

Vocational Education

2022 Report on the Action Plan of the Unified
National Strategy for Education and Science of
Georgia

2023

Vocational Education Development Department
Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

Introduction

In 2022, the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia (2022-2030) was developed, which is based on the analysis of the achievements and challenges of the reforms implemented in the field of education and science. The Strategy includes all areas of the education system. The Strategy is approved by the Decree N446 of the Government of Georgia (31.08.2022) and is implemented based on the relevant action plan.

In accordance with the vision of the abovementioned Strategy, in 2030, high quality of education and science system of Georgia will give the individuals the opportunity to make the best choices for developing their competencies and abilities. This, in turn, will contribute to the development of the labor force corresponding to the needs of the labor market within the country and will enable individuals to fulfill their own interests and abilities.

The abovementioned document was developed with a systematic approach and is in full compliance with national legislation, European best practices in the field of education as well as the relevant recommendations. It stipulates the political vision of the future of Georgia, which is based on aspiration to build the European state. Therefore, the Strategy is closely related and corresponds to the Government Program 2021-2024 Towards Building a European State as well as all the policy documents developed within the formats of inter-agency councils and commissions.

It should be emphasized, that while developing the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science, the recommendations in terms of vocational education highlighted under the evaluation of the Vocational Education Reform Strategy (2013-2020) were taken into consideration, which were implemented through the support of the European Training Foundation.

Herewith, the Law of Georgia on Vocational Education adopted by the Parliament of Georgia in 2018, put the need for important interventions on the agenda of which this Report provides comprehensive information. Furthermore, the Association Agreement and the Financial Agreement signed between the EU Representative in Georgia and the Government of Georgia, and within its framework, the commitments undertaken by the country in the direction of human capital development and employment should be noted as well.

This Report refers to the progress achieved in 2022 in the direction of the development of vocational education within the framework of the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia (2022-2030).

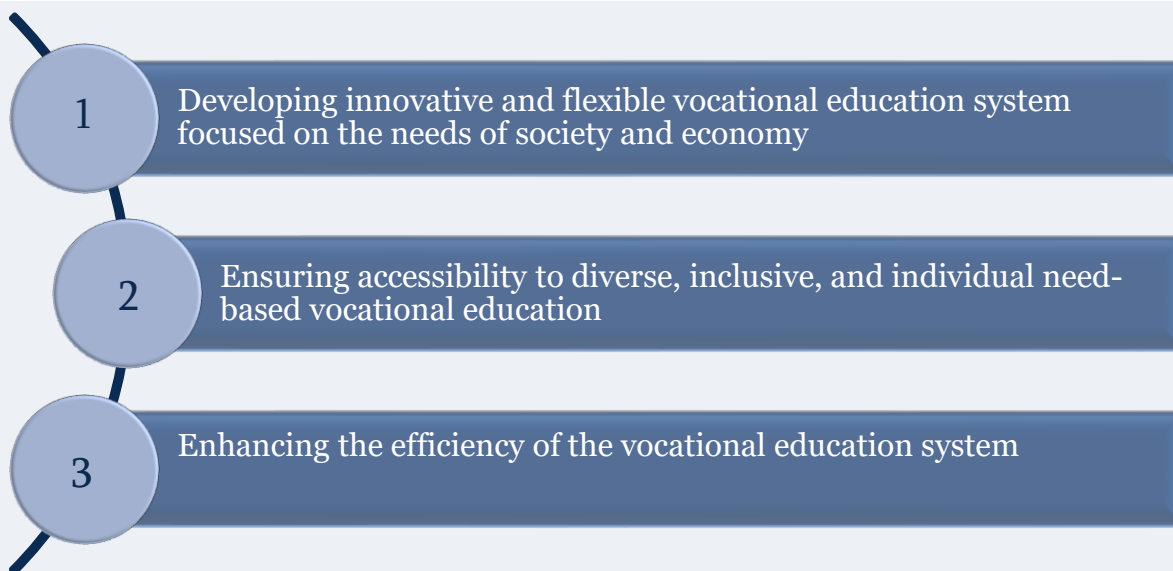


Report

The importance of vocational education is emphasized in the Government Program and its rapid development is an important priority, since it is considered as an effective mechanism to eliminate social inequality in the country, reduce unemployment and ensure decent employment.

