

COUNTRY NOTE

ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN UKRAINE (2023)



1. ABOUT THIS COUNTRY NOTE

This country note presents a snapshot of findings on adult education in Ukraine: on access to and prospective demand for adult education, on adult skills and competences, and on the extent to which opportunities for lifelong learning benefit specific groups of adult learners (women and adults at risk of socio-economic disadvantage).

The country note is based on evidence collected each year for monitoring purposes through KIESE¹ and the Torino Process² – two annual ETF initiatives which track developments in the domains of education, skills, and employment in countries - partners of the ETF. In the context of these initiatives, adult education is an element of the broader concept of lifelong learning and may refer to any formal, non-formal, or informal learning activity, both general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.

The findings in this note focus on policy and system performance in support of adult education in Ukraine, as well as on the learners. The note does not provide a description of adult education arrangements in the country. Where necessary and appropriate, the note may draw on information from third-party reports.

The evidence for this note was collected and analysed from September 2022 to April 2023. Since Ukraine is facing a particular situation as a country defending itself in a war of aggression, additional information on the war's impact on VET is provided in the referenced reports present at the end of this document.

2. ADULT EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

2.1 Gauging demand for adult education

Understanding demand for adult education is an important prerequisite for crafting relevant educational programmes and policies. It allows to identify which adult populations need learning opportunities, helping policymakers and practitioners create and provide courses that fill specific skills gaps and meet personal and career aspirations.

So far, there is no uniform, internationally agreed-upon metric for measuring demand for adult education. To gauge the educational needs and aspirations of prospective adult learners, one can leverage existing data sources for a blend of indirect indicators instead. Which indirect indicators, however?

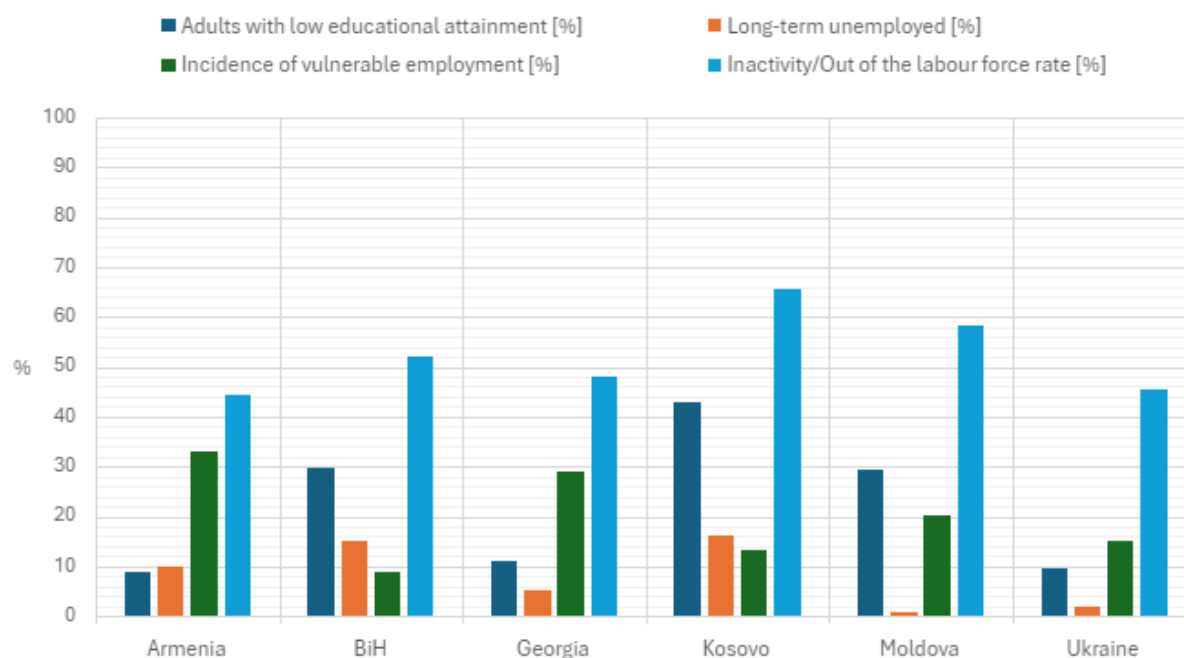
¹ The Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment (KIESE) are a collection of statistics that form part of a broader set of information proposed by the ETF to enable a review of developments in the field of education, skills and employment in the partner countries.

