

NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM REVIEW – GEORGIA

February 2022

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The report was coordinated, supervised, and finalised by Florian Kadletz, ETF Human Capital Development Expert.

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1. CONTEXT AND SYSTEM OVERVIEW

Background

Education, training, and labour market systems are increasingly challenged by global developments such as digital transformation, globalization, demographic change, climate change and global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. All these have a profound impact on the lives of individuals and on society. The development of technology, especially information and communication technology (ICT), has boosted economic globalization and opened new opportunities for people, but also new risks.

Amidst these developments with uncertain outcomes, some things are for sure: firstly, a fast-evolving world and a changing labour market require individuals to become real lifelong learners, to acquire new competences to cope with change and to adapt and further develop existing competences. And, secondly, there is a growing demand for valid information on the changing labour markets and future prospects. This goes along with a growing need for supporting people to manage their more frequent and complex transitions within and between education and work. In this context, there is a greater need than ever for career development support. At the same time, career development support – that is lifelong career guidance, and in particular career education, and career development support for workers – itself faces challenges in adapting to the new circumstances.

Against this background, ETF engaged in reviewing the state of national career development support systems in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Ukraine. The objective of the reviews is to describe existing capacities and development potentials of career development support systems, not just services or policies, to inform policy and practice enhancement in a system approach, to support the selection of country priorities for further system development and future planning, and to inform ongoing and future EU and ETF activities, like the EU4Youth. For more information about the conceptual approach to the reviews, please refer to the ETF-ILO publication “Developing National Career Development Systems”¹.

The review process was led by local experts under the coordination of ETF and included (a) desk research and individual consultation interviews, (b) a national consultation meeting that involved all relevant stakeholders to clarify open questions from desk research, to add details and triangulate desk research findings by listening to different points of views from Ministries of education, labour and youth, social partner representatives, youth organizations, practitioners, employer organizations, sector representatives, researchers, (c) review report finalization, translation and distribution, (d) discussion of findings with national authorities to identify priority areas for further system development, (e) a wide validation event to discuss the review findings and how to move forward in priority areas identified, and (f) last revision of the report that is being published in both English and national language.

1.1 Context

Georgia is a country of the South Caucasus, neighbouring Turkey, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran. Georgians represent the majority of the population (83.8 %), with Azeris (6.5 %), Armenians (5.7 %) and Russians (1.5 %) being the largest minority ethnic groups². The population is 3.7 million, 57 % of which live in urban areas, including 1.1 million in the capital, Tbilisi. The share of young people (aged 15-24) among the general population has been decreasing (from 20.8 % in 2013 to 17.7 % in 2019), indicating that the Georgian population is gradually ageing. Two primary factors explaining this decrease are low natural growth rates and emigration³. As many as 746 000 people

¹ ETF-ILO (2021): <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/developing-national-career-development-support-systems>

² Geostat.

³ Policies for Human Capital Development Georgia, 2020, ETF.

have emigrated (16 % of the country's population)⁴ (the main destination countries being Russia, Ukraine, Greece, Germany, Spain, the United States and Turkey), with the population aged 25-29 representing the highest share of emigrants, followed by those aged 30-34 and aged 20-24.

Georgia is an upper middle-income country⁵ with a growing gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, which increased from USD 8 000 in 2012 to USD 11 400 in 2018. Over the past 10 years Georgia's GDP growth has fluctuated considerably, falling from 7.2 % in 2011 to only 2.7 % in 2016. However, after catching up in 2017, the Georgian economy continued to perform well in 2019, with GDP growth standing at 5 % until the COVID-19 pandemic reversed this trend in 2020 (- 6.8 %)⁶. The main contributors to GDP in 2019 were services (60.4 %), followed by industry (20.0 %) and agriculture (6.2 %). Services are also the fastest growing sector, with hospitality and financial services leading the way.

In recent years Georgia has continuously improved the business environment for all enterprises (including SMEs) by simplifying administrative regulations, reducing the tax burden, fighting corruption, facilitating free trade, promoting privatisation, and initiating a policy partnership platform to build a national lifelong entrepreneurial learning concept. The World Bank's Doing Business assessment of 2020 ranked Georgia 7th out of 190 countries⁷.

TABLE 1. MAJOR EMPLOYMENT INDICATORS

	2010	2015	2019	2020
Population (in thousands)	3 799.8	3 721.9	3 723.5	3 716.9
Workforce (15+ age group)	1 603.8	1 675.6	1 572.8	1 523.7
Employed	1 167.6	1 308.5	1 295.9	1 241.8
Hired	710.0	855.3	897.5	845.3
Self-employed	455.2	445.6	397.9	395.9
Unemployed (15+ age group)	436.2	367.2	276.9	281.9
Activity rate (% of 15+ age group)	51.5	55.5	51.8	50.5
Employment rate (% of 15+ age group)	37.5	43.3	42.7	41.1
Unemployment rate (% of 15+ age group)	27.2	21.2	17.6	18.5
Unemployment rate (women)	25.0	20.0	16.0	16.2
Youth (15-24 age group) unemployment rate	36.8	31.8	27.8	41.1

Source: Geostat, 2021: <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/683/dasakmeba-umushevroba>

Georgia aspires to closer integration with the EU. In 2014, Georgia signed an Association Agreement with the EU, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area. Georgia conducts and develops policy consistent with the framework of relevant EU policies and practices. The EU is

⁴ Geostat.

⁵ <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519>

⁶ <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/23/mtliani-shida-produkti-mshp>

⁷ <https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/reports/global-reports/doing-business-2020>

currently Georgia's main trading partner, accounting for 28 % of Georgian imports and 22 % of Georgian exports in 2018⁸.

A long-term analysis of indicators shows that the labour market gained momentum between 2010 and 2015, but has decreased over the past 5 years, which were marked by a decreasing activity rate and therefore, slightly decreasing unemployment rates across all categories. Despite the sustained but mediocre economic growth of the past decade, the Georgian labour market continues to have three structural problems: 1) limited job creation (especially, for skilled workers); 2) a high share of self-employment in subsistence agriculture; and 3) a high level of urban unemployment, especially among young people. Roughly speaking, half of the total employment is in the services sector, 40 % in agriculture and 10 % in manufacturing. The employment share of services has been increasing in the last decade at the expense of shrinking agricultural employment.

Informality, together with its implications (low levels of productivity, low wages, poor working conditions, and poor access to social protection), is also a challenge as it accounts for a large share of the Georgian labour market. Georgia's labour force participation rate is relatively high, especially among older people. The activity rate (aged 15+) decreased from 65.2 % in 2013 to 62.9 % in 2019. There was a pronounced gender gap of 21 percentage points between the activity rates for men (67.0 %) and women (46 %) in 2020. The gender difference in employment rates is also significant, with 15 percentage points between the employment rates for men (49 %) and women (34.0 %) in 2020. Among the employed population, women (76 %) are more likely to be in hired employment, than men (61.7 %); however, self-employed women are more likely to be contributing family members (46.2 % of self-employed women), than men (14.2 %). Men are more likely to be employed in industry and agriculture than women: 26 % of employed men work in industry, compared to 8.4 % of employed women, and 22.4 % of employed men work in agriculture, compared to 16.5 % of employed women. Consequently, services are dominated by women (75,1 % of employed women, versus only 51,6 % of employed men)⁹.

The lower female participation rate is partly explained by a lack of childcare opportunities, significant wage disparities between men and women (about 35 %), and a lack of flexible employment opportunities.

The overall unemployment rate (aged 15+) has been declining, falling from 26.4 % in 2013 to 17.6 % in 2019. The unemployment rate is higher for men (18.9 %) than for women (16 %). There are also significant geographical disparities. In 2019, the unemployment rate in rural areas of Georgia was 16.7 %, compared with 18.2 % in urban areas¹⁰. People with higher education are slightly less affected by unemployment than individuals with lower skills (10.2 % against 10.5 % in 2020)¹¹.

Young people face particular challenges in the labour market. The youth unemployment rate remains high, standing at 30.4 % in 2019, although it had declined in recent years (down from 36.8 % in 2010). However, the COVID-19 pandemic appears to have affected this age group the most, with youth unemployment standing at 41.1 % in 2020. The unemployment rate is higher for young women (32.9 %) than for young men (28.9 %). Youth unemployment by educational level shows that rates are lowest for the group with low levels of education, while the difference between the rates among those with medium and high levels is not significant. This might be explained by agricultural self-employment among people with lower educational attainment. The proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) remains high and actually increased from 24.8 % in 2017 to 26.9 % in 2018, before declining again to 26.0 % in 2019. However, the trend is downwards in recent years (from 29.9 % in 2013). Young women are more prone to becoming NEETs, with a rate of 29.1 % compared with 23.3 % for young men in 2019. Young people with lower levels of education are less

⁸ Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (2019).

⁹ Women and men in Georgia/ labour force, earnings, Geostat, 2021.

¹⁰ Geostat, 2021 <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/683/employment-unemployment>

¹¹ Geostat, 2021. Women and men in Georgia, Statistical publication.

likely to become NEETs, unlike young people with an intermediate education (especially VET graduates) and university graduates, who face the highest risk of becoming NEETs¹².

The majority of jobs in Georgia are in traditional, low-productivity sectors, whereas only a minority are in modern, high-productivity sectors. The share of employment in sectors with higher productivity and wages (for example, industry and services) has been steadily increasing over the past decade, but subsistence agriculture continues to be a large source of employment. In 2018, 38.2 % of employment was in agriculture, 48 % was in services (up from 45.5 % in 2013) and only 13.9 % was in industry. In 2018, the share of self-employment in the Georgian labour market remained high, at 49.7 % of the workforce (down from 57.2 % in 2013). Self-employed workers are predominantly in rural areas, typically in agriculture, and are less likely to have access to high-quality training and better employment opportunities. Georgia also has a relatively high share of people classed as ‘contributing family workers’, who typically do unpaid work associated with the agricultural sector.

Skills mismatch is a growing concern in the Georgian labour market. An ETF study¹³ found that there is both over-qualification and under-qualification, as people work in jobs that do not necessarily correspond to their educational levels. The analysis also shows that the highest incidence of over-education in Georgia (30 %) is among semi-skilled professions (clerks, service and sales workers, and operators and technicians). This is because a large proportion of those with tertiary education take lower-skilled jobs and work in occupations that do not require a tertiary degree. They are often compelled to accept less skilled jobs because there are not enough jobs that require higher skills.

There is also under-education in semi-skilled professions, probably owing to a limited supply of VET graduates. In 2017, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD) commissioned a labour demand survey with a large representative sample of 6 000 companies. The survey results revealed that it is difficult to fill blue-collar vacancies, particularly in food processing and related occupations and those requiring stationary-plant and related operators. This is a direct reflection of the recruitment problems facing the manufacturing sector. The low qualification level among jobseekers and employees makes it necessary in many cases to seek workers from abroad. The survey also showed that the main challenges that businesses face when filling vacancies are applicants’ lack of qualifications and experience and their salary demands.

TABLE 2. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ACTIVE POPULATION (2020)

	Women	Men	Total
Lower Secondary or below (ISCED 0-2)	24	27	26
Upper Secondary (ISCED 3-4a)	39	46	43
Vocational (ISCED 3-5b)	12	9	10
Tertiary (ISCED 5-8)	25	18	21
% of early leavers from education and training (among the population aged 18-24)	8.3	9.5	8.9

Source: Exploring the Diversity of Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), World Bank, 2019¹⁴ (calculations based on LFS, Geostat).

