



2021

LED Moldova – Annual Report

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March 2022

LED LIECHTENSTEIN
DEVELOPMENT
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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

Political context – an overview

The year 2021 started with a governmental crisis caused by the Prime Minister's resignation and with subsequent tensions between Presidency and Parliament. Early Parliamentary elections were triggered by several failed attempts to form a new Government, i.e., the President refused to appoint the candidate proposed by the Socialist and Sor Party, whilst the Parliament refused to vote for the candidates nominated by the President. Snap Parliamentary Elections took place on 11th of July 2021. Three parties entered Parliament - of which the Party Action and Solidarity (PAS) won 63 seats out of the total 101, the alliance of Socialist and Communist parties received 32 seats, and the Sor Party won 6 seats in the legislature. The unprecedented victory of PAS party allowed them to swiftly form the Government. Natalia Gavrilita was appointed as Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers was sworn in on 6th of August 2021.

For the first time in the history of the Republic of Moldova, 40 women have been elected as MPs (39,6%). This achievement pushed Moldova up 56 positions in the world rankings by share of women in Parliament - 27th place worldwide and 12th place among European countries. This is the result of the application of double-quota system, which obliges political parties to have at least 40% representation quota for both sexes and to position their candidates on the electoral lists according to the formula: at least 4 candidates of each sex for every 10 places.

The year 2021 was marked by a significant political change - a critical juncture that could advance Moldova on the path of Europeanization.

Following this political change, Moldova's foreign affairs relations with European countries and EU institutions intensified. The cooperation with Romania and Ukraine consolidated. President Maia Sandu met important officials such as Germany's Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier both in Berlin and Chisinau, the President of Italy Sergio Mattarella, French President Emmanuel Macron, President of Poland Andrzej Duda, President of the European Council Charles Michel, President of the EU Commission Ursula von der Leyen.

The energy crisis dominated the public agenda in the second half of 2021, after Moldova's contract with Gazprom expired on September 30. The Russian state company Gazprom had raised the price to \$790 per cubic meter (compared to the previous average price of \$250 per cubic meter) and threatened

cutting off gas supplies to the country unless Moldova pays \$73 million within 48 hours. Moreover, Gazprom insisted Moldova pays the accumulated debt for the gas consumption in the Transnistrian region, amounting to over \$700 million. On 1st of November, the Moldovan Government and Gazprom agreed a five-year contract and the Parliament approved budget amendments to cover the debt of Moldovagaz to Gazprom. The Parliament approved compensations for the household consumers amounting to approximately 70 million Moldovan Lei for the first three months of 2022. In October, the EU Commission disbursed €60 million to the Republic of Moldova to help overcome the effects of the gas crisis. Against this backdrop, the discourse about renewable energy and green technology as well as investments in this sector has gained importance. The interest from development cooperation donors in stimulating green employment and actions for environment has also intensified.

Education and Training

Year 2021 was marked by significant changes in the composition and structure of Ministry of Education, Culture and Research (MECR). Due to political instability, MECR had an interim cabinet till August 2021, which compromised its performance of the policy and strategic leadership functions. After the snap elections, MECR was reorganized into two Ministries: Ministry of Education and Research (MER) and Ministry of Culture. A new Minister and State Secretaries were appointed. For the first time, a State Secretary for Vocational Education and Training (VET) was nominated, reinforcing the commitment of the Ministry to enforce the reform of the VET system.

