEN in education</p>	<p>30% (2023)</p>	<p>100% (2027)</p>	<p>Project's reports, Procurement Plan, Joint Monitoring visits' reports including, RCPA and MER MER's administrative statistics</p>	<p>Government is committed to strengthen the education system's preparedness and inclusion of children with disabilities and SEN, as evidenced by budget allocations and policy directives</p>
<p>Output 2.1 related to Outcome 2 Improved preparedness of the education system including RCPA and rayons' Services for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance (PASs), to provide education service targeting children with disabilities and SEN (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 4, 5, 6, 9)</p>	<p># of managerial staff with enhanced knowledge on the use of digital and assistive devices</p>	<p>0 (2023)</p>	<p>40 (2027)</p>	<p>Project's reports, Monitoring visits, RCPA, MER</p>	<p>Managerial Staff are committed to support improvement of learning outcomes of their children through active involvement in their school life</p>

5 IG



NDICI-GEO-NEAR/2023/449-040 - Advancing Quality Education and Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All

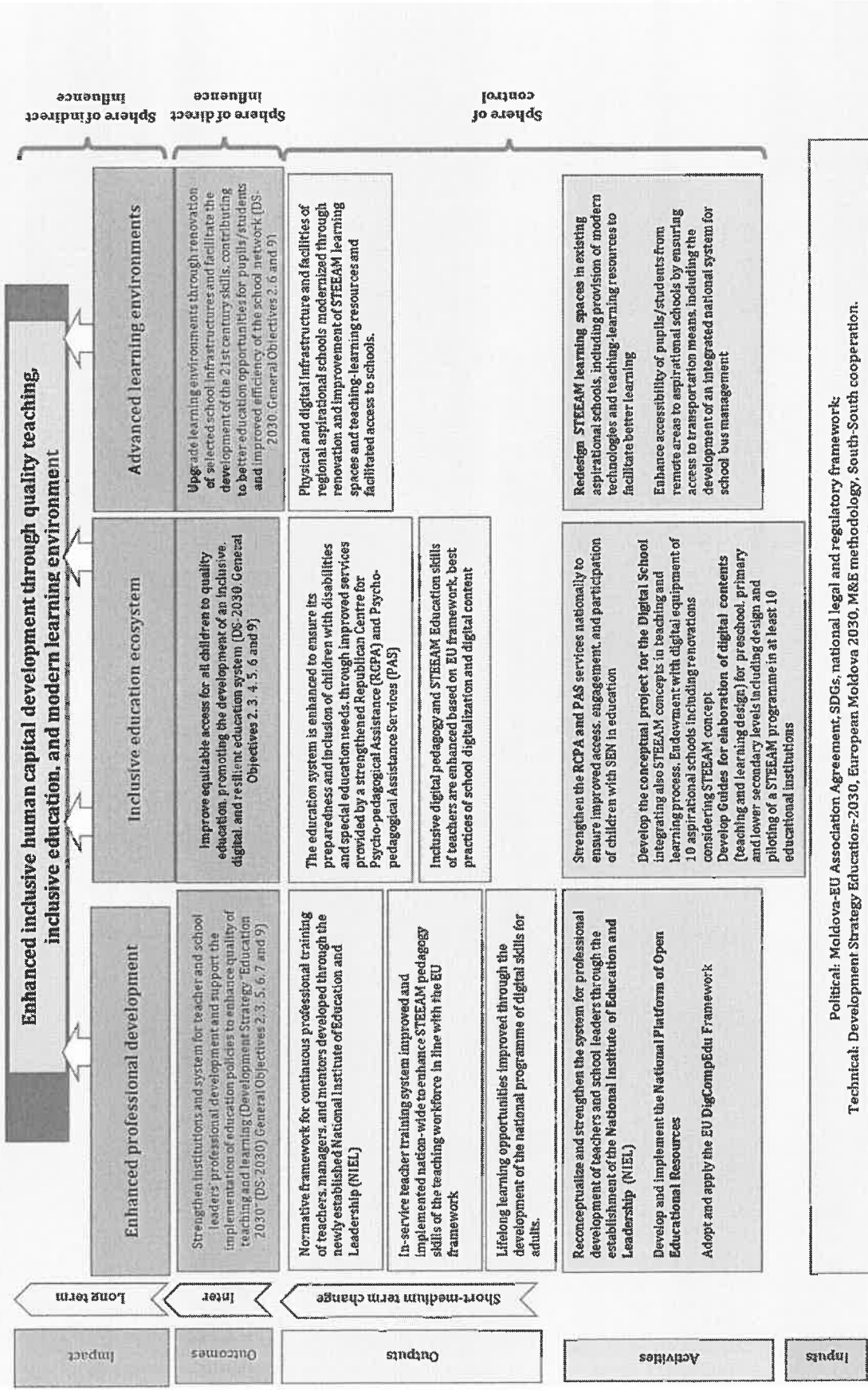
	# of teachers working on IE, with improved capacities on the use of digital materials and assistive technology (AT) nation-wide	1000 (2023)	3000 (2027)	Project's reports, Monitoring visits, RCPA, MER	Teachers are willing to engage in inclusive education practices, and there is a system in place to meet their training needs on use of digital materials and ATs
	# of targeted institutions with improved access to education for children with SEN at preschool, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels	0 (2023)	10 (2027)	Project's reports, Monitoring visits, RCPA, MER	Commitment of the Government to support the improvement of physical and digital infrastructure of educational institutions, making them accessible for children with SEN
Output 2.2 related to Outcome 2 Output 2.2: Inclusive digital pedagogy skills and STEEAM education skills of teachers are enhanced based on EU policies, best practices of school digitalization and development of digital content (DS-2030, General Objectives 2, 6, 7)	Normative framework for Digital School available	No (2023)	Yes (2025)	Document MER	Normative framework for Digital Schools and STEEAM programmes approved by MER and applied nationally
	# of children (boys and girls) applying the newly designed STEEAM programme in the learning process	0 (2023)	4000 (2027)	Project's reports, Monitoring visits MER's administrative statistics	
Output 3.1 related to Outcome 3 : Modernization of 10 model/aspirational schools. This includes targeted infrastructural support of variable nature, equipment with educational technologies, support to the establishment of an integrated school transport	# of teaching staff in the 10 model/aspirational schools with enhanced capacities to integrate technology and new pedagogical approaches into their teaching practice	0 (2023)	70% (2027)	Project's reports, Monitoring visits	
	# of schools benefitting from an integrated school transport system	0 (2023)	10 (2027)	Project reports, monitoring visits	

5 IG

system, which is instrumental for the consolidation of the school network and strengthening of STEAM education and digital skills of teachers. (DS-2030, General Objective 2, 6, 7)	# of children (boys and girls) benefitting from improved learning process designed under the STEAM programme	0 (2023)	2000 (2027)	Project's reports, Monitoring visits MER's administrative statistics	
	# of pupils who benefit from career orientation and advisory activities as a result of project support	0 (2023)	1000 (2027)	Project's reports, Monitoring visits	

IG

**ANNEX B. THEORY OF CHANGE DIAGRAM**



IG

