

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

**NATIONAL REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

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1. Overview of the education system at the beginning of the 21st century

1.1. Main reforms and innovations included in the education and professional training system at the beginning of the 21st century

a) Legal framework and education reform processes

It is common knowledge that the economic successes of nations are directly determined by the quality of educational systems and that human capital is the most efficient production factor expressed in knowledge, competences, creative skills and moral qualities of society members, who, to a great extent, are produced by the educational system.

Specialists consider in this regard that in the 21st century economy, the educational system will become a priority branch of production, being looked at as an occupational area and an area for advantageous investments. This conception about the purpose of education will dominate the public agenda of educational policies in most countries of the world.

Since the proclamation of its independence, Moldova has initiated radical political, economic and social changes, aimed at creating a market economy based on private and public property, free initiative and competition. In 1994, the Parliament adopted the **Constitution of the Republic of Moldova**, confirming the right of all citizens to education, with no limitation or discrimination, and compulsory education was declared secular and free of charge in all state institutions.

The transition from the centrally planned economy to the market economy called for changes in the educational policies of the newly formed independent state. The main task was set to build a modern and democratic national educational system, based on both national and universal values. The educational system entered the phase of democratic reforms, based on new educational principles formulated in the Law on Education adopted by the Parliament in 1995.

The strategy of the implementation of the **Law of Education** is reflected in the **State Programme of Educational Development**, as well as in other legal and normative acts. The stages of the reform of the educational system of Moldova are determined by the need to adapt it to the immediate and future requirements of the society: depolitize and departy education, eliminate political indoctrination, the excessive centralism and paramilitary training, connect the education to the requirements of a modern world in permanent change. The implementation of

social and economic reforms in the Republic, synchronized with the European tendencies, calls for the promotion of a systemic, overall reform in the educational system, changing the paradigm and logic of its organization. We refer to the key factors of the education system: the state's role in education, the relations of the education system with the labor market, the organization of the financing system, control of the effectiveness of the educational system as a whole. A series of actions have been taken with a view to promoting the education reform, focused on solving the problems in the priority areas of education: educational management, education financing, curriculum, textbooks and didactic technologies, evaluation and control.

The *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, ratified by the Republic of Moldova, constitutes together with other approximately 20 laws of the country, the legal framework for providing social assistance and social protection to the family, mother and child, declared by the Constitution of Moldova. Starting with 1994, the *Law on the Rights of the Child* provides for the physical and spiritual health of children, with a special emphasis on social protection measures for children who lack a family temporarily or permanently, or live in difficult conditions. In 1998, the Government set up a National Council for the Protection of Children's Rights, and on January 10, 2002, a governmental decision approved *the National Conception of Child and Family Protection*.

The Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (i-PRSP), approved by the Government on April 21, 2002, puts forth the three pillars of the "government's poverty reduction strategy: (i) sustainable and inclusive economic growth that will provide the population with productive employment; (ii) human development policies emphasizing increased access to basic services (especially primary medical services and primary education); and (iii) social protection policies targeting those most in need". Therefore, the education, along the economic growth and protection of those in need, is considered as one of main factors ensuring the sustainable development of the country.

In order to promote the educational reform, a number of actions have been undertaken to solve the problems in the priority educational areas: educational management, financing of education, curriculum development and implementation, textbook development and improvement of teaching-learning methodologies, monitoring, evaluation and control of the education system. The structure of the educational system has been modernized with the creation of gymnasiums, lyceums, polyvalent vocational schools, colleges, new levels of graduate education, and with the establishment of mandatory endings at the end of each training level.

In the context of the general secondary education reform, important achievements have been registered in the development and implementation of new contents based on formative education, on national and universal values: development of modern textbooks for the primary and lower secondary education, implementation of a textbook rental scheme, involvement of the majority of the teaching staff in the implementation of the new contents and teaching-learning methodologies, creation and development of a national learning evaluation system. In 1998-99, 10840 primary teachers were trained in the context of implementation of the new curriculum, and during 2001, 34 central trainers, 482 local trainers and over 10,000 teachers were retrained. Also, in the summer of 2000 there were trained 141 central trainers, 1900 local trainers and over 24000 lower secondary teachers.

In the context of the territorial-administrative reform, the decentralization of the education system continues, with the establishment of specific competencies and responsibilities for each level of educational management. New mechanisms of certification of teaching staff and school managers are also being implemented.

As concerns the children in difficult development conditions and complicated social circumstances, the Government of the Republic of Moldova has made as considerable efforts as possible to improve the situation of persons with disabilities. Besides, various international organizations, private individuals from various countries have provided humanitarian aid to institutions educating children with disabilities, orphans or children left without parent care. In this period, there have been set up NGOs working with people with disabilities and their families. New projects have been launched proposing certain alternatives to state institutions. Since then, several attempts have been made to integrate and include children with special educational needs (rehabilitation classes, logopedics centers, psycho-pedagogic services, inclusion of children with minor disabilities in the general school, organization of family-type houses for children, day-care centers etc).

The educational practices in the Republic of Moldova show valuable examples of collaboration between the formal and non-formal educational factors. Thus, in the past ten years, on the initiative of a number of national and international organizations (SOROS Foundation, UNICEF, UNESCO, Council of Europe, Center for Information and Documentation on Children's Rights, National Council of Youth, National League for Pre-university Disputes, UNESCO associated schools etc.), there have been implemented a series of educational programs destined for children of certain ages and for specific population groups. Based on the educational values of these

programs, new school subjects have been developed, for example “Education for Health”, “Family and Life Education”, “Debates”, “We and the Law” etc. At the same time, NGOs have a relatively high, yet not fully used, potential in the field of education. In this connection, it is necessary to mention that at the end of 2001, in Moldova there were registered around 2,500 NGOs, 65% of them with national status and 35% with local status. In accordance with the provisions of the Dakar Framework for Action, experience accumulated by these organizations, must be evaluated, deepened, and implemented at national level.

As a follow-up to the *Dakar World Education Forum (2000)*, the National Conference “Education for All” took place in Chisinau on December 3-5, 2001. The Conference participants established the EFA priorities for the Republic of Moldova, created the *National Council*, and set the time limits for the development of the *EFA Strategy* and *National Action Plan*.

b) Organization, structure and management of the education system

In Republic of Moldova the education policies rely on a set of general principles such as the following:

- Education is lifelong, free of restrictions or discriminations
- Education is a national priority
- Education should not be subjected to the influence of various political ideologies
- The education system of Republic of Moldova is democratic, open to the European and universal values
- The education system must provide equal opportunities to all citizens
- The public institutions must provide free of charge education for the pre-university level, as well as for the university level to the limit of the existing subsidized places
- The persons originating from ethnic minority groups are entitled to pursue their studies in their respective mother tongues
- The education network must be permanently adjusted to the demographic developments and to the vocational training requirements
- The Ministry of Education is the central public body defining and implementing policies in the field of education

The structure of the education and basic vocational training system, implemented as of the 2003/2004 school year, is presented in the organizational chart below. According to this structure, the education system of Moldova comprises the following levels:

Preschool education is part of the educational system and it targets the children's socialization and their physical, emotional and cognitive development by means of specific activities. This education level includes children aged 3 to 6 (7) and is carried out in specialized institutions called kindergartens, most of which are public. Children's attendance of kindergartens is free of charge and optional; during the final year they are prepared for entering the primary grades. In 2003/2004, the participation ratio for pre-primary education was 66.5% on the whole, whereas the participation rate exceeded 80% for the final year (the preparatory grade for school). Preschool education is organized in groups (junior group, intermediate group, and the senior group - the preparatory one).

Primary education comprises I-IV forms and organized as full time education in primary schools, which can function as separate units or in frame of general secondary education.

Children who are 6-7 years old are enrolled in I form when the school year starts. Schooling is obligatory when the child attains the age of 7.

Secondary education

- **General secondary education**

Gymnasium cover grades 5 to 9. After primary school all pupils continue their education in a gymnasium. Education is compulsory from grade 1 to grade 9. Graduates of gymnasia must pass a number of examinations, after which they receive a school certificate that allows them to continue their studies.

General culture secondary schools -the higher grades of which are grades 10 and 11 - are left over from the former system of education. It is expected that by the end of the transitional period in 2005, some of these schools will be reorganized either into lyceum or gymnasium. During the transitional period the graduates of the general culture secondary schools can enter higher educational institutions (through entrance examinations) or they can continue their studies in an institution of secondary vocational education.

Lyceum education provides with fundamental theoretical training and with cultivation of the integrated general culture necessary for continuing the studies in the higher education or in secondary vocational educational institutions.

Lyceum education is organized as full time education in lyceums of general theoretical education with one or more profiles or in lyceums forms in frame of the school , as well as in the frame of versatile vocational schools.

Duration of the lyceum education is 3 years (comprising X-XII forms).

Enrolment in lyceum education is competition based; graduates from gymnasium or versatile vocational schools of the perspective level can participate in entrance examinations, under conditions indicated by the Ministry of Education.

After successful baccalaureate examination a baccalaureate diploma is awarded, giving the right for higher education enrolment

In case of failing the baccalaureate examination, it can be retaken not more than twice during next 3 years.