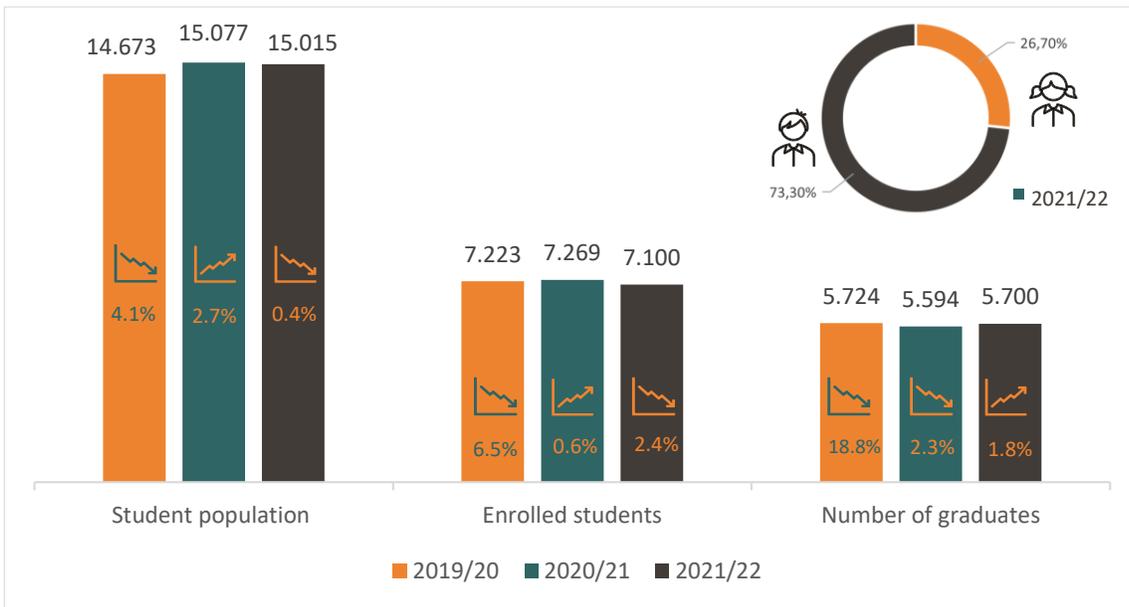
The key policy document approved in 2021 is the regulation on the organization of the professional Baccalaureate. The Republic of Moldova's 2030 Education Strategy, Regulation on Lifelong Learning, and Regulation on Apprenticeship have been under development. Furthermore, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research (ANACEC) reviewed the methodologies for temporary authorization and accreditation of initial VET (IVET) and continuing VET (CVET) programs and proposed amendments to simplify the procedure for accrediting CVET programs. All these policies are due to be approved in 2022. The main objectives of MER remain unchanged: to align the education system to labor market needs in order to increase employment, enhance labor productivity, and stimulate sustainable economic growth.

An overview of the key characteristics and trends in the secondary VET (i.e., VET schools) and post-secondary VET (i.e., colleges and centers of excellence) is presented below (source: National Bureau of Statistics, www.statistics.gov.md).

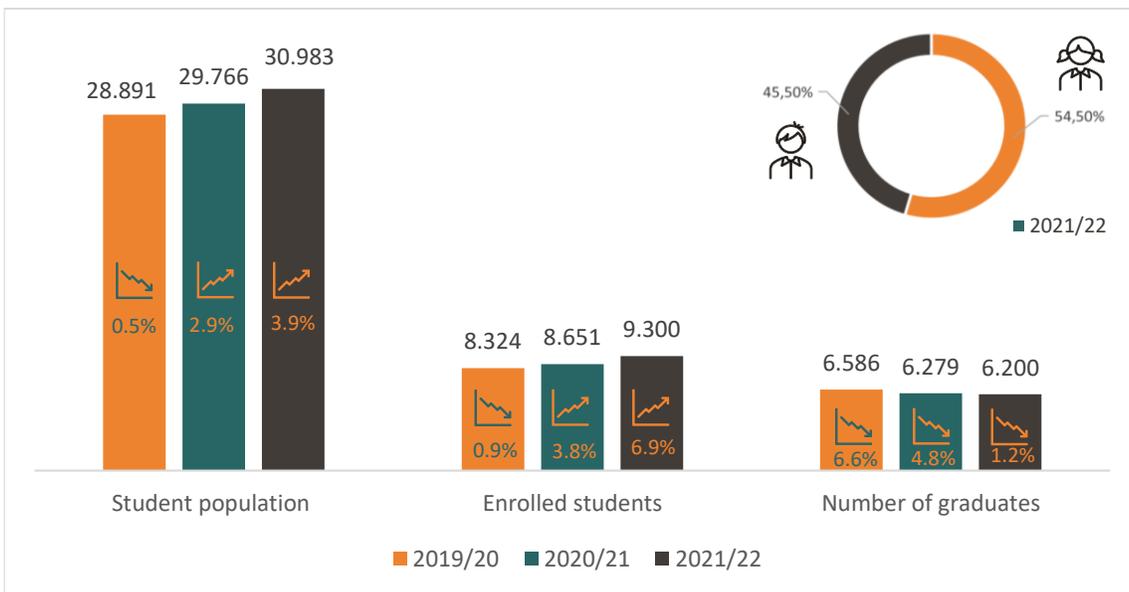
Vocational Education and Training

	Education Pathways		
		2020/21	2021/22
Lower-secondary / Gymnasium graduates	Lyceum	39%	44%
	Secondary VET	19%	17%
	Post-secondary VET	21%	25%
	Have not continued studies	21%	14%

Secondary VET



Post-secondary VET – overview



Coordination Office, Moldova

In 2021, LED MD continued to implement the capacity development support program designed to assist partner organizations (POs) in improving their Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems. The Monitoring and Evaluation consultant provided individualized consultancy to the interested partner organizations to help with the development of M&E plans and/or Performance Indicator Tracking Tables. In a nutshell, the LED partners benefited from technical expertise in developing, improving, and integrating MEL into their project cycle management practices. Those who continuously engaged with the capacity development support program voiced satisfaction with the M&E inputs received (Figure 1 & 2).