¹² European Training Foundation, Young People Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET): An Overview in ETF Partner Countries, 2015, available at: <http://www.etf.europa.eu/web.nsf/pages/NEET ETF partner countries>

¹³ Policies for Human Capital Development Georgia, 2020, ETF, available at: https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-03/04_trp_etf_assessment_2019_georgia.pdf

¹⁴ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/591061559766670862/pdf/Exploring-the-diversity-of-young-people-not-in-employment-education-or-training-NEET-the-gender-profile-of-NEETs-in-Georgia-and-Armenia.pdf>

1.2 System overview

Career development support in Georgia is currently under the responsibility of three ministries (and/or their agencies): the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MIDPLHSA), and its State Employment Support Agency (SESA); the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) (and schools, VET colleges and universities within the education system); and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY), and its Youth Agency. Moreover, labour market information (LMI) is created under the Labour Market Information System (LMIS) division under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD).

Career development support for jobseekers ranks among the most advanced policies. SESA, which was created in 2019, provides career guidance to jobseekers covering both employment support (registration in a job-seekers database, informing on career opportunities, profiling, competency assessments, career guidance and counselling, training/retraining, career education, as well as vacancy analysis and support with recruitment services for employers) and mediated employment (job mediation, salary subsidies, internships, labour migration). SESA provides the aforementioned services through its 12 service centres (5 located in the capital and 7 in the regions).

The development of employment-related services started in 2012, when employment-related functions came under the remit of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (now MIDPLHSA) and its Social Services Agency (succeeded by SESA in 2020 for matters relating to employment support). The service model in place originated within the Concept on Professional Consultation and Career Planning adopted in 2014 and the 'new Service Model' introduced by the EU Budget Support Project, which has been further developed over the past 7 years.

In the education system, career development support is not highly developed. In general education, career education is supposed to be provided in a cross-curricular manner throughout the primary, lower and upper secondary education levels (which are called 'basic education' and 'secondary general education' respectively in the Georgian education system) and is also included within the so-called 'class teacher hour'. Career education has a few learning outcomes dedicated to studying the labour market, self-awareness and making career choices and is supposed to be taught by subject teachers¹⁵. The class teacher hour is a programme delivered by the class head teacher and includes working with students at least once a fortnight at primary level and at least once a month at lower and upper secondary level. While the former version of the National Curriculum (2011-2016) had clear guidance on the scope of the class teacher hour regarding career guidance and professional orientation, the new National Curriculum (2018-2024) is less focussed. The former National Curriculum states that, at basic and secondary education levels, for the age group 15-17 (grades 9, 10, 11), the class teacher hour should focus on professional orientation and career guidance, which is no longer included in the new version of the National Curriculum, where the guidance is limited to 'delivering age-appropriate content'.

At the vocational and higher education levels, having career guidance services at colleges and universities is a requirement under the relevant authorisation standards (at vocational education level, the new standards were only enforced from 2020). Each institution, therefore, has career guidance specialists and provides basic career guidance services, mostly related to employer relations, internships and job placements, outreach to potential students and conducting tracer studies with recent graduates.

Some 25 % of schools are covered by the MoES programme 'Vocational Skills Development Among Pupils'¹⁶. The programme aims to improve professional orientation of general education school students at grades 8 and 9 by offering a mix of services, mostly through short-term vocational training offered at school. Within the framework of the programme, 200 short-term courses were implemented in 2017, 348 in 2018 and 590 in 2019. By 2020, the number of schools covered by the programme was up to 700.

¹⁵ MoES, 2016, National Curriculum 2018-2024.

¹⁶ 2019 Implementation Report of the Unified Strategy of Education and Science (USES), 2020, MoES.

It should be noted that the MoES in 2016 launched a more robust Professional Consultation and Career Planning Programme for general education students coordinated by the Education Institutes' Mandator's Office (an agency under the MoES). The programme had foreseen the creation of a pool of career coordinators at the Mandator's Office and career counsellors at Education Resources Centres (the MoES regional offices) that should have created methodologies, guidebooks, career information and career education modules to be delivered at school level to students of grades 9, 10 and 11. However, the system was abolished the next following year of its enforcement, since the measure was considered too expensive.

A third system providing basic career development support services for youth under 29 is operated under the Youth Agency, an institution currently within the remit of the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth. The services here cover the following components: key competencies training provided to youth through various programmes (summer schools and camps, hobby centres, etc.), as well as a career information portal (www.myprofession.gov.ge) which was launched in 2015 as an online alternative to career guidance services targeting youth, but it has not been fully developed yet. Moreover, within the recently adopted Concept on Youth Policy¹⁷ a more structured vision of how to provide effective services to youth is suggested, including the creation of a youth worker institute¹⁸, reaching out to NEETs, further development of the online career planning platform, improving access and equal opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship, through better targeted ALMPs and economic support programmes, improving coordination between different actors in the youth sector and monitoring of youth policy implementation.

The Labour Market Information System, currently coordinated by a division under the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD) operates a labour market portal (www.lmis.gov.ge) that collects information on labour market and educational/training opportunities from mostly labour market surveys administered by the division, the State Statistics Service (Geostat) and the MoES. The MoES runs an education information portal (www.vet.ge), which provides data and search engine on formal vocational education and training opportunities in Georgia.

The MoESD and Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture (MEPA) are major actors aiming to create conducive environments for businesses and innovation, supporting start-ups through various mechanisms, including training needs analysis, capacity building and training initiatives mostly targeting skills for SMEs in the sphere of access to financing, accessing international markets, IT and media technologies.

¹⁷ Concept Paper on Youth Policy for 2020-2030, 2020, Parliament of Georgia.

¹⁸ Following relevant EU, European Council and UN documents, youth work in Georgia is defined social and educational practices delivered at community level aiming at youth development and well-being. Their active participation and integration in the society, including developing key skills for life through informal education (hobby centres, mass sports, cultural-creative clubs and summer schools) (abstracted from the Concept of Youth Policy, 2020, Parliament of Georgia, Draft State Youth Strategy 2025, the Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth, forthcoming).

2. POLICY FRAMEWORK

There is no unique term used to refer to Career Development Support in Georgia. It is referred to either as Professional Consultation and Career Planning (PCCP) within the Concept Paper approved by the Government of Georgia in 2014, or as Employment Support (ES) within the Law on Employment Promotion (approved in 2020). Moreover, in the formal education system the relevant services are referred to either as Career Support Service (Higher Education authorisation Standards), or as Professional Orientation, Consultation and Career Planning System (Law on Vocational Education). The definitions below are taken from relevant regulatory documents to provide an accurate description of the concepts, however the report uses the term 'Career Development Support' system to denote all of the services mentioned below.

The Law on Employment Promotion provides the following definition: employment support services refer to measures provided for job-seekers, i.e. unemployed or employed persons who are actively seeking a job, are able to start a job and are registered in the job-seekers' database, or any other persons defined by the Law on Employment Promotion to support the process of job seeking and professional development, including services to employers to support the process of finding workers capable of performing relevant jobs¹⁹.

The Concept of Professional Consultation and Career Planning (2014) and, based on it, PCCP standards (2015), gave rise to the following definition: services provided to any interested persons, at any stage of life, that will enable them to manage their careers, choose appropriate educational pathways and make career choices.

The law on vocational education refers to the Professional Orientation, Consultation and Career Planning system and defines it as 'a set of measures aiming to support individuals, at any stage of life, in determining their capabilities, competencies and interests in order to choose an education and/or profession and manage their own career'²⁰. This definition is further specified in the Vocational Education Authorisation²¹ Standards. These standards do not provide a definition of the services per se, but from the indicators within the standards it can be assumed that Career Support Services are professional orientation and employment measures, delivered to current or potential students, that include the provision of information on employment/vacancies and further career development opportunities, as well as the regular study of the employment status of students and graduates²². Similar definition can be assumed from the Higher Education Authorisation standards.

The Georgian legislation is not consistent as to the career development support legislation, services and responsibilities. This stems from the fact that different government documents adopted in the area as well as the relevant terminology and approaches are not harmonised and lastly the documents are sometimes ambiguous as to the distribution of roles or responsibilities in certain areas.

The system has been reformed during the last 7 years. In 2014, Resolution N721 (26/12/2014) on approving a concept for a Professional Consultation and Career Planning System (პროფესიული კონსულტაციისა და კარიერის დაგეგმვის სისტემა) (accompanied by the action plan 2015-2017) was issued by the Government of Georgia, which covered responsibilities and functions under the following ministries: the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (since then reorganised into the MIDPLHSA) seen as a lead in the process, as well as the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Sports and Youth (reorganised into the MoCSY). The concept provided for the following target groups: jobseekers, students within formal education at any level, employed persons wanting to change job or career, and people with special needs. The responsibilities between the three ministries

¹⁹ Law on Employment Promotion of Georgia, 2020, Parliament of Georgia.

²⁰ Law on Vocational Education, 2018, Parliament of Georgia.

²¹ Authorisation is an official procedure in Georgia for acquiring a right to deliver educational programmes. Authorisation is done by Authorisation Boards and is administered by an agency under the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia called the National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement.

²² Vocational Education Authorisation Standards, Charter on Authorisation, 2010 (amendment 2021).

were distributed in line with the institutional set-up: employment offices, schools, colleges and universities and webpages targeting young people (up to 29 years old).

The concept was followed by the approval of the Standards for Professional Consultation and Career Planning System in 2015. The concept on PCCP and related standards were never revoked, but new legislation adopted in the area (referred to below) does not make reference to those and were adopted as independent documents.

The recently approved Law on Employment Promotion (2020) provides for a one-stop-shop system (in physical or virtual space) to support employment, supply qualified personnel for employers, motivate job-seekers towards employment or self-employment and develop the workforce in line with the structural changes in the Georgian economy. The law provides for the creation of SESA, which is responsible for providing services to jobseekers and defines the responsibilities of different state actors in the sector as well as the range of services provided under the law. The MoES is responsible for career guidance at each level of education and for providing training/retraining opportunities; the MoESD manages the LMIS and ensures mediation between the investors and SESA; the MEPA provides guidance and contributions to training in agriculture. It should also be noted that, for the first time in Georgian legislation, the Law on Employment Promotion defines the concept of 'vulnerable persons' as 'a group of people, who, because of physical, psychological or social characteristics, may have a higher risk of poverty or social exclusion than the general population of the country'. The law provides for interagency coordination for the effective operation of the system, such as representation of trade unions and employment associations within the board and partnerships between the state and the private sector, including for the procurement of services in selected cases. Experts have recognised the positive effect the law will have on the sector, but indicate that the document lacks in clarity and cohesion²³.

The career development support services to be provided within the formal education system is governed by the Law on vocational Education of 2019, the Law on Higher education of 2015 and the National Curriculum for general education and Authorisation Standards for vocational and higher education levels.

The National Curriculum 2018-2024 provides for the system of 'class teacher hour' – a regular programme to be delivered by a teacher supervising a class, aiming to raise students' awareness on cross-curricular topics, which, although not stated explicitly, can cover career education and professional orientation. The document is not as specific regarding the contents related to career development as its predecessors. Moreover, the syllabus for the programme has not been approved, and supporting reference materials have not been developed. Furthermore, class teachers do not receive any pre-service or in-service training or technical support, therefore this component is hardly implemented in general education schools.

