

# Torino Process Level 2: Review of policies for lifelong learning in Armenia 2023

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# PREFACE

In 2022, the European Training Foundation (ETF) launched the sixth round of its Torino Process – a biennial review of vocational education and training (VET) in countries in East and South-East Europe, Central Asia and the South and East Mediterranean region. The Torino Process (TRP) describes and analyses country developments, identifies challenges in the domain of human capital development, and describes the ways in which countries mobilise their VET systems to address these challenges [Torino Process 2022-24 Guidelines EN \(2\).pdf \(europa.eu\)](#).

In this round, the focus of the Torino Process is twofold, looking at:

- the performance of education and training systems with respect to the creation of good and equitable opportunities for lifelong learning (TRP Level 1); and
- the analysis of policies that would influence the performance of education and training systems, to identify areas in need of improvement and to generate hands-on advice on the transition towards responsive lifelong learning systems (TRP Level 2).

The focus of this review is on the second operational level (TRP Level 2). This level facilitates a review on what countries do to influence and improve the performance of their policies and systems in a lifelong learning perspective. This means documenting and interpreting the effectiveness of policies and systemic arrangements in countries against the backdrop of a) demand for learning opportunities; and b) relevant socioeconomic and demographic developments which may influence that demand.

This review – likewise in other country – is the result of four phases:

- Preparatory phase: formal expression of interest by the country, joint identification of issues, priorities, and stakeholders by the partner country and ETF.
- Desk research phase: review of primary and secondary data and documentation produced by the country or other organisations (including the ETF).
- Field phase: during a mission in the country, mapping key informants and conduct interviews, focus groups and discussion groups.
- Report preparation: report drafting, quality assurance, validation and dissemination.

The focus of the review conducted in Armenia is on access and attractiveness of VET, as expressed by the country. The issues and recommendations of this report have been discussed and finetuned during an event held in Yerevan the 22 November 2023.

This report was prepared for the ETF by Incom.Ltd. The report is authored by Niels Haderup and Arayik Navoyan. The ETF team supervising the research was led by Abdelaziz Jaouani and Cristiana Burzio, within one of the ETF projects, coordinated by Mihaylo Milovanovitch. The report has been peer-reviewed by Mihaylo Milovanovitch.

ETF would like to thank all the stakeholders in Armenia who have engaged throughout the process and provided valuable inputs for its finalisation. Particular thanks go to the national coordinator Armenuhi Poghosyan and her team.

The Torino Process System Monitoring Report: Armenia, 2023 is available at ETF webpage.

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# Executive Summary Review of policies for lifelong learning in Armenia, TRP 2023

## Outline of the main analytical points:

Approximately 3 million citizens live in Armenia, of which about 63,7% in urban areas. GDP reached 12.6% growth in 2022, with an unemployment rate of 11,6%. There are three top economic sectors, each with around 11-12% of total economy (industry, agriculture and wholesale and retail) and two economic sectors with smaller portion (around 6-8%) of the total economy (real estate activities and construction). An interesting feature of the Armenian private sector is the fact that more than 94% of the sector consists of micro-enterprises with less than ten employees. 38% of the employed workforce are women.

Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) is mostly school-based, and all public VET institutions have a status of State non-commercial organisations (SNCO), acting in accordance with the corresponding law. Continuing Vocational Education and Training (CVET) is mostly organised in the framework of employment policies carried out by the Unified Social Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) which are responsible for labour market policies for target groups of population considered as vulnerable. Part of CVET programmes is delivered by VET institutions funded by participants on a commercial basis or donors' organizations. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS) with the support of the National Centre for VET Development (NCVETD) manages and coordinates the public VET system. Currently, State institutional accreditation is mandatory for all VET institutions, while programme accreditation is a voluntary process.

Several issues exist in access to IVET, such as a growing share of paid education in recent years at preliminary and especially middle VET institutions, creating issues for accessibility to education particularly for economically disadvantaged groups. The number of available tuition free places, along with other supporting measures, is of primary importance for increasing the access to IVET programmes. Access to both VET and higher education for disadvantaged groups (including people with disabilities) remain a serious issue and several constraints related to increasing the access of students with special educational needs to the IVET system persist. Access to CVET for unemployed, disabled or other vulnerable groups is ensured only within the limits of available funding provided by State budget, as the volume of the related planned trainings is insignificant. The organization and delivery of CVET programmes at VET institutions, funded by participants on a commercial basis or donors' organizations, limit the access to CVET programmes. Moreover, there is a lack of comprehensive data on nature and volume of CVET programmes organized by VET institutions.

Policy responses to VET access issues are expressed in the Action plan for implementation of the "State Program for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030" (Education 2030), which outlines targets to be reached by 2030, including increasing access to IVET and CVET. The creation of a universal inclusive learner-centred education environment is one of the strategic directions of the Education 2030. There is no specific policy or activity targeting the access of immigrants, refugees or people with special educational needs to IVET and CVET programmes. With regard to CVET the majority of issues defined in the Concept of Lifelong Learning (LLL) in 2012 still remain unsolved.

Attractiveness of IVET is hampered by several issues, such as a limited vertical and horizontal permeability. VET is not attractive for youth and especially graduates from secondary education schools, and a high share of basic school graduates admitted to VET institutions is linked to the introduction of the 12-year mandatory secondary general education in 2017, allowing them to receive also a certificate of secondary education. The shift between IVET and CVET is almost non-existing, since the Validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) system is currently not operational. A career guidance system is being implemented, however, comprehensive and objective data on IVET/CVET graduates' job placement or other career pathways of VET graduates is not available. The important mismatch

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between skills and demand negatively affects the attractiveness of VET. Work-based learning (WBL) is considered one of the means to address this mismatch and the issues of relevance and quality of VET in general. However, in 2022 the share of specialties delivered through pilot dual education programmes was only 8,4%. Poor knowledge of foreign languages and skills on internationalization by staff strongly limit the efforts of VET institutions for internationalization, which is considered a way for increasing the attractiveness of the Armenian VET.

Policy responses to attractiveness of VET aspire to address many of the issues identified. The draft Law on VET foresees the implementation of a credit transfer system thus creating a flexible pathway for students between general education and IVET. However, there is no specific regulation on transition from the VET-related levels 3 and 4 to level 5, and no provision for improvement of accessibility of tertiary education for graduates of IVET/CVET is foreseen within Education 2030. Currently, the VNFIL mechanism is not operational due to a limited capacity (mainly financial) of the National Training Fund (NTF) and the weak and obsolete procedures regulating VNFIL. VET institutions enjoying large autonomy have an opportunity to propose new IVET or CVET programmes to be funded by State budget. State standards and corresponding modular programmes for VET professions are developed in accordance with a set procedure involving sectorial committees, the NCVETD and the National Council for VET Development (NCVD). There is no country wide, tracer study mechanism.

Resources, teaching/learning and management of IVET/CVET face a number of issues that limits the access and attractiveness of VET, such as (i) insufficient investments from the State budget for the improvement of building conditions of VET institutions and teaching/learning infrastructure, (ii) very low amount of State scholarships provided to preliminary and middle VET students (iii) VET institutions inherited old fashion and obsolete buildings which require costly investment for maintenance and heating in winter, (iv) for many specialties, obsolete literature is still in use, (v) due to students' and teaching staff's poor knowledge of foreign languages the use of textbook, teaching and learning materials in foreign languages is also limited, (vi) only entry requirements are used as a mechanism for evaluation of VET institution directors' qualification adequacy to the job position, and finally, (vii) although training for the secondary vocational education administrative, pedagogical staff and members of the management board of VET institutions have been carried out every year, their professional abilities still need to be improved.

Providing policy responses to the limitation of resources, teaching/learning and management of IVET/CVET is an ongoing process, which includes (i) optimization of the distribution of VET institutions and their professions to improve the conditions for an effective and quality VET provision (the Action plan for the implementation of Government program for 2021-2026 foresees the reorganization of 10 VET institutions by 2026); (ii) introduction and expansion of WBL foreseen by Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia for 2021-2026 and the Action plan of the Education 2030 and (iii) development by end of 2023 of the mechanisms for increased possibilities and forms of entrepreneurial activities by VET institutions.

### **Main recommendations:**

The TRP Level 2 Review team suggests specific steps, which can support the implementation of the approved policies for VET, including the Education 2030 Action Plan and the upcoming employment strategy. Conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter 3, with a more detailed overview in Appendix 4, including short-term, mid-term and long-term actions. A summary of six consolidated recommendations is provided below.

#### **Recommendation 1: Setting-up a comprehensive national framework for LLL, that meets the demands of individuals and labour market in order to improve the effectiveness of the VET system**

This recommendation involves a composite of different initiatives, which all together can contribute to setting up a consolidated national framework for lifelong learning. Some of these are already part of the

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national Education Strategy 2030. They have all been derived from the policy review in chapter two of this report and include the following result areas: (i) Agree and develop jointly with key stakeholders a coherent Strategy for LLL, based on relevant regulations, the mapping of LLL activities and the identified gaps. (ii) Develop a flexible learning system of short-cycle and long-cycle programmes and courses, including recognized micro-credentials (making affordable learning paths for disadvantaged groups) – mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, self-learning etc. (iii) Develop and implement national anticipation skills mechanisms for mapping the future needs of the Armenian private sector and revision of level 4 and 5 qualifications IVET/CVET. (iv) Coordination of career guidance activities at secondary, VET and higher education institutions, as well as youth organizations for a cross-sectoral career guidance strategy. This strategy should support the attractiveness of different educational pathways and build on solid evidence of the value of education programmes for future employability and career options, such as tracer study results and labour market information. (v) Reinforce the process for review of existing programmes for their vertical and horizontal labour market appropriateness, in close cooperation with social partners.

**Recommendation 2: Adapting current governance settings to enhance the VET autonomy process in order to foster the relevance of VET system.**

This recommendation covers a range of initiatives, which can all contribute to the establishment of a collaborative environment for enhancing the autonomy process in the VET sector, giving more responsibility and accountability to partnerships and good governance settings. This includes the following result areas: (i) Creation of a National training register. (ii) the integration of several national registers. (iii) Development of piloting of an independent and easy-manageable tracer study mechanism in few IVET and CVET institutions and evaluation of the pilot to develop a systemic and sustainable tracer study mechanism, (iv) Establishment of sectorial, regional or local educational councils (in cooperation with 49 centres of the MoLSA) to bridge between employment promotion, education and labour market, in order to share information and jointly plan regional or local capacity building initiatives, (v) Development of Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) with private sector for the funding and running of buildings, equipment, WBL development, involvement of companies' employees in the educational process etc. (vi) Implementation of targeted awareness raising campaigns on IVET and CVET in secondary education schools. (vii) Development of quality assurance and accountability procedures with yearly key performance indicators. (viii) Implementation of pilot projects within different categories of VET institutions with diversified funding policy including enterprises participation.

**Recommendation 3: Initiate measures to increase the access to the IVET system.**

This recommendation includes a number of measures, which can in turn contribute to increased access to IVET. These include the following result areas: (i) Development of mechanisms and tools, such as reinforcing the dialogue with the private sector in priority fields in order to link scholarships with the needed qualification profiles, to improve the image and awareness of priority fields among secondary education students for admission to tuition free places in IVET left unspent. (ii) Based on in depth analysis regarding special educational needs (SEN) access to IVET, preparation of an action plan for inclusion of SEN into IVET system and outlining a detailed roadmap with yearly performance indicators. (iii) Creation of a special admission “track” for immigrants/ refugees/displaced population, including the screening of qualification levels, offering additional training, and career guidance support, as well as the set-up of a database to record data on admission of immigrants and forced displaced persons from Nagorno Karabakh.

**Recommendation 4: Initiate measures to increase the access to the CVET system.**

This recommendation aims at increasing the volume of CVET students through targeted measures towards specific disadvantaged groups of the Armenian society. This includes the following result areas: (i) Monitoring the effect of the financial support and stipends to disadvantaged groups including through tracer studies after completion of their learning periods. (ii) By close cooperation between the MoESCS and the MoLSA introduction of practices from EU member states on “Job Guarantee”, with a special focus on forced displaced persons from Nagorno Karabakh.

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### **Recommendation 5: Initiate measures to increase the attractiveness of the IVET system**

This recommendation is based on the results of the policy review in chapter two, and consists of a wide range of measures, that can make the IVET system more attractive to potential learners as well as to the employers. This consists of the following ten result areas: (i) Along with the optimization of the distribution of VET institutions and their professions, development of mechanisms and digital tools for effective delivery of IVET programmes allowing progressive decreasing of paid places share. (ii) Establishment of short higher education programmes for VET graduates and revision of level 4 and 5 qualifications. (iii) Development of guidelines for introducing WBL, based on the experience drawn from the implementation of international donors' supported programmes. (iv) Before system level introduction and following the adoption of new Law on VET, a thorough review of the different WBL pilot programmes could be undertaken, identifying lessons learned, coherence issues, gaps, risks etc. including recommendations to be discussed with the MoESCS, its agencies and partners. (v) Based on the assessment of the potential, development of an action plan to support the internationalization of the VET system, including capacity building of staff, e.g. targeting the reinforcement of foreign languages (particularly English, French and German) of the staff VET institutions. (vi) Encouraging cooperation projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions, particularly in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme, Armenia's membership in the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) and EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe). (vii) Development of pilot projects for digitalization and innovation of specialties, offering different forms of learning that can take place outside school premises. (viii) Establishment of continuous development in digital teaching and learning methodology. (ix) Encouraging and setting up pilot twinning projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions with the available international donor funding.

### **Recommendation 6: Initiate measures to improve the attractiveness of the CVET system.**

This recommendation focuses on measures that can make the CVET system more attractive to potential learners as well as to employers. These consist of the following result areas: (i) Development of outcome-based qualifications, based on Occupational Standards (OSs), establishment of a credit system and alignment of the VNFIL system to the current qualification framework including implementation of a credit rating system for micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education. (ii) Setting up work-based learning opportunities in employment promotion programmes and bridging programmes to VET for inactive groups of the workforce population, based on a review of education programmes for inactive population. (iii) Development of a flexible learning system of short-cycle and long-cycle programmes and courses, including recognition of micro-credentials (making affordable learning paths for disadvantaged groups) mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, self-studies.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The focus of the report

This report aims at reviewing access to and attractiveness of VET<sup>1</sup> system in Armenia. The analysis covers the identification of main issues and related policy responses, the estimation of policy gaps vis a vis access to and attractiveness of both IVET and CVET and proposition of a set of policy recommendations to bridge this gap. In 2022, the ETF launched a new round of the Torino Process - TRP 2022-2024) with a specific focus on lifelong learning. TRP has two main objectives: to monitor the performance of education and training systems regarding the creation and maintenance of good and equitable opportunities for lifelong learning - LLL ("TRP Level 1: monitoring of system performance") and to review the policies which influence that performance so that it can recommend improvements ("TRP Level 2: reviews of policies for LLL").

Following the "TRP Level 1: monitoring of system performance" carried out in Armenia in 2022, the MoESCS proposed to focus, during the TRP Level 2 review on access and attractiveness of IVET, while addressing CVET as a complementary stream and when relevant. The overarching goal of the policy review is twofold: explain the monitoring results (Level 1) and provide guidance for timely policy actions in support of system change for LLL with a specific focus on VET access and attractiveness.

Following the Azeri military operation in September 2023, more than 100.000 refugees have arrived in Armenia from Nagorno Karabakh, requiring both immediate assistance and longer-term support. Among them, more than 21.000 are school-aged children. As of 3 November 2023, about 17.000 children have been enrolled in the Armenian school system<sup>2</sup>. Given the timeframe, the present review could not address the impact on access to VET that the above recent developments are likely to have on the system.

## 1.2. The structure of the report

The report is composed of 3 chapters. The introduction, which presents the context of the review through the findings of the TRP level 1, with specific focus on the key areas of access to initial and continuing VET, attractiveness of VET programmes as well as the system management, resources and teaching/learning resources. Chapter 2 consists of the review of the main policy areas related to access and attractiveness of IVET and CVET (including the ALMP framework). After a short presentation of the issues follows an account of any gaps identified in the policy responses to the issues related to access and attractiveness. A third concluding section propose a set of policy recommendations at short, mid and long-term related to the operationalization and coherence of LLL in the country and to the specific topic of access and attractiveness.

## 1.3. The methodology

In the **preparatory phase** the relevant stakeholders were identified for the review, all relevant documentation regarding the country context were identified, a questionnaire for the field mission was drafted and an intervention plan, including the time frame, was drafted, in close collaboration with the national review coordinator. Then followed a **desk research phase**, in which the ETF review team, in advance of the first mission, gathered and reviewed all relevant available documentation of the VET system in Armenia, with particular focus on the focus areas in question. The **field phase**, conducted

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<sup>1</sup> Considering the CEDEFOP definition of access to education and training as "conditions, circumstances or requirements (such as qualifications, education level, competences or work experience) governing admittance to, and participation of an individual in, learning" (CEDEFOP, Terminology of European education and training policy. Access to education and training) and "the factors and characteristics that impact on attractiveness such as relevance of IVET programmes to the labour market, quality assurance, recognized qualifications" (CEDEFOP, 2014. Attractiveness of initial vocational education and training: identifying what matters. Research paper No 39. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, p. 31).

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF, Two-thirds of refugee children in Armenia enrolled in school, efforts must now focus on expanding access to education for all children, Press release 24 October 2023. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/armenia/en/press-releases/two-thirds-refugee-children-armenia-enrolled-school-efforts-must-now-focus-expanding>

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between June 12-21, 2023, had two objectives, to gather additional information which would help to either validate or modify the findings from the desk phase and offer the opportunity to consult directly with key stakeholders, facilitating discussions and reflection on findings with decision makers and involved institutions, and presenting some suggestions for further action in the selected policy areas.

Two main activities were carried out aimed at accomplishment of field missions' objectives, the first being the "Torino Process: Towards Lifelong Learning National launch meeting". Following actions were accomplished: i) presentation of the new Torino Process methodology and modality of implementation; ii) presentation and discussion of the preliminary results of the level 1 (monitoring system performance) and the related possible gaps as input to the level 2 (review of lifelong learning policy); iii) discussion and agreement on the different aspects of "Access and attractiveness" to focus the analysis on, as well as the calendar and modality of implementation and iv) identification of the stakeholders (institutions) for the national Reference Group according to the selected thematic priority areas.

The second activities consisted of field visits and focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders for detailed discussion of the issues of "Access and attractiveness" identified during the "Torino Process: Towards Lifelong Learning National launch meeting".;

The results of the field mission were finally documented in a field mission report.

In the **process for the preparation of the review report** all results from the desk and field phases were brought into a report structure agreed with the TRP process coordination team. A first draft of the report was submitted for comments to the National Coordinator and the appointed National Reference Group after which the final version is disseminated and discussed with all concerned national and international stakeholders in a workshop in Yerevan. Once all the outcomes validated by the country, the paper is published.

