

KEY POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

ARMENIA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Armenia has experienced several socio-political and economic shocks in recent years, from the 2018 Velvet Revolution, the COVID-19 pandemic and the 44-day conflict with Azerbaijan in 2020 to the military escalations in Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023 and the consequent displacement of over 115 000 ethnic Armenians. As of October 2023, the government and the international community have been putting in place a significant set of crisis-response measures to deal with the needs of the displaced population.

Despite the challenges, Armenia has made progress on its reform agenda.

The Government Programme of the Republic of Armenia 2021-2026 calls for evidence-based policy and strategic planning in all sectors. It assigns education a key role in achieving sustainable and inclusive development and welfare, in line with the broader goals of the Armenian Transformation Strategy 2050.

Further to the adoption in 2022 of the new State Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Armenia until 2030 (the 'Education Strategy'), much progress has been made in reviewing the legislation covering the various education levels.

The new Vocational Education and Training (VET) law was adopted in May 2024, emphasising increased cooperation with the private sector. A new law on Higher Education and Science is expected to be adopted soon, as is a law on youth, which a Youth Strategy and Action Plan will follow.

Elaborating on the priorities of the Government Programme 2021-2026 and the Armenian Transformation Strategy 2050, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) is advancing on an Employment Strategic Plan for 2024-2030. The Plan, presented to the National Assembly in June 2024, covers economic, employment, education and training, and social policies, showing an overarching approach to the human capital development ecosystem.

The Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the European Union (EU) and Armenia – signed in 2017 and in force since 2021 – sets the framework for cooperation between the EU and Armenia. Among its pillars are better living standards (more jobs and business opportunities) and more choice in education (better quality of education, with a focus on lifelong learning). The Partnership Implementation Report, issued in February 2024 (EC, 2024), highlighted the willingness to further develop the partnership and cooperation. Within the 5th Armenia-EU Partnership Committee held in June 2024, the EU and Armenia agreed to step up their efforts to unlock the CEPA's full potential, with the EU recognising Armenia's achievements and continued reform commitment.

At a high-level meeting in April 2024, the EU and Armenia laid out a vision for a new Partnership Agenda. To strengthen this partnership, the EU has proposed a EUR270 million Resilience and Growth Plan for Armenia for 2024-2027 in the form of grants. Among its priorities, the Plan foresees support for a resilient Armenian society, including support for reforms and investments in skills and employment and for the long-term integration of displaced people.

1. KEY POLITICAL, DEMOGRAPHIC, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

Political developments

The military operation conducted by Azerbaijan against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh in September 2023, and the subsequent displacement of over 115,000 people, generated considerable pressure on the Armenian government. The government is currently addressing the socio-economic needs of the displaced population to ensure access to basic services such as healthcare, shelter, schooling, food security and livelihood, as well as offering psychological support. The EU Mission in Armenia (EUMA) is responsible for observing and reporting on the situation on the ground, contributing to human security in conflict-affected areas, and fostering confidence-building between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In October 2024, discussions over peace agreements and border delimitation and demarcation took place between the Armenian Prime Minister Pashinyan and the Azerbaijani President Aliyev.

Whereas Armenia remains a formal member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) – the intergovernmental military alliance currently consisting of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan – the government is taking steps to distance itself from the alliance.

Despite the challenges faced during recent years, the government, led by the Civil Contract party, continues its commitment to reforms and economic recovery.

Demographics

Armenia is a landlocked country with an area of 29 800 km². The country has 10 administrative-territorial units (*marzes*) plus the capital city of Yerevan, which has special status. The population – composed of 98.1% Armenians – has shrunk over the last 20 years, from 3 084 000 in 2003 to 2 778 000 on 1 January 2023. The fertility rate declined from 2 in 1996 to 1.3 in 2006, although there has been an increasing trend since 2007, reaching 1.6 in 2022 (World Bank, 2024).

The population is ageing, with a decreasing proportion of young people. The ratio of the youth population to the working-age population decreased from 27.5% in 2010 to 17.4% in 2023.

According to the World Bank, more than 22% of Armenia's population will be aged 65 or over by 2050, creating a growing demand for social services and increasing associated government expenditure (World Bank, 2019).

Armenia has one of the highest emigration rates in the world, with about 30% of the population living outside the country (OECD, 2017). Poverty and the lack of jobs are the main drivers of emigration, while emigrants are mainly low-skilled workers. Following the September 2023 military operation, over 115,000 Armenian civilians from Nagorno-Karabakh arrived in Armenia (IOM, 2023). Regarding outward migration, Russia has historically been the most common destination country, receiving 56% of Armenia's emigrants (OECD, 2017), followed by the United States and France. However, Russia's aggression against Ukraine impacted these flows, especially seasonal labour migration, e.g. in the construction sector (Eurasianet, 2022). As of the first quarter of 2022, more than 142,000 Russian citizens – mainly entrepreneurs and their families – moved to Armenia (Osservatorio Balcani e Caucaso Transeuropa, 2022).

Key economic developments

In 2018, Armenia became an upper middle-income country (UMIC), and in 2023, it became an International Development Association (IDA) donor, only 9 years after being an IDA recipient itself (World Bank, 2024).

The country's economy is characterised by market orientation, sustained growth, and inflows of capital and remittances. In 2022, Armenia witnessed outstanding economic growth, positioning itself as the

fastest-growing country in eastern Europe and central Asia, although this came after a sharp GDP contraction of 7.2% in 2020. The economy recorded 8.7% growth in 2023, a steep decrease compared to 12.6% in 2022, when the economy was boosted by an influx of migrants, businesses and increased capital in the aftermath of Russia's aggression against Ukraine (World Bank, 2023). Around 2,600 non-resident companies and 6,000 non-resident individual enterprises, mainly from Russia, were registered in Armenia between March 2022 and February 2023. Approximately 40% of these companies and 65% of these entrepreneurs were registered in the IT sector (IMF, 2023).

Agriculture still accounts for 8.4% of GDP in 2023, though it is sharply decreasing (17.2% in 2015) compared to the industry's consistent trend (23.9% in 2023 vs. 25.7% in 2015 (World Bank, 2024)). Armenia's Agriculture Strategy (2020-2030) recognises sustainable agriculture as key for rural development. It aims to promote sustainable land management, using environmentally friendly processes, prioritising sustainable and climate-smart agricultural practices, digital agriculture and technological innovation. The services sector has been consistently growing in recent years, contributing to 59% of GDP in 2023 compared to 48.2% in 2015 (World Bank, 2024).

There has also been a consistent shift from employment in industry and agriculture towards services. Figures from the Labour Force Survey for 2023 show a sharp decrease in the share of employment in agriculture (19.4%, compared to 35.3% in 2015) and an increased share in industry (23.3%, compared to 15.9% in 2015) and services (57.3% in 2023 compared to 48.8% in 2015). The economy's most dynamic growth sectors are the food industry, information and communication technology (ICT), tourism, mining products, garment and footwear manufacturing, tobacco, jewellery making (the diamond industry), and the production and processing of fresh fruits and vegetables. Armenia's ICT sector, in particular, witnessed impressive growth, expanding by 20% in 2022, highlighting the country's dedication to making digital transformation a key policy focus (OECD, 2024).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in Armenia's economy, comprising nearly 99.9% of all enterprises, collectively contributing to 69.5% of total employment and generating up to 66.2% of the value added to the economy (OECD, 2024).

Approximately 35% of the labour force is estimated to be working in the informal economy (ARMSTAT, 2021), which contributes to approximately 36% of Armenia's GDP. Informality also remains widespread in non-agricultural sectors, which had a 15.3% informal employment rate in 2020 (ARMSTAT, 2021).

