

TORINO PROCESS: REVIEW OF POLICIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING IN ARMENIA – 2024

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

This review – as in other countries – is the result of four phases:

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

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

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

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

The Torino Process System Monitoring Report: Armenia, 2023 is available on the [ETF webpage Torino Process 2022–24: Armenia | ETF \(europa.eu\)](#).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Approximately 3 million citizens live in Armenia, of which about 63.7 % live in urban areas. GDP reached 12.6 % growth in 2022, with an unemployment rate of 11.6 %. There are three top economic sectors, each contributing around 11-12 % of the total economy (industry, agriculture, and wholesale and retail) and two economic sectors with smaller portions (around 6-8 %) of the total economy (real estate activities and construction). An interesting feature of the Armenian private sector is the fact that more than 94 % of the sector consists of micro-enterprises with fewer than ten employees. 38 % of the employed workforce are women.

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

This analysis explores the themes, selected by the country, of **access** to and **attractiveness** of VET from the standpoint of **lifelong learning**. The review was conducted through: a) identification of main issues; b) scrutiny of policy responses in place to address these issues; c) analysis of gaps of policy responses in addressing these issues; and d) proposal for policy recommendations that could address the gaps. The establishment of the national lifelong learning framework faces a number of **issues** that limit the access¹ to and attractiveness² of VET³, such as (i) insufficient investments from the State budget for the improvement of building conditions of VET institutions and teaching/learning infrastructure; (ii) very low amount of State scholarships provided to preliminary and middle VET students; (iii) VET institutions inherited old-fashioned and obsolete buildings which require costly investment for maintenance and heating in winter, (iv) for many specialties, obsolete literature is still in use; (v) due to students' and teaching staff's poor knowledge of foreign languages, the use of textbooks and teaching and learning materials in foreign languages is also limited; (vi) only entry requirements are used as a mechanism to evaluate the adequacy of VET institution directors' qualifications with the job position; and finally, (vii) although training for the secondary vocational education administrative, pedagogical staff and members of the management board of VET institutions has been carried out every year, their professional abilities still need to be improved.

Providing policy responses to the issues in the establishment of the national lifelong learning framework is an ongoing process, which includes (i) optimisation of the distribution of VET institutions and their professions to improve the conditions for effective and quality VET provision (the action plan for the implementation of the Government Programme for 2021-2026 foresees the reorganisation of

¹ Access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) refers to the ability of individuals to enter and participate in vocational education and training programs. It encompasses various aspects such as availability, affordability, geographical proximity, and inclusivity, ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances, have equal opportunities to engage in VET.

² Attractiveness of Vocational Education and Training (VET) relates to the desirability and perceived value of VET programs among learners, employers, and other stakeholders. It encompasses factors such as the quality of training, relevance to labour market needs, career prospects, prestige, and societal recognition of VET qualifications. An attractive VET system is one that effectively meets the needs and expectations of stakeholders, encouraging participation and investment in vocational education and training.

³ NB: Access and attractiveness are closely linked in the sense that good performance in the area of access also indicates a certain attractiveness, and vice versa. Please see also the description of access and attractiveness through Torino Process monitoring report (Level 1) indexes:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1DeN5VHfRA1DQLkqS4c3aEaWpDwemaklr/edit?usp=sharing&oid=110154518834912853011&rtpof=true&sd=true>

10 VET institutions by 2026); (ii) introduction and expansion of WBL foreseen by Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia for 2021-2026 and the action plan for implementation of Education 2030; and (iii) development by the end of 2023 of the mechanisms for increased possibilities and forms of entrepreneurial activities by VET institutions. Several gaps persist in accessing IVET, such as a growing share of paid education in recent years at preliminary and especially middle VET institutions, creating issues for accessibility to education, particularly for economically disadvantaged groups. The number of available free tuition places, along with other supporting measures, is of primary importance for increasing the access to IVET programmes. Access to both VET and higher education for disadvantaged groups (including people with disabilities) remains a serious issue and several constraints related to increasing the access of students with special educational needs to the IVET system persist. Access to CVET for unemployed, disabled, or other vulnerable groups is ensured only within the limits of available funding provided by the State budget, as the volume of the related planned training is insignificant. The organisation and delivery of CVET programmes at VET institutions, funded by participants on a commercial basis or by donor organisations, limit access to CVET programmes. Moreover, there is a lack of comprehensive data on the nature and volume of CVET programmes organised by VET institutions.

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

Attractiveness of IVET is hampered by several issues, such as a limited vertical and horizontal permeability. VET is not as attractive as higher education for youth and especially graduates from secondary education schools, and a high share of basic school graduates admitted to VET institutions is linked to the introduction of the 12-year mandatory secondary general education in 2017, allowing them to also receive a certificate of secondary education. The shift between IVET and CVET is almost non-existent since the validation of the non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) system is currently not operational. A career guidance system is being implemented, however comprehensive and objective data on IVET/CVET graduates' job placement or other career pathways of VET graduates is not available. The important mismatch between skills and demand negatively affects the attractiveness of VET. Work-based learning (WBL) is considered to be a means to address this mismatch and the issues of relevance and quality of VET in general. However, in 2022 the share of specialties delivered through pilot dual education programmes was only 8.4 %. Poor knowledge of foreign languages and staff skills on internationalisation strongly limit the efforts of VET institutions towards internationalisation, which is considered a way to increase the attractiveness of the Armenian VET.

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

The TRP Level 2 Review team suggests specific steps to support the implementation of the approved policies for VET, including the action plan for implementation of Education 2030 and the upcoming employment strategy. Conclusions and recommendations are presented in Chapter 3, with a more

detailed overview in Appendix 4, including short-term, mid-term, and long-term actions. A summary of three sets of **policy recommendations** is provided below.

As regards **lifelong learning**, four main recommendations aim to set up a coherent lifelong learning vision and a comprehensive national framework. This entails a comprehensive set of immediate, short-term, and long-term initiatives, which all contribute to the establishment of a coherent lifelong learning vision and a comprehensive national framework.

- **Recommendation 1** concerns developing a coherent vision and a comprehensive national framework for LLL. This has three sub-areas: a strategy for LLL (Lifelong Learning Strategy) is jointly developed with key stakeholders based on the relevant regulations, the mapping of LLL activities, and the identified gaps; a flexible learning system of short-cycle and long-cycle programmes and courses is developed on AQF level 4 and 5; and a national training register is developed.
- **Recommendation 2** deals with further involvement of the private sector in skills anticipation, development, governance, and financing, with two sub-areas: strengthening cooperation structures in VET and establishing public-private partnerships (PPPs).
- **Recommendation 3** focuses on cross-sectoral coordination of lifelong career guidance, with two sub-areas: job placement methodology and tracer study methodology.
- **Recommendation 4** concerns quality and accountability procedures for all IVET and CVET providers, with two sub-areas: quality and accountability procedures and performance indicators for free tuition VET.

As regards **access**, four main recommendations aim to improve VET provision in order to allow more groups in Armenian society to access IVET and CVET programmes. This covers a comprehensive set of immediate, short-term, and long-term initiatives, which all contribute to increased access to IVET and CVET.

- The goal of **recommendation 5** is to provide free IVET for all citizens by optimising provision and resources. This has two sub-areas: developing flexible delivery of VET and diversified funding for VET.
- **Recommendation 6** deals with the inclusion of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and forced displaced persons and migrants into mainstream VET education, with two sub-areas: a roadmap for SEN in IVET and setting up admission tracks for immigrants/refugees/ forced displaced persons.
- **Recommendation 7** aims to monitor the effects of CVET financing to increase its scope and efficiency through one sub-area: monitor financial support to CVET.
- **Recommendation 8** introduces a kind of 'job guarantee/youth guarantee' with a special focus on vulnerable groups through one sub-area: job/youth guarantee introduced.

As regards **attractiveness**, three main recommendations aim to improve the attractiveness of IVET and CVET. They cover a comprehensive set of immediate, short-term, and long-term initiatives, which all contribute to making the IVET and CVET systems more attractive to potential learners as well as to employers.

- **Recommendation 9** seeks to optimise the distribution of VET institutions and specialities and introduce digital learning through eight sub-areas: (i) diversified learning environments in IVET and CVET; (ii) review of digitalisation and innovation methods and resources; (iii) continuous professional development for digitalisation and innovation in VET; (iv) a certification system for VET teaching and management staff; (v) expanded work-based learning (WBL) and a monitoring system for WBL; (vii) internationalisation of IVET; and capacity building for internationalising VET.
- **Recommendation 10** seeks to ease the transition to higher education (HE) programmes and clarify the links between level 4 and 5 and level 6, through three sub-areas: establishing progression

routes to HE, twinning projects for innovation and digitalisation, and a system to measure vertical and horizontal job relevance of programmes.

- **Recommendation 11** concerns operationalising the VNFIL and micro-credentials to foster CVET appeal, through three sub-areas: making VNFIL and micro-credentials operational, designing a concept for non-formal education and developing inclusive speciality programmes for disadvantaged learners.

1. Introduction

1.1 The focus of the report

This report aims to review access to and attractiveness of the VET⁴ system in Armenia. The analysis covers the identification of main issues and related policy responses, and of policy gaps vis-à-vis access to and attractiveness of both IVET and CVET, and the proposition of a set of policy recommendations to bridge these gaps.

In 2022, the ETF launched a new round of the Torino Process (TRP 2022-2024), with a specific focus on lifelong learning. TRP has two main objectives: to monitor the performance of education and training systems regarding the creation and maintenance of good and equitable opportunities for lifelong learning - LLL ('TRP Level 1: monitoring of system performance') and to review the policies which influence that performance so that it can recommend improvements ('TRP Level 2: reviews of policies for LLL').

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

Following the Azeri military operation in September 2023, more than 100,000 refugees arrived in Armenia from Nagorno Karabakh, requiring both immediate assistance and longer-term support. Among them are more than 21,000 school-aged children. Since 3 November 2023, children have been enrolled in the Armenian school system⁵. Given the timeframe, the present review could not address the impact on access to VET that these recent developments are likely to have on the system.