#### 1.4. The Torino Process Findings from the VET policy and system performance monitoring

The following outcomes of the TRP-level 1 monitoring exercise in Armenia in terms of issues of VET access and attractiveness (dimensions A1 and A2) are identified:

##### Monitoring findings regarding access to initial and continuing VET

Access to initial VET in Armenia reveals a disparity between enrollment rates and labor market demands. While preliminary and middle VET enrollment rates are 6.2% and 13.9%, over 70% of the labor market seeks specialists with vocational education. A rising trend is students opting for paid placements in VET programs. Since 2019, these numbers have doubled, with 2022 seeing 11.6% and 47.8% of students in paid placements for preliminary and middle VET, respectively. However, free placements in VET institutions under the MoESCS have decreased since 2018, while those under the Police's coordination have surged by 83.3%.

Between 2019 and 2022, only about 79% of government-allocated free placements were occupied. In the 2022-2023 academic year, 37.4% of VET students paid for their studies, emphasizing the shift towards paid education.

CVET programmes face challenges due to the absence of a cohesive state policy. Funding primarily comes from participants, donor organizations, or specific state budget allocations targeting vulnerable populations, restricting broader access. The MoESCS lacks comprehensive data on CVET programs, complicating matters.

VET accessibility for vulnerable groups is concerning. Although 49 regional employment centers under the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (MoLSA) train the unemployed and disabled, the Torino Process monitoring determined that the volume of planned vocational trainings is insufficient. According to a household survey from 2018, close to 83% of higher education students come from non-poor households, with a significant 17.2% from poor households. There is also a lack of policies and data on immigrant and refugee access to the VET system.

##### Monitoring findings regarding the attractiveness of VET programmes

VET in Armenia faces challenges in its appeal, especially among general education school graduates. In 2021, only 5.28% of basic and secondary school graduates chose preliminary VET programs, with

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19.92% opting for middle VET. For secondary school graduates, the figures are even lower. Between 2019 and 2021, a mere 6.3% of these graduates preferred middle VET, while a significant 84% pursued higher education.

Gender disparities further highlight the issue. In the 2022-2023 academic year, 88.1% of women were admitted to higher education institutions, overshadowing VET enrollments. Transitioning from VET to higher education is restrictive, with many barriers for IVET graduates. The current system often excludes VET graduates with certified qualifications from progressing to higher education. Moreover, there's a lack of short higher education programs tailored for VET graduates.

The pathway for VET graduates wishing to progress within the system is unclear. Additionally, the VNFIL remains ineffective, with no bridge between non-formal and formal settings. Armenia also lacks mechanisms to gauge current VET skill demands or anticipate future needs. The absence of an independent tracer study mechanism leaves a data gap on VET graduates' job placements and educational pathways that compromises the attractiveness of VET system.

Pilot projects introducing WBL lack transparency, and there's no legislative incentive for employer participation in these programs. While a small percentage of students in VET are from the Armenian diaspora, limited foreign language proficiency among staff hampers the global appeal of Armenian VET.

- **Monitoring findings regarding the system management, resources, and teaching/learning**

In Armenia, the allocation of resources, teaching, learning, and management within the VET system present several challenges. A significant portion, over 90%, of the budget is consumed by student subsidies, leaving a minimal amount for infrastructural or quality improvements. Consequently, investments from the State budget, excluding those from the EU budget support program, are insufficient to enhance the building conditions and teaching-learning infrastructure and the quality of VET provision. State scholarships for preliminary and middle VET students are meager, failing to make studies at VET institutions more affordable. Many VET institutions are housed in outdated buildings, physically deteriorating and obsolete. These structures require substantial investments for maintenance and winter heating.

A pressing concern is the scarcity of quality textbooks, especially in Armenian. As a result, many specialties still rely on outdated literature. The utilization of textbooks and educational materials in foreign languages, even those available electronically, is restricted due to the limited foreign language proficiency of both students and teaching staff.

In terms of management, the evaluation of VET institution directors is inappropriate. Beyond the annual report to the management board, there's no established mechanism to assess the performance of these directors.

Furthermore, there is a notable lack of resources dedicated to inclusion. This includes adapting current VET facilities, constructing new inclusive facilities, procuring and installing relevant equipment, and developing human, methodological, and didactic resources.

## 1.5. Context

Armenia is a landlocked country located in Transcaucasia with a territory of 29743 km<sup>2</sup>. As of 1st July 2023, the population comprised 2,985.1 thousand people. The country consists of 10 administrative-territorial units (Marz) and the capital city of Yerevan with a special status. The share of urban population is about 63.7%<sup>3</sup>. In 2022 the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 of represented respectively 6% and 5.4% of total population<sup>4</sup>.

The economic growth was strong in Armenia since 2017 (7.5%), which has moderated in 2021 (5.7%) after severe shut down in 2020 (-7.2%)<sup>5</sup>. In 2022 GDP growth reaching 12.6 percent driven largely by private consumption powered by exceptionally high inflows of people and funds from Russia and contributing the decrease of the unemployment rate to 11.6% in mid-2022 against 15.5% at end-2021.

<sup>3</sup> Statistical Committee of Armenia, 2023. Permanent population figures of the Republic of Armenia as of 1 July 2023, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Statistical Committee of Armenia, 2022. The Demographic Handbook of Armenia, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> GDP growth (annual %) – Armenia. World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=AM>

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This is expected to drive a substantial reduction in the UMIC poverty line (USD 6.85/day, 2017) from 51.7 percent in 2021 to 41.8 percent in 2022<sup>6</sup>.

In 2021 the main sectors contributing to the country's (% of GDP) are Imports of goods and services (44%), Exports of goods and services (35%), Industry (including construction) (27%) and Agriculture, forestry, and fishing (11%)<sup>7</sup>.

In 2017, 99.8% of all firms in the Armenia's non-financial business economy were SMEs<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, 94% of Armenian enterprises are micro-enterprises with less than ten employees, more than half (58%) of which are non-employers<sup>9</sup>. In 2019 the share of SMEs (0 -249 persons employed) represented 99.8%, generating 65.4% of value added and 69.7% of employment<sup>10</sup>. Five sectors of economy represent 64% of employment: Agriculture - 22%; Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles - 12%; Education - 11%; Manufacturing -10; Public administration and defence and compulsory social security - 9%<sup>11</sup>. In 2021, the women represented 38% of total employed people<sup>12</sup>.

## 1.6. Main elements of VET

Within the National Qualification Framework, VET occupies the levels 3-5 in Armenia (appendix 1). The initial vocational education and training programmes are mostly school-based and have two levels: preliminary vocational (craftsmanship) education and middle vocational education. Both preliminary and middle VET can be accessed through the basic general (9-year) and secondary (12-year mandatory) general education, as well as through preliminary vocational (craftsmanship) education in case of admission to middle VET institutions (appendix 2).

In the 2022/2023 academic year there were 23 functioning educational institutions delivering preliminary (craftsmanship) vocational education programmes involving 6.456 students<sup>13</sup>. In the same academic year 33.230 students were involved in 99 institutions providing middle vocational education and training out of which 16 are private institutions<sup>14</sup> schooling 2420 students.

Among the 83 State middle vocational education institutions 80 operate under the supervision of the MoESCS, one institution under the supervision of the Civil Aviation Committee of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (CAC-MTAI) and two under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (previously Police).

Preliminary vocational (Craftsmanship) education is mostly implemented in craftsmanship schools, while middle vocational education can be implemented at middle vocational educational institutions, colleges. All public VET institutions have a status of SNCO, acting in accordance with the corresponding law<sup>15</sup>.

Continuing VET is mainly organized in the framework of employment policy carried out by the Unified Social Services (USS) of the MoLSA responsible of employment policy for target groups of population considered as vulnerable, as well as by VET institutions funded by participants on the commercial basis or donors' organizations.

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<sup>6</sup> The World Bank in Armenia. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/armenia/overview#3>

<sup>7</sup> Armenia, Country profile.

[https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report\\_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ARM](https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ARM)

<sup>8</sup> European Commission, 2019. Small Business Act for Europe, 2019 SBA Fact Sheet ARMENIA, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> OECD, 2018. Compendium of Enterprise Statistics in Armenia 2018, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> 2021 SME country fact sheet Armenia. Brief introduction [https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-09/armenia\\_-\\_sme\\_fact\\_sheet\\_2021.pdf](https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-09/armenia_-_sme_fact_sheet_2021.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2022. Labour market in Armenia, 2022, p. 205.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 173.

<sup>13</sup> National Statistical Service of Armenia. Preliminary (craftsmanship) vocational education in 2022/2023 academic year. Social - economic situation in the Republic of Armenia in January-March 2023.

<sup>14</sup> National Statistical Service of Armenia. Middle vocational education in 2022/2023 academic year. Social - economic situation in the Republic of Armenia in January-March 2023.

<sup>15</sup> Law on State Non-Commercial Organizations, ՅՕ-248.

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VET policy directions and priority actions are guided by "Education Development Programme until 2030 of the Republic of Armenia"<sup>16</sup> (Education 2030), "Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia 2021-2026"<sup>17</sup> and plan of activities for implementation of Education 2030<sup>18</sup>. The Law on Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education and Training (2005) is the main regulatory document defining the conditions of VET provisions and role of stakeholders, which serves as a basis for an extensive number of by-laws regulating different aspects of VET. A new law on VET education is under discussion at the National Assembly.

At State-level the MoESCS is responsible for public policy formulation and the coordination and implementation of the strategies, and action plans for development programme of VET, approving the State Standards and modular curricula, promoting social partnership, delivering State accreditation of VET institutions and programmes. Vocational training for adults is under the remit of the MoLSA.

Supervised by MoESCS, the NCVETD (<https://mkuzak.am/>) provides methodological support for VET and is in charge of methodological reforms, developing standards, modular curricula and teaching/learning materials, as well as teacher training.

Institutional cooperation between MoESCS, MoLSA, other ministries, trade unions and employers happens at central level through the National Council for VET and at local level through the institutions' Governance Boards. The NCVD, which includes representatives from government institutions, employers' and business organizations and trade unions, is national level public-private partnerships for VET and skills provision. NCVD advises MoESCS preparing development programmes, promoting the effectiveness of reforms in the sector and deepening social partnership.

Governance Board of VET institutions comprises representatives from the student body, social partner organizations, local institutions, employment offices and other stakeholders. The boards approve institutions' budget, Development (business) Plans, tuition fees, internal regulations, elect the directors, head of both preliminary and middle VET institutions, etc.

VET institutions enjoy a large autonomy in financial (approving own budgets) and academic (approving own curricula and defining the teaching means and methods) terms. The appointment of teachers and management staff is under the authority of the VET institutions' directors.

Since 2017 the public spending on education in Armenia was around 2.0 - 2.3 percent of GDP, being 2.1% in 2021<sup>19</sup>, which is about twice lower than the average for upper-middle-income countries and 2.5 times lower than the average among Europe and Central Asia countries<sup>20</sup>.

In Armenia the monitoring and quality assurance of education is carried out through three processes: i) licensing for the implementation of academic programmes; ii) internal quality assurance in institutions and iii) external quality assurance: state accreditation.

The process of state licensing is carried out by a specialized department of the MoESCS and aims at determining the necessary threshold conditions for the implementation of VET programmes.

The internal quality assurance system is of utmost importance. Self-assessment reports issued by the internal quality assurance system for institutional accreditation are publicly available in the website of accredited institutions, while experts' reports are available on the site of the National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA), an independent organization founded by RA government in 2008<sup>21</sup>. Member of (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), ANQA implements quality assurance processes through institutional and programme accreditation in preliminary, vocational and higher educational institutions, as well as fosters the

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<sup>16</sup> Law "On approval of the State Program for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030" from December 12, 2022. RO-441-L

<sup>17</sup> Appendix to RA Government Decision №1363-N from August 18, 2021

<sup>18</sup> Appendix 1 of RA Government Decision № 351-L from March 16, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> National Statistical Service of Armenia, 2023. Statistical Yearbook of Armenia 2022, p. 452.

<sup>20</sup> World Bank Group, 2019. Country partnership framework for the Republic of Armenia for the period FY19–FY23. Report No. 123902-AM, February 28, 2019, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.anqa.am/en/about-us/#Mission>

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continuous quality enhancement in education system, promoting autonomy and accountability of institutions.

Currently State institutional accreditation is mandatory for all VET institutions, while programme accreditation is voluntary process.

Institutional accreditation is the state recognition of academic and QA procedures of the higher education and VET institutions, the requirements set forward towards academic programmes as ascribed by the law, correspondence with state academic standards and institutional accreditation criteria.

Accreditation of the academic programme (Programme accreditation) is the recognition of academic programmes and the correspondence of quality with state accreditation standards and programme accreditation criteria.

## 2. Review of main policy areas related to access and attractiveness of the IVET and CVET

### 2.1. Access to IVET/CVET and pathways between different levels of VET and higher education

#### 2.1.1. Identified issues of access to IVET/CVET

While applying for entering VET institutions, applicants make a choice between preliminary (Craftsmanship) or middle vocational education programmes depending on the employment (craftsperson or a middle level manager) and further education perspectives.

According to data on students' admission to VET institutions, the share of students admitted to paid places<sup>22</sup> both at preliminary (6 months to 3 years) and middle VET (2-5 years) levels is in stable increase and has doubled since 2019, representing in 2022 11.6% and 47.8% respectively of total admitted students, against 5.4% and 22.3% in 2019 (see Appendix 3, table 1).

For the whole VET system, the share of students admitted for paid studies represented about 35%, being however more than two time less compared to paid places at higher education institutions (see Appendix 3, table 2).

The growing share of paid education in recent years at preliminary and especially middle VET institutions is creating issues with the accessibility to education in terms of its affordability, particularly for economically disadvantaged groups having difficulties to access post-secondary education. In these conditions, the number of available tuition free places, along with other measures supporting students for study at VET institutions, is of primary importance for increasing access to initial VET programmes.

At the same time, according to the statistics on admission to tuition free places yearly defined by a government decree, not all free of charge places have been used for admission to VET institutions (see Appendix 3, table 3).

Thus, for the period of 2019-2022 in average only about 79% of planned tuition free places have been occupied. In parallel the number of paid places is more than doubled in comparison to 2019, which is due, among other factors, mainly to increase of the tuition-based places for middle VET professions, as well as very slightly to amendment of Law on Education in 2020, allowing admission of the graduates from basic school to paid places.

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<sup>22</sup> If not mentioned otherwise, presented data on students' are retrieved from publications of Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia on social situation in RA in January-March in 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022 and 2023 concerning preliminary, middle vocational and higher education. [www.armstat.am](http://www.armstat.am)

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According to the statistics of admission per VET professions, 4 fields represent 72.2% of admission: business/management (27.2%), health (21.4), ICT (12.3%) and art (11.2%).

In comparison to 2018, the number of tuition free places allocated for VET within institutions under the coordination of MoESCS has decreased in 2022 both for preliminary and middle VET programmes, respectively 14% and 7.6%, while the tuition free places devoted to institutions delivering VET programmes under the coordination of the Police and Civil aviation committee of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure increased respectively 6 and 5 time (see Appendix 3, table 4).

Taking into account the high share of paid places both in preliminary and middle VET institutions (tables 1 and 2), the level of tuition fees (in average about 100.000 AMD for preliminary and 250.000 AMD for middle VET profession) along with the other necessary expenditures (e.g. for transportation which is specifically relevant to rural youth who should every day reach the VET institutions located in the towns) continue to be a serious obstacle for increasing access to VET.

Considering data provided in the "State Program for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030" (Education 2030), access to both VET and higher education for disadvantaged groups (including people with disabilities) remains a serious issue: "According to the comprehensive household survey, in 2018, 82.8% of students in higher education institutions were from non-poor, 17.2% were from poor (excluding the extremely poor), and 0% were from extremely poor households"<sup>23</sup>.

Several constraints remain also in the domain of increasing particularly the access of mainstream students as well as of students with special educational needs in the IVET system<sup>24</sup>, such as (i) Insufficiency of the legal framework of VET sector and metrological documents ensuring regulation of stakeholders' relations involved in the implementation of inclusive education, (ii) lack of needed resources for adapting the VET institutions' current facilities, building adapted new facilities, purchase and instalment of corresponding equipment, development of human, methodological and didactic resources, (iii) absence of system and staff for specialized services, including for pedagogical and psychological support, (iv) limited awareness of teaching and administrative staff of VET institutions about methodology of work with learners having special educational needs, (v) lack of specialists (special teacher, psychologist, teacher of the deaf, occupational therapist, social worker, etc.) for effective implementation of inclusive education, (vi) absence of systemic work for professional orientation of the persons with special educational needs at general education schools, (vii) absence of requirements for mandatory training of pedagogical and administrative staff of VET institutions and lack of programmes for development of the skills needed for effective implementation of inclusive education, (viii) lack of awareness raising activities among the persons with specific educational needs and their families on benefits and availability of VET programmes, and finally, (ix) the geographical distribution of VET schools hinders accessibility to VET.

### 2.1.2. Identified issues of participation to CVET (including in the framework of ALMPs)

The following main forms and types of non-formal learning can be identified in Armenia:

- Mandatory trainings implemented in accordance with the requirements of the law, e.g., those foreseen for the civil servants or other categories of public employees (judges, policemen, military servants, teachers, etc.) and paid by State budget,

<sup>23</sup>Appendix of the law of the RA "On approval of the State Program for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030" from December 12, 2022. ՅՕ-441-Ն, p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> World Vision, 2021. Description of current conditions for ensuring inclusion in the system of VET in the Republic of Armenia and ways to face issues, p. 9-11.

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- Continuing vocational education and training proposed by USS, agency of the MoLSA targeting specific groups of population considered vulnerable (registered unemployed, disabled persons, young mothers without profession, prisoners, demobilized soldiers, etc.),
- Training courses provided by companies for their own staffs or job applicants,
- Commercial training courses (vocational and non-vocational) provided by private companies as services to the population or other private or public customers,
- Targeted courses carried out by different international organizations and projects, including those of charitable nature,
- Various preparatory courses, including private tutors' activities.

CVET programmes at VET institutions are mainly funded in three ways: i) by participants on the commercial basis; ii) donors' organizations; iii) State budget in the framework of vocational trainings proposed by USS and iv) by companies.

Some examples of CVET programmes delivered in the framework of projects funded by donors' organizations:

- In the framework of Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training South Caucasus Programme (PSD TVET) implemented by GIZ, 12 short-term dual VET courses were piloted (from which 3 in 2022) at 4 VET colleges, responding to the needs of private sector companies. These short-term courses (duration 4-5 months) are mainly focused on introducing new specialties allowing quick solution to reduce the gap and demands for specific skills needed by private business<sup>25</sup>.
- "Transition from Education to Employment" project funded by EU and implemented by People in need is aimed at piloting apprenticeships schemes in short non-formal courses piloted in the agriculture and textile sectors through enhancement of the capacities of 4 VET institutions in Shirak region<sup>26</sup>.
- In the framework of EU4Youth - SAY YES. Skills for Jobs project carried out by World Vision Armenia in partnership with Global Developments Fund short-term curricula for four professions: "Cheese making", "Wine making", "Agro-machinery maintenance" and "Veterinary" were developed in beneficiary colleges on the same four professions<sup>27</sup>
- Funded by a broad coalition of international and local organizations led by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Switzerland, MAVETA project is implemented aimed to assist the Government of Armenia to reform the vocational education system in Armenia in agriculture. Project seeks to train young people so that their knowledge is directly useful for their future professional career, as hired professionals or self-employed. Practical learning in companies and farms shall be combined with modern cutting-edge knowledge learned in colleges with special focus on dual education. The selected professions include Veterinary Specialist, Milk and Dairy Technologist, Farmer, Agricultural Machinery, Milk Farm Manager, Orchard Workers / Nut and Fruit Farmers<sup>28</sup>.

