**UNICEF Moldova**

**Terms of Reference**

**National Individual Consultancy** **for the development of the policy document on digitalization of the education sector**

**Location:** Home-based

**Duration and timeline:** **35 working days** (September 2023 – November 2023)

1. **Background**

The Republic of Moldova embraces an education policy that is consistent with the European and international education policy, that responds to the current issues and needs of the education system and its beneficiaries. The documents underpinning the strategic development of the education system are proof of the high regard of the Government of the Republic of Moldova to shifting focuses on education in favour of quality and sustainability.

The Education Sector Analysis was performed in 2019 and informed the preparation of the education strategy, including a detailed problem analysis and efficiency of the sector. To ensure the continuous and sustained access to education for all children and in line with Moldovan authorities' efforts to achieve the objectives of SDG4, the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) in cooperation with UNICEF, as Grant Agent and Coordinating Agency for Education Sector Programme Implementation Grant (ESPIG) under the partnership with Global Partnership for Education (GPE), has developed a new long-term Development Strategy “Education 2030“. The DS explores the education sector within the international, regional, and national context and sets out the education policy of the Government of the Republic of Moldova and the strategic directions of actions required for solving the identified issues.

According to the [Development Strategy “Education 2030,](https://www.legis.md/cautare/getResults?doc_id=136600&lang=ro) one of the issues that the education system is facing is related to the inefficient application of ICT in education and lack of functional management in the process of education digitalization. Over recent years, more actions have been taken aimed at enhancing digital literacy competences of teachers and pupils/students. The extent to which digital skills are used in the teaching-learning-assessment process and the insufficient capacity to effectively use the latest generations of interactive multimedia educational software are still a problem. Surveys reveal that around 79% of teachers believe that the use of ICT contributes to increasing the level of development of pupils’ skills and around 70% of these point out the importance of ICT in improving learning outcomes. At the same time, around 40% of teachers show a reserved attitude towards the impact of information technologies, which signals a significant delay in digitalizing education.

According to the [‘Social and Economic Impact Assessment of the COVID-19 Pandemic on vulnerable Groups and Economic Sectors in the Republic of Moldova’](https://www.undp.org/moldova/publications/social-and-economic-impact-assessment-covid-19-republic-moldova) report[[1]](#footnote-2), the pre-existing vulnerabilities of the Moldovan education system were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, concluding specifically for education that the most socially disadvantaged children had difficulties in accessing remote education. The access to on-line education of children with disabilities was limited where no accessibility provisions were available, the Roma were at risk of being left behind given poverty levels, lack of access to IT equipment and potential discrimination. Remote learning remained a challenge for about 16,000 students and 3,000 teachers who did not have access to ICT technology (laptop, tablet, or access to internet). The consequences of the pandemic and the move to alternative online learning were potentially very damaging. The report also indicated that despite Government and donor efforts, there is still a baseline disparity in availability of information technology equipment, with 75% of the children and youth in the vulnerable sample not having enough devices, and 50% not being connected to the internet.

Due to poor access to the internet, insufficient financial resources allocated for digitalizing the education sector and their inappropriate use, the availability of ICT in education institutions remains low, hampering the implementation of computer-assisted training and digital education management.

Failure to prioritize digitalization in policy documents, insufficiency of mechanisms for implementing ICT standards, lack of mechanisms for assessing and certifying digital competences, lack of a systemic vision on the equipment and assistive technologies, focused efforts of ongoing in-service training on digital literacy and less on digital pedagogy led to specific consequences and risks that should be addressed. Building inclusive and open ecosystems means a strong interconnection between policy framework, inclusive digital infrastructure, capacity building and awareness raising. These are interconnected challenges that should be embedded into the general process of digital transformation, with a focus on upstreaming the children who are at risk of digital exclusion. In addition to addressing the challenges mentioned, it is crucial to recognize the importance of building 21st-century skills among students in Moldova. As the world rapidly evolves in the digital age, students need to develop competences such as critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy to thrive in the 21st century. These skills enable students to adapt to changing environments, become active participants in the digital society, and contribute effectively to the economy.

One of the objectives of the new education strategy is to facilitate the digital transformation of the education sector. To achieve this important goal, UNICEF supported MER to develop a programme proposal, and successfully secured financing through the GPE Multiplier Fund for 2022-2025. The funding is solely used for digital transformation of the education sector. Based on a competitive process and its valuable experience and expertise in education globally and nationally, UNICEF was identified as Grant Agent (GA) and Implementing Agent (IA) for the Multiplier Fund, the Digital Innovation of Moldovan Education System Programme.

Based on the above, UNICEF Moldova is seeking to engage a consultant to support MER with the development and costing of the policy document on digitalization of the education sector.