- **Vocational secondary education**

Polyvalent (versatile) schools provide successive training in a large range of qualifications, from those of a simple worker to a technician. Vocational education programmes are provided for the graduates of gymnasia, but also for graduates of general culture secondary schools and lyceum. The length of education in these schools is up to five years for the graduates of gymnasia and up to three years for the graduates of lyceum and general culture secondary schools.

The vocational education and training programme of polyvalent schools is organized into three steps. The first step lasts two years and provides training in a qualified worker trade. A qualification certificate is awarded at the end of the programme. This grants the graduates the right to enter the labor market, or to continue their education to the second step of the polyvalent school. Lyceum education (general education) is also provided during the first step of the polyvalent school. The second step lasts two years and extends qualifications to the foreman (*maistru*) level, and professional initiation in how to manage a private business. The second step ends with examinations, after which a polyvalent school II qualification certificate is awarded. This grants trainees the right to continue with education in the third step, or to enter the labor market. Lyceum education (general education) is also provided during the second step of polyvalent school and it ends after this second step. The graduates, at their request, can take examinations leading to a baccalaureate diploma, which also grants them the right to enter a higher educational institution. During the third step, vocational

training continues up to the qualification of technician. The third step of polyvalent school ends with a qualification examination, after which a technician diploma is awarded. This step lasts one year.

Schools-of-trades provide professional (vocational) training in either one trade or several related trades. The graduates of gymnasia, lyceum or general culture secondary schools can enter schools-of-trades. With the approval of the Ministry of Education, special groups of pupils who have not finished nine grades but are already 16 years old can also be enrolled. The courses last from 6 to 18 months and finish with an examination, after which a school-of-trades qualification certificate is awarded.

- **Short-term higher education**

Lasts from two to three years, is organized in *colleges*. In the former Soviet Union, colleges (called *technicums*) offered a special secondary education and were an intermediate type of educational institution between vocational schools and institutes of higher education. According to the Law on Education of 1995 colleges can function as autonomous institutions or as part of a university, or they can be affiliated to such institutions.

- **Long-term higher education**

Depending on the profile of their studies, *universities* offer courses lasting from four to six years. The graduates who pass the license examination are awarded a licentiate diploma.

The higher education system in the Republic of Moldova has undergone considerable changes. These changes are both quantitative and qualitative. Major objectives of the Educational Reform are the following:

- Improving the quality of higher education in Moldova;
- Ensuring equal access for all citizens to higher education;
- Updating the national curriculum for higher education;
- Quality assurance through the system of accreditation and evaluation;
- Implementing European Credit Transfer System (ECTS);
- Academic and professional mobility;
- Implementing the Diploma Supplement.

The Structure of the Higher Education System

The main goal of higher education is to train and retrain professionals for national economy. Higher education is declared a national priority.

The activity of the Ministry of Education is focused on the adjustment of Higher education system to the European standards.

The network of higher education institutions comprises **41 institutions**, including **16 public**, subordinated to the Ministry of Education and some other sector ministries and **25 private higher education institutions**.

According to year 2004 official data there are about **104,000** students in Moldova, including **81,000 in public** and **23.000** in private HEIs.

2/3 of the whole number of students study in Romanian language, Russian is the language of instruction of **31.000 students** and for 3% of the whole number of students the languages of instruction are: Ukrainian, Bulgarian and Gagauzian.

The specialists for the national economy are prepared in **137 specialties** in universities. HEIs comprise a highly qualified academic-scientific potential of about **4,700 academic staff**. Among the academic staff of universities there are about **2,000 with scientific degrees**.

The activity of the higher education institutions is regulated by the Law of Education and by Government Decisions in the educational sphere. To ensure the compatibility of curriculum, to create conditions for students' mobility inside and outside the country, to ensure transparency and compatibility of educational system with similar systems in other countries the Frame-Plan for higher education has been developed.

Having as objectives the adjustment of the national higher education system to the European standards and the future adherence to the Bologna Process, working groups have been set up for elaboration of the new Law of Education, National Strategy of Higher Education and the Action Plan for adhering to the European common educational area.

Higher education in Moldova is provided by universities, academies, institutes. The period of studies is 4-6 years. The duration of the academic year is 34 weeks, divided into two semesters. The duration of the study week lasts for 5-6 days with 28-32 compulsory hours.

Admission to higher education

Admission to higher education is for graduates from general secondary schools, lyceums, colleges and graduates from the higher education institutions. The studies may be of full-time or part-time attendance.

In the Republic of Moldova all citizens, irrespective of their nationality, gender, social origin, religion, places of residence, are guaranteed equal access to higher education of an adequate quality. Admission to the higher education institutions is based on competition.

The admission is provided according to the Regulation of Admission approved by the Ministry of Education. The process of admission is not centralized. Each institution appoints an admission Committee consisting of representatives of the teaching staff and the officials.

The admission quotas are set by the government and the state study places are divided as the following: 30% for the holders of the Certificate of Secondary Education, 60% for the holders of the Diploma of Baccalaureate and 10% for the college graduates.

Trying to support the children from disadvantaged families, 12 % from the whole number of budget places are designated to this category of children.

The admission period is July-August.

There are some ways of enrolling foreigners in higher education institutions of the Republic of Moldova: exchange students (according to the Agreements between our Republic and the respective countries, according to international Conventions, according to interuniversity Agreements, etc.) and students who pay tuition fees. The university graduates have the possibility to work in different branches of the national economy or to continue their studies in the post-graduate education.

Post – graduate education

The university graduates have the right to continue their studies in the post – graduate education. The holders of the Diploma of Licenses or the Diploma of Higher Education can apply for post-graduate education, the first level being the master courses, which is an advanced specialization

in a certain domain. The period of studies is 1-2 years depending on the specialization. Nowadays post-graduate education (master) is full-time attendance. Students enrolled due to the plan of the Ministry of Education get scholarships. Admission is by exams and students must show good results. Holders of master's degree have the right to apply for doctoral studies.

The postgraduate education has several levels: doctoral and postdoctoral studies. Candidates for doctoral and postdoctoral degrees should pass additional examination and prepare extended papers before writing a dissertation under the guidance of an academic or a senior researcher. Postgraduate education is provided by HEIs or by the Institutes of Research within the Moldovan Academy of Science.

Doctor's degree is awarded after a 3 years (full-time) and 4 years (part-time) period of scientific activity finalizing with presentation of a Doctor thesis which is to be presented to the Scientific Council qualified by the Higher Attestation Commission.

Doctor of Science (D.Sc.) degree is for persons holding Ph.D. Postdoctoral studies consist of research. The Doctor of Science's degree is awarded after the presentation of thesis.

Applications for post-doctoral studies are possible only on the basis of Diplomas of Doctor of Science. The study duration for this level is 2 years, the graduates being awarded the second scientific degree - Doctor habilitat.

Other types of education provision

- **Special education** is a component part of the education system and offers training for children with different mental and physical disabilities.
- **Art and sport education** is organized as lyceum education for children with special musical, artistic or sporting abilities. Transfers are possible between this and the usual forms of education.
- **Complementary (or out-of-school) education** helps to develop the abilities and talents of children in different fields and satisfies various individual interests.
- **Adult vocational education and training (including continuing vocational training)** can take place through various forms of training and self-training, in state or private institutions. The institutions for adult education have to be accredited by the Ministry of Education. The funding of institutions for adult education is provided by sponsors, donations and other legal sources. Individuals who have attained a certain level of knowledge have the right to take examinations, and once they have passed these they are awarded a qualification certificate. The government approves the listing of trades and specialties, which can be obtained through

self-education. The ministries, departments, enterprises and other legal entities can organize - either with an educational institution or independently-training, retraining or upgrading courses in accordance with the conditions issued by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection.

In summary, there are currently four categories of educational establishments from which students may leave to obtain their first job on the labor market:

- general secondary education in a general secondary school for 9 or 11 years;
- vocational secondary education in either polyvalent schools for two plus two plus one years, or professional (trade) schools for one to one-and-a-half years;
- short-term higher education for two to three years in colleges (in the Soviet system these were called *technicums*); long-term higher education in institutes and universities that lasts for four to six years.

c) Curricular policies , content and teaching and learning strategies

Curriculum Development

The component's objective consisted in revising the entire general education curriculum, ensuring its correspondence with the new requirements set for the education system, reflection of modern teaching-learning methods improved from a methodological point of view.

The process of development and approval of curriculum for all subjects was guided by the National Curriculum and Assessment Board, founded in 1997. The main innovation within this component was the organization of the development process with a considerably large base and participation of area specialists. Each draft curriculum went through a process of massive consultations, with the participation of area specialists from rayon education departments, school managers and teachers. Developed curricula versions were submitted to national expert examination at local and national levels. Some curricula (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, Romanian language, Russian language) were submitted to international expert examination. Thus, in 1998 there were approved the curricula for grades 1-4 and in 2000 – for grades 5-9.