The 49 regional employment centers of the USS of the MoLSA - covering the whole territory of Armenia - are in charge of the professional training of persons belonging to unemployed, disabled or other vulnerable groups. However, the physical accessibility of these trainings is subject to available funding provided by State budget, as the volume of planned vocational trainings for people belonging to identified vulnerable groups is insignificant compared to their number. As an example, for non-formal

<sup>25</sup> Dual education – guaranteed employment! Results and Stories. Presentation provided by GIZ within Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training South Caucasus (PSD TVET) Programme.

<sup>26</sup> Transition from Education to Employment. <https://armenia.peopleinneed.net/en/our-work/education-skills>

<sup>27</sup> World Vision's work-based learning initiatives in Armenia. <https://www.wvi.org/stories/armenia/world-visions-work-based-learning-initiatives-armenia>

<sup>28</sup> CHF 8.3 mln. for professional education in agriculture in Armenia: Switzerland joins forces with Austria and Germany. <https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/armenia/en/home/news/news.html/content/countries/armenia/en/meta/news/2022/september/chf-8-3-mln--for-professional-education-in-agriculture-in-armeni>

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learning within employment regulation adopted by Government in the 2021 State Budget, 63.875 thousand AMD (about 160.000 euros) for vocational training of unemployed persons, prisoners, persons at risk of dismissal and 113.454 thousand AMD (about 284.000 euros) for mothers without profession were allocated (including payment of salaries during the period of the training)<sup>29</sup>. The volume of planned vocational trainings for the registered unemployed, disabled persons and prisoners is also insignificant with regard to registered unemployed (61.356 on the date of July 2021<sup>30</sup>) for instance: total beneficiary 434 persons, out of which 43 persons with disabilities<sup>31</sup>.

CVET programmes at VET institutions are offered on a tuition fee basis and, in the case of the textile sector, paid by companies in order to bring down the shortage of staff. However, according to interviews with VET institution directors, companies in other sectors are not interested in financing CVET programmes in VET institutions.

The MoESCS doesn't possess comprehensive data neither on the nature and volume of CVET programmes organized by VET institutions on a commercial basis or supported by donor organizations, nor does it have information about those programmes supported by State budget in the framework of employment regulation.

According to the interviewed VET institution directors, only limited number of individuals are interested in the offered CVET programmes, especially in regions outside the capitol, limiting therefore the opportunities for VET institutions to generate extrabudgetary funds. Another issue hampering the development of CVET implementation is the absence of mandatory certification of almost all CVET related programmes, which leads to low interest from the side of the companies.

### 2.1.3. Policy gaps with respect to the policy responses

#### 2.1.3.1. The issue of paid places

The admission to IVET programmes is organized based on available places for VET professions<sup>32 33</sup> (tuition free and paid) yearly defined by a government decree and according to the procedure of admission to institutions delivering VET programmes<sup>34</sup>. In line with the admission procedure, enrolment to limited number of tuition free places is based on average scores of the certificate of basic or secondary education, of the diploma supplement of VET or higher education, as well as on note of the competition subject if any. Therefore, mostly candidates with higher scores have access to free of charge places and the availability of places free of tuition, is the main basic condition of accessibility to IVET programmes.

#### 2.1.3.2. The issue of setting up an inclusive learner-centred education environment

The creation of a universal inclusive learner-centered education environment is one of the strategic directions of the Education 2030 targeting "insuring universal provision of accessible and affordable educational institutions (preschool, general education and VET) and programs"<sup>35</sup>. There are specific measures that target participation of disadvantaged groups in VET and higher education who benefit of tuition free education upon passing the entrance examinations (if any):

- children left without parental care<sup>36</sup>
- first and second-degree handicapped children<sup>37</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Law on 2021 State Budget.

<sup>30</sup> Appendix 1 of RA Government Decision №1589-L from September 30, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Appendix 3 of RA Government Decision №1589-L from September 30, 2021.

<sup>32</sup> RA Government Decision № 1139-N from October 1, 2015.

<sup>33</sup> RA Government Decision № 977-N from September 6, 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Minister of Education and Science order № 254-N, 05.04.2012. Last modified by Minister of Education, Science Culture and Sports order № 62-N 12.08.2021.

<sup>35</sup> Appendix of the law on "State Program for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030", December 13, 2022; ՌՕ-441-Ն, p. 46.

<sup>36</sup> Law about social protection of children left without parental care, September 24, 2002, ՌՕ-411-Ն, article 7.

<sup>37</sup> Law of RA on social protection of the disabled people, April 14, 1993, ՌՕ-57, article 15.

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- children and spouses of deceased and first-degree handicapped military servants
- those who became first and second degree disabled during military service and children of serviceperson dead during military service<sup>38</sup>.

The achievements in the domain of social inclusion within the VET system can be resumed as follows<sup>39</sup>:

- A legal basis for country wide inclusive education<sup>40</sup> has been established and the country's commitments for ensuring internationally defined pre-conditions has been consolidated;
- One of three strategic directions is set up for implementation of the Education 2030, which is the "creation of a universally inclusive, learner-centered educational environment, which at the different stages of human life span will provide people all across the Republic of Armenia with quality and effective educational services, customized to one's individual development and personal traits, as well as participative citizenship";
- Lessons learned from experience of implementation of the universal inclusive education in general education system according to Action Plan and Schedule for Introducing Integrated Inclusive Education System in Armenia for the period till 2022 has been approved by the Government in 2016;
- At least four special education institutions in Yerevan and at least one in the regions of Armenia have been reorganized as regional pedagogical-psychological support center for learners with specific educational needs;
- Law on VET establishes equal opportunities to deliver VET programmes, particularly via establishment of conditions for those with special educational needs and for their inclusion in the mainstream education, in all VET institutions;
- Modular VET programmes have been designed which allow flexibility of education for learners with specific educational needs;
- Implementation of WBL is a policy priority, whose models can contribute to increase the possibilities for further employment of students with special educational needs.

At the same time, there is no specific policy or activity targeting access of the persons with immigrant or refugee statue to VET system and there is no available data on admission of persons having immigrant or refugee status.

Recently the Government decided to increase the amount of student scholarships to encourage admission to IVET programmes in the fields considered as priority and important for country. Government has decided that for the school year 2023-24 there are 1379 places in preliminary vocational (craftmanship) education and 785 places in middle VET professions. The distribution between those professions is shown in Appendix 3, box 1. This list represents the priority and serves as the basis for an increased portion of government grants. Thus, starting from the academic year 2023-2024 students in these professions will receive a total of 50.000 AMD, instead of the previous 4.750 AMD. The priority places represent 40.1% and 12.9% of the total tuition free places defined for admission respectively to preliminary and middle VET professions in 2023<sup>41</sup>.

In terms of access to VET, Education 2030 foresees as objective "expansion of preliminary (craftmanship) and middle vocational education (VET); development of accessible, inclusive and safe environments, and ensuring access to all population groups" as final target in 2030. To achieve this objective, the following activities with corresponding results are foreseen<sup>42</sup>:

<sup>38</sup> Law About military service and the status of a serviceperson, November 15, 2017, ՅՕ-195-Ն, article 67.

<sup>39</sup> World Vision, 2021. Description of current conditions for ensuring inclusion in the system of VET in the Republic of Armenia and ways to face issues, p. 9.

<sup>40</sup> Law of RA "On additions and modifications in the law of Republic of Armenian on Secondary Education", December 1, 2014, ՅՕ-200-Ն.

<sup>41</sup> Appendix 3 of RA Government Decision № 1289-N from July 27, 2023.

<sup>42</sup> Appendix 1 of RA Government Decision № 351-L from March 16, 2023.

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Process/Activity	Expected result
<b>Ensuring necessary conditions for the effective operation of VET institutions of national importance, including provision of dormitories or other accommodation facilities</b>	Number of VET institutions of national importance, provided with conditions necessary for effective operation: 2026 - 1 2030 - Final target – 3
<b>Introduction of a transportation cost reimbursement toolkit for students and teaching staff in VET institutions operating in the regions</b>	Availability of a regulation for transportation cost reimbursement
	Proportion of students receiving reimbursement for transportation services in accordance with the developed criteria
	Proportion of teachers receiving reimbursement for transportation services in accordance with the developed criteria is 100%
<b>Transition to universal inclusivity in the area of VET</b>  <b>Development and implementation of a pilot project on inclusive education in the area of VET</b>	Amendment of the legislative framework ensuring inclusivity in the VET system; legal regulations are available 2023 - Legal regulations are approved 2024 - Secondary regulations are being developed 2026 - Legal regulations are developed 2030 - Final target - Legislative and other legal regulations are improved
	Proportion of institutions where physical access to the environment and reasonable adaptations are available: 2026 - 12.5% 2030 - Final target - 100%

The Law on Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education and Training (Law on VET) defines the supplementary (continuing) education as "education process beyond the framework of main (initial) vocational educational programmes, targeted at improving professional qualities, ensuring professional re-qualification, upgrading and complementing the qualification of a person"<sup>43</sup>. Thus, the purpose of supplementary education is to improve, update and complement previously obtained (foregoing) knowledge, skills, competences and values throughout the entire life of a person in order to meet the professional and individual educational needs and shall be considered as means of ensuring non-formal learning<sup>44</sup>.

A Concept of Lifelong Learning in Armenia was adopted by the Government in 2009 based on the analysis of the Lifelong Learning situation in Armenia, the identification of problems and challenges and the formulation of several solutions<sup>45</sup>. In 2012 the Strategy of Supplementary and Continuing Education in Armenia, was adopted by the MoESCS<sup>46</sup>.

A number of legal documents regulating the practical implementation of the supplementary (continuing) educational programmes have been adopted over time. Article 201.1. of the RA Labor Code regulating in-service vocational training specifies: "the employer has the right to organize a training of an apprentice or a candidate for recruitment up to six months of duration on his own expenses, within the company, or elsewhere. A scholarship shall be paid to the trainee. The said sum shall at least be identical to the monthly minimum salary stipulated by the law"<sup>47</sup>. This sum considered as entrepreneurial expenses as defined by point 28 of 1st part of the article 4 of the Tax Code can be reduced from gross income of the involved company subject to profit tax. Thus, according to article 121 of the Tax Code of the Republic of Armenia "gross income is reduced directly by the taxpayer or by the amount of expenses that are

<sup>43</sup> Law on Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education and Training, 2005, ՅՕ-164-Ն. Article 3.

<sup>44</sup> Law on Education, 1999. ՅՕ-297 Article 26.

<sup>45</sup> Appendix of RA Government protocol decision № 43 from October 15, 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Order № 1163-A/Q of the Minister of Education and Science from December 20, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> RA Labour Code, ՅՕ-124-Ն. Article 201.1.

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carried out on research and (or) experimental design activities and services upon the order of the taxpayer, during the full tax year of the costs"<sup>48</sup>. In case education and staff capacity building activities (trainings) are considered as experimental design activities and services, these two provisions are tax incentives for companies wishing to organize in-service vocational training of employees and thus contribute to the accessibility of CVET.

The Law of the Republic of Armenia on State Non-Commercial Organizations allows VET institutions to deliver continuing VET programmes as entrepreneurial activities which could be done according to the decision of the founder for identified type of entrepreneurial activities<sup>49</sup>. Thus, according to the Government decision, the state colleges are allowed to carry out continuing (supplementary) VET programmes targeting staff training, capacity building and qualification development<sup>50</sup>.

In 2015 the Government adopted two regulations: "Organization and Implementation of Supplementary (Continuing) Educational Programmes" and "Assessment and Recognition of the Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes"<sup>51</sup>, which define conditions of organization and implementation of continuing education programs by providers being registered in "National register of training".

These policy and implementation documents whose definitions "contain a number of conceptual mistakes or at least uncertainties"<sup>52</sup> do not present a comprehensive and coherent vision and legal basis for the delivery and assessment of informal and non-formal learning, as well as recognition and certification of their learning outcomes in line with current policy priorities of the education sector, thus contribution to access to the CVET. Furthermore, majority of issues defined in the Concept of LLL, like "insufficient funding of Lifelong Learning, weak coordination and management of LLL sector management, absence of statistical data regarding LLL persist"<sup>53</sup>, which has substantially limited their implementation.

Besides, there is no specific State policy or measure (including provision for CVET programmes within the funding formula of VET institutions from State budget) to support and coordinate elaboration and delivery of CVET programme by State VET institutions. The only measures contributing to the delivery of CVET by VET institutions are State programmes proposed by MoLSA targeting training of different groups considered as vulnerable.

As a result, the organization and delivery of CVET programmes at VET institutions is mainly funded by participants on the commercial basis or donors' organizations, thus limiting the access to CVET programmes.

In 2022 the amendment of the Law on Education was initiated within the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sport of the Parliament of Armenia aimed at "resolving the legislative crisis, strengthening the processes of organizing and implementing additional educational programs, as well as more effectively implementing State policy in the field of assessment, recognition and certification of the results of informal and non-formal learning, as well as ensuring the fulfillment of the international obligations". In particular, the creation of a "National register of training", as national database of supplementary educational programs and courses' providers, persons participated in courses, got assessed and certified, as well as of persons in charge of monitoring the progress of courses, assessment of the results of informal and non-formal trainings<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> RA Tax Code, RO-165-U. Article 121, Part 6.

<sup>49</sup> Law of the RA on State Non-Commercial Organizations. RA National Assembly, RO-248, article 6.

<sup>50</sup> RA Government Decision № 1009-N from June 20, 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Appendix 1 and 2 of RA Government Decision № 1062-N from September 10, 2015.

<sup>52</sup> ETF, 2019. Torino Process Armenia National Report 2018–2020, p. 22.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 23.

<sup>54</sup> Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. Draft: the procedure for evaluating and recognizing the results of informal and non-formal learning will be defined. <https://escs.am/am/news/12399>

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In the field of non-formal education, Education 2030 foresees the "introduction of mechanisms for the recognition of informal education results; provision of an environment and conditions for lifelong learning and continual development of human capital among adults and youth" as final target in 2030. To achieve this objective, following activities and corresponding results are planned within the Action plan for implementation of the Education 2030, as outlined in Appendix 3, Table 5.

#### **2.1.4. Policy recommendations related to access to IVET/CVT**

Specific recommendations for IVET:

This covers a comprehensive set of immediate initiatives, which all contribute to the establishment of measures that increase the access to IVET. These are: (i) Mechanisms and tools developed, such as reinforcement dialogue with private sector companies in the priority fields in order to link scholarships with needed qualification profiles, to raise image and awareness of priority fields among secondary education students for admission to tuition free places in IVET left unspent. (ii) Based on in depth constraints analysis regarding SEN access to IVET, action plan is prepared for inclusion of SEN into IVET system and outline detailed roadmap for realization of the action plan with yearly performance indicators. (iii) Special admission "tracks" are created for immigrants/ refugees, including screening of qualification level, offering supplement training in subjects not meeting the requirements, guidance and support from career guidance, as well as setting up database to record data on admission of persons having immigrant or refugee status.

Specific recommendations for CVET:

This covers a set of immediate initiatives, which all contribute to increasing access of disadvantaged groups to the CVET system, such as: (i) The effect of the financial support and stipends to disadvantaged groups is monitored, including by means of tracer studies after completion of learning periods. (ii) By close cooperation between MoESCS and MLSA introduce practices from EU member states on "Job Guarantee" and (iii) A strategy is elaborated in the MoESCS for the development of CVET programmes including support to VET institutions to propose short-term trainings to MoLSA/USS to address rapid socio-economic development of the country.

## **2.2. Attractiveness of IVET/CVET**

### **2.2.1. Identified issues of pathways flexibility: vertical permeability (accessibility of tertiary education for graduates of IVET/CVET)**

There are two pathways for graduates of VET to access higher education: i) participate to the centralized admission examinations and ii) benefit from admission to second year of study in bachelor degree based on academic merit. However, current procedures limit the transition of IVET graduates to higher education institutions as the admission is allowed only to graduates with high academic notes and within the corresponding professions and quantities decided by Government; and on a paid basis.

Furthermore, admission to second year full time studies within bachelor degree is allowed only in case if for a given profession there is no provision of part-time study. The current procedure makes therefore impossible the transition to higher education for those VET graduates who do not have high academic notes, despite the fact of accomplishment of VET studies which certify the acquisition of VET qualifications according to NQF.

In addition, there are no short higher education programmes for VET graduates.

### **2.2.2. Identified issues of flexibility pathways: horizontal permeability (students transition between parallel IVET/CVET and general education pathways, as well as between formal and non-formal settings)**

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In Armenia gross enrollment rates are 6.2% and 13.9% respectively for preliminary and middle VET, while 70% and more of the real labor market needs specialists with vocational education<sup>55</sup>.

The VET system is still not attractive for graduates from schools, especially from secondary education schools. In 2021 only 5,28% of graduates from basic and secondary schools were admitted to preliminary VET programmes (respectively 5,49% and 5,47% in 2020 and 2019), while the share of those who opted for middle VET programmes was 19,92% (respectively 20,52% and 16,44% in 2020 and 2019). In total, the share of graduates from basic and secondary education schools (32.615 and 20.507 respectively) admitted in 2021 in all VET institutions was 25,2%; with the majority of admitted coming from basic education schools (35,33%) against 9,08% of newly enrolled graduates from secondary education schools (see Appendix 3, table 6).

For the same year, the share of graduates from secondary schools<sup>56</sup> admitted to higher education institutions was 83.91% (respectively 88.82% and 79.41% in 2020 and 2019).

More than 80% of admitted to preliminary VET programmes in 2021 (2282 people) were graduated from basic schools. The share of graduates from basic schools admitted to middle VET programmes is more than 86%. This high share of basic school graduates admitted to VET institutions is linked to the introduction of 12-year mandatory secondary general education in 2017, allowing them in parallel to VET studies to receive also certificate of secondary education.

Compared to the number of secondary education graduates admitted to higher education institutions, one can note that the share of those who preferred to enter VET institutions is more than 9 times less, while the total admitted students to higher education institutions is 22.2% more (see Appendix 3, table 6).

The number of higher education students is still more than two times as big as the number of those enrolled in VET institutions which is due to traditional "attractiveness" of higher education for both youth and their parents (see Appendix 3 table 7).

### 2.2.3. Career guidance towards VET

As a branch of the National Institute of Labor and Social Research since 2017, the Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre (CGCD center) is in charge for all aspects of organization and provision of vocational guidance and career development services at all levels of education, as well as for job seekers including adults.