1.2 The structure of the report

The report is composed of three chapters. The introduction, which presents the context of the review through the findings of the TRP Level 1, with a specific focus on the key areas of access to initial and continuing VET and the attractiveness of VET programmes, as well as system management, resources and teaching/learning resources. Chapter 2 consists of the review of the main policy areas related to the establishment of national lifelong learning framework, access to and attractiveness of IVET and CVET (including the ALMP framework). After a short presentation of the issues, an account of the gaps identified in the policy responses to address LLL framework, access, and attractiveness is presented. The third and final chapter proposes a set of policy recommendations in the short, medium, and long-term related to the operationalization and coherence of LLL in the country and to the specific topics of access and attractiveness.

⁴ Considering the CEDEFOP definition of access to education and training as 'conditions, circumstances or requirements (such as qualifications, education level, competences or work experience) governing admittance to, and participation of an individual in, learning' (CEDEFOP, 'Access to education and training', *Terminology of European education and training policy*,) and 'the factors and characteristics that impact on attractiveness such as relevance of IVET programmes to the labour market, quality assurance, recognised qualifications' (CEDEFOP, 2014. *Attractiveness of initial vocational education and training: identifying what matters*, Research paper No 39, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 31).

⁵ UNICEF, 'Two-thirds of refugee children in Armenia enrolled in school, efforts must now focus on expanding access to education for all children', Press release, 24 October 2023. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/armenia/en/press-releases/two-thirds-refugee-children-armenia-enrolled-school-efforts-must-now-focus-expanding>

1.3 The methodology

In the **preparatory phase**, the relevant stakeholders were identified for the review, all relevant documentation regarding the country context was compiled, and a questionnaire for the field mission and an intervention plan, including the time frame, were drafted, in close collaboration with the national coordinator. A **desk research phase** followed in which the ETF review team, in preparation for the first mission, gathered and reviewed all relevant available documentation on the VET system in Armenia, with particular focus on the subjects in question. The **field phase**, conducted in the period from 12 to 21 June 2023, had three objectives: a) to gather additional information which would help to either validate or fine-tune the findings from the desk phase; b) to offer the opportunity to consult directly with key stakeholders, facilitating discussions and reflection on the findings with decision makers and involved institutions; and c) to present preliminary suggestions for further action in the selected policy areas.

Two main activities were carried out to accomplish the field mission's objectives, the first being the 'Torino Process: Towards Lifelong Learning National Launch Meeting' on 14 June 2023. The following activities were conducted at the meeting: i) presentation of the new Torino Process methodology and implementation modality; ii) presentation and discussion of the preliminary results of level 1 (system performance monitoring) and on the related possible gaps as input to level 2 (review of lifelong learning policy); iii) discussion and agreement on the different aspects of access and attractiveness on which to focus analysis, including the implementation calendar and modality.

The second set of activities consisted of field visits and focus group discussions with relevant stakeholders on the issues of access and attractiveness identified during the 'Torino Process: Towards Lifelong Learning National Launch Meeting'.

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

In the **process of preparing the review report** all results from the desk and field phases were brought into a report, the structure of which was agreed with the TRP process coordination team. A first draft of the report was submitted for comments to the national coordinator and her team, after which the final version was disseminated and discussed with all concerned national and international stakeholders in a workshop held on 22 November 2023 in Yerevan. The report was substantially reviewed to incorporate the input received by the country stakeholders. A final review of the report has been done by the ETF Editorial Board before publication.

Please see detailed methodology at the following link: [TRP6 reviews methodology final for discussion edited_EN.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#).

1.4 The Torino Process findings from the VET policy and system performance monitoring

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

Establishment of the national lifelong learning framework

The allocation of resources, teaching, learning, and management within the VET system in Armenia present several challenges. A significant portion of the operating budget, over 90 %, is mostly consumed by staff salaries and building maintenance costs, leaving a minimal amount for infrastructure or quality improvements. Consequently investments, excluding those from the EU budget support, are insufficient to enhance the building conditions and teaching-learning infrastructure and the quality of VET provision.

State scholarships for preliminary and middle VET students are meagre, failing to make studies at VET institutions more affordable. Many VET institutions are housed in obsolete and deteriorated buildings. These structures require substantial investments for maintenance and winter heating.

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

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

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

Access to initial and continuing VET

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

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

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

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

Attractiveness of initial and continuing VET

VET in Armenia faces challenges in its appeal, especially among general education school graduates. In 2021, only 5.28 % of basic and secondary school graduates chose preliminary VET programmes, with 19.92 % opting for middle VET. For secondary school graduates, the figures are even lower. Between 2019 and 2021, a mere 6.3 % of these graduates preferred middle VET, while a significant 84 % pursued higher education.

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

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

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

1.5 Context

Armenia is a landlocked country located in Transcaucasia with a territory of 29,743 km². As of 1 July 2023, the population comprised 2,985,100 people. The country consists of 10 administrative-territorial units (Marz) and the capital city of Yerevan with special status. The share of urban population is about 63.7 %⁶. In 2022, the age groups 15-19 and 20-24 represented respectively 6 % and 5.4 % of the total population⁷.

Economic growth has been strong in Armenia since 2017 (7.5 %), which was moderated in 2021 (5.7 %) after a severe lockdown in 2020 (-7.2 %)⁸. In 2022, GDP growth reached 12.6 per cent, driven largely by private consumption powered by exceptionally high inflows of people and funds from Russia and contributing to a decrease in the unemployment rate to 11.6 % in mid-2022 against 15.5 % at the end of 2021. This is expected to drive a substantial reduction in the UMIC poverty line (USD 6.85/day, 2017) from 51.7 per cent in 2021 to 41.8 per cent in 2022⁹.

In 2021, the main sectors contributing to the country (% of GDP) are imports of goods and services (44 %), exports of goods and services (35 %), industry (including construction) (27 %), and agriculture, forestry, and fishing (11 %)¹⁰.

In 2017, 99.8 % of all firms in Armenia's non-financial business economy were SMEs¹¹. Moreover, 94 % of Armenian enterprises are micro-enterprises with fewer than ten employees, more than half (58 %) of which are non-employers¹². In 2019, the share of SMEs (0-249 employees) represented 99.8 %, generating 65.4 % of value added and 69.7 % of employment¹³. Five sectors of the economy represent 64 % of employment: agriculture - 22 %; wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles - 12 %; education - 11 %; manufacturing 10 %; public administration and defence and compulsory social security - 9 %¹⁴. In 2021, women represented 38 % of total employed people¹⁵.

1.6 Main elements of VET

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

⁶ Statistical Committee of Armenia, 2023. *Permanent population figures of the Republic of Armenia* as of 1 July 2023, p. 4.

⁷ Statistical Committee of Armenia, 2022. *The Demographic Handbook of Armenia*, p. 55.

⁸ GDP growth (annual %) – Armenia. World Bank national accounts data and OECD National Accounts data files. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=AM>

⁹ The World Bank in Armenia. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/armenia/overview#3>

¹⁰ Armenia, 'Country Profile'. https://databank.worldbank.org/views/reports/reportwidget.aspx?Report_Name=CountryProfile&Id=b450fd57&tbar=y&dd=y&inf=n&zm=n&country=ARM

¹¹ European Commission, 2019. Small Business Act for Europe 2019, *SBA Fact Sheet ARMENIA*, p. 2.

¹² OECD, 2018. *Compendium of Enterprise Statistics in Armenia 2018*, p. 12.

¹³ 2021 SME country fact sheet Armenia. Brief introduction https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-09/armenia_-_sme_fact_sheet_2021.pdf

¹⁴ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2022. *Labour market in Armenia, 2022*, p. 205.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 173.

In the 2022/2023 academic year there were 23 functioning educational institutions delivering preliminary (craftsmanship) vocational education programmes involving 6,456 students¹⁶. In the same academic year, 33,230 students were involved in 99 institutions providing middle vocational education and training, out of which 16 are private institutions¹⁷ schooling 2,420 students.

Among the 83 State middle vocational education institutions, 80 operate under the supervision of the MoESCS, 1 under the supervision of the Civil Aviation Committee of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure (CAC-MTAI), and 2 under the Ministry of Internal Affairs (previously Police).

Preliminary vocational (craftsmanship) education is mostly implemented in craftsmanship schools, while middle vocational education can be implemented at middle vocational educational institutions, colleges. All public VET institutions have a status of State Non-Commercial Organisations (SNCO) acting in accordance with the corresponding law¹⁸.

Continuing VET is mainly organised in the framework of the labour market policies implemented by the Unified Social Services (USS) of the MoLSA, responsible for employment policies for vulnerable populations, as well as by VET institutions funded by participants on a commercial basis or with donor organisations.

VET policy directions and priority actions are guided by the 'Education Development Programme until 2030 of the Republic of Armenia'¹⁹ (Education 2030), the 'Programme of the Government of the Republic of Armenia 2021-2026'²⁰, and the action plan for implementation of Education 2030²¹. The Law on Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education and Training (2005) is the main regulatory document defining the conditions of VET provisions and the role of stakeholders, which serves as a basis for an extensive number of by-laws regulating different aspects of VET. A new law on VET education is currently under discussion at the National Assembly.

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

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

Institutional cooperation between MoESCS, MoLSA, other ministries, trade unions, and employers take place at central level through the National Council for VET (NCVD) and at local level through the governing boards of the institutions. The NCVD, which includes representatives from government institutions, employer organisations and trade unions, is a national level public-private partnership for VET and skills provision. The NCVD advises the MoESCS in preparing development programmes, in promoting the effectiveness of reforms in the sector and in reinforcing social partnership.

The governing boards of VET institutions comprise representatives from the student body, social partner organisations, local institutions, employment offices, and other stakeholders. The boards approve institutions' budgets, development (business) plans, tuition fees, and internal regulations, elect the directors, heads of both preliminary and middle VET institutions, etc.