There is a large gender gap among entrepreneurs (86% men, 14% women) and in the overall labour market in Armenia. The divide is smaller in the ICT sector due to open work environments, young staff and opportunities for remote work – nevertheless, only 11% of leaders in the ICT sector are women (NIRAS, 2021).

Remittances play an important role in household economies and employment choices. After the peak in 2013, when money sent home from abroad amounted to 19.7% of GDP, the figures steadily dropped over the following years, reaching 6% in 2023 (World Bank, 2024).

In 2022, the Armenian government launched the policy dialogue platform 'Green Armenia' in cooperation with the EU, the World Bank and UNDP. The overall goal of this platform is to facilitate the country's transition to a green economy.

Key social issues

Armenia has made some progress in tackling poverty in recent years, thanks to a combination of economic growth and investment in social protection. Due to robust economic performance and low inflation, the UMIC poverty rate is projected to decline gradually to 47.7% in 2024 (51.7% in 2021) (World Bank, 2024).

The poverty rate calculated with respect to the average poverty line – primarily relying on the Cost of Basic Needs approach, which accounts for the essential expenditure required to maintain a minimum acceptable standard of living – was 24.8% in 2022 (26.5% in 2021). The extreme poverty rate in 2022 was 1.2%, decreasing by 0.3% from 1.5% in 2021. Large differences persist across the *marzes*,

communities and rural and urban areas in the proportion of the poor and extremely poor population (ARMSTAT, 2023).

Armenia has made some progress in the Global Gender Gap Index, rising from 102nd in 2016 to 84th in 2022 and 61st in 2023 (World Economic Forum, 2023), ranking third in the Eurasia and Central Asia region. The most significant changes are registered in educational attainments (35th). Despite the major progress in developing an adequate framework for the promotion of gender equality in recent years, less than 50% of working-age women in Armenia participate in the labour force, mainly due to caregiving responsibilities (World Bank, 2024).

While there are no major gender differences in poverty levels, children, young people, and people with lower educational attainment are more exposed to poverty (UN Women, 2021).

At the same time, there is a clear gender gap in employment, and young women face particular challenges in transitioning from school to work, as evidenced by a high NEET rate. The 2024-2026 strategy for implementing the gender policy and the related action plan envisage establishing efficient mechanisms to support the active participation of women in all sectors of public life. The policy and action plan will be implemented with the shared objectives of the Armenia Transformation Strategy 2050 and the Employment Strategy (expected to be adopted soon). Further specific implementation will take place through active labour-market measures to be designed in line with the plan.

More than 115,000 refugees have arrived in Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh following the Azerbaijani military operation in September 2023, requiring both immediate assistance and longer-term support. Before their arrival, this population endured months of blockades that restricted their access to essential services, such as food and medicine. As of April 2024, over 80,000 registered for temporary protection. While the most severe life-saving needs have been addressed, many humanitarian needs remain, including adequate short-term shelter and non-food items, ultimately sustainable housing solutions, mental health and psychosocial support, access to specialist health services in rural and under-served areas; registering the approx. 30,000 refugees who are not yet in the national electronic healthcare system, and a significant need for livelihoods and employment support to bolster long-term socio-economic integration (IOM, 2024).

More than 21,000 school-aged children arrived in Armenia from Nagorno-Karabakh. As of 24 October 2023, two-thirds of these have enrolled in the Armenian school system (UNESCO, 2023).

The international community has granted support measures to help the Armenian government to address the crisis. In addition to the emergency support measures provided in October 2023, the EUR270 million Resilience and growth plan for Armenia, launched in April 2024, includes support for the long-term integration of displaced people, including in relation to housing and employment.

2. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Trends and challenges

Education strategy and legal framework for education

The Armenian Development Strategy (ADS) 2014-2025 identifies education as a fundamental driver for the country's sustainable development. Increasing the quality, effectiveness, relevance, and access to all levels of education is a major priority.

The State Programme for the Development of Education in the Republic of Armenia until 2030 (the 'Education Strategy 2030') was endorsed by the National Assembly in November 2022, and the Action Plan, which runs until 2026, was adopted in March 2023. The Strategy covers the whole educational spectrum – pre-school education, primary and secondary schools, vocational education, higher education and, to some extent, informal and non-formal education – and focuses on education quality, accessibility and efficiency. It also widely addresses vocational education and training (VET), and assigns a key role to lifelong learning (LLL) and to opportunities for upskilling and reskilling, which are still at an early development stage in Armenia. The transition from school to work and the provision of skills in line with labour market needs are some of the key areas that the strategy addresses, with the aim of reducing youth unemployment.

The progress in the implementation of the Education Strategy 2030 – including challenges and achievements – was discussed with a wide range of stakeholders at a high-level policy dialogue meeting on education in May 2024. A second meeting is planned for November 2024. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS) plans for Strategy implementation reports on an annual basis, which will also provide an opportunity for the targets and indicators to be adjusted.

The MoESCS has initiated a thorough review of the legal framework regulating the different levels of education, in line with the Education Strategy 2030. The new law on Vocational Education and Training (VET) was adopted in May 2024, and a new law on Higher Education and Science has been drafted and is expected to be adopted soon.

A major ambitious reform plan to reorganise higher education and research institutions within an 'Academic City' was approved in 2023. Consultations and discussions on the master plan, the infrastructure, and the services to be activated around the project are ongoing, considering that the new Academic City will start its first operations in 2030.

Education expenditure

Public expenditure on education is low. It has decreased from 3.2% as a share of GDP in 2010 to 2.5% in 2022. In 2022, education represented 9.7% of total public expenditure, confirming a decreasing trend (12.4% in 2010).

Access, participation and early school leaving

Armenia has made strong progress in improving access to general education. The total net enrolment rate in general education in recent years has been relatively high, at around 90% on average. Enrolment rates in lower secondary and upper secondary education were 99.6% and 96.5%, respectively, in 2022 (UNESCO, 2023).

Trends in net enrolment rates in secondary education (ISCED levels 2 to 3) are increasing, with the share of VET students in upper secondary (ISCED level 3) rising from 5.1% in 2010 to 26.2% in 2015 to 28.4% in 2022 (UNESCO, 2023).

There are no formal mechanisms in place to track children who are not in school or are at risk of dropping out (UNESCO, 2022). VET students face a significantly higher dropout risk compared to students in general education. Many VET programmes still lack adequate links to the labour market,

negatively affecting the employability of their graduates. Access to VET – both initial and continued – and adult learning is well below the international average, though IVET appears to be more accessible and attractive than CVET (ETF, 2024).

Several issues exist with access to IVET, such as a growing share of paid education in recent years at preliminary and, especially, middle-level VET institutions, creating challenges for accessibility, especially for economically disadvantaged groups. Access to CVET for the unemployed and disabled people or other vulnerable groups is ensured only within the limits of available funding provided by the state budget.

Participation in lifelong learning is on a rising trend, reaching 8.8% of the population aged 25-64 in 2023 compared to 7.4% in 2018, though it was 9.3% in 2022 (ARMSTAT, 2024).

PISA results

Armenia will participate in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) for the first time in 2025.

The OECD Capacity Needs Assessment noted that Armenia has extensive experience with large-scale assessments, both international and national. However, PISA's methods are more complex. It was therefore recommended that Armenia take full advantage of the capacity-building opportunities offered during PISA 2025 (OECD, 2023).

Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)

Armenia faces persistently high numbers of NEETs for the 15-24 age group (16.9% in 2023), although the figures have been consistently decreasing over recent years (from 44.5% in 2010 to 23.3% in 2019). Young women continue to be more seriously affected than young men, with female NEET rates at 20.3% in 2023 (ARMSTAT, 2024), though the trend is improving (29.3% in 2019).

In 2019, half of VET graduates aged 15-29 were NEETs in Armenia, as was the case in Georgia and Moldova (ETF, 2022). Such outcomes point to a difficult school-to-work transition for young people, which is also due to the quality of VET education and the limited availability of jobs.

Additionally, there are currently limited opportunities for IVET graduates to transition to higher education institutions, as admission is only granted to graduates with high academic grades and within the professions and quotas decided at the central level. Students also have to pay for their studies: the share of students admitted to paid places at both preliminary and middle VET levels has doubled since 2019, at 11.6% and 47.8% of the total admitted students, respectively, compared to 5.4% and 22.3% in 2019. The growing share of paid education at VET institutions in recent years is creating issues regarding accessibility to education in terms of its equity and affordability, particularly for economically disadvantaged groups. In addition, there are no short higher education courses available to VET graduates (ETF, 2024).

2.2 Initial VET and adult learning

Strategic and legal framework for initial VET and adult learning

The formal VET system in Armenia has two levels:

- Preliminary – or initial – vocational (craftsmanship) education is provided in vocational (craftsmanship) schools, other professional educational institutions, educational centres and penitentiary institutions. Graduates of craftsmanship education are awarded a diploma in initial vocational (craftsmanship) education and the 'Craftsman' qualification level. The duration of the initial VET programmes to obtain a 'Craftsman' qualification ranges from 6 months to 3 years. The specific titles of qualifications reflect the profession, e.g. 'forester', 'butcher', 'baker', 'carpenter', etc. Courses last 3 years when, starting from basic general education and around 1 year for students who have completed their secondary general education.

- Middle professional vocational education can be acquired at colleges and universities. Its duration depends on the student's previous attainment (basic or secondary general) and on the profession, and varies from 2 to 5 years. Graduates are awarded a middle professional vocational education diploma with the 'Specialist' qualification level. Examples of specific qualifications are: 'accountant', 'fermentation production and wine-making technician', 'agricultural mechanisation technician', 'veterinarian', etc.

In the 2023-24 school year, the total number of students in middle vocational institutions was 29,895; with 6,177 in preliminary (craftsmanship) institutions (MoESCS, 2024).

Before the new Education Strategy 2030, the education system in Armenia was regulated by three main laws – the Law on Education (1999), the Law on Higher and Post-graduate Vocational Education (2004) and the Law on Preliminary Vocational (Craftsmanship) and Middle Vocational Education (2005), with the related Implementation Plan 2017-2023, approved in 2019.

Since the new Education Strategy, the MoESCS has launched a review of the legal framework regulating the different levels of education.

A new law on Vocational Education and Training was adopted in May 2024. Among the key features of the new VET law are: the harmonisation of concepts and definitions; the implementation of a cooperative model for education management, with increased responsibility for non-governmental partners; revised general requirements for VET programmes, including the opportunity for additional courses certifying learning outcomes obtained and providing the basis for micro-qualifications and micro-credentials; a revision of the VET financing system and the promotion of entrepreneurial activity; a review of recruitment and training mechanisms of administrative and teaching staff at VET institutions; and a regulation of rights and responsibilities of VET students and trainees.

The new VET law aims to address – among others – the fragmentation of the system and the need for a comprehensive and coherent vision of LLL.

VET governance and financing arrangements

VET in Armenia is centrally managed under the MoESCS, which is responsible for policy design, implementation and the day-to-day administration of the system. The MoESCS receives support and advice mainly from the following entities:

- The tripartite National Council for VET Development (NCVD), established in 2008, is a consultative body that includes an equal number of representatives from government, employers and trade unions. Its main function is to advise the MoESCS on decision-making and developing VET programmes.
- The National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development (NCVETD) is the main support institution for VET. It participates in developing VET policies and strategies, medium- and long-term development programmes and action plans; it carries out different types of research in the VET system; it analyses and evaluates its performance; it ensures communication between the VET system and the labour market institutions; it organises the development and continuous updating of qualification (educational) standards and curricula; it provides professional expertise; it identifies and adapts international best practices in VET; and it supports the development of the NQF (National qualifications framework) and compatibility with the EQF, and the introduction of the credit accumulation and transfer system in VET.
- The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA), established in 2008, is mandated to implement and oversee quality-assurance processes in preliminary, vocational and higher education.
- The National Centre for Educational Technologies (NCET), established in 2004, is responsible for different aspects of the introduction and use of ICT at all levels of education (general, vocational and higher), including distance learning, and for developing the education management information system (EMIS).

- The National Training Fund (NTF), established in 2011, aims to ensure links between the VET system and the labour market, specifically to encourage the involvement of employers and their organisations in different aspects of VET. The NTF's main responsibilities are focused on labour market research, identifying skills needs, and organising continuing VET for different categories of jobseekers, including employed and unemployed adults.

A plan is being discussed for the establishment of a new entity under the MoESCS, which will be tasked – among others – with implementing the validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), work-based learning (WBL), dual education, sector committees and qualifications. The new Unit or Agency has been conceived to merge the functions of NTF and NCVETD.

School governing boards are collegial management bodies in public VET colleges and craft schools. VET institutions have a certain degree of autonomy; they approve their budgets and curricula and decide on teaching methods.

The main source of funding for VET is the state budget. Financial allocations are low and normally sufficient to cover staff salaries (ETF, 2024). Donors provide more tangible investments directly or via budget support schemes. Some VET institutions generate their income through education and training services. However, the legal status of public VET institutions is currently an obstacle for such activities and for producing and selling goods. However, discussions are currently taking place about a review of the legal framework, with the idea of changing their legal status and allowing commercial activities within the ongoing debate on WBL.

Qualifications, validation and recognition

The Armenian National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was first adopted by the Government Decree in March 2011, before being updated in July 2016 with new definitions for each level. The Armenian NQF – mainly oriented towards the formal education system – has eight levels, covering general education, vocational education and training (VET) and higher education (levels 6 to 8 are reserved for higher education). The NQF is oriented towards the formal education system, and no mechanism exists to include qualifications awarded from outside the formal education sector (ETF, 2023).

The MoESCS is the lead organisation for the NQF, and develops related tools and approaches. VET qualifications are defined by VET standards that are validated by the corresponding sectoral committee and then approved by the MoESCS. VET qualifications are included in the lists (classifiers) of primary and secondary VET professions (specialities), and are delivered and awarded by VET institutions or other training providers licensed and accredited by the MoESCS. Secondary VET qualifications can be acquired at secondary vocational educational institutions (colleges) and higher education institutions. Armenia has made progress in NQF development in recent years. The VET system has been updated to include quality-assurance measures, competence-based education standards and assessment, modular programmes based on learning outcomes, career guidance, and sectoral committees representing social partners (ETF, 2023).

In 2015, the government approved the procedures for continuing vocational training and VNFIL. The National Training Fund (NTF) was appointed by the MoESCS as the body responsible for implementing the VNFIL system, though the mechanisms are not yet operational (ETF, 2021, 2023). Following the adoption in 2023 of the Action Plan of the Education Strategy until 2030, the NTF is working on reinforcing mechanisms and processes related to non-formal and informal education, including setting up a register of non-formal training providers and drafting the relevant legislation and regulatory framework.

