

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT – GEORGIA 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the end of 2023, youth policies were shifted to the portfolio of the Ministry of Education and Science, leading to its rebranding as the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth. This shift also resulted in the Youth Agency being brought under the jurisdiction of the renamed ministry. Its new leadership, appointed in 2023, is keen on accelerating reforms in vocational education and training (VET) and general education, which led to the unveiling of a fresh reform policy agenda and priorities in 2023.

In the field of VET, the objective is to increase private sector involvement in the management of VET providers, including their co-establishment and co-financing through public-private partnerships, internationalise VET provision by improving the skills and competences of teachers, and introduce VET pathways in upper secondary education. Practical steps and plans to operationalise these policy objectives are underway. The Skills Agency has raised concerns about the quality of the newly integrated programmes and their comparability with the current VET qualifications provided by authorised VET colleges. It has proposed that, in future, partial qualifications and micro-credentials be delivered by upper secondary schools, with VET colleges continuing to provide full qualification programmes.

In general education, special emphasis will be placed on enhancing teachers' professional development and raising the status and appeal of the teaching profession. From mid-2024 onwards, the salaries of approximately 70 % of educators will be increased. Additional measures to improve the quality of general education include the devolution of some powers to schools to strengthen their capacity for decision-making at local level. Ambitious revisions of the national curriculum are underway, particularly at the level of secondary education, to facilitate students' exploration of their interests and abilities, and incorporate diverse programmes into vocational studies, the humanities and sciences alongside the core curriculum. Efforts to upgrade the educational infrastructure are ongoing, with major construction and renovation projects, aiming to complete the structural upgrade of all schools by the end of 2027.

Enrolment in VET started to increase slightly in 2021 and 2022, after a deep dip during the pandemic in 2020, when VET provision was suspended for several months. However, it remains low and further efforts are needed from the government to boost enrolment. The rate of participation in lifelong learning has registered a slight increase from 1.2 % in 2021 to 1.6 % in 2022, which may reflect recent government efforts to upskill and reskill Georgia's workforce through State-funded adult education programmes.

The labour market is beginning to show signs of recovery from the effects of the pandemic, as evidenced by a gradual improvement in key labour market indicators. In particular, the unemployment rate has decreased from 20.6 % in 2021 to 17.3 % in 2022 and, according to the latest data, it continued to decline to 16.4 % in 2023. This improvement is attributable to the rapid recovery of the Georgian economy and a significant GDP growth in 2022 and 2023. The pandemic had a disproportionate impact on low- and medium-skilled workers. Although the activity rate remained broadly unchanged in 2022, there was significant gender disparity, with persistently low activity and employment rates among women.

In addition to women, young people continue to face significant challenges in the labour market. Despite a small decrease, the unemployment rate for young people (15-24 years) remains high, having dropped from 42.9 % in 2021 to 39.4 % in 2022. The share of young people aged 15-29 years who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) also decreased from 35.1 % in 2020 to 30.7 % in 2022, but remains disconcertingly high, highlighting the need for continued efforts in activation policies. The government must prioritise urgent, targeted and coordinated policy action to engage these young people and ensure they receive appropriate education, training, and opportunities.

Georgia applied for EU membership in March 2022 and was granted candidate status in December 2023. This recognition came with the condition that Georgia takes specific steps

recommended by the Commission. Candidate status will open up new opportunities to align Georgia’s education, training and employment policies with those of the EU.

1. KEY POLITICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Political developments

Georgia's legislative infrastructure, institutional framework, and dynamic civil society have positioned it for progress in democratic reform and the rule of law. However, persistent political strife, polarisation, and a lack of collaboration between parties have hampered progress, making it difficult to reach a consensus on key national issues according to the European Commission Georgia 2023 Report (EC 2023).

Tensions between political parties and insufficient engagement with civil society have hampered the decision-making process and the implementation of reforms. Following the Commission's opinion, in July 2022 the Parliament took steps to address the 12 priorities identified by setting up working groups to discuss the necessary reforms.

Efforts to achieve substantive inter-party collaboration in Parliament faced obstacles due to the ruling party's selective inclusion of opposition MPs in the legislative process and intermittent boycotts by opposition groups. Despite these challenges, there were instances of effective cross-party cooperation and voting, notably in the adoption of amendments, in November 2022, to strengthen parliamentary oversight.

On the basis of the Commission's Opinion on Georgia's application for EU membership, the country was granted a European perspective on 23 June 2022 by unanimous agreement of the leaders of all 27 EU Member States. Candidate status was granted to Georgia in December 2023. Following the granting of candidate status, Georgia's government has been working towards launching membership negotiations with the EU. This includes taking the necessary steps outlined for Georgia by the European Commission.

In February 2024, Irakli Kobakhidze, the former leader of the ruling party, was appointed as Georgia's new Prime Minister. The new government programme¹, entitled "For Building a European State", outlines the government's main objectives: to ensure a stable and safe environment for citizens, strengthen democratic institutions, stimulate the economy and take effective steps towards EU integration. In order to achieve these goals, the programme focuses on several key areas: (1) Foreign policy focus on EU integration, peaceful resolution of the Russia-Georgia conflict, territorial recovery, enhancing security and raising Georgia's regional and global profile; (2) Economic development aiming to make Georgia a key economic hub through stability, structural reforms, trade development and EU integration, with a focus on improving tourism, agriculture and entrepreneurship to improve the welfare of citizens; (3) Social policy aiming to enhance access to healthcare, social protection, employment and education, promoting a knowledge-based society; and (4) Democratic institutions that prioritise the development of democracy and public services, and accelerating EU integration.

Demographics

Georgia's population was just over 3.7 million in 2022, indicating a slight fluctuation rather than a sustained decline. Approximately 57 % of the population lives in urban areas, with 1.1 million living in the capital Tbilisi. The share of young people (aged 15-24 years) has decreased in comparison to 10 years ago but remained steady at 17.6 % in the last three years. Low natural growth rates and emigration are two main factors for the decline. According to the latest census in 2014, 16.2 % of the country's population (602 700 people) have ethnic minority background, with Azerbaijanis and Armenians being the largest groups.

¹ <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2024/357#gsc.tab=0>

In 2019, approximately 861 077 of Georgia's citizens were living abroad, representing about 22 % of the total population (UN, 2020). Most of these emigrants were in Russia, with Greece, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, the United States and Armenia also hosting significant numbers. The gender distribution of the emigrants was almost even, with women accounting for 50.2 %. Migration patterns have shifted, especially after the 2008 conflict with Russia, favouring destinations such as the EU, Israel and North America due to better employment, security and living conditions (SCMI, 2019). Poland, among the newer EU Member States, has become attractive to Georgian migrants due to more flexible migration policies. The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 dramatically affected migration, leading to a decrease in emigration from Georgia and resulting in the first positive net migration in 26 years (SCMI, 2021).

According to [estimates](#) of the Georgian Ministry of Internal Affairs, in the first nine months of 2022 alone a total of 112 000 Russian citizens arrived in the country. A study conducted by the Centre for East European and International Studies (ZoiS 2023) has shown that Russian migrants in Georgia are mostly young, with an average age of 32.6 years, urban background, liberal social values and a high level of education. Predominantly from large Russian cities, many work in the IT industry and have a critical attitude towards the Russian government. Many of these migrants have not decided on the duration of their stay in Georgia, reflecting a high level of uncertainty about their future. They have faced challenges in adapting to their new environment, both psychological and material, such as finding housing or employment. Despite these challenges, they maintain a high level of interest and critical views on Russian politics, with a significant proportion actively engaged in political discussions and maintaining strong links with fellow migrants.

Key economic developments

Georgia continues to show strong economic resilience and growth. The GDP growth rate, after a significant decrease in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rebounded impressively to 10.5 % in 2021 and adjusted to 10.1 % in 2022. In January 2024, the National Statistics Office, Geostat², announced the Georgian economy grew by 6.9 % in 2023 based on data for the first 11 months of the year. Inflation fell sharply from 11.9 % at the end of 2022 to 2.47 % in 2023, influenced by lower food and fuel costs and a strong Georgian currency, prompting the National Bank of Georgia to cut interest rates.

The structure of the economy shows a consistent pattern, with services contributing the largest share (59.9 % in 2022), followed by industry (21.5 %) and agriculture (6.1 %). This indicates a sustained shift towards a service-oriented economy, with industry also playing an important role in economic structure.

In the fourth quarter of 2023, Georgia's revenue from tourism reached GEL2.7 billion, an increase by 7.3 % compared to the previous year. Despite a 1.5 % decrease in the number of visitors and a reduction in the average length of stay from 5.5 to 5 days compared to Q4 2022, expenditure per visitor increased by 9 per cent year-on-year. Georgia welcomed 5.1 million international visitors in 2023, an increase from 3.9 million in 2022, with the largest number of tourists coming from Russia at 1.2 million tourists. Total revenue from international tourism increased by 20 % rise in 2023 to GEL 12.9 billion (or USD 4.9 billion) (World Bank, 2024).

The employment rate increased slightly to 42.9 %, suggesting a recovering labour market. Remittances remain crucial, underlining their importance for the socio-economic stability of Georgian families. The government's strategic focus on inclusive economic development, innovation and private sector competitiveness is evident, aiming to create an enabling environment for economic recovery and sustainable growth.

Georgia's Development Strategy Vision 2030, which has been adopted by the government, encompasses a wide range of initiatives designed to transform the country's economy by 2030, promoting growth, sustainability and closer integration with the European Union. The strategy focuses on several key objectives and targets, reflecting a comprehensive approach to economic development.

² <https://www.geostat.ge/en>

Key social issues

Georgia faces significant challenges in the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups in education and the labour market, characterised by regional, ethnic and gender disparities in equal access to quality education and employment opportunities.

According to the Law on General Education, minority groups in Georgia have the right to primary and basic education in their languages, although Georgian is the main language of instruction. In vocational education and training (VET), minority students can take entrance exams in their own language. However, they are required to enrol in Georgian language modules to participate in vocational programmes.

Although women consistently outperform men academically, they remain underrepresented in STEM fields and have very poor labour market outcomes, with only one in three employed. Disadvantaged and minority students, especially immigrants, have significantly lower educational attainment and school graduation rates. The current curriculum and resources of the education system do not fully cater to students from linguistic minorities or with special needs. In addition, university admissions and the lack of financial support systems hinder access to higher education for students from low-income families, thereby reinforcing inequality.

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Trends and challenges

Education strategy and legal framework for education

Education in Georgia is compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years and illiteracy is minimal. The school system is divided into elementary (six years, age group 6 to 12 years), basic (three years, age group 12 to 15 years) and secondary (three years, age group 15 to 18 years) or, alternatively, two years of vocational education. Access to higher education requires graduation from upper secondary school and passing uniform national examinations to enrol in a State-accredited higher education institution.

The government strategy³ for the period 2021-2024 builds on the Georgia 2020 strategy, which identified ‘improving skills’ as one of the three overarching goals for the country’s socio-economic development and defined the reforms needed at all levels of education (primary, secondary and tertiary). It concludes that the implementation of the strategy should improve the quality of and access to education at all levels, leading to greater competitiveness and employability of the labour force and better matching of skills. An updated version of the government strategy was presented in February 2024, following the change of prime minister.

In August 2021, the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) developed a long-term Single National Strategy for Education and Science for the period 2022-2030⁴. The new strategy replaced the Single Strategy of Education and Science for the period 2017-2021, which brought together all aspects of education and science into a single policy document: early/pre-school education and primary and secondary education, vocational and higher education, adult education, and science and research.

The new strategy covers lifelong and life-wide learning and aims to launch a new wave of reforms to address the identified challenges and opportunities through a long-term joint effort by the government and key stakeholders, including academia and civil society, the private sector, international donors, independent experts and the wider public. The single strategy includes the strategies for each sub-sector of education, including VET.

In addition, in December 2023 the Minister presented for the first time a document setting out the national objectives for general education (from 2024 onwards) and announced the new priorities for the reform of general education:

1. **Revision of the national education goals:** The reform aims to strengthen students' national identity, teach values and enhance awareness of patriotism, Georgian traditions, culture and family principles.
2. **Professional development of teachers** with an emphasis on improving the professional development framework for educators to ensure that they are well equipped to meet the demands of modern education.
3. **Support for teachers and salary increases**, include a substantial increase (GEL 500) in salaries starting from 1 July 2024, which will benefit around 70 % of the teaching workforce. In addition, school administrators and support staff will also receive salary increases.
4. **School autonomy:** The reform includes measures to increase the autonomy of schools and to enhance their capacity for local decision-making while maintaining central government control over education policy.

³ https://www.gov.ge/files/41_78149_280277_GP.pdf

⁴ <http://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7756&lang=eng>

5. **Public school principal selection process:** efforts will be made to improve the selection process for new principals, addressing challenges such as a lack of applicants and ensuring a fair and inclusive environment for candidate selection.
6. **Curriculum overhaul** with a significant update of the national curriculum, particularly at the level of secondary education, aimed at supporting students' self-discovery and their talents through integrated vocational, humanities and science programmes alongside the standard curriculum.
7. **Infrastructure development:** A major investment in school infrastructure has been planned, including the construction and refurbishment of school facilities, with a budget of GEL 1 billion to ensure that all schools are structurally renovated by the end of 2027. This includes the construction of 75 new public schools starting in 2024, with an investment of GEL 700 million.

Education expenditure

In 2021, total public spending on education registered a slight decrease from 3.9 % to 3.6 % of GDP, with the share of education spending remaining stable at 11.5 % of total government spending. The share of spending on VET in the total budget of the Ministry of Education⁵ has increased from 3.0 % in 2018 to 4.3 % in 2021. Despite the gradual increase in education spending in recent years, the amount is below the average of 4.4 % in upper middle-income countries.

Access, participation and early school leaving

Georgia has almost universal participation in primary and lower secondary education, and a strong culture of pursuing higher education. In 2020, Georgia's gross enrolment rate in pre-primary education was 95.2 %. The country also has a high net enrolment rate in upper secondary education (96.1 % in 2021), a high gross enrolment rate in tertiary education (72.5 % in 2021), and a relatively low rate of early school leavers (7.3 % in 2021). The level of educational attainment of the population (aged 15+ years) is high and rising: 30.5 % are high skilled, 58.4 % have a medium level of skills, and only 11.0 % are low-skilled (2022 data). In terms of aspirations, a high level of educational attainment has always been a social norm in Georgia.

The share of VET students in upper secondary education fell from 14.6 % in 2013 to 8.0 % in 2018, before rising to 11.2 % in 2019, but then falling to 7.6 % in 2020, and further — to 6.6 % in 2021. VET enrolment gradually decreased from 16 553 learners in 2017 to only 9 442 in 2020, before increasing slightly to 11 199 in 2021, and then to 13 800 in 2022 (MoES data). There are a total of 79 authorised VET institutions that are currently eligible to receive State funding for accredited long-term programmes. Out of these, 42 are private providers, while 16 are higher education institutions licensed to provide VET programmes (EMIS data). In Georgia, the participation rate in lifelong learning remains very low, but recovered slightly to 1.2 % in 2021, further increasing to 1.6 % in 2022.

One of the challenges is the high dropout rate in VET – approximately 34.6 % in the period 2017-2021, according to a recent study (Kitiashvili and Rukhadze, 2022). A much higher proportion of men than women drop out of VET. The profile of students who have dropped out of VET shows that this group is quite vulnerable, comprising people with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs) and socially vulnerable people making up to 12.6 % of those whose student status has been terminated.

Students, teachers and VET college directors mention institutional factors as the most common reason for dropping out of school. Other reasons include the inconvenient location of the VET institution, inflexible study schedules, parallel employment or study at another university, and factors such as lack of funds for food, transport and accommodation on campus, a lack of possibilities for practical learning at VET institutions, and limited demand for VET certification by employers.

⁵ Source: Ministry of Finance

⁶ *ibid*

PISA results

Georgia's PISA 2022 (OECD 2023) results show stability in the average scores for mathematics, reading and science compared to 2018, remaining the same as in 2012 but below the highs of 2015. The gap between the students with the highest and lowest scores did not change significantly between 2018 and 2022 in all three domains, with performance in mathematics remaining consistent for both high and low achievers.

The proportion of students performing below the baseline level of proficiency (Level 2) has increased by nine percentage points in mathematics since 2015 but remained stable in reading and science. The scores of Georgian students are below the OECD average in all three domains.

Compared to the OECD average, a smaller percentage of Georgian students achieved the highest level of performance (Level 5 or 6) or the minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in any subject in all three domains. In particular, only 34 % of students in Georgia achieved at least Level 2 in mathematics, well below the OECD average of 69 %. Only 1 % achieved the highest level of proficiency in mathematics, compared to an OECD average of 9 %.

Socio-economic status plays a role in educational achievement, with advantaged students outperforming their disadvantaged peers by 65 score points in mathematics, a smaller gap than the OECD average. This gap narrowed between 2015 and 2022, mainly due to the decrease of average performance of the top quarter while the performance of students in the bottom quarter remained stable. Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET)

The proportion of people aged between 15 and 24 years not in employment, education or training (NEETs) remains high but decreased slightly from 28.5 % in 2020 to 26.8 % in 2021, and further to 23.4 % in 2022, with a small difference between young women (23.7 %) and men (24.1 %). The NEET rate also decreased for the age group 15-29 years from 34.6 % in 2021 to 30.7 % in 2022. In the same year, the gender gap for this age group widened slightly, with young women more likely to become NEETs at a rate of 34.5 % compared to 27.1 % for young men⁷.

2.2 Initial VET and adult learning

Strategic and legal framework for initial VET and adult learning

In 2018, the Georgian Parliament adopted the new Framework Law on VET — an important milestone for the development of skills and VET from a lifelong learning perspective. The Law covers both initial VET and adult learning. Secondary legislation to facilitate the implementation of the Law is currently being drafted with the support of international development partners.

The EU Skills4Jobs project has supported the government in drafting the VET Strategy for the period 2022-2027 as one of the elements of the Single National Strategy for Education and Science 2022. However, the adoption of the VET Strategy has been delayed to date due to revisions and updates proposed by the Ministry.

Apart from the Law, VET in Georgia is governed by the technical regulations of the Georgian government and the following orders issued by the Minister for Education and Science of Georgia:

1. Decree of the Government of Georgia on approval of the rules and conditions for the implementation of the Vocational Education Programme/Short-cycle Education Programme/Vocational Training Programme/Vocational Retraining Programme in the form of work-based learning⁸;
2. Decree of the Government of Georgia on approval of the procedure and conditions for obtaining the status of a training enterprise⁹;

⁷ National Statistics Office of Georgia, <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/683/dasakmeba-umushevroba>

⁸ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5541071?publication=0>

⁹ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5560778?publication=0>;

3. Decree of the Government of Georgia on the development and approval of occupational Standard(s)¹⁰;
4. Order of the Minister for Education and Science of Georgia on approval of rules on the drafting, development and approval of a VET standard and module(s)¹¹;
5. Order of the Skills Agency on approval of Methodological Guidelines for sector skills organisations.

In 2023, the new Minister for Education, Science and Youth, Giorgi Amilakhvari, presented the key elements of the renewed VET strategy:

1. **Improving educational programmes** to ensure that are aligned with labour market needs to increase students' employment opportunities.
2. **Increasing the number of work-based and market-oriented programmes** on the basis of real market demand, with the aim of increasing the employment rate of graduates.
3. **Expanding integrated programmes** that combine theoretical knowledge and practical skills.
4. **Increasing public funding and implementing a results-based funding model** through the introduction of a new model for the funding of VET based on outcomes and effectiveness.
5. **Public-private partnerships**, where partnerships are established with businesses to co-develop educational programmes with a view to ensuring that VET meets the needs of employers and the economy.
6. **Participatory management models** that involve enterprises into the management and decision-making processes of VET providers in order to improve the quality and relevance of VET.
7. **Reviewing and updating VET standards** in collaboration with industry associations and private enterprises to review and update occupational standards and qualifications according to a new methodology by the end of 2025.
8. **Professional development of teachers** through the introduction of an occupational standard for VET teachers and a new model for their training, certification and continuous professional development in line with international standards.
9. **Strengthening of college management** to improve the effectiveness of college management through better qualifications for principals, institutional restructuring and alignment with VET priorities.
10. **Internationalisation** to provide opportunities for international certification, implementation of international exchange programmes and alignment with global best practice in VET to enhance the competitiveness of the system.

In order to increase and broaden participation in VET, the government intends to introduce vocational pathways in general upper secondary education. The MoESY, with support from the ADB, plans to upgrade the infrastructure of a number of upper secondary schools to provide work-based learning facilities for students. It is not yet clear what kind of vocational programmes and at what level of qualification will be offered in the VET pathways within the upper secondary education system. There are concerns about quality assurance in the context of the planned provision of VET pathways, which need to be addressed to make the reform relevant for learners and the labour market.

VET governance and funding arrangements

In January 2024, Georgia's Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) was renamed the **Ministry of Education, Science and Youth** (MoESY) when the youth policy portfolio was brought back under the Ministry. The MoESY is the main policy-making body for education. The **Education Management Information System** (EMIS), which is a legal entity under the MoES, is responsible for collecting data

¹⁰ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5822204?publication=0>;

¹¹ <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5900025?publication=0>

and evidence on the education system as a whole. The **National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement** (NCEQE) is responsible for quality assurance at all levels of education. It authorises educational institutions by granting them licences and accrediting educational programmes, including vocational qualifications. It used to co-ordinate the work of sectoral organisations in developing occupational standards, but this function has been transferred to the new Skills Agency. The **National Assessment and Examinations Centre** (NAEC) under the jurisdiction of the MoES aims to improve the quality of education through valid, fair and reliable assessment and examination. The NAEC provides a wide range of tests and other instruments for assessing achievement and competence, from school examinations to tests for civil servants. It also conducts the PISA Test in Georgia. The **National Centre for Teacher Professional Development** provides in-service training for secondary general and vocational teachers and trainers. The **Educational and Scientific Infrastructure Development Agency** deals with school construction and equipment. In 2023, the Ministry established a new **National Centre Education Research** which is responsible for analysis and research in the area of education policy. The focus in 2023 was on secondary education. The Centre has already published its first research papers on textbooks, the professional and career development system for teachers, and the new curriculum.

The **Skills Agency** was jointly established in 2021 by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. It facilitates the introduction of new vocational programmes to address the needs of the labour market, supports innovative training initiatives and promotes employability. It has been operational since March 2022. The Agency supports skills development through research and development and facilitates the establishment of Sector Skills Organisations (SSO). These are co-funded by the Agency to perform certain functions, such as the development of standards. They are established jointly with sector-based associations and professional communities to ensure the labour market relevance of standards and qualifications and facilitate work-based learning opportunities. SSOs are involved in VET final examinations.

The **Skills Agency** is governed by a public-private partnership and its supervisory board includes six business associations and six line ministries. The Agency is funded by a government subsidy and its work is also supported by international donors such as UNDP and the Asian Development Bank. In 2023, it had approximately 80 employees, including short-term and contract staff.

The **Youth Agency** was established in 2019 and is responsible for promoting and implementing youth policies. The National Youth Strategy for the period 2023-2026 was adopted in December 2022. The framework for the Strategy was set by the National Youth Policy Concept for the period 2020-2030¹², approved by Parliament in July 2020, which focused on the development of a strategy and action plan that bring together Georgia's international and national commitments on youth. Since January 2024, the Youth Agency has been operating under the jurisdiction of the MoESY following the transfer of the youth policy portfolio from the Ministry of Culture and Sports.

Qualifications, validation and recognition

In 2019, new legislation regulating the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was adopted. The new framework for lifelong learning has a unified eight-level structure, with the level descriptor categories 'Knowledge and Understanding', 'Skills' and 'Responsibility and Autonomy', which are compatible with those of the European Qualifications Framework.

General education qualifications are placed at NQF levels 2 and 4, vocational qualifications at NQF levels 3 to 5, and higher education qualifications at levels 6 to 8 (ETF, 2021b). Continuing vocational education leads to qualifications at NQF levels 2 to 5. They are considered part of formal education and can be assigned a level in the NQF. Furthermore, vocational qualifications can be awarded by any legal entity, including those outside the formal education system such as private companies, training centres, etc., which are authorised¹³ to provide short-term training/retraining programmes independently or in cooperation with an educational institution.

¹² <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/4936402?publication=0>

¹³ <https://www.mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=9133&lang=eng>

In the past, the social partners have also been involved in the validation of occupational and educational standards through sectoral committees. The Skills Agency has taken over these functions and, from 2022, has been coordinating the work of Sector Skills Organisations (SSOs). A new concept for the development of vocational qualifications was introduced in Georgia in 2021, giving SSOs the leading role in defining learning outcomes. By the end of 2022, nine SSOs had been established and more are expected to be established in the future. Their composition is formally approved by the Skills Agency Board.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is another area that Georgia began to develop as early as 2008 and formalised in 2010. However, there was no validation due to a lack of demand and fears of malpractice in its implementation. RPL was revised in 2019 to create a separate certification process for RPL providers and a network of certified assessors. As of 2023 validation services are available in 11 fields of studies and the number of VET providers authorised to offer validation services is gradually increasing. However, the results are still modest as only 19 applicants received partial certification and one person a full certification (ETF, 2023). Lack of awareness of the existence of RPL and low confidence in and demand for formal VET credentials, both among learners and employers, may be the reason why the system has not yet taken off. Further efforts in this area would be needed to ensure that the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) becomes an integrated practice of Georgian lifelong learning in coming years.

Quality and quality assurance

The NCEQE is responsible for quality assurance at all levels of education. It authorises educational institutions by granting them a licence. The Law on Development of the Quality of Education (2010) established a quality assurance framework for all VET providers. The framework provides for two instruments for quality assurance in the VET system: authorisation (licensing of educational institutions) and accreditation (quality assurance at programme level). The Law recognises the NCEQE as the only national body authorised to act as an external mechanism with a view to assuring and improving the quality of education. The main objectives of the NCEQE are to promote the improvement of the quality of education and to develop a culture of quality at educational institutions. Quality assurance at VET institutions is carried out through internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. Internal quality assurance mechanisms are set up and implemented by the VET institutions, while external quality assurance mechanisms are the responsibility of the NCEQE (ETF, 2021c).

In line with the MoES Decree of 11 February 2020 new standards were approved for the authorisation of VET institutions. These updated standards assess all aspects of the educational process through a coherent and systematic approach, with a particular focus on ensuring stakeholder engagement in the educational process. In 2023, the NCEQE introduced the use of some EQAVET indicators to monitor developments in VET as a result of its participation in the ETF-led VET Quality Assurance Forum.

The MoESY is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the VET strategy and system. It produces progress reports on strategy implementation, including VET (MoES, 2022). The MoESY also evaluates and monitors the strategies within its remit of competence. It can also request external evaluations, as was the case with Georgia's VET Strategy 2013-2020, when the ETF was commissioned to conduct the evaluation. The State Audit Office also conducts thematic audits on the performance of the education system. Audit reports are available in English on the website of the institution¹⁴.

Work-based learning arrangements

With the easing of pandemic-related restrictions in 2021, an opportunity arose to revive work-based learning initiatives. As a result, 13 public VET institutions were granted authorisation to run dual programmes, creating 395 new places for participants. In 2020, a total of 384 students were enrolled in the new qualification programmes using a work-based learning model in various fields, including

¹⁴ <https://sao.ge/en/reports?IsAudit=true>

agriculture, construction, tourism, food production, veterinary science and transport. By 2021, this number had increased to 521 students enrolled in dual programmes. These developments show that despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the private sector is looking ahead and continuing to invest in vocational education and training. In particular, by 2021 more than 100 private enterprises became involved in dual programme initiatives. The Skills Agency plays a pivotal role in promoting and further developing work-based learning programmes through SSOs.

Digital education and skills

In 2018, the MoES announced the comprehensive 'New School' reform with the aim of rolling out digital education in all public schools in the country. Working closely with Microsoft and the Education Management Information System (EMIS), the Ministry rolled out Microsoft 365 to digitally transform the education environment. A series of training workshops were conducted through a network of EMIS specialists and Microsoft engineers to facilitate the adoption of the system by teachers.

In 2020, the EMIS was providing a continuous learning experience for all students, including those in remote areas, using Microsoft 365 for virtual classes, pre-recorded lessons, and real-time communication and collaboration.

Performance indicators to monitor progress in digitisation are provided in the EMIS Medium Term Action Plan¹⁵ for the period 2023-2026, which describes the programmes, sub-programmes and activities to be implemented within the individual priorities. All public schools in Georgia (both primary and secondary) are connected to the internet.

While Georgia's general education system was better prepared to move to online learning mode during the pandemic, the capacity of the VET system was not up to the challenge and VET provision was suspended for several months. Over the past decade, VET institutions in Georgia have been extensively re-equipped with computer labs and infrastructure through various government or donor-supported initiatives (ETF, 2019). All VET institutions are connected to the internet. However, there has been no formal teacher training in digital skills and competences (DSC), although the use of ICT-supported teaching across the curriculum is mandatory. Previously, 60 % of VET teachers completed the in-service courses in basic DSC (two levels) and 50% passed the advanced Intel Teach Essentials course in ICT-enriched project-based learning (ETF, 2019).

Despite various DSC initiatives in VET colleges and donor-funded DSC programmes, Georgia needs to strengthen its capacity to develop the digital skills of teachers and trainers across the VET system to ensure technology-enabled hybrid education and digitally-driven instruction for learners. The Skills Agency has developed an e-platform aimed at developing and strengthening the capacity of VET institutions in blended learning to deliver distance and online courses.

Statistics on education and training

Since 2012, the Education Management Information System (EMIS) has been operating under the Ministry of Education and Science as the legal entity responsible for collecting, aggregating, analysing and using data and information on education for policy planning, formulation, monitoring and evaluation at all levels — from early childhood to higher education.

The EMIS has developed and maintains customised systems for different levels of education, including VET¹⁶. The new authorisation rules for VET providers require all VET institutions, including privately-owned ones, to report to the EMIS. Although the EMIS is considered a reliable source of information and data, the use of data remains somewhat limited. The State Audit Office conducted a performance audit of the EMIS in 2019 (SAO, 2019) and recommended that the MoESY and the EMIS further develop the functionalities of the system to ensure a user-friendly data interface, including

¹⁵ [Medium Term Action Plan \(2023-2026\) N 1.1. Description of programs, sub-programs and activities implemented within the framework of priorities.pdf](#)

¹⁶ [Order N11 N On approval of the rules and conditions for the establishment and administration of the Vocational Education Management Information System.pdf](#)

analytical dashboards, graphs and data visualisations, to make it easier for the Ministry and other stakeholders to analyse current developments.

The MoESY, with support from the World Bank, has launched a VET portal [VET.ge](https://vet.ge), which provides user-friendly and easy access to the latest VET information, electronic databases and training materials. This initiative is designed to meet the needs of different stakeholders, especially VET students, by improving their access to career options. In addition, the portal serves as a resource for decision-makers in the VET sector by providing relevant data.

The MoESY conducts regular tracer surveys of VET graduates. The limited representativeness of the survey does not allow it to be considered a sufficiently reliable source of data, but the practice continues and survey results indicate a gradual improvement in the employability of VET graduates (ETF, 2021a).

3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

3.1 Trends and challenges

Labour market characteristics

Georgia's labour market continues to face structural challenges. These include a high unemployment rate, especially among young people, a significant proportion of people engaged in subsistence farming through self-employment, difficulties for women in securing employment and a lack of job opportunities for highly skilled professionals.

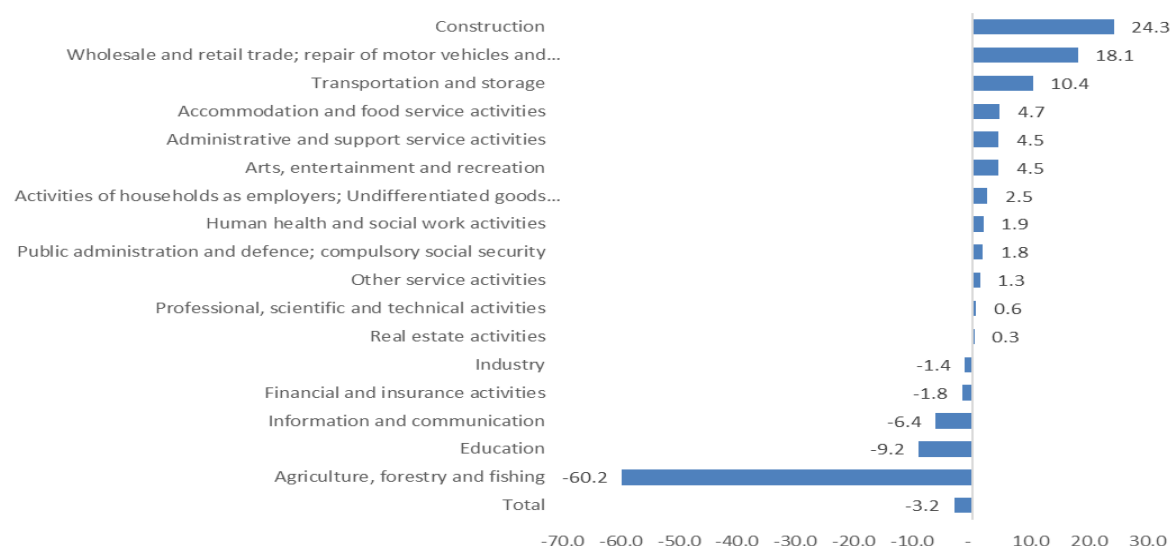
Between 2021 and 2022, the labour market in Georgia showed some signs of improvement. However, activity and employment rates remain low. In 2022, the activity rate (for the age group 15+ years) increased to 51.9 % from 50.1 % in 2021. In the same year, the employment rate (for the age group 15+ years) increased to 42.9 % from 40.4 % in 2021. The employment rate is particularly low for women, people with a lower level of education (primary, lower and upper secondary), young people and the elderly (age group 60+ years), and people living in rural areas.

The pandemic caused a temporary increase in unemployment, with rates rising to 18.5 % in 2020 and 20.6 % in 2021. However, after the pandemic the unemployment figures returned to their downward trajectory, with the unemployment rate among those aged 15 years and older decreasing to 17.3 % in 2022, and reaching 16.4 % in 2023¹⁷. Despite this positive trend, the unemployment rate remains high.

Employment by sector and occupation

The main sectors of employment in 2022 were *Agriculture* with a share of 17.9 % of the total number of employed persons, *Wholesale and retail trade* (15 %); *Industry* (11.9 %), *Education* (11.7 %) and *Construction* (8.5 %¹⁸). While the number of employed persons slightly decreased by 3.2 thousand between 2017 and 2022, there are variations between the different sectors. The most significant increases in the number of employed persons was registered in the sectors of Construction, Wholesale and retail trade, and Transport and storage. The most significant decrease was registered in the sectors of *Agriculture*, *Education* and *Information and communication*.

Figure 1. Percentage point variation in the sectors of employment (2022 vs 2017)



Source: <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/683/Employment-Unemployment>

¹⁷ <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/683/Employment-Unemployment>

¹⁸ [idem](#)

In 2023, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development published a five-year skills and occupations forecast based on the macroeconomic model. According to current estimates, the number of employed persons will increase by 90 thousand by 2027. The largest increase in employment in absolute terms is expected in the sectors of *Public administration and defence, Transport and storage, and Education*. The largest declines are expected in the sectors of Agriculture and Industry.

New jobs will be created in almost all occupational categories, with the exception of skilled agricultural workers and craftsmen and workers in related trades. On average, replacement demand is expected to account for 70 % of job openings, while new jobs (expansion demand) will account for the remaining 30 %. The largest increase in employment is expected in the group of professional¹⁹.

Groups facing difficulties in the labour market

Some groups are particularly disadvantaged in the labour market. Various studies show that women and young people are among **the most disadvantaged** compared to other groups (ETF, 2023). This is also the case for people with a lower level of education. There are also significant territorial disparities, with a clear disadvantage for people from rural areas.

Young people

This group faces challenges in the transition from school to work and the labour market. The youth unemployment rate (for the age group 15-24 years) remains high, despite a slight decrease from 42.9 % in 2021 to 39.4 % in 2022. Young women aged 15-29 years are likely to be out of the labour market or education system, possibly due to family responsibilities.

Around 200 000 NEETs aged between 15 and 29 years represent a large share of Georgia's youth population. They require urgent attention and coordinated policy action by the government. A youth guarantee scheme could help reduce the number of NEETs in the future.

Even employed young people often struggle to find a stable job that matches their qualifications. In 2019, more than 40 % of young people (aged 15-24 years) with tertiary education were working in semi-skilled occupations, while for persons aged 15+ years, this share was 27.4 %. This shows that the Georgian economy needs to provide more jobs for high-skilled workers and that a significant share of young people still need to acquire skills that are relevant to the needs of the labour market.

Women

The position of women in the labour market is significantly worse than that of men. Women are more likely to remain outside the labour market. In 2023, the gender gap in the activity rates for men and women was 22.1 percentage points, with an activity rate of 65.1 % for men and 43.1 % for women. The gender gap in employment rates is also significant at 16.2 percentage points, with an employment rate of 53.2 % for men and 37.1 % for women.

Wage levels also point to discrimination against women in the labour market. In 2022, the average salary of women was 31.7 % lower than the average salary of men. Although the situation has improved compared to previous years — the gap was 36 % in 2019 and more than 50 % in 2006²⁰ — the gap remains significant.

Georgia's National Statistical Office has estimated the adjusted gender pay gaps, taking into account demographics and job characteristics, to be 15.7 % (hourly) and 21.4 % (monthly)²¹. The adjusted hourly gender pay gap is particularly high for craftsmen and workers in related trades (46.4 %), the incumbents of managerial positions (40.4 %), plant and machine operators and assemblers (33.9 %).

Persons with a low level of education

¹⁹ Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (2023), Development of a macroeconomic skills forecasting model for Georgia Analysis of the labour market for the next five years, [Link](#)

²⁰ ILO (2023), Gender Wage Gap in Georgia, [Link](#)

²¹ National Statistics Office of Georgia (2021), Adjusted gender pay gap 2021, [Link](#)

In 2022, only 15.3 % of persons with a low level of education (aged 15+ years) were in employment, compared to 58.3 % of those with a high level of education. The risk of unemployment is also significantly higher for this group. In 2022, the unemployment rate was 27.1 % for those with a low level of education and 12.9 % for those with a high level of education.

Rural areas

In 2022, 50.8% of the population (15+ years) in rural areas was economically inactive compared with 46 % in urban areas. The unemployment rate in rural areas was 18.2 % compared with 22.2 % in urban areas²². A total of 18 % of the workforce is employed in agriculture, forestry and fishing, while agriculture accounts for only 6.1 % of gross value added. This shows that productivity in agriculture is particularly low, which is reflected in low income levels. In 2022, the average wage in agriculture was 73 % of the average wage in the economy as a whole.

It should be noted that 13% of the population (age group 15+ years) are employed as subsistence farmers (producing agricultural products mainly for family/own consumption). This group is particularly vulnerable to poverty.

Skills mismatch

The Georgian labour market faces many other challenges, mainly related to various imbalances. The most important is the skills mismatch, which remains a concern in the Georgian labour market, especially for those with higher education. In 2019, 22.4 % of employees with upper secondary education worked in low-skill occupations, and 27.4% of employees with tertiary education worked in semi-skilled occupations. Many people with tertiary degrees are often forced to take less qualified jobs. Although labour market matching has improved since 2016, in 2019 just under half of workers in Georgia were still not matched to the highest level of education in their occupational category, suggesting that occupational mismatch is a significant problems in Georgia (ETF, 2023).

Low quality jobs

Employment in some segments of the labour market does not provide sufficient security, stability and income. Structural problems persist, resulting in a pronounced polarisation of the job market in terms of high and low quality jobs and formal and informal employment (ETF, 2023). The share of self-employment in the Georgian labour market remains high at 32.1 % of the labour force in 2022. Self-employed workers are concentrated in rural areas, typically in agriculture, and are less likely to have access to quality training and better employment opportunities. Georgia also has a relatively high share of people classified as ‘contributing family workers’, who typically do unpaid work in the agricultural sector.

The proportion of vulnerable workers remains high, at 29 % in 2022. This indicator provides information on the share of employed persons working on their own account or as unpaid workers within the family unit.

Informal employment accounts for a large share of the Georgian labour market. In 2022, the share of informal workers in the non-agricultural sector was 28.4 %²³. It is particularly high in rural areas (31.6 %) and more common for men (33.4 %) than women (22.5 %). Informal employment has many negative consequences: low productivity, low wages, poor working conditions and poor access to social protection.

Therefore, moving workers from low-quality informal jobs to formal employment has been recognised as a key priority for the government, which led to the development of the Public Works Programme in 2022. The programme targets the recipients of Targeted Social Assistance (TSA), the majority of whom are believed to be working in the informal economy.

Number of registered unemployed

²² National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2022 <https://www.geostat.ge/ka/modules/categories/683/dasakmeba-umushevroba>

²³ idem

Information on registered unemployment usually provides a valuable insight into the labour market situation. According to the legal definition, the registered unemployed are all persons who are registered with the Public Employment Service, do not have a job and are looking for work. The data refers to the end of the year (reference period) and is cumulative, i.e. the sum of the number of unemployed as of 1 January and the number of registered unemployed for each month.

Table 1. Number of registered unemployed and structure by sex, age and level of education

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	110,090	34,056	8,992	5,978
Male	47%	48%	43%	36%
Female	53%	52%	57%	64%
under 29 years	23%	25%	36%	31%
29 + years	77%	75%	64%	69%
Low education attainment	21%	12%	26%	37%
Medium education attainment	75%	74%	68%	53%
High education attainment	4%	14%	7%	10%

Source: The platform worknet.gov.ge; for 2013-2019 Social Service Agency (SSA). State Employment Service Agency (SESA) for the year 2020-2022.

The number of registered unemployed has been decreasing since 2019, most noticeably in 2020 and 2021, reaching 5 978 in 2022. This trend is in contrast to the rising unemployment rates seen in 2020 and 2021²⁴. The main reason for these changes is regulatory. In 2017, a requirement was introduced for all applicants for Targeted Social Assistance (cash transfer programme for people at risk of poverty) to register as jobseekers. In 2020, this obligation was removed and the number of registered unemployed fell significantly, suggesting that TSA recipients are inactive.

Most registered unemployed are women, people aged 29+ years, and people with a medium level of education. Between 2019 and 2022, the share of women, young people and those with a lower level of education in the labour force increased. This trend can be attributed to a better labour market, with increased representation of groups that typically face greater difficulties in securing employment. However, it remains unclear how much of this shift is due to a decrease in the number of people receiving social assistance and how much actually reflects real changes in the labour market.

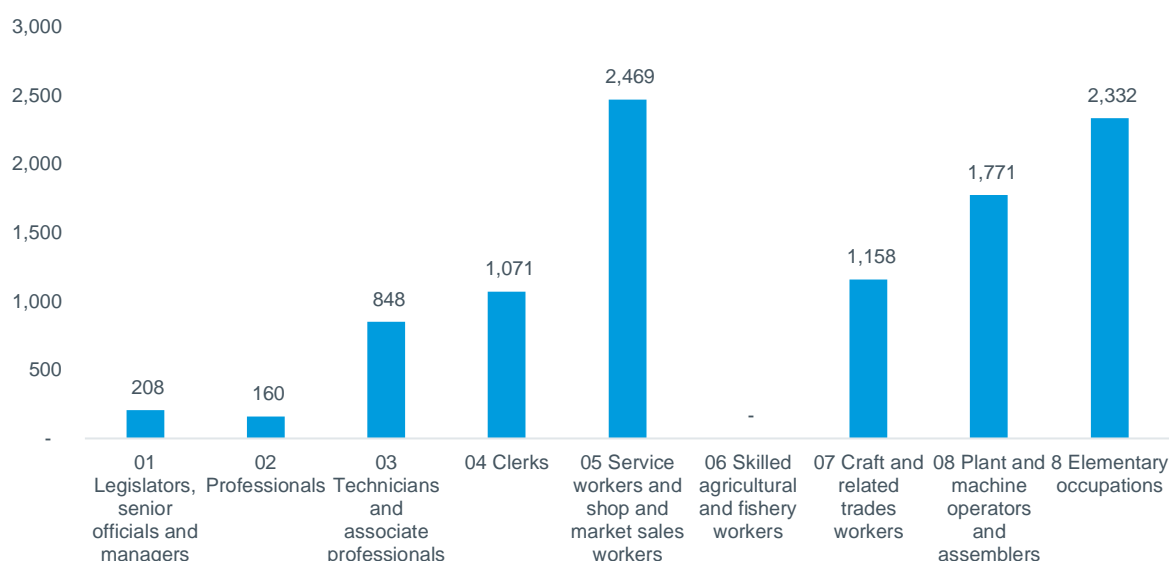
Number of job vacancies

In 2022, a total of 10 017 job vacancies were available – significantly higher than in previous years but slightly lower than in 2021. By economic sector, the highest number of vacancies was registered by employers in the sectors Wholesale and retail trade & repair of motor vehicles, Accommodation and food service activities, and Manufacturing, while the lowest number of vacancies were available in the sectors Activities of households as employers, followed by Real estate, Public administration and defence, and compulsory social security.

In terms of occupational groups, the largest group was that of Clerks, followed by Elementary occupations and Plant and machine operators and assemblers. Professionals were the smallest group, preceded by legislators, senior officials, managers, technicians and associate professionals.

²⁴ <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/683/Employment-Unemployment>

Figure 2. Number of vacancies by ISCO major occupational groups



Source: Platform worknet.gov.ge for 2013-2019 Social Service Agency (SSA). State Employment Service Agency (SESA) for 2020-2022.

Labour market and employment statistics

The National Statistical Office, Geostat, conducts a quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) and publishes, quarterly and annually, key labour market indicators, including microdata, on its website. Worknet is the database of registered jobseekers and vacancies operated by the SESA, but its reliability still needs to be improved.

In 2020, Georgia adopted the new International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards for publishing labour market indicators (MoESD, 2022). The new standards define employment as ‘activities to produce goods and services [for others in exchange] for pay or profit’, excluding ‘own-use production work’ and ‘activities to produce goods and services primarily for own final use by the household’, which were included in the previous standards. According to the new standard, people working on their own family farm are no longer considered self-employed if the farm is not market-oriented and mainly produces agricultural products (more than 50 %) for the family’s own consumption. Georgia’s National Statistical Office has only recalculated the aggregated data for key indicators for 2010-2019. These cover the labour force, employment, unemployment, inactive population, unemployment rate, employment rate and participation rate. The data is further disaggregated by gender, urban-rural areas, regions, and age groups, but not all indicators have been recalculated to allow full comparability with previous years.

Since 2017, the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development (MoESD) has provided labour market information to obtain updated information on labour market trends, career guidance and occupational profiles. The MoESD’s Labour Market Information System (LMIS) Division coordinates the analysis of labour market demand and produces regular analytical reports on the labour market, which are published on the LMIS website²⁵. The MoESD analyses job vacancies by sector and occupation using data from private and public job portals.

²⁵ <http://www.lmis.gov.ge>

3.2 Employment policy and institutional settings

Strategy and legal framework in the field of employment policy

Georgia's **National Labour and Employment Policy Strategy for the period 2019-2023** was adopted in December 2019. The Strategy builds on and takes forward the activities included in the previous strategy and sets two priorities:

- promotion of employment,
- effective functioning of the labour market.

The first priority has three objectives: reducing the mismatch between demand and supply, strengthening active labour market policies (ALMP), and promoting the participation of women and vulnerable groups in the labour market through targeted social and inclusive employment policies. The second priority focuses on occupational health and safety, the protection of labour rights and improving the management of labour migration.

The Georgian government has drafted a new **National Labour and Employment Policy Strategy for the period 2024-2028**, which is expected to be adopted in the first quarter of 2024. The new strategy includes the following policy objectives:

- Reducing the mismatch between demand and supply;
- strengthening active labour market policies;
- promoting the inclusion of vulnerable groups and groups with different needs in the labour market;
- improving the legal basis and enforcement system for the protection of labour standards;
- contributing to the effective management of labour migration (emigration/migration);
- promoting and developing temporary legal employment of Georgian citizens abroad (circular labour migration).

The new **Law on Facilitating Employment**²⁶, adopted in 2020, established a new State Employment Support Agency (SESA) and outlined new employment policy measures. ALMP were previously under the remit of competence of the Employment Support Services Department of the Social Service Agency, which had been responsible for their implementation since 2013. SESA's activities are aimed at employers, jobseekers and other stakeholders, and the Agency operates under the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MIDPLHSA).

On 29 September 2020, the Georgian Parliament adopted an important package of labour law reforms. By providing much greater protection to workers, the adoption of the reforms, which were developed with extensive ILO support, represents a significant step forward in bringing Georgia's labour legislation in line with relevant ILO standards EU directives and achieving a better balance between the rights and interests of workers and employers.

Georgia's **Law on Labour Inspection**²⁷, which was adopted in September 2020, established the Labour Inspection Service as an agency under the MIDPLHSA. Its operations are being developed and in 2022 the number of inspectors was increased to 109. The Labour Inspection Service has set up an Advisory Board that provides training to enterprises and plans to expand the regional coverage of its services, at least to larger cities. It has also reported an increasing awareness of training needs among employers. The EU has underlined the need to further strengthen the labour inspection system by ensuring adequate resources and trained staff for its activities and effective monitoring of labour rights and working conditions. In addition, the Georgian government is considering ratifying ILO's Labour Inspection Convention (C081). Georgia has asked the EU to support capacity building at the Labour Inspection through a Twinning project.

²⁶ <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/4924109?publication=0>

²⁷ <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/MONOGRAPH/110472/137421/F-1715825391/GEO110472%20Eng.pdf>

The EU has urged Georgia to proceed with quality improvements and timely transposition of outstanding directives. Draft legislation transposing several OSH directives has been developed. The new version of the OSH Law²⁸, which aims to better align the old Law with EU acquis, was adopted in 2019.

The Confederation of Georgian Trade Unions and the Georgian Employers' Association have been closely involved, particularly in drafting the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the transposition of EU directives and the amendment of the Labour Code.

Initiatives to boost employment

The SESA provides employment services through seven regional offices and five district offices in Tbilisi. Preparations are underway to open three new regional offices. While the regional offices carry out some outreach activities, jobseekers living in remote areas (or outside regional centres) remain disadvantaged in terms of access to employment services. However, at the end of 2022 the SESA recruited 200 new staff in the regional offices of the Social Service Agency to strengthen reach out to the rural population and other vulnerable groups.

Active labour market policies are divided into labour market services and labour market measures. Labour market services refer to activities related to job search. These include job matching and counselling. In 2022, 2 263 jobseekers participated in job-matching services, which were most frequently used by women and people aged over 29 years. In addition 3 165 people benefited from counselling (the number of women participants is twice as high as the number of male participants).

Table 2. Participants in labour market services

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Job matching	6 170	1 806	2 997	2 263
Male	50 %	72 %	51 %	44 %
Female	50 %	28 %	49 %	56 %
under 29 years	31 %	13 %	32 %	27 %
29 + years	69 %	87 %	68 %	73 %
Counselling	14 992	3 024	2 584	3 165
Male	54 %	20 %	37 %	34 %
Female	46 %	80 %	63 %	66 %
under 29 years	20 %	30 %	45 %	32 %
29 + years	80 %	70 %	55 %	68 %

Source: The platform worknet.gov.ge for 2013-2019 Social Service Agency (SSA). State Employment Service Agency (SESA) for the year 2020-2022.

Labour market measures (LMMs) include interventions that provide temporary support to disadvantaged groups in the labour market and are designed to activate the unemployed, help people move from involuntary inactivity into employment, or maintain the jobs of people at risk of unemployment. These measures include training, employment incentives, subsidised employment and rehabilitation, direct job creation and start-up incentives.

²⁸ <https://www.moh.gov.ge/uploads/files/2019/Failebi/08.06.2019.pdf>

In 2022, the total number of LMM participants reached 32 856 people, a significant increase compared to previous years. This is due to the introduction, in March 2022, of a new Public Works Programme, targeting social assistance recipients (not necessarily registered as jobseekers/unemployed).

In 2022, a total of 3 244 people will be offered training courses, including vocational training (2 517 people, mostly women and participants aged over 29 years) and core competency training (727 participants). The latter measure was added in the course of the review of labour market programmes carried out in 2022 and includes job-search skills, foreign languages and digital skills.

In 2022, employment incentives accounted for a tiny proportion of the participants in the labour market measures implemented in Georgia, with only 283 participants. In 2022, the measure for subsidised employment and rehabilitation had the lowest number of participants (only 6).

The Public Work labour market measure, which has a significant budget of GEL 36 million (approximately EUR 12 million), aims to activate the recipients of Targeted Social Assistance. The Georgian authorities believe that many TSA recipients are able to work and are engaged in informal work. Therefore, the programme targets those who are able to work (ETF, 2023). It typically offers low-skilled or unskilled work that does not require special training or skills. In 2022, a total of 29 323 people participated in the measure. The participants in the Public Works Programme are not required to register in Worknet. They can do so if they wish to receive SESA services, but there is no requirement to do so in order to participate in the programme. Therefore, from a statistical point of view, it is impossible to estimate the number of registered jobseekers involved in the programme. Women are slightly more likely to participate in the programme than men. Beneficiaries aged 29+ years account for 87 % of all beneficiaries.

In the Public Works Programme, TSA recipients are offered four options (ETF, 2023). They can:

1. take up a job under the Public Works Programme;
2. apply for a regular vacancy on the open labour market;
3. enrol in a short-term training/retraining course; or
4. formalise the existing employment relationship / economic activity status.

If the TSA recipient chooses one of the four available options, they are granted a grace period of 4 years during which they will continue to receive their social assistance benefits and their income will not be reassessed. If the TSA recipient refuses all options, their household will be reassessed the following year.

Initial statistics on the effectiveness of the programme show that about 60 % of TSA recipients choose a job in the Public Works programme. However, there is a significant difference between the capital and the provinces, with 7 % of TSA recipients in Tbilisi choosing jobs under the programme, compared to 66 % outside the capital. This reflects the scarcity of real job opportunities in the provinces compared to those living in the capital city where more alternatives for employment are available.

Transition from unemployment to employment

The main objective of the employment services is to help jobseekers find sustainable and decent employment. In 2021, a total of 3 812 jobseekers entered employment — a significant number, considering that 8 992 jobseekers were registered at the end of the year. The indicator achieved, which measures the number of registered unemployed who moved from unemployment into employment, was 42 % of the stock of registered unemployed persons. It was significantly higher for women (49 %) than for men (33.5%), and for persons under the age of 29 years (82 %) than for older persons (65 %).

In 2022, a total of 12 645 persons moved from unemployment to employment. The significant difference compared to previous years is due to the additional participants in the Public Works Programme. The figure for 2022 includes two groups of participants: the group that SESA placed in jobs through its regular placement service and the group of participants in the Public Works Programme who opted for 'employment on the open labour market'.

Table 3. Transition from unemployment to employment (number) by sex and age

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	1 415	908	3 812	12 645
Male	575	209	1 287	6 889
Female	840	699	2 525	5 756
under the age of 35 years	602	421	1 711	2 043
over the age of 35 years	813	487	2 101	10 602

Source: The platform worknet.gov.ge for 2013-2019 Social Service Agency (SSA); State Employment Service Agency (SESA) for 2020-2022.

Initiatives to increase the capacity of public employment services

The main challenge for the SESA is to ensure high quality employment services and outreach in all regions. The Agency has an annual budget (GEL 4 million), of which GEL 770 000 was spent on active labour market measures in 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on SESA's activities as it was tasked with paying out one-off unemployment benefits to workers laid off as a result of the crisis (ETF, 2023). As there is no unemployment insurance/benefit system in Georgia, the government offered a one-off financial assistance of GEL 600 (EUR 214) to employees who lost their jobs due to the pandemic while self-employed persons were entitled to GEL 300 (EUR 107). This assistance benefited 162 271 workers who were made redundant and 124 348 self-employed persons. The SESA registered these workers in a separate database (outside Worknet) and provided them with employment counselling in 2020 and 2021. The provision of other employment services (e.g. counselling and job placement) slowed down during this period, mainly due to the very low turnover of beneficiaries, as no special measures were taken to provide these services online. In 2022, all services returned to a face-to-face format.

The continued provision of ALMP services and the implementation of the Public Works Programme and other initiatives may present an opportunity to increase the capacity of the SESA. Job vacancies posted in Worknet are still being collected and analysed, but a new upgraded Worknet with several modules (e.g. employer module, jobseeker module, case management module) is needed. The SESA has requested international assistance to fund the development costs of an upgraded Worknet, which should be fully operational by the end of 2023.

The regional offices now have between three and six staff per region, but the SESA plans to increase the number to an average of 12 to 15 staff per region. The salary of staff at the regional offices is around GEL 1 000 to GEL 1 100. As a follow-up to the Public Works Programme, the SESA is also considering increasing the availability of individual employment specialists in 69 territorial offices to ensure better outreach of employment services throughout the country. To this end, the SESA recruited 200 new staff in 2022 to be appointed throughout the country.

For further information, please email Timo Kuusela and Piotr Stronkowski at the European Training Foundation at Timo.Kuusela@etf.europa.eu or Piotr.Stronkowski@etf.europa.eu.

GEORGIA: STATISTICAL ANNEX

The Annex includes annual data from 2010, 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022 or the last available year.

	Indicator	2010	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	
1	Total population (,000) ⁽¹⁾	3 786.7	3 725.3	3 720.2	3 722.7	3 708.6	3 712.5	
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15-24 years and denominator age 15-64 years (%) ^{(1) C}	24.0	19.6	17.7	17.6	17.6	17.6	
3	GDP growth rate (%)	6.2	3.0	5.0	-6.8	10.5	10.1	
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	Agriculture	8.5	7.8	6.5	7.3	6.5	6.1
		Industry	16.9	19.2	20.3	21.2	21.4	21.5
		Services	63.1	62.0	60.8	59.1	59.5	59.9
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	2.8	3.2	3.8	3.9	3.6	M.D.	
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)	9.0	11.1	13.4	11.2	11.5	M.D.	
7	Adult Literacy (%) ^C	M.D.	M.D.	99.6	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+ years) (%)	Low ⁽²⁾	M.D.	10.7	11.9	11.2	11.3	11.0
		Medium ⁽³⁾	M.D.	58.2	57.8	58.9	58.6	58.4
		High ⁽⁴⁾	M.D.	31.1	30.2	29.8	30.1	30.5
9	Early leavers from education and training (age group 18-24 years) (%) ⁽⁹⁾	Total	M.D.	5.8	9.3	8.2	7.3	6.0
		Male	M.D.	6.8	9.6	8.8	7.6	6.1
		Female	M.D.	4.7	8.9	7.4	7.0	5.9
10	NET enrolment rates in secondary education (ISCED level 2-3) (%)	M.D.	91.3	95.8	95.0	96.1	M.D.	
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	M.D.	9.0	11.2	7.6	6.6	M.D.	
12	Low achievement in reading, mathematics and science – PISA (%)	Reading	62.0 ⁽⁶⁾	51.7	64.4 ⁽⁷⁾	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
		Mathematics	68.7 ⁽⁶⁾	57.1	61.1 ⁽⁷⁾	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
		Science	65.6 ⁽⁶⁾	50.8	64.4 ⁽⁷⁾	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
13	Activity rate (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁹⁾	Total	51.5	55.5	51.8	50.5	50.9	51.9
		Male	62.2	66.3	61.8	62.0	62.9	64.0
		Female	42.5	46.2	43.1	40.4	40.5	41.5

	Indicator		2010	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022
14	Inactivity rate (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁹⁾	Total	48.5	44.5	48.2	49.5	49.1	48.1
		Male	37.8	33.7	38.2	38.0	37.1	36.0
		Female	57.5	53.8	56.9	59.6	59.5	58.5
15	Employment rate (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁹⁾	Total	37.5	43.3	42.7	41.1	40.4	42.9
		Male	44.1	50.8	50.1	49.5	48.6	51.7
		Female	31.8	36.9	36.2	33.9	33.3	35.4
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁹⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	32.1	30.9	30.5	14.7	13.1	15.3
		Medium ⁽³⁾	54.7	60.1	56.6	37.9	36.9	40.2
		High ⁽⁴⁾	58.0	61.6	63.9	57.5	57.6	58.3
		VET ⁽⁵⁾	59.8	63.7	59.5	41.8	41.9	45.3
17	Employment by sector (%) ⁽⁸⁾⁽⁹⁾	Agriculture	48.0	43.9	19.1	19.9	18.9	17.9
		Industry	10.6	11.0	19.2	18.2	19.0	20.3
		Services	41.4	45.2	61.7	61.9	62.1	61.8
18	Incidence of self-employment (%) ⁽⁹⁾		58.8	53.5	49.7	31.9	31.8	32.1
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%) ⁽⁹⁾		57.4	52.1	47.7	29.0	29.1	29.0
20	Unemployment rate (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁹⁾	Total	27.2	21.9	17.6	18.5	20.6	17.3
		Male	28.9	23.5	18.9	20.2	22.7	19.3
		Female	25.0	20.0	16.0	16.2	17.8	14.6
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (age group 15+ years) (%) ⁽⁹⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	9.3	8.5	10.9	26.5	33.8	27.1
		Medium ⁽³⁾	16.3	13.4	11.8	20.5	23.3	19.5
		High ⁽⁴⁾	21.4	16.1	11.3	14.8	15.5	12.9
		VET ⁽⁵⁾	15.9	13.3	9.8	16.3	17.7	13.6
22	Unemployment rate (age group 15-24 years) (%) ⁽⁹⁾	Total	37.9	33.8	30.4	39.4	42.9	39.4
		Male	35.1	31.7	28.9	40.1	44.3	39.8
		Female	42.7	37.6	32.9	38.2	40.5	38.8
23	Proportion of people age group 15-24 years not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	Total	M.D.	26.6	26.0	28.5	26.8	23.4
		Male	M.D.	21.0	23.3	28.7	26.8	23.1
		Female	M.D.	32.8	29.1	28.3	26.8	23.7
		Total	M.D.	0.6	0.8	1.1	1.2	1.6

	Indicator		2010	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% age group 25-64 years) ⁽⁹⁾	Male	M.D.	0.7	0.9	0.9	1.1	1.3
		Female	M.D.	0.6	0.8	1.2	1.3	1.8
25	Human Development Index		0.759	0.790	0.810	0.802	0.802	M.D.

Last update: 14/07/2023

Sources:

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: The World Bank, World Development Indicators database

Indicators 7, 10, 11: UNESCO, Institute for Statistics

Indicators 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24: GEOSTAT, National Statistical Office of Georgia (data received). 2017: Break in time series.

Indicators 13, 14, 15, 20 GEOSTAT, National Statistical Office of Georgia (data received). The data for 2010-2019 are recalculated according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards adopted at the 19th and 20th International Conferences of Labour Statisticians;

Indicator 12 - OECD PISA 2018 Results (Volume I) Annex B1

Indicator 25 – UNDP

Notes:

(1) Estimation.

(2) Low – Lower secondary education and less

(3) Medium - Upper secondary education, vocational program and secondary professional program

(4) High - Higher professional program, Bachelor, Master and Doctor programme

(5) VET - secondary professional and vocational programmes

(6) applies to 2009

(7) applies to 2018

(8) Before 2021 according to economic activity (Nace rev. 1.1), from 2021 according to Nace rev. 2.

(9) 2017: Break in time series.

Legend:

C= ETF calculations

N.A. = Not Applicable

M.D. = Missing Data

Annex: definitions of Indicators

	Description	Definition
1	Total population (in thousands)	The total population is estimated as the number of people having their usual residence in a country on 1 January of the respective year. When information on the usually resident population is not available, countries may report legal or registered residents.
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15–24) (%)	This is the ratio of the youth population (aged 15-24 years) to the working-age population, usually aged 15-64 years (or 15-74 years or 15+ years).
3	GDP growth rate (%)	Annual percentage growth rate of GDP at market prices based on constant local currency. Aggregates are based on constant 2010 U.S. dollars. GDP is the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or for depletion and degradation of natural resources.
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	The share of value added from Agriculture, Industry and Services. Agriculture corresponds to ISIC divisions 1-5 and includes forestry, hunting, and fishing, as well as cultivation of crops and livestock production. Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs. It is calculated without making deductions for depreciation of fabricated assets or depletion and degradation of natural resources. The origin of value added is determined by the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC), revision 3 or 4. Industry corresponds to the International Standard Industrial Classification (ISIC) tabulation categories C-F (revision 3) or tabulation categories B-F (revision 4) and includes mining and quarrying (including oil production), manufacturing, construction, and public utilities (electricity, gas, and water). Services correspond to ISIC divisions 50-99 and they include value added in wholesale and retail trade (including hotels and restaurants), transport, and government, financial, professional, and personal services such as education, healthcare, and real estate services. Also included are imputed bank service charges, import duties, and any statistical discrepancies noted by national compilers as well as discrepancies arising from rescaling.
5	Public expenditure on education (as % of GDP)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of GDP. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
6	Public expenditure on education (as % of total public expenditure)	Public expenditure on education expressed as a percentage of total public expenditure. Generally, the public sector funds education either by directly bearing the current and capital expenses of educational institutions, or by supporting students and their families with scholarships and public loans as well as by transferring public subsidies for educational activities to private firms or non-profit organisations (transfer to private households and enterprises). Both types of transactions together are reported as total public expenditure on education.
7	Adult literacy (%)	Adult literacy is the percentage of the population aged 15 years and over who can both read and write a short simple statement on his/her everyday life and understand it. Generally, 'literacy' also encompasses 'numeracy' – the ability to make simple arithmetic calculations.

	Description	Definition
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)	Educational attainment refers to the highest educational level achieved by individuals expressed as a percentage of all persons in that age group. This is usually measured in terms of the highest educational programme successfully completed, which is typically certified by a recognised qualification. Recognised intermediate qualifications are classified at a lower level than the programme itself.
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%)	Early leavers from education and training are defined as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 years whose highest level of education is lower than upper secondary education and who were not in further education or training in the four weeks prior to the survey. Lower secondary education refers to ISCED 1997 levels 0-2 and 3C short (i.e. programmes of less than two years) for data up to 2013 and to ISCED 2011 levels 0-2 for data from 2014 onwards.
10	NET enrolment rates in secondary education (ISCED level 2-3) (%)	This indicator covers the enrolments in a given level of education of children/youths belonging to the official age group corresponding to the given level of education.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	Total number of students enrolled in vocational programmes at a given level of education (in this case, upper secondary), expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled in all programmes (vocational and general) at that level.
12	Low achievement in reading, maths and science – PISA (%)	Low achievers are the 15-year-olds who are failing to reach level 2 on the PISA scale for reading, mathematics and science.
13	Activity rate (age group 15+ years) (%)	The activity rate is calculated by dividing the active population by the population of the same age group. The active population (also called 'labour force') is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed people. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
14	Inactivity rate (age group 15+ years) (%)	The inactivity/out of the labour force rate is calculated by dividing the inactive population by the population of the same age group. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
15	Employment rate (age group 15+ years) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed people by the population of the same age group. Employed people are all people who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated.
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (age group 15+ years) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed persons by the population of the same age group. Employed persons are all persons who worked at least one hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated. Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: Low (ISCED level 0–2), Medium (ISCED level 3–4) and High (ISCED 1997 level 5–6, and ISCED 2011 level 5–8).
17	Employment by sector (%)	This indicator provides information on the relative importance of different economic activities with regard to employment. Data are presented by broad branches of economic activity (i.e. Agriculture/Industry/Services) based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC). In Europe, the NACE classification is consistent with ISIC.
18	Incidence of self-employment (%)	The incidence of self-employment is expressed by the self-employed (i.e. employers + own-account workers + contributing family workers) as a proportion of the total employed.
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)	The incidence of vulnerable employment is expressed by the own-account workers and contributing family workers as a proportion of the total employed.

	Description	Definition
20	Unemployment rate (age group 15+ years) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months).
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-64 years or 15+ years who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work (had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months)). Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: low (ISCED level 0-2), medium (ISCED level 3-4) and high (ISCED 1997 level 5-6, and ISCED 2011 level 5-8).
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15–24 who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the two weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the four-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, three months).
23	Proportion of people in the age group 15-24 years not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	The indicator provides information on young people aged 15-24 who meet the following two conditions: first, they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the ILO definition); and second, they have not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. Data are expressed as a percentage of the total population of the same age group and gender, excluding the respondents who have not answered the question on participation in education and training.
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% age group 25-64 years)	Participants in lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25–64 who stated that they received education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question on participation in education and training. The information collected relates to all education or training, whether or not it is relevant to the respondent's current or possible future job. If a different reference period is used, this should be indicated.
25	Human Development Index	The index is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living.

KEY DONOR PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

DONOR	PROJECT	BUDGET & DURATION
EU	Skills4Jobs Programme (supports VET, employment and labour market reforms, entrepreneurial learning)	2018-2024 EUR 50.8 million
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), European Union (EU)	Private Sector Development and Vocational Education and Training in the South Caucasus	2017-2024 EUR 46 380 000 (including EUR 20 780 000 EU co-financing)
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation UNDP	Modernization of the Vocational Education and Training and Extension Systems Related to Agriculture in Georgia	2022-2025 USD 4 million
German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) – implemented by GIZ	VET in Georgia’s Growth Sectors	2023-2026 EUR 4.5 million
World Bank	Innovation, Inclusion and Quality (expanding access to pre-school education and improving the quality of education and learning environments in secondary general and higher education)	2019-2026 USD 102.7 million
World Bank	Human Capital Program (health sector, social services, education, labour market and employment support programme) – co-financed by AFD- Expertise France implements a TA component on labour and employment issues	2022-2028 USD 400 million
Asian Development Bank	Modern Skills for Better Jobs Sector Development Program (supports VET reform)	2020-2027 USD 70 million
Asian Development Bank	Improving Learning Outcomes in Secondary Education Sector Development Program – yet to be agreed with the Georgian government	2022-2028 USD 150 million
USAID	USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program	2021-2026 USD 24 million
USAID	Educating for the Future – FEDU – supports teacher education and training and school governance	2023- 2028 USD 14 million

ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ALMP	Active labour market policy
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ETF	European Training Foundation
GDP	Gross domestic product
ILO	International Labour Organization
LFS	Labour force survey
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MoES(Y)	Ministry of Education and Science (and Youth)
MoESD	Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development
MIDPLHSA	Ministry of Internally Displaced People, Labour, Health and Social Affairs
MoCSY	Ministry for Culture, Sports and Youth
NAEC	National Assessment and Examinations Center
NCEQE	National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NYPG	National Youth Policy for Georgia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSH	Occupational safety and health
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SESA	State Employment Support Agency
SSA	Social Service Agency
TSA	Targeted Social Assistance

VET Vocational education and training

WBL Work-based learning

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