

KAZAKHSTAN: ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET MEASURES FOR YOUTH

Working paper

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1 INTRODUCTION

Over thirty years of independence, Kazakhstan’s economy has undergone several critical stages of transformation. These include the transition to a market economy in the 1990s, the establishment of a free trade area within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), rapid economic growth in the 2000s driven by inflows of foreign direct investment and commodity exports, the global financial crisis of 2008–2009, deepening Eurasian integration (the establishment of the Customs Union in 2010 and the Eurasian Economic Union in 2015), declining global oil prices and the subsequent devaluation of the tenge in 2015–2016, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. (Mukhamediev & Temerbulatova, 2021).

In the economic context, Kazakhstan demonstrates sustained growth. Kazakhstan’s gross domestic product at current prices has steadily increased from KZT 70.6 trillion in 2020 to KZT 136.7 trillion in 2024.¹ As shown in Annex 1, the main contribution comes from services, whose share exceeds that of goods production. In 2024, the volume of services production amounted to KZT 79.2 trillion (including trade – KZT 26 trillion, real estate activities – KZT 11.6 trillion, transport and storage – KZT 7.8 trillion), while goods production reached KZT 49.2 trillion. Within the goods sector, industry is the leading contributor – KZT 35.7 trillion, including mining (KZT 16.4 trillion) and manufacturing (KZT 16.9 trillion). Agriculture, construction and energy also demonstrate positive dynamics.

As shown in Table 1, data on key labour market indicators reflect long-term positive changes in the structure of employment and declining unemployment in Kazakhstan. In 2020–2024, Kazakhstan’s labour market demonstrated a stable labour force, increasing from 9.18 million persons in 2020 to 9.66 million in 2024. Employment increased from 8.73 million to 9.21 million, with employees accounting for the majority of those employed (approximately 7.0 million in 2024), while the number of self-employed persons remained at approximately 2.2 million. The unemployment rate remained stable at 4.7–4.9%, while youth unemployment declined: among persons aged 15–34, it decreased from 3.8% in 2020–2022 to 3.1% in 2024.

Table 1. Key Labour Market Indicators in Kazakhstan²

Key labour market indicators	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Labour force, thousand persons	9 180,8	9 256,8	9 429,8	9 534,1	9664,0
Employed population, thousand persons	8 732,0	8 807,1	8 971,5	9 081,9	9214,2
Employees, thousand persons	6 686,7	6 710,2	6 847,3	6 893,4	7015,1
Self-employed persons, thousand persons	2 045,4	2 096,9	2 124,2	2 188,5	2199,1
Unemployed population, thousand persons	448,8	449,6	458,3	452,2	449,8
Unemployment rate, %	4,9	4,9	4,9	4,7	4,7
Youth unemployment rate, % (aged 15–24) ³	3,8	3,7	3,8	3,8	3,7
Youth unemployment rate, % (aged 15–34) ⁴	3,8	3,8	3,8	3,5	3,1
Share of youth NEET (aged 15–34)	7,1	6,9	6,5	7,3	6,5
Long-term unemployment rate, %	2,2	2,1	2,3	1,2	1,0
Average duration of unemployment, ⁵ months	5,2	6,7	7,0	5,9	4,9
Persons outside the labour force, thousand persons	4 076,8	4 093,3	4 301,4	4 393,5	4512,8

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan

As shown in Annex 2, the employment structure indicates that the largest number of workers are concentrated in trade (approximately 1.53 million persons or 17% of total employment in 2024),

¹ Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan

² The data were generated based on the results of a sample survey of 208,275 households (4.48% of the total number of households); the survey is conducted once per year.

³ Age classification for youth in accordance with the standards of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

⁴ From 2001 to 2022, the data were compiled in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On State Youth Policy”, covering persons aged 15–28 (not yet reached 29 years of age). From 1 January 2023, the upper age limit for youth was increased to 35 years.

⁵ Excluding pensioners, full-time students, and persons with disabilities classified as “unemployed”.

agriculture (1.03 million or 11%), education (1.20 million or 13%) and industry (1.16 million or 13%). Within industry, the key subsectors remain manufacturing (625.9 thousand or 54% of total industrial employment) and mining (284.3 thousand or 23% of total industrial employment). Construction consistently provides employment for more than 660 thousand persons, while transport and storage employ 670 thousand persons (each sector accounting for 7% of total employment in 2024). Within the services sector, significant subsectors include human health and social work activities (583.9 thousand or 6% of total employment in 2024), public administration (517 thousand or 6% of total employment in 2024), professional and scientific activities (263.6 thousand or 3% of total employment in 2024), as well as accommodation and food service activities (232.5 thousand or 3% of total employment in 2024). Smaller but growing sectors include arts, entertainment and recreation (154.2 thousand or 2% of total employment in 2024) and other service activities (383.3 thousand or 4% of total employment in 2024).