The new Education Strategy provides a legal basis for the adoption of a competency-based curriculum guided by learning outcomes, with a focus on strengthening STEM subjects, green education and foreign languages (World Bank, 2024).

The new law on Vocational Education and Training, adopted in 2024, regulates the transition to NQF, SQF (sector qualifications) and the credit system in the VET sector. It also revises the requirements for professional education programmes, including the opportunity to certify learning outcomes obtained, providing the basis for micro-credentials. Micro-credentials are being piloted in a few sectors

within the Erasmus+-funded project '[Beyond Europe with Micro-Credentials \(BEM\)](#)', whose Armenian partners are Lori Regional State College and the NCVETD.

Quality and quality assurance

VET monitoring and quality assurance are carried out through three processes: a) licensing for the implementation of programmes; b) internal quality assurance at VET institutions; and c) external quality assurance for state accreditation.

The National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA) implements and oversees quality-assurance processes in preliminary, vocational and higher education. Among its responsibilities are: a) developing standards and procedures for the accreditation and quality assurance of institutions and programmes (then subject to approval by the government); b) audits and quality assessments of training institutions; and c) issuing advice on developing standards and methodologies for student assessment. ANQA has adopted quality criteria from the European Quality Assurance in VET (EQAVET) framework (ETF, 2019), and has been a member of the ETF's Quality Assurance Forum since 2021. As of October 2024, discussions are ongoing on the possibility of using EQAVET indicators in Armenia.

The NCVETD periodically reviews the performance of the state educational standards and carries out an annual evaluation of VET reforms and their impact on selected institutions. It covers aspects such as education content and relevance, increasing the quality of career guidance and other services to students, improving facilities, and improving teaching and learning materials and human resources. The NCVETD is also in charge of VET teacher training, including content development (ETF, 2019).

Work-based learning arrangements

The Government Programme of the Republic of Armenia 2021-2026 envisages the introduction of work-based learning (WBL) and dual education pilots in VET. It aims to have at least one new specialism each year at two institutions between 2022 and 2026 and to bring in legislation for further WBL and dual education. The Education Strategy 2030 makes WBL a key priority for the Armenian VET system. The VET law ultimately aims to provide a solid basis for work-based learning and dual education and to improve the legislation in cooperation with the private sector.

In 2019, the National Council for VET Development (NCVD) approved the 'Concept paper and roadmap for developing WBL in Armenia 2019-2025'. The document envisages three different forms of WBL and their integration into the VET system. The three forms are: i) learners' internship programmes, ii) 'real' companies running commercial activities adjacent to the VET institutions (the Armenian system of WBL); and iii) apprenticeship / dual training schemes.

The new VET law adopted in 2024 widely addresses WBL and dual education. The forms of WBL envisaged by the law include dual education, internships and on-the-job learning. Currently, dual education is provided in agriculture, IT, precision engineering, wine-making, tourism and hospitality, technical maintenance and repair of automobile transport, and culinary professions (MoESCS, 2024).

Several pilots have been conducted under several different programmes, as listed below.

- The GIZ Programme on Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training South Caucasus (PSD TVET), in cooperation with the private sector. Since mid-2023, dual education has been experimentally introduced in 20 VET institutions, covering 24 professions in agriculture, IT, precision engineering, wine-making, tourism and hospitality, technical maintenance and repair, and cooking, with over 1 000 students involved to date (MoESCS, 2023).
- The multi-donor MAVETA project implemented by the Strategic Development Agency. The dual education approach is being piloted in agriculture professions – such as veterinary specialist, milk and dairy technologist, farmer, agricultural machinery operator, milk farm manager, orchard worker, and nut and fruit farmer – in close cooperation with public and private partners.

- The 'Skills for Jobs' project, under the EU4Youth – SAY YES initiative carried out by World Vision Armenia, has developed short-term curricula for four professions: cheese-making, wine-making, agro-machinery maintenance and veterinary medicine.
- The EU-funded project 'Transition from Education to Employment' is run by People in Need. It pilots apprenticeship schemes in short non-formal courses in the agriculture and textile sectors in cooperation with VET institutions in the Shirak region.
- The 'Apprenticeship for better job placement of the vulnerable youth in Armenia' project, funded by the Global Apprenticeship Network (GAN) and run by the Miassine Foundation, provides support to VET institutions' careers services in developing their capacity to deliver apprenticeships in partnership with companies.

Armenia became a member of the European Alliance for Apprenticeship (EAfA) in October 2023 and has since then been an active participant in regional events. Among the targets set in the national commitment document, the country aims to raise the share of WBL specialities being taught from 8.4% in 2022 to 22% by 2030, to increase the share of colleges providing WBL and dual education from 7% in 2022 to 30% by 2030, and to improve the quality of training and teaching.

Digital education and skills

Armenia has made major steps forward in the field of digitisation. In addition to the National Digital Strategy of the Republic of Armenia 2021-2025, adopted in 2021, the Government Programme of the Republic of Armenia 2021-2026 sets out measures to 'increase the digital literacy of the population and the implementation of programmes targeted at the growth of volumes of application of digital tools'. The Education Strategy 2030 refers to the 'introduction of digital and other tools appropriate to the transformation of the effective and creative learning environment' and the 'modernisation of digital technologies'.

The National Centre of Educational Technologies (NCET) actively reinforces digital education and skills. Building on the experience with the 'E-school Armenia' project initiated during the COVID-19 pandemic, the NCET has launched the 'Mentor School' project, with the objective of ensuring the continuity of education through online teaching in schools in rural areas of Armenia facing teacher shortages. The project was launched in 2021, with 17 initial Mentor Schools throughout Armenia. Each Mentor School appointed at least two mentors, who were trained and mentored by online teaching experts from the NCET's Distance Learning Department. The trained mentors now train and mentor schoolteachers who provide online teaching to learners in rural schools with teacher shortages. Building on the achievements of the Mentor School project, the pilot of the SELFIE tool was completed in 2024, with the objective of improving the digital capacity of Mentor Schools for effective digital and online learning. The SELFIE tool aims to support (i) the innovative use of digital technologies in teaching and learning in primary, secondary general and vocational schools, and (ii) the provision of digital skills.

An excellent example in the digital sphere is the TUMO Centre for Creative Technologies – <https://tumo.org/> – which provides free IT training for 12-to-18-year-olds, and helps 19-to-26-year-olds to specialise in particular areas by providing web-based training. Students get insights into 3D modelling, robotics, photography and graphic design. TUMO has hubs in Yerevan, Dilijan, Gyumri and Stepanakert, with five TUMO boxes operating in neighbouring towns. Linked to this initiative is the upcoming EU-TUMO Convergence Centre for Engineering and Applied Science, which will become a unique STEM hub in Yerevan, where academia and industry come together. The Centre will offer training in areas such as coding, robotics, artificial intelligence and digital media. It will provide incubation and acceleration services to tech start-ups, promoting innovation and collaboration between the private sector, universities and the government.

It was observed that among the obstacles hampering the digital transformation of SMEs in Armenia, in addition to the limitations in digital infrastructure, especially in rural areas, the low level of digital skills

among the workforce and the general population further complicates the integration of modern technologies (OECD, 2024).

Statistics on education and training

The Statistical Committee (ARMSTAT) publishes a range of education and education-related statistics annually and throughout the year. The Education Strategy 2030 highlights that the current Education Management Information System (EMIS) does not yet provide exhaustive data. The need to develop a more comprehensive data system has been raised. As in neighbouring countries in the region, 'graduate tracking practices in Armenia should be mainstreamed in education and training, both at upper secondary and tertiary levels as well as for continuous training programmes.' (ETF, 2022).