Since 2013, career guidance activities in general and VET institutions, regional employment centres, and childcare and child protection units are organized according to the career guidance and career education models and methodologies developed by CGCD Center. Since 2018 career guidance units are established in VET institutions supported by State budget. Models of standard operational procedures, regulatory by-laws and job descriptions for career guidance specialists were developed by CGCD Center. The center is also in charge of continuous training of the career guidance specialists of VET institutions. Currently career guidance services are functioning in all 96 VET institutions, providing career guidance services to 97.37% of total graduates<sup>57</sup>. At the same time, according to interviewed stakeholders, the organization and assessment of student internship, to which career guidance services are involved, continue to be formal, using procedures and tools inherited from the soviet period. People not in formal education, NEETs, adults and people who are not competitive in the labour market can receive career guidance services in 49 regional centres of the Unified Social Service, which operate in the capital city and in all regions of the country. However, comprehensive and objective data on IVET/CVET graduates' job placement or information on other career pathways of VET graduates as part

<sup>55</sup> Appendix 2 of RA Government Decision № 351-L from March 16, 2023, p 16.

<sup>56</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, Statistical Yearbook of Armenia 2022.

<sup>57</sup> ETF, 2022. National career development support system review report – Armenia, pp. 9 and 35.

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of main data in education management information system are not available, pointing towards a need for more objectivity of job placement surveys.

It is worth to mention that the data and methodology of the job placement surveys carried out by CGCD Center are not available publicly, even in the web-site of the centre (<http://www.mycareer.am/>).

### 2.2.3. Links between learning and the world of work

According to several studies skills vertically (when the received level of skills or education is either more or less than the level of skills or education required to perform a job) and horizontally (when the type of education or skills is not appropriate for the current job, but the level of education or skills matches the requirements of the job) mismatches<sup>58</sup> are observed. This negatively affects the attractiveness of VET. As reported by studies mentioned by Work Armenia Strategy, among graduates of VET and higher education institutions "only 41% believe that the acquired theoretical knowledge meets the requirements of their job, and 43% believe that the acquired practical professional skills meet the requirements of the job", while 78% of employers observed lack of work experience and practical skills during the recruitment of young specialist<sup>59</sup>.

In the Adult Education Survey 2020-2021 carried out by CRRC-Armenia and DVV International, "thirty-seven percent (37%) of respondents stated that they were partially or completely utilizing their knowledge and skills, whereas as many as 45% of respondents answered that they had not utilized the skills and knowledge that they had acquired during their studies" in their current job<sup>60</sup>.

The results of the survey measuring attitude of economically inactive youth vis-à-vis the usefulness of obtained education published by the Statistical Committee in 2022 showed that in total only 22% of inactive population in 2021 aged 15-29 found that their education was very useful for obtaining job<sup>61</sup> (see Appendix 3, table 8).

From the companies' side, "85% of respondents believe that skill shortages negatively affect firms in their sector in terms of loss of time, financial resources, productivity, clients and quality" according to ILO Skills Development Survey<sup>62</sup>.

While work-based learning (WBL) is seen as a mean to address the problem of relevance and quality of VET in Armenia, from the internationally defined WBL models, the sole model that is legally bound in Armenia is the traditional internship of VET students, the purpose of which is the implementation of practical and theoretical knowledge gained at VET institutions, as well as acquisition of applied skills. Out of the the three types of internships common in Armenian VET institutions - academic, production and pre-graduation – the last two are mandatory for final-year students of both preliminary and middle VET institutions. In the 2021/2022 academic year, production and pre-diploma internships were mandatory for 13,362 students studying in the last year, of which 1,918 were involved respectively in preliminary and 11,444 and middle VET institutions.

Besides students' internships, during last years, the German dual education model is being piloted in the framework of the Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training South Caucasus Programme (PSD TVET) funded by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in cooperation with the private sector. Since 2017, 12 long-term dual VET programmes were launched in 12 VET institutions across Armenia, involving more than 600 students, from selected specializations in winemaking, tourism, and IT/precision engineering sectors. During 2019-2020 academic year in cooperation with 45 companies 155 long term and 61 short term WBL

<sup>58</sup> EU commission- Skills panorama, 2015. Skills Panorama glossary.

<sup>59</sup> Appendix 1 of RA Government Decision № 1753-L from December, 5 2019, Objective 1, issue 1.

<sup>60</sup> DVV International Armenia. Adult Education survey Armenia 2020-2021, p. 23.

<sup>61</sup> Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2022. Labour Market in Armenia 2018-2021. Youth.

<sup>62</sup> Republican Union of Employers of Armenia, 2021. A strategy for skills development in Armenia 2021-2025, p. 11.

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based programmes were implemented<sup>63</sup>. In the 2020-2021 academic year 5 WBL based dual education programmes were piloted in 15 VET institutions.

In the framework of the PSD TVET, 3 short-term dual CVET courses were also piloted in 4 VET institutions, responding to the needs of private sector companies. These short-term courses (duration 4-5 months) are mainly focused on introducing new specialties allowing to address the gaps in the demand for specific skills needed by private businesses.

Two agricultural professions, Veterinary and Milk & Dairy Technology have been revised according to the WBL approaches and piloted in the framework of EU-funded project "Promoting partnerships for effective WBL opportunities in VET" implemented by Strategic Development Agency NGO. The piloted curricula have been submitted to MoESCS for further implementation in VET system.

WBL is also addressed by other projects funded by EU, for instance:

- 1) Within the framework of EU4Youth - SAY YES. Skills for Jobs project carried out by World Vision Armenia in partnership with Global Development Fund short-term curricula for four professions: 'Cheese making', 'Wine making', 'Agro-machinery maintenance' and 'Veterinary' were developed and capacity building training delivered for staff of the Career Counselling services, as well four full laboratories were established in beneficiary VET institutions on the same four profession<sup>64</sup>.
- 2) "Transition from Education to Employment" project funded by EU and implemented by "People in need" NGO is aimed at piloting apprenticeships schemes in short CVET courses piloted in the agriculture and textile sectors through enhancement of the capacities of 4 VET institutions in Shirak region to monitor the labor market, improving cooperation with the business sector, and facilitating the introduction of WBL<sup>65</sup>.
- 3) In the framework of German "Vocational Education and Training (VET) - cooperation in the South Caucasus" project implemented by "Business and Education Partnership" foundation students of different VET institutions established Student's companies aimed at carried out commercial activities and therefore having opportunity to learn by practical activities<sup>66</sup>.

In 2022 the share of specialties delivered through pilot dual education programmes was 8,4%, implemented by institutions which represent 7% of total number of VET institutions<sup>67</sup>.

At the same time, there is a lack of comprehensive information on the impact and continuity of the results of various pilot projects introducing WBL forms and mechanisms of their sustainability and further use in the VET system. The results of these WBL pilot implementation projects are not publicly available, in particular on the websites of the MoESCS and NCVETD.

#### 2.2.4. Internationalization of IVET

About 2% of students enrolled in middle VET institutions were foreign citizens (see Appendix 3, table 9), while foreign students' number involved in higher education institutions was more that 4 time higher in 2021-2022 academic year (7,6% of total number)<sup>68</sup>. For both cases the majority of foreign students are from the Armenian diaspora.

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<sup>63</sup> Dual education – guaranteed employment! Results and Stories. Presentation provided by GIZ within Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training South Caucasus (PSD TVET) Programme.

<sup>64</sup> World Vision's work-based learning initiatives in Armenia.

<sup>65</sup> Transition from Education to Employment. <https://armenia.peopleinneed.net/en/our-work/education-skills>

<sup>66</sup> <https://bep.am/news>

<sup>67</sup> Appendix of RA Government Decision № 242 from 25, 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Statistical Committee of Armenia. Statistical Yearbook of Armenia 2022.

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In the framework of different projects carried out by international donors, staff from VET institutions participate to capacity building activities (trainings, study visits, conferences, etc.) abroad. However, at the MoESCS there is no comprehensive data on participants' numbers and fields of the capacity building activities.

In 2012 Armenia joined WorldSkills. In Kazan and Lyon competitions respectively 3 and 4 competitors participated in 2019 and 2022, within the skills in jewelry, Fashion Technology, Mechatronics, Web Technologies and Cooking fields. In July 2023 an application for membership in the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) has been submitted by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

Since 2022 Armenian VET institutions are eligible for participation in the Erasmus+ programme 'Capacity Building in the field of VET' (CB VET) action. As a result of the Erasmus+ programme last two calls, 7 capacity building projects with Armenian stakeholders have been funded, with the involvement of VET institutions and NCVETD/MoESCS:

- Developing Social Entrepreneurship schemes for VET institutions in Neighborhood East (SE VET)
- Beyond Europe with Micro-credentials (BEM)
- VET partnership for Green and Smart Electricity in Buildings (VET4GSEB)
- An innovative model of SMART Farm adjacent to VET institution for students work-based learning towards better employability of graduates (CB4WBL)
- IMProve and PROMote VET in Armenia (IMPROVET-AM )
- VET Demonstration Partnership for Pistachio Farm in Armenia: Geospatial Approach (VETfarm)
- INVEsT in you: promote international traineeship programs for Armenian, Georgian and Moldovan students in Central Europe (IN-VET).

A non-mandatory involvement of an international expert during the institutional accreditation of VET institution is foreseen by ANQA's procedure. However, the presence of an international expert increase by 87% the costs of accreditation to be paid by VET institution (3.972.000 AMD instead of 2.124.000 AMD)<sup>69</sup>.

It is worth mentioning, that the poor knowledge of foreign languages (mainly English, French or German) by staff and almost absence of staff with skills on internationalization of VET limit strongly the efforts of VET institutions for internationalization, which is considered as a way for increasing the attractiveness of Armenian VET. In addition, the possibilities for student and staff international mobility are very limited.

## 2.2.5. Policy gaps with respect to the policy responses

### Policy response on pathways flexibility

Since September 2017, 12-year mandatory secondary education was introduced in Armenia which in same extent makes VET more attractive for graduates from basic secondary schools looking for a full secondary education in parallel of vocational education, instead of being enrolled in high school.

The implementation of the credit system in high schools started in 2022-2023 academic year and is scheduled to be introduced in all high schools in 2024-2025 academic year. Among the objectives of the credit system in high schools are: ensuring easy transition of students from secondary to VET and higher education institutions; and promoting comparability of third level secondary education supporting organization of education process at VET and higher education institutions<sup>70</sup>. The draft Law on VET under discussion at the National Assembly foresees the implementation of the credit transfer system aimed at ensuring students' smooth mobility and possibility for further studies.

<sup>69</sup> National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation. Accreditation process and documents. <https://www.anqa.am/en/accreditation/#Papers>

<sup>70</sup> Order of Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports № 39 from October 27, 2022.

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Overall, there are flexible pathways for students between general education and initial VET, which will be further reinforced with the implementation of the credit system in high schools and VET system.

There is no specific regulation on the transition from VET levels 3 and 4 to level 5. The only regulation on students' transition between different level of IVET is the procedure of the transfer of students from one vocational institution to another educational institution. The regulation focuses on restrictions rather than on students' support in choosing the right pathways in line with their personal and professional aspirations<sup>71</sup> Below some examples are provided:

- The transfer of a student in the first semester is not allowed
- during the transfer changing of professions is allowed only if in the curriculum of the profession chosen by the student the differences in subjects (modules) do not exceed 8,
- transfer of a student from an accredited non-state educational institution to a state educational institution may be carried out with the permission of the Ministry on the recommendation of the director of the receiving educational institution,
- transfer is authorized if, as a result, the total number of admission places established for a given year in the relevant profession is maintained.

In practice, according with the information provided by the MoESCS, few graduates of preliminary VET express a wish to acquire also middle VET (4 persons in 2021-2022).

There is no information available related to the admission of CVET graduates in VET institutions.

According to a procedure defined by the Government<sup>72</sup>, only graduates of middle VET programmes who have demonstrated high academic merit, are allowed to continue their education in the higher education institutions in the corresponding profession and on the paid basis, from the second year of study. The procedure requires particularly, that the difference in the education content (subject, modules) at VET and higher education institutions does not exceed 30%. This is assessed by a special committee established in the corresponding higher education institution which make also selection of the college graduates based on their marks. In addition, every year, MoESCS approves lists of VET and higher education institutions between which the transition of VET graduates is allowed, as well as the number of sits as per higher education institutions, which are foreseen for that transition<sup>73</sup>. For instance, in 2021 25% of VET graduates was admitted to second year at higher education institution for part-time studies. According to current procedure, admission of VET graduates to second year full time studies within bachelor degree is allowed only in case if for given profession there is no provision of part-time study. A pilot project on admission of graduates from agricultural VET professions to 1<sup>st</sup> year of corresponding professions at Armenian National Agrarian University is under implementation in cooperation with MoESCS.

No provision for improvement of accessibility of tertiary education for graduates of IVET/CVET is foreseen within Education 2030.

### Policy response on career guidance towards VET

In 2011 the National Training Fund (NTF) was established, with responsibilities to ensure links between the VET system and the Labour Market and specifically support involvement of employers and their organisations in different aspects of VET. The NTF's main responsibilities are focused on Labour Market research and identification of skills needs, as well as on organising continuing VET for different categories of job seekers including employed and unemployed adults. Since 2015 by order of the Minister of Education and Science the NTF was designed as the responsible body for coordination,

<sup>71</sup> Order of Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia №1455-N from October 1, 2010.

<sup>72</sup> RA Government Decision № 752-N from July 8, 2015.

<sup>73</sup> RA Government Decision № 856-N from May 27, 2020.

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organization and supporting the operationalization of the Procedure of Assessment and Recognition of the Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes.

Currently the VNFIL mechanism is not operational due to the lack of capacity (mainly financial) of the NTF and to the weakness and obsolescence of the above-mentioned procedures. Two activities linked to VNFIL are planned in the Plan of Activities for implementation of Education 2030 within VET system:

Process/Activity	Expected result
<b>Mechanisms ensuring rapid and flexible qualifications, including through the recognition of micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education</b>	Mechanisms ensuring rapid and flexible qualifications, including through the recognition of micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education are developed and implemented 2023 – Legislative changes are developed 2024 - Legislative changes are approved; mechanisms are being developed 2026 - Mechanisms are approved and implemented in accordance with the approved phases and schedule 2030- Final target – The mechanisms are fully operational
<b>Development and testing (piloting) of mechanisms for the registration of actors in the area of non-formal education and service providers, systems of recommendation and accreditation of programmes implemented by them, awarding of credits and recognition of results, and quality assurance.</b>	Mechanisms ensuring the quality of non-formal education is increased to 100%
<b>Mechanisms ensuring rapid and flexible qualifications, including through the recognition of micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education</b>	Mechanisms ensuring rapid and flexible qualifications, including through the recognition of micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education are developed and implemented 2023 – legislative changes are developed 2024 - legislative changes are approved; mechanisms are being developed 2026 - Mechanisms are approved and implemented in accordance with the approved phases and schedule 2030- Final target – The mechanisms are fully operational

The importance of career guidance, career education and career development support services is highlighted in Law on General Education, Law on Social Assistance, Law of the RA on Social Protection of Children Left Without Parental Care and Government decisions on Employment Strategy of the Republic of Armenia 2013-2018, Work Armenia initiative, etc.

Since 2012 the MoLSA and MoESCS are actively involved in the creating a career development support system that will provide free, accessible services for the conscious choice, effective planning and lifelong career development of individuals. Supported by State budget, MoLSA is providing a methodology and continuous development of the professional capacities of practitioners; and MoESCS is supporting the implementation of relevant services in secondary and VET institutions and creating proper positions in their staff, as well as jointly with CGCD Centre twice a year monitor the career guidance activities to check on student involvement and the level of graduate employment.

The information on job placement, essential basis for a strategy of attractiveness of IVET, is usually collected by MoESCS from VET institutions or through the monitoring of their career units' activities implemented by CGCD Center, as well as studies carried out by different organizations. However, there is no country wide, independent tracer study mechanism, which could provide, based on comprehensive methodology, reliable data on job placement of VET graduates and relevance of their skills in the labor market, as well as information on skills demand by employers.

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## Policy response to links between learning and the world of work

Three institutionalized mechanisms are in place to consider labor market needs and socio-economic development for updating existing VET programmes or developing new one: i) definition of yearly admission numbers; ii) procedure of elaboration of State Educational Standards of Professions and Qualifications for VET and iii) quality assurance of academic programmes.

The annual number of enrollment per VET programmes is defined on the basis of information on VET demand collected by MoESCS at the regional level from education department of regions and Yerevan city, as well as at the sectoral level from the Ministries. In addition, two main structures representing employers, i.e. the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Armenia and the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia are also requested to provide corresponding information on the VET demand.

VET institutions are also requested to provide proposals on the enrolment of the given year, based on availability of human and material resources to deliver training in accordance with the demand and in line with requirements of the State educational license. The VET institutions enjoying large autonomy have therefore an opportunity to propose, in close cooperation with relevant structure representing employers, new IVET or CVET programmes to be funded by State budget.

The provided data is only quantitative, i.e. the number of those with VET qualifications who are demanded in the economy of the region or the sector, if any. Consequentially, the main issue still is the qualitative aspect, i.e. the skills (or knowledge and competences) which the VET graduates should be equipped with. This issue is not made a discussion subject at the stage of enrolment planning. Taking into account the fact that these institutions does not use well defined methodology for future job forecasting, the accuracy and validity of those data is disputable as well.

According to Concept of Developing and Introducing Competence-Based State Educational Standards of Professions and Qualifications of Vocational Education in Armenia, the State standards and corresponding modular programmes for VET professions are first developed by a working group composed by 7 members, out of them 3 people representing organizations (companies) from the sector of the profession under discussion. Developed State standards and corresponding modular programmes are subject of expertise by relevant sectorial committee, then finalized by NCVETD and presented to National Council for VET for validation before being approved by Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. The Concept suggests that the objective of the standard is to set requirements towards the education outcome, i.e. to the formation of the graduates' competences, which would meet the personal educational demands and the requirements of both national and international labor markets, taking into account their current needs and the future developments.

Involving interested members from organizations of profession's sector and VET institutions in the working group in charge of elaboration of State standards and corresponding modular programmes, as well as involving the sectorial committees is an effective mechanism to respond to market needs in case if the involved people possess the necessary professional knowledge and updated relevant sectorial information. Therefore, commissioned by weakness of sectorial committees, and employers intermediate organizations in general, the responding to sector wide needs is not always guarantee.

The standard 3.5. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> institutional accreditation creation concerning academic programmes requests that the VET institution "has policy ensuring academic program monitoring, effectiveness assessment and improvement"<sup>74</sup>. In particular, the VET institutions are requested to have:

- Approved policy for the review of learning outcomes based on the needs of stakeholders (if applicable),
- Methods exploring the needs of internal and external stakeholders,
- Policy, procedures and mechanisms for regular evaluation of academic programmes.

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<sup>74</sup> Institutional and program accreditation criteria and standards of RA. <https://www.anga.am/en/about-us/legal-field/#Decisions>

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While defining the education content and the skills demand, MoESCS considers also the findings of researches and surveys carried out by some donors and projects which are specifically useful for identifying the soft skills required by the employers.