However, according to experts, the January 2022 events demonstrated the vulnerability and instability of the existing economic model, highlighting issues such as low wage levels, high unemployment and the prevalence of self-employment (Dankov, 2022).

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, economic developments in the country were largely shaped by dependence on the extractive sector, which directly influenced labour market conditions. During the pandemic period, the tertiary sector—services—was particularly affected. A decline in employment, an increase in unemployment, and sectoral and gender-related shifts in the labour market were observed, including a slowdown in both internal and external migration flows. The greatest losses were experienced by so-called “contact-intensive” services, characterised by high labour intensity, low wages and high levels of informal employment (Alshanskaya & Azatbek, 2021, p.147). At the same time, quarantine measures led to changes in the structure of employment: regional imbalances in labour resources intensified, the number of technically unemployed persons increased, and demand for workers in construction, transport and industry rose (Izguttiyeva et al., 2021, p.187).

The purpose of this report is to map active labour market measures (ALMMs) in Kazakhstan with a focus on youth. The report includes an overview of the current situation, an analysis of existing programmes and the institutional environment, an assessment of the effectiveness of implemented measures, as well as the identification of challenges and the development of recommendations. The report is based on desk research and a limited number of interviews.

2 YOUTH LABOUR MARKET OVERVIEW

In accordance with amendments to the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan “On State Youth Policy” (December 2022), the upper age limit for youth was increased to 35 years. As a result, the total number of youth under the new definition has significantly increased compared to previous years.

In 2024, the number of youth (aged 15–34) within the labour force of the Republic of Kazakhstan amounted to 3,747.4 thousand persons, representing more than one third (39%) of the total labour force (9,664.0 thousand persons), highlighting the importance of this demographic group for the country’s socio-economic development (Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan).

In total, 3,629.4 thousand young people were employed in the economy, including 2,810.5 thousand employees and 818.9 thousand self-employed persons (Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan). At the same time, approximately 513.2 thousand young people are engaged in flexible forms of employment, primarily freelance work, meaning they are self-employed workers who pay pension contributions but do not make social security contributions (Joint Stock Company Centre for the Development of Labour Resources (JSC CDLR), 2023, p. 57).

Despite their numerical significance, over the past five years there has been a decline in the youth labour force, partly due to the demographic “gap” associated with births during the unstable period of the 1990s–2000s. Thus, the economically active population aged 15–34 decreased by 6% compared to 2018. This decline is particularly pronounced among women, at 8.2% (JSC CDLR, 2023, p. 44).

The youth unemployment rate stands at 3.1%, which is considered relatively low by international standards. However, concern is raised by the number of young people outside the labour force, amounting to 1,659.2 thousand persons. In addition, particular attention is given to NEET youth (not in employment, education or training), whose number has reached 354,046 persons. As shown in Table 1, the share of NEET youth remains relatively stable; however, its dynamics indicate that slight increases are observed in certain years.

One of the significant challenges is the socio-economic vulnerability of rural youth. Mass migration to cities in the absence of adequate education, skills and career guidance often leads to involvement in informal employment or entry into the NEET group. Two thirds of unproductively self-employed youth reside in rural areas. At the same time, youth employment in the agricultural sector continues to decline amid low incomes and weak infrastructure (JSC CDLR, 2023, pp. 49–55).

A high level of informal employment is also observed in sectors such as trade. Trade accounts for up to 18% of youth employment and is characterised by high labour turnover (21.3%) and a dominant share of informal employment, which reduces employment stability and job quality (JSC CDLR, 2023, p. 55).

Among the key factors negatively affecting youth employment, the following can be identified:

- Skills mismatch between education and labour market requirements. According to employer assessments, the quality of graduate training does not meet their expectations. Weak career guidance in schools and insufficient digital and practical preparation of young specialists further exacerbate the problem (JSC CDLR, 2023, p. 63).
- Excessive requirements on the part of employers. Employers often give preference to candidates with professional experience, which makes it difficult for young specialists at the beginning of their careers to enter employment. Particularly vulnerable in this context are young mothers, who temporarily exit the active labour force due to childcare responsibilities, as well as youth with disabilities, for whom the labour market remains insufficiently adapted and poorly accessible (Alshanskaya, 2020, p. 37).
- Insufficient awareness among youth of employment opportunities. Young people often lack adequate information about existing employment options, including support programmes offered by both public and private institutions. This issue is particularly acute in regions where information channels are underdeveloped and systematic career guidance is lacking (Alshanskaya, 2020, p. 38). According to a survey conducted by the Research Centre (2023) “Youth”, only 4.7% had heard of the state employment programme and only 0.8% had participated.
- Growth of informal employment due to low levels of labour formalisation in certain sectors, such as trade, services and agriculture. This results in the absence of social protection and lower quality employment (JSC CDLR, 2023, pp. 55–74).
- Low motivation and passivity among NEET youth. A sociological study conducted in 2022 showed that 58% of individuals in this group are not seeking employment, while 18% do not intend to continue education or training. This requires the implementation of targeted programmes to engage such young people in active economic participation (JSC CDLR, 2023, p. 67).
- Changes in youth behavioural patterns. Modern young jobseekers increasingly prefer flexible forms of employment, including remote work. However, employer readiness for such formats remains low, creating an additional imbalance between youth expectations and labour market opportunities (JSC CDLR, 2023, p. 58).