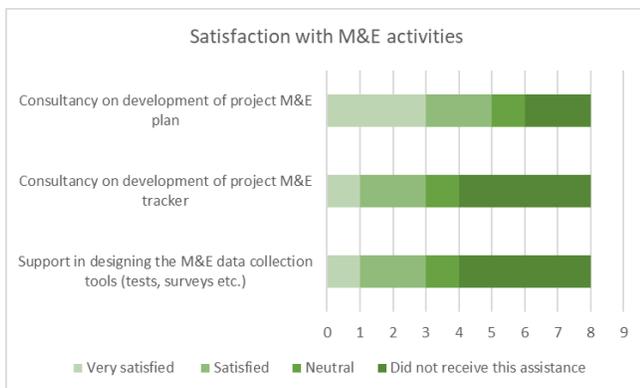


Figure 1. Level of satisfaction with M&E support

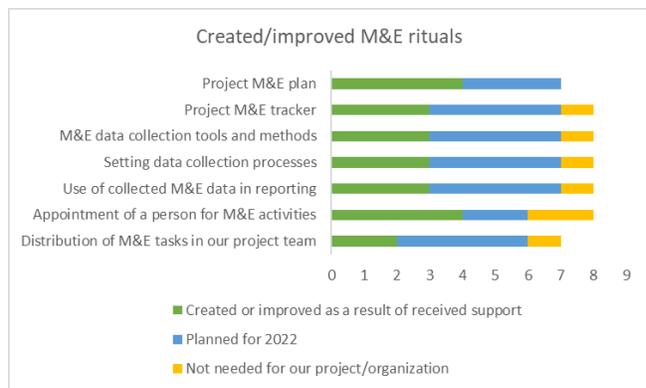


Figure 2. Improved M&E rituals

As a result of the support provided, four out of six partner organizations have extended and/or improved their M&E rituals/processes. As Figure 2 illustrates: four partner organizations developed project M&E plans; three partners reported devising the M&E tracker; and three partners incorporated the collected M&E data in the narrative reports. Furthermore, the survey revealed that the current beneficiaries as well as the partners who did not access this support program in 2021 planned a series of M&E processes to be implemented in 2022. Respectively, LED will continue to support their partner organizations in their efforts to improve their M&E capacities.

LED SUPPORT FOR MOLDOVA

Strategy:

In formal education, LED MD continues to support projects that aim at improving the quality of education, with a special focus on the quality of Vocational Education and Training (VET). This component is complemented with support for non-formal education and for advocacy in education. In this sense, LED MD supports non-formal education programs for skills development that occur both inside and outside educational institutions and offer innovative, flexible, and learner-centered delivery modes. As for the component on advocacy in education, LED MD supports advocacy work with a focus on strengthening the dialogue between the key stakeholders to improve the school environment and pupils' wellbeing.

Project Portfolio:

The portfolio of projects supported by LED in Moldova is published on the LED Moldova website ([link](#)). The graph below shows the project portfolio at the end of 2021 with the active phase budgets. Three full-phase projects started in 2021 (GirlsGoIT, Youth Maker Clubs, and Together for Quality Education). The CREATIVO project is co-financed with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the budget reflects solely the LED contribution.