1. **Purpose of the assignment**

The purpose of this consultancy is to develop thepolicy document on digitalization of the education sector aligned with the Development Strategy “Education 2030”, the draft of the National Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-2030 and other relevant documents. The policy document on digitalization will serve as a basis for an effective and efficient digital transformation of the education sector.

1. **Objectives of the consultancy**

The objective of the consultancy is to provide qualified assistance to MER and UNICEF for the development of a policy document on digital transformation (Program) of the education sector and a mid-term costed Action Plan for implementation.

1. Details of how the work should be delivered

Thepolicy document on digitalization will be developed guided by the Development Strategy “Education 2030”, the draft of the National Digital Transformation Strategy 2023-2030, European Moldova 2030 National Development Strategy, the Multiplier Programme, MER priorities, including the European Frameworks for Digital Competence for Educators and Students (DigCompEdu), and the EU Digital Education Action Plan.

The policy document on digitalization (Program) will include, but not be limited to:

* Vision and policy formulation and setting the policy priorities
* Identification of the key strategies for achieving the vision, including the human, technical, and financial resources and capacities required, remedial actions, costing and financing
* Development of a realistic costed action plan, defining the implementation.
* Development of a monitoring and evaluation framework.

The policy document on digitalization will also be based on the analysis of the current trends and thoughtful hypotheses for overcoming financial, technical, and administrative constraints to effective elaboration and implementation. It will provide a framework for domain priorities, activities, and budget. They will also recognize the strong ownership by key stakeholders. The policy document on digitalization will be evidence-based, with the main information drawn from: (a) evaluation indicators from policy documents and (b) detailed discussions and consultations with relevant stakeholders, c) best international practices.

In-depth discussions will be held with various stakeholders, particularly, members of the LEG, relevant MER departments, UNICEF, MoF, National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (ANACEC), National Curriculum and Evaluation Agency (NACE), e-Governance Agency Moldova, ATIC, and other relevant actors. Technical meetings with key personnel involved in education at both strategic and operational levels will be held to gain different perspectives on common issues, especially regarding the key strategic priorities and activities.

The key objective will envisage the development of an overarching framework of long-term strategic priorities in digitalization of the education sector, outcomes, and activities. The emerging interlinked results framework will be presented and further discussed at a one-day validation workshop with the MER, UNICEF, and e-Gov Agency, focusing on the adoption of a strategic design and its implementation arrangements, including a comprehensive approach towards monitoring and evaluation.

The incumbent will also ensure integration of gender equality, provisions for children with SEN and PSEA considerations, including safe and ethical protocols into the development of the policy document on digitalization of the education sector. The consultant will work closely with MER and UNICEF, consulting MER at all stages, seeking inputs through discussions and document writing activities. Also, the UNICEF Project Officer and Education Officer will provide technical assistance.

The policy document on digitalization will serve as the main policy framework for the digitalization of the education sector, education sector priorities, and a mid-term detailed implementation costed Action Plan for 2023-2025 for the operationalization of the Program, consistent with the identified policy priorities and linked to the national budget process, to usefully feed into the annual budget preparation and oversight processes. The Action Plan will outline staged implementation of activities, with information on timing, roles, responsibilities, and costs. The action plan will be part of the policy document (Program). Planned implementation arrangements with relevant responsibilities and accountability will be clearly identified and will be as close as possible to the usual responsibilities of ministries and ministry departments. To support the definition of the implementation arrangements, the capacity gaps of stakeholders at both central and local levels will be identified as well.

The final stage will include the development of a robust monitoring and evaluation framework of the policy with clearly defined results, targets, and key milestones. The policy document will contain a clearly defined M&E mechanism and assign M&E accountabilities. Relevant assumptions and risks will be identified as well and remedial actions.