3 INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

The employment governance system in Kazakhstan includes a wide range of stakeholders responsible for implementing state labour policy. The key institutional actors are:

1. Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MLSPP RK):

- Policy and strategy formulation: The MLSPP RK is the key government authority responsible for the development and implementation of state employment policy, including youth employment policy. The MLSPP RK defines strategic priorities, objectives and tasks in this area, develops relevant regulatory and legal acts, state programmes and national projects aimed at increasing youth employment, reducing unemployment and ensuring youth competitiveness in the labour market.
- Coordination and monitoring: The MLSPP RK coordinates the activities of other government bodies, local executive authorities and social partners on youth employment issues. The Ministry also conducts monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of implemented measures and programmes, analyses the youth labour market situation and, where necessary, introduces policy adjustments.
- Financing and resource allocation: The MLSPP RK participates in determining funding allocations for youth employment programmes and distributes budgetary resources among regions and institutions involved in implementing these programmes.

2. Career Centres (formerly Public Employment Centres):

- Registration and profiling of jobseekers: Career Centres register individuals seeking employment assistance, maintain vacancy records and develop databases of jobseekers and employers.
- Information and advisory services: Career Centres provide information on labour market conditions, available vacancies, employer requirements, opportunities for vocational education and training and reskilling, as well as ongoing state employment support programmes. They also provide guidance on labour legislation and workers' rights.
- Employment mediation: Career Centres provide direct support in identifying suitable employment opportunities, organise job fairs, facilitate employer interviews and assist with CV preparation and interview readiness.
- Implementation of active labour market measures: Career Centres are key implementing bodies for active labour market measures.

3. Akimats (local executive authorities):

- Implementation of regional employment policy: Akimats develop and implement regional youth employment programmes, taking into account the specific characteristics of local labour markets and the socio-economic development of the region.
- Cooperation with Career Centres and employers: Akimats coordinate the activities of local Career Centres and engage with regional employers to identify workforce needs and create new employment opportunities for youth.
- Financial support for regional programmes: Akimats may allocate additional funding for the implementation of regional youth employment support measures.
- Organisation of public works: Akimats may organise public works programmes to provide temporary employment for youth.

4. National Chamber of Entrepreneurs "Atameken" (NCE):

- Representation of business interests: The NCE represents the interests of the business community, including young entrepreneurs, particularly in relation to workforce supply and youth employment.
- Participation in employment policy development: The NCE participates in the development of state employment policy and submits proposals to improve legislation and programmes aimed at increasing youth employment.
- Support for skills development: The NCE cooperates with education providers and other organisations to support the development of qualified human resources aligned with business

needs, including through participation in the organisation of dual education and vocational training.

- Employer information: The NCE informs employers about opportunities to participate in state youth employment support programmes.

5. Ministry of Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan:

- Definition of education policy: The Ministry defines state policy in the field of pre-primary, general secondary, technical and vocational education and training, which directly influences the quality of preparation of future young specialists.
- Development of education standards: The Ministry develops education standards aligned with labour market needs, contributing to the preparation of more relevant and employable young specialists.
- Development of the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system: The Ministry plays a key role in the development of the TVET system, which provides youth with the practical skills and qualifications required for employment.
- Support for career guidance: The Ministry participates in organising career guidance activities to support young people in making informed career choices.

6. Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MSHE RK):

- Definition of higher education policy: The MSHE RK defines state policy in the field of higher education, ensuring the preparation of highly qualified specialists for various sectors of the economy.
- Development of higher education programmes: The Ministry participates in the development of higher education programmes aligned with labour market requirements and innovation priorities.
- Graduate employment support: The MSHE RK may implement measures to support graduate employment, such as organising job fairs and facilitating engagement with employers.
- Development of science and innovation: Support for research and innovation within higher education institutions contributes to the creation of new employment opportunities for highly qualified youth.

7. Private employment agencies (PEAs):

- Employment intermediation services: PEAs provide fee-based services to employers and jobseekers, including young people, related to recruitment and job placement.

Legal regulation in the field of employment is carried out in accordance with the Social Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Labour Code of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which guarantee the implementation of the constitutional right of citizens to work and protection against unemployment regardless of age. State labour market policy is based on a balance between active and passive measures, ranging from unemployment prevention to unemployment regulation.

Additional social guarantees are provided in the event of job loss, including support measures established in collective agreements and social partnership arrangements.