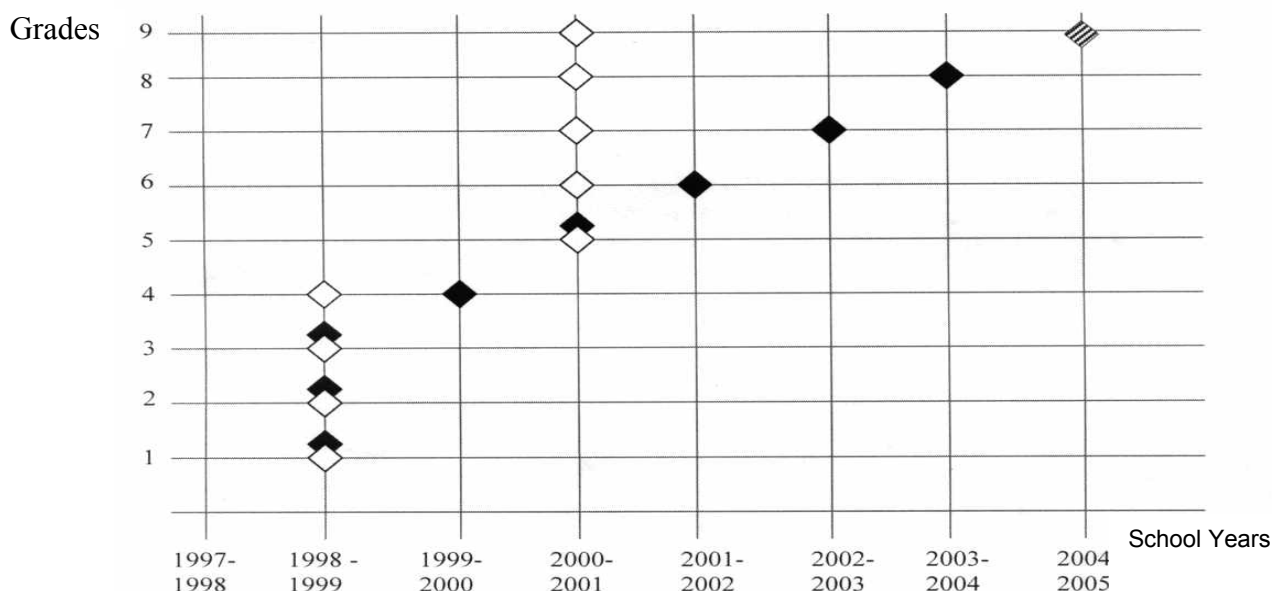
As a result, there were developed 186 curricula for all lower secondary education subjects and grades, instead of the 134 initially planned. The curricula for all subjects were translated into Russian, published and distributed to every teacher.

The national curriculum has been implemented gradually, starting with 1998 and reaching grade 9 in 2004/2005. (Fig. 1)

Although the work on curriculum initially produced new subject curricula, it was established that a real curricular reform would require an entirely new curricular structure, aimed at developing high-level thinking abilities necessary for the “knowledge economy” and which would allow school teachers use their own creativity in its implementation.

The output consisted in the development and approval of the National Curriculum Framework Plan implemented since the school year 2000/2001 (order no. 277 of 11 May 2000). The new framework plan stresses the development of skills, abilities and attitudes, clear curricular and implementation standards, a student-oriented learning process, and relevance to the social issues and real life.

Fig.1 Approval and implementation of new curriculum



◆ *Approved*

◇ *Implemented*

◆ *To be implemented*

The new framework plan essentially remodeled the method of teaching and learning in primary and secondary education. It was structured into a common (obligatory) part, which constitutes approximately 85% of the teaching time and a school-based program of approximately 15% of the teaching time. In order to support the students' personal growth in accordance with the characteristics of and to balance the presence of various cultural fields, the new plan was structured into six curricular areas (Language and Communication, Mathematics and Sciences, Socio-Human Education, Arts, Sports, Technologies).

The implementation of the national plan started in the 2000/2001 school year and has been gradually realized by years and grades. It was immediately followed by a revision of all subject programs for the primary education (grades 1-4).

The plan implementation coincides with school curriculum implementation.

The new framework plan for the lower secondary education will be fully implemented in grades 1-9 during the 2004/2005 school year.

The curriculum development process was adequate for achieving the goal; working groups that involved hundreds of teachers and researchers, the coordination process ensured by the National Curriculum Board, and a conceptually strong national framework plan made possible the sustainability of the curricular reform.

During Project implementation years, the new curriculum played the role of a “driving factor” in the education reform.

Upon the implementation of the new plan and curriculum started the process of monitoring the impact of the curriculum in class activities.

However, in order to be sure of those tremendous changes in teaching values and paradigms promoted by the new program, their advantages in supporting the students in achieving their

entire potential through significant learning experiences, it is necessary to conduct a study of the implemented curriculum quality. The scope of the final success will depend on the classroom curriculum teaching and students' learning.

Learning Assessment

This component's objectives stipulated were the following:

1. Integration of assessment objectives into the new curriculum;
2. Improvement of technical quality of final evaluation tools in grade 4 and grade 9 examinations to monitor students' performance and the impact of the new curriculum and new textbooks on learning results;
3. Development and distribution packages of materials – method of assessment for core subjects in grades 1-9;
4. Training of central trainers in using these materials;
5. Realization of a sample research of students' achievements in the framework of the current system and their comparison with students' performance in the framework of the new curriculum.

The evaluation and examination system reform was based on the following principles:

- (i) Enhancement of the **impartiality** of continuous class evaluation through a system based on adequate assessment tools;
- (ii) Focusing on the quality of **gymnasium and lyceum graduation examinations**;
- (iii) Improvement of examination **impartiality and transparency**;
- (iv) Transition from a "content-based assessment" to an "**objective-based assessment**";
- (v) Transition from the evaluation of memorized information to the evaluation of the **ability to apply** the knowledge in a new, real life context.

A Department for Evaluation and Examination, later called Department for Evaluation (DE), was created in August 1998 to improve and update the national examination system. Starting with 1999, DE has been responsible for the development, administration and evaluation of grade 4 and 9 national examinations. DE staff received considerable technical assistance at local level, DE specialists attended trainings conducted at the National Service for Evaluation and Examination (NSEE) in Romania, participated in international conferences, underwent a specialized training in Great Britain and The Netherlands.

Modern equipment was purchased for DE for test multiplication and statistical data processing.

The DE achievements have been the following:

- Introduction of a new national evaluation by the end of grade 4 (2000-2003).
- Introduction of a new gymnasium and lyceum graduation examination in compliance with the Law on Education starting with 2001; the new strategy of examination implementation includes:
 - Preparation of an examination program
 - Pilot testing of examination documents at rayon level
 - Preparation of final tests version
 - Examination unfolding
 - Preparation and distribution of final reports.

The impact of reform measures on the quality of the evaluation and examination system was closely monitored. The conclusions emphasized the fact that the process of reformation would be more efficient if the **additional goals** were closely related to the implementation process. These goals were:

1. Production of training evaluation materials for teachers;
2. Organization of training seminars to support teacher efforts to implement the new evaluation and examination procedures;
3. Development of local capacity to organize examinations.

Although there have been difficulties with the implementation of DE tasks, grade 4 and 9 national examinations have in general been successfully conducted, are accepted by parents, students and teachers. Very few of them would like to go back to the old method of examination. The nature of the new tests is completely different from the old content of examinations. They are related to the specific objectives of the curriculum and evaluation and aim at evaluating other abilities than the simple reproduction of knowledge.

The main problem with the sustainability of the “Assessment” component is related to the insufficient progress in ensuring the DE capacity for the development of national tests and examinations after the Project end. To ensure sustainability, it is necessary to develop a medium-term DE development plan (including sufficient funding), which would include the following:

1. DE to remain for at least 2 years within the Ministry;
2. DE staff to increase in this period;
3. DE tasks to include development of grade 11/12 baccalaureate examinations;
4. DE to become a semi-autonomous structure with a new operational status.

Textbook Development and Financing

The objectives of this component were the following:

1. To facilitate the introduction of the new curriculum by supplying schools with an adequate number of textbooks corresponding to the new curriculum;
2. To provide assistance with the creation of a sustainable textbook financing system that would contribute to the guarantee of textbook availability .

The expected outputs of the Textbook Development component were:

- to publish and deliver to schools 95 titles with approximately 1 million textbooks for Moldovan schools, more than 300 thousand textbooks for Russian schools and 27 thousand textbooks of national minority languages;
- the publishing industry to be able to meet the needs of the educational system regarding textbook supply;
- to set up a Textbook Rental Scheme and an Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund, establish the mechanism of textbook reproduction .

The editing, publication and distribution of textbooks for the general education textbooks – grades 1-9 – were the responsibility of PMU and CAM. Contracts were signed with those publishers that had submitted good proposals in terms of **quality** and **reasonable prices**. The costs and quality were balanced through an accurate and transparent evaluation scheme, included in the Tender Documents. At this education level, textbooks are distributed on a rental basis, being entirely purchased by MoE.

In the period 1998-2003 there were organized 17 tenders.

The creation of a textbook market was not taken into account as a separate goal, but as part of the **curricular reform** textbooks are basically a tool that corresponds to the requirements within the curricula, to the contents of curricula by subjects, and to the new strategies of evaluation and examination.

After six years of efforts made in favor of the reform, the following main achievements can be mentioned:

- 113 titles of basic textbooks and 86 titles of guides have been published;
- for the first time there have been published textbooks for the national minorities: Gagauzian Language, Ukrainian Language, Bulgarian Language, grades 1-9.
- groups of authors for each subject have been made up;
- a competitive publishing industry at international level has been created;

- a group of specialists adequately trained for textbook evaluation;
- over 10 publishing and printing houses (including foreign ones) have been involved in textbook development;
- a new generation of textbooks for students has been created, which develops the knowledge and skills required by the new curriculum: analytical thinking, problem solving, tolerance etc. facilitating the integration of the new generation into a democratic society;
- 14 titles of new alternative textbooks for the lower secondary education;
- a new textbook financing mechanism has been set up by means of application of the Textbook Rental Scheme and creation of the Extra-budgetary Textbook Fund.