1. Deliverables and delivery dates

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| **NO.** | **Tasks** | **Deliverable** | **Timeline\*** |
| 1. | Develop an inception report that will contain a detailed methodology and tools to be used for data collecting and analysis needed for drafting the policy document on digitalization (Program) and the mid-term costed Action Plan  | Inception report containing the methodology and tools  | 2 working days |
| 2. | Conduct desk review of documentation on digitalization of the education sector in Moldova, including international best practices and policies applied, available national studies, evaluations and reports, and data from relevant ministries and agencies  | The desk review report containing main findings and recommendations for policy development | 4 working days |
| 3. | - Conduct relevant interviews and focus group discussions with MER departments, UNICEF, e-Governance Agency Moldova, World Bank, UN Agencies, USAID, ATIC and other relevant actors.- Apply analytical methodology and tools to interviews and data | List of interviewed people, including the strategic priorities and interventions identified by the interviewees or the focus groups participants. Summary report on the key findings | 3 working days |
| 4. | Develop a comprehensive policy document on digitalization (Program) and costed Action Plan in Romanian and English and submit to the MER/UNICEF and stakeholders for review and comments | Draft policy document on digitalization, concept note and costed Action Plan with all comments from UNICEF, MER and other stakeholders addressed | 18 working days |
| 5.  | Development of a monitoring and evaluation framework.  | Draft monitoring and evaluation framework | 4 working days |
| 6. | Organize the validation meeting with UNICEF, MER, development partners and other stakeholders | - Consultation conducted, incl. logistic arrangement (agenda, invitation letter, and list of participants with confirmed attendance)- PPT on the drafts of developed documents, including the vision, key strategic directions, objectives, financial, human, and other resources considerations etc.- Summary report concluding the validation meeting. | 2 working days |
| 7. | Finalize policy document on digitalization, the mid-term costed Action Plan, and the M&E Framework. | Program on digitalization of the education sectorCosted Action Plan, and M&E framework (in Romanian and English)  | 2 working days |
|  | **Total:** | 35 working days |

*\* Exact deadlines will be mutually agreed upon contract signature.*

All materials for the consultation/validation meetings, including the draft policy document on digitalization, mid-term costed Action Plan and M&E Framework, agenda, list of participants with confirmation of attendance, PPT, hand-out and other will be presented for endorsement to UNICEF and MER at least one week prior to the meeting in Romanian and English. The report from the validation meeting will be presented to UNICEF and MER three working days after the event, in Romanian.

1. Reporting requirements

The consultant will report to the UNICEF Project Officer, with support from the Education Officer and Education Specialist, who will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance on his/her performance and all other necessary support so to achieve objectives of the consultancy, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to consultant’s performance and quality of work.

All activities and deliverables undertaken by the consultant shall be discussed and planned in consultation with UNICEF. The consultant is expected to deliver each component of the workplan electronically (in Word format). At each stage, the deliverable shall be sent to the Project Officer by email, with the Education Officer in copy.

1. **Performance indicators for evaluation of results:**

The performance of work will be evaluated based on the following indicators:

* Completion of tasks specified in ToR.
* Compliance with the established deadlines for submission of deliverables.
* Quality of work.
* Demonstration of high professional and ethical standards in cooperation and communication with UNICEF and counterparts
1. Qualifications and experience
* University degree in education, social policies, economics, or other relevant studies
* Minimum of 5 years of experience in quantitative and qualitative research, evaluation, and development of strategic documents in education, including digitalization of the education sector and/or relevant technical fields
* Proven experience and involvement in developing education or related sectors policy documents (examples of specific strategic documents and/or policies developed should be provided)
* Demonstrated experience of work with Governmental institutions, preferably MER. Previous experience in working with the Government of the Republic of Moldova is a strong asset
* Familiarity with international, EU and European Commission policies and benchmarks in education and best European practices in the field of education. Previous work with UNICEF, other UN agencies, or the WB is an asset
* Excellent verbal and written communications skills, both at technical level and policy level
* Fluency in Romanian and working knowledge in English is required. Knowledge of another official UN language or a local language is an asset.
1. **Content of technical proposal**

* Relevant experience with similar type of assignments (max 300 words)
* Proposed approach and methodology (max 1500 words), including:
* Timeline and milestones
* Risk and mitigation measures
* Ethical considerations and how the consultant will address them
* Sample questionnaire: 2-3 interview questions per type of stakeholder
* Annex: Short Sample or links to related work previously conducted by the consultant

In addition, please provide your *Curriculum Vitae*.

1. **Content of financial proposal**

The applicant should fill in the Financial Offer Template and specify an all-inclusive fee to complete the tasks/deliverables described in the Terms of Reference in MDL.

Other expenses directly related to the ToR assignments and deliverables such as: (translation/interpretation costs, local transportation etc.) may be included in the financial offer unless specified that UNICEF will cover them separately (see paragraph 14 and 15 below).

The final selection will be based on the principle of “best value for money” i.e., achieving desired outcome at lowest possible fee.

If not provided by ToR, UNICEF will not reimburse costs not directly related to the assignment. This contract does not allow payment of off-hours, medical insurance, taxes, and sick leave.

UNICEF reserves the right to withhold all or a portion of payment if performance is unsatisfactory, if work/output is incomplete, not delivered or for failure to meet deadlines.

1. **Evaluation criteria for selection**

The candidate is expected to reflect in the submission the qualifications, knowledge and experience related to the requirements listed above. Technical evaluation will be performed through a desk review of applications, evaluation of technical proposals, and if necessary, may be supplemented by an interview.