Kazakhstan has a number of non-governmental and civil society organisations working with youth in the areas of skills development, education, civic engagement and volunteering. Their activities may have an indirect impact on youth employment, for example by strengthening competencies, expanding social networks or supporting participation in projects that develop leadership and professional skills. These include:

- Youth Information Service of Kazakhstan (YISK) – training, expansion of information exchange and cooperation.
- Shakhmardan Yessenov Foundation – educational grants and skills development.
- International Youth Foundation, Kazakhstan – in cooperation with Chevron, implemented initiatives in Western Kazakhstan to provide young people with meaningful opportunities for personal and professional development.

4 ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET MEASURES FOR YOUTH

Within the framework of state employment policy, active labour market measures are implemented to promote employment, aimed at increasing citizens' competitiveness in the labour market and reducing unemployment.

In 2024, according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 683.7 thousand citizens benefited from various forms of support (Unified Platform of Internet Resources of Government Bodies, N.d.). Out of the total number of programme participants, 546.9 thousand persons were employed, including 358.8 thousand in permanent jobs. A significant share consisted of subsidised jobs, to which 188.2 thousand persons were referred, including:

- social jobs – 15.5 thousand;
- youth practice – 33.3 thousand;
- public works – 110 thousand;
- “First Job” project – 9.6 thousand;
- “Generations Contract” project – 420 persons;
- “Silver Age” project – 19.2 thousand persons.

Out of 51.3 thousand young people who completed participation in subsidised jobs in 2024, 24.5 thousand were employed in permanent positions (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025).

Significant attention was also given to upgrading the qualifications of the labour force. Thus, 57.7 thousand unemployed citizens participated in the online skills training system for in-demand competencies, of whom 52.4 thousand completed the training programmes. In the field of entrepreneurship education, within the framework of the “Bastau Business” project, 60.3 thousand persons completed training, of whom 37.8 thousand successfully completed the courses and received certificates (Unified Platform of Internet Resources of Government Bodies, N.d.).

In addition, in 2024, efforts were made to stimulate entrepreneurial activity among socially vulnerable population groups. Under this measure, 8,941 grants of up to 400 monthly calculation indices (MCI)⁶ (KZT 1,476,800 or USD 2,746.9) were awarded to support the launch of new business initiatives (Unified Platform of Internet Resources of Government Bodies, N.d.).

It should be noted that currently, in the Republic of Kazakhstan, there is no dedicated state programme exclusively aimed at increasing youth employment. Previously, youth employment support measures were implemented within the framework of the following programmes:

- “Youth of Kazakhstan” Programme (2001);
- Youth Policy Programme for 2003–2004;
- Youth Policy Programme for 2005–2007.

In 2018, in order to engage youth not in employment, education or training (NEET category), a Roadmap for Ensuring Youth Employment and Socialisation was developed.

In addition, in 2017–2021, the State Programme for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship “Enbek” was implemented, covering the entire population, including youth. Under the “Youth Practice” measure, 149 thousand graduates of higher education institutions and colleges participated, of whom approximately 61% were employed in permanent jobs. Under the “First Job” project, 84 thousand young people under the age of 29, including those from the NEET category,

⁶ In 2025, the monthly calculation index (MCI) in Kazakhstan amounts to KZT 3,932 or USD 7.3 (according to the National Bank of Kazakhstan, the exchange rate was KZT 537.63 per USD as of 28 August 2025).

were referred, and the measure provided for permanent employment with wages financed by the state during the first year (Kuttybayev D., 2022).

The main employment support measures include:

1. Training programmes

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MLSPP RK) acts as the coordinating authority: skills development measures include training in in-demand skills delivered by training providers based on employer requests, as well as workplace-based vocational training with mentorship.

This training primarily focuses on preparing workers for technical and service occupations, including youth without higher education. At the same time, regulatory documents do not specify particular target groups beyond general descriptions. However, statistical reporting collected by the MLSPP RK (Annex 3) includes disaggregation by categories such as “women”, “men” and “youth”, allowing the participation of young people in these programmes to be assessed.

As of 1 January 2025, 3,654 young people participated in these forms of training. A total of 3,117 persons completed short-term training, of whom 2,739 were employed (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025).

In addition, labour force development places a strong emphasis on digital forms of learning for the entire population.

Since July 2021, a unified online Short-Term Training Portal for in-demand labour market skills has been launched (<https://skills.enbek.kz>).

As of 1 January 2025, 18,587 young people participated in online training, of whom 16,202 received certificates upon completion (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025).

2. Wage subsidies

The MLSPP RK applies a mechanism for subsidising employers (Table 2) for the employment of young people, which includes:

- “First Job” programme (employer subsidies for 12 months),
- youth practice for graduates of higher education institutions and colleges (up to 12 months),
- state subsidies for socially vulnerable population groups.

Employers are able to create subsidised jobs within their enterprises and employ unemployed persons registered with Career Centres. Wages for such employees are fully or partially financed by the state through the Labour Mobility Centre.