In the country's current difficult economic situation, the rental scheme turned out to be the most efficient mechanism of school textbook reproduction after Project completion.

At the beginning of the 2003/2004 school year, the main task - production of new textbooks for the lower secondary education – had been accomplished. However, the Ministry of Education decided to continue the process of textbook renovation under the same principles: transparent competition among publishers, textbooks chosen by teachers.

In order to determine the textbook quality level and to decide on their republication, the Ministry organized a textbook quality study:

The study of grade 3-4 textbooks was conducted in 2002/2003, and of grade 5-6 textbooks – in 2003/2004.

As a result of the study of the first textbooks published from Project sources for grades 3-4, textbooks for grade 3 Mathematics and Romanian Language, grades 2-4 English language, grades 3-4 Sciences, grades 3-4 Bulgarian, Gagauzian and Ukrainian Languages have been republished with slight changes due to the modification of primary education curriculum, which points out that these textbooks have been appreciated by teachers.

Textbooks of grade 4 Mathematics, grade 4 Romanian Language, grades 3-4 Russian Language (Russian school), grades 2-4 French language will be procured under a new tender.

A thorough study of grades 5-6 textbooks was conducted in 2004.

The study included the development of the evaluation methodology, the proper evaluation of textbooks and preparation of reports. Two national experts were selected (for sciences and humanities), evaluation questionnaires were developed, the study sample was constituted, the

application methodology was developed, local experts were selected and trained, the questionnaires were applied and the obtained data were processed.

Most textbooks are recommended to be updated and republished, being supplemented with materials for skill and ability building, differentiated approach, improvement of formative evaluation tests, and not least the physical aspect of the textbook (cover, colors, design).

The results of these studies will be used by the Ministry of Education in the production of the second generation of textbooks for lower secondary education.

School hours

A school week consists of five school days. The curriculum determines the weekly lesson load for students of different levels. The maximum allowed load varies from 20 weekly hours with 4 lessons per day in grade 1 to 35 hours with 7 lesson hours per day in grades 2-12.

The school year consists of 35 school weeks or 175 school days.

Policy trends in curriculum reform with regard to school autonomy

One of the most significant administrative changes has resulted in greater autonomy of educational institutions. The Ministry of Education determines obligatory subjects (80%), and optional subjects (15-20%) are left for school decision. Decisions about optional subjects, to a great extent, depend on the possibilities within the school staff and the school environment.

1.2. The main achievements in terms of quantity and quality

In accordance with the Jomtien Declaration, *Education for All* should be approached not only from the perspective of the compulsoriness of spending a certain period of time at school, but also from the perspective of the level of knowledge, attitudes and skills which must be achieved at its end. Education for All should contribute to the development of the personality, intellectual independence, integration of the individuals in the professional life and their participation in the development of the society in the conditions of democracy.

In order to achieve these objectives, EFA should contribute to the acquisition of the following qualities:

- Key skills, used as instruments, that ensure the development of the person's personality, and subsequently serve as a basis for education in the course of life;
- The initial professional orientation;
- Knowledge, value notions and abilities necessary for the development of a personality, and for educating the citizen feeling, in the conditions of democracy, when people begin to understand that it is necessary for them to participate actively in the life of the society and to have citizen responsibilities.

In this respect the findings, conclusions and recommendations formulated in the *World Declaration on Education for All* (Jomtien 1990) and in the *Dakar Framework for Action* (2000) are relevant to our educational system and extremely actual for all the factors involved in the educational development in the Republic of Moldova.

The National Conference "Education for All", held in December 2001 in Chisinau, examined the EFA International Goals in the light of the country's context, established the EFA priorities for the Republic of Moldova (RM), created the National Forum "Education for All" and set the time limits for the development of the strategy and the National Action Plan. In the conditions of the Republic of Moldova, the following are the national goals of the EFA Strategy deriving from the above six EFA Goals:

1. To increase the coverage with early childhood programmes up to 75 percent for 3-5 year children, and up to 100 percent for 6-7 year children by the year 2007 while reducing during the same period disparities between the rural and urban areas to less than 5 percent as well as between children from disadvantaged groups vs. general population.
2. To achieve the universal access to and the quality of basic education, by ensuring that recognized and measurable outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills, including health education, vocational training, etc. by the year 2015.
3. To ensure that by 2007 all children, especially children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and are able to complete education that is free, compulsory and of good quality
4. To promote a comprehensive inclusive education which addresses the needs of the pupils with special education needs (SEN) and provides support and guidance to schools, particularly with regard to pupils with emotional and behavioral difficulties (EBD)

5. To increase or at least to maintain the current level of adult literacy (95 percent) by 2007 and to provide access to all families to family education programmes that would allow them to develop better parental skills and communication with their children, leading to the fulfillment of children's rights
6. To ensure the development of skilled human resources for a democratic social and economic life through the provision of appropriate learning opportunities, especially for youth and adult in difficult circumstances.

The key goal of the EFA Strategy in the Republic of Moldova is to provide access to high quality early and basic education to all children, especially, children in very difficult circumstances: orphans, children lacking parental care, children with physical or mental disabilities, street children, children from socially vulnerable families, refugee children, children in conflict with the law, neglected and abused children, etc.

Taking into account the main educational objectives and the actual state of the educational system, **three major priority areas** of the EFA Programme have been determined as follows:

- Quality early childhood care and education
- Access to quality formal basic education, with focus on children in very difficult circumstances
- Appropriate non-formal education and learning opportunities

The actions and measures undertaken within each area will be addressed from the perspective of the following three-pronged interventions.

- legislative and normative framework;
- institutional framework;
- human resources;
- financial and material resources;
- informational-didactic resources;
- community services.

The underlying principles of the National EFA strategy

The following principles will be respected in the implementation of the EFA Strategy:

1. The principle of “The child’s supreme interest” and maximum development of each child’s potential
2. The principle of equal right to quality education for all children regardless of living place (urban or rural), family income, gender, ethnic origin, physical and mental disabilities, etc.
3. The principle of holistic/integrated approach to childhood: care, nutrition, education, recuperation, health, cognitive and psycho-social development
4. The principle of social partnership, multi-sector, inter-disciplinary and early intervention in the development of the child
5. The principle of flexibility of educational programmes, their updating according to the actual needs, the available budget resources, cognitive possibilities, etc.
6. The principle of educational services decentralization
7. The principle of regional integration and a modern Moldovan education system in line with European tendencies

Goal

a). Early childhood care and education (ECCE)

To increase the coverage with early childhood programmes up to 75 percent for 3-5 year children, and up to 100 percent for 6-7 year children by the year 2007 while reducing during the same period disparities between the rural and urban areas to less than 5 percent as well as between children from disadvantaged groups vs general population.

Objectives

- Develop a national policy for early childhood care and education as an indispensable part of national EFA programs;
- Extend and improve comprehensive measures for the improvement of early childhood care and education, especially for children aged 0-3 and 3-5;
- Reduce access inequality and remove in-proportions from the system (the disadvantaged groups in terms of access to services: the poor, rural population, children with special educational needs (SEN), institutionalized children);
- Improve the quality of early care and education approaching it as preparation for life in order to ensure a good schooling and social integration for all children;
- Promote the participation of families/parents, civil society in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs of development of early childhood education.

Intervention areas

Legislative-normative framework

- Develop and promote – at a national, local, institutional and family level – viable strategies and alternative/cost-effective educational services (without eliminating the existing models) for implementation of *Early Childhood Development for All* and equitable access to qualitative services;
- Bring the national legislation, instructions and regulations on Early Childhood Education of children aged 0-7 in line with the international legislation;
- Develop and strengthen social partnership to the supreme interest of the child through a multi-sector and multi-disciplinary approach;
- Carry out awareness-raising campaigns among the population on the importance of early age and early stimulation of child's development;
- Carry out advocacy campaigns for the observance of rights of small children and their families through mass media, conferences, seminars, round tables, etc.
- Raise the status, spirit (motivation) and professionalism of educators and medical assistants that work with small children; develop a viable and efficient system of social protection of educators;
- Develop and improve standards of care services, education, medical assistance and rehabilitation in institutions and for the alternative forms.

Institutional framework

- Implement the institutional reform by creating educational alternatives, develop an adequate institutional framework by ensuring access for all children to quality education starting from concrete local conditions, the child's and its family's needs, depending on the real possibilities;
- Create viable and cost-effective educational services without destroying the existent structures; widen the offer of high-quality educational services.

Human resources

- Develop managerial and professional skills with a view to improving the services related to early childhood education and development;

- Develop the skills and knowledge of families and other persons, taking care of children, to improve child care and education practices;
- Improve the initial training and in-service training of educators and medical assistants.

Financial and material resources

- Evaluate the existent institutional capabilities involved in early childhood education and development;
- Develop a flexible and cost-effective financial mechanism focused on needs and target groups;
- Develop and implement complex social program to assist disadvantaged children in order to ensure for them access to quality education;
- Improve the material and didactic basis of the educational process;
- Stimulate the involvement of the private sector in the funding of the area.