² The Torino Process is a multiannual review of policy and system performance in support of lifelong learning through vocational education and training (VET) in countries in East and South-East Europe (including Turkey), Central Asia, and the South and East Mediterranean region. The Torino Process is carried out in partnership with countries in these regions on a regular basis since 2010.

Assuming that education and training in a country can be judged by how it treats those most in need, focusing on indicators related to vulnerable adults – the long-term unemployed, the economically inactive, and those with low or no educational attainment – can be a promising strategy to understand the broader demand for adult education. Giving attention to these groups can serve as a useful proxy of wider educational and training needs across the workforce. The extent to which countries succeed in providing these groups with access to training and meeting their educational needs can significantly influence both the demand for and the supply of skills in the labour market.

This is particularly relevant for ETF partner countries, where the proportion of adults exposed to vulnerability and at risk of socio-economic disadvantage can be significant. In Ukraine for instance, the data reveals that close to 45% of the adult population is economically inactive – the second highest share of all countries included in the sample of six countries presented in Figure 1. Another 14.9% are in precarious (vulnerable) employment.

Figure 1. Demand for education: vulnerable and at-risk population in working age (2022 or latest available year)



Source: ETF KIESE database

Notes: Reference year before 2022 for Armenia is 2017 (long-term unemployment). Reference years before 2022 for Bosnia and Herzegovina are 2018 (long-term unemployment) and 2021 (educational attainment and inactivity). Reference year before 2022 for Georgia is 2018 (long-term unemployed). Reference years before 2022 for Kosovo are 2019 (long-term unemployment) and 2020 (educational attainment). Reference year before 2022 for Moldova is 2018 (long term unemployment). Reference years before 2022 for Ukraine are 2018 (long-term unemployment for age group 15-70), 2021 (vulnerable employment for age group 15-70) and 2021 (educational attainment and inactivity).

In any country, adults who have low level of education or no education are usually the adults who are most at risk of unemployment. In Ukraine, less than 10% of the adult population in working age falls into that category, which is the second lowest share of all countries covered in this series of notes and a low share also in comparison to other ETF partner countries. This implies that Ukraine has a relatively high level of education among its working-age population.

Given the relatively high education levels among the working-age population, long-term unemployment may pose a lesser risk compared to other vulnerabilities. Ukraine exhibits one of the lower rates of long-term unemployment among ETF partner countries. It is important to note, however, that the data on vulnerable adults in Figure 1 is based on labour force statistics prior to 2022.

The ongoing war may have significantly altered these dynamics, rendering the current situation different from the one described. According to official data, 17 institutions were destroyed and 136 damaged as of March 30, 2023, which was the cut-off date for the data used for this note. This destruction extends to educational facilities and disrupts the training infrastructure, further complicating the already challenging situation.

Despite commendable efforts at reconstruction and hybrid modalities of teaching, the war-induced damage to the VET system, coupled with a shortage of human resources and the loss of skilled teachers, is likely to have a considerable effect on access to VET and learning in general, potentially altering the labour market dynamics and increasing vulnerability among the working-age population.

2.2 Access to and participation in adult learning

Despite some variations in performance, the results in access to and participation in learning indicate that both the IVET and CVET subsystems could do more to support lifelong learning. Access to and attractiveness of initial VET programs remain challenging, falling below the average of other countries participating in the Torino Process monitoring (hereafter, "international average"). Conversely, the CVET subsystem, including the other opportunities for adult learning as well, exhibits similar access and attractiveness levels, but its performance surpasses the international average significantly.

The better performance of CVET and other learning opportunities for adults beyond VET, especially when compared to most of the ETF partner countries, is explained by various reasons including a favourable legislative framework, a growing social responsibility movement among private businesses, as well as a number of short-term courses by donors, civil society organisations, and businesses to provide adults with the skills anticipated to be in demand for the reconstruction of the country.