In addition, regardless of age, the following employment support measures are provided: the creation of special jobs for persons with disabilities and participation in public works programmes.

Table 2. Types of Subsidised Jobs

No	Support measure	Description	Requirements for unemployed persons	Duration	Wages	Financing
1	Public works	Socially beneficial work under contracts with Labour Mobility Centres (e.g. landscaping, courier services, document management)	Unemployed persons	≤ 12 months	Not less than 24 monthly calculation indices (MCI)	100% financed by the Labour Mobility Centre
2	Social jobs	Temporary jobs created by employers in cooperation with Labour Mobility Centres	Defined by the employer	≤ 12 months	Defined by the employer, but not exceeding 24 MCI	35% financed by the state, 65% financed by the employer
3	Youth practice	Employment aimed at acquiring initial professional experience	Graduates of higher education institutions/colleges within five years after graduation, without work experience in their field of study	≤ 12 months	≥ 30 MCI	100% financed by the Labour Mobility Centre
4	First job	First job aimed at acquiring knowledge and skills	Youth under 35 years of age, without vocational education and work experience	≤ 18 months (plus ≥ 12 months with the employer)	≥ 30 MCI for the first 18 months, then subject to employer decision	100% financed by the Labour Mobility Centre for the first 18 months
5	Generations contract	Transfer of experience from pre-retirement workers to graduates	Graduates under 35 years of age who completed their studies ≤ 3 years ago	≤ 6 months (plus permanent employment/replacement)	≥ 30 MCI for the first 6 months, then subject to employer decision	100% financed by the Labour Mobility Centre for the first 6 months
6	Silver age	Jobs for persons aged 50 and above	Persons aged 50+ up to retirement age	≤ 36 months	Defined by the employer, but not exceeding 30 MCI	Months 1–12: 70% state / 30% employer; Months 13–24: 65% / 35%; Months 25–36: 60% / 40%

Source: Joint Stock Company “Centre for the Development of Labour Resources”. N.d

3. Support for voluntary relocation of citizens to regions with labour shortages

The state encourages the relocation of citizens from regions with low employment levels and limited job opportunities to regions experiencing labour shortages.

Its objective is to attract labour resources, including youth, from regions with low employment levels to regions with labour shortages, while ensuring opportunities for employment and integration into new socio-economic conditions.

Programme participants may include unemployed persons, self-employed citizens and their family members, including young people willing to relocate and work in another region. The state provides comprehensive organisational and social support: covering relocation transport costs, providing one-off relocation allowances to participants and their family members, compensating housing rental costs or providing temporary accommodation, facilitating employment, and, where necessary, organising retraining and upskilling.

Responsible authorities: Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MLSPPP RK), local executive authorities, Career Centres (Information and Legal System of Regulatory Legal Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2023).

4. Entrepreneurship support

Within the framework of the Register of State Support Measures for Private Entrepreneurship, 112 different support instruments are provided, covering a wide range of areas, including lending, subsidies, grant and leasing financing, infrastructure support, as well as advisory and training measures. Particular emphasis is placed on the development of small and micro-enterprises, the agro-industrial complex, exports, tourism, innovation and manufacturing. Measures include subsidisation of interest rates and costs, provision of state and investment grants, loan guarantees, and strengthening the export and domestic capacity of businesses through acceleration programmes, training and information support. Beneficiaries include individual entrepreneurs, legal entities, agricultural cooperatives, start-up and established entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and large enterprises in priority sectors of the economy. The implementation of these measures is carried out by various government bodies and organisations, depending on the type of support. Lending and subsidy programmes are administered by authorised financial institutions and second-tier banks under the coordination of relevant ministries; grant and investment financing is implemented by authorised government bodies and quasi-governmental development institutions; infrastructure support is provided by local executive authorities; and training and advisory measures are delivered by sectoral ministries and business support institutions.

Previously, within the framework of the State Programme for the Development of Productive Employment and Mass Entrepreneurship “Enbek” (2017–2021), the MLSPPP RK implemented a dedicated youth initiative, “Zhas Kasipker”. This initiative provided free entrepreneurship training, as well as microcredit and grant financing for young start-up entrepreneurs, contributing to the development of youth entrepreneurship and the economic participation of young people.

Currently, although a programme of the scale of “Enbek” is no longer in operation, the MLSPPP RK continues to implement entrepreneurship support measures.

Financial instruments

1. Microcredit in rural areas and small towns

Beneficiaries: unemployed persons, self-employed persons, cooperative members, start-up and existing individual entrepreneurs.

Responsible authorities: MLSPPP RK, local executive authorities, Ministry of National Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance (Information and Legal System of Regulatory Legal Acts of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025).

2. Preferential microcredit for youth

Beneficiaries: youth registered as individual entrepreneurs for less than five years.