¹⁶ National Statistical Service of Armenia. *Preliminary (craftsmanship) vocational education in 2022/2023 academic year. Social - economic situation in the Republic of Armenia in January-March 2023.*

¹⁷ National Statistical Service of Armenia. *Middle vocational education in 2022/2023 academic year. Social - economic situation in the Republic of Armenia in January-March 2023.*

¹⁸ Law on State Non-Commercial Organisations, ՅՕ-248.

¹⁹ Law 'On approval of the State Programme for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030' from 12 December 2022, ՅՕ-441-Ն.

²⁰ Appendix to RA Government Decision №1363-N from 18 August 2021.

²¹ Appendix 1 of RA Government Decision № 351-L from 16 March 2023.

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

Since 2017, public spending on education in Armenia has hovered around 2.0-2.3 per cent of GDP, being 2.1 % in 2021²², which is about 2 times lower than the average for upper-middle-income countries and 2.5 times lower than the average among European and Central Asian countries²³.

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

The process of state licensing is carried out by a specialised department of the MoESCS and aims to determine the necessary threshold conditions for the implementation of VET programmes.

The internal quality assurance system is of the utmost importance. Self-assessment reports issued by the internal quality assurance system for institutional accreditation are publicly available on the website of accredited institutions, while experts' reports are available on the site of the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation (ANQA), an independent organisation founded by the RA government in 2008²⁴. A member of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), ANQA implements quality assurance processes through institutional and programme accreditation in preliminary, vocational, and higher educational institutions, as well as fosters continuous quality enhancement in the education system, promoting the autonomy and accountability of institutions.

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

Institutional accreditation is the state recognition that academic programmes and quality assurance procedures of VET institutions correspond to state academic standards and institutional accreditation criteria. Institutional accreditation evaluates the effectiveness of VET institution operations, as well as finding out whether they are in compliance with their mission, whether they follow the policy of continuous improvement, and enhance the development of implemented academic programmes.

²² National Statistical Service of Armenia, 2023. *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia 2022*, p. 452.

²³ World Bank Group, 2019. *Country partnership framework for the Republic of Armenia for the period FY19–FY23*, Report No. 123902-AM, 28 February 2019, p. 11.

²⁴ <https://www.anqa.am/en/about-us/#Mission>

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

2.1 Lifelong learning national framework

This section delves into three areas: funding, teaching & learning, and management, chosen for their pivotal roles in shaping a LLL system. These three elements are interlinked and directly influencing the scope and quality of skills provision, and thereby access and attractiveness.

Their interplay is critical for addressing the challenges and opportunities, making their discussion not only relevant but essential for understanding the broader context of lifelong learning.

State funding of VET provision

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

Among the expenditure lines devoted to the VET system, student subsidies take up more than 90 % of the budget allocations (see Appendix 3, Table 10). The law on VET defines student subsidies as 'compensation of the tuition fees based on the state budget funding, allocations by vocational education institution and other legal and physical entities'²⁵, which are 'only covering the staff salaries and buildings maintenance costs (not always fully)²⁶. Under these conditions, investments from the State budget (except those made within the EU budget support programme) for improvements to the building conditions of VET institutions and teaching/learning infrastructure are insufficient. For instance, in the 2021 State budget, the amount devoted to 'Improvement of buildings and facilities of the preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education institutions' represents only 2.27 % of the total amount devoted to the VET system (see Table 10 in Appendix 3).

In comparison to the 2019/2020 academic year, the share of students studying on a paid basis increased by 119.44 % and 126.46 % respectively for students in preliminary and middle level professional education institutions. At the same time, the share of students studying on a free tuition basis decreased by 8.68 % and 6.16 % respectively for students in preliminary and middle level professional education institutions. For the 2022/2023 academic year, students enrolled in paid tuition represent 9.6 % and 42.8 % respectively at preliminary and middle VET institutions and 37.4 % at all VET institutions (see Appendix 3, Table 11). For the 2021/2022 academic year, 91 % and 36.5 % of students respectively in preliminary and middle VET institutions received monthly State scholarships, mainly 4000 AMD and less (about 10 euros).

The amount of State scholarships provided to preliminary and middle VET students is low and does not contribute to the affordability of studies at VET institutions. To increase the involvement of students in IVET professions considered as a priority for the country, an increased amount of scholarship to 10 times more than that currently paid to the majority of students has been decided by the Government (see point 2.3.). The capital/investment budget, which is presented in Appendix 3, Table 10, shows the slightly increased budgets for improvements to buildings and facilities of the preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education institutions in 2021 compared with the previous years, but with large cuts in 2019 and 2020.

²⁵ RA Law on Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education, RO-164-U, Article 3.

²⁶ ETF, 2019. *Torino Process Armenia National Report 2018–2020*, p. 71.

Teaching and learning at IVET (including innovation and digitalisation)

In terms of the teaching and learning environment, despite the efforts of the NCVETD – publishing more than 100 manuals for various education fields available in electronic form on the organisation's website (<https://mkuzak.am/>) – the lack of quality textbooks, in particular in Armenian, remains an issue. As a result, for many specialties, obsolete literature is still in use. The use of textbooks, teaching and learning materials in foreign languages, especially available in electronic form, is also limited due to students' and teaching staff's poor knowledge of foreign languages. The experience of the National Centre for Education Technologies (NCET) with the organisation of online teaching and learning for secondary education school in remote areas, as well as with the SELFIE project (being piloted by ETF in cooperation with JRC) could be extended to VET towards the introduction of innovative digital teaching learning methods and tools.

Management of VET institutions

VET institutions enjoy a large degree of autonomy in terms of financial and academic freedom as they approve their own budgets and curricula and define the teaching means and methods via the governing boards.

According to point 5 of Article 18.1 of the Law on Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education and Training (2005), a VET institution director can be selected or nominated as a person having higher education, relevant experience, and at least five years of experience in pedagogical work in the last 10 years; at least three years of experience in educational management; etc. In addition, the candidates for nomination or election to the position of director need to present the certificate of ability to manage a VET institution, issued after completing specific training carried out by organisations recommended by MoESCS. This certificate of ability to manage a VET institution is issued for five years.

It is worth mentioning that apart from the abovementioned entry requirements, there is no other mechanism to evaluate the adequacy of VET institution directors' qualifications with the tasks required by the position.

Furthermore, beside the annual report to the management board, there is no mechanism to evaluate the job performance of VET institution directors.

According to justifications for the 2021-2026 action plan of the Government of the Republic of Armenia, 'one of the priorities of the reforms conducted in the post-secondary vocational education (PSVE) sector is the strengthening of human resources through trainings. In this regard, trainings for the PSVE administrative, pedagogical staff and members of the management board of VET institutions have been carried out every year; during the last three years, trainings have been provided for the employees of the PSVE system and persons of other staff involved in the work of that system, during which about 3000 people have undergone training. But there is still a lot to be done to develop the professional abilities'²⁷.

The report on the implementation of the Government Programme for 2021-2026 states that in line with action #14.1. 'Training of members of the administrative, management boards, representatives of branch and sectoral associations involved in different working groups, pedagogical staff of institutions providing preliminary vocational (handicraft) and secondary vocational education', 1072 people in total were trained in 2022, of which 85.2 % were pedagogical staff²⁸.

²⁷ Appendix 2 of RA Government Decision № 1902-L from 18 November 2021, p 448.

²⁸ Report on implementation of the actions plan of the Government Programme for 2021-2026 in 2022.

Policy gaps with respect to the LLL framework policy responses

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

There have been three main **policy innovations** aimed at supporting access to quality VET provision in recent years. First, the introduction of mandatory 12-year secondary education in 2017, which created more demand for VET professions combining the provision of secondary education and professional skills. While the quality of this combined provision needs to be assessed, especially in terms of achieving expected learning outcomes/skills, an increase in the number of admissions of graduates of basic schools in VET institutions can be observed. Second, the drafting in 2022 of two documents: 'Assessment of VET needs in Republic of Armenia per professions and development perspectives' and 'Revision of list of VET professions per regions and administrative units' which will serve as the basis for distribution of admission places. Third, the revision of the procedure on the organisation of distance education adopted in 2020 by decision of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports.

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

In line with these policy priorities and direction, the share of specialties taught on the basis of the WBL model and VET institutions providing WBL programmes is planned to amount to respectively 22 % and 23.8 % by 2030 against 8.4 % of the specialties delivered through pilot dual education programmes in 2022.

Promotion of excellence in the content and implementation of IVET and CVET

Six main activities are foreseen in the action plan for implementation of Education 2030, as shown in Appendix 3, Table 12. Among these the following specifically promote excellence: (i) introducing components of the quality assurance system of preliminary and middle VET education in accordance with licensing, institutional certification, programme accreditation, international standards, and the criteria developed; (ii) introducing training/retraining and certification systems for educators in the field of preliminary and middle VET education, promoting capacity development, and linking capacity development to an increased rate of payment; (iii) creation of preliminary and middle VET-related resource centres; (iv) improvement of building conditions of VET institutions according to the results of the mapping and identified priorities; and (v) supplying and modernising the resources of the VET institutions according to the results of the mapping and identified priorities.

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

State Funding of VET Provision

To bolster the financial resources of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system, the Armenian government could envisage a strategy to diversify the system funding in close cooperation with social partners. VET financing diversification is of the utmost importance to improve the coverage and the quality of both IVET and CVET. It could take many forms, such as a training levy, public-private partnerships (PPPs), extension of WBL, schools income generation, household participation (when relevant), etc., or a mix of all these possibilities²⁹.

Teaching and Learning Methods at IVET (Including Innovation and Digitalisation)

The modernisation of teaching and learning methods is crucial for the evolution of initial VET. This can be achieved by initiating pilot projects that stress digitalisation and innovative specialties, offering flexible learning modalities outside traditional school settings. Collaborative public-private partnerships (PPPs) can be instrumental in funding and managing facilities, equipment, WBL placements, and integrating company employees into the educational process. Additionally, a comprehensive review and the implementation of digital teaching methodologies and resources are necessary. The existing professional literature and curricula should be assessed, with recommendations for updates.