Within the framework of the Vocational Education Reform of Georgia (2013-2020), the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia developed systematic approaches to enhance the alignment of vocational education with the labor market demands and harmonize it with the European educational space. A new law regulating the field was introduced, a new national qualifications framework and new standards for quality assurance of vocational education were developed and introduced, mechanisms for recognizing non-formal education and a systematic approach to vocational training and retraining of adults were developed. VET institutions were renovated and equipped with modern equipment; More than 150 VET qualifications were developed in active cooperation with the private sector; The integration of a general educational component in vocational education, opened up possibility of continuing studies at the higher education level with a vocational diploma; Forms of work-based learning were introduced, which helped to increase the interest of the private sector and the transition of graduates to the labor market. In order to introduce even more effective and systematic mechanisms of public-private partnership, in 2021, based on consultations with employers' associations operating in Georgia and their expressed readiness, the Georgian Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia jointly established a non-profit (non-commercial) legal entity - Skills Agency. The new institutional arrangement is based on participation and aims to accelerate the development of the human capital of the country through the joint efforts and sharing of responsibilities of the public and private sectors. The Skills Agency started active operation from 2022, therefore, this report reflects the results achieved in terms of the development of vocational education in general, including the activities carried out by the agency.

In terms of vocational education, in accordance with the sectoral priorities of the Strategy, three objectives have been identified:



Objective 1. Developing innovative and flexible vocational education system focused on the needs of society and economy

For the development of an innovative and flexible vocational education system focused on the needs of society and economy, the institutional development of VET institutions, including the promotion of continuous professional development of VET teachers, is of key importance. In this regard, during 2022, active work was carried out with the aim of increasing the scale of vocational education, strengthening key competencies within the programs, developing educational resources, supporting international mobility and other significant directions.

In order for the skills and competencies of VET students to be in line with the requirements of the labor market, it is important that the private sector is actively involved in the process of development and revision of qualifications. Within the reporting period, legal acts for the development and approval of occupational standards and educational standards were developed, which were based on the new methodology prepared with the support of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). The main innovation related to the new model of qualifications development is the shifting roles between education and employment. Previously, educational sphere held most of the responsibility for creating vocational qualifications. However, according to the new approach, the creation and development of qualifications has become the main function of sectoral skills organizations and meanwhile, the methodological support and coordination function will be carried out through the Skills Agency.

A new methodology for the development of vocational qualifications, along with the study of the local market characteristics, provides further study of international trends and professional classifiers, so those important competencies that are relevant in other countries, but not yet in demand in the Georgian employment market, are not left outside the qualification and vocational education programs. To pilot the new methodology,

through the involvement of the sectoral skills organizations, within the reporting period, the primary versions of sectoral roadmaps (professional duties and tasks within a specific sector are grouped, structured according to directions) were prepared in 12 economic sectors and 4 occupational standards (draft), and 4 educational standards (draft) were developed.

To ensure a systematic and sustainable integration of the private sector in the management of vocational education "the Rules and Conditions for Delivering Vocational Education Program / Short-cycle Education Program / Vocational Training Program / Vocational Retraining Program in the Form of Work-based Learning" was developed and approved by the Decree N416 of the Government of Georgia dated 09 August 2022; and "the Rules and Conditions for Obtaining the Status of a Training Enterprise by the Entity" was approved by the Decree N451 of the Government of Georgia dated 05 September 2022. The parties involved in work-based learning and their responsibilities were clearly defined based on the abovementioned Decrees; furthermore, **the institutional entity, such as the Sectoral Skills Organization has entered the system**, which is the umbrella organization of professional associations. Sectoral Skills Organization enables agreed and reconciled coordination of sectoral priorities at meso-level, which shall ultimately have a positive impact on the relevance of skills and competencies of vocational education students to the requirements of the labor market. The main functions of the Sectoral Skills Organization is development of occupational and educational standards based on industry knowledge and expertise and ensuring involvement of the private sector in the processes of both implementation of vocational education programs as well as conducting qualification exams. **As a result of the implemented activities, initiative groups of Sectoral Skills Organizations have been introduced in 9 economic sectors.**