Informational-didactic resources

- Improve and implement the educational curriculum and strategy in accordance with the recommendations of international organizations and existing positive experiences in the field;
- Implement in the educational process modern child-centered methodologies;
- Develop and implement comprehensive care and education programmes for children aged 0-7, focused on meeting all the needs of the child in terms of health, nutrition, hygiene, as well as cognitive and psycho-social development;
- Develop and implement a system of evaluation and monitoring of successes registered in the area;
- Cover the informational vacuum in matters of health, care, education and development of younger children;
- Strengthen international collaboration in order to disseminate and generalize good practices and positive experience in the area (policies, experience, educational practices/methodologies etc.).

Community services

- Involve families and the community in children's education and development;

- Create educational community alternatives (first of all for the children in difficult circumstances, for those from disadvantaged families etc.)
- Create services of social, psycho-pedagogic assistance for families with younger children aimed at information, documentation, counseling, consulting.

Monitoring and evaluation (M & E) indicators

The evaluation and monitoring will be conducted based on the following indicators:

- Overall participation ratio of children aged 0-7 in early childhood education programmes;
- Overall participation ratio of children aged 5-7 in compulsory preschool ;
- The percentage of those who attended early childhood education programmes in Grade 1 of the primary education;
- Percentage of rural/urban population, involved in preschool education programmes;
- Number of preschool institutions;
- Number of alternative educational services for children aged 0-7
- Number of services for social, psycho-pedagogic assistance of the families with younger children.

b) Access to high quality basic education

Goals

1. To achieve the universal access to and the quality of basic education, by ensuring that recognized and measurable outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills, including health education, vocational training, etc. by the year 2007.
2. To ensure that by 2015 all children, especially children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and are able to complete education that is free, compulsory and of good quality
3. To promote a comprehensive inclusive education which addresses the needs of the pupils with special education needs (SEN) and provides support and guidance to schools, particularly with regard to pupils with emotional and behavioral difficulties (EBD)
4. To increase or at least to maintain the current level of adult literacy (95 percent) by 2007 and to provide access to all families to family education programmes that would allow them to

develop better parental skills and communication with their children, leading to the fulfillment of children's rights

Objectives

- Improve the legislative and normative framework with regards to the access for all children to quality basic education;
- Ensure equal opportunities, rights and obligations for all children in general and for the children in difficult circumstances in particular (orphans, street children, refugee children, etc.) by improving the didactic, technical materials and sanitary-hygienic basis of the educational institutions;
- Delimitate the competencies and responsibilities of state bodies of central, regional, local, institution level;
- Develop mechanisms that would avoid the inequitable distribution of funds, as a result of the decentralization process;
- Support preparation for school by organizing primary education in each location;
- Create favorable conditions for the attendance of mandatory education for children from rural areas, create a school transportation system;
- Social integration of children in very difficult circumstances, create adequate conditions for their psycho-social development, material support of children from vulnerable families;
- Develop and implement life skills education, especially health care and education in the educational system (sanitary behavior in personal hygiene problems, prophylaxis of infectious diseases and sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, early pregnancy, forming a health aware behavior, etc.);
- Expand and diversify educational and medical facilities for pupils;
- Improve the quality of education from the perspective of treating thereof as a preparation for life, orient the educational system towards the social integration of graduates;
- Elaborate and implement unified, modern and flexible curricula for all education levels and ensure it with the necessary materials bringing it in accordance with the actual and perspective requirements of the society;
- Develop and implement an independent system of evaluation and monitoring of the educational system and of schools achievements;
- Support the competitive teaching staff by remunerating them in accordance with the results of the evaluation, bring the teacher certification system in line with the needs of the modern school;

- Ensure social and professional protection of teachers, especially of those activating in the rural area;
- Implement new educational methods based on informational and communication technologies;
- Provide each pupil with textbooks by continuously developing the Textbook Rental Scheme, as well as provide free textbooks to children from socially vulnerable families (up to 25% from the real number of children); update and re-publish school textbooks.

Intervention areas

Legislative and normative framework:

- Adjust the legal and normative framework related to access and quality of education to the existing strategies and programmes, including the National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper;
- Harmonize national legislation with the existing international documents, including Dakar Framework for Action (2000), UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, the World Programme of Action for disabled persons (1983); the Standard Regulations to equalize the chances of disabled persons (1993) etc;
- Establish clearer competencies and responsibilities of the state bodies of different levels (central, regional, local/institutional) in ensuring equal opportunities to education;
- Make aware and increase the level of awareness of the society as a whole, and of each citizen, in part with regards to problems related with the education of children with special needs;
- Improve the legal and normative framework regarding setting up community enrolment funds (mainly for the children from poor families, orphans, street children, children with special needs, refugees);

Institutional framework

- Update the school mapping and create a national data base of the educational institutions, which will serve as a support for the optimization of the educational management;

- Constitute a optimal network of school units that would offer to each child equal opportunities to studies by passing to the only standard of the general secondary education – lyceum education;
- Adapt the network of educational institutions to the demographic tendencies in the Republic of Moldova;
- Create new possibilities for gymnasium leavers to continue education (lyceums with technical, technological, agricultural, economic, etc. streams).

Human resources

- Develop human resources in order to implement participating-formative techniques in education, raise the status, moral spirit and professionalism of teachers and medical assistants, of the technical staff activating in the educational system;
- Implement a new model of training and retraining of teachers in the context of the new requirements: organization of simultaneous training, teaching of foreign languages, activity in the conditions of localities with a reduced number of pupils etc;
- Develop managerial and professional skills in view of improving educational services for children in very difficult circumstances at all levels of the educational system;
- Connect the typical staff of the educational institutions to the needs of the community, update norms of the didactic load in accordance with the international experience;
- Consolidate and develop family capabilities for the promotion of EFA;
- Improve and train leading staff at a national, rayon and local level in order to ensure adequate educational management to meet the educational reform requirements;
- Change the mentality of central and local level decision-making factors and the community as a whole in order to form active agents of change.

Financial and material resources

- Re-allocate and re-orient financial means within the system in accordance with EFA priorities established at a national level in order to increase the weight of educational expenses compared to the total expenses;
- Create a viable financing mechanism for the educational system in order to implement financing methods based on the cost/efficiency analysis;

- Implement measures of efficient use of financial resources; financing based on programmes and on pupil/child;
- Develop and implement complex social and educational programs for children in very difficult circumstances and ensure their access to quality education;
- Expand financial autonomy of education institutions at the same time with responsibilities;
- Diversify financial resources for education and expand extra-budgetary funds to support education;

Informational-didactic resources

- Design comprehensive monitoring and evaluation indicators of the educational system and performance at a national, regional and school level;
- Elaborate and implement unified, modern and flexible curricula for all education levels and ensure it with the necessary materials bringing it in accordance with the actual and perspective requirements of the society;
- Develop textbooks and didactic materials in conformity with the requirements of the new curriculum;
- Develop and implement programmes promoting health care and education;
- Develop complex and flexible programs of education of children in very difficult circumstances to be oriented towards satisfaction of needs and recovery of physical, cognitive and social development;
- Implement new educational methods based on new information and communication technologies in the teaching, learning, monitoring and management for all training levels and steps;
- Create an informational system to integrate both local education networks and the networks of local and central bodies;
- Create a national database that would include the legislative and normative framework of the functioning of the educational system, evaluation indicators at central and local levels.

Community services

- Create mechanisms for the involvement of family and community in the realization of EFA objectives;
- Create educational community alternatives especially for the children in difficult circumstances;

- Create services of social, psycho-pedagogical assistance for families with children in very difficult circumstances aimed at information, documentation, counseling, support etc.

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

The evaluation and monitoring will be conducted based on the following indicators:

1. Gross and net enrolment ratios in the compulsory preschool education
2. Gross and net enrolment ratios in the primary education
3. Gross and net enrolment ratios at the lower secondary level (gymnasium education)
4. Gross enrolment ratios at the upper secondary level (lyceum education)
8. Percentage of primary school teachers with the required academic qualification
9. Percentage of gymnasium teachers with the required academic qualification
10. Pupil/teacher ratios by level: primary, gymnasium, lyceum
11. Repetition rate by grade and by level
12. Survival rate in grades 1-5, 5-10 and 10-12 (or in grades 1-4, 5-9 and 10-12)
13. The coefficient of efficiency (expressed as a percentage of the number of pupil-years actually spent by the cohort)
14. Literacy rate of the population aged 15-24
15. Percentage of pupils having reached the national standard established for the end of grade 4 and grade 9
16. Number of children enrolled in the health care and education promotion programmes
17. Indexes of pupils' health
18. Pupils' knowledge and skills related to health promotion to respect a healthy way of life
19. No. of boarding institutions
20. No. of children in boarding institutions
21. No. of children that benefited from services of prevention of drop out from institutionalization
22. No. of children reintegrated in their families
23. No. of children reintegrated in the general school
24. No. of children in the system of alternative education and care services
25. No. of un-enrolled children with SEN (out-of-school children with SEN)
26. Length of CDC stay in boarding institutions
27. No. of employees in boarding institutions
28. No. of staff who received professional training

29. Didactic and methodical provision of boarding institutions

c) Non-formal education

Goal

- 1. To ensure the development of skilled human resources for a democratic social and economic life through the provision of appropriate learning opportunities, especially for youth and adult in difficult circumstances**