A database for tracing graduates has been established to monitor the job-placement rates of graduates receiving career guidance services, with input from the Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre (CGCD) and relevant departments at the MoESCS.

3. LABOUR MARKET AND EMPLOYMENT

3.1 Trends and challenges

Labour market characteristics

The labour market in Armenia has a number of peculiarities, such as low diversification in terms of sectors, a large informal sector and labour migration. Key labour market challenges include the significant mismatch between labour supply and demand (the share of occupationally mismatched employees has increased over time), the lack of jobs, and the quality of existing jobs. The private sector is still too small to facilitate a substantial transition of workers from less productive to more productive sectors (World Bank, 2019). In addition, the labour market suffers from geographical imbalances. Economic dynamism and job-creation potential are, to a large extent, concentrated in the capital city, Yerevan (World Bank, 2020). According to a recent World Bank study, key challenges are posed by long-term unemployment, low public spending and the limited coverage of active labour market measures (ALMMs) (World Bank, 2023).

Activity and employment rates are low in Armenia. The activity rate decreased from 62.5% in 2015 to 56.4% in 2023 (ARMSTAT, 2024), reaching its lowest level in 2021 (54.8%). The decline was more significant for women (from 54.3% in 2015 to 46.1% in 2023, whereas the decrease for men was 4.2%). The reasons behind such high inactivity rates are different: for women, family care responsibilities; for men, circular and seasonal migration; and for lower-educated people, seasonal migration and discouragement are the most cited reasons for inactivity (World Bank, 2019). The findings from a recent EU-NIRAS study show that women's employment reaches its peak among 40-to-54-year-olds, indicating that women are out of the labour market during their most employable years. Marital status also appears to influence employment opportunities: in Armenia, divorced women constitute the largest group of employed women among all female demographic groups (EU-NIRAS, 2024).

The employment rate has been fluctuating at low levels, between 49.6% in 2010, 50.9% in 2015 and 49.4% in 2023, hitting the lowest rate of 45.4% in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a large disparity between the employment rates for men and women: 60.4% versus 40%, respectively in 2023 (ARMSTAT, 2024). A major reason for women's absence from the labour market is their involvement in unpaid household and care activities (NIRAS, 2021). Employment rates by level of educational attainment show higher opportunities for high-skilled workers with higher (tertiary or post-graduate) education qualifications (63.5% in 2022). The need for continuous learning seems to be gaining traction, as the trend in participation in lifelong learning is increasing, with 8.8% of people aged 25-64 in training in 2023 compared to 8.2% in 2019, though showing a decrease compared to 9.3% in 2022 (ARMSTAT, 2024).

Unemployment rates have been decreasing, reaching 12.4% in 2023 compared to 18.5% in 2015. Unemployment has particularly decreased for those with higher skill levels and for tertiary graduates in VET specialities, from 17.9% in 2015 to 10.6% in 2023. However, the unemployment rate has substantially increased for low-skilled workers between 2015 (14.9%) and 2023 (20.9%). The youth unemployment rate remains high (27.2% in 2023), although it has steadily decreased (from 38.9% in 2010 and 32.5% in 2015). The risk of long-term unemployment is also high – in 2020, the majority of unemployed people (49.3%) had been searching for a job for more than a year. Moreover, nearly a third of overall employment is considered vulnerable. In the search for business opportunities, 33.8% of the workforce was self-employed in 2023.

While employment in agriculture has been decreasing, it remains relatively high, at 19.4% in 2023. Employment in industry has been expanding slightly, but remains at a low level (23.3% in 2023), while the services sector is expanding, reaching 57.3% of the employment share in 2023. The ICT sector has been growing considerably (with the number of people employed in the sector more than doubling from 2018 to 2023), offering new opportunities to young professionals. However, skills shortages are

limiting the sector and preventing companies from being able to expand (Eurasianet, 2022). Young people are taking up digital job opportunities, including through online labour platforms, but they are often pushed to work informally (ETF 2021).

The total number of registered jobseekers in the 'GORTS' (JOB) system in 2015-2021 varied between around 89,000 to 86,000, with a sharp decrease in the last few years, reaching 64,190 in 2023. Only about a quarter of unemployed persons (based on the LFS) are registered with Unified Social Service (USS) – approximately 46,000 in 2023. The USS and its regional centres provide services only to registered jobseekers and unemployed persons. No special mechanism is in place to motivate jobseekers or unemployed persons to register with USS regional offices (ETF, 2022).

A recent ETF study analysing the determinants of vertical and horizontal skills mismatch reveals that in Armenia, older cohorts have significantly higher probabilities of being occupationally mismatched, similar to the population living in a rural area (ETF, 2024).

Statistics on the labour market and employment

The Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia (ARMSTAT) releases updates on the socio-economic situation twice a year, carries out the Labour Force Survey, and publishes a yearbook on labour market developments in Armenia. The methodology for labour market statistics was revised in January 2018 in the context of the Labour Force Survey conducted among households.

To address job-matching challenges, the government has begun to set up an extensive online labour market information system (LMIS), which includes information about in-demand occupation profiles and the skills needed to work in specific occupations.

Within the scope of the 'Work Armenia' Strategy, the Edu2Work platform is operational in analysing labour market trends in Armenia. The platform is designed to analyse the high-skilled labour force in Armenia through AI-powered software, which gathers and analyses thousands of job vacancies – from almost all economic sectors – posted on 10 online job portals in Armenia on a daily basis.

A job-search platform has been operationalised at the USS for Eurasian Economic Union countries. The 'Work without Borders' platform provides access to job vacancies and jobseekers in the member states of the Union (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia).

Additionally, a number of skills demand analyses are being conducted in the country, such as:

- the annual employer skills surveys on occupations in demand, conducted by the Unified Social Service (USS);
- the annual tracer study for VET graduates, conducted by the MoESCS in the 6 months after graduation;
- short sector profiles and analysis of specific skill needs, conducted by the National Institute of Labour and Social Research; and
- research work in the fields of data science (natural language processing), behavioural experiments and design thinking, conducted by the National SDG Innovation Lab.

The new Armenia government job platform 'e-work.am' was officially launched in May 2024 by the MoLSA and the developer Nork Technology Center. The purpose of the platform – conceived as an evolution of the current GORTS information system – is to bridge the gap between employers and jobseekers, consolidate available vacancies, and facilitate communication between the state, employers and applicants.

3.2 Employment policy and institutional settings

Strategy and legal framework in the employment policy field

The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) is the main government institution responsible for employment policy in Armenia. Until April 2021, regulatory functions in the employment sphere were

delegated to the State Employment Agency (SEA). As of April 2021, as part of the amendments to the Law on Social Assistance (March 2020), the Unified Social Service (USS) was established, unifying all four bodies of social protection in Armenia – the social security department, medical and social examination, state employment offices, and regional and community social assistance agencies.

A new Employment Strategic Plan for 2024-2030 was presented to the National Assembly in June 2024. Meanwhile, a Population Strategy 2024-2040 was adopted in October 2024, and progress is ongoing with the design of a new policy for the USS.

The new Plan, prepared with UNDP's support, aims to comprehensively address interlinked issues in labour and employment through human capital development. The Government Programme of the Republic of Armenia 2021-2026 and the Armenia Transformation Strategy until 2050 provide the legal basis for the Strategy. The objectives are to contribute to higher productivity, create new jobs in non-agricultural sectors in the marzes, and increase the competitiveness and employability of the population by specifically targeting women, NEETs, communities and vulnerable social groups. The Plan also aims to implement institutional and systemic reforms to improve the effectiveness of public authorities and policies (MoLSA, 2024).