Work-based learning is a guarantee in terms of relevance, quality, and effectiveness of vocational education to the requirements of the labor market. In accordance with the Decree, work-based learning implies obtaining program learning outcomes in a real and/or simulated work environment. Furthermore, it is defined that the learning outcomes may be achieved in a real work environment through dual or cooperative learning. As a result of engagement in the work-based learning, enterprises will train highly qualified employees, having skills and work experience tailored to the needs of the enterprise. Within the framework of the work-based learning, vocational education students, in most cases, develop both transferable and professional skills while working and they are given the opportunity to explore the world of employment and improve their employment/career advancement opportunities. For the institutions implementing vocational education programs, partnership with the companies in the process of work-based learning creates an opportunity of obtaining knowledge regarding the technological and methodological innovations, transferring complete knowledge and experience to VET students, improving the quality of training and achievements organized by them and increasing the employment opportunities of graduates. Taking into consideration these conditions, work-based learning is one of the priorities of the Ministry; and implementation of the abovementioned Decrees is a step forward in the direction of further strengthening of work-based learning.

It should be emphasized that the introduction of programs in the form of work-based learning, through the active support of donor organizations, began as early as 2016, which significantly increased the opportunities for employment and self-employment of graduates. As a result of the implemented interventions, the number

of introduced dual programs and the number of students enrolled in these programs is increasing annually – as of 2022, up to 40 dual programs are implemented in the system. Up to 550 VET students were enrolled in dual programs within 2022. Compared to 2021, the number of students enrolled in dual programs increased by 35%.

As a result of the support and consulting of institutions implementing vocational education programs, **in 2022 thirteen public institutions obtained the right to implement dual programs in 395 places.**

Since 2020, as a result of integrating the learning outcomes of the secondary level of general education in secondary vocational education programs, the connection between the various levels of education has become more flexible and at the same time, school students were given the opportunity to learn a profession interesting to them, in parallel with the results of their general education. After completing this type of program, along with vocational qualifications, a person receives a diploma equivalent to a certificate of complete general education. Based on the importance of the mentioned programs, the Ministry supports the increase in the scale of integrated programs. It should be highlighted, that training on integrated vocational programs is available in almost all regions of Georgia. Within the reporting period, 8 educational institutions (6 public and 2 private), through authorization, obtained the right to implement 29 integrated programs. Thus, at the system level, 91 integrated programs are implemented in 26 educational institutions. Within 2022, 570 people were enrolled in integrated programs. These types of programs are implemented by both public and private vocational education institutions.

During 2022, electronic textbooks were developed to support the teaching of integrated general modules in the following areas: "Science and Technology", "Quantitative Literacy" and "Citizenship". Furthermore, a toolkit of complex tasks was developed for the integrated general module "Science and Technology". Overall, in 2022, in total 7 different learning resources have been developed. All of them are digital.

The introduction of integrated programs will significantly increase the involvement of young people in vocational education; however, it is also important for the vocational education system to offer services appropriate to the needs and interests of the adult population as well. Provision of vocational training and retraining programs for the adult population is an effective mechanism for updating the skills within population and successful integration into the labor market. For this purpose, since 2019, new educational services have been introduced in the formal education system of Georgia. Based on the changed system and regulations, the idea of receiving formal education only in educational institutions was transformed, and the private sector with an educational component and non-standard qualifications was added to the existing providers and qualifications. After completing the programs developed on the basis of private-public partnership and financed by the state, students receive certificates recognized by the state. The mentioned initiative has tangible results since its introduction. In particular, **a total of 163 programs (75 of them through acquisition of rights) of 57 legal entities were added to the system of vocational training and retraining programs within 2022**, of which 128 are vocational training programs and 35 are retraining programs. From these legal entities 27 belong to state educational institutions, 3 to state non-educational institutions, 18 to private educational institutions and 9 to private non-