The Law on VET defines the system of career guidance, counselling and career planning in formal education as 'a wide range of measures that help a person, at any stage of formal education, to determine his/her abilities, competences and interests to make decisions related to education and choosing a profession, as well as to manage his/her career'²⁴. The law also requires the MoES to 'approve a strategy of career guidance, counselling and career planning in formal education and colleges', and 'to ensure the implementation of the measures provided for by the legislation of Georgia within the system of career guidance, counselling and career planning in formal education'. The draft strategy is under public discussion and is summarised below.

In line with the respective laws (Law on Education Quality Enhancement of 2010, Law on Higher education of 2004 and Law on Vocational Education of 2018), all education institutions are subject to authorisation, which is the process of obtaining the right to provide education services. The process is coordinated by the MoES's National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) through Authorisation Boards represented by education institutions, employers and other sector experts. The

²³ Uncertain chances of success: A review of the Georgian law on employment promotion, Boergen, Ruediger; Burisch, Michael, 2021, available at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/18163.pdf>

²⁴ Law on vocational education, 2018, Parliament of Georgia <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/4334842?publication=0>

authorisation process aims to verify that the institution's mission, programmes, human, material and financial resources, as well as management, educational, assessment and support services comply with the standards. The authorisation process also entails regular self-assessment and monitoring processes. The Authorisation standards for both vocational and higher education call for the creation of career support services.

The standards require each education institution to set up and run career guidance services and have career guidance specialists. Career guidance specialists are full-time or part-time employees of education institutions. Such services offered by vocational and higher education institutions include career guidance, developing career management skills, mediation of employment, work placements or internships, tracer studies, and engagement of employers and graduates in programme development.

Lastly, the Youth Agency's functions also cover professional orientation and career planning for young people. As defined within the Law on Supporting Children's and Youth Unions, the Charter of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Charter of the Youth Agency, the Agency 'develops and implements programmes to build ICT competencies of youth, to provide professional orientation and career planning support to promote youth empowerment, and employment and education support for work transition. In so doing, the Agency ensures the inclusion of different vulnerable groups (persons with disabilities, NEETs, IDPs). The newly approved concept on Youth Policy in Georgia for 2020-2030 prioritises the economic empowerment of youth (decreasing youth unemployment (4.1.), decreasing NEETs rate (4.2.), decreasing inequality in youth employment and activity rate (4.3.), reducing bad practice in youth employment and hiring (4.4.), increasing youth entrepreneurship levels (4.5.) and creating a formally recognised institute of youth workers (2.1.)) to contribute to youth policy implementation and youth empowerment. The concept puts the Youth Agency in charge of coordination between central and local government institutions and external actors in youth policy implementation²⁵.

The key document providing strategic directions in the area of career guidance is the Labour and Employment National Strategy of Georgia (2019-2023), but career guidance is also partially covered by sector-specific strategies like the SME strategy 2021-2025, the VET Reform Strategy 2013-2020 or the Unified Education and Science Strategy 2017-2021. Career guidance is mentioned in the Draft Education Strategy for 2022-2032 and the MoES is working on a Strategy for Career Planning in the Formal Education System (2021-2025).

The National Strategy 2019-2023 for Labour and Employment Policy of Georgia²⁶ is the key strategic document that outlines the major areas of focus for labour market policy in Georgia: Reducing the discrepancy between supply and demand; strengthening Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP); promoting involvement of women and vulnerable groups in the labour market; improving the system of enforcement of workplace safety and protection of rights; improving labour migration management. The strategy details the responsibilities by each state actor within the sphere as detailed above within the Law on Employment promotion, including the MoES, MoESD and MEPA and covers actions targeted to unemployed, special vulnerable groups, students in formal education system and SMEs and start-ups, as well as promotion of selected economic sectors. The strategy is accompanied by the detailed action plan for 2019-2021. Moreover, each year the government approves an Employment Support Services Programme, with specific targets and funding for each strategic direction identified under the Employment promotion Law and the Strategy, including those related to career development support.

The SME Development Strategy 2021-2025²⁷ covers the career development support system from the point of view of labour market information and labour market management systems (www.lmis.gov.ge and www.worknet.gov.ge). The strategy provides further improvement of the systems, so that the improved visualisation and functionality of LMIS enables different target groups to find and analyse labour market information, and that worknet.gov.ge provides improved automated professional

²⁵ Resolution #7054 of the Parliament of Georgia on Approving the Concept of youth Policy in Georgia for 2010-2030, 2020, accessible at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4936402?publication=0> (in Georgian)

²⁶ https://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/2020/Failebi/strategy-13.12.19_final-translation.pdf

²⁷ http://www.economy.ge/uploads/files/2017/ek_politika/sme_strategy/sme_development_strategy_2021_2025_.pdf

orientation and career development services. As its predecessor, the SME Development Strategy 2016-2020, the current strategy also aims to make it easier for SMEs to access financing, improve entrepreneurial learning, encourage innovation and entrepreneurship, promote exports and foreign direct investments in the Georgian economy.

Both the VET Reform Strategy 2013-2020 and the Unified Strategy for Education and Science 2017-2021 had a focus on developing a professional orientation and career guidance system within formal education at all levels (e.g. Specific Strategic objective 2 (general education): 'Improve the quality of education to increase the possibilities of transition to the next level of education, to develop vital skills of students and to achieve better academic results' included the 'revision and further development of the current model of professional orientation and career planning of students'). Similar objectives were set for vocational and higher education levels²⁸. However, the implementation and evaluation reports of both strategies only show some actions within vocational education, but none at general and higher education levels.

Unlike the aforementioned strategy, the draft Unified Education Strategy 2022-2032 identifies the challenges faced by students in making informed choices because of the absence of career development systems; however, the only activity it advocates in this direction is the creation of a centralised database of employment of vocational and higher education graduates²⁹.

In addition to the Unified Education Strategy, the MoES is developing the VET Development Strategy 2021-2025, which, according to the MoES decision makers, will be more detailed in the VET sector, so that it could be included in the unified education strategy. The strategy draft is accompanied by an action plan for 2021-2022. The strategy will focus on improving accessibility to VET services, continuous development for VET providers and improved efficiency of VET governance. Under Priority 1, the strategy advocates for a spectrum of support services targeting the employment and education of VET students (Strategic Priority 1.3), which will create a unified career management system at all levels of education (including career information, career education, career counselling) coordinated with education institutions, employment services and external stakeholders: employers and self-governance bodies, etc. The strategy speaks also of creating employment support services (work-based learning, entrepreneurship and support to develop start-ups, etc.) and social services (support with accommodation, transportation, other financial aid, as well as psychological counselling).

A more detailed outline of the career development system model offered for the education sector is given in another draft document³⁰: Strategy for the Development of the Professional Orientation, Consultation and Career Planning System in Formal Education (2021-2025)³¹. The draft of the strategy provides for the creation of a career development support system in line with international standards and good practice, widening, diversification, introduction and quality assuring of career development support services and ensuring accessibility of quality career information for all to enable informed career decision making. The draft strategy advocates for a centralised model for career planning in the education system with a core career counsellor team placed within the MoES who will directly provide services to general education school students and coordinate the career development specialists in vocational colleges. The services will be gradually decentralised after a successful pilot, meaning that the model advocates for the services to be provided at institutional level, after all. The model also envisages cooperation with non-education actors, SESA, the Youth Agency, Private HR associations, employers and NGOs. Based on the ETF taxonomy of career guidance services³², the concept offers the four career guidance models - curriculum model, career centre model, specialist model, a virtual career guidance model that will offer the 7 components (career information, career

²⁸ <https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7755&lang=eng>

²⁹ Unified Education Strategy 2022-2032, draft, MoES, 2021

https://www.mes.gov.ge/mesgifs/1638884672_განათლების_2020-დან_2020მეცხრეობის_20სტრატეგიის_20პროექტი_20-2006.12.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1-j-PPdfRx9nepOINhyhyNS5ZhNh2fKw8iWlZnt-QHJwTHKGUlojxHfo

³⁰ The new Law on Vocational Education obliges the MoES to develop a system of career guidance, counselling and career planning in formal education.

³¹ Strategy for the Development of the Professional Orientation, Consultation and Career Planning System in Formal Education (2021-2025). Draft. MoES.2021. Unpublished

³² ETF (2020). International Trends and Innovation in Career Guidance.

management education, work experience, testing, individual guidance, group guidance, counselling) through a mix of physical and virtual, individual and group services. And lastly, the draft strategy advocates for quality career information that will cover economic trends, information on skills demands by profession, education and training opportunities and employment opportunities. Further improvements of LMIS and VET and NCEQE databases, career guidance support for each student and tailored services for Special Educational Needs are also planned.

Another draft strategy document is the State Youth strategy 2025 (and action plan 2022-2023). In line with the aforementioned Youth Policy Concept, the strategy has 5 priorities:

- Increasing youth participation, equality and civil activism.
- Youth empowerment and support to realise their potential through youth work and non-formal education
- Increasing youth health and welfare
- Youth economic empowerment through employment and entrepreneurship
- Improving the governance of the youth sector

Within the priorities, the strategy involves the creation of a youth workers' institute (in line with EU, Council of Europe and ILO recommendations), that will contribute to youth empowerment, activation and advocacy. The strategy will also result in improved access to non-formal education and hobby-education programmes, youth programmes, information and counselling, summer-schools and engagement in voluntary activities for the age groups 6-14 and 15-29. The strategy will achieve better targeting of youth with ALMPs that are provided by SESA, will contribute to improved and equal employment opportunities for youth, will contribute to the creation of online career development support services, and will achieve better targeting and accessibility of SME and start-up support programmes by EDA and GITA and the development of IT, green, entrepreneurship skills among youth. The strategy will also support youth programmes and strategies at municipal level. The strategy will have an interagency council to coordinate activities among different state actors.

3. COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

3.1 Promoting coordination, cooperation and good governance

Chapter VIII of the Law on Employment Promotion outlines the responsibilities of the institutions involved in the Employment Promotion System and forms of co-operation needed (see Table 4 below). The Law also refers to an interagency coordination council to ‘exchange information about the demand and supply in the labour market’, represented by the MIDPLHSA, MoES, MoESD, MEPA, the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure, and National Statistical Service of Georgia from the government institutions, and also three members of a Tripartite Social Partnership Commission – a chairperson of the Commission, one trade union representative and one representative from the Employers’ Association³³. This council has not been created so far.

In 2021, SESA appointed an advisory council, which convenes once a year. In line with the charter of the council, its role include discussing policy initiatives in the sector and making recommendations to the SESA director³⁴. It has up to 12 members, who are appointed for 3 years from the representatives of the line ministries, employer and employee organisations, and education institutions. The council can also invite other international and national experts, as needed. In 2021, the council held two meetings, one approving the operational framework of the council and another discussing policy initiatives in the sphere of employment.

The major actor in the sector is SESA. It was established in October 2019 to implement Georgia’s active labour market policy and provide quality employment services, including the development of temporary and legal employment opportunities abroad (circular labour migration). SESA has an annual budget of approximately GEL 4 million and a total employed staff of 86 people³⁵. Of this total, 46 contracted staff are field-based in the regions, while the remaining 40 (out of 52 defined by the decree on SESA staff) work in Tbilisi.

The MoES provides career development support services in the formal education system. The MoESD oversees and manages the LMIS. Other government entities cooperate within their mandates.

The law also defines the roles played by MEPA, municipalities and the private sector within the system. The law provides for the possibility to delegate certain components of employment promotion to the private sector; however, so far this has not been done. The only case that can be regarded as a pilot is within the EU funded ESCape project³⁶ (Project Skills4Jobs), which aims to contribute to continuous/life-long career guidance and employment service development in Georgia. SESA has reported that they are referring ‘hard-to-employ beneficiaries’ to the service centres created by the project in six regions of Georgia.