Initiatives to boost employment

The services provided and the active labour market policies (ALMPs) currently implemented in Armenia can be classified as follows:

■ Labour market services

- Jobseekers in Armenia are registered at regional USS offices in the centralised 'GORTS' information system. After registration, jobseekers can benefit from counselling, needs assessments, be provided with information on sought-after professions on the labour market, develop an individual programme and identify the ALMPs that best fit their profile, and enrol in schemes. Over 86,000 people benefitted from labour market counselling services in 2023 (ETF, 2024).

■ Active labour market policies (ALMPs)

The total number of beneficiaries of ALMPs in 2023 was approximately 3,800.

- Training programmes designed to train or retrain job seekers are provided by selected educational institutions and at the workplace (609 beneficiaries in 2021, of whom 487 were women and 127 were under 25 years old – ETF, 2024).
- Employment incentives through the provision of support to the agricultural economy promoting seasonal employment (3 155 beneficiaries in 2023, of whom 916 were women – ETF, 2024).
- The 'Providing employment for the unemployed' programme: 731 beneficiaries in 2023, of whom 164 were women (ETF, 2024).
- Direct job creation: 1,157 beneficiaries in 2021 (of whom 345 were women and 11 under 25 years old – ETF, 2024).
- Start-up incentives to promote entrepreneurship by supporting unemployed persons who start their own business or become self-employed (475 beneficiaries in 2021, of whom 273 were women and 14 below 25 years old – ETF, 2024).
- The 'Acceleration Programme', implemented by the MoLSA jointly with the UNDP, provides training programmes aimed at upskilling and reskilling different segments of vulnerable populations in entrepreneurship, both for beginners with a business idea and for advanced participants and private entrepreneurs. In some cases, UNDP has also provided post-training support.

An increasing trend is observed in registered jobseekers transiting into employment: 16.9% during 2023 against 11.3% in 2015 (ARMSTAT, 2023).

To address the emergency situation in October 2023, the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs launched the platform www.workforall.am, through which people forcibly displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh can

apply for a job (Government of the Republic of Armenia, 2023). As of April 2024, over 6,500 displaced people are registered in USS, of whom 1 990 have been employed (MoLSA, 2024). Donor-driven initiatives were also launched to support the employability of the displaced population. Among these is the 'Livelihood recovery of the most vulnerable among the refugees from Nagorno Karabakh and their host communities' project funded by the Swedish International Development Agency in cooperation with UNDP, which provided 3-month on-the-job paid training programmes.

A career development support system is in place in Armenia. The state bodies responsible are the MoLSA and the MoESCS. The Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre (CGCD) under the MoLSA provides career support services, develops policy and methodology in vocational guidance and career education models, develops technologies and capacity building for service providers, and monitors the establishment of cross-sectoral networks. The MoESCS provides the operational and institutional basis for introducing career guidance services in education and training. Regarding beneficiaries, only 21.4% of Armenian schools currently provide career education in grades 8 to 11. In contrast, students at all 96 VET institutions in the country have access to career guidance and career education services. People not in formal education, NEETs, adults and people who are considered 'not competitive' in the labour market – i.e. facing employment challenges and requiring upskilling/reskilling – can receive career guidance services in the 49 USS regional centres, which operate in the capital city and all regions (ETF, 2022).

A recent ETF e-survey on working and learning aimed at understanding perceptions of the quality of the education system, participation in further education and training, access to career guidance and WBL opportunities, teleworking and gender. The findings revealed that 72% of the interviewees considered having sufficient access to education and training opportunities. In the last 12 months, 40% had participated in courses, workshops or seminars to learn new job-related skills. In contrast, only 31% had received on-the-job training with the support of a designated trainer. 38% of respondents had had an education or training activity fully or partly paid by their current employer or had been able to attend it during paid working time. 49% of respondents knew about job-related education and training opportunities through an internet search, and 30% knew about them from their employers. Only 13% stated they had participated in career guidance services in the last 12 months (ETF, 2023).

Initiatives to increase the capacity of the public employment services

Labour market public expenditure for active programmes in 2022 accounted for less than 0.02% of GDP and has slightly decreased over the last 10 years (World Bank, 2024).

The workload of the Armenia PES's (USS) employees is high: 268 employees in a total of 49 regional centres provide services to 864,000 registered jobseekers in the 10 regions of Armenia and in Yerevan, with a workload of 322 jobseekers per employee (ETF, 2022).

The employment services face a number of challenges, such as the high workload of PES staff, the lack of institutional capacity for effective service provision (including counselling, information provision, and guidance and support in job placement), the low efficiency of job-matching services, incomplete and fragmented labour market information, budget constraints, and a subsequently limited outreach to potential beneficiaries. To increase the capacity of the Armenian PES (USS), the ETF is actively involving its staff in learning opportunities. Furthermore, the Armenian PES are following activities delivered to EaP PES under the EU4Youth regional programme, particularly related to supporting the integration of young people into the labour market.

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STATISTICAL ANNEX – ARMENIA

The Annex includes annual data from 2015, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 or the last available year.

	Indicator	2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
1	Total population (in thousands) ⁽¹⁾	2 878.6	2 820.6	2 805.6	2 791.0	2 780.5	2 778.0	
2	Relative size of youth population (age group 15-24 and denominator age 15-64, %) ^{(1) c}	22.2	18.0	17.6	17.4	17.3	17.4	
3	GDP growth rate (%)	3.2	7.6	-7.2	5.8	12.6	8.7	
4	Gross value added by sector (%)	Agriculture	17.2	11.5	11.3	11.3	10.4	8.4
		Industry	25.7	25.0	26.8	26.4	25.3	23.9
		Services	48.2	54.0	53.2	53.1	55.5	59.0
5	Public expenditure on education (as% of GDP)	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.8	2.5	M.D.	
6	Public expenditure on education (as% of total public expenditure)	M.D.	10.0	9.6	9.7	9.7	M.D.	
7	Adult literacy (%)	M.D.	M.D.	99.8	M.D.	M.D.	M.D.	
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)	Low ⁽²⁾	M.D.	9.5	9.9	9.5	8.7	8.1
		Medium ⁽³⁾	M.D.	65.5	64.7	64.3	65.6	65.2
		High ⁽⁴⁾	M.D.	25.1	25.4	26.2	25.7	26.7
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Total	M.D.	3.4	3.5	3.0	2.8	2.2
		Male	M.D.	4.7	5.0	4.8	3.1	3.3
		Female	M.D.	1.9	1.8	1.2	2.4	0.9
10	Total NET enrolment rate (%)	Lower secondary	M.D.	98.5	99.5	99.4	99.6	M.D.
		Upper secondary	M.D.	94.3	96.2	95.3	96.5	M.D.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	26.2	25.9	25.9	28.7	28.4	M.D.	
12	Low achievement in reading, mathematics and science – PISA (%)	Reading	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
		Mathematics	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
		Science	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
13	Total	62.5	58.8	55.4	54.8	55.7	56.4	