At the same time, there is a need for better coordination of collection and analysis of labor market information. Apart from the Edu2Work project which presents an analysis of the labour market based on job announcements posted on 10 online job portals in Armenia<sup>75</sup>, there is no country-wide comprehensive mechanism and tools neither for identifying the present demand for skills in the labor market, nor for anticipating the future skills needs within different economic sectors. Establishment of an e-borsa state platform by MoLSA aimed at accessibility of registered standardized CVs to anyone allowing employers to post vacancies, internship and training opportunities, as well as creating a matching system is in progress in the framework of a project funded by the Eurasian Development Bank. This platform is based on the experience of an information system on available work positions managed by MoLSA<sup>76</sup>.

## 2.2.6. Policy recommendations for attractiveness to IVET/CVET

### Specific recommendations for IVET:

This covers a set of immediate objectives, which all contribute to increase the attractiveness of IVET towards its potential learners. These are: (i) Along with optimization of the VET institutions and their professional mechanisms and digital tools are developed for effective delivery of IVET programmes allowing saving devoted to progressive decreasing of share of paid places. (ii) Short higher education programmes are established for VET graduates and revise level 4 and 5 qualifications for IVET and develop them for short higher education programmes accordingly. (iii) Guidelines are developed for introducing WBL/dual education, based on experience drawn from implementation of international donors' supported programmes<sup>77</sup>. (iv) Before system-level introduction and following adoption of new Law on VET, a thorough review of the different WBL pilot programmes should be undertaken, identifying lessons learned, gaps and risks and preparing recommendations to MoESCS, its agencies and partners. (v) Based on assessment of the capacities, a plan is developed for activities supporting internationalization of the VET system, including capacity building of staff on internationalization. (vi) Capacity building programme is designed; e.g. targeting reinforcement of foreign languages (particularly English, French and German) of the staff of VET institutions. (vii) Cooperation projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions is supported and encouraged, particularly in the framework of Erasmus+ programme, Armenia's membership to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) and EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe). (viii) Pilot projects are designed for digitalization and innovation of specialties, offering different forms of learning that can take place outside the premises of school buildings. (ix) A system for continuous development in digital teaching and learning methodology for IVET learners is established. (x) Pilot twinning projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions are encouraged/set up through international donor initiatives.

### Specific recommendations for CVET:

This covers a set of immediate initiatives, which all contribute to increase the attractiveness of CVET towards its potential candidates: (i) Outcome-based qualifications are developed, based on OSs, and a credit system established- and the VNFIL system has been aligned with the qualification system, including implementation of a credit rating system for micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education. (ii) Work-based learning opportunities have been set up in employment promotion programmes and bridging programmes to VET for inactive

<sup>75</sup> Edu2Work project is funded with UK aid from the UK government. The project is part of Work Armenia initiative. <https://edu2work.am>

<sup>76</sup> <https://workforall.am/gorc-vacancy/index>

<sup>77</sup> In line with road map of the "Concept paper and Road map for development of the work-based learning (WBL) in Armenia for 2023-2026" developed at MoESCS working group on WBL and validated by National Council for VET Development.

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population based on the review of the education programmes for inactive population. (iii) A flexible learning system is established consisting of short-cycle and long-cycle programs and courses, including recognized micro-credentials (making affordable learning paths for disadvantaged groups) – mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, self-learning.

## 2.3. Lifelong learning national framework

### 2.3.1. State funding of VET provision

In Armenia, vocational education and training is mainly financed by the State according to the average number of learners per year, through compensation of the tuition fees per VET profession. Other forms of financial flows are tuition fees and financial flows generated as an outcome of entrepreneurial activities and provided educational services.

Among the expenditure lines devoted to VET system, the student subsidies take up more than 90% of the budget allocations (see Appendix 3, table 10). The Law on VET defines student subsidies as “compensation of the tuition fees based on the state budget funding, allocations by vocational education institution and other legal and physical entities”<sup>78</sup>. In these conditions, investments from State budget (except those made within the EU budget support programme) for improvement of the building conditions of VET institutions and teaching/learning infrastructure are extremely insufficient. For instance, in the 2021 State budget the amount devoted to “Improvement of buildings and facilities of the preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education institutions” represents only 2.27% of total amount devoted to VET system (cf. table 10 in appendix 3).

In comparison to 2019-2020 academic year, the share of students studying on a paid place increased by 119.44% and 126.46% respectively for students in preliminary and middle level professional education institutions. At the same time, the share of students studying on a tuition free basis decreased by 8.68% and 6.16% respectively for students in preliminary and middle level professional education institutions. In 2022-2023 academic year the student enrolled in paid places represent 9,6% and 42.8% respectively at preliminary and middle VET institutions and 37,4% at all VET institutions (see appendix 3, table 11). In 2021-2022 academic year, 91% and 36.5% of students respectively in preliminary and middle VET institutions received monthly State scholarships mainly 4000 AMD and little (about 10 euros).

The amount of State scholarships provided to preliminary and middle VET students is very low and does not contribute to the affordability of studies at VET institutions.

To increase the involvement of students in IVET professions considered as priority for country, an increased amount of scholarship 10 times more than currently paid to majority of students is decided by Government (cf. point 2.3.). The capital/investment budget, which is presented in appendix 3, table 10, shows the slightly increased budgets for improvement of buildings and facilities of the preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education institutions in 2021 compared with the previous years, but with large cuts in 2019 and 2020.

### 2.3.2. Teaching and learning at IVET (including innovation and digitalization)

In terms of teaching and learning environment the following issue can be pointed out:

Despite efforts of NCVETD publishing more than 100 manuals for various education fields available in electronic form at organization web-site (<https://mkuzak.am/>), lack of quality textbooks, in particular in Armenian, remains an issue. As a result, for many specialties, mainly obsolete literature is still in use. The use of textbooks, teaching and learning materials in foreign languages, especially available in electronic form, is also limited due to students' and teaching staff's poor knowledge of foreign languages. The experience of National Centre for Education Technologies (NCET) on organization of online

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<sup>78</sup> RA Law on preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle vocational education, ՅՕ-164-Ն. Article 3.

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teaching and learning for secondary education school in remote area, as well results of SELFIE project being piloted by NCET supported by ETF in cooperation with JRC could be considered to be extended to VET towards introduction of innovative digital teaching learning methods and tools.

### 2.3.3. Management of VET institutions

VET institutions enjoy a large degree of autonomy in terms of e.g. financial and academic freedoms through approving own budgets, own curricula and defining the teaching means and methods by Governance Boards.

According to point 5 of article 18.1 of the Law on preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle Vocational Education and Training (2005), as director of VET institution can be selected or nominated a person having higher education and at least 5 years of experience in pedagogical work during last 10 years; or at least 3 years of experience in educational management; or at least 5 years of experience in management fields; or at least 5 years of professional work experience. In addition, the candidates for nomination or election to the position of VET institutions need to present the Certificate on ability to manage VET institution, issued after accomplishment of specific training carried out by organizations recommended by Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. This Certificate on ability to manage VET institution is issued for 5 years.

It is worth mentioning that apart the above cited entry requirements, there is no other mechanism for the evaluation of VET institution directors' qualification adequacy to the tasks required by job position. Furthermore, beside annual report to management board, there is no mechanism for evaluation of VET institution directors' work performance.

According to justifications for the 2021-2026 action plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, "one of the priorities of the reforms conducted in the post-secondary vocational education (PSVE) sector is the strengthening of human resources through trainings. In this regard, trainings for the PSVE administrative, pedagogical staff and members of the management board of VET institutions have been carried out every year; during the last three years, trainings have been provided for the employees of the PSVE system and persons of other staff involved in the work of that system, during which about 3000 people have undergone training. But there is still a lot to be done to develop the professional abilities"<sup>79</sup>.

The report on implementation of Government programme for 2021-2026 states that in line with action #14.1. "Training of members of the administrative, management boards, representatives of branch and sectoral associations involved in different working groups, pedagogical staff of institutions providing preliminary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education" 1072 people in total were trained in 2022, among which, 85.2% were pedagogical staff<sup>80</sup>.

### 2.3.4. Policy gaps with respect to the LLL framework policy responses

#### Policy innovations and excellence in the content and implementation of IVET and CVET programmes supporting access to VET

There are three main **policy innovations** aimed at supporting access to quality VET provisions in the latest years. First, the introduction of mandatory 12-year secondary education in 2017, which created more demand for VET professions combining the provision of secondary education and professional skills within the VET profession. While the quality of this combined provision needs to be assessed especially in terms of achievements of expected learning outcomes/skills, an increase in number of the admission of graduates of basic schools in VET institutions is observed. Second, the drafting in 2022 of

<sup>79</sup> Appendix 2 of RA Government Decision № 1902-L from November 18, 2021, p 448.

<sup>80</sup> Report on implementation of the actions plan of the Government programme for 2021-2016 in 2022.

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two documents "Assessment of VET needs in Republic of Armenia per professions and development perspectives " and "Revision of list of VET professions per regions and administrative unites" which will serve as basis during distribution of admission places. Third, the revision of the procedure on organization of distance education adopted in 2020 by decision of Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

Within the Action plan for implementation of Education 2030, the draft Law on VET and amendments to related laws currently under public discussion, the following main policy innovations related to increasing attractiveness of the VET are foreseen: (i) the introduction of sectorial qualification frameworks, (ii) a combination of face to face and distance teaching, (iii) Implementation of comprehensive legal framework and mechanisms for further development of work-based learning (dual education) with system level introduction of work-based learning in different levels of professional education and training, highlighting not only the issues of modernization of the institutions' infrastructures within the framework of further development of WBL, but also the possibilities of using employers' infrastructures in the educational process,(iv) an extension of the possibilities for entrepreneurial activities of VET institutions as sources of financial resources, (v) the implementation of mechanisms for flexible and rapid development of qualifications, including recognition of micro-credentials acquired through non-formal education, (vi) implementation of procedure for compensation of students' and teaching staff's transport costs in regions, (vii) the transition to full inclusive education following implementation of a pilot program, (viii) the introduction of credit transfer system, and finally, (ix) implementation of diversified funding policy, including State funding within different category of VET institutions.

In line with these policy priorities and direction the share of specialties taught on the basis of the WBL model and VET institutions providing WBL programmes is foreseen to amount to respectively 22% and 23.8% by 2030.

**Promotion of excellence in the contents and implementation of IVET and CVET** are foreseen in six main activities in the Action Plan for the implementation of the Education 2030, as shown in Appendix 3, table 12, in the activities (i) Development and revision of state educational standards of preliminary and middle vocational education (VET) and their related modular programmes in accordance with current national and international requirements, (ii) Introducing components of the quality assurance system of preliminary and middle VET education in accordance with licensing, institutional certification, programme accreditation, international standards and the criteria developed, (iii) Introducing training/retraining and certification systems for educators in the field of preliminary and middle VET education, promoting capacity development and linking capacity development to an increased rate of payment, (iv) Creation of preliminary and middle VET-related resource centres, (v) Improvement of building conditions of VET institutions according to the results of the mapping and identified priorities and (vi) Supplying and modernizing of the resources of the VET institutions according to the results of the mapping and identified priorities.

### 2.3.5. Policy recommendations regarding resources, teaching/learning and management in IVET/CVET

#### *State Funding of VET Provision*

To bolster the financial resources of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system, the Armenian government needs to envisage a strategy to diversify the system funding in close cooperation with social partners. The VET financing diversification is utmost important to improve the coverage and the quality of both IVET and CVET. It could take many forms such as training levy, PPPs, extension of WBL, schools income generation, Household participation (when relevant) etc., or a mix of all these possibilities. Please see also [Guide to ETF financing prism.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

#### *Teaching and Learning Methods at IVET (Including Innovation and Digitalization)*

The modernization of teaching and learning methods is crucial for the evolution of initial VET. This can be achieved by initiating pilot projects that stress digitalization and innovative specialties, offering flexible

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learning modes outside traditional school settings. Collaborative Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) with the private sector can be instrumental in funding and managing facilities, equipment, WBL placements, and integrating company employees into the educational process. Additionally, a comprehensive review and implementation of digital teaching methodologies and resources are necessary. The existing professional literature and curricula should be assessed, with recommendations for updates.

To foster international collaboration, twinning pilot projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions should be encouraged, leveraging available international donor funding. Lastly, partnering with cultural institutes in Armenia, such as the British Council, Institut Français, and Goethe Institute, can enhance language learning opportunities for VET staff.

#### *Management of VET Institutions*

Effective management of VET institutions hinges on robust quality assurance and accountability mechanisms. It is proposed that procedures are developed that incorporate yearly key performance indicators for directors, aligning them with the overarching strategy and action plans of their institutions. This approach ensures that leadership remains accountable and that institutions consistently work towards their strategic objectives.

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### 3. Conclusions and recommendations

This chapter contains the conclusions of the review, including possible general and policy recommendations for the operationalisation and coherence of LLL policy(ies) in the country at system level (where relevant). Conclusions from each of the 3 sub-sections will be consolidated in an overall conclusion of the access and attractiveness of the Armenian lifelong learning provision, with recommendations taking into account the given best practice examples and the recommendations provided by the stakeholders met during the ETF field mission in June 2023. Tables in the Appendix 4 will be used to provide a quick overview, complementing the text below.

#### General recommendations:

#### **Recommendation 1: Setting up a comprehensive national framework for LLL, that meets the demands of the labour market and individual and social needs in order to improve the effectiveness of the VET system**

##### Objective:

This covers a comprehensive set of immediate initiatives, which all contribute to the establishment of a consolidated national framework for LLL. Individual objectives are: (i) A Strategy for LLL (Lifelong learning Strategy) is jointly developed with key stakeholders based on the relevant regulations, the mapping of LLL activities and the identified gaps. (ii) a flexible learning system of short-cycle and long-cycle programs and courses is developed, including recognized micro-credentials (making affordable learning paths for disadvantaged groups) – mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, self-studies. (iii) national skills forecasting is developed and implemented for mapping the future needs in the Armenian private sector) and mechanism are set up for level 4 and 5 qualifications IVET/CVET. (iv) Coordination is introduced of career guidance activities at secondary, VET and higher education institutions, as well as youth organizations for a cross-sectoral career guidance strategy supporting the attractiveness of different educational pathways based on solid evidence on the value of education programmes for future employability and possible career development based on tracer study results and labour market information. (v) Routines are reinforced for review of existing programmes for their vertical and horizontal appropriateness for performing jobs – in close dialogue with sector councils -- and recommendations are prepared for adjustments.

##### Short-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- All types of LLL activities in the country are mapped, including current funding, target groups, outcomes in terms of employment, upskilling of current workforce, cultural value, etc.
- Exemplary specialities have been selected to create flexible learning in short-cycle programs, that are affordable to disadvantaged groups
- The future needs in the Armenian private sector for level 4 and 5 qualifications are mapped
- Guidelines on job placement surveys have been developed and published
- Routines have been reviewed for analysing existing programmes for their vertical appropriateness for performing jobs – in close dialogue with sector councils and prepare recommendations for adjustments

##### Mid-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are::

- A forum is established for dialogue with LLL providers and users and identify current gaps in the provision of LLL. a strategy plan for the LLL sector has been developed jointly with key stakeholders, based on the two Government regulations, the mapping of LLL activities and the identified gaps
- A portfolio has been built of short-cycle learning paths in CVET, mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, self-studies
- The occupational standards and qualification requirements for specific level 4 and 5 qualifications have been described, in close dialogue with each economic sector,
- CGCD center has prepared publicly accessible data on results of job placement surveys

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- Routines have been set up to review horizontal appropriateness of skills for specific jobs - in close dialogue with sector councils and prepare recommendations for revision of skills development programmes or alternatively, replacement of outdated programmes with new ones.

Long-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- Approval and financial commitment from stakeholders to the realisation of the strategy plan has been accomplished. Costed action plan have been developed for each coming year of the strategy plan.
- The methodological delivery of long-cycle IVET programs has been reformed, with financial contributions from private sector (e.g. paid work practice, training levy etc.), creating inclusive affordable learning paths.
- level 4 and 5 qualifications have been developed for IVET and short higher education programmes
- 516 educational standards have been developed by 2030 (National Education Plan 2030 Action Plan)

## **Recommendation 2: Adapting current governance settings to enhance the VET autonomy process in order to foster the relevance of VET system.**

### Objective:

This covers a comprehensive set of immediate initiatives, which all contribute to the establishment of an ideal environment for enhancing the autonomy process in the VET sector, giving more responsibilities and accountabilities to joint governance settings. This includes the following immediate initiatives: (i) a National register of training has been created and (ii) several national registers are integrated. (iii) an independent and easy-manageable tracer study mechanism has been developed and piloted in a few IVET and CVET institutions and the tracer study pilot has been evaluated. (iv) Sectorial, regional or local educational councils (in cooperation with 49 centres of the MLSA) may be established to bridge between employment promotion, education and labour market, in order to share information and plan regional or local capacity building initiatives jointly. (v) PPPs are developed with private sector regarding the funding and running of buildings, equipment, WBL places, utilization of company employees in the educational process. (vi) targeted awareness raising of IVET and CVET has been implemented in secondary education schools. (vii) quality assurance and accountability procedures are developed with yearly key performance indicators of the director that are based on the institution's strategy and action plan. (viii) pilot projects are implemented within different categories of VET institutions on diversified funding policy.

Short-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- An understanding is established between the key stakeholders of which type of data, and of which stakeholders need data, and for which purpose a national register of training should be developed.
- The needs of government and relevant stakeholders is reviewed for data information, and a requirement list is prepared for which national registers should be integrated.
- An independent and easy-manageable tracer study mechanism is developed and piloted in a few IVET and CVET institutions
- Dialogue networks have been established between the world of work and the world of education, on sectorial, local, regional and national level – to identify measures for flexible and rapid development of demanded qualifications and establish dialogue with employment and education stakeholders and authorities
- Cooperation structures have been set up with employers and other relevant stakeholders with sectorial or geographical focus on developing new IVET of CVET programmes
- International praxis and standards for evaluation of VET institution directors' qualifications and performance is reviewed, as well as existing legal framework –on which recommendations are prepared.
- Workshop(s) for VET managerial staff on entrepreneurial activities as sources of financial resources has been implemented

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Mid-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- A concept on the national register of training has been developed, which may act as the common base for the further specification of the register. MoESCS will either need to integrate the register into an existing database, or create a new database, which is to be piloted and evaluated before upscaling
- legislative framework for information handling and storage has been reviewed or developed, as needed. Institutional mechanisms (toolkit and national register) have been designed and piloted
- The tracer study pilot has been evaluated; guidelines and data on outcomes of the tracer studies is developed and published
- formalised sector skills councils/local or regional VET and employment councils for continuous dialogue and common reform work have been established
- MoESCS procedures and practices have been looked over for simplification of the approval of new IVET and CVET programmes. IVET and CVET delivery institutions propose new programs for approval.
- quality assurance procedures have been developed, with timebound performance indicators of the management staff of VET institutions
- pilot projects are being implemented within different categories of VET institutions on diversified funding policy

Long-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- the national register of training has been integrated with other relevant data registers
- National register which integrates quantitative and qualitative statistical data from all relevant sources is implemented and institutional mechanisms are put in place, users have been trained in the operation of mechanisms.
- country wide independent tracer study mechanism are analysed, which could provide, based on comprehensive methodology, reliable data on job placement of VET graduates and relevance of their skills in the labour market, as well as information on skills demand by employers.
- Cooperation structures with the world of work established and made sustainable
- Targeted awareness raising implemented on IVET and CVET in secondary education schools
- National quality assurance framework developed, with external monitoring and internal self-assessment procedures – observing international standards and practices in QA of VET institutions (e.g. EQAVET)
- Guidelines for VET institutions on diversified funding policy are developed and implemented

### **Recommendation 3: Initiate measures to increase the access to the IVET system**

#### Objective:

This covers a comprehensive set of immediate initiatives, which all contribute to the establishment of measures that increases the access to IVET: (i) Mechanisms and tools are developed, such as reinforcement dialogue with private sector companies in the priority fields in order to link scholarships with needed qualification profiles, to raise image and awareness of priority fields among secondary education students for admission to tuition free places in IVET left unspent. (ii) Based on in depth constraints analysis regarding SEN access to IVET, action plans are developed for inclusion of SEN into IVET system and outline detailed roadmap for realization of the action plan with yearly performance indicators. (iii) Special admission “tracks” are created for immigrants/ refugees, including screening of qualification level, offering supplement training in subjects not meeting the requirements, guidance and support from career guidance, as well as setting up database to record data on admission of persons having immigrant or refugee status.