Objectives

- Develop the Conception of Non-Formal Education as development of attitudes, mentality, behavior and creativity in the society, school and family;
- Educate children in view of getting them rid of aggressive impulses and of hostile behavior and raise their awareness to order, peace, balance, justice;
- Form the youth in the spirit of ideas of mutual understanding, cooperation, national and general-human values, being based on the culture of peace, tolerance, non-violence, human rights, constructive pluralism;
- Engage youth capabilities to define and delimitate their aspirations and needs for innovation, to obtain the capacity of self-financing and entrepreneurship, with a good integration in the social and economic life plan;
- Promote efficient partnership among the community, civil society and non-formal educational institutions;
- Develop and strengthen institutional capabilities;
- Develop and strengthen human resources;
- Ensure equal opportunities, access for all children to EFA;
- Involve families/parents in the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of EFA;
- Develop and harmonize the legislative framework to ensure EFA (adapt the law on public associations, law on sponsorship);
- Develop a system of monitoring and evaluation of EFA efficiency, especially of the non-formal education;

- Set up an interdepartmental council for the coordination and monitoring of the activity of all educational agents;
- Restore the network of extra-school institutions with a diverse range of activities, especially for children and youth in rural localities, in order to raise the coverage ratio of pastime and further learning needs to the level of 1992 (12.3%), to begin with;
- Develop and approve state standards of funding of the activity of extra-school institutions regardless of their administrative subordination.

Intervention areas

Legislative and normative framework

- Expand the targets, content and scope of the non-formal education through adjustments to national legislations, including the Law on Education, especially in its part related to non-formal education and further learning opportunities in accordance of the international conventions (Convention on Children' Rights, Dakar Framework for Action, etc.);
- Adjust the Law on NGOs, the Law on sponsorship and charity to the needs of the non-formal educational process.

Institutional framework

- Create and develop educational alternatives;
- Create viable and cost-effective educational services (without destroying existing models).

Development of human resources

- Improve the system of initial and continuous training of non-formal education specialists;
- Develop managerial and professional skills in order to improve non-formal education and further learning services;
- Develop partnership with local communities, the civil society and business community;
- Raise the awareness level of the society regarding the appropriate learning opportunities in the context of EFA;
- Eliminate the gap related to salary/vacation of staff engaged in extra-school activities and adults and youth training centers.

Financial and material resources

- Conduct a study of the non-formal education system in view of evaluating the existing institutional and professional capabilities;
- Develop an efficient monitoring and evaluation mechanism of non-formal educational services (use of financial resources);
- Define quality criteria of non-formal educational services in order to efficiently use the allocated resources.

Informational-didactic resources

- Develop comprehensive and flexible educational programmes to correspond to the bio-psycho-social potential of the child and to the actual and perspective social requirements;

Community services:

- Develop alternative educational institutions/programs, especially in the rural area;
- Attract NGOs to the realization of non-formal educational actions (use of the human and financial potential).

Monitoring and evaluation indicators:

The evaluation and monitoring will be conducted based on the following indicators:

1. Percentage of children that attend extra-school institutions of all types
2. No. of non-formal educational institutions and their capacity
3. No. of NGOs with educational actions and children engaged in such programmes
4. No. of employees in extra-school institutions
5. Current budget expenditure allocated for extra-school institutions
6. Qualitative indicators of the non-formal education to be developed

d) Cross-cutting issues

The purpose of the strategy

To ensure the development and implementation of coherent and comprehensive sector development strategies within each priority area by promoting multidisciplinary and intersectoral approaches.

Objectives

- Promote the development of necessary institutional and curricular reform strategies conducive to the achievement of EFA objectives;
- Promote participatory approach in EFA planning and informed policy dialogue between all stakeholders;
- Promote participation of families/parents and the civil society in the process of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of related development programs

Intervention areas

Legislative-normative framework

- Revisit the Education Law and other legal acts in the light of the Dakar Framework for Action;
- Increase the level of involvement of the population in the achievement of objectives of the EFA Strategy;
- Promote at national and local levels the EFA policies and equitable access to qualitative educational services;
- Carry out an institutional analysis (audit) of the ministries promoting social policies in the context of realization of the EFA Strategy;
- Develop and implement public policies necessary for the realization of the national objectives of the EFA Strategy.

Development of human resources

- Take appropriate measures to raise the status, morale and professionalism of teachers and other educational personnel at all levels and types of education;
- Ensure a social and professional protection of the educational personnel, especially those working in rural areas;
- Develop staff development and career recognition strategies;
- Provide in-service and pre-service training of good quality to teachers and educational managers;
- Develop managerial and professional skills to improve educational services at central, district and local levels.

Informational-didactic resources

- Improve and implement the Educational Curriculum and EFA Strategy in accordance with the recommendations of international bodies and forums, and the existing positive experience in the area;
- Participate in OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and in order to benchmark the skill and knowledge performances of Moldovan students against those required in modern workplaces;
- Organize national discussions of the results of PISA assessment and develop a plan of actions to integrate the educational system of the Republic of Moldova in the international one.

Financial and material resources

- Carry out a study on the contributions of the families and the private sector to education;
- Define the quality criteria of the educational services for the efficient use of the allocated resources;
- Evaluate the practices of use of existing resources and their reallocation in view of improving the quality of teaching;
- Implement measures to save available resources by developing balanced budgets, rationalizing the school network, modernizing heating and electricity systems, developing flexible study plans;
- Strengthen the managerial capacity of the educational system, exclude political interventions.

Management information system

- Review the existing education information systems in the light of EFA and in accordance with the educational decentralization;
- Organize specific surveys in order to fine-tune the data collected and to generate qualitative information on educational services, especially on early childhood development, non-formal and adult education;
- Implement new information and communication technologies in the process of educational planning, monitoring and management.

Monitoring and evaluation indicators

1. Public expenditures (recurrent and capital) for education as percentage of GDP and of the total budget, per pupil/student as percentage of GDP per capita;
2. Public expenditures (recurrent and capital) for preschool education as percentage of GDP, per pupil as percentage of GDP per capita;
3. Public expenditures (recurrent and capital) for primary education as percentage of GDP, per pupil as percentage of GDP per capita;
4. Public expenditures (recurrent and capital) for secondary education (Gymnasium and lyceum) as percentage of GDP, per pupil as percentage of GDP per capita;
5. Public expenditures (recurrent and capital) for non-formal and adult education;
6. Number of years of schooling completed of the population.

Roles and responsibilities

1. National Level

- Ministry of Education: to ensure the general coordination and coherence of the EFA in regard to the other programmes and strategies (State Programme on Education Development, Preliminary Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Strategy on Medium Term Expenditures, etc.);
- Ministry of Finance: to assure financial support to the EFA programmes, taking into account the priorities established at the national level;

- Ministry of Economy: to support the educational reform by regulating the process of teacher training; to adjust the legal and normative framework; to optimize the institutional network; to strengthen the material basis of the educational institutions in the context of the EFA National Plan of Action.
- Ministry of Health: to elaborate and implement programmes aimed at promoting health care;
- Ministry of Labor: to ensure the social protection of the employees of the educational system;
- EFA National Council: to examine and approve the EFA National Plan of Action.

2. Rayon level

- Rayon/municipal Departments of Education, Youth and Sport: to implement and monitor the EFA Programmes.

3. Local level

- Family (parents, parents' associations): to ensure child's enrolment in the system of mandatory education; to assure adequate conditions in the family for the integral development of the child; to contribute to the improvement of the quality and access to education; to ensure transparency in the management of school's funds, to cover partially the costs for the school transportation, meals, supplies, textbooks, etc.
- Civil society (NGOs): to promote non-formal education, to assure the openness of the educational system towards the labor market.

1.3. The main problems and challenges the education system must withstand in the beginning of the 21 century

During the period of transition, the educational sector has considerably deteriorated, which brought about a series of obstacles in the achievement of educational objectives.

Early Childhood Care and Education: Due to the lack of material and financial resources from the budget, poverty among population, and the lack of a viable educational policy regarding the category of children aged 0-7, the deterioration of preschool institutions continues. In the past six years, the number of preschool units has dropped by 36%, and namely, from 1,774 in 1994/1995

school year to 1,135 in 1999/2000 school year. As compared with the school year 1992/1993, the participation ratio of children in early childhood development programs has decreased by 57.3%, and the number of educational staff has reduced by around 70%. The process of closing and liquidation of kindergartens has significantly reduced the access to early childhood education for children of 1-5 years of age. Overall, it is estimated that about 80 % of all children of 1-5 years of age, the absolute majority of them being from rural areas, do not attend any early childhood education programs, and the mandatory preschool training is done only for about 60% of all children of 5-6 years of age.

Unfortunately, village-city disparities continue to deepen. The likelihood that a village child will attend an early childhood education program is three times lower than in the case of a city child. Social inequalities also continue to deepen. While about 60% of children from relatively well-to-do families have access to early education programs, in case of needy families, this indicator is only 7%.

On the whole, educational alternatives are missing both at central and community level. Paying tribute to some old-fashioned traditions and in the absence of social models worth following, the absolute majority of parents is not ready to organize individually or in association the early education for their own children at the level of modern requirements.