The total amount of points to be allocated for the price component is 30. The maximum number of points (30) will be allotted to the lowest price proposal of a technically qualified offer. Points for other offers will be calculated as Points (x) = (lowest offer/ offer x) \* 30.

The selection process is aimed at selecting the applicant who obtains the highest cumulative score (technical evaluation + financial offer evaluation points) following “best value for money” principle.

1. **Payment schedule**

The payment will be linked to the following deliverables upon satisfactory completion and acceptance by UNICEF:

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| **Deliverable** **(delivered according to the timeline agreed upon with UNICEF)**  | **Proportion of payment**  |
| Deliverables 1, 2, 3 | 20%  |
| Deliverable 4,5 | 60%  |
| Deliverable 6,7 | 20%  |

1. **Definition of supervisory arrangements**

The consultant will work under the oversight of Project Officer of UNICEF Moldova. Payments will be rendered upon successful completion of each task, as per the schedule outlined above.

1. **Work location and official travel involved**

The work will require local travels in order to conduct in-person visits and interviews with the different government authorities, as per their availability. The consultant is expected to cover costs, arrange, and schedule such visits, including transportation. The UNICEF office will facilitate introductions to key informants.

1. **Support provided by UNICEF**

UNICEF will regularly communicate with the consultant and provide feedback and guidance and necessary support so to achieve objectives of the work, as well as remain aware of any upcoming issues related to the performance and quality of work. UNICEF will provide an initial package of relevant documents and available research, and an initial list of relevant experts and counterparts to work with. UNICEF will also request relevant data – as agreed upon with the consultant – from relevant government counterparts.

1. **Child Safeguarding**

Is this project/assignment considered as “[Elevated Risk Role](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DHR-ChildSafeguarding/DocumentLibrary1/Guidance%20on%20Identifying%20Elevated%20Risk%20Roles_finalversion.pdf?CT=1590792470221&OR=ItemsView)” from a child safeguarding perspective?

[ ]    YES     NO  [x]      If YES, check all that apply:

More information is available in the [Child Safeguarding SharePoint](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DHR-ChildSafeguarding/SitePages/Amendments-to-the-Recruitment-Guidance.aspx) and [Child Safeguarding FAQs and Updates](https://unicef.sharepoint.com/sites/DHR-ChildSafeguarding/DocumentLibrary1/Child%20Safeguarding%20FAQs%20and%20Updates%20Dec%202020.pdf)

1. **Ethical considerations**

The Consultant will ensure that the process is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines1. The Consultant should be sensitive to beliefs, manners and customs and act with integrity and honesty while interacting with stakeholders and beneficiaries. Furthermore, the Consultant should protect the anonymity and confidentiality of individual information. All participants should be informed about the context and purpose of the Assessment, as well as about the confidentiality of the information shared. The Consultant is allowed to use documents and information provided only for the tasks related to these terms of reference.

As per UNICEF’s procedure on Individual Consultants, together with the Notification letter, the selected candidate will be sent the [link on UNICEF’s learning platform, Agora](https://agora.unicef.org/course/view.php?id=15620), containing UNICEF policies on Prohibiting and Combatting Fraud and Corruption; Prohibition of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and abuse of authority and other relevant policies for their information and acknowledgment. The selected candidate must complete the applicable mandatory online courses on UNICEF’s learning platform prior to signature of contract.  All certificates should be presented as part of the contract.

1. **Other considerations**

Individuals engaged under an individual consultancy will not be considered “staff members” under the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and UNICEF’s policies and procedures and will not be entitled to benefits provided therein (such as leave entitlements and medical insurance coverage). Their conditions of service will be governed by their contract and the General Terms and Conditions of Contract (Consultants). Individual consultants are responsible for determining their tax liabilities and for the payment of any taxes and/or duties, in accordance with local or other applicable laws.

The selected candidate is solely responsible to ensure that the visa (if applicable) and health insurance required to perform the duties of the contract are valid for the entire period of the contract.

Selected candidates are subject to confirmation of fully vaccinated status against SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) with a World Health Organization (WHO)-endorsed vaccine, which must be met prior to taking up the assignment. It does not apply to consultants who will work remotely and are not expected to work on or visit UNICEF premises, programme delivery locations, or directly interact with communities UNICEF works with, nor to travel to perform functions for UNICEF for the duration of their consultancy contracts.

UNICEF offers reasonable accommodation for consultants with disabilities. This may include, for example, accessible software, travel assistance for missions or personal attendants. We encourage you to disclose your disability during your application in case you need reasonable accommodation during the selection process and afterwards in your assignment.

1. <https://www.md.undp.org/content/moldova/en/home/library/inclusive_growth/social-and-economic-impact-assessment-of-covid-19-in-the-republi.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)