Loans of up to KZT 5 million are provided at an annual interest rate of 2.5% for a period of up to seven years for livestock projects and up to five years for other types of business activities, with a grace period of up to one third of the loan term. Project selection is conducted by a commission under the akimat based on criteria of relevance, economic feasibility, social impact and sustainability, with mandatory collateral requirements (EGov, 2024).

Responsible authorities: MLSP RK, Joint Stock Company “Agrarian Credit Corporation”, local executive authorities.

3. Grants for the implementation of business ideas

Beneficiaries: socially vulnerable groups registered as unemployed or as individual entrepreneurs for up to three years.

The grant is provided on a non-repayable basis to support the launch of new business ideas or the development of start-up businesses. Eligible beneficiaries include registered unemployed persons and individual entrepreneurs whose registration period does not exceed three years. A mandatory requirement is belonging to one of the socially vulnerable categories: recipients of large family allowances, resettled persons and their able-bodied family members, persons caring for a child with a disability, low-income households receiving targeted social assistance, survivors’ benefit recipients, ethnic returnees (kandas), and persons with disabilities. The grant amount is up to 400 monthly calculation indices (MCI). Within twelve months, beneficiaries are required to confirm the targeted use of funds on a quarterly basis by submitting relevant documentation (Joint Stock Company “Centre for the Development of Labour Resources”. N.d.).

Responsible authorities: MLSP RK, Labour Mobility Centre.

Non-financial instruments:

1. Entrepreneurship training under the “Bastau Business” project

Since 25 July 2022, entrepreneurship training under the “Bastau Business” project has been available in an online format via the Skills.enbek.kz platform and is intended for unemployed persons, start-up and existing entrepreneurs, redundant workers, and persons engaged in family businesses or low-income household production. The training lasts up to 14 calendar days, is provided free of charge, and includes 12 modules with interim assessments, a final examination and the issuance of an electronic certificate valid for three years. Successful completion of the course provides eligibility to apply for a grant to implement a business idea under state programmes (Unified Platform of Internet Resources of Government Bodies. N.d.).

Beneficiaries: all population groups.

Responsible authority: MLSP RK.

2. Women’s Entrepreneurship Development Centres (WEDCs)

WEDCs were launched in 2022 by the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs “Atameken” with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). They provided free services to women entrepreneurs and women with business initiatives, including advisory services, training, business diagnostics, mentoring, support in accessing finance and participation in international projects. In 2023, more than 13,000 services were provided to 8,300 women, 20 exhibitions were organised, and several training events were conducted. However, in 2024, due to budget cuts, the WEDC initiative was discontinued, although the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs “Atameken” continues to promote women’s entrepreneurship through cooperation with international organisations (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), UN Women and others) and mentoring programmes such as Talpynup 3.0.

5 EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT OF ACTIVE LABOUR MARKET MEASURES

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan (MLSPP RK) conducts monthly monitoring of citizens' employment using information systems that enable the tracking of electronic employment contracts and the payment of mandatory pension contributions. Based on these data, the Ministry regularly publishes statistics on population participation in active labour market measures, including participation rates, training outcomes and the share of programme participants who obtain employment. However, there is no officially approved methodology or tool for assessing the effectiveness of, or conducting participant surveys for, state employment support programmes.

Experts, civil society representatives and government officials regularly highlight the low effectiveness of current measures to reduce unemployment in the country. The main criticism relates to the fact that existing programmes predominantly create temporary jobs and do not fully address the objective of ensuring sustainable and productive employment (Alshanskaya, 2020, p. 51). At the same time, according to data from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, out of 51.3 thousand young people who completed participation in subsidised jobs, only 24.5 thousand, or approximately 47.7%, were able to secure permanent employment (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2025).

6 CHALLENGES AND GAPS

Despite the measures implemented, a number of significant challenges and gaps remain within the youth employment support system, hindering the achievement of sustainable outcomes:

- Absence of a dedicated state programme to promote youth employment. Support measures are implemented within general programmes, which reduces their focus and effectiveness. Young people face barriers that are not adequately addressed by universal employment measures, including lack of work experience, insufficient practical skills, limited understanding of labour market conditions, low awareness of available opportunities, and restricted professional networks. As a result, support measures implemented under general programmes remain insufficiently adapted to these challenges. Although certain aspects of youth needs are reflected in various initiatives, a systematic approach and sustained progress in addressing youth employment challenges are still emerging.
- Programme focus on temporary jobs rather than sustainable employment. Most active labour market measures create temporary employment, which does not address the long-term objectives of productive employment.
- Low coverage and participation of youth in state programmes. Survey data indicate that only a small proportion of young people are aware of employment programmes and participate in them. According to the results of a sociological survey conducted by the Research Centre "Youth", only 4.7% of respondents were aware of the state employment programme "Enbek", and only 0.8% participated in it (Oyshybayev K.B. et al., 2019, p. 79).
- Limited entrepreneurship support for youth. Despite the availability of microcredit and training programmes, the scale of support and engagement of young entrepreneurs remains insufficient.
- Low levels of registration as unemployed persons and the quality of vacancies on the Enbek.kz platform remain problematic issues. Despite the requirement for employers to publish vacancies within five days of their availability, many vacancies are filled significantly earlier. In addition, not all employers are aware of this requirement. At the same time, low registration levels as unemployed persons are also influenced by the quality of available vacancies. For

example, in 2019, the average salary offered in vacancies in Astana (the capital) was KZT 100,000⁷ (Alshanskaya, 2020, p. 46).

7 CONCLUSION

The development of youth employment in Kazakhstan requires a systematic and long-term approach. Despite the availability of various active labour market measures, including vocational training, youth practice, wage subsidies and entrepreneurship support, their effectiveness is constrained by a number of institutional, organisational and informational challenges. The primary focus remains on temporary measures, while young people require sustainable mechanisms for integration into productive economic activity.

To achieve sustainable impact, it is necessary to:

- develop a dedicated national youth employment programme;
- increase programme coverage and accessibility for rural and vulnerable youth;
- strengthen awareness-raising and motivation among youth to participate in employment and entrepreneurship;
- develop and implement tools for regular evaluation of programme effectiveness and support measures, including monitoring of outcomes and their impact on participants' long-term employment.

Youth represent a strategic resource for the country. The integration of young people into formal employment, entrepreneurship and innovation should become a priority of state policy in the fields of labour, education and social protection. Only through a comprehensive and targeted approach will it be possible to reduce youth unemployment and unlock the potential of the younger generation in support of Kazakhstan's sustainable development.

⁷ Approximately USD 260 at the 2019 exchange rate.

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ANNEX 1: GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT BY PRODUCTION APPROACH, AT CURRENT PRICES

NACE	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Production of goods	27 192 162,8	33 829 913,9	41 741 280,1	43 301 995,5	49 202 895,7
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	3 808 889,1	4 222 766,5	5 444 727,3	4 568 671,3	5 306 833,1
Industry	19 098 171,4	24 841 595,1	30 841 860,5	32 012 398,6	35 717 802,5
Mining and quarrying	8 596 835,5	11 886 878,4	15 210 887,2	15 365 189,3	16 430 049,2
Manufacturing	9 235 617,6	11 424 765,7	13 929 790,7	14 677 293,6	16 941 133,3
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	1 097 125,1	1 310 044,3	1 452 458,8	1 690 003,0	2 016 982,3
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	168 593,2	219 906,7	248 723,8	279 912,7	329 637,7
Construction	4 285 102,3	4 765 552,3	5 454 692,3	6 720 925,6	8 178 260,1
Production of services	39 636 072,3	45 266 156,4	54 626 235,4	67 299 123,5	79 203 932,4
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	12 166 037,6	14 106 194,6	17 046 877,7	21 816 414,2	26 007 101,5
Transport and storage	4 824 663,8	5 718 757,0	6 391 443,3	6 716 351,2	7 752 756,9
Accommodation and food service activities	722 736,0	812 752,2	1 052 069,3	1 305 506,8	1 580 662,4
Information and communication	1 670 561,0	1 952 156,7	2 109 087,4	2 595 103,4	3 013 049,3
Financial and insurance activities	2 376 245,1	2 438 216,0	3 171 635,7	3 934 921,8	4 649 709,1
Real estate activities	5 147 649,0	5 486 403,2	6 732 562,0	8 942 176,8	11 576 195,0
Professional, scientific and technical activities	2 919 937,4	3 106 546,6	3 427 482,3	4 188 167,1	4 252 469,0
Administrative and support service activities	1 609 821,0	1 741 828,5	2 219 160,6	2 821 767,4	3 210 188,6
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	1 342 993,7	1 533 106,6	1 961 063,2	2 442 908,7	2 630 560,3
Education	2 572 779,7	3 245 879,8	4 224 630,8	5 337 072,7	5 729 285,5
Human health and social work activities	1 804 796,2	2 459 919,9	2 959 635,6	3 490 168,7	4 075 853,2
Arts, entertainment and recreation	639 680,6	731 327,4	928 891,5	1 047 193,4	1 257 750,9
Other service activities	1 788 578,2	1 879 315,7	2 338 955,0	2 460 139,8	3 175 149,4
Activities of households as employers; undifferentiated goods- and services-producing activities of households for own use	49 593,0	53 752,2	62 741,0	201 231,5	293 201,3
Total by economic activity	66 828 235,1	79 096 070,3	96 367 515,5	110 601 119,0	128 406 828,1
Financial intermediation services indirectly measured					
Gross value added	66 828 235,1	79 096 070,3	96 367 515,5	110 601 119,0	128 406 828,1
Net taxes on products and imports	3 820 798,1	4 855 517,6	7 398 002,7	8 841 170,7	8 286 490,2
Taxes on products and imports	4 069 079,9	5 161 134,0	7 779 408,5	9 180 745,3	8 713 991,3
Subsidies on products and imports	248 281,8	305 616,4	381 405,8	339 574,6	427 501,1
Gross domestic product	70 649 033,2	83 951 587,9	103 765 518,2	119 442 289,7	136 693 318,3

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan

ANNEX 2: EMPLOYED POPULATION BY MAIN ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES (THOUSAND PERSONS) ⁸

Economic sectors	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total employed population	8732,04	8807,113	8971,539	9081,92	9214,184
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1175,118	1176,382	1108,9	1078,72	1027,851
Industry	1089,222	1097,95	1121,155	1121,494	1157,816
Mining and quarrying	276,906	277,932	274,838	277,497	284,257
Manufacturing	581,796	585,638	613,651	605,562	625,911
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	149,016	150,128	148,075	148,86	155,107
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	81,504	84,252	84,591	89,575	92,541
Construction	630,861	641,431	658,905	642,298	665,46
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	1421,332	1451,93	1497,942	1515,132	1528,981
Transport and storage	617,509	609,501	640,553	647,723	670,059
Accommodation and food service activities	193,665	190,899	198,396	214,327	232,533
Information and communication	159,67	161,67	166,46	187,77	188,484
Financial and insurance activities	188,986	184,903	186,274	201,736	202,509
Real estate activities	158,403	168,414	166,057	151,106	162,93
Professional, scientific and technical activities	254,652	247,305	253,661	265,03	263,586
Administrative and support service activities	285,501	287,48	280,835	272,806	277,187
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	489,341	484,096	508,519	523,701	517,031
Education	1109,457	1120,056	1142,25	1182,98	1198,394
Healthcare and social work activities	512,434	525,963	561,174	577,495	583,886
Arts, entertainment and recreation	138,437	134,722	137,929	139,446	154,181
Other service activities	307,452	324,411	342,529	360,156	383,296

Source: Bureau of National Statistics of the Republic of Kazakhstan

⁸ The data were generated based on the results of the labour force sample survey.

ANNEX 3: FORM FOR THE COLLECTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE DATA ON SHORT-TERM TRAINING

Форма, предназначенная для сбора административных данных за _____
20__ года (месяц)

Сноска. Приложение 14 - в редакции приказа и.о. Министра труда и социальной защиты населения РК от 03.05.2024 № 135 (вводится в действие по истечении десяти календарных дней после дня его первого официального опубликования).

Представляется: в уполномоченный государственный орган в сфере занятости населения
Форма административных данных размещена на интернет – ресурсе: www.enbek.gov.kz
Наименование формы административных данных: Сведения о ходе реализации профессионального обучения безработных на Электронной бирже труда по перечню востребованных профессий
Индекс формы административных данных: ПО-3-1
Периодичность: ежемесячная
Отчетный период: _____ месяц 20__ года.
Круг лиц, представляющих информацию: карьерные центры
Срок представления формы административных данных:
к 1 числу месяца, следующего за отчетным периодом

Таблица. Сведения о ходе реализации профессионального обучения безработных на Электронной бирже труда по перечню востребованных профессий

№	Наименование области / города, код по КАТО	Всего приступили к обучению (человек)	В том числе из графы 1			Всего получил и сертификат (человек)	В том числе из графы 5			из гр. 5 Наименование профессиональной области			
			жители села	женщины	молодежь до 35 лет		жители села	женщины	молодежь до 35 лет	Сельское хозяйство	IT и телекоммуникации	Туризм	Маркетинг и СМИ
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

Скачать

Form intended for the collection of administrative data for _____
20__ (month)

Footnote. Annex 14 — as amended by the Order of the Acting Minister of Labour and Social Protection of the Population of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 03 May 2024 [No. 135](#) (shall enter into force ten calendar days after the date of its first official publication).

Submitted to: the authorised state body in the field of employment of the population
The administrative data reporting form is available on the Internet resource: www.enbek.gov.kz

Title of the administrative data reporting form: Information on the progress of implementation of vocational training for unemployed persons on the Electronic Labour Exchange according to the list of in-demand occupations

Administrative data form index: PO-3-1

Frequency: monthly

Reporting period: _____ month, 20__

Reporting entities: Career Centres

Deadline for submission of the administrative data form:

by the 1st day of the month following the reporting period

Table. Information on the progress of implementation of vocational training for unemployed persons on the Electronic Labour Exchange according to the list of in-demand occupations

No.	Name of region / city, KATO code	Total number who started training (persons)	Including from column 1:			Total number who received certificates (persons)	Including from column 5:			From column 5: Name of the professional field			
			rural residents	women	youth under 35 years of age		rural residents	women	youth under 35 years of age	Agriculture	IT and telecommunications	Tourism	Marketing and media
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14

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