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

Management of VET Institutions

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

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

Identified issues regarding access to IVET/CVET

When applying to enter VET institutions, applicants make a choice between preliminary (craftsmanship) or middle vocational education programmes, depending on the employment (craftsperson or middle level manager) and further education perspectives.

According to data on student admissions to VET institutions, the share of students admitted to paid places³⁰ both at preliminary (six months to three years) and middle VET (two to five years) levels is in stable increase and has doubled since 2019, representing in 2022 11.6 % and 47.8 % respectively of the total admitted students, against 5.4 % and 22.3 % in 2019 (see Appendix 3, Table 1).

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

²⁹ Please see also [Guide to ETF financing prism.pdf \(europa.eu\)](#)

³⁰ Unless mentioned otherwise, the data presented on students is retrieved from publications of the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia on the social situation in RA in January-March in 2019; 2020; 2021; 2022 and 2023 concerning preliminary, middle vocational, and higher education. www.armstat.am

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

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

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

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

In comparison to 2018, the number of free tuition places allocated for VET within institutions under the coordination of MoESCS decreased in 2022 both for preliminary and middle VET programmes, respectively 14 % and 7.6 %, while the free tuition places devoted to institutions delivering VET programmes under the coordination of the Police and Civil Aviation Committee of the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure increased respectively six and five times (see Appendix 3, Table 4).

Taking into account the high share of paid places both in preliminary and middle VET institutions (Tables 1 and 2), the level of tuition fees (on average about 100,000 AMD for preliminary and 250,000 AMD for middle VET professions) along with the other necessary expenditures (e.g. for transportation which is specifically relevant to rural youth who need to travel every day reach the VET institutions located in the towns) continue to be a serious obstacle to increasing access to VET.

Considering data provided in the 'State Programme for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030' (Education 2030), access to both VET and higher education for disadvantaged groups (including people with disabilities) remains a serious issue: 'According to the comprehensive household survey, in 2018, 82.8 % of students in higher education institutions were from non-poor, 17.2 % were from poor (excluding the extremely poor), and 0 % were from extremely poor households'³¹.

Several constraints also remain in the domain of increasing the access of students with special educational needs to the IVET system³², such as (i) insufficient legal framework of the VET sector and metrological guidelines ensuring regulation of stakeholders' relations involved in the implementation of inclusive education; (ii) lack of necessary resources to adapt the current facilities at VET institutions, building new adapted facilities, purchasing and installing corresponding equipment, developing human, methodological and didactic resources; (iii) absence of system and staff for specialised services, including for pedagogical and psychological support; (iv) limited awareness of teaching and administrative staff of VET institutions about work methodology for learners with special educational needs; (v) lack of specialists (special teacher, psychologist, teacher for the deaf, occupational therapist, social worker, etc.) for effective implementation of inclusive education; (vi) absence of systemic work for professional orientation of persons with special educational needs at general education schools; (vii) absence of requirements for mandatory training of pedagogical and administrative staff of VET institutions and lack of programmes for the development of the skills needed for effective implementation of inclusive education; (viii) lack of awareness raising activities

³¹ Appendix of the law of the RA 'On approval of the State Programme for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030' from 12 December 2022, ՅՕ-441-Ն, p. 7.

³² World Vision, 2021. *Description of current conditions for ensuring inclusion in the system of VET in the Republic of Armenia and ways to face issues*, p. 9-11.

among persons with specific educational needs and their families on benefits and availability of VET programmes; and finally, (ix) the geographical distribution of VET schools hinders accessibility to VET.

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

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

- mandatory training implemented in accordance with the requirements of the law, e.g., for civil servants or other categories of public employees (judges, police officers, military servants, teachers, etc.) and paid by the State budget,
- continuing vocational education and training proposed by USS, agency of the MoLSA targeting specific population groups considered vulnerable (registered unemployed, disabled persons, young mothers without a profession, prisoners, demobilised soldiers, etc.),
- training courses provided by companies for their own staff or job applicants,
- commercial training courses (vocational and non-vocational) provided by private companies as services to the population or other private or public customers,
- targeted courses carried out by different international organisations and projects, including those of a charitable nature,
- various preparatory courses, including private tutoring activities.

CVET programmes at VET institutions are mainly funded in three ways: i) by participants on a commercial basis; ii) by donor organisations; iii) through the State budget in the framework of vocational training proposed by USS, and iv) by companies.

Below are examples of CVET programmes delivered in the framework of projects funded by donor organisations.

- In the framework of the Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training South Caucasus Programme (PSD TVET) implemented by GIZ, 12 short-term dual VET courses were piloted (three in 2022) at four VET colleges, responding to the needs of private sector companies. These short-term courses (duration four to five months) are mainly focused on introducing new specialties allowing quick solutions to reduce the gap and demands for specific skills needed by private business³³.
- The ‘Transition from Education to Employment’ project funded by EU and implemented by the NGO People in Need aims to pilot apprenticeships schemes in short non-formal courses in agriculture and textile through enhancement of the capacities of four VET institutions in the Shirak region³⁴.
- In the framework of EU4Youth - SAY YES Skills for Jobs project carried out by World Vision Armenia in partnership with Global Developments Fund short-term curricula for four professions - ‘cheese making’, ‘wine making’, ‘agro-machinery maintenance’, and ‘veterinary’ - were developed in beneficiary colleges within the corresponding professions³⁵.
- Funded by a broad coalition of international and local organisations led by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Switzerland, MAVETA project is implemented to assist the Government of Armenia to reform the VET system in Armenia in agriculture. The project seeks to train young people so that their knowledge is directly useful for their future professional career, as hired professionals or self-employed. Practical learning in companies and farms is combined with modern cutting-edge knowledge learned in colleges with a special focus on dual education. The

³³ ‘Dual education – guaranteed employment! Results and Stories’. Presentation provided by GIZ within Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training South Caucasus (PSD TVET) Programme.

³⁴ Transition from Education to Employment. <https://armenia.peopleinneed.net/en/our-work/education-skills>

³⁵ World Vision's work-based learning initiatives in Armenia. <https://www.wvi.org/stories/armenia/world-visions-work-based-learning-initiatives-armenia>

selected professions include veterinary specialist, milk and dairy technologist, farmer, agricultural machinery, milk farm manager, orchard workers / nut and fruit farmers³⁶.

The 49 regional employment centres of the USS of the MoLSA - covering the whole territory of Armenia - oversee the professional training of persons belonging to unemployed, disabled, or other vulnerable groups. However, the physical accessibility of these courses is subject to available funding provided by the State budget, and the volume of planned vocational training for people belonging to identified vulnerable groups is insignificant compared to their number. As an example, for non-formal learning within the employment regulation adopted by the Government in the 2021 State Budget, 63,875 thousand AMD (about 160,000 euros) for vocational training of unemployed persons, prisoners, persons at risk of dismissal and 113,454 thousand AMD (about 284,000 euros) for mothers without a profession were allocated (including payment of salaries during the training period)³⁷. The volume of planned vocational training for registered unemployed, disabled persons, and prisoners is also insignificant regarding registered unemployed (61,356 in July 2021³⁸) for instance: 434 beneficiaries in total, of which 43 persons with disabilities³⁹.

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

The MoESCS does not possess comprehensive data on either the nature and the volume of CVET programmes organised by VET institutions on a commercial basis or supported by donor organisations, or on the programmes supported by the State budget in the framework of employment regulation and organised by USS.

According to the interviewed VET institution directors, only a limited number of individuals are interested in the CVET programmes on offer, especially in regions outside the capital, thereby limiting the opportunities for VET institutions to generate extra-budgetary funds. Another issue hampering the development of CVET implementation is the absence of mandatory certification of almost all CVET related programmes, which leads to low interest on the part of companies.

Policy responses and possible gaps related to access

The paid places

The admission to IVET programmes is organised based on available places for VET professions^{40 41} (free and paid tuition) annually defined by a government decree and according to the procedure of admission to institutions delivering VET programmes⁴². In line with the admissions procedure, enrolment for a limited number of free tuition places is based on average scores for the certificate of basic or secondary education, of the diploma supplement of VET or higher education, as well as on the score of the competition subject, if any, depending on the VET profession. Therefore, mostly candidates with higher scores have access to free places and the availability of free tuition places is the main basic condition for accessibility to IVET programmes.

Inclusive learner-centred education environment

The creation of a universal inclusive learner-centred education environment is one of the strategic directions of Education 2030 targeting 'ensuring universal provision of accessible and affordable

³⁶ 'CHF 8.3 mln. for professional education in agriculture in Armenia: Switzerland joins forces with Austria and Germany.' <https://www.eda.admin.ch/countries/armenia/en/home/news/news.html/content/countries/armenia/en/meta/news/2022/september/chf-8-3-mln--for-professional-education-in-agriculture-in-armeni>

³⁷ Law on 2021 State Budget.

³⁸ Appendix 1 of RA Government Decision №1589-L from 30 September 2021.

³⁹ Appendix 3 of RA Government Decision №1589-L from 30 September 2021.

⁴⁰ RA Government Decision № 1139-N from 1 October 2015.

⁴¹ RA Government Decision № 977-N from 6 September 2018.

⁴² Minister of Education and Science Order № 254-N, 5.4.2012. <https://www.arlis.am/documentview.aspx?docid=76154>
Last modified by Minister of Education, Science Culture and Sports Order № 62-N 12.8.2021.

educational institutions (preschool, general education, and VET) and programmes⁴³. There are specific measures that target participation of disadvantaged groups in VET and higher education who benefit from free tuition education upon passing the entrance examinations (if any):

- children left without parental care⁴⁴
- first and second-degree handicapped children⁴⁵
- children and spouses of deceased and first-degree handicapped military servants
- those who became first and second-degree disabled during military service and children of service persons who died on military service⁴⁶.