	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)	Male	72.6	70.9	66.3	67.3	68.4	68.4
		Female	54.3	48.2	46.3	44.8	45.1	46.1
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	37.5	41.2	44.6	45.2	44.3	43.6
		Male	27.4	29.1	33.7	32.7	31.6	31.6
		Female	45.7	51.8	53.7	55.2	54.9	53.9
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)	Total	50.9	48.4	45.4	46.4	48.3	49.4
		Male	59.8	59.1	53.8	56.8	59.4	60.4
		Female	43.8	39.0	38.4	38.0	38.9	40.0
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁶⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	35.6	25.2	17.1	16.1	20.2	16.6
		Medium ⁽³⁾	48.4	46.7	44.1	45.5	46.9	47.7
		High ⁽⁴⁾	63.3	63.0	59.5	59.6	61.4	63.5
17	Employment by sector (%) ⁽⁶⁾	Agriculture ⁽⁷⁾	35.3	23.4	22.1	22.1	22.2	19.4
		Industry ⁽⁸⁾	15.9	23.8	20.9	22.0	21.8	23.3
		Services ⁽⁹⁾	48.8	52.8	57.0	55.9	55.9	57.3
18	Incidence of self-employment (%) ⁽⁶⁾		42.8	35.0	32.5	33.2	34.7	33.8
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%) ⁽⁶⁾		41.9	33.6	31.1	31.8	33.0	31.6
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁶⁾	Total	18.5	17.7	18.1	15.4	13.4	12.4
		Male	17.6	16.6	19.0	15.6	13.1	11.7
		Female	19.5	19.2	17.1	15.2	13.7	13.2
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%) ⁽⁶⁾	Low ⁽²⁾	14.9	19.9	24.2	11.8	16.1	20.9
		Medium ⁽³⁾	19.1	18.7	18.9	16.3	14.0	12.9
		High ⁽⁴⁾	17.9	15.2	15.8	13.9	11.8	10.6
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%) ⁽⁶⁾	Total	32.5	32.2	32.3	30.5	27.1	27.2
		Male	28.6	29.3	31.6	28.0	24.3	24.2
		Female	37.2	35.6	33.3	33.6	31.6	31.5
23	Proportion of people aged 15-24 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Total	M.D.	23.3	23.0	20.3	19.0	16.9
		Male	M.D.	17.8	17.5	16.2	13.2	13.8
		Female	M.D.	29.3	28.8	24.6	25.5	20.3
		Total	M.D.	31.0	31.0	28.3	25.9	24.4

	Indicator		2015	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
	Proportion of people aged 15-29 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%) ⁽⁵⁾	Male	M.D.	20.8	22.6	19.2	15.7	16.4
		Female	M.D.	41.6	39.9	37.3	36.8	33.3
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)	Total	M.D.	8.2	6.8	8.6	9.3	8.8
		Male	M.D.	8.3	6.4	8.5	9.1	8.3
		Female	M.D.	8.1	7.0	8.7	9.4	9.3
25	Human Development Index		0.769	0.789	0.769	0.774	0.786	M.D.

Last update: 22/10/2024

Sources:

Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7: World Bank, World Development Indicators database,
Indicators 10, 11: UNESCO, Institute for Statistics,
Indicators 8, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24: ARMSTAT, LFS,
Indicator 25: UNDP,

Notes:

- (1) Estimation.
- (2) Low – primary and lower, general basic.
- (3) Medium – general secondary, vocational, secondary specialised.
- (4) High – tertiary, post-graduate.
- (5) Detailed categories can bring reliability challenges that need careful consideration.
- (6) Until 2020, the data referred to the population aged 15-74; since 2020, it has referred to the population aged 15+.
- (7) Agriculture (A).
- (8) Industry (B-F).
- (9) Services (G-U).

Legend:

C = ETF calculations
N.A. = not applicable
M.D. = missing data

ANNEX: DEFINITIONS OF INDICATORS

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

	Description	Definition
8	Educational attainment of total population (aged 15+) (%)	Educational attainment refers to the highest educational level achieved by individuals expressed as a percentage of all persons in that age group. This is usually measured in terms of the highest educational programme successfully completed, which is typically certified by a recognised qualification. Recognised intermediate qualifications are classified at a lower level than the programme itself.
9	Early leavers from education and training (aged 18-24) (%)	Early leavers from education and training are defined as the percentage of the population aged 18-24 with at most lower secondary education who were not in further education or training during the 4 weeks preceding the survey. Lower secondary education refers to ISCED 1997 levels 0-2 and 3C short (i.e. programmes lasting under 2 years) for data up to 2013, and to ISCED 2011 levels 0-2 for data from 2014 onwards.
10	Total NET enrolment rate	Total number of students of the official age group for a given level of education who are enrolled in any level of education, expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population.
11	Share of VET students in upper secondary education (ISCED level 3) (%)	Total number of students enrolled in vocational programmes at a given level of education (in this case, upper secondary), expressed as a percentage of the total number of students enrolled in all programmes (vocational and general) at that level.
12	Low achievement in reading, maths and science – PISA (%)	Low achievers are the 15-year-olds who are failing to reach level 2 on the PISA scale for reading, mathematics and science.
13	Activity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The activity rate is calculated by dividing the active population by the population of the same age group. The active population (also called the 'labour force') is defined as the sum of employed and unemployed people. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
14	Inactivity rate (aged 15+) (%)	The inactivity/out of the labour force rate is calculated by dividing the inactive population by the population of the same age group. The inactive population consists of all people who are classified as neither employed nor unemployed.
15	Employment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed people by the population of the same age group. Employed people are all people who worked at least 1 hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated.
16	Employment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The employment rate is calculated by dividing the number of employed persons by the population of the same age group. Employed persons are all persons who worked at least 1 hour for pay or profit during the reference period or were temporarily absent from such work. If a different age group is used, this should be indicated. Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: Low (ISCED level 0-2), Medium (ISCED level 3-4) and High (ISCED 1997 level 5-6, and ISCED 2011 level 5-8).
17	Employment by sector (%)	This indicator provides information on the relative importance of different economic activities with regard to employment. Data is presented by broad branches of economic activity (i.e. Agriculture/Industry/Services) based on the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC). In Europe, the NACE classification is consistent with ISIC.
18	Incidence of self-employment (%)	The incidence of self-employment is expressed by the self-employed (i.e. employers + own-account workers + contributing family workers) as a proportion of the total employed population.

	Description	Definition
19	Incidence of vulnerable employment (%)	The incidence of vulnerable employment is expressed by the own-account workers and contributing family workers as a proportion of the total employed.
20	Unemployment rate (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the 2 weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the 4-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, 3 months).
21	Unemployment rate by educational attainment (aged 15+) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-64 or 15+ who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the 2 weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work (had taken specific steps in the 4-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, 3 months)). Educational levels refer to the highest educational level successfully completed. Three levels are considered: low (ISCED level 0-2), medium (ISCED level 3-4) and high (ISCED 1997 level 5-6, and ISCED 2011 level 5-8).
22	Unemployment rate (aged 15-24) (%)	The unemployment rate represents unemployed people as a percentage of the labour force. The labour force is the total number of people who are employed or unemployed. Unemployed people comprise those aged 15-24 who were without work during the reference week; are currently available for work (were available for paid employment or self-employment before the end of the 2 weeks following the reference week); are actively seeking work, i.e. had taken specific steps in the 4-week period ending with the reference week to seek paid employment or self-employment, or had found a job to start later (within a period of, at most, 3 months).
23	Proportion of people aged 15–24/15-29 not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (%)	The indicator provides information on young people aged 15-24 who meet the following two conditions: first, they are not employed (i.e. unemployed or inactive according to the ILO definition); and second, they have not received any education or training in the 4 weeks preceding the survey. Data are expressed as a percentage of the total population of the same age group and gender, excluding the respondents who have not answered the question on participation in education and training.
24	Participation in training/lifelong learning (% aged 25-64)	Participants in lifelong learning refers to persons aged 25-64 who stated that had they received education or training in the 12 months preceding the survey (numerator). The denominator is the total population of the same age group, excluding those who did not answer the question on participation in education and training. The information collected relates to all education or training, whether or not it is relevant to the respondent-s current or possible future job. If a different reference period is used, this should be indicated.
25	Human Development Index	The index is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and having a decent standard of living.