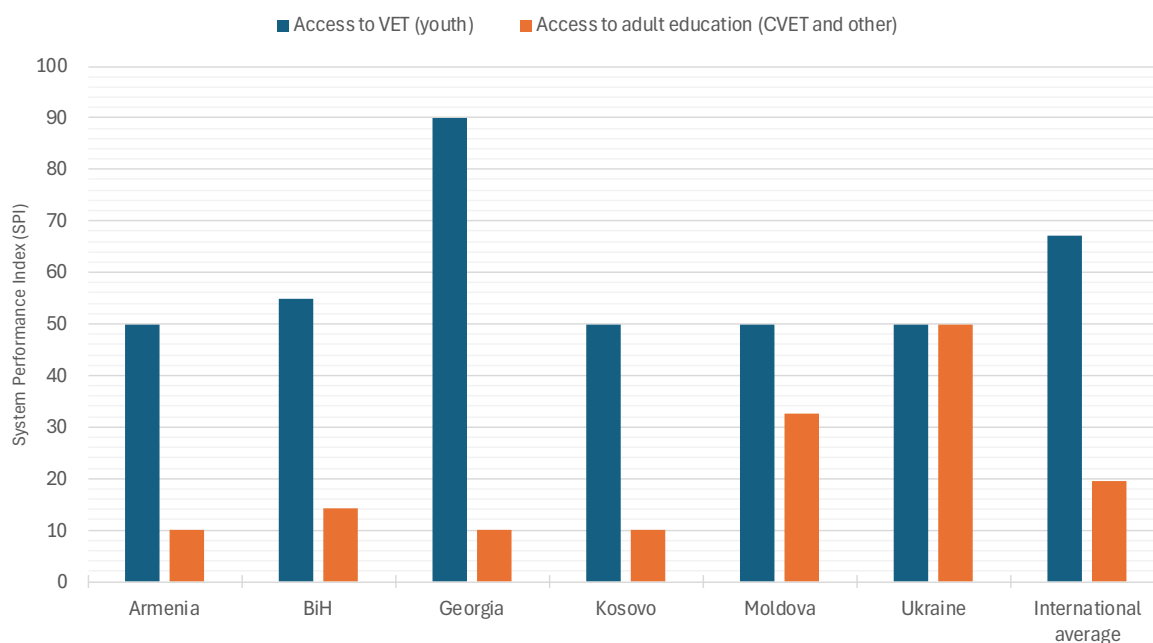
In response to the ongoing war, Ukraine recently introduced new measures to support access to VET for both young people and adults. These measures include amendments to the Law on Vocational Education and additional support for specific groups of learners, i.e., those affected by the war through vouchers, professional development opportunities, and access to free VET programmes. Though these measures have not gained widespread adoption yet, their impact might only become evident in the coming years.

When looking at system performance in support of access from a gender perspective, the data reveals that access in the VET system in Ukraine differs slightly between adult male and adult female in support of the latter. Additionally, the system is more accessible to adult women than to young women and once inside the system adult women have a better chance to participate and progress successfully.

The monitoring data reveals that the vulnerable categories of adult population (long-term unemployed, economically inactive adults and adults with low or no educational attainment) face different challenges when trying to gain access to learning within the VET system. Long-term unemployed and adults with low or no education have the same good prospect of accessing opportunities for learning. For these two groups of the population, the VET system is more supportive in access and participation compared to inactive adults or average adult learners.

Ukraine has implemented several policies and puts a lot of effort in guaranteeing citizens have equal rights to obtain professional education in accordance with their abilities and inclinations. Examples include the qualification centres, which help increase attractiveness of the professional qualifications system. These entities have the authority to evaluate and recognise the results of individuals, including those obtained through non-formal or informal education, confirmation of full/partial professional qualifications, and recognise professional qualifications obtained in other countries.