Project	Contract partner	Budget	Project start	Project end
Strengthening Vocational Education and Training in Moldova - CONSEPT	Association Education for Development (AED)	€ 1'439'755	01.01.2019	31.12.2022
Capacity Development for CNIDE - Future Classroom	Foundation for Advancement of Moldova (FAM)	€ 464'453	01.10.2019	30.09.2022
Creating Values for Others: VET institutions provide relevant vocational skills - CREATIVO	Center for Entrepreneurial Education and Business Support (CEDA)	€ 400'915	01.12.2020	30.11.2023
Solar Energy Competence Initiative II (SECI)	Association Education for Development (AED)	€ 327'189	01.04.2020	31.07.2022
InfOrganic 2020-2022	Association Education for Development (AED)	€ 618'567	06.02.2020	05.02.2023
GirlsGoIT	TEKEDU	€ 398'591	01.01.2021	31.12.2023
Youth Maker Club (YMC)	Moldovan Association of ICT Companies	€ 431'326	01.09.2021	31.08.2024
Together for Quality Education	APSCF	€ 309'913	01.10.2021	30.09.2024

Table 1. LED MD Portfolio

■ Formal Education

■ Non-Formal Education

■ Advocacy

Strengthening of Vocational Education and Training in Moldova (CONSEPT IV)

The project CONSEPT IV aims to strengthen the quality of the VET system in Republic of Moldova by providing support for the entire educational “value chain” from developing standard qualifications, new curricula, learning materials and assessment tests, training VET teachers, supporting Student Councils, up to rehabilitation and modernization of student dormitories. The project is implemented by AED (L). In 2021, the project CONSEPT IV underwent a rigorous evaluation of the completed objectives and activities to determine whether the project has produced planned results, delivered expected benefits, and made desired changes. The overarching findings are as follows:

- CONSPET IV remained relevant to VET reform strategy.
- CONSEPT IV made a significant positive impact on VET delivery in partner schools (especially in terms of learning outcomes, school dropout rates and employability of VET graduates) as follows:

	Enrolment rate	Learning outcomes	Dropout rate	Employment rate
CONSEPT-IV schools	118%	7.89	18%	58%
All CONSEPT schools	117%	7.73	18%	54%
Non-CONSEPT schools	107%	7.64	23%	48%

- CONSEPT embedded several sustainability elements in the delivery of project outputs:

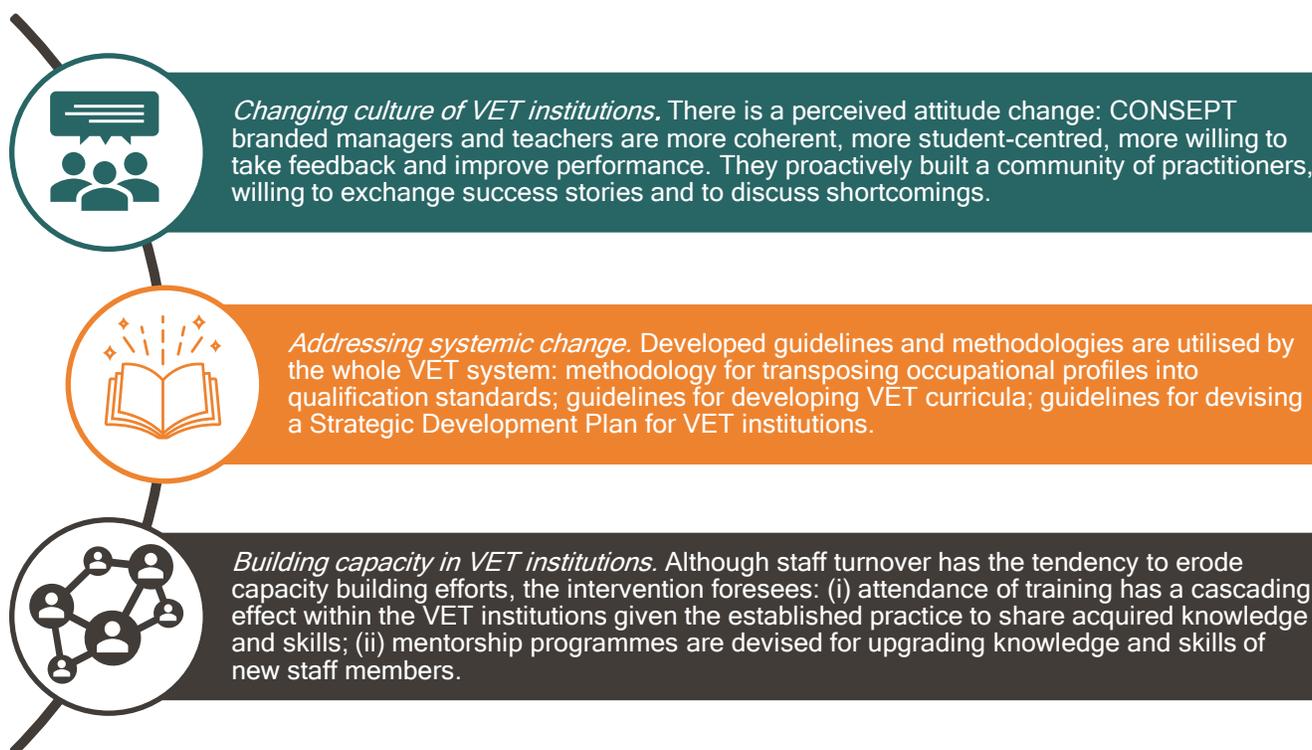


Figure 3. Key CONSEPT sustainability elements

InfOrganic

Organic agriculture sector in Moldova is still at an early stage, even compared to its neighbors¹. According to the Ministry of Agriculture (data of 2019) [\(L\)](#), only 77 companies were certified against the Moldovan Organic Regulation; whilst 115 companies were certified by an EU accredited Control Body for equivalence with the EU Organic Regulation (OFIS List) [\(L\)](#). The turnover of the formal food retail trade in Moldova is about 1 billion EUR (980 million EUR 2019) and just an estimated 0.1% of this (about 1 million EUR) is from certified organic products².

Against the background of a slow progress of organic agriculture in Moldova, the project InfOrganic implemented by AED [\(L\)](#) aims at extending the pool of relevant information materials and activities for organic farming. Produced materials are shared openly on one central webpage AgroEco [\(L\)](#) run by the agriculture online portal Agrobiznes.md. Developed handbooks and infographics on the webpage AgroEco were produced by one of the world's leading institutes in organic agriculture - Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) and by grassroots organizations - EcoVisio, Etnogastronomica: e.g. *organic fruit growing* [\(L\)](#); *organic beekeeping* [\(L\)](#); *sustainability and quality of organic produces* [\(L\)](#); *certification of organic produces* [\(L\)](#). Furthermore, in 2021 several videos were produced on: e.g. *weed control* [\(L\)](#); *biodiversity as a way to prevent diseases and pests* [\(L\)](#); *organic plant protection* [\(L\)](#). Pocket guides were developed by a consortium of international and local experts in organic agriculture (i.e. Farmer-to-Farmer USAID Program, MOVCA): e.g. on *biodiversity in farm households* [\(L\)](#), *crop rotation* [\(L\)](#), *organic seeds* [\(L\)](#). In addition to the knowledge building in organic agriculture, the NGOs EcoVisio and AED coordinated the efforts of invested stakeholders to advance organic agriculture to another level via the regular Organic Round Table Meetings. A list of experienced local experts and practitioners was compiled by the Organic Round Table. Finally, AED contributed to the campaign "*Do you care?*" [\(L\)](#) launched by EcoVisio to raise awareness of the general population and farmers about benefits of organic agriculture. Thus, a series of audio spots and live audio interviews were broadcasted on various media channels (Jurnal FM, Jurnal TV, TV8, AgroTV).



Figure 4. Key results of InfOrganic

¹ External evaluation (2018) Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL)

² <https://ecolocal.md/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Country-Report-Organic-MOLDOVA-EkoConnect-2020.pdf>

Capacity Development for the CNIDE³ – Future Classroom

Digitalization in education continued to be a predominant topic, being incorporated in various Government documents such as the National Development Strategy 2030, the concept of the national system for knowledge transfer „E-DOME”⁴, and other relevant strategic documents and initiatives. As an initiative of the Government of the Republic of Moldova and with the support of strategic development partners (e.g., Moldova Competitiveness Project funded by USAID, Government of Sweden and UK aid, Orange Moldova Foundation), the *National Center for Digital Innovation in Education “Future Classroom”* (hereafter referred to as **CNIDE**) was set up in April 2019. The aim of CNIDE is to serve as a strategic nucleus for the whole educational system, a training platform for promoting STEAM, active learning, use of innovative technologies, etc. The capacity development project funded by LED aims to help CNIDE to develop their own capacity to better fulfil their core functions and mission. The project is implemented by FAM ([L](#)). In 2021, the project underwent an evaluation of the completed objectives and activities to determine whether the project has produced planned results, delivered expected benefits, and made desired changes. The overarching findings are as follows:

- The project is implemented in line with the main strategies and policies at the EU and national level in Moldova (e.g., Education Development Strategy 2014-2020⁵, EU-Moldova Association Agreement⁶, Digital Strategy Moldova 2020⁷), and scientific standards and innovative trends in the sector of education.
- The project succeeded in providing relevant support to CNIDE in fulfilling its role as the leading institution in digital innovation in Moldova’s educational system by serving as a competence center. For instance, MEC commissioned CNIDE to deliver two nationwide digital literacy programs as well as to lead the implementation of the SELFIE digital maturity tool for all schools. Furthermore, the core team of CNIDE and its service portfolio has been significantly extended.
- CNIDE has been successful in securing funding from diverse sources: donor funding, public budget, income generation activities. Attracting funding and generating income could strengthen the position of CNIDE to successfully deal with financial and structural challenges in the “post project phase” and, thus, increasing the sustainability of the project results.