KEY DONOR PROJECTS IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

EU-funded

- The 'Resilient Syunik Team Europe Initiative' (5-year budget of initially EUR51 million) was launched in January 2023 as a joint undertaking of the European Union, the European Investment Bank and EU Member States Austria, France, Germany, Poland and Sweden, with Switzerland also joining as an external partner. The aim of the initiative is to contribute to an improved business environment for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and to enhanced private-sector competitiveness and improved access to high-quality, people-centric public services. It also seeks to prioritise green regional development, increase protection and sustainable use, and restore biodiversity. As of May 2024, 37 projects with a total budget of EUR125 million are currently implemented under the umbrella of the Initiative.
- The EU-funded 'Local Empowerment of Actors for Development (LEAD)' programme (4-year budget of EUR14.6 million) was launched in March 2021 with the aim of creating more than 250 jobs, supporting 160 rural businesses, funding 150 migrant businesses and training at least 500 beneficiaries in business management and operations. The action is run in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD).
- A Budget Support of EUR32 million was launched in 2023 under the EU-Armenia Multiannual Indicative Programming Document 2021-2027. The action has a focus on secondary education and improving the quality of STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) teaching and learning, supporting the improvement and modernisation of school infrastructure and school management in rural areas, and piloting the proposed solutions in the Syunik *marz* of Armenia. Additionally, the programme plans to enhance access to education in the four *marzes* selected by the government (Ararat, Kotayk, Gegharkunik and Syunik) and to improve the national student learning-outcome assessment system.
- A 3-year EU regional programme implemented by ETF on 'Supporting education reforms and skills in the Eastern Partnership region' was launched in May 2024 with a budget of EUR2.5 million. The objectives are to improve the governance of the national education systems – from pre-primary to tertiary education, including vocational education and training and adult learning – and to strengthen capacities in evidence-based planning, management and performance monitoring in the education sector. The Programme is structured around three pillars: a) a rapid education diagnosis based on the thematic dimensions of inequality, financing and governance; b) capacity development for policy implementation, to enhance capabilities for the effective implementation of sector strategies and targeted to address the challenges identified in the countries; and c) training and peer learning at regional level.
- Under the 'Erasmus+ KA 2 Capacity Building in VET' programme, seven projects are currently ongoing involving Armenian institutions: an innovative model of a smart farm adjacent to a VET institution for students undertaking work-based learning towards better employability of graduates (CB4WBL); 'VET Demonstration Partnership for Pistachio Farm in Armenia: Geospatial Approach' (VETfarm); 'INVESt in you: promote international traineeship programs for Armenian, Georgian and Moldovan students in Central Europe' (IN-VET); 'IMProve and PROMote VET in Armenia' (ImProVET); 'Beyond Europe with micro-credentials' (BEM); 'VET Partnerships for Green and Smart Electricity in Buildings' (VET4GSEB); and 'Developing Social Entrepreneurship schemes for VET institutions in Neighbourhood East' (SE VET).

Other donors / international organisations

- GIZ's Private Sector Development Programme (PSD TVET) 2017-2024 has the objective of improving the conditions for sustainable economic development and encouraging inclusive growth, particularly in rural regions. In cooperation with the MoESCS, it has launched long-term dual VET courses in VET institutions for selected specialisations in the wine-making, tourism and IT / precision engineering sectors. In addition, the programme has helped to pilot three short-term dual VET courses at four VET colleges, catering to the needs of private-sector companies and focused on introducing new professions. The EU is co-funding the programme with a contribution of EUR20.7 million. The programme will come to an end in December 2024, and a new phase starting in 2025 on a bilateral basis, will cover new sectors including textiles.
- The USAID' Armenia Workforce Development Activity' project (budget of USD7.5 million) was launched in 2021 and will last until September 2026. The project is run by the Enterprise Incubator Foundation, the Armenian National Agrarian University, the Fund for Armenian Relief and CIVITTA Armenia. The goal is to improve the soft and technical skills of young people and women, and to increase their links to occupations in three target sectors – information and communication technology and the high-tech industry (ICT/HT); agriculture and food processing (agri-food); and hospitality, restaurants and cafés (HoReCA) – by reducing the barriers to entering the labour market.
- The Modernizing VET in Agriculture in Armenia (MAVETA) project is funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and other partners, including the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) and the Armenian Izmirlian Foundation for the period 2022-2025 (budget CHF 8.3 million). The aim is to contribute to higher productivity in agriculture, increased income and enhanced (self)-employment in agricultural and related fields through improving the knowledge and skills of farmers. The project is run by the Strategic Development Agency (SDA) NGO in partnership with Swiss Church Aid (HEKS/EPER), the School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences of the Bern University of Applied Sciences (HAFL), and GIZ. The current MAVETA project will end in August 2025, and a new phase is currently under discussion.
- In 2024, the International Labour Organization (ILO) launched an initiative to tackle informal work amid Armenia's refugee crisis, in support of ethnic Armenian refugees from Nagorno-Karabakh, many of whom face significant barriers to stable jobs. The initiative – with a budget of USD 600 000 – focuses on protecting workers' rights and improving working conditions amid current labour market challenges. This ILO initiative will operate in the capital, Yerevan, and the provinces of Kotayk and Ararat.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADA	Austrian Development Agency
ADS	Armenian Development Strategy
ALMMS	Active labour market measures
ALMP	Active labour market policy
ANQA	National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance
ARMSTAT	Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia
BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CB4WBL	Work-based learning towards better employability of graduates
CEPA	Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement
CGCD	Career Guidance and Capacity Development Centre
COVID_19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CVET	Continuous vocational education and training
EaFA	European Alliance for Apprenticeship
EaP	Eastern Partnership
EC	European Commission
EIP	Economic Investment Plan
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EQAVET	European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EUMA	EU Mission in Armenia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GAN	Global Apprenticeship Network
GDP	Gross domestic product
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HAFL	School of Agricultural, Forest and Food Sciences of the Bern University of Applied Sciences
HEKS/EPER	Swiss Church Aid
HoReCA	Hospitality, restaurants and cafés
HT	High-tech
ICMPD	International Centre for Migration Policy Development
ICT	Information and communication technology
IDA	International Development Association
ILO	International Labour Organization

IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISIC	International Standard Industrial Classification
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LEAD	Local Empowerment of Actors for Development
LLL	Lifelong learning
LMIS	Labour Market Information System
MAVETA	Modernizing VET in Agriculture
MoESCS	Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports
MoLSA	Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
MSMEs	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
NCET	National Centre for Educational Technologies
NCVD	National Council for VET Development
NCVETD	National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development
NEET	(Young people) not in employment, education or training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NTF	National Training Fund
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Public Employment Service
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PSD	Private-sector development
SDA	Strategic Development Agency
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEA	State Employment Agency
SELFIE	Self-reflection on Effective Learning by Fostering the Use of Innovative Education
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SQF	Sector qualifications
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and maths
TUMO	Centre for Creative Technologies
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
UMIC	Upper middle-income country
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

USS	Unified Social Service
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VNFIL	Validation of non-formal and informal learning
WBL	Work-based learning

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