Mandatory education: The ratio of schooling in the mandatory education is declining steadily: in the school year 2000/2001, about 7000 children were not schooled, which represents 28% more than in the previous year. In the school year 2001-2002 (October 1st), about 3980 children were not schooled (0,73%). In the school year 2003-2004 were note schooled 0, 26% children. The most difficult situation is in rural areas, where poor families cannot even cover all the expenses needed for clothes, footwear, food, school supplies and textbooks. Such localities lack or have very expensive school transportation, many schools are not heated in the cold period of the year, and some of them are closed down.

There is a continuous decrease in the participation ratio of children from poor families in the post-mandatory education – upper secondary, vocational secondary, higher – because of insufficient budget funding, lack of the respective educational institutions in many localities, extremely high prices for contract-based education.

Annually, after finishing mandatory education (9 grades, age 15-16), around 12-16 thousand youth leave the educational system without any professional qualification. There is a continuous decline in enrolments in the vocational secondary education, prices go up and the funding of institutions destined for children coming from socially vulnerable families decreases.

The human potential of the educational system continues to deteriorate, especially at the level of mandatory and general secondary education. In the past years, there has been registered an inadmissible aging of the teaching staff, about 7% of all teaching staff have already passed the retirement age, 53% of the teaching staff have a length of service exceeding 18 years. According to the situation as of October 1, 2001, 1,357 of teaching staff have left only 1-3 years until the retirement age, but the number of young specialists employed by schools is insignificant. In 1998-2000, about 4200 teaching staff left school, and in 2001 – 2497 teachers. As a result, the teachers that remained in school have to teach an exaggerated number of hours, on the average 1.5-2 norms per teacher. In many schools, the subjects with missing teachers are not taught at all, which impedes the children's access to basic quality studies. Due to the low salaries and the lack of teachers, many employees of the educational system do not have required professional training, are not acquainted with the new educational technologies, do not correlate the teaching-learning methodologies with the individual features of each child, which has a negative impact on the quality of education. A discrepancy forms between the logistic insurance and the proposed financial solutions, between the modern curriculum requirements and the availability of competitive teaching staff. The sharp lack of competitive teachers, of the necessary equipment for the supply of laboratories and of intuitive didactic materials questions the success itself of the education reform process.

The technical-material basis of education continues to deteriorate, and the annual capital investments of only 5% of all costs for education are absolutely insufficient. The lack of financial resources even for current repairs causes serious damages to school buildings, electricity and heat systems. During winter time, in many schools there is registered an acute lack of fuel, frequent disconnections, inadequate sanitary-hygienic conditions, no free meals for preschool children and primary students are ensured. It should be mentioned that only 47% of all primary students (2001-2002 school year) benefited from free meals at school.

During the past years, actions have been taken aiming at integrating and including children with special educational needs in the common educational system; there have been created rehabilitation classes, logopedics centers, psycho-pedagogic services, family-type houses for

children, day-care centers, it has been attempted to include children with minor disabilities in the general school. But these actions have had a minor effect and have not found an adequate support on behalf of decision-making factors, parents and teachers, which does not correspond to the spirit of the Dakar Framework of Actions.

The most disadvantaged from the point of view of access to qualitative educational services are the children in especially difficult conditions: from poor families, families with many children, single-parent families, the children with special educational needs (SEN), street children, children infected with HIV/AIDS, as well as children from the rural area. In general, the situation of children with special educational needs, of those with physical or mental disabilities, is very difficult, and the high costs of their subsistence and education cannot anymore be integrally paid from the state budget.

Non-formal education and learning opportunities: The non-formal education represents the totality of pedagogical actions projected and realized in an extra-didactic and/or extra-curricular institutionalized framework, or through optional or facultative activities. The non-formal education is realized outside the mandatory syllabus and aims at the formation of vocational abilities, not certified officially, but with an important personal and social value, offering the possibility to extend and make more thorough the knowledge acquired during classes and the information accumulated informally. In the Republic of Moldova, the non-formal education is carried out by state institutions, by private institutions and by non-governmental organizations, constituting a possibility for the creation of a pedagogical partnership based on the effective cooperation of various educational agents. The documents of the Council of Europe on the education for a democratic citizenship qualifies non-formal education, the activities outside the school or the classroom organized by educational institutions as a completion of the formal curriculum.

At present, in the country (except the institutions of this type on the left bank of Nistru river) there operate 126 extra-school institutions entailing an overall number of over 60,553 participants that account for 10% of the total number of children in pre-university education institutions. These institutions are grouped as follows: 45 children creation centers (30,043 students), 10 centers of technical-scientific creation for students (7,432 students), 6 young naturalist centers (1,610 students), 7 young tourist centers (1,992 students), 57 sports schools (17,957 students), 1 swimming pool (850 students). Due to the limited funding, the number of extra-school institutions has decreased, as compared with 1992, by 65 units: technical creation

centers – by 22 units (69%), young naturalist centers – by 13 units (68.4%), young tourist centers – by 18 units (72%), the number of children involved in the respective activities decreasing in the same proportion.

The insufficient funding, salary arrears, space alienation, lack of heat and electricity are only some of the serious problems impeding extra-school institutions to realize the planned educational objectives at the level of their maximum potential and to ensure the access of all children to quality non-formal education. One of the major related problems is the fact that practically all extra-school institutions are located in regional centers or in the former district centers, which reduces the chances of children from rural areas to benefit from the respective educational services.

2. Quality education for all young people: challenges, trends and priorities.

2.1. Education and social inclusion

The objectives of social inclusion policies

The action plan (2004-2008) for implementation of strategy EFA is approved by the Government of Republic of Moldova in May, 2004.

The general objective:

To ensure access of all children in difficult circumstances to educational services of good quality starting from the early stages of development by 2008

To improve the quality of inclusive/special education by creating optimal conditions of care, rehabilitation and socialisation and to improve the conditions in the existing educational institutions.

The specific objectives are:

1. Ensure equal access, opportunities, rights and obligations for children in difficult circumstances.
2. Improve the quality of care and education of children in difficult circumstances in the perspective of preparation for life, increase efficiency and relevance of education in accordance with the needs and possibilities for development

Main important activities:

- Increased participation in education of children in difficulty.
- Harmonize the legal framework with the international legislation and normative acts.

- Reorganize the system of institutionalized care and education for children in difficult circumstances.
- Set up a restructuring and reorganization concept of education system of a child in difficulty.
- Create community assistance services, stimulation and support for children in difficulty.
- Create a public opinion on CDC and their families.
- Create services of assistance for CDC at the local level in general schools:
 logopedics, psycho-pedagogical services, specialized medical assistance, services of pedagogical and psychological recovery, services for preventing abandon , institutionalization and child's entering in difficult circumstances.
- Evaluate existing institutional and financial capacities of assistance for CDC.
- Provide institutions with materials and equipment necessary for assisting children with special educational needs.
- Repair / renovate/maintain buildings of educational institutions.
- Set up a data base on situation of children in difficulty, including children in extremely difficult situation at community, regional, national levels, aiming at strengthening quality assistance services.
- Adjust educational institutions and physical conditions of facilities to the needs and possibilities of children in difficult circumstances.
- Set up complex social assistance programmes for CDC (health , pedagogical, psychological and social assistance)
- Involvement of NGO's in financing and development of assistance services for CDC
- Set up services for children with special educational needs
- Develop a service of evaluation and diagnosis of children's development from early stages of development.
- Develop a service of evaluation and diagnosis of children's development from early stages of development.
- Create conditions for development recovery and psycho-pedagogical assistance for children in difficult circumstances in Day Centers, community services at general education level. (kindergarten, school).
- Create and develop alternative services to institutionalization for children with special education needs.
- Improve care conditions (food and medical assistance), education and recovery quality of services for children from the existant residential institutions

- Improve the initial and continuous qualification of education and medical personnel through inclusive education concept .
- Develop and implement minimum standards of care, education, medical assistance and recovery / rehabilitation of children in difficult circumstances (for all types of institutions and alternative forms of care, education and rehabilitation / recovery of CDC.
- Develop differentiated curriculum for education of children with SEN and CDC.
- Develop and implement tools and techniques for evaluation of children development to identify deficiencies and difficulties in their psycho-physical development.
- Develop and implement curriculum and educational strategy of training teaching, medical, and social assistance personnel in accordance with international recommendations and positive experiences.
- Develop and implement programmes of individualized and holistic care and education for children with SEN /CDC with emphasis on meeting the special needs of the child.
- Develop and implement programmes of individualized and holistic care and education for children with SEN /CDC with emphasis on meeting the special needs of the child.
- Elaborate and implement an evaluation/monitoring system of child's development progress as regarding recuperation and rehabilitation of children with SEN/CDC in inclusive education institutions.

2.2. Education and skills necessary in life

The general objective:

To achieve by the year 2008 access of all children to quality basic education which would ensure development of essential life skills, including health education, civic education, family education, vocational training, etc.