Youth Maker Club (YMC)

The full phase project Youth Maker Club started in September 2021. The project aims to offer VET students learning opportunities to explore technologies, to actively engage with project-based activities,

³ CNIDE is the abbreviation of the Romanian translation of *National Center for Digital Innovation in Education*.

⁴ E-DOME: systemic solution in the algorithm of knowledge delivering: [\[link\]](#)

⁵ <https://cis-legislation.com/document.fwx?rgn=55990>

⁶ EU-Moldova Association Agreement - Chapter 23: Cooperation on education, training, multilingualism, youth and sport [\[link\]](#)

⁷ <https://mei.gov.md/en/content/digital-moldova-2020>

and to strengthen their technical abilities, digital competences, and self-confidence. In the first four months, the implementing partner, the Moldovan Association of ICT Companies ([link](#)), managed to set up two new locations for Youth Maker Clubs in Cahul (south) and Balti (north) along the existing Youth Maker Club in Chisinau (centre). The Youth Maker Club is a creative, friendly, nurturing learning environment where VET students are encouraged to learn new technical skills for solving real-life problems and for developing new products. VET students can participate in a series of learning activities: Maker workshops, Makeathons, Camps, Repair Cafés, career orientation events, etc. Four learning tracks are available: CNC and Woodworking, Arduino and Electronics, 3D Printing and Modelling, Python and Raspberry Pi. Each track lasts from 4 to 8 weeks.

The key highlights are as follows:

- Outreach activities (app. 320 participants)
- 1 Open Door event (34 participants)
- 4 Maker workshops (83 participants)
- 1 Mini-Makeathon (16 participants)
- 1 Repair Café (17 participants)
- 1 Training for mentors (10 participants)

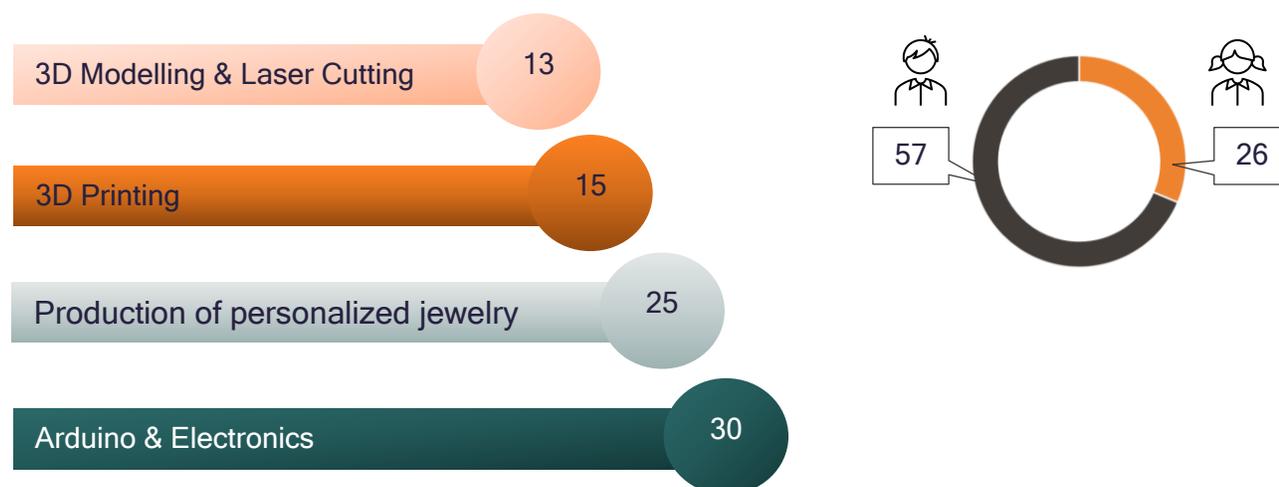


Figure 5. Maker workshops' attendance (nr. of participants)

Solar Energy Competence Initiative (SECI II)

In 2021, AED continued the cooperation with the Centre of Excellence in Construction, Centre of Excellence in Energetics and Electronics and the Professional School No.4 in Balti for the finalization of the two CVET courses for the following occupations: (i) Installer for solar thermal systems; (ii) Installer for photovoltaic solar systems.