Figure 2. Access to learning for youth and adults (2023): index of policy and system performance



Source: ETF Torino Process database

Notes: The System Performance Index SPI is a metric of performance calculated on the basis of quantitative and qualitative data collected annually through the Torino Process. It ranges from 0 (min/low performance), to 100 (max/high performance). International average refers to the average of countries which participate in the 2023 round of Torino Process policy and system performance monitoring. These countries are Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Palestine, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Adult education is currently a primary focus of several dedicated policies in Ukraine, including the law on “Adult Education” and its proposed amendments under discussion in Parliament, the law on “Employment of the Population”, and the law on “Professional Education”. The active involvement of the Ministry of Education and Science underscores the government's commitment to this area.

Ukraine also stands out for its civil dialogue facilitated by the Public Council at the Ministry of Education and Science, alongside a social dialogue driven by the strong commitment of social partners, who are motivated by the urgency to address skills shortages. The significant role played by non-state actors and the decentralisation reform, which has enhanced the regions' responsibility in policy implementation, establish a governance approach to lifelong learning and other public policies that reinforces horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms. The move towards this approach is somewhat remarkable, denoting Ukraine's innovative stance on education and training governance.

Despite comprehensive efforts to ensure equal access to professional education and to enhance the attractiveness of the VET system through various policies and initiatives, one area that remains

challenging in Ukraine is career guidance provision. The limited performance of career guidance services directly impacts access by not fully informing or engaging potential learners about the opportunities within the VET system. This stands in contrast with the otherwise strategic approach to VET in Ukraine, highlighting a gap in effectively linking education outcomes to labour market needs. To address this, authorities are leveraging policies that promote on-the-job training tailored for IVET program students and organising CVET on-the-job training directly at employers' premises, under the coordination of the Employment Centres.

Regarding the role of the Ukrainian State Employment Service in facilitating skills development, training has been the primary active labour market measure implemented in recent years. However, participation in training programs has decreased from 138,588 in 2019 to 46,621 in 2022, influenced by the backdrop of war. The training programs available to registered unemployed individuals include professional training, retraining, and advanced training courses. To ensure flexible and inclusive access to these training opportunities, a specific program utilises training vouchers. These vouchers are typically issued to individuals not registered at employment centres as unemployed but who meet certain criteria. Eligible individuals include those over 45 years of age; persons released from military service (excluding conscripts); those who have been discharged from military service after participating in anti-terrorist operations; and internally displaced persons from the occupied territories.

Career guidance systems, providing seamless support over the lifetime of individuals from early schooling onwards until retirement, deal as key enabler for increased access to and participation in learning and work. Ukraine has a robust legal framework in support of career guidance in employment, education, and youth sectors.³ Established by the 2008 Concept of the State System for Public Career Guidance, it defines roles for public actors at all levels and includes non-governmental support, with the 2018 action plan providing updates. Public services target all demographics, including outreach efforts, and a framework exists for customer-oriented services at employment centres. The State Employment Service (SES) offers diverse career services, including online, for youth, women, and disabled individuals, with recent commitments to expand online guidance. In 2022, professional orientation services were accessed by one million jobseekers, down from two million due to Russia's aggression and population displacement.

VET schools and university career centres in Ukraine provide various career services through 142 operating career centres. The country benefits from the engagement of research institutes under the National Academy of Educational Sciences, which explore international best practices in career guidance and contribute to policymaking and reforms. However, the effectiveness of career guidance is limited by a methodological focus on information provision and psychometric testing, rather than fostering empowerment and teaching career management skills.