Short-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- opportunities have been investigated for using unspent tuition free places in IVET institutions on free flexible learning for disadvantaged groups in CVET, possibly in the same institutions.

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- Dialogue has been established with private sector companies in the priority fields in order to link scholarships with needed qualification profiles and to raise image and awareness of priority fields among target groups
- The constraints regarding SEN access to IVET have been analysed in depth
- The constraints for immigrants, refugees and forced displaced persons for accessing IVET have been analysed in depth

Mid-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- procedures for distribution of tuition free places to reduce non-filled places have been analysed and amended
- action plan for inclusion of SEN into mainstream education has been prepared
- special admission “tracks” are created for immigrants, refugees and forced displaced persons, in selected specialities, including screening of qualification level, offering supplement training in subjects not meeting the requirements, guidance and support from career guidance

Long-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are::

- IVET access is made a right of all Armenian citizens and offer free of charge IVET for all.
- detailed roadmap has been outlined for realisation of the SEN and immigrants'/refugees/forced displaced persons integration action plans with regular monitoring system and yearly performance indicators set up
- admission tracks in all IVET specialities for immigrants and refugees are developed

#### **Recommendation 4: Initiate measures to increase the access to the CVET system**

##### Objective:

This covers a set of immediate initiatives, which all contribute to increasing access of disadvantaged groups into the CVET system: (i) the effect of the financial support and stipends to disadvantaged groups is monitored including by means of tracer studies after completion of learning periods. (ii) By close cooperation between MoESCS and MoLSA practices are introduced from EU member states on “Job Guarantee”.

Short-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- The employment effect of the financial support and stipends to disadvantaged groups has been monitored
- the EU member state concept of Job Guarantee is studied, including measures such as work experience, occupational rehabilitation, employment training, support and advice if considering starting own business, education in continuous adult education or in non-formal course, validation, guidance - and apply in a selected number of locations

Mid-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- continuous tracer measuring after learning periods of disadvantaged groups is Introduced
- local employment offices, VET Centers and VET institutions have been prepared for job guarantee implementation (including capacity building, facility upgrading, organisation and management)

Long-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- access increased for disadvantaged groups to CVET through mixed funding arrangements
- nation-wide job guarantee for all registered unemployed persons implemented

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## **Recommendation 5: Initiate measures to increase the attractiveness of the IVET system**

### Objective:

This covers a set of immediate initiatives, which all contribute to increase the attractiveness of IVET towards its potential learners. These are: (i) Along with optimization of the VET institutions and their professions mechanisms and digital tools are developed for effective delivery of IVET programmes allowing saving devoted to progressive decreasing of share of paid places. (ii) Short higher education programmes for VET graduates are established along with revision of level 4 and 5 qualifications for IVET and the development of short higher education programmes accordingly. (iii) guidelines are developed for introducing WBL, based on experience drawn from implementation of international donors' supported programmes. (iv) Before system level introduction and following adoption of new Law on VET, a thorough review of the different WBL pilot programmes is undertaken, identifying lessons learned, gaps and risks and preparing recommendations to MoESCS, its agencies and partners. (v) Based on assessment of the potential, a plan is developed for activities supporting internationalization of VET system, including capacity building of staff on internationalization. (vi) Capacity building programme is designed targeting reinforcement of foreign languages (particularly English, French and German) of the staff VET institutions. (vii) cooperation encouraged through projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions, particularly in the framework of Erasmus+ programme, Armenia's membership to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) and EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe). (viii) pilot projects developed for digitalization and innovation of specialties, offering different forms of learning that can take place outside the premises of school buildings. (ix) continuous development of digital teaching and learning methodology for learners established. (x) pilot twinning projects encouraged/set up between Armenian and foreign VET institutions through available international donor initiatives.

Short-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- A range of efficient learning environments (pilot projects in a few selected VET institutions) are created that break down the traditional teacher-learner roles and involves companies in the learning process
- specific IVET programs developed, targeting students who wish to continue in HE (including HE-preparatory subjects)
- Subject specialities designed for potential work-based learning delivery, in close dialogue with involved private sectors
- a working group established to oversee the review process and prepare recommendations to MoESCS, its agencies and partners
- Specific needs for data on internationalisation of IVET reviewed
- Dialogue established with cultural institutes present in Armenia regarding exposure to language learning for VET institution staff
- VET institutions invited to design pilot projects for digitalisation and innovation of specialties, offering different forms of learning that can take place outside the premises of school buildings
- New digital teaching methods and digital learning resources in the teaching process and existing professional literature and professional subject curricula and make recommendations regarding updates are reviewed
- Professional standards reviewed for capacity building teaching and management staff of VET institutions abroad.

Mid-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- Development of methodologies supported that allow learners to interact through team learning and by teaching each other. During the learning process, learners integrate what they have learned with prior learning – teacher takes on a coaching /mentoring role. Trained company mentors in charge of WBL, digitalisation of learning processes.
- Credit system developed for transferability between IVET and HE

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- appropriate mechanisms for further development of WBL prepared, such as curriculum division of responsibilities between school and enterprise, enterprise mentoring system, contract templates, transport reimbursement systems, monitoring and assessment methodology.
- The different WBL pilot programmes reviewed, identifying lessons learned and gaps and risks
- an “internal memory” established of capacity building data at MoESCS HRD – with information on courses delivered and their contents, number of participants and fields of capacity building activities. Assign internal staff to update data.
- Performance criteria and procedures developed for attestation of VET staff and draft qualification profile standards of staff in VET institutions
- pilot twinning projects encouraged/ set up between Armenian and foreign VET institutions with available international donor funding
- Public Private Partnerships developed with private sector regarding the funding and running of buildings, equipment, WBL places, utilisation of company employees in the educational process.
- Capacity building of VET teachers conducted for development and use of digital resources.
- Professional literature updated in areas needed.
- Didactical certification course designed and implemented for VET teachers and instructors;

Long-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- New learning methodology is introduced which allows more students per teacher, saves resources for decrease of paid studies
- Progression routes established of from IVET to HE. A coherent framework of qualifications established that allows progression vertically and horizontally in the system.
- Guidelines prepared for VET institutions for implementation of dual education / WBL
- 22% of all specialities taught according to the WBL model by 2030
- donor-coordination unit in MSCS set up
- foreign language learning materials and entrepreneurial activities with institutions abroad applied
- preliminary and middle VET-related resource centres created, VET institutions are modernized and logistical and/or educational laboratory base is available
- A system for continuous capacity building of VET teachers is in place
- In-service skills development for VET institution staff established with multiple funding options

## **Recommendation 6: Initiate measures to increase the attractiveness of the CVET system**

### Objective:

This covers a set of immediate initiatives, which all contribute to increase the attractiveness of CVET towards its potential learners: (i) outcome-based qualifications developed, based on OSs, and a credit system established - and the VNFIL system is aligned with the qualification system, including implementation of a credit rating system for micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education. (ii) work-based learning opportunities set up in employment promotion programmes and bridging programmes to VET for inactive population based on the review of the education programmes for inactive population. (iii) a flexible learning system of short-cycle and long-cycle programs and courses is developed, including recognized micro-credentials (making affordable learning paths for disadvantaged groups among others) – mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, self-studies.

Short-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- A financial plan established for sustainable VNFIL operation (fees, contributions, State funding – mix) and review current VNFIL procedures and update.
- The education programmes available to inactive population reviewed and gaps identified

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- Exemplary specialities selected to create flexible learning in short-cycle programs, which are affordable to disadvantaged groups

Mid-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- Credit rating system for micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education implemented
- Specific skills demand analysed and work-based learning opportunities set up in employment promotion programmes and bridging programmes to VET for inactive population
- Portfolio of short-cycle learning paths in CVET has been built, mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, self-studies

Long-term results are linked with the individual immediate objectives described above, and are:

- A system for quality assurance of the VNFIL processes established
- A concept of non-formal education is implemented
- The methodological delivery of CVET programs reformed, with financial contributions from private sector (e.g. paid work practice, training levy etc.), creating inclusive affordable learning paths.

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## Appendix 1. National Qualification Framework in Armenia

Level	Qualification	Education degree (level), the programme	Duration
1st	CERTIFICATE OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION	1st level of Secondary Education	4 years
2nd	CERTIFICATE OF BASIC EDUCATION	2nd level of Secondary Education	5 years
3rd <sup>81</sup>	CRAFTSMAN (with basic education) (Certificate of Master training qualification)	Preliminary Vocational (Craftsmanship) Educational Programme	6 months to 1 year
4th	1. CERTIFICATE (“Attestat”) OF SECONDARY EDUCATION	3rd level of Secondary Education – senior school	3 years
	2. CRAFTSMAN (with secondary education) (Diploma of Craftsmanship Education)	Preliminary Vocational (Craftsmanship) Educational Programme	1-3 years
5th	SPECIALIST (Diploma of Middle Vocational Education)	Middle Vocational Educational Programme	2-5 years
6th	BACHELOR (Diploma of Bachelor)	Bachelor’s Educational Programme	Minimum 3 years
7th	MASTER (Diploma of Master)	Master’s Educational Programme	Minimum 1 year
	SPECIALIST WITH DIPLOMA <sup>82</sup> (Diploma of Specialist with Diploma)	Bachelor’s Educational Programme of Specialist with Diploma	Minimum 5 years
8th	(Certificate of PhD)	Post-graduate Professional Educational Programme	Minimum 3 years

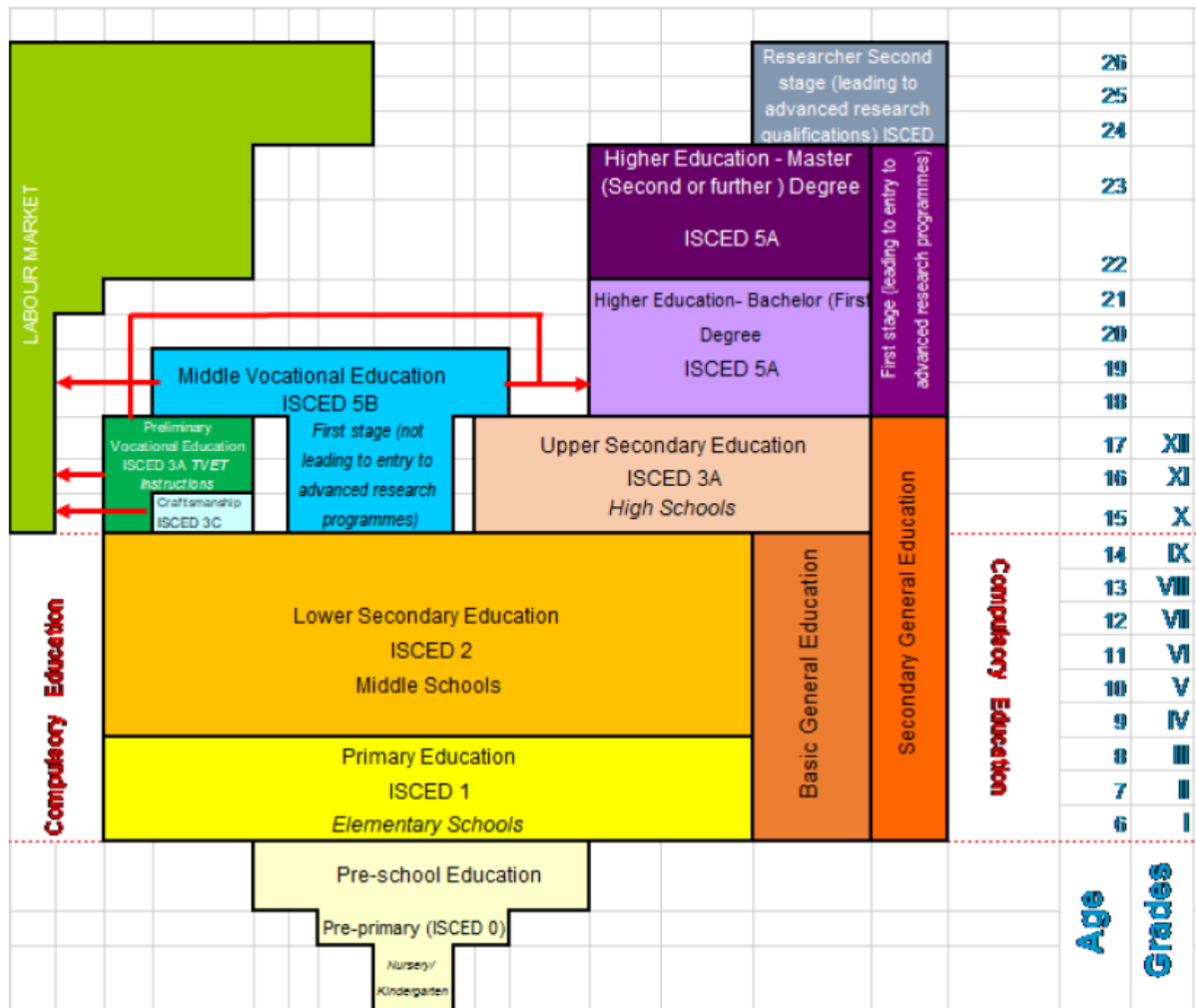
Source : RA Government Decision №714 from July 7, 2016.  
<https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=107371>

<sup>81</sup> After introducing mandatory 12-year secondary general education, the Level 3 cannot be implemented anymore as it does not provide secondary education. Nevertheless, this level remains in the framework in order to classify education of those who had received it before making secondary education obligatory.

<sup>82</sup> the “Diploma of Specialist with Diploma” under 7th level concern diplomas of 5-year higher education studies before introduction of LMD system following Armenia’s membership to Bologna Process in 2015. This diploma is considered as equivalent to master degree.

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## Appendix 2. Education system in Armenia



Source: ETF, 2020. Policies for human capital development Armenia: an ETF Torino Process assessment, p. 47. [https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-07/05\\_trp\\_etf\\_assessment\\_2019\\_armenia.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-07/05_trp_etf_assessment_2019_armenia.pdf)

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## Appendix 3. Data regarding performance of VET in Armenia

Table 1. Student enrolment in preliminary VET institutions in 2019-2023

Academic year	Number of students at preliminary VET institutions, out of which:								
	total	women	% of women	Tuition free		Paid places		% of paid places	
				total	women	total	women	total	women
2019-2020	6 530	1 590	24,35	6 393	1 518	137	72	2,1	52,6
2020-2021	6 780	1 580	23,30	6 434	1 466	346	114	5,1	32,9
2021-2022	6 761	1 666	24,64	6 181	1 473	580	193	8,6	33,3
2022-2023	6 456	1 494	23,14	5 838	1 336	618	158,00	9,6	25,6

Table 2. Student enrolment in middle VET institutions in 2019-2023

Academic year	Number of students at middle VET institutions out of which:								
	total	women	% of women	Tuition free		Paid places		% of paid places	
				total	women	total	women	total	women
2019-2020	24 854	12 985	52,25	20 162	10 210	4 692	2 775	18,9	59,1
2020-2021	28 399	14 467	50,94	20 344	9 839	8 055	4 628	28,4	57,5
2021-2022	31 159	15 797	50,70	19 783	9 399	11 376	6 396	36,5	56,2
2022-2023	33 230	16 926	50,94	18 992	8 968	14 238	7 958	42,8	55,9

Table 3. Student enrolment in VET institutions in 2019-2023

Academic year	Number of students at all VET institutions out of which:								
	total	women	% of women	Tuition free		Paid places		% of paid places	
				total	women	total	women	total	women
2019-2020	31 384	14 575	46,44	26 555	11 728	4 829	2 847	15,4	59,0
2020-2021	35 179	16 047	45,62	26 778	11 305	8 401	4 742	23,9	56,4
2021-2022	37 920	17 463	46,05	25 964	10 872	11 956	6 589	31,5	55,1
2022-2023	39 686	18 420	46,41	24 830	10 304	14 856	8 116	37,4	54,6

Table 4. Number of free charge places for admission to VET programmes in 2018-2023<sup>83</sup>

VET level	Coordinating State body	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Preliminary VET	MoESCS	3 777	3 400	3 312	3 312	3 312	3 312
	Police	200	200	970	1 370	1 200	520
Middle VET	MoESCS	6 546	6 511	6 114	5 614	6 084	6 064
	Police	65	65	65	65	65	205
	MES	15	15	15	15	15	*
	CAC-MTAI	30	30	90	90	120	15
Total VET		10 633	10 221	10 566	10 466	10 796	10 116

<sup>83</sup> RA Government Decisions № 686-N, 15.06.2018; № 859-N 04.07.2019; № 958-N 11.06.2020; № 965-N 10.06.2021; № 1066-N 14.07.2022, № 1289-N 27.07.2023.

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Box 1 – The list and the number of priority and important fields of professions taught in preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle vocational educational programs of the Republic of Armenia in the 2023-2024 academic year<sup>84</sup>

	Name of preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle vocational educational program	Number of places
1	Operation and technology of woodworking production equipment	45
2	Carpentry, woodwork, glass works	80
3	Metal processing technology with pressure	20
4	Mechanical processing of metals on machines and lines	40
5	Technical operation of electrical equipment	45
6	Oil, cheese and milk production technology	40
7	Technical operation of gas equipment and underground gas pipelines	25
8	Implementation of finishing construction works	130
9	Electrical installation of lighting and power equipment	20
10	Technology of welding works	180
11	Enrichment of useful minerals	40
12	Technical operation of electrical equipment of machines and mechanisms	40
13	Laboratory studies and measurements in production	41
14	Installation and operation of communication equipment	33
15	Winemaking and juice production	50
16	Road construction and improvement works technical support	25
17	Glass production technology	20
18	Organization of rural (farm) exploitation	90
19	Gardening	20
20	Technical support of agricultural works	145
21	Installation, repair and maintenance of renewable energy power plants	200
	Total	1329

	Name of middle vocational educational program	Number of places
	Management of land resources	30
	Operation of crane transport, construction, road vehicles and equipment	25
	Mechanization of agriculture	35
	Analytical quality control of chemical compounds	25
	Open mountain operations	40
	Construction and operation of buildings and structures	50
	Operation and repair of agricultural machinery and equipment	20
	Greenhouse exploitation	145
	Veterinary medicine	160
	Beekeeping	60
	Organization of rural (farm) exploitation	85
	Fisheries and aquaculture	15
	Preservation and processing of plant products	20
	Installation and operation of drip irrigation systems	75
	Total	785

<sup>84</sup> Appendix 3 of RA Government Decision N1289 from July 29, 2023.