With the project's support, the two occupations have been included in the national register of vocational occupations⁸ and in the national register of occupations⁹. The two occupational standards have been

⁸ In Romanian language: Nomenclatorul domeniilor de formare profesională și al meseriilor/profesiilor

⁹ In Romanian language: Clasificatorului ocupațiilor din Republica Moldova (CORM)

developed, validated, and approved by Sector Skills Committee in Construction, and subsequently, approved by the Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure¹⁰. The qualification standards for the two occupations were also developed and approved¹¹. The curricula, learning materials and equipping the training labs are planned to be finalized by end of July 2022 (during a four-month extension period).

SECI II supported the drafting of “Methodology for establishing connected occupations” approved by the Ministry of Education and Research Decision no. 847 /07.07.2021. Although the practice of connecting professional programs according to related occupations existed, there was a confusion about the process which delayed or blocked initiatives for merging related occupations into a more complex professional program. The two trainings can now be incorporated into IVET programs of connected occupations: Installer of photovoltaic systems and Electrician in construction, Installer of solar thermal systems and Installer of ventilation and air conditioning.

Creating Values for Others: VET institutions provide relevant vocational skills (CREATIVO)

CREATIVO is co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Both parties contribute to the project implementation equally. In 2021, the implementing organization CEDA selected 16 VET institutions as partners and conducted a Baseline Capacity Assessment to evaluate partners’ competence to develop demand-oriented CVET educational offers (outcome 1) or to produce demand-oriented products and/or services (outcome 2).

The conducted Baseline Capacity Assessment produced the following findings:

- The capacity to establish partnerships with the private sector is very low, i.e., only 2 out of 9 institutions, pre-selected for developing demand oriented CVET offers, have some partnerships with private companies on training adults; whilst 4 out of 7 institutions, preselected for developing the entrepreneurial activities, have private sector clients/partners.
- The engagement of teachers and pupils in the decision-making processes related to launching new initiatives or income-generating activities is also low. The proportion of school management decisions taken with the involvement of VET Student Councils is very small (1% in average across 9 institutions under outcome 1, and 7% in average across 7 institutions under outcome 2). Front-runners in this area, with a rate of 10%, are the Centre of Excellence in Construction (CEC) and Center of Excellence in Horticulture and Agricultural Technologies (CEHTA).
- Overall, the capacity to deliver demand-driven courses with and for the private companies is currently estimated at 37% (compared to the 100% target when all benchmarks are met), while

¹⁰ Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure, Order no. 224 dated 16-11-2020 on approving the occupational standard „Installer of solar thermal systems”, [\[link\]](#) / Ministry of Economy and Infrastructure Order no. 225 dated 16-11-2020 on approving the occupational standard „Installer of solar photovoltaic systems”, [\[link\]](#)

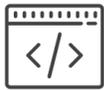
¹¹ National Qualifications Framework in Romanian [\[link\]](#), [\[link\]](#)

the capacity to organize school-based entrepreneurial activities is currently estimated at around 50%.

It is worth noting that 5 out of 9 institutions have reported the delivery of Continuous Vocational Training programs, mostly to unemployed persons on behalf of the National Employment Agency. The cumulative revenue is 719,558.00 MDL (about CHF 37,400) in 2020 which constitutes about 0.5% of the cumulative budgets of those five institutions which offer CVET. Besides, 5 out of 7 institutions earned income from entrepreneurial or economic activities in 2020, with amounts ranging from 40'200 MDL in Bubuieci Vocational School to 293'050 MDL in CEHTA. The total revenues from these activities constituted 501,850.00 MDL (about CHF 26,090), which constitutes a share of 0.4% of their overall budgets. The project aims to raise these percentages to a much higher level.

GirlsGoIT

In 2021, TEKEDU conducted two bootcamps, a summer camp, as well as provided 11 internships for participants at several IT companies: Crunchyroll, GoParrot, Atomate, and FabLab. During summer camp, participants could choose from the following learning tracks:



Front-end static (HTML & CSS)



Front-end dynamic (JavaScript)



Back-end (Python)



Engineering, Arduino & 3D printing



Data Science (Python)

In addition to technical content, participants could learn the basics of project management, drafting a CV, public speaking, critical thinking, etc. Trainers are former GirlsGoIT participants and active professionals who serve as role models.