The achievements in the domain of social inclusion within the VET system can be summarised as follows⁴⁷:

- A legal basis for country-wide inclusive education⁴⁸ has been established and the country's commitments for ensuring internationally defined pre-conditions has been consolidated.
- One of three strategic directions is set up for implementation of Education 2030, which is the 'creation of a universally inclusive, learner-centred educational environment, which at the different stages of human life span will provide people all across the Republic of Armenia with quality and effective educational services, customised to one's individual development and personal traits, as well as participative citizenship'.
- Lessons learned from experience of implementing the universal inclusive education in the general education system according to the action plan and Schedule for Introducing Integrated Inclusive Education System in Armenia for the period until 2022 was approved by the Government in 2016.
- At least four special education institutions in Yerevan and at least one in the regions of Armenia have been reorganised as regional pedagogical-psychological support centres for learners with special educational needs.
- The law on VET foresees equal opportunities to deliver VET programmes, particularly via the establishment of conditions for those with special educational needs and for their inclusion in mainstream education, in all VET institutions.
- Modular VET programmes have been designed to allow flexibility of education for learners with special educational needs.
- Implementation of WBL is a policy priority, with models that can contribute to increasing the possibilities for further employment of students with special educational needs.

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

Recently the Government decided to increase the amount of student scholarships to encourage admission to IVET programmes in the fields considered as priority for the country. The Government has decided that for the 2023/2024 school year there are 1379 places in preliminary vocational (craftmanship) education and 785 places in middle VET professions. The distribution between those professions is shown in Appendix 3, box 1. This list represents the priority and serves as the basis for an increased portion of government grants. Thus, starting from the 2023/2024 academic year students

⁴³ Appendix of the law on 'State Program for Development of Education of the Republic of Armenia until 2030', 13 December 2022, ՌՕ-441-Ն, p. 46.

⁴⁴ Law about social protection of children left without parental care, 24 September 2002, ՌՕ-411-Ն, Article 7.

⁴⁵ Law of RA on social protection of the disabled people, 14 April 1993, ՌՕ-57, Article 15.

⁴⁶ Law about military service and the status of a serviceperson, 15 November 2017, ՌՕ-195-Ն, Article 67.

⁴⁷ World Vision, 2021. *Description of current conditions for ensuring inclusion in the system of VET in the Republic of Armenia and ways to face issues*, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Law of RA 'On additions and modifications in the law of Republic of Armenian on Secondary Education', 1 December 2014, ՌՕ-200-Ն.

in these professions will receive a total of 50,000 AMD, instead of the previous 4,750 AMD. The priority places represent 40.1 % and 12.9 % of the total free tuition places defined for admission respectively to preliminary and middle VET professions in 2023⁴⁹.

In terms of access to VET, Education 2030 foresees the objective of ‘expansion of preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle vocational education (VET); development of accessible, inclusive and safe environments, and ensuring access to all population groups’ as a final target in 2030. To achieve this objective, the following activities with corresponding results are foreseen⁵⁰:

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

The Law on Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education and Training (law on VET) defines supplementary (continuing) education as ‘education process beyond the framework of main (initial) vocational educational programmes, targeted at improving professional qualities, ensuring professional re-qualification, upgrading and complementing the qualification of a person’⁵¹. Thus, the purpose of supplementary education is to improve, update, and complement previously obtained (foregoing) knowledge, skills, competences, and values throughout the entire life of a person in order to meet the professional and individual educational needs and shall be considered as means of ensuring non-formal learning⁵².

A Concept of Lifelong Learning in Armenia was adopted by the Government in 2009 based on the analysis of the lifelong learning situation in Armenia, the identification of problems and challenges, and the formulation of several solutions⁵³. In 2012, the Strategy of Supplementary and Continuing Education in Armenia was adopted by the MoESCS⁵⁴.

Several legal documents regulating the practical implementation of supplementary (continuing) educational programmes have been adopted over time. Article 201.1. of the RA Labour Code

⁴⁹ Appendix 3 of RA Government Decision № 1289-N from 27 July 2023.

⁵⁰ Appendix 1 of RA Government Decision № 351-L from 16 March 2023.

⁵¹ Law on Preliminary (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education and Training, 2005, ՌՕ-164-Ն, Article 3.

⁵² Law on Education, 1999, ՌՕ-297, Article 26.

⁵³ Appendix of RA Government Protocol Decision № 43 from 15 October 2009.

⁵⁴ Order № 1163-A/Q of the Minister of Education and Science from 20 December 2012.

regulating in-service vocational training specifies: 'the employer has the right to organise a training of an apprentice or a candidate for recruitment up to six months of duration on his own expenses, within the company, or elsewhere. A scholarship shall be paid to the trainee. The said sum shall at least be identical to the monthly minimum salary stipulated by the law'⁵⁵. This sum considered as entrepreneurial expenses as defined by point 28 of first part of the Article 4 of the Tax Code can be reduced from the gross income of the company in question subject to profit tax. Thus, according to Article 121 of the Tax Code of the Republic of Armenia 'gross income is reduced directly by the taxpayer or by the amount of expenses that are carried out on research and (or) experimental design activities and services upon the order of the taxpayer, during the full tax year of the costs'⁵⁶. In the case where education and staff capacity building activities (training) are considered experimental design activities and services, these two provisions are tax incentives for companies wishing to organise in-service vocational training for employees and thus contribute to the accessibility of CVET.

The Law of the Republic of Armenia on State Non-Commercial Organisations allows VET institutions to deliver continuing VET programmes as entrepreneurial activities defined by its founder⁵⁷. Thus, according to the Government decision, state colleges are allowed to carry out continuing (supplementary) VET programmes targeting staff training, capacity building, and qualification development⁵⁸.

In 2015, the Government adopted two regulations, namely on the 'Organisation and Implementation of Supplementary (Continuing) Educational Programmes' and the 'Assessment and Recognition of the Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes'⁵⁹, which define the conditions of organisation and implementation of continuing education programmes by providers registered in the 'National register of training'.

These policy and implementation documents with definitions that 'contain a number of conceptual mistakes or at least uncertainties'⁶⁰ do not present a comprehensive and coherent vision and a legal basis for the delivery and assessment of informal and non-formal learning, as well as for the recognition and certification of their learning outcomes in line with current policy priorities of the education sector, thus contributing to access to CVET. Furthermore, the majority of issues defined in the concept of LLL, like 'insufficient funding of lifelong learning, weak coordination and management of LLL sector management, absence of statistical data regarding LLL persist'⁶¹, which has substantially limited their implementation.

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

As a result, the organisation and delivery of CVET programmes at VET institutions is mainly funded by participants on a commercial basis or through donor organisations, thus limiting the access to CVET programmes.

In 2022, the amendment to the Law on Education was initiated within the Standing Committee on Science, Education, Culture, Diaspora, Youth and Sport of the Parliament of Armenia aimed at 'resolving the legislative crisis, strengthening the processes of organising and implementing additional educational programs, as well as more effectively implementing State policy in the field of assessment, recognition and certification of the results of informal and non-formal learning, as well as ensuring the fulfilment of the international obligations'. In particular, the creation of a 'National register of training', as a national database for supplementary educational programmes and course providers,

⁵⁵ RA Labour Code, ՅՕ-124-Ն, Article 201.1.

⁵⁶ RA Tax Code, ՅՕ-165-Ն, Article 121, Part 6.

⁵⁷ Law of the RA on State Non-Commercial Organisations, RA National Assembly, ՅՕ-248, Article 6.

⁵⁸ RA Government Decision № 1009-N from 20 June 2002.

⁵⁹ Appendix 1 and 2 of RA Government Decision № 1062-N from 10 September 2015.

⁶⁰ ETF, 2019. Torino Process Armenia National Report 2018–2020, p. 22.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

persons participating in courses, getting assessed and certified, as well as of persons in charge of monitoring the progress of courses, assessment of the results of informal and non-formal training⁶².

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

Policy recommendations related to access to IVET/CVT

Specific recommendations for IVET

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

Specific recommendations for CVET

These cover a set of immediate measures, which can all contribute to increasing access for disadvantaged groups to the CVET system, such as: (i) the effect of the financial support and stipends to disadvantaged groups is monitored, including by means of tracer studies after completion of learning periods; (ii) by close cooperation between MoESCS and MoLSA practices from EU Member States on ‘job guarantee’ are introduced; and (iii) a strategy is elaborated by the MoESCS for the development of CVET programmes including support to VET institutions to propose short-term training to MoLSA/USS to rapidly address socio-economic developments in the country.

2.3. Attractiveness of IVET/CVET

Identified issues regarding attractiveness of IVET/CVET

Attractiveness through vertical permeability (accessibility of tertiary education for graduates of IVET/CVET)

There are two pathways for VET graduates to access higher education: i) participating in the centralised admissions examinations or ii) benefiting from admission to a second year of study for a bachelor’s degree based on academic merit. However, current procedures limit the transition of IVET graduates to higher education as admission is only granted to graduates with high academic grades and within the corresponding professions and quantities decided by Government, and on a paid basis.

Furthermore, admission to second year full time studies within a bachelor’s degree is allowed only for a given profession and there is no provision of part-time study. Therefore, the current procedure makes the transition to higher education impossible for VET graduates who do not have high academic grades, despite successful completion of VET studies which certify the acquisition of a VET qualification according to NQF.

⁶² Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports. Draft: the procedure for evaluating and recognising the results of informal and non-formal learning will be defined. <https://escs.am/am/news/12399>

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

Attractiveness through horizontal permeability (students transition between parallel IVET/CVET and general education pathways, as well as between formal and non-formal settings)

In Armenia, gross enrolment rates are 6.2 % and 13.9 % respectively for preliminary and middle VET, while more than 70 % of the labour market needs specialists with a vocational education⁶³.

The VET system is still not attractive for graduates from schools, especially secondary education schools. In 2021, only 5.28 % of graduates from basic and secondary schools were admitted to preliminary VET programmes (respectively 5.49 % and 5.47 % in 2020 and 2019), while the share of those who opted for middle VET programmes was 19.92 % (respectively 20.52 % and 16.44 % in 2020 and 2019). In total, the share of graduates from basic and secondary education schools (32,615 and 20,507 respectively) admitted in 2021 to all VET institutions was 25.2 %, with the majority of those admitted coming from basic education schools (35.33 %) against 9.08 % of newly enrolled graduates from secondary education schools (see Appendix 3, Table 6). For the same year, the share of graduates from secondary schools⁶⁴ admitted to higher education institutions was 83.91 % (respectively 88.82 % and 79.41 % in 2020 and 2019).

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

Compared to the number of secondary education graduates admitted to higher education institutions, the share of those who preferred to enter VET institutions is more than nine times lower, while the total number of students admitted to higher education institutions is 22.2 % more (see Appendix 3, Table 6).

The number of higher education students is still more than two times the number of those enrolled in VET institutions, which is also due to the traditional 'attractiveness' of higher education for both youths and their parents (see Appendix 3, Table 7).

Career guidance towards VET

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

Since 2013, career guidance activities in general and VET institutions, regional employment centres and childcare and child protection units are organised according to the career guidance and career education models and methodologies developed by CGCD. Since 2018, career guidance units are established in VET institutions supported by the State budget. Models of standard operational procedures, regulatory by-laws, and job descriptions for career guidance specialists were developed by CGCD. The centre is also in charge of continuous training for career guidance specialists at VET institutions. Currently career guidance services are functioning in all 96 VET institutions, providing career guidance services to 97.37 % of total graduates⁶⁵. At the same time, according to interviewed stakeholders, the organisation and assessment of student internships, in which career guidance services are involved, continue to be formal, using procedures and tools inherited from the soviet period.

People not in formal education, NEETs, adults, and people who are not competitive in the labour market can receive career guidance services in 49 regional centres of the USS, which operate in the capital city and in all regions of the country. However, comprehensive, and objective data on

⁶³ Appendix 2 of RA Government Decision № 351-L from 16 March 2023, p 16.

⁶⁴ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia 2022*.

⁶⁵ ETF, 2022. National career development support system review report – Armenia, pp. 9 and 35.

IVET/CVET graduate job placement or information on other career pathways for VET graduates is not available, pointing towards a need for more objectivity in job placement surveys.

It is worth mentioning that the data and methodology of the job placement surveys carried out by CGCD are not available publicly, not even on the centre's website (<http://www.mycareer.am/>).

Links between learning and the world of work

According to several studies, skills mismatches⁶⁶ are observed both vertically (when the received level of skills or education is either higher or lower than the level of skills or education required to perform a job) and horizontally (when the type of education or skills is not appropriate for the current job, but the level of education or skills matches the requirements of the job). This negatively affects the attractiveness of VET.

As reported by studies mentioned by Work Armenia Strategy among graduates of VET and higher education institutions, 'only 41 % believe that the acquired theoretical knowledge meets the requirements of their job, and 43 % believe that the acquired practical professional skills meet the requirements of the job', while 78 % of employers observed a lack of work experience and practical skills during the recruitment of young specialists⁶⁷.

In the Adult Education Survey 2020-2021 carried out by CRRCA-Armenia and DVV International, '37 % of respondents stated that they were partially or completely utilising their knowledge and skills, whereas as many as 45 % of respondents answered that they had not utilised the skills and knowledge that they had acquired during their studies' in their current job⁶⁸.

The results of the survey published by the Statistical Committee in 2022 measuring the attitude of economically inactive youth vis-à-vis the usefulness of obtained education showed that in total only 22 % of the inactive population aged 15-29 in 2021 found that their education was very useful for obtaining a job⁶⁹ (see Appendix 3, Table 8).

From the point of view of companies, '85 % of respondents believe that skill shortages negatively affect firms in their sector in terms of loss of time, financial resources, productivity, clients and quality' according to an ILO Skills Development Survey⁷⁰.

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

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

⁶⁶ EU Commission, *Skills panorama, 2015*, Skills Panorama glossary.

⁶⁷ Appendix 1 of RA Government Decision № 1753-L from 5 December 2019, Objective 1, issue 1.

⁶⁸ DVV International Armenia. Adult Education survey Armenia 2020-2021, p. 23.

⁶⁹ Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 2022. 'Youth', *Labour Market in Armenia 2018-2021*.

⁷⁰ Republican Union of Employers of Armenia, 2021. *A strategy for skills development in Armenia 2021-2025*, p. 11

programmes were implemented⁷¹. In the 2020/2021 academic year, 5 WBL-based dual education programmes were piloted in 15 VET institutions.

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

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

WBL is also addressed by other projects funded by the EU, such as:

1. Within the framework of the EU4Youth - SAY YES. Skills for Jobs project carried out by World Vision Armenia in partnership with Global Developments Fund, short-term curricula for four professions: 'cheese making', 'wine making', 'agro-machinery maintenance' and 'veterinary' were developed and capacity building training delivered to staff of the Career Counselling services, as well as four full laboratories established in beneficiary VET institutions for the same four professions⁷².
2. The 'Transition from Education to Employment' project funded by the EU and implemented by 'People in Need' NGO is aimed at piloting apprenticeships schemes in short CVET courses piloted in the agriculture and textile sectors through enhancement of the capacities of four VET institutions in Shirak region to monitor the labour market, improving cooperation with the business sector, and facilitating the introduction of WBL⁷³.
3. In the framework of the German 'Vocational Education and Training (VET) - cooperation in the South Caucasus' project implemented by Business and Education Partnership Foundation, students of different VET institutions established student companies intended to carry out commercial activities and therefore having the opportunity to learn through practice⁷⁴.

In 2022, the share of specialties delivered through pilot dual education programmes was 8.4 %, implemented by institutions which represent 7 % of total number of VET institutions⁷⁵.

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

Internationalisation of IVET

About 2 % of students enrolled in middle VET institutions were foreign citizens (see Appendix 3, Table 9), while foreign student numbers involved in higher education institutions was more than four times higher in the 2021/2022 academic year (7.6 % of the total number)⁷⁶. For both cases, the majority of foreign students are from the Armenian diaspora.

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

In 2012, Armenia joined WorldSkills. In Kazan and Lyon competitions, respectively three and four competitors participated in 2019 and 2022, within the skills in jewellery, fashion technology,

⁷¹ 'Dual education – guaranteed employment! Results and Stories'. Presentation provided by GIZ within Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training South Caucasus (PSD TVET) Programme.

⁷² World Vision's work-based learning initiatives in Armenia.

⁷³ 'Transition from Education to Employment'. <https://armenia.peopleinneed.net/en/our-work/education-skills>

⁷⁴ <https://bep.am/news>

⁷⁵ Appendix of RA Government Decision № 242 from 25, 2021.

⁷⁶ Statistical Committee of Armenia. *Statistical Yearbook of Armenia 2022*.

mechatronics, web technologies, and cooking fields. In October 2023, Armenia became a member of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA).

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

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

The non-mandatory involvement of an international expert during the institutional accreditation of VET institutions is foreseen by the ANQA procedure. However, the presence of an international expert increases by 87 % the costs of accreditation to be paid by the VET institution (3,972,000 AMD instead of 2,124,000 AMD)⁷⁷.

It is worth mentioning that poor knowledge of foreign languages (mainly English, French, or German) among staff and the limited share of staff with skills in VET internationalisation strongly limit the efforts of Armenian VET institutions towards internationalisation, which is considered as a way to increase the attractiveness of VET. In addition, the possibilities for student and staff international mobility are very limited.

Policy responses and possible gaps

Pathway flexibility

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

The implementation of the credit system in high schools started in the 2022/2023 academic year and is scheduled to be introduced in all high schools in the 2024/2025 academic year. Among the objectives of the credit system in high schools are: ensuring easy transition of students from secondary to VET and higher education institutions; and promoting comparability of third level secondary education supporting the organisation of the education process at VET and higher education institutions⁷⁸. The draft law on VET under discussion at the National Assembly foresees the implementation of the credit transfer system aimed at ensuring students' smooth mobility and possibility for further studies.

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

There is no specific regulation on the transition from VET levels 3 and 4 to level 5. The only regulation on students' transition between different levels of IVET is the procedure of student transfers from one vocational institution to another. The regulation focuses on restrictions rather than on support for

⁷⁷ National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation. 'Accreditation process and documents'. <https://www.anqa.am/en/accreditation/#Papers>

⁷⁸ Order of Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports № 39 from 27 October 2022.

students in choosing the right pathways in line with their personal and professional aspirations⁷⁹. Below are some examples:

- a student is not allowed to transfer in the first semester;
- during the transfer, changing profession is only allowed if there are no more than eight differences in subjects (modules) in the curriculum of the chosen profession;
- the transfer of a student from an accredited non-state educational institution to a state educational institution may be carried out with the permission of the Ministry on the recommendation of the director of the receiving educational institution;
- a transfer is authorised if, as a result, the total number of admission places established for a given year in the relevant profession is maintained.

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

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

According to a procedure defined by the Government⁸⁰, only graduates of middle VET programmes who have demonstrated high academic merit are allowed to continue their education in the higher education institutions in the corresponding profession and on a paid basis, from the second year of study. In particular, the procedure requires that the difference in the educational content (subject, modules) at VET and higher education institutions does not exceed 30 %. This is assessed by a special committee established in the corresponding higher education institution which also selects college graduates based on their marks. In addition, every year the MoESCS approves the lists of VET and higher education institutions among which the transition of VET graduates is allowed, as well as the number of places per higher education institution, which are foreseen for that transition⁸¹. For instance, in 2021, 25 % of VET graduates were admitted to second year at a higher education institution for part-time studies. According to the current procedure, admission of VET graduates to the second year of full-time studies within a bachelor's degree is allowed only if for the given profession there is no provision of part-time study.

A pilot project on admission of graduates from agricultural VET professions to the first year of corresponding professions at Armenian National Agrarian University is under implementation in cooperation with the MoESCS.

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

Career guidance

In 2011, the National Training Fund (NTF) was established. Its responsibilities include ensuring links between the VET system and the Labour Market and specifically supporting the involvement of employers in different aspects of VET. The NTF's main responsibilities focus on Labour Market research and identification of skills needs, as well as on organising continuing VET for different categories of job seekers, including employed and unemployed adults. Since 2015, by order of the Minister of Education and Science, the NTF was designed to be the responsible body for coordination, organisation and support for the operationalization of the Procedure of Assessment and Recognition of the Non-formal and Informal Learning Outcomes.

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

⁷⁹ Order of Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Armenia №1455-N from 1 October 2010.

⁸⁰ RA Government Decision № 752-N from 8 July 2015.

⁸¹ RA Government Decision № 856-N from 27 May 2020.

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

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

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

The Information on job placement, an essential basis for a strategy of IVET attractiveness, is usually collected by MoESCS from VET institutions or through the monitoring of the career units' activities implemented by CGCD, as well as partially through studies on youth employment carried out by different organisations, such as the graduate tracer survey conducted by 'Caucasus Research Resource Centre – Armenia' Foundation (CRRC-Armenia) in 2012 for ETF. However, there is no country-wide, independent tracer study mechanism which could provide, based on comprehensive methodology, reliable data on job placement of VET graduates and relevance of their skills in the labour market, as well as information on skills in demand by employers.

Links between learning and the world of work

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

The annual number of enrolments per VET programme is defined based on information on VET demand collected by MoESCS at regional level from Yerevan city and regional education

departments, as well as at the sectoral level from the Ministries. In addition, two main structures representing employers, i.e. the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Armenia and the Republican Union of Employers of Armenia are requested to provide corresponding information on VET demand.

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

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

According to the Concept of Developing and Introducing Competence-Based State Educational Standards of Professions and Qualifications of Vocational Education in Armenia, the State standards and corresponding modular programmes for VET professions are first developed by a working group composed of seven members, of which three people represent organisations (companies) from the sector of the profession under discussion. Developed State standards and corresponding modular programmes are subject to expertise by relevant sectoral committees, then finalised by NCVETD and presented to the National Council for VET for validation before being approved by the MoESCS. The Concept suggests that the objective of the standard is to set the requirements to ensure graduate competences, which would meet the personal educational demands and the requirements of both national and international labour markets, considering their current needs and future developments.

An effective mechanism to respond to market needs is to involve interested and knowledgeable members from professional sector organisations and VET institutions in the working group in charge of drafting State standards and corresponding modular programmes, as well as involving the sectoral committees. Therefore, due to the weakness of sectoral committees, and employers' intermediate organisations in general, the response to sector-wide needs is not always ensured.

Standard 3.5. of the third institutional accreditation creation concerning academic programmes requests that the VET institution 'has a policy ensuring academic programme monitoring, effectiveness assessment and improvement'⁸². In particular, VET institutions are requested to have:

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

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

At the same time, there is a need for better coordination in the collection and analysis of labour market information. Beyond the Edu2Work project which presents an analysis of the labour market based on job announcements posted on 10 online job portals in Armenia⁸³, there is no country-wide comprehensive mechanism or tool for either identifying the present demand for skills in the labour market, or for anticipating the future skills needs within different economic sectors. The establishment of the e-borsa state platform by the MoLSA aimed at accessibility of registered standardised CVs to

⁸² Institutional and programme accreditation criteria and standards of RA. <https://www.anqa.am/en/about-us/legal-field/#Decisions>

⁸³ Edu2Work project is funded with UK aid from the UK government. The project is part of Work Armenia initiative. <https://edu2work.am>

anyone, allowing employers to post vacancies, internship, and training opportunities, as well as creating a matching system, is currently in progress in the framework of a project funded by the Eurasian Development Bank. This platform will be based on experience of the information system on available job positions managed by the MoLSA⁸⁴.

Policy recommendations for IVET/CVET attractiveness

Recommendations for IVET

These cover a set of immediate measures, which can all contribute to increasing the attractiveness of IVET towards potential learners. These are: (i) along with the optimisation of VET institutions and their professions, mechanisms and digital tools are developed for effective delivery of IVET programmes allowing savings to be devoted to progressive decreasing of share of paid places; (ii) short higher education programmes are established for VET graduates and level 4 and 5 qualifications for IVET are revised/developed for short higher education programmes accordingly; (iii) guidelines are developed for introducing WBL/dual education based on the experience drawn from implementation of international donor supported programmes⁸⁵; (iv) following the adoption of the new law on VET, a thorough review of the different WBL pilot programmes is undertaken, identifying lessons learned, gaps, risks, and recommendations to MoESCS, its agencies, and partners; (v) based on the assessment of the capacities, a plan is developed for activities supporting the internationalisation of the VET system, including capacity building for staff on internationalisation; (vi) capacity building programmes are designed, e.g. targeting the reinforcement of foreign languages (particularly English, French, and German) of the staff VET institutions; (vii) cooperation projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions are encouraged, particularly in the framework of Erasmus+, Armenia's membership to the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA) and EPALE (Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe); (viii) pilot projects are designed for digitalisation and innovation of specialties, offering different forms of learning to take place outside school premises; (ix) a system for continuous development in digital teaching and learning methodology for IVET learners is established; (x) pilot twinning projects between Armenian and foreign VET institutions are encouraged/set up through international donor initiatives.

Recommendations for CVET

These cover a set of immediate measures, which can all contribute to increasing the attractiveness of CVET in the eyes of its potential candidates: (i) outcome-based qualifications are developed, based on Occupational Standards (OSs), a credit system is established and the VNFIL system is aligned with the qualification system, including implementation of a credit rating system for micro-credentials acquired from non-formal education; (ii) work-based learning opportunities are set up in employment promotion programmes and in bridging programmes to VET for inactive populations based on the review of the education programmes for inactive populations; (iii) a flexible learning system is established, consisting of short-cycle and long-cycle programmes and courses, including recognised micro-credentials (making affordable learning paths for disadvantaged groups) – mixing online learning, class tuition, WBL, and self-learning.

⁸⁴ <https://workforall.am/gorc-vacancy/index>

⁸⁵ In line with road map of the 'Concept paper and Road map for development of the work-based learning (WBL) in Armenia for 2023-2026' developed at MoESCS working group on WBL and validated by National Council for VET Development.

3. Conclusions

The comprehensive analysis and policy recommendations detailed in this report offer a strategic roadmap for enhancing the VET system in Armenia. This review, aligned with the ambitious goals of the Education 2030 strategy and action plan, underscores a commitment to fostering a resilient, inclusive, and future-oriented workforce. The key findings of this analysis illustrate the urgent need for systemic reforms to address the challenges of lifelong learning, access, and attractiveness in line with the national strategic priorities.

To overcome these challenges, the review outlines a multi-faceted approach encompassing the development of a coherent national framework for lifelong learning, a deeper engagement of the private sector in VET, enhanced cross-sectoral coordination for career guidance, and robust quality and accountability measures for VET providers. Furthermore, recommendations to optimise resource provision, integrate special educational needs and marginalized groups, and amplify the efficiency and scope of CVET financing are pivotal for broadening access to skills.

Equally critical is the enhancement of the VET system's access and attractiveness. The recommendations for optimising the distribution of VET institutions, embracing digital learning, facilitating transition to higher education, and operationalising the Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning (VNFIL) and micro-credentials, are instrumental in aligning Armenia's VET offerings with both national and international labour market demands. These initiatives not only aim to elevate the quality and relevance of VET but also to position it as a viable and appealing path for youth and adult learners alike.

In conclusion, the implementation of these policy recommendations could represent a significant step forward in the evolution of the Armenian VET system. By addressing the triad of lifelong learning, access and attractiveness, the country would set a strong foundation for the development of a skilled, adaptable, and competitive workforce. This would, in turn, drive economic growth, innovation, and social cohesion, contributing to the nation's overall prosperity and well-being. The commitment of all stakeholders to these reforms is crucial for their success and will require sustained efforts, investments, and public-private partnerships to fulfil the vision of a comprehensive, inclusive, and dynamic VET system in Armenia.

Appendix 1. National Qualification Framework in Armenia

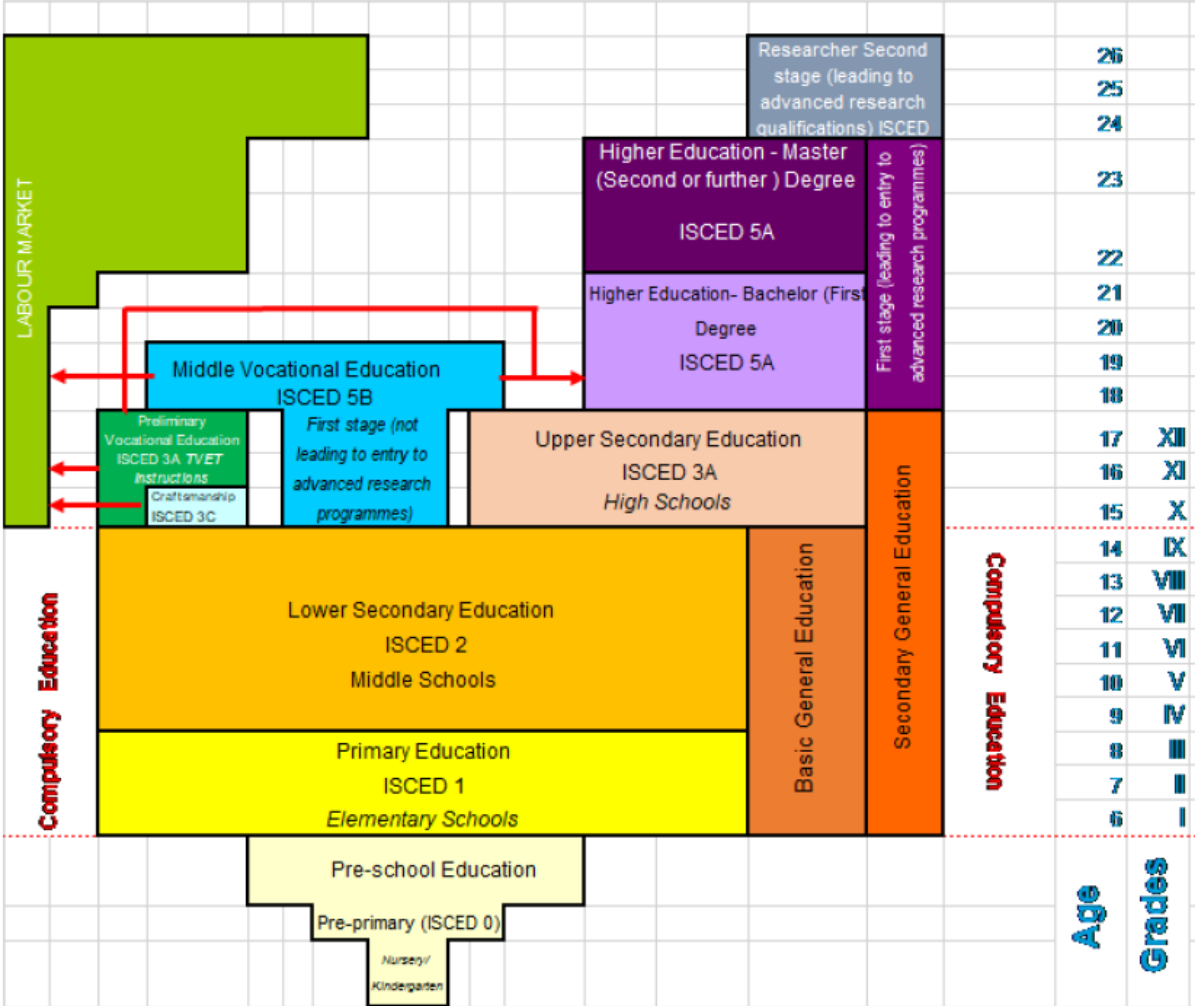
Level	Qualification	Education degree (level), programme	Duration
1st	CERTIFICATE OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION	1st level of Secondary Education	4 years
2nd	CERTIFICATE OF BASIC EDUCATION	2nd level of Secondary Education	5 years
3rd ⁸⁶	CRAFTSMAN (with basic education) (Certificate of Master training qualification)	Preliminary Vocational (Craftsmanship) Educational Programme	6 months to 1 year
4th	CERTIFICATE ('Attestat') OF SECONDARY EDUCATION	3rd level of Secondary Education – senior school	3 years
	CRAFTSMAN (with secondary education) (Diploma of Craftsmanship Education)	Preliminary Vocational (Craftsmanship) Educational Programme	1-3 years
5th	SPECIALIST (Diploma of Middle Vocational Education)	Middle Vocational Educational Programme	2-5 years
6th	BACHELOR (Bachelor Diploma)	Bachelor's Educational Programme	Minimum 3 years
7th	MASTER (Master Diploma)	Master's Educational Programme	Minimum 1 year
	SPECIALIST WITH DIPLOMA ⁸⁷ (Diploma of Specialist with Diploma)	Bachelor's Educational Programme of Specialist with Diploma	Minimum 5 years
8th	(Certificate of PhD)	Post-graduate Professional Educational Programme	Minimum 3 years

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

⁸⁶ After introducing mandatory 12-year secondary general education, Level 3 cannot be implemented anymore as it does not provide secondary education. Nevertheless, this level remains in the framework in order to classify the education of those who received it before secondary education was made obligatory.

⁸⁷ The 'Diploma of Specialist with Diploma' under level 7 concerns diplomas of 5 years of higher education studies before the introduction of the LMD system following Armenia's membership of the Bologna Process in 2015. This diploma is considered as equivalent to a master's degree.

Appendix 2. Education system in Armenia



Source: ETF, 2020. Policies for human capital development Armenia: an ETF Torino Process assessment, p. 47. https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2020-07/05_trp_etf_assessment_2019_armenia.pdf

Appendix 3. Data regarding the performance of VET in Armenia

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

Academic year	Number of students at preliminary VET institutions, out of which:								
	total	women	% of women	Free tuition		Paid tuition		% of paid tuition	
				total	women	total	women	total	women
2019/2020	6 530	1 590	24.35	6 393	1 518	137	72	2.1	52.6
2020/2021	6 780	1 580	23.30	6 434	1 466	346	114	5.1	32.9
2021/2022	6 761	1 666	24.64	6 181	1 473	580	193	8.6	33.3
2022/2023	6 456	1 494	23.14	5 838	1 336	618	158	9.6	25.6

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

Academic year	Number of students at middle VET institutions out of which:								
	total	women	% of women	Free tuition		Paid tuition		% of paid tuition	
				total	women	total	women	total	women
2019/2020	24 854	12 985	52.25	20 162	10 210	4 692	2 775	18.9	59.1
2020/2021	28 399	14 467	50.94	20 344	9 839	8 055	4 628	28.4	57.5
2021/2022	31 159	15 797	50.70	19 783	9 399	11 376	6 396	36.5	56.2
2022/2023	33 230	16 926	50.94	18 992	8 968	14 238	7 958	42.8	55.9

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

Academic year	Number of students at all VET institutions out of which:								
	total	women	% of women	Free tuition		Paid tuition		% of paid tuition	
				total	women	total	women	total	women
2019/2020	31 384	14 575	46.44	26 555	11 728	4 829	2 847	15.4	59
2020/2021	35 179	16 047	45.62	26 778	11 305	8 401	4 742	23.9	56.4
2021/2022	37 920	17 463	46.05	25 964	10 872	11 956	6 589	31.5	55.1
2022/2023	39 686	18 420	46.41	24 830	10 304	14 856	8 116	37.4	54.6

Table 4. Number of free of charge places for admission to VET programmes in 2018-2023⁸⁸

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

⁸⁸ RA Government Decisions № 686-N, 15.6.2018; № 859-N 4.7.2019; № 958-N 11.6.2020; № 965-N 10.6.2021; № 1066-N 14.7.2022, № 1289-N 27.7.2023.

Box 1. The list and the number of priority and important fields of professions taught in preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle vocational educational programmes of the Republic of Armenia in the 2023/2024 academic year⁸⁹

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

⁸⁹ Appendix 3 of RA Government Decision N1289 from 29 July 2023.

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

Table 5. Action plan for implementation of Education 2030, area of non-formal education

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

Raising awareness about non-formal education (including youth and adult learning and education) among the public through advocacy and public campaigns in the area

Regular public campaigns implemented:
2023 - 2
2024 - 3
2026 - 5

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

Schools of graduation and paid places	Total admitted	Women	% of school graduates	% of total admitted
Preliminary VET institutions				
Graduated from basic schools	2 282	482	7.00	81.30
Graduated from secondary schools	525	367	2.56	18.70
Including paid places	424	169		15.11
Total	2 807	849	5.28	
Middle VET institutions				
Graduated from basic schools	9 242	4 430	28.34	87.35
Graduated from secondary schools	1 338	1 069	6.52	12.65
Including paid places	5 053	2 853		47.76
Total	10 580	5 499	19.92	
Total VET institutions				
Graduated from basic schools	11 524	4 912	35.33	86.08
Graduated from secondary schools	1 863	1 436	9.08	13.92
Including paid places	5 477	3 022		40.91
Total VET institutions	13 387	6 348	25.20	
Higher education institutions				
Graduates from secondary schools	17 208	9 635	83.91	
Including paid places	14 680	8 344		85.31

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

Academic year	Number of students					
	Higher education institutions		% of women	VET institutions		% of women
	total	women		total	women	
2019/2020	74 942	41 486	55.36	31 384	14 575	46.44
2020/2021	79 590	44 187	55.52	35 179	16 047	45.62
2021/2022	78 603	44 482	56.59	37 920	17 461	46.05
2022/2023	71 732	40 368	56.28	39 686	18 420	46.41

Table 8. Youth outside the labour force attitude towards the usefulness of the education obtained by age group, 2021 (as a percentage)

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

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

Year	State middle VETIs				Private middle VETIs				Total enrolled in VETIs	% of foreign students
	Admitted		Enrolled		Admitted		Enrolled			
	total	women	total	women	total	women	total	women		
2019/2020	236	112	399	193	80	23	160	61	559	1.8
2020/2021	152	68	453	202	103	35	233	75	686	2.0
2021/2022	185	75	471	198	52	12	226	69	697	1.8

Table 10. Allocations from the RA State budget to the VET system in 2018-2021 per expenditure lines (thousand drams)⁹⁰

Expenditure line	2018	2019	2020	2021
Provision of student subsidies for preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education	2,061,389	1,943,909.8	2,522,142	2,430,557.6
Student scholarships for preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education	365,657.4	342,165.6	463,140	442,103.4
Provision of student subsidies for middle vocational education	7,288,315.9	7,158,190.9	8,535,519	7,581,497.4
Student scholarships for middle vocational education	670,192.2	713,070	888,538.8	888,168.3
Establishment of professional orientation and career guidance centres at preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education institutions	-	92,340	-	-
Improvement of buildings and facilities of the preliminary (craftsmanship) and vocational education institutions	250,000	1,435,772.4	235,865.2	269,944.2
Reforms on the preliminary (craftsmanship) and middle vocational education institutions	154,694.2	154,694.2	199,405.4	197,730.4
Provision of QA services for preliminary, middle vocational, and higher education institutions	-	64,336.5	88,384.5	87,642.1
Total	10,790,248.7	11,904,479.4	12,932,994.9	11,897,643.4

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

Academic year	Number and amount of scholarship at preliminary VET institutions		Number and amount of scholarships at middle VET institutions			
	% of scholarship holder	4000 AMD and more	Number of scholarship holders	4000 AMD and more	Specific	% of scholarship holders
2019/2020	97.9	6 392	10 693	10 590	103	46.5 (53 % of students studying with free tuition)
2020/2021	94.8	6 427	11 200	11 190	10	42.8 (55.1 % of students studying with free tuition)
2021/2022	91.0	6 168	10 523	10 520	3	36.5 (53.5 % of students studying with free tuition)

⁹⁰ RA Laws on State budgets 2018-2021. <https://www.gov.am/am/budget/>