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Table 5: Action Plan for Implementation of the Education 2030, area non-formal education

Process/Activity	Expected result
Development of a concept of non-formal education (including youth and adult learning and education), and a roadmap for its introduction	A concept of non-formal education (including of youth and adult learning and education) is approved
Alignment of the terminology related to youth and adult learning and education used in the main education laws and sub-legislative acts of the Republic of Armenia (additional and continual education, adult learning and education, lifelong learning, etc.) with internationally accepted and agreed definitions and standards (e.g. UNESCO, UN): analysis and proposals	Terminology related to the area of non-formal education is available
Development and testing (piloting) of mechanisms for the registration of actors in the area of non-formal education and service providers, systems of recommendation and accreditation of programmes implemented by them, awarding of credits and recognition of results, and quality assurance.	Mechanisms ensuring the quality of non-formal education is increased to 100%
Development and introduction of a legal framework and institutional mechanisms (including a toolkit and also a national register) for the collection of quantitative and qualitative statistical data related to non-formal education	A legal framework for statistical data collection is approved
Raising awareness about non-formal education (including youth and adult learning and education) among the public through advocacy and public campaigns in the area	Regular public campaigns implemented: 2023 - 2 2024 - 3 2026 – 5

Table 6. Admission to VET and higher education institutions from Armenian basic and secondary schools (2021-2022)

Schools of graduations and paid places	Total admitted	Women	% of school graduates	% of total admitted
<b>Preliminary VET institutions</b>				
Graduated from basic schools	2 282	482	7,00	81,30
Graduated from secondary schools	525	367	2,56	18,70
Including Paid places	424	169		15,11
Total	2 807	849	5,28	
<b>Middle VET institutions</b>				
Graduated from basic schools	9 242	4 430	28,34	87,35
Graduated from secondary schools	1 338	1 069	6,52	12,65
Including Paid places	5 053	2 853		47,76
Total	10 580	5 499	19,92	
<b>Total VET institutions</b>				
Graduated from basic schools	11 524	4 912	35,33	86,08
Graduated from secondary schools	1 863	1 436	9,08	13,92
Including Paid places	5477	3022		40,91
Total VET institutions	13 387	6 348	25,20	
<b>Higher education institutions</b>				
Graduates from secondary schools	17 208	9 635	83,91	
Including Paid places	14 680	8 344		85,31

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Table 7. Student enrolment in VET and higher education institutions (2019-2023)

Academic year	Number of students					
	Higher education institutions		% of women	VET institutions		% of women
	total	women		total	women	
2019-2020	74 942	41 486	55,36	31 384	14 575	46,44
2020-2021	79 590	44 187	55,52	35 179	16 047	45,62
2021-2022	78 603	44 482	56,59	37 920	17 461	46,05
2022-2023	71 732	40 368	56,28	39 686	18 420	46,41

Table 8. Youth outside the labor force attitude towards the usefulness of the obtained education by age groups, 2021 (in percentage)

	Total		Men		Women		Urban		Rural	
	15-24	25-29	15-24	25-29	15-24	25-29	15-24	25-29	15-24	25-29
Very useful	3	19	2	16	5	19	4	20	3	18
Relatively useful	8	24	6	10	9	27	10	41	5	11
Not useful	4	11	4	18	4	9	4	7	4	14
Do not get professional education	84	43	87	53	81	41	82	29	87	55
It is difficult to answer	1	2	1	2	1	3	0	2	2	3

Table 9. Enrolment of foreign students in Armenian middle VET institutions

Year	State middle VETIs				Private middle VETIs				Total enrolled in VETIs	% of foreign students
	Admitted		Enrolled		Admitted		Enrolled			
	Total	women	total	women	total	women	total	women		
2019-20	236	112	399	193	80	23	160	61	559	1.8
2020-21	152	68	453	202	103	35	233	75	686	2.0
2021-22	185	75	471	198	52	12	226	69	697	1.8

Table 10. Allocations from the RA state budget to the VET system in 2018-2021 per expenditure lines (thousand drams)<sup>85</sup>

Expenditure line	2018	2019	2020	2021
Provision of student subsidies for preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education	2,061,389.0	1,943,909.8	2,522,142.0	2,430,557.6
Student scholarships for preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education	365,657.4	342,165.6	463,140.0	442,103.4
Provision of student subsidies for middle vocational education	7,288,315.9	7,158,190.9	8,535,519.0	7,581,497.4
Student scholarships for middle vocational education	670,192.2	713,070.0	888,538.8	888,168.3
Establishment of professional orientation and career guidance centers at preliminary	-	92,340.0	-	-

<sup>85</sup> RA Laws on State budgets 2018-2021. <https://www.gov.am/am/budget/>

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(craftsmanship) and vocational education institutions				
Improvement of buildings and facilities of the preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education institutions	250,000.0	1,435,772.4	235,865.2	269,944.2
Reforms on the preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle vocational education institutions	154,694.2	154,694.2	199,405.4	197,730.4
Provision of QA services for preliminary, middle vocational and higher education institutions	-	64,336.5	88,384.5	87,642.1
Total	10,790,248.7	11,904,479.4	12,932,994.9	11,897,643.4

Table 11. Number and amount of scholarships at VET institutions (2019-2022)

Academic year	Number and amount of scholarship at Preliminary VET institutions		Number and amount of scholarship at Middle VET institutions			
	% of scholarship holder	4000 AMD and more	Number of scholarship holder	4000 AMD and more	Specific	% of scholarship holder
2019-2020	97,9	6 392	10 693	10 590	103	46,5 (53% of students studying with tuition free)
2020-2021	94,8	6 427	11 200	11 190	10	42,8 (55,1% of students studying with tuition free)
2021-2022	91,0	6 168	10 523	10 520	3	36,5 (53,5% of students studying with tuition free)

Table 12: Action Plan for the Implementation of Education 2030, VET

Process/Activity	Expected result	Implementer/ Co-implementer	Time-frame
Development and revision of state educational standards of preliminary and middle vocational education (VET) and their related modular programmes in accordance with current national and international requirements	Number of educational standards developed and revised: 2023 - 362 2024 - 384 2026 - 428 2030 - Final target - 516	MoESCS	2023-2030
Introducing components of the quality assurance system of preliminary and middle VET education in accordance with licensing, institutional certification, programme accreditation, international standards and the criteria developed	A package of documents defining preliminary and middle VET standards of quality assurance in accordance with international standards is developed by 2030	MoESCS	2023-2030
	A quality assurance system is introduced in all preliminary and middle VET institutions, and an institutional accreditation process has been carried out:	MoESCS	2023-2030

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	<p>2023 - 20%</p> <p>2024 - 31%</p> <p>2026 - 54%</p> <p>2030 – Final target - 100%</p>		
	<p>The proportion of professions taught in preliminary and middle VET educational institutions with which the process of programme accreditation was carried out, is 5%</p> <p>2030 - Final target - 30%</p>	MoESCS	2025-2030
<p>Introducing training/retraining and certification systems for educators in the field of preliminary and middle VET education, promoting capacity development and linking capacity development to an increased rate of payment</p>	<p>Proportion of teachers in the area of preliminary and middle VET education that have received training</p> <p>2024 - 8%</p> <p>2026 – 20.5%</p> <p>2030 - Final target - 65%</p>	MoESCS	2024-2030
<p>Creation of preliminary and middle VET-related resource centres</p>	<p>Educational networks created based on developed operational mechanisms:</p> <p>2016 - 2</p> <p>2030 - Final target - education networks</p>	MoESCS	2026-2030
<p>Improvement of building conditions of VET institutions according to the results of the mapping and identified priorities.</p>	<p>Share of VET institutions with improved building conditions:</p> <p>2023 – 12.5%</p> <p>2024 – 14.4 %</p> <p>2026 – 17.3 %</p> <p>2030 – final target 30%</p>	MoESCS	2023-2030
<p>Supplying and modernizing of the resources of the VET institutions according to the results of the mapping and identified priorities</p>	<p>Share of VET institutions with improved/modernized educative - laboratory resources:</p> <p>2023 - 4.2%</p> <p>2024 - 10.4 %</p> <p>2026 - 19.2 %</p> <p>2030 - final target 30%.</p>	MoESCS	2023-2030

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## Appendix 4. Conclusion and recommendation reference table

Table 14. Identified issues, current policy solutions and recommendations by policy areas related to access to VET and its attractiveness, as well as its resources, teaching, learning management.

Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
<b>Access to IVET/CVET and pathways between different levels of VET and higher education</b>		
<b>Admission to VET</b>		
Economically disadvantaged groups of society lack means to pay for VET studies	EAP section Informal education 1.1.1. Development of a concept of non-formal education (including youth and adult learning and education), and a roadmap for its introduction. Specific measures exist that target participation of disadvantaged groups in VET and higher education who benefit of tuition free education upon passing the entrance examinations	<u>Objective:</u> Develop a flexible learning system of short-cycle and long-cycle programs and courses, including recognized micro-credentials (making affordable learning paths for disadvantaged groups) – mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, self-studies <u>Short-term result:</u> Select exemplary specialities to create flexible learning in short-cycle programs, that are affordable to disadvantaged groups <u>Mid-term result:</u> Build portfolio of short-cycle learning paths in CVET, mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, self-studies <u>Long-term result:</u> Reform the methodological delivery of long-cycle IVET programs, with financial contributions from private sector (e.g. paid work practice, training levy etc.), creating inclusive affordable learning paths.
In the entire VET system only 34,8 % received paid studies (2022-23)	Create universal inclusive learner-centred education (Education 2030, section VET, 2.1.1.)	<u>Objective:</u> Along with optimization of the VET institutions and their professions develop mechanisms and digital tools for effective delivery of IVET programmes allowing saving devoted to progressive decreasing of share of paid places. <u>Short-term result:</u> Create more efficient learning environments (pilot projects in a few selected VET institutions) that break down the traditional teacher-learner roles and involves companies in the learning process <u>Mid-term:</u> Support development of methodologies that allow learners to interact through team learning and by teaching each other. During the learning process, learners integrate what they have learned with prior learning – teacher takes on a coaching /mentoring role. Trained company mentors in charge of WBL, digitalisation of learning processes. <u>Long-term:</u>

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
		New learning methodology allows more students per teacher, saves resources for decrease of paid studies
<p>For the period of 2019-2022 in average only about 79% of planned tuition free places have been occupied. The number of tuition free places allocated for VET within institutions under coordination of MoESCS has been decreased in 2022 both for preliminary and middle VET programmes, respectively 14% and 7.6%.</p>	<p>Amendment of Law on Education in 2020, allowing admission of the graduates from basic school to paid places. Government Decision № 1139-N, 01.10.2015 on the approval of VET professions (classifiers). Government Decision № 977-N, 06.09.2018 on modification of the decision relative to VET professions. Recently the Government decided to increase the amount of student scholarships to encourage admission to IVET programmes in the fields considered as priority and important for country. EAP section VET 2.2.1. Development of mechanisms to increase opportunities and forms of new entrepreneurial activities of VET</p>	<p><u>Objective:</u> Develop mechanisms and tools, such as reinforcement dialogue with private sector companies in the priority fields in order to link scholarships with needed qualification profiles, to raise image and awareness of priority fields among secondary education students for admission to tuition free places in IVET left unspent</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Investigate opportunities to use unspent tuition free places in IVET institutions on free flexible learning for disadvantaged groups in CVET, possibly in the same institutions Establish dialogue with private sector companies in the priority fields in order to link scholarships with needed qualification profiles and to raise image and awareness of priority fields among target groups.</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Analyse and amend procedures for distribution of tuition free places to reduce non-filled places</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> Offer free of charge IVET for all.</p>
<p>Several constraints remain also in domain of increasing the access of students with special educational needs in the system of IVET</p>	<p>EAP 2030 VET section VET, 2.1.7. on transition to universal inclusivity in VET: Law on VET requiring equal opportunities to deliver VET programmes, particularly via establishment of conditions for those with special educational needs and for their inclusion in the mainstream education, in all VET institutions SEN institutions to be set up in Armenia</p>	<p><u>Objective:</u> Based on in depth constraints analysis regarding SEN access to IVET, prepare action plan for inclusion of SEN into IVET system and outline detailed roadmap for realization of the action plan with yearly performance indicators</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Analyse in depth the constraints regarding SEN access to IVET</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Prepare action plan for inclusion of SEN into mainstream education</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> Outline detailed roadmap for realisation of the action plan with yearly performance indicators</p>
<p>No policy or activities in VET for immigrants or refugees, no data on their admission</p>	<p>Education 2030 foresees as objective "expansion of preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle vocational education (VET); development of accessible, inclusive and safe environments, and ensuring</p>	<p><u>Objective:</u> Create special admission "tracks" for immigrants/ refugees, including screening of qualification level, offering supplement training in subjects not meeting the requirements, guidance and support from career guidance, as well as setting up database to record data on admission of persons having immigrant or refugee status.</p>

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
	access to all population groups" as final target in 2030. See also EAP 2030 section VET 2.1.7. on Transition to universal inclusivity in the area of VET.	<p><u>Short-term:</u> Analyse in depth the constraints for immigrants and refugees for accessing VET</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Create special admission "tracks" for immigrants, in selected specialities including screening of qualification level, offering supplement training in subjects not meeting the requirements, guidance and support from career guidance</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> Develop admission tracks in all VET specialities for immigrants and refugees</p>
<b>Access to CVET</b>		
the physical accessibility of CVET training is ensured only within the limit of available funding provided by State budget	EAP 2030 section Informal Education, 1.1.1. Development of a concept of non-formal education (including youth and adult learning and education), and a roadmap for its introduction. For non-formal learning as part of employment promotion, unemployed persons, prisoners, persons at risk of dismissal and mothers without profession received stipends/allowances of a total value of 63.875.000	<p><u>Objective:</u> Monitoring the effect of the financial support and stipends to disadvantaged groups including by means of tracer studies after completion of learning periods</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Monitor the employment effect of the financial support and stipends to disadvantaged groups</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Introduce continuous tracer measuring after learning periods</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> Increase access to CVET through mixed funding arrangements</p>
The volume of planned vocational trainings for the registered unemployed, disabled persons and prisoners is very insignificant with regards of registered unemployed persons	State program for regulation of employment in 2022. Annex 1 of the Decision N1589-L of the Government of Republic of Armenia of September 30, 2021 "About validation of the State program and actions plan for regulation of employment in 2022".	<p><u>Objective:</u> Within close cooperation between MoESCS and MLSA introduce practices from EU member states on "Job Guarantee",</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Study the EU member state concept of Job Guarantee, which includes measures such as work experience, occupational rehabilitation, employment training, support and advice if considering starting own business, education in continuous adult education or in non-formal course, validation, guidance - and apply in a selected number of locations</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Prepare local employment offices and VET institutions for implementation of job guarantee (including capacity building, facility upgrading, organisation and management)</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> Implement nation-wide job guarantee for all registered unemployed persons</p>
The MoESCS don't possess	EAP 2030 Informal education, section 1.1.3. and 1.1.4. In	<p><u>Objective:</u> Creation of a National register of training</p>

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
comprehensive data neither on nature and volume of CVET programmes organized by VET institutions on commercial basis or supported by donor organizations	2022 amendment of the Law on Education ensures the fulfilment of the international obligations". In particular, creation of a "National register of training", as national database of supplementary educational programs and courses' providers, persons participated in courses, got assessed and certified, as well as of persons in charge of monitoring the progress of courses, assessment of the results of informal and non-formal trainings	<p><u>Short-term:</u> Establish an understanding of which type of data, and of which stakeholders need data, and for which purpose the register should be developed.</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Develop concept on the national register of training, which may act as the common base for the further specification of the register. MoESCS will either need to integrate the register into an existing database, or create a new database, which is to be piloted and evaluated before upscaling.</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> Integrate the national register of training with other relevant data registers</p>
85% of respondents (ILO Skills Development Survey) believe that skill shortages negatively affect firms in their sector in terms of loss of time, financial resources, productivity, clients and quality	EAP 2030 VET section 1.1.5. Introduction of sectorial qualifications framework and implementation of mechanisms for flexible and rapid development of qualifications	<p><u>Objective:</u> Sectorial, regional or local educational councils (in cooperation with 49 centres of the MLSA) may be established to bridge between employment promotion, education and labour market, in order to share information and plan regional or local capacity building initiatives jointly.</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Establish dialogue networks between the world of work and the world of education, on sectorial, local, regional and national level – to identify measures for flexible and rapid development of demanded qualifications and establish dialogue with employment and education stakeholders and authorities</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Establish formalised sector skills councils/local or regional VET and employment councils for continuous dialogue and common reform work</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> Cooperation structures with the world of work established and made sustainable</p>
The MoESCS doesn't have information relevant to those supported by State budget in the framework of employment regulation.	EAP 2030 section Informal Education 1.1.4. Development and introduction of a legal framework and institutional mechanisms (including a toolkit and also a national register) for the collection of quantitative and qualitative statistical data related to non-formal education	<p><u>Objective:</u> Integration of several national registers</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Review the needs of government and relevant stakeholders for data information, and prepare requirement list.</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Review or develop legislative framework for information handling and storage, if needed. Design and pilot institutional mechanisms (toolkit and national register)</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u></p>

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
		National register which integrates quantitative and qualitative statistical data from all relevant sources implemented and institutional mechanisms in place, users trained in the operation of mechanisms.
There is no specific State policy or measures (including provision for CVET programmes within the funding formula of VET institutions from State budget) to support and coordinate elaboration and delivery of CVET programme by State VET institutions	In 2015 the Government adopted two regulations: “Organization and Implementation of Supplementary (Continuing) Educational Programmes” and “Assessment and Recognition of the Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes”, which define conditions of organization and implementation of continuing education programs by providers being registered in “National register of training”. Both documents contain a number of uncertainties, and issues, such as weak coordination and management of LLL, lack of data - defined in the Concept of LLL are still valid. This links with EAP section Informal Education, 1.1.1. Development of a concept of non-formal education (including youth and adult learning and education), and a roadmap for its introduction	<p><u>Objective:</u> Develop jointly with key stakeholders a Strategy for the LLL (LLL Strategy), based on the relevant regulations, the mapping of LLL activities and the identified gaps</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Map all types of LLL activities in the country, including current funding, target groups, outcomes in terms of employment, upskilling of current workforce, cultural value, etc.</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Establish a forum for dialogue with LLL providers and users and identify current gaps in the provision of LLL</p> <p>Develop jointly with key stakeholders a strategy plan for the LLL sector, based on the two Government regulations, the mapping of LLL activities and the identified gaps</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> Seek approval and financial commitment from stakeholders to the realisation of the strategy plan</p> <p>Develop costed action plan for each coming year of the strategy plan</p>