A total of 475 girls aged 14-20 years were selected to participate in the GirlsGoIT activities out of 1,412 applications received from 33 regions of Moldova. Of those, 186 participants passed the technical test. The satisfaction rate with GirlsGoIT activities is high, 98% of the participants who completed the evaluation forms (n=117 girls) found the program helpful.

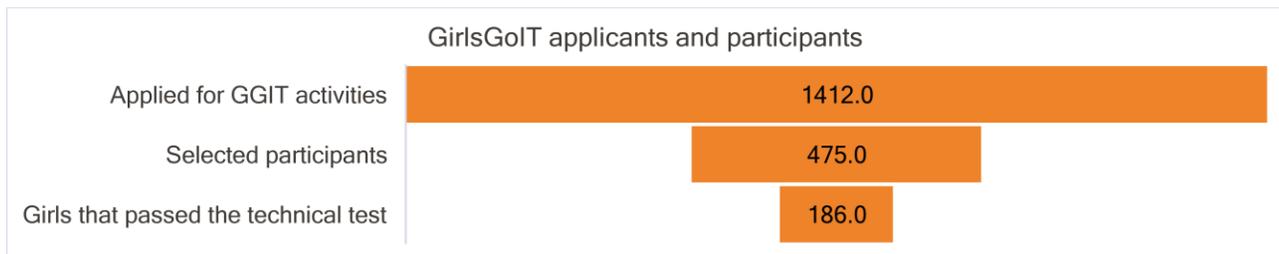


Figure 6. Number of applicants, participants, and graduates in 2021

In 2021, 19 girls from 10 regions joined the GirlsGoIT ambassadors' community. Girls Ambassadors conduct local outreach activities. For instance, a parents' meeting was organized to debate gender

stereotypes on girls' career choices. 20 parents attended the event and provided a positive response¹². It is worth mentioning that TEKEDU widely invests in awareness-raising and outreach activities and in developing digital content: e.g., *PRACTIC* podcast¹³, career-orientation videos, video testimonials from GirlsGoIT ambassadors who share their stories¹⁴, short clips explaining the learning tracks in summer camp¹⁵, a series of events organized jointly with the company GoParrot *IT is not only about programming*¹⁶. A total of 958,677 online viewers were reached during 2021.

Together for Quality Education

The three-year phase of the project started in 2021. The implementing organization APSCF together with civil society organizations chose to focus the project on raising awareness about and doing advocacy against bullying. According to global data, the Republic of Moldova has one of the highest rates of peer violence in the region, occupying the 3rd position after Lithuania and Latvia. According to the UNICEF Report "An Everyday Lesson: #ENDviolence in School" (September 6, 2018), 57% of the children aged 13-15 participated at least once in a fight in the previous year and/or were harassed at least once in the previous few months. This data is confirmed by the National Study "Bullying among adolescents in the Republic of Moldova" conducted in 2019 by MECR in collaboration with UNICEF, which shows that 70.8% of surveyed students (grade 6-12) are victims of bullying. According to a 2019 UNESCO report, approximately 34.7% of Moldovan children experienced bullying (as victims).

During the inception phase, APSCF conducted a capacity and needs assessment which revealed that most partners need capacity building in both advocacy and on the topic of bullying, i.e., about how to design and conduct advocacy actions, what bullying is and how to advocate for solutions to combat this phenomenon. Over 20 organizations expressed the interest to join forces in conducting evidence-based advocacy actions.

¹² [GirlsGoIT - Posts | Facebook](#)

¹³ A total of 8 podcast episodes have been developed in 2021 jointly with UN Women [\[link\]](#)

¹⁴ A series of videos presented about local clubs [Descoperim cluburile locale GGIT - YouTube](#)

¹⁵ Arduino and 3D printing track [\[link\]](#), [\[link\]](#) [\[link\]](#)

¹⁶ A series of four events with invited practitioners from private companies took place during February-May 2021, the kick-off event can be viewed here [Lansarea programului 🌸 IT nu e doar despre COD! - YouTube](#)

FINANCES

2021 Budget for LED Moldova Office (€):	102.842
Personnel	69.132
Salaries	51.588
Social contributions and taxes	12.381
Professional development activities of staff	5.163
Office Structure	12.738
Office rent	7.815
Office running costs, administration, and organization	4.067
Office equipment and software	856
Coordination, Supervision and Communication Activities	10.142
Unforeseen	6
Total Expenses	92.018

LED Moldova is audited annually. The financial audit report for 2021 will be available on www.led.md.

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