The specific objectives:

1. Improve institutional framework to ensure equal opportunities of access to quality basic education for all children in general and for children in difficult circumstances in particular.
2. Develop curricula for the secondary general education.
3. Implement information and communication technologies in education (ICT)

The main important activities:

- Network of institutions, optimal as to quality, access and economic efficiency of education

- Mapping of institutions of secondary education and setting up a data-base to support educational management
- Adjust the network of institutions of secondary education to the demographic tendencies in the Republic of Moldova
- Set up an optimal network of school units to offer every child equal opportunities for education by developing a unitary standard of general secondary education - lyceum education
- Create new opportunities for gymnasium leavers to continue studies (lyceums with technical, agricultural, technological, economic specialization etc.)
- Create new opportunities for gymnasium leavers to continue studies (lyceums with technical, agricultural, technological, economic specialization etc.)
- Develop and implement a program of support for education in rural area
 - Enrolment rate of children / youth in levels of education which include basic education: pre-school, primary, gymnasium, lyceum, vocational;
 - Coefficients of social integration of leavers;
 - Health indicators of school age population;
 - The budget expenditures for NGP per student vs NGP % per person; Budget expenditures for the levels of pre-school, primary, gymnasium, lyceum, vocational education from NGP per student vs NGP % per person;
 - Repetition indicator;
 - The stability maintenance indicators of pupils in 1-4; 5-9; 10-12 grades;
 - The stability indicators of pupils who cover the : 4-5; 9-10 grades;
- The rate of gymnasium leavers who do not continue their studies
- Monitoring of implementation of educational standards at all levels of general secondary education
- Revise lyceum curriculum in view of preparation for life of pupils and qualification of teaching personnel.
- Develop health education and promotion programmes.
- Develop health education and promotion programmes.
- School **curricula** ensured with textbooks, methodological manuals, learning materials, and laboratory equipment.
- Publish / revise textbooks of general secondary education (the implemented ones as well as publishing textbooks for technological education, moral / spiritual education, arts, etc.)
- Ensure methodological manuals for all school subjects
- Ensure equipment for the subject of science of nature in the context of the new curriculum
- Ensure schools with methodological guides, manuals, didactical materials on health education and promotion of a healthy life style
- Develop and implement an independent system of evaluation of school performances

- Viable, credible and autonomous system of evaluation of school results
- Evaluations of representative samples of pupils of different forms / subjects aiming at determining the real situation of achieving the educational objectives
- Develop materials for the item bank.
- Organize external examinations in graduating forms to ensure correctness of examinations.
- Improved quality of education in the system of secondary education.
- Mapping supply with equipment of educational institutions for the implementation of ICT
- Carry out a study on ensuring qualified personnel for implementation of ICT in education.
- Carry out a study on the use of ICT in school subjects, education and management evaluation.
- Develop a national programme of Implementation of ICT in education.
- Implement new educational methods based on information and communication technologies.

2.3. Quality education. The key role of teachers

Teacher training

The component's main objective was to provide the key personnel in rayon education departments and teachers with the necessary training to implement effectively the new curricula and evaluation methods and thus to improve the quality of classroom teaching.

The successful implementation of the new curricula, didactic materials and evaluation methods depends to a great extent on how well teachers are trained for making such changes.

Therefore, upon the development of new curricula and new textbooks started out the process of teacher training. Teacher training was conducted at three levels: national, central and local. The former Teacher Training Institute, as the main institution responsible for training, trained its own staff and the staff of institutions—teacher training centers. There were set up 7 such centers.

The trained specialists from those centers trained methodologists, inspectors, school managers, teachers selected from the former regions so that they, in their turn, could train teachers on site. Thus, there was formed a “cascade” model, which used the existing structure and adopted its capacity and functions to the new challenges of education. This method was more efficient also from the viewpoint of costs of training a large number of teachers within a short period of time.

This model was also efficient and well-thought through the fact that it transferred the accents and the main training effort from the central level to the rayon one, thus consolidating the capacity of education departments of providing support to teachers. From the content point of view, this model ensured sound relations between the new curricula, textbooks, evaluation procedures, on one side, and the teacher training process, on the other side.

Thus, in the course of four years, 34 central trainers, 482 local trainers and over 10 thousand primary school teachers underwent initial and recap training for primary schools.

As to lower secondary education, there were trained 148 central trainers, 1638 local trainers and about 30 thousand teachers in all school subjects.

For the successful fulfillment of on-site teacher training tasks, there were set up 52 training centers, each of them being properly equipped for the organization of training activities.

The form and content of the training programs were developed by curriculum and evaluation working groups in collaboration with IES specialists with foreign technical assistance. The course content was based on two modules: module A – General Training and module B – Subject Training.

For the efficient implementation of module B, which tackled the problems of the new curriculum, new textbooks and new evaluation procedures, in 2000 there were published (at the stage of recap retraining) Methodological Guides for curriculum development and implementation for all subjects included in the **education plan**. They were accompanied by a General Guide for curriculum implementation.

There was conducted an impact study on the teacher training process in classroom activities. A group of independent experts attended 720 lessons, and an opinion survey was conducted on 600 parents and 600 students. The monitoring took place in six localities, by two in the north, center and south of the country.

There were monitored the learning objectives, contents, teaching and learning technologies and the utilization of textbooks and other didactic materials.

The result of the study was presented in a broad report that will serve as argument for planning teacher training sessions in the future.

The team of experts reached the following conclusions: over 60% of teachers correctly realize subject curricular objectives, 54% reasonably use the textbook's methodological device, circa 50% know how to use the didactic technologies and 36% are acquainted with the evaluation methods.

98% of students come to school to acquire knowledge, prefer group work, recommend teachers to use various encyclopedias. Among the difficulties, they mentioned the large amount of information, teacher's authoritative behavior, and expensive textbooks.

More than 50% of parents consider that they are well-informed about the school activities and 74% - that the educational process is well-organized. In order to improve the teaching-learning process, parents propose to supplement school libraries and sufficiently supply schools with didactic materials.

The quantity and quality statistical analysis denotes that the results of teacher training within training sessions exerts an essential positive influence on the teaching-learning process, the quality of educational activities is basically good.

For the future, it is necessary to increase the efficiency of initial training of teachers, to promote the new modalities.

The main important activities:

1. Promote a policy of support for **teaching personnel** based on performance and competitiveness
2. Sufficient, professional and competitive teaching personnel
3. Approve concept and strategy of continuous training of teaching personnel
4. **Develop human resources for the implementation of participatory – formative technologies in education, strengthen the status and professionalism of teaching personnel**
5. Develop and implement a new model of training and in-service training of teachers in the context of new demands: simultaneous training, teaching foreign languages, work in localities with reduced nr of attendants
6. Adjust the number of teaching personnel of educational institutions to the needs of communities, adjust norms of teaching hours to the international practices
7. Ensure the motivation of teaching personnel by remunerating it in accordance with the law of demand and supply

Civic Education in secondary school in Moldova

This discipline is included in the educational program for primary schools and gymnasiums by the Order no. 277 of Ministry of Education, dated May 05, 2000.

In primary level this is a separate subject “Moral education” (1 hrs per week).

In gymnasium the course was launched in September 2000 for pupils in the 5th form only and is gradually introduced to elder forms (e.g. in September 2001 it was included in the curriculum of the 6th form, in September 2002 is planned to be introduced for the 7th form in September 2003 is planned to be introduced for the 8th form,, etc.)

Currently, the course's curriculum for gymnasiums (5th – 9th form) is elaborated, translated into Russian, and published in both Romanian and Russian. The implementation guide has been elaborated and translated, but hasn't been published yet.

During June – August 2001, more than 1500 teachers were trained to deliver the course. Currently, "Civic Education" manual for the 5th form is elaborated and ready for publishing, while the manual for the 6th form is under elaboration. Within the framework of a SIEDO project sponsored by Iowa University, USA "Civic Education" manual for the 9th form has been elaborated.

In the educational program for lyceum X-XII grades was included the discipline "We and low». From September 2001 this is obligatory subject, elaborated by support of non governmental organization SIEDO. The SIEDO s project was supported elaboration of curriculum and manuals.

The problems Moldova faces in implementing the "Civic Education" course, is specifically:

- Publishing the Implementation Guide of the "Civic Education" curriculum for gymnasiums;
- Elaboration, translation, publishing, and piloting didactic sets for 5th – 8th forms;
- Organizing experience exchange seminars (internships);
- Organizing extra-curricular activities on Democracy and Human Rights education (Debate tournaments, drawings and pictures exhibitions, articles and school journals contests, etc.)

Formal curriculum provisions for EDC in Moldova

Country	Terminology	Educational level	Approach	Time allocation
Moldova	Moral education	Primary	Separate subject	1 hrs per week
	Civics education	Secondary (grades V-IX)	Separate subject	1 hrs per week
	We and low	Secondary (lyceum grades X-XII)	Separate subject	1 hrs per week

At the compulsory education students should :

- * Understand the meaning of their belonging to different types of community, by:
 - participating in the social life of the class , the school and the local community to which they belong ;
 - identifying the rights and responsibilities they have as citizens of Republic of Moldova and reflecting upon them ;

- understanding and evaluating the interdependence between self and others ,between local and national , between national and global;
- build one s set of individual and social values and orient one s behavior and career on keeping with these , by :
 - *understanding the way in which the social and cultural environment (the family , social norms, linguistic codes , historical traditions etc.) influence one s own ideas and behavior as well as those of other people ;*
 - *knowing and analyzing the opportunities offered by the various learning tracks , depending on one s individual aptitudes etc*

In addition to basic specialized subjects of civic education the new curriculum framework also includes curricular areas referring to optional disciplines , topics or courses such as “Debate” , “Child Parliament” , “Youth participation “ etc.