#### Attractiveness of IVET/CVET

#### *Flexibility pathways: vertical permeability (accessibility of tertiary education for graduates of IVET/CVET)*

Current procedure limits the transition of IVET graduates to higher education institutions as the admission is allowed only to graduates with high academic notes and within the corresponding professions and quantities decided by Government; and on a paid basis	The draft Law on VET under discussion at National Assemble foreseen implementation of credit transfer system aimed at insuring student’s smooth mobility and possibility for further studies. This links with EAP 2030 section VET, 1.1.2. Development and revision of state educational standards of preliminary and secondary vocational education (VET)	<p><u>Objective:</u> Establishment of short higher education programmes for VET graduates and revise level 4 and 5 qualifications for IVET and develop them for short higher education programmes accordingly.</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Develop specific IVET programs targeting students who wish to continue in HE (including HE-preparatory subjects)</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Develop credit rating system for CVET courses (requires linking outcome performance indicators with occupational standards and qualifications</p>
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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
	and their related modular programmes in accordance with current national and international requirements	<u>Long-term:</u> Establishment of progression routes from IVET and CVET to HE.
Admission to second year full time studies within bachelor degree is allowed only in case if for given profession there is no provision of part-time study	EAP section VET 1.1.2. on development and revision of state educational standards: A pilot project on admission of graduates from agricultural VET professions to 1st year of corresponding professions at Armenian National Agrarian University is under implementation in cooperation with MoESCS. No provision for improvement of accessibility of tertiary education for graduates of IVET/CVET are foreseen within Education 2030	<u>Objective:</u> Develop specific IVET modules targeting students who wish to continue in HE (including HE-preparatory subjects) in line with admission and qualification requirements of the targeted speciality <u>Short-term:</u> set up bridging courses in IVET and CVET in order to ensure accessibility to HE. <u>Mid-term:</u> Establish a credit system for transferability between IVET, CVET and HE <u>Long-term:</u> A coherent framework of qualifications established that allows progression vertically and horizontally in the system.
There are no short higher education programmes for VET graduates.	EAP 2030 section VET, 1.1.2. on development and revision of state educational standards: There is no special regulation on transition from the VET-related levels 3 and 4 to the level 5	<u>Objective:</u> Develop and implement national skills forecasting for mapping the future needs in the Armenian private sector and development mechanism for level 4 and 5 qualifications IVET/CVET <u>Short-term:</u> Map the future needs in the Armenian private sector for level 4 and 5 qualifications <u>Mid-term:</u> Describe, in close dialogue with each economic sector, the occupational standards and qualification requirements for specific level 4 and 5 qualifications <u>Long-term:</u> Develop level 4 and 5 qualifications for IVET and short higher education programmes
<b><i>Horizontal permeability (students transition between parallel IVET/CVET and general education pathways, as well as between formal and non-formal settings)</i></b>		
The VET still not attractive for graduates from schools, especially for those graduates from secondary education schools	The VET institutions enjoying large autonomy have an opportunity to propose, in close cooperation with relevant structure representing employers, new IVET or CVET programmes to be funded by State budget. This links with EAP 2030 VET section, 2.1.1. on development of mechanisms to increase opportunities and forms of new entrepreneurial	<u>Objective:</u> Develop PPPs with private sector regarding the funding and running of buildings, equipment, WBL places, utilization of company employees in the educational process. Implement targeted awareness raising of IVET and CVET in secondary education schools <u>Short-term:</u> Establish cooperation structures with employers and other relevant stakeholders with sectorial or geographical focus on developing new IVET of CVET programmes <u>Mid-term:</u>

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
	activities of VET – and EAP 2030 section Informal Education, 1.1.5. on raising awareness about non-formal education.	Look over MoESCS procedures and practices for simplification of the approval of new IVET and CVET programmes. IVET and CVET delivery institutions propose new programs for approval. <u>Long-term:</u> Implement targeted awareness raising on IVET and CVET in secondary education schools
Procedures on assessment and validation of individuals' knowledge, skills and competences acquired through VNFIL don't allow awarding of a qualification, making the validation system useless. The VNFIL mechanism is not operational and no recognition of VNFIL and consequentially no pathway between non-formal and formal settings are provided.	Two activities linked to VNFIL are planned in the Plan of Activities for implementation of Education 2030 within VET system (EAP 2030 VET section, 1.1.5.): Mechanisms ensuring rapid and flexible qualifications, including through the recognition of micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education as well as EAP 2030 Section Informal Education, 1.1.3. on Development and testing (piloting) of mechanisms for the registration of actors in the area of non-formal education and service providers, systems of recommendation and accreditation of programmes implemented by them, awarding of credits and recognition of results, and quality assurance	<u>Objective:</u> Develop outcome-based qualifications, based on OSs, and establish a credit system - and align the VNFIL system to the qualification system, including implementation of a credit rating system for micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education <u>Short-term:</u> Establish a financial plan for sustainable VNFIL operation (fees, contributions, State funding – mix). Review current VNFIL procedures and update <u>Mid-term:</u> Implement credit rating system for micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education <u>Long-term:</u> Establish a system for quality assurance of the VNFIL processes
<b>Career guidance towards VET</b>		
Compressive and objective data on IVET/CVET graduates' job placement or other career pathways of VET graduates as part of main data in education management information system are not available.	EAP 2030 section 1.1.4. on introducing components of quality assurance system: The information on job placement, essential basis for a strategy of attractiveness of IVET, is usually collected by MoESCS from VET institutions or through the monitoring of their career units' activities implemented by CGCD Centre, as well as studies carried out by different organizations.	<u>Objective:</u> Develop and pilot an independent and easy-manageable tracer study mechanism in a few IVET and CVET institutions and evaluate the tracer study pilot <u>Short-term:</u> Develop and pilot an independent and easy-manageable tracer study mechanism in a few IVET and CVET institutions <u>Mid-term:</u> Evaluate the tracer study pilot; Develop and publish guidelines and data on outcomes of the tracer studies. <u>Long-term:</u> Analyse country wide independent tracer study mechanism, which could provide, based on comprehensive methodology, reliable data on job placement of VET graduates and relevance of

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
		their skills in the labour market, as well as information on skills demand by employers.
Data and methodology of the job placement surveys carried out by CGCD Centre are not available publicly, even in the web-site of the centre	EAP section 1.1.3. Legislative and institutional introduction of work-based learning (WBL) educational programmes	<p><u>Objective:</u> Coordination of career guidance activities at secondary, VET and higher education institutions, as well as youth organizations for a cross-sectoral career guidance strategy supporting the attractiveness of different educational pathways based on solid evidence on the value of education programmes for future employability and possible career development based on tracer study results and labour market information.</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Develop and publish guidelines on job placement surveys;</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> CGCD prepares publicly accessible data on results of job placement surveys</p>
<b>Links between learning and the world of work</b>		
Skills <u>vertically</u> (when the received level of skills or education is either more or less than the level of skills or education required to perform a job) and <u>horizontally</u> (when the type of education or skills is not appropriate for the current job)	EAP 2030 section 1.1.2. Unified State standards and corresponding programmes for VET professions are developed according to procedures by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, involving NCVETD and NCVD, MoESCS	<p><u>Objective:</u> Reinforcing routines for review of existing programmes for their vertical and horizontal appropriateness for performing jobs – in close dialogue with sector councils and prepare recommendations for adjustments.</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Review routines for analysing existing programmes for their vertical appropriateness for performing jobs – in close dialogue with sector councils and prepare recommendations for adjustments</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Similarly, set up routines to review horizontal appropriateness of skills for specific jobs - in close dialogue with sector councils Prepare recommendations for revision of skills development programmes or alternatively, replacement of outdated programmes with new.</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> 516 educational standards developed by 2030</p>
78% of employers observed lack of work experience and practical skills during the recruitment of young specialist	Introduction and expansion of dual education foreseen by Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia for 2021-2026. Pilots have been organised with GIZ support. Action Plan 2030 foresees enlargement of involvement of private sector in the education process (EAP 2030 section 1.2.2.) and	<p><u>Objective:</u> Carry out, in close dialogue with representatives of employers, sector-specific reviews of the need and potential for WBL/dual education in VET, and draft action plan for expansion of WBL/dual education in priority sectors</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Carry out sector-specific reviews of the need for dual education in VET, in close dialogue with sector representatives</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u></p>

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
	legislative and institutional introduction of work-based learning (EAP 2030 section 1.1.3.)	Draft plan for expansion of dual education (with timebound action plan) in priority sectors <u>Long-term:</u> Develop guidelines for introducing dual education, based on experience drawn from implementation of GIZ supported PSD TVET
Only 22% of inactive population in 2021 aged 15-29 found that their education was very useful for obtaining job	EAP 2030, Informal Education section, 1.1.1. Development of a concept of non-formal education (including youth and adult learning and education), and a roadmap for its introduction	<u>Objective:</u> Set up work-based learning opportunities in employment promotion programmes and bridging programmes to VET for inactive population based on the review of the education programmes for inactive population <u>Short-term:</u> Review the education programmes available to inactive population and identify gaps <u>Mid-term:</u> Analyse specific skills demands and set up work-based learning opportunities in employment promotion programmes and bridging programmes to VET for inactive population <u>Long-term:</u> A concept of non-formal education is implemented
85% of respondents (ILO Skills Development Survey) believe that skill shortages negatively affect firms in their sector in terms of loss of time, financial resources, productivity, clients and quality	EAP 2030 VET section 1.1.5. Introduction of sectorial qualifications framework and implementation of mechanisms for flexible and rapid development of qualifications	<u>Objective:</u> Reinforced dialogue networks between the world of work and the world of education, on sectorial, local, regional and national level – to identify measures for flexible and rapid development of demanded qualifications and establish dialogue with employment and education stakeholders and authorities <u>Short-term:</u> Establish dialogue networks between the world of work and the world of education, on sectorial, local, regional and national level – to identify measures for flexible and rapid development of demanded qualifications and establish dialogue with employment and education stakeholders and authorities <u>Mid-term:</u> Establish formalised sector skills councils/local or regional VET and employment councils for continuous dialogue and common reform work <u>Long-term:</u> Cooperation structures with the world of work established and made sustainable
In 2022 the share of specialties delivered through pilot dual education programmes was 8,4%, implemented	Education Action Plan 2030, section VET, 1.1.3. foresees implementation of comprehensive legal framework and mechanisms for further development of	<u>Objective:</u> Develop guidelines for introducing WBL/dual education, based on experience drawn from implementation of international donors' supported programmes. <u>Short-term:</u>

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
by institutions which represent 7% of total number of VET institutions	work-based learning (dual education), and implementation of procedure for compensation of students' and teaching staff's transport costs in regions (EAP section VET, 2.1.6.)	Review specialities for potential dual education or work-based learning delivery, in close dialogue with involved private sectors <u>Mid-term:</u> Prepare appropriate mechanisms for further development of WBL/dual education, such as curriculum division of responsibilities between school and enterprise, enterprise mentoring system, contract templates, transport reimbursement systems, monitoring and assessment methodology. <u>Long-term:</u> Prepare guidelines for VET institutions for implementation of dual education / WBL
There is a lack of comprehensive information on the impact and continuity of the results of various pilot projects introducing WBL forms and mechanisms of their further use in the VET system	Education Action Plan 2030, VET section 1.1.3. foresees system level introduction of work-based learning in different level of professional education and training, at least for 1 new profession in 2 institutions per year during the period of 2022-2026. Amendments of law on Preliminary (craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education and Training by November 2022 as necessary legal basis for further implementation WBL and dual education.	<u>Objective:</u> Before system level introduction and following adoption of new Law on VET, a thorough review of the different WBL pilot programmes should be undertaken, identifying lessons learned, gaps and risks and preparing recommendations to MoESCS, its agencies and partners <u>Short-term:</u> Establishment of a working group to oversee the review process and prepare recommendations to MoESCS, its agencies and partners <u>Mid-term:</u> Review of the different WBL pilot programmes should be undertaken, identifying lessons learned and gaps and risks. <u>Long-term:</u> 22% of all specialities taught according to the WBL model by 2030
<b>Internationalization of IVET</b>		
MSCS has no comprehensive data on capacity building of different projects carried out by international donors, staff from VET institutions and participants' number and fields of these capacity building activities	EAP 2030 section 2.2.1. Development of mechanisms to increase opportunities and forms of new entrepreneurial activities of VET	<u>Objective:</u> Based on assessment of the potential for internationalisation of the IVET subsector, develop a plan for activities supporting internationalization of VET system, including capacity building of staff on internationalization. <u>Short-term:</u> Review the specific needs for data on internationalisation of IVET <u>Mid-term:</u> Establish an "internal memory" of capacity building data at MoESCS HRD – with information on courses delivered and their contents, number of participants and fields of capacity building activities. Assign internal staff to update data. <u>Long-term:</u> Set up donor-coordination unit in MSCS
Poor knowledge of foreign languages	Action Plan 2023 section 1.2.1. foresees	<u>Objective:</u>

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
(mainly English, French or German) by staff and almost absence of staff with skills on internationalization of VET limit strongly the efforts of the VET institutions for internationalization	implementation of mechanisms for recruitment, in-service training and attestation of teaching staff of the VET institutions	Development of language capacity building programme; e.g. targeting reinforcement of foreign languages (particularly English, French and German) of the staff VET institutions <u>Short-term:</u> Identify language learning environment and conditions for staff in VET institutions <u>Mid-term:</u> Develop performance criteria and procedures for internationalisation of VET staff <u>Long-term:</u> Develop pre-service and in-service training programs in foreign languages
Students' and teaching staff's poor knowledge of foreign languages limits the use of foreign language learning materials	EAP 2030, section 2.2.1. Development of mechanisms to increase opportunities and forms of new entrepreneurial activities of VET.	<u>Objective:</u> Encourage cooperation projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions, particularly in the framework of Erasmus+ programme, Armenia's membership to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) and EPAL (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe). <u>Short-term:</u> Engage in dialogue with cultural institutes present in Armenia regarding exposure to language learning for VET institution staff <u>Mid-term:</u> Encourage/ set up pilot twinning projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions with available international donor funding <u>Long-term:</u> Apply foreign language learning materials and entrepreneurial activities with institutions abroad
<b>Resources, teaching/learning and management in IVET/CVET</b>		
<b>State funding of VET provision</b>		
Scholarships and Investments from State budget (except EU budget support programme) are extremely insufficient. The share of students studied on a tuition free basis was decreased by 8.68% (preliminary) and 6.16% (middle level)	Education Action Plan 2030, VET section 2.2.1. foresees enlargement of possibilities for entrepreneurial activities of VET institutions as sources of financial resources In Action Plan 2023, section 2.2.3. is foreseen the implementation of diversified funding policy, including State funding within different categories of VET institutions.	<u>Objective:</u> Implement pilot projects within different categories of VET institutions on diversified funding policy. <u>Short-term:</u> Implement workshop(s) for VET managerial staff on entrepreneurial activities as sources of financial resources <u>Mid-term:</u> Implement pilot projects within different categories of VET institutions on diversified funding policy <u>Long-term:</u> Develop guidelines for VET institutions on diversified funding policy
<b>Teaching and learning methods at IVET (including innovation and digitalization)</b>		

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
VET institutions inherited old fashion and obsolete building which request costly investment for maintenance and especially for heating in winter.	Education Action Plan 2030, section 2.1.2., 2.1.3., 2.1.4., and 2.1.5. EAP 2030 section 2.2.2. Introduction of joint management formats of VET institutions with the private sector	<u>Objective:</u> Develop pilot projects for digitalization and innovation of specialties, offering different forms of learning that can take place outside the premises of school buildings <u>Short-term:</u> Invite VET institutions to design pilot projects for digitalisation and innovation of specialties, offering different forms of learning that can take place outside the premises of school buildings <u>Mid-term:</u> Develop PPPs with private sector regarding the funding and running of buildings, equipment, WBL places, utilisation of company employees in the educational process. <u>Long-term:</u> Creation of preliminary and middle VET-related resource centres, VET institutions are modernized and logistical and/or educational laboratory base is available
Lack of quality textbooks, in particular in Armenian, remains an issue.	Action Plan 2030 foresees development of digital educational resources and improvement of professional literature (EAP 2030 section 2.1.5.	<u>Objective:</u> Establish continuous development in digital teaching and learning methodology <u>Short-term:</u> Review new digital teaching methods and digital learning resources in the teaching process Review existing professional literature and professional subject curricula and make recommendations regarding updates <u>Mid-term:</u> Conduct capacity building of VET teachers for development and use of digital resources. Update professional literature in areas needed. <u>Long-term:</u> A system for continuous capacity building of VET teachers in place
<b>Management of VET institutions</b>		
Apart from entry requirements, there is no other mechanism for evaluation of VET institution directors' qualification adequacy to the tasks required by job position. No mechanism exists for evaluation of VET institution directors' work performance.	EAP section 1.1.4. Introducing components of the quality assurance system of preliminary and middle VET education in accordance with licensing, institutional certification, programme accreditation, international standards and the criteria developed	<u>Objective:</u> Develop quality assurance and accountability procedures with yearly key performance indicators of the director that are based on the institution's strategy and action plan <u>Short-term:</u> Review international praxis and standards for evaluation of VET institution directors' qualifications and performance, and existing legal framework – prepare recommendations. <u>Mid-term:</u> Develop quality assurance procedures with timebound performance indicators of the management staff of VET institutions <u>Long-term:</u>

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Identified issues	Current policy solution	Recommendations
		Develop national quality assurance framework, with external monitoring and internal self-assessment procedures – observing international standards and practices in QA of VET institutions (e.g. EQAVET)
There is still a lot to be done to develop the professional capacities of VET institution staff	Action Plan 2030, section 1.2.1. Introducing training/retraining and certification systems for educators in the field of preliminary and middle VET education, promoting capacity development and linking capacity development to an increased rate of payment	<p><u>Objective:</u> Encourage/set up pilot twinning projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions with available international donor funding</p> <p><u>Short-term:</u> Review professional standards for capacity building teaching and management staff of VET institutions abroad.</p> <p><u>Mid-term:</u> Design and implement didactical certification course for VET teachers and instructors;</p> <p><u>Long-term:</u> Establish in-service skills development for VET institution staff with multiple funding options</p>

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## ACRONYMS

ALMP	Active Labour Market Policies
AMD	Armenian dram
ANQA	National Center for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation
CAC-MTAI	Civil Aviation Committee of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure
CEDEFOP	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CGCD center	Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre
CV	Curriculum vitæ
CVET	Continuing Vocational Education and Training
EaFA	European Alliance for Apprenticeships
EAP 2030	Education Action Plan 2030
EPALE	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HE	Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MES	Ministry of Emergency Situations
MoESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
NCVD	National Council for VET Development
NCVETD	National Centre for VET Development
NTF	National Training Fund
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OS	Occupational Standards
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
PSD TVET	Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training South Caucasus Programme
QA	Quality assurance
RA	Republic of Armenia
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SNCO	State non-commercial organisations
SEN	Special educational needs
TRP	The Torino Process
UK	United Kingdom
UMIC	Upper middle-income countries
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USD	United States dollar
USS	Unified Social Services
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning
WBL	Work-based learning.

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