2.3 Quality and relevance of skills and competences

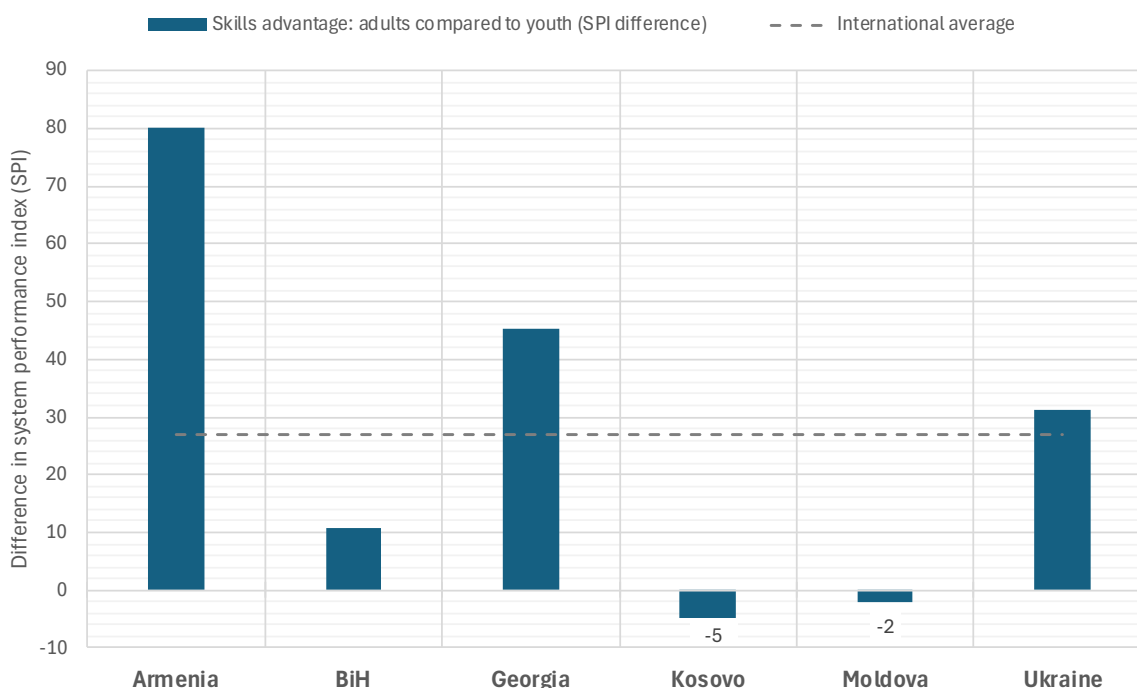
In Ukraine, while adult learners generally possess work-relevant skills, there are noticeable disparities in the basic skills and competences between youth and adults necessary for successful economic participation. Ukrainian youth, despite being relatively better skilled than their international counterparts, fall significantly short in both the quality and relevance of their learning outcomes

³ See ETF (2022): <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/document-attachments/career-development-support-system-review-ukraine>

compared to adults. The VET system in the country struggles with swiftly adapting to and reflecting local labour market needs, impacting the employability of both adults and youth.

These challenges are partly due to the reliance on programmes with insufficient work-based learning links to the labour market. Although there have been recent initiatives aimed at enhancing career guidance and access to quality learning, career guidance remains inadequate, and on-the-job training policies need further development to ensure a seamless transition from education to employment.

Figure 3. Skills gap between youth and adults (2023): difference in system performance



Source: Torino Process database

Note: The "Skills Gap between Youth and Adults (SPI difference)" represents the difference in the System Performance Index (SPI) scores between two key Torino Process monitoring targets (MTs): the skills and competences of youth in VET (MT35) and those of adults (MT39). This measure is calculated by subtracting the SPI score for MT35 (youth) from the SPI score for MT39 (adults). Positive values indicate areas where the skills and competences of adults surpass those of youth, while negative values indicate the opposite.

As indicated in Figure 3, while adults demonstrate superior skills and competences, there exists a gender disparity within each age group. Adult men generally exhibit better outcomes than adult women, and this disparity is mirrored among the youth, with young male learners often outperforming young female learners. The system's bias, unintentionally favouring adults over youth, poses additional challenges for young women transitioning into the labour market. Vulnerable adult learners, particularly long-term unemployed individuals and economically inactive persons, face significant difficulties acquiring the skills and competences needed for the labour market, with these challenges being more pronounced for economically inactive individuals.

3. FURTHER READING

For more information on the monitoring results of Ukraine, see the Torino Process policy and system performance report for 2023 at:

<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/trp-assessment-reports/ukraine-2023>

For more information on key developments in education, skills and employment in ETF partner countries in 2023, see the cross-country monitoring report at:

<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/education-skills-and-employment-trends-and-developments>