³⁴ Decree of the SESA Director on Approving the Charter of the Advisory Council to the State Employment Support Agency, 2021.

³⁵ SESA correspondence, December 2021.

³⁶ Co-implemented by the Education Development and Education Centre (EDEC), Democracy Development Agency (DDA) and Konrad Adenauer Foundation (FES).

TABLE 4: RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT

Institution	Responsibilities
The Parliament of Georgia	Determine and supervise state policy for the promotion of employment.
The Government of Georgia	Create draft laws and bylaws to regulate employment sector Prepare agreements with competent bodies and organisations of foreign countries on labour migration
Interagency Coordination Mechanism	Collect and exchange all information on labour market demand and supply ³⁷
Ministry of Education and Science	Promote professional consultation and career planning at all education levels Create effective mechanisms to develop professional orientation and career management competencies at general education level
Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs	Observe trends in the labour market Develop strategies, forecasts and state programmes to support employment and short-term training of jobseekers Develop normative instruments to ensure equal opportunities in the labour market Support the implementation of state employment programmes and active labour market policies in the sector of employment, international relations and preparation of contracts; Plan and implement the monitoring and evaluation of SESA
Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture	Provide consultation to those seeking employment in agriculture Support the creation and implementation of training programmes in agriculture
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development	Study occupational groups (in line with the ISCO classification) within the labour market analysis component and provide relevant recommendations to other agencies Cooperate with other government bodies in the sphere of exchanging information and in managing and developing LMIS Mediate between investors and SESA for investment projects involving employment opportunities
State Employment Support Agency	Provide services within ALMP Provide mediation services in the labour market Provide career counselling to the jobseekers, offering and partially or fully financing training programmes Support the recruitment of staff based on employer requests; provide support services to employers Undertake research to observe trends in the labour market Create databases of SESA programmes, collect and analyse the related information Manage the electronic system for job matching
Municipalities	Support SESA regional representations in employment promotion Carry out their duties under the Code of Local self-governance related to employment promotion
Non-commercial private sector representatives	Be delegated some of the functions for employment promotion, if the services provided by them are more efficient and timelier, cheaper and of higher quality than the ones provided by the state

Source: Law on Employment Promotion, 2020, GoG.

Interagency coordination is implied in the Labour Market and Employment Promotion Strategy 2018-2023 and SME development Strategy 2021-2025 as well, which include career development support activities under the mandate of MIDPLHSA (and SESA), MoES and MoESD and its agencies – the Georgian Innovation and Technologies Agency and Enterprise Georgia. However, the gaps in

³⁷ See also beginning of this chapter for functions of the council in line with the SESA charter.

coordination are still visible and can be traced down even to the Law on Employment Promotion and the lack of clarity and consistency therein. Both the law and strategies ignore another important actor in the field, the Youth Agency, currently under the MoCSY. On the other hand, the youth sector policy documents (Concept paper on Youth Policy 2020-2030 and draft National Youth Strategy) make reference to such coordination and provide a role for the Youth Agency, municipalities, SESA and MoESD agencies in youth career development and employment support activities.

In the formal education sector, the roles are distributed between the MoES, which should define the policy with regard to career development support services within the formal education system, NCEQE, that sets the standard for the services and education institutions, who are responsible for autonomously designing and delivering such services. The exceptions are general education institutions that have the service defined within the National Curriculum. The education sector documents do not imply cooperation with line ministries or other actors in the field; however, the need is already recognised within the draft Strategy for the Development of the Professional Orientation, Consultation and Career Planning System in Formal Education (2021-2025) mentioned in the previous chapter.

3.2 Key civil society stakeholders

The Employment Promotion Law of Georgia 2020, and the charter of the SESA Advisory Council provide for the participation of non-governmental actors, including trade unions and employer associations in the implementation of state policy on employment promotion, as described above.

The Georgian Employers' Association (GEA) with financial and technical support from the Government of Germany, has been implementing vocational education programmes since 2017. The programme, among other activities, included:

- Piloting a model of career guidance for students of partner general education institutions
- An informational database on demanded skills based on the survey of HRs of member companies
- Training of career guidance specialists in partner colleges.

Depending on the availability of financial resources, GEA plans to systematise the activities as permanent services.

The Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) also launched series of meetings with businesses, called Open Dialogue with Business, aimed at facilitating dialogue between public- and private-sector actors, increasing awareness on available state programmes and projects that support business in the spheres of education, access to finance, business start-up, technological advancement and export. The project is implemented with technical and financial support from the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) for Munich and Upper Bavaria. Under the project, as well as with technical and financial support from GIZ, GCCCI started to carry out surveys of businesses aiming to identify skill needs in selected sectors and measure employer satisfaction with dual education services. As a regular service to business, GCCCI provides counselling on the development and authorisation of training and retraining in vocational education programmes (with the authorisation, the training programmes will be eligible for public funding) and in setting up dual education programmes with authorised vocational colleges.

GCCI is one of the two co-founders of the Georgian Skills Agency (established in 2021) that is in charge of vocational and further education policy implementation in Georgia. GCCCI is represented in the supervising council of the Agency. The Agency, among others, will be responsible for career development support policy development in the vocational education sector.

In 2022, GCCCI launched a three-year project with the support of Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce aiming to:

- train in-company trainers in planning and organizing in-house training

- contribute to cooperation between colleges and businesses for their mutual benefit
- organise visits to general education institutions to increase awareness on employment opportunities and popularise certain demanded professions.

In General, GCCI plans to increase its services and impact in skills matching.

There is a well-developed market of private and public organisations in the sphere of HR services and education consultation. The Georgian Business registry (www.yell.ge) provided more than 37 entries in HR services and 44 entries in education consultation; of course, the registry is far from being comprehensive.

The typical services HR companies provide, include:

- Recruitment and headhunting;
- HR outsourcing
- HR counselling and teambuilding
- Corporate training
- Job fairs and professional development services to employees
- Vacancy postings and CV banks

The services provide mixed web-based or physical activities and provide orientation on internal as well as international job markets. The services try to respond to existing challenges in the Georgian labour market, such as lack of information and informational asymmetry between potential employers and jobseekers, high turnover and skill shortages in certain sectors, access to international high-paying job markets, etc.

On the other hand, education consultation mostly targets enrolment at foreign universities and involves advising and providing information on different educational opportunities and grants and scholarships to this end (while Georgian universities do the recruitment for their students themselves). The organisations are mostly located in big cities and, although they try to have regional outreach, accessibility to their services might still be limited.

A number of international development partners are active in supporting the GoG within the career development sector:

Between 2005 and 2012, the International Organization for Migration provided initial support to the GoG in piloting different initiatives in career guidance and support services and in drafting initial employment support policy. The IOM continues to provide technical assistance, which includes policy advice, training of professionals and development of methodological guides.

In 2016/2017, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has supported the government of Georgia in the regulation and implementation of circular labour migration processes. In close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA) of Georgia, the IOM supported MoLHSA to create a temporary labour migration management model for the employment of Georgian migrant workers abroad, which has contributed to the design and implementation of the current labour schemes with different countries of destination for Georgian migrants.

IOM Georgia continues to support the Ministry for the operationalisation of temporary labour migration schemes by providing expertise, capacity building, and delivering technical support to the staff of the MoLHSA and the State Employment Support Agency in the field of circular labour migration. Support is also provided in the development of related information materials and in facilitating pre-departure orientation training courses.

The EU is another development partner which has provided comprehensive and systemic support over the past 10 years. EU programmes support reforms in employment, skills development and entrepreneurial learning, targeting young people and vulnerable groups in particular. The interventions

include designing career development support policy (concept papers, strategies, guidebooks), as well as capacity building of government actors (e.g. training of SSA and SESA staff involved in career development support) and provision of career development support services (at least three grant projects within the Skills4Jobs project contain career development support components aimed at developing and piloting at small scale within their focus regions viable models of services for different target groups, including jobseekers, NEETs and general school students).

The TA component of the Skill4Jobs project (2019-2024) provides support to four ministries involved in the sector (MoES, MIDPLHSA, MoESD and MCSY) to develop sector strategies, train staff, develop methodological tools and instruments and mentor and coach on the spot. Recent related outputs from the project include:

- Draft VET Development Strategy 2021-2025 (and action plan 2022-2023);
- Draft Strategy for the Development of the Professional Orientation, Consultation and Career Planning System (2021-2025);
- Draft State Youth strategy 2025 (and action plan 2022-2023).

The project seeks to further develop LMI and SESA service quality and effectiveness by providing methodological tools and guides.

The EU also provided several grants within its Skills4Jobs project aimed at improving skills delivery and employment and entrepreneurship systems through improved regional and sectoral partnerships. At least three projects have career development support components.

The LINKS project (2020-2023), implemented by UNAGE and OSGF, aims to achieve the following:

- Supply of actionable data, tools and platforms for improved skills anticipation and matching by skills training, VET education, career counselling and employment support service providers.
- Evidence-based, market-relevant design and delivery of career guidance and skills development opportunities.
- Accessibility, quality and inclusiveness of entrepreneurial studies and lifelong learning for the most disadvantaged populations – young men and women in rural areas, NEETs, IDPs, PwDs and other vulnerable groups.

Skills4Success (2020-2023), which is implemented by Save the Children in partnership with the Youth Agency of Georgia, the Association of Youth Workers and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS), will focus on international partnerships for the transfer of knowledge in the sphere of youth policy. The project will achieve the following, targeting four regions of Georgia:

- Develop tools and methodologies to contribute to the institutionalisation of youth work in Georgia;
- Target vulnerable youths, including NEETs, with career guidance, training and entrepreneurship opportunities;
- Build online platforms for NEETs to access labour information and create platforms for experience exchange in the youth sector between the EU and Georgia.

The ESCape project (2020-2023) is implemented by a consortium including the Centre for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia, the Young Pedagogues' Union (YPU) and the Georgian Civil Development Association (GCDA). It includes the following actions in the area of career development support:

- Providing of career guidance and counselling for students and jobseekers;
- Supporting job search and vacancy management;
- Providing of employment services and job placements for jobseekers;
- Promotion of non-formal education and training in key competences;

- Strengthening innovative learning and digital competences, including entrepreneurship;
- Strengthening labour market monitoring;
- Supporting active labour market measures for jobseekers (job search, labour market training & retraining, employment subsidies, self-employment & entrepreneurship, internships & apprenticeships, public work);

Under the Modernization of VET and Extension Services Project Phase 1 (2013-2018), the UNDP has contributed to the MoES programming (2015-2017) for general education students within the Vocational Skills Development Project (2017, 2018, 2019).

The project developed a career planning and professional orientation model which involved partnerships between vocational colleges and general education schools. The programme provided career guidance services for lower-secondary school students, but was more focused on career training as an extra-curricular activity to enable students to try out certain professions. The programme was centrally financed and managed by the MoES and implemented in up to a quarter of schools between 2017 and 2019. Unfortunately, the MoES was not able to continue its implementation in 2020/2021 (due to the COVID 19 pandemic) and the schools could not find enough resources to independently carry on with the programme. The limitation of the programme is that it is biased towards vocational education and fails to provide full-scale professional orientation and career guidance. The programme is not systematised in general education policy and schools are financially and technically dependent on the MoES to carry out the activities.

The MCA ISWD (2013-2017) programme trained career management specialists from all vocational colleges and provided guidebooks for high quality provision of services.

4. MAIN SERVICES AND ACTIVITIES

4.1 Education, training and work-based learning for youth

The Concept for Professional Consultation and Career Planning System and Professional Consultation and Career Planning Standards provide for a lifelong career development support system from preschool to adulthood for all, with well-coordinated actions. However, both the concept and the standards are not fully applied, especially outside the employment sector.

Currently, at secondary education level, career education is supposed to be taught across curricula at all primary, basic (lower secondary) and secondary levels. The competency framework for career education is limited and includes basic information on major economic sectors and some information on professions, capacities of students to assess their interests and capacities vis-à-vis requirements of the labour market, oral and written communication on their interests and experience and opportunities for further education. Most of the related learning outcomes are concentrated within the social sciences block of subjects within the National Curriculum 2018-2024. Moreover, programmes of other subject groups (sciences, arts, etc.) also require teachers to indicate and underline the links of the studied topics with their applicability in the world of work³⁸.

Additionally, the class teacher hour (which is a bi-monthly or monthly programme offered by the head teacher of the class targeting important age-appropriate topics that can range from civic education to health education) can also focus on career guidance and career education. As mentioned earlier, the class teacher hour programme in the current version of the National Curriculum is not as explicit about the content of the programme as the previous version, leaving it up to schools and teachers to adapt the programme to the needs of the students. Teachers do not have access to support materials, although some of them were developed under international programmes (like GPriEd by USAID³⁹).

Judging from the views of the consulted education experts, civic education teachers and directors of public and private schools, the programme implementation is weak in practice. This is confirmed by youth opinion studies⁴⁰, which indicate that young people often have to make career decisions without any skills, information or external assistance. This could arise not only from the insufficient time allocated to career education within the National Curriculum, but also from the competencies of the teachers, who are required to deliver the curriculum without having received training on the relevant contents and teaching methodologies. Teaching career education in a cross-curricular manner, rather than as an individual subject, exacerbates the situation even more, since unskilled professionals have to deal with the topic. Teachers themselves are often the source of the conviction that the right career choice is to try to achieve the highest level of education, thus little by little herding all students towards either higher education or a sense of career failure.

Secondary schools normally do not provide career guidance services to students and their parents, nor do they have staff responsible for career guidance, and reach out to third parties only to a limited degree in order to outsource this service. This could be due to limited resources as well as low awareness of the importance of the topic on the part of the administration.

In general, as guaranteed by the authorisation standards, all vocational and higher education institutions have career management services, which:

³⁸ National Curriculum 2018-2024, 2016, MoES.

³⁹ Between 2016 and 2018 G-PriEd, within its business skills component, adapted Junior Achievement's programmes for career and financial education, developed supporting materials for school grades 1-6, and piloted it in 62 public schools. The materials are available for a fee from the Junior Achievement's local office. The consulted project staff, pilot school directors and teachers mentioned that the materials and the programme were effective. Some of the teachers that participated in the pilot still use the programme during the class teacher hour, or use it for their subject programmes. However, schools note that they do not currently receive adequate technical and financial support from the MoES to continue its application across the board.

⁴⁰ <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/15957.pdf>

- provide outreach to potential students;
- provide individual and group counselling, job mediation/vacancy postings, internship or work-based learning placements;
- undertake tracer studies of graduates and surveys of students and graduates; they are supposed to use the information for further development of the services.

However, recent studies have shown a significant gap at these levels as well. As confirmed by a study conducted by FES in 2020⁴¹ (Youth Policy implementation at the Local Level: Imereti and Tbilisi), young people in all age groups indicate that they lack access to information on professions and services that will help them choose a career pathway. Interviews with career guidance specialists from VET colleges revealed that career guidance services are understaffed and have to implement large volumes of work related to student recruitment, outreach to employers and student counselling. Sometimes, the functions of career guidance managers include tasks beyond their duties, which further reduces their already limited time. As the qualification as a career manager is not regulated, some colleges manage to employ people with the relevant skills, including a social sciences degree and relevant training and work experience, while some have to hire unqualified staff and train them on the job. Most of the career managers have received short-term training on Training in Career Planning (EU TA- Skills4Jobs), ToT in Career Development and Planning (MCA ISWD project), Qualitative and Quantitative research methods for labour market studies (by research NGO ACT), and on professional Orientation – an experience from Germany (by the Georgian Employers' Association). However, no systematised qualification standards and programmes are available for career managers yet, and there is limited information on how sufficient the trainings undertaken are for the career managers in place.

Last but not least, there is cooperation between SESA and colleges (colleges reported that SESA administers group consultation sessions with VET college students and informs them of the possibility to register on the job-seekers site; however, the cooperation is not well structured and SESA, with its limited resources, currently cannot guarantee adequate time for VET and higher education students). In general, the career guidance methodologies, tools and career information to which career managers at education institutions have access is limited and poor. LMI is not user-friendly and does not provide career information with sufficient detail to be useful for career managers (it provides only disaggregated information on trends in economic fields with no detail on regional or qualification level). Methodological guides for career specialists have been developed by a number of organisations (such as the IOM, World Vision, Youth Agency and the HR management Centre), but they all provide an introduction to the sector and are less specific on methods that career managers can apply in practice.

Work-based learning is a compulsory part of all vocational education programmes and is integrated as an end-of-programme internship within a company to provide opportunities to apply competencies in real work situations, develop work attitudes and improve social and communication skills. All students in vocational education should be guaranteed such an internship. A growing number of students are being offered dual education programmes, with 500 students pursuing a dual education programme⁴² as of 2020.

In higher education institutions, career development support services are integrated into universities' electronic management systems, where students are able to create CVs, access career and training information and apply for vacancies. Career management specialists provide individual and group consultations aimed at developing career management skills, such as CV writing, efficiently managing job interviews, etc. Six higher institutions were part of a Capacity Development programme within the EU Erasmus programme in the early 2000s and therefore have received technical and financial assistance to set up and develop their career centres.

The state standards for the services mentioned above are general and are not applied in reality, therefore the quality of delivered services varies greatly.

⁴¹ <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/georgien/15957.pdf>

⁴² VET Reform Implementation Report 2020, 2021, MoES.

4.2 Unemployed support and support to NEETs

Services to job-seekers registered in the state employment support portal (www.worknet.gov.ge) are structured and delivered in line with the Law on Employment Promotion, the state Standards for Professional Consultation and Career Planning System, the substandard for Professional Consultation and Career Planning for job-seekers (see above) and were recently brought in line with the Concept of Youth Policy for 2020-2030.

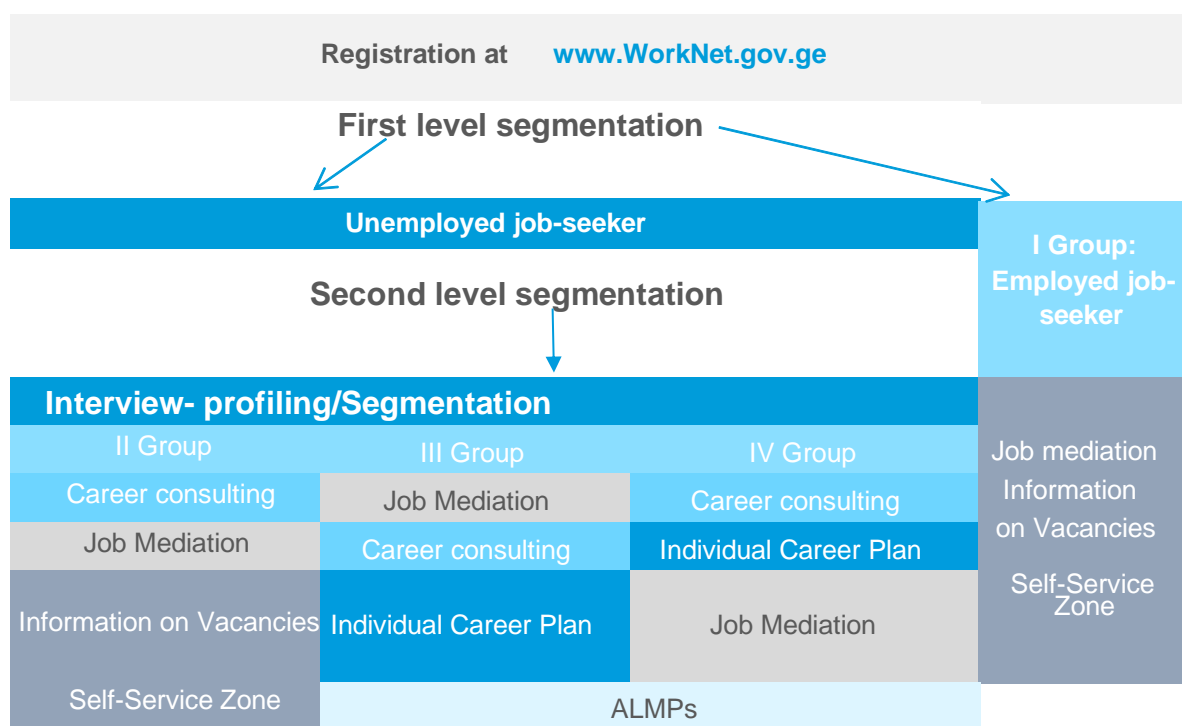
The services are provided by the State Employment Support Agency (before the establishment of the agency in 2020, the service was provided by the employment department of the Social Services Agency) within so-called New Service Model and include:

- Registration of job-seekers into the www.worknet.gov.ge website
- Profiling – creating individual competency profiles and categorising clients according to their needs
- Support for the assessment of competencies
- Access to vacancies (including SMS service)
- Individual and/or group counselling
- Development of individual career plans
- Training or retraining opportunities
- Job mediation
- Salary subsidies (for people with special needs)
- Internships
- Labour migration opportunities
- Support for access to finances and self-employment (in cooperation with GITA and Enterprise Georgia)
- Job fairs
- Local vacancy surveys
- Personnel recruitment services for employers

The services are supported by the electronic platform and follow strict guidelines developed in line with international good practice. The job-seekers are categorised according to their employment status and competencies and referenced to relevant support systems. As recommended by the methodological guide⁴³, the services that may be receive by registered job-seekers are shown in the service workflow shown in diagram 1 below.

⁴³ Guide for Serving Job-Seekers, 2021, SESA

DIAGRAM 1: SESA SERVICES TO JOB-SEEKERS (NEW SERVICE MODEL):



Source: SESA, Guide for Serving Job-Seekers, 2021

SESA publishes annual reports of implemented activities on the MIDPLHSA website. In 2021, SESA provided the following services to the 19 150 beneficiaries:

TABLE 6: STATE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME BENEFICIARIES (2021)

2021 (as of 1st December)	Total (N)	Female (N)	Youth (N)
New registration as a job-seeker in Worknet.ge in 2021	8 673	4 968	3 135
Job Mediation	2 894	1 400	932
Career Planning/Individual Consultations Regions	1 782	1 302	862
Career Planning/Individual Consultations Tbilisi	2 444	1 519	1 134
Supported employment	220	95	88
Salary subsidies	7	1	
Participation in job fairs	2 014		
Training/retraining programme applications	2 010	1 144	814
Internships	122	72	46
Key skills trainings	550	427	324

Source: SESA, 2021

Despite the structured approach to provide services to registered job-seekers, the capacity of SESA is limited and insufficient to provide efficient services to all target groups. SESA is expected to cope with hundreds of thousands of job-seekers already registered on www.worknet.ge, while the number of clients with diverse needs is constantly rising (SSA beneficiaries receiving targeted social assistance from the state are required by law to register as job-seekers, the enforcement of the clause has been postponed because of the COVID-19 crisis management activities for the last 2 years, but will greatly strain SESA resources). The newly adopted youth policy concept expects SESA to adapt their services to young people, especially vulnerable youth, who only have very limited access to services within the current programmes since they are unlikely to be registered job-seekers. SESA has attempted to reach out to students of vocational and higher education institutions; however, currently the tools within the self-service area and online resources are underdeveloped. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that SESA will manage to allocate structured services and time to this specific group of potential clients. More importantly, with only seven regional offices, SESA has weak geographical representation and poor outreach to potential beneficiaries.

Experts from private providers of employment support services (like HR HUB, KMS) indicate that the state is replacing services that were more or less well covered by private providers (e.g. job fairs, labour migration), but is unable to deliver services to the most difficult categories (hard-to-employ groups of job-seekers or potential job-seekers). Despite the legal possibility to use third-party services to outsource some of the SESA functions, there is little to no experience in this regard, despite the fact that, so far, SESA lacks both the competencies and experience in managing certain target groups (hard-to-employ individuals, NEETs) and in delivering services for students and for international labour migration.

4.3 Workers/Employed persons

Officially, SESA provides services to all potential beneficiaries that can be classified as jobseekers and register on www.worknet.gov.ge. Depending on the category of jobseeker, the employment services will select appropriate measures within the inventory listed above, including counselling on access to finances and self-employment opportunities. Within the latter, SESA cooperates with other government agencies, namely GITA and Enterprise Georgia, who support the improvement of the business environment in Georgia through access to finances and accompanying measures (e.g. TNA, training courses, mentorship, etc.) for small, medium and large companies.

Enterprise Georgia (EDA) and the Georgian Innovation and Technology Agency provide financial and technical assistance for entrepreneurship, innovation and export promotion, and support the growth of SMEs. Moreover, EDA ran a pilot initiative in 2016, 2017 and again in 2020 to analyse skills needs and gaps at sector level, and work is underway on improving skills intelligence to inform companies and training providers.

However, as mentioned above, SESA's self-service area and its inventory of online resources are underdeveloped, meaning that SESA is unable to provide sufficient outreach and services to this group of clients.

As mentioned above, private HR associations are active in providing services to all job-seekers, including those with a view to self-professional development on a career ladder. However, the accessibility to the service can greatly vary, since most of the organisations are located in big cities, provide internet-based services and/or have specific sector portfolio. Which means access to services could be far from universal.

5. FUNDING

All employment promotion services are free for beneficiaries and is financed from the state budget.

TABLE 6: STATE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME BUDGET (GEL)

Budget Item	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
State Programme for developing employment promotion services	676 000	700 000	700 000	700 000	770 000
State Programme for training and retraining of job-seekers	2 014 000	2 090 000	2 090 000	2 090 000	2 090 000

Source: SESA 2021

While the number of beneficiaries continues to increasing, the budget provided for SESA programmes remains more or less stable, which poses a challenge to cover regular programming and development needs of the agency.

6. ACCESS

SESA is currently represented through only seven regional offices throughout Georgia, each of which is supposed to cover an entire region, and five offices in Tbilisi. The former employment support structure was made up of 69 territorial SSA offices. The limited number of offices may reduce the outreach of services, particularly in rural areas, so service accessibility to the population can be an issue. SESA plans to develop a strategy to increase outreach, while it also negotiates with the Ministry of Justice to use the latter's 70 community centres in the regions to register jobseekers.

Another indirect indicator of limited access to career development support is the share of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). This indicates the proportion of young people who are unemployed and those who are inactive. Georgia is a leader even in the regional context in this regard. The share of NEETs was almost 27 % of the total youth population aged 15 to 24 in 2018. This share increases further with age, reaching almost 30 % for the 15 to 29 age group. There are more NEETs among women and in urban areas. According to one study⁴⁴, younger NEETs can also be rural residents, which is in line with the higher share of early school leavers in rural areas. Their orientation to the labour market is very weak and they lack most of the transversal skills.

High incidence of early school leaving and the inequalities in educational attainment stemming from belonging to certain ethnic groups or to a family with low socioeconomic status indirectly speaks of poor career development support at school level. The schools that provide high quality educational and support services should and are able to perform an important role in social mobility. The results of a recent youth transition survey conducted face-to-face with 2 000 young people⁴⁵ shows the influence of family origin on educational attainment. The results of the survey show a strong degree of intergenerational inheritance of education levels: 65 % of respondents whose parents' highest level of education was lower secondary education also end up in the lowest education group, whereas this applies only to 1 % of respondents with at least one parent with tertiary education. Similarly, there is a pattern of intergenerational transfer of VET educational attainment. The share of VET degrees is highest among persons whose parents had a VET degree as their highest level of education. The advantages that people from privileged families have is also visible in the link between parental wealth and educational attainment. For example, respondents who assessed the financial wealth of their parents as (fairly) poor ended up in basic education (21 %) three times more often than respondents who reported that their parents were (fairly) wealthy (Badurashvili et al, 2019). The survey showed also a clear ethnic inequality in educational attainment, as ethnic minorities are over-represented at the lower education levels of basic secondary (or lower) and upper secondary. Around 9 % of respondents had dropped out of education.

More direct evidence of poor career development support is provided through youth surveys⁴⁶, in which the respondents speak of the shortcomings in the professional orientation and career support system they face and of the uninformed career choice they make as a result. Unfortunately, there is no evidence from the older population groups as to the accessibility and quality of services.

⁴⁴ SAVE-DEPA, 2018.

⁴⁵ Badurashvili et al, 2019.

⁴⁶ FES, 2020.

7. USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The services SESA provides is automated. The www.worknet.ge portal is an electronic system created to support the state employment promotion policy. It brings together the databases of jobseekers and vacancies and allows SESA career guidance practitioners to electronically process data and provide parts of the services electronically. The portal enables the profiling of job-seekers and their segmentation/categorisation according to the service model described above. It produces administrative documents and statistical reports, and allows for automated vacancy referencing. However, the current capacity of the system is limited and SESA is working on the further development of the electronic portal.

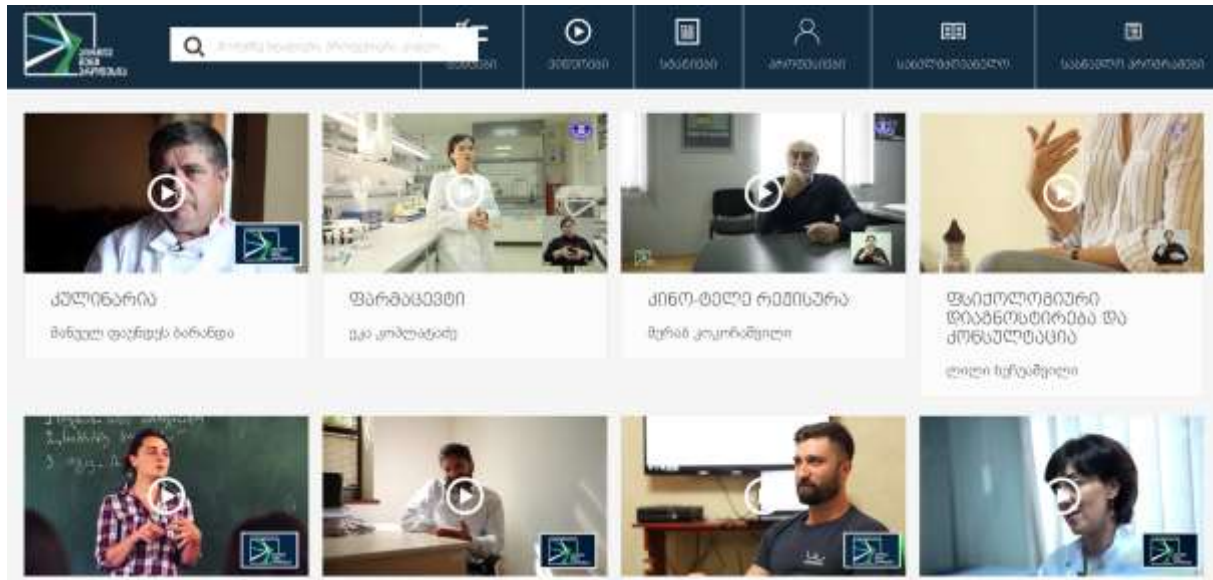


The LMIS platform (www.lmis.gov.ge) is operated by the MoESD and aims to provide updated and comprehensive labour market information. It brings together data on education opportunities, labour market demand trends from Geostat and surveys administered directly by the LMIS division under the MoESD. Unfortunately, the platform is not targeted to any specific client group, therefore its use is limited for final beneficiaries (job-seekers, students, etc.) or career development practitioners.



The www.vet.ge website is administered by the MoES and provides information and search functionalities for beneficiaries on short-term and long-term vocational programmes. Both the www.lmis.gov.ge and www.vet.ge websites have a less user-friendly design and provide only limited information that could be used by beneficiaries or career development professionals for career development purposes.

My.profession.gov.ge



The Myprofession.gov.ge website, which is administered by the Youth Agency, is so far the best career counselling resource targeting young people. The service provided by the website is currently limited to information on some professions/groups of professions, self-assessment tests and career management skills information. The Youth Agency has plans to further develop the portal, but it will never be able to provide labour information unless the LMIS and worknet.ge services make such information available and user-friendly.

8. QUALITY OF PROVISION OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT SERVICES WITHIN A CULTURE OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

8.1 Standards

The state standards for Effective Professional Consultation and Career Planning Services (PCCP), and sub standards for the PCCP services for jobseekers were approved in 2015. The standards provide the description of the PCCP services, details on coordination between different actors, information base, as well as requirements to human, material/technical, methodological resources and monitoring of the services.

PCCP services are defined as career planning and professional consultation services and are provided by employment services, and by educational and youth organisations in cooperation with employment services, to different target groups. The information base should consist of a working and regularly updated labour information management system with accessible and relevant information on demand and supply, short-term and long-term demand on the labour market, educational and employment opportunities, etc. and informational materials (guidebooks, posters, leaflets, videos on professions) as well as well-defined methodological materials (methodological procedural guides for professionals, high quality self-assessment materials adapted to the needs of the target groups).

The services should be provided by qualified professionals. The service standards contain professional standards for career counsellors, describe the functions they should perform and knowledge and skills required therein. The standards also specify qualification requirements and provide that career counsellors should have a higher education qualification in social sciences and 3 years' working experience in the relevant sphere, and should undertake special professional training in career counselling (which should be included in regular professional development).

Career information should be regularly updated and adapted to the needs of the target group. There should be relevant infrastructure for individual and group counselling, including computers and internet access, and access to the labour market information management system (that will also include individualised profiles of the beneficiaries).

The monitoring system should consist of internal and external procedures and include feedback from potential beneficiaries (employers, jobseekers, educational institutions), and should enable a comparison of services provided by different institutions and their relative effectiveness.

The MIDPLHSA and its agencies (formerly SSA, now SESA) apply internal methodological and procedural guidelines to provide services to jobseekers (so called New Service Model) and operational instructions that were initially developed based on the standards and are updated based on experience and new technical knowledge.

The service models have been reformed since in the employment policy sector, however the approved standards have not been updated. Little evidence exists of whether these standards are applied in the employment support policy sector (considering that the service models are being constantly updated and reformed) or in education.

Education institutions have to comply with authorisation standards to be able to launch any educational activity. Authorisation standards, among other aspects, set requirements for career guidance services. Tables 2 and 3 below show criteria and indicators from authorisation standards for vocational and higher education respectively for career development services at education institutes. As seen from the tables, the standards are basic and do not provide sufficient detail (as the PCCP does) with regard to qualifications of staff involved and minimum requirements for delivering the services.

TABLE 2: VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AUTHORISATION STANDARDS RELATED TO CAREER SUPPORT SERVICES

Criterion	Indicator	Evidence
3.2.2. Vocational Education Institution (VEI) has a career support service	<p>Career support services are available to existing and potential professional students;</p> <p>VEI is constantly providing vocational students and alumni with up-to-date information on employment opportunities / vacancies and further career development opportunities;</p> <p>VEI periodically conducts surveys on the employment of vocational students and graduates</p> <p>Based on the feedback received from the study of the career services, the institution improves the quality of service</p>	<p>Planned / implemented activities related to professional orientation and employment;</p> <p>Methodology for surveying vocational students and graduates;</p> <p>Analysis of survey results;</p> <p>Documentation of the planned / implemented activities based on the results of the survey;</p> <p>Results of interviews with vocational students and stakeholders.</p>

Source: Authorisation Standards, Amendment 2020, NCEQE

TABLE 3: HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORISATION STANDARDS RELATED TO CAREER SUPPORT SERVICES

Criterion	Indicator	Evidence
5.2. Student Support Services		
HEI has career support service which provides students with appropriate counselling and support regarding employment and career development.	<p>HEI has career support service which provides students with professional orientation and other information events regarding employment and career development;</p> <p>Institution finds information on potential employers, and ensures cooperation with them;</p> <p>A unit/person responsible for career support services facilitates employers' involvement in the creation and implementation of educational programmes, implementation of internship and practice corresponding to educational programmes;</p> <p>HEI creates employer database and constantly informs students and alumni on employment opportunities/ vacancies;</p> <p>HEI regularly conducts surveys of its students and alumni regarding their personal, professional and academic development.</p>	<p>Career support services;</p> <p>Implemented and planned and implemented activities (employment forums, workshops, thematic conferences, individual student counselling, etc.);</p> <p>Student and alumni employment indicators, including according to the qualifications granted;</p> <p>Alumni tracer study regarding career (including employment rate with obtained qualification) and academic development;</p> <p>Implemented internship and practice programmes;</p> <p>Cooperation with employers and its results;</p> <p>Survey results;</p> <p>Interview results.</p>

Source: Authorisation Standards, Amendment 2017, NCEQE

8.2 Staffing

Although the service standards have set specific requirements as to the qualifications of staff involved in the system, the requirements are generally drawn up by institutions themselves (with no reference to the service standards described above).

No structured training programmes, so far, are available for career development support specialists. However, international technical support is readily available in this area (see chapter 3.2 for detailed information).

SESA is staffed with up to 100 officers who underwent on-the-job training from SESA coordinators and international development partners, but there is no structured approach to the recruitment requirements and further development of career guidance professionals.

The PCCP standards contain qualification requirements and a competency framework for career guidance professionals, but little information exists on whether the standards are applied in practice. No structured professional development programme is in place and offered as a systemic service to all career professionals who want to gain or further develop their qualifications.

Considering the number of beneficiaries SESA has to deal with, the agency seems greatly understaffed.

PCCP standards are also not applied in formal education. Career management specialists at vocational and higher education institutions have to comply with the internally defined qualification requirements. The offices are mostly represented by one staff member, who is in many cases dedicated only part-time to this job. Several international donor organisations have developed and provided one-time training in career guidance to employed specialists in vocational education, but there is no structured approach to human capital development in the sector.

Career education and guidance at general education level is completely delegated to class and subject teachers, with no prior training or professional development.

8.3 Quality of data and information

Career information is limited and not provided in a user-friendly format. Labour market information is collected by the MoESD LMIS unit (and partially by www.worknet.ge through the registration of vacancies and job-seekers), but the information is not collected and presented at the required level of detail, it does not allow disaggregation of data into information categories needed for beneficiaries and career development practitioners. The most frequently cited limitation is the lack of regional specific data and of data presented by occupation group. Most of the information is presented in PDF files, and the platform is not accompanied by a search engine that would enable beneficiaries to search for data and information specific to different categories. Regular updates and linkages between various career information websites are another challenge.

While information on services planned and delivered by employment support structures (SSA or SESA) is publicly available, little is known on how the services are delivered within the formal education system.

The SSA Employment Department and SESA produce annual reports detailing the administrative data on types of services delivered and beneficiaries covered, but the data is collected and published only on specific target groups prioritised within the policy documents above, namely on the total number of beneficiaries by type of service received, disaggregated by gender and youth/non-youth categories.

As part of internal and external quality assurance procedures, vocational and higher education institutions are required to report basic information on compliance with authorisation standards. However, this information is very limited and does not provide any insight as to the quantity or quality of the career development support activities undertaken.

So far, no data has been made available on the evaluation of the effectiveness of the employment support policy.

8.4 Monitoring, evaluation and policy feedback

The employment programmes and strategy implementation are accompanied by detailed monitoring and reporting systems. Previously, when ALMP was within the remit of the Social Services Agency's employment department, the department published detailed reports on the implemented activities. In the same manner, SESA's annual report 2020 also details the types of services provided and number of beneficiaries (totals and disaggregated into basic categories, such as gender and youth/non-youth) during the reporting year.

The Labour and Employment Strategy 2019-2023 provides a framework for monitoring and evaluation of the sector and strategy implementation. According to the MIDPLHSA's Employment Department representative, the implementation reports 2020 and 2021 on the Labour and Employment Strategy 2019-2023 will be available by the beginning of 2022.

However, the focus seems to lie on administrative reporting, namely which planned actions have been implemented in practice, how many clients were reached, etc. However, the reports do not focus on assessing the effectiveness and impact of activities/services and policies, therefore offering little use as a source for service and policy improvement. In line with the SESA representatives, the internal quality assurance system is built in the institutional and operational set up of SESA. The agency has a monitoring and statistics department which is responsible for preparing and publishing annual reports. Moreover, each department has a coordinator who coaches staff employed within the division and closely monitors that work is administered in line with the organisational instructions, provides recommendations to improve the procedures and programmes of the employment services, and updates instructions. The new staff organisational chart is ready to be approved and new technical specifications for www.worknet.ge are being developed.

The higher and vocational education authorisation process entails the assessment of starting conditions (baseline) as well as regular monitoring that education institutions comply with the authorisation standards. To this end, educational institutions submit self-assessment reports, and NCEQE/authorisation board commissions also submit an external evaluation of compliance with the standard. However, in the absence of operational national standards for professional consultation and career planning services at vocational and higher education institutions, and limited technical expertise of both internal and external quality assurance specialists, the assessment and evaluation process can appear to be superficial. For example, the analysis of selected external evaluation reports on vocational authorisation shows that experts have identified evidence that career management support services are available based on interviews with the college staff and, in some cases, based on the internal institutional charters; however, they failed to collect any evidence on the quantitative or qualitative parameters of the services. Being mere statements that such services exist and that career guidance activities and tracer studies are conducted, these assessments merely collected evidence of tracer study/student/graduate survey questionnaires, not evidence of the effectiveness of the services being implemented.

9. CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

During the past 10 years their some major reforms were implemented in the area of career development support. In 2014, GoG approved a concept paper of career planning and professional development, followed by service and outcome standards for the area (2015), followed by adoption of The Law on Employment Promotion adopted in 2020. This together with reforms in the education sector, like the authorization standards related to the career guidance and career education that were integrated in National Curriculum, is the basis for the current system of career development support. Unfortunately, different government documents adopted in the area as well as the relevant terminology and approaches are not harmonised and lastly the law would have benefited from clarity as to the distribution of roles or responsibilities in certain areas (e.g. with regards to services to youth, career information etc).

The Employment promotion law provides for wide space for interagency coordination, public private partnerships and participatory decision making. It calls for creation of interagency coordination council represented by most of the major actors in career development sector including employer and employee representatives, envisages public-private partnership in delivering the services and distributes functions between several government agencies, most importantly MIDPLHSA/SESA, MoES, MoESD, MEPA etc. The following still needs to be ensured to achieve effective partnerships in the area:

- The interagency coordination council implied by the law is not yet created and though implies wide participation of different state and non-state actors, it is not all inclusive (e.g. youth sector is completely missing), has very limited mandate (provide information on trends in labour market) and is late to be realized – the council is not yet in place.
- The law provides for public private partnerships in delivering services to target groups, though despite multiple inefficiencies in the quantity and quality of services public offices can deliver, such a partnership has so far not been invoked.
- The system implies cooperation and responsibilities of several government actors (MoESD, MoES, MEPA), however, the roles and responsibilities in some case is not clear, therefore some components of the system remains un or poorly developed (e.g. who MoESD or MIDPLHSA is responsible for developing effective and up-to-date career information and online self-service?) career development tools and instruments (when both agencies are responsible for parts of labour market analysis). Considering that SESA covers only registered “job-seekers”, how the career guidance services is guaranteed to all, especially to not registered “job-seekers” that are beyond formal education?)

It is recommendable that all national strategies related to labour market development, education, and youth ensure efficient partnership and clear distribution of responsibilities among key actors, as correctly called for within the draft strategy for COOP in formal education sector.

The most effective reforms in the area are with regards to employment support services for “jobseekers” and career guidance services for VET and HE students. SESA being established to administer career development services to all registered job seekers has developed services models that allow for categorization of target groups and provision of needs-based services. Authorization procedures ensured that all VET and HE students have access to career guidance at their institutions. There were major achievements in labour market information collection and publication during recent years (LFS were launched, regular sector studies and establishment surveys are being implemented, LMIS system is being set up ensuring annual LM reports. However, in the absence of overall vision for effective LLL career development support system, there are gaps in policy implementation, while in some spheres there is an overlap between the public and private services delivered.

Despite the fact that the career development support policy is accompanied by ample number of national strategies and action plans at sector and subsector levels, the strategies are mostly input and

process oriented and would not change the big picture with regards to access and effectiveness of employment services at country level. Consistency in policy application is also a challenge, some actors are more aligned with the legislation and action plans (e.g. services to unemployed, VET and HE institutes), while some areas are less aligned (career information, career education at general education level, services to youth, NEETs, etc). Moreover, in the absence of quality standards for career development support services and related personnel, the efficiency of the services rendered is not assured.

While basic services are available for “job-seekers” and students of vocational and higher education students, the biggest inefficiencies in terms of services delivered are as follows:

- Need for service standards for career development and qualification standards for professionals involved in the sector; in-existence of systemic pre-service and in-service professional development opportunities
- Weakly developed career education in general education (career education content included in across the National Curriculum, stays undelivered because the schools lack resources for implementation, responsible teachers do not have relevant qualifications and introduction of the curriculum was not accompanied with relevant capacity building activities);
- Weakly developed career guidance and professional orientation services at VET and Higher education level. Because of the inexistence of applicable service and qualification standards, authorization procedures rely on vague input and process-oriented authorization standards. Career offices seem to be understaffed, unsourced, responsible personnel lack qualifications, access to career information and management tools and instruments and the services delivered are limited to career planning individual/group counselling, employer mediation and tracer studies.
- Weak geographical coverage and limited personnel deployed by SESA, also lack of experience in tailoring services to different target groups, especially youth, VET/HE graduates, NEETs, hard-to-employ persons, adults looking for career development, people employed in new forms of economy (SMEs, Platform workers);
- Poorly developed career information and career development tools and instruments, in existence of tailored and easily accessible/usable online career development self-service system;
- Poor use of modern technologies and tools in the sector;
- Poor system of quality monitoring and evaluation

Therefore the recommendations below cover the following major areas:

- Effective governance and partnerships for the holistic career development support system
- Access and effectiveness of delivered services in LLL perspective (services to all target groups, career education at general education level, quality standards and qualification requirements for services, tools and personnel involved in the career development support system, career information and career tools and instruments, especially digitalized/online format)

Recommendations do not represent definitive solutions, but are aimed at guiding policy and practice discussions. They follow the key pillars of this report and cover the system, provider and practitioner levels:

Policy framework

Short-term

- Ensure that the interagency coordination council is created at the appropriate level and with the appropriate authority to make it a meaningful and effective organisation aimed at ensuring that the legislation and practice in the area follows a coherent system-wide approach: ensure that the council does not have a role merely in collecting and exchanging information (as defined by the law), but also at the operational level and that its functions include the steering, monitoring and

approval of the development, review, and continuous improvement of legal and sublegal acts, standards, strategies, competence frameworks, etc. that frame the national career development support system. For that reason, in addition to the bi-annual meeting of the council, sub-committees should be established and assigned to steer, monitor and bring forward concrete tasks to be approved in the council, which in turn provides recommendations to the legislator.

- Add youth policy practitioners, researchers and NGO representatives and private providers as members of the interagency coordination council to ensure an integrated system approach.
- Include recommendations made in this report related to career education in the Strategy for Career Planning in the Formal Education System (2021-2025) and the VET Development Strategy 2021-2025.
- Ensure that the existing services and institutions defined by law have sufficient resources at their disposal and appropriate implementation methods and tools that meet the needs of the various target groups.

Medium-term

- Ensure improvement of the legislative framework in the area of career development support, including the consistency and synchronisation of all existing legislation, terminology applied, existence of updated standards, definition of responsibilities across different actors working in education, employment, youth, social services, economic development and labour policy – as legislation is not consistent due to different government documents adopted in the area. For example, review and update the concept for Professional Consultation and Career planning System to bring together the education, employment, youth and social policy aspects into one system, ensuring that a well-coordinated and synchronised strategy for career development support that meets the challenges of the time is in place (e.g. by making labour market and employment strategy more comprehensive). All sector strategies, such as the youth policy concept 2030 and National Youth Strategy, MoES's strategy on career guidance, counselling and career planning in formal education and colleges should be aligned to this overall long-term strategy.
- Review and update all existing standards for career guidance (e.g. standards for Professional Consultation and Career Planning System and substandard for Professional Consultation and Career Planning for job-seekers, NCEQE authorisation standards for vocational and higher education, and related service models (reformed in the employment policy sector) and integrate them into one set of standards for all service providers in education, employment, youth, social services and the private sector, addressing all various client groups: standards should define the outcomes of career guidance for clients, as well as the service standards, including online services and platforms.

Coordination and Cooperation

Short-term

- As a first priority, discuss the outcomes of the review of the national career development support system in the framework of the interagency coordination council established by the Law on Employment Promotion (2020) with the objective of developing a national theory of change (ToC)⁴⁷, as a long-term vision guiding the development of a national career development support system, and action plan(s) to prioritise certain reform initiatives.

Medium-term

- Ensure structured cooperation and collaboration between provider organisations in education and employment to allow for seamless and neutral service provision to beneficiaries, e.g. secondary

⁴⁷ See [Developing national career development support systems | ETF \(europa.eu\)](#)

schools, VET and higher education institutions, SESA and employer organisations and unions should naturally cooperate closely to provide services to secondary schools.

Services

Short-term

- As a high priority due to the need to (a) address high skills mismatch of youth, (b) reduce the level of NEETs, and (c) prepare all young people for a changing world of work with changing skills requirements: ensure access of all high priority target groups (school pupils, college and higher education students, NEETs, youth, etc.) to existing career development support services (by schools teachers and class teachers within the class teacher hour or civic education subjects, SESA and its regional employment services, VET and Higher education institutions, private providers); as much as possible, make efficient and effective use of existing provider networks and existing tools and materials:
- provide career education to all secondary school students by means of the class teacher hour and civic education, relying on piloted quality-checked career education curricula and career service standards and by including trained career professionals through training of existing professionals, or by outsourcing the services to third party providers. e.g. add to the National Curriculum 2018-2024 a specific syllabus, reference materials, support materials and in-service training for teachers.
- core career counsellor team within the MoES to coordinate and lead the development of a career management skills competence framework as a basis for coordinating and leading the development of career education programmes for ALL learners at different education levels aimed at gradually developing career management skills to empower all individuals to manage their own education and careers, with a focus on increasing career readiness, lifelong career adaptability and employability through learning about themselves, about the world of learning and work (either as part of existing subjects, or as stand-alone subjects and/or integrated through extra-curricular activities but in any case as an integral part of formal education). This way career guidance is preventive.
- offer career guidance and counselling services within schools for all learners of all grades and their parents, (a) by establishing a career guidance centre in schools with a full-time qualified career guidance coordinator who ensures coordination on career learning with internal and external stakeholders (incl. employers and parents), (b) by establishing a career guidance centre for several schools in a geographical area such as a city district or municipality, with a full-time qualified career guidance coordinator, (c) by ensuring the cooperation of schools with SESA career guidance practitioners or (d) by outsourcing the services to third-party private/non-government providers – in all cases, practitioners would need a fixed day and time each week and physical space in schools available to provide services to those learners who were identified in the learning programme for all or by other subject teachers or by themselves as individuals needing personalised support. A strong emphasis is to be given to the work with learners and parents to help avoid the high skills mismatch by developing a new mindset, shifting away from the traditional idea of aiming for the highest level of education (university) as a guarantee for future decent employment, and moving towards taking well-informed decisions based on LMI. For this, each education institution should develop and implement a career development support plan for their students.
- Refer to previous work carried out by the Education Institutes' Mandator's Office and the Education Resources Centres (the MoES regional offices), the USAID GPriEd Project, EUVEGE and Twinning projects by creating methodologies, guidebooks, career information and career education modules to build professional teaching and learning resources.
- Apply a similar approach to higher and vocational education institutions, whose learners face high risks of becoming NEETs.
- Design specific career guidance methodologies and outreach activities for NEETs.

Medium-term to long-term

- Design specific SESA services for youth and VET and higher education students, including self-assessment and online tools and services;
- Design specific services for workers and employed persons, including those in non-standard forms of employment (e.g. platform workers, dependent self-employment).

Funding:

Short-term

- Identify, within the interagency coordination council, new funding sources to ensure access to career guidance services for all employed people within the private and public sectors and all vulnerable groups (e.g. in precarious employment or in the informal sector), responding to the need for re/upskilling in the context of the digital and green transitions.
- Ensure appropriate financial support to reach out to all potential users, especially in rural areas.

Medium-term

- Implement new funding schemes for all employed/working persons, in close partnership with relevant stakeholders such as employer organisations and trade unions.

Access:

Short-term

- Develop outreach activities, inter alia through cooperation with social workers and youth workers to provide services to NEETs in both urban and rural areas.
- Review and update the client profiling system to tailor services to the specific needs of individuals, thereby improving the quality and effectiveness of services, and to deal effectively with the increase of clients (all workers) using limited resources: clients can be grouped according to their needs, e.g. those that can be referred to self-help services (e.g. online), those with limited support needs, and those with high needs. Moreover, different qualifications will be required of practitioners for these different support roles.

Medium-term to long-term

- Use the need to increase the service offer throughout Georgia (SESA currently has seven regional offices and five offices in Tbilisi) to conceptualise an outreach approach that goes beyond the traditional idea of a SESA office where clients step in, moving towards of a multi-channel approach to the delivery of career-guidance services to meet the needs of diverse clients, and increase access to and the quality of guidance services: from telephone, online, distance services (telephone, radio, TV), third-party providers, personalised guidance, group guidance or self-directed service offers.

Use of technology

Short-term

- Provide platforms with adequate online tools and information (self-assessment tools, information on careers, professions, labour market trends, information on career guidance tools and services available, information on education, training, mobility and employment, self-employment opportunities, etc.).
- Ensure all platforms are regularly updated in a timely manner.

Medium-term

- Adapt ICT services to the needs of various user groups (e.g. parents, youth, career guidance practitioners, employed persons, job-seekers) to provide user friendly information and learning opportunities, instead of a single webpage with one-size-fits-all information.
- Provide one-stop-shop access to the services: integrate existing ICT services (myprofession.gov.ge, www.lmis.gov.ge, www.worknet.ge, www.vet.ge and others) to bring together the different elements of the career-guidance system to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

Quality, professionalisation and continuous improvement:

Short term

- Develop occupational standards for all different career guidance practitioners across the education, employment, youth and social services sectors at different qualification levels as needed.
- Develop retraining programmes for practitioners in the field, or requalification programmes for professionals in related fields of study, such as social sciences, to meet the needs of current or future practitioners in the education, employment, youth and social services sectors: e.g., certificates for all subject and class teachers, certificate programmes and/or minors in BA and/or MA degrees in social or education sciences for career guidance practitioners providing counselling at SESA, youth workers, career guidance specialists at college and university levels, etc. – thereby building on the work done so far by national and donor initiatives.
- Use tracer studies conducted by educational institutions in VET and higher education to improve and inform career guidance services.

Medium-term

- Develop BA and MA programmes (major/minor) for future career guidance practitioners in the education, employment, youth and social services sectors.
- Conduct training programmes, and BA and MA programmes.
- Structure and institutionalise a continuous professional development system for all career guidance practitioners, e.g. by making a minimum amount of continuous professional development hours within a calendar year mandatory for career guidance practitioners by integrating requirements in each career guidance practitioner's annual performance objectives or provider organisation's annual action plan, and implement mandatory minimum requirements as regards continuous professional development hours for head teachers, class teachers and subject teachers about career guidance within a span of 2-3 years.
- Improve/integrate monitoring and evaluation of career guidance services and career education in the formal education system from primary to VET and higher education in the wider quality assurance system of education: looking at (a) inputs (including expenditure, number and qualifications of practitioners, volume of career guidance and career education and compliance of the services provided with the national standards for professional consultation and career planning, form of the services (e.g. whether career education is cross-curricular, extra-curricular or a stand-alone subject, career centres in each school), number of online services and their form (one-stop website access, several diverse offers on websites of different stakeholders, various apps; content and quality of online and offline materials, e.g. self-learning, LMI, job offers, international job offers, etc.); (b) service outputs, such as the number and type of interventions, number and type of clients; satisfaction with the services and (c) service outcomes, including learning outcomes of career learning programmes, changes in employment status, transitions in training and education, transitions in employment status.

- Establish a universal M&E system of professional consultation and career planning services across all sectors (education, employment, youth and social services) as provided by the concept on PCCP, including internal and external evaluations and feedback loops from clients.
- Ensure access to quality tools and information for practitioners that allow for adapting methodologies and tools to client needs.

ACRONYMS

DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESIDA	Education and Science Infrastructure Development Agency
EU	European Union
GCCI	Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GEA	Georgian Employers' Association
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
GoG	Government of Georgia
GE	General Education
HE	Higher Education
MIDPLHSA	Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs
MoCSY	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia
MEPA	Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture
NAEC	National Assessment and Examination Centre
NCEQE	National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement
PCCP	Professional Consultation and Career Planning
SESA	State Employment Support Agency
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TPDC	Teachers' Professional Development Centre
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VE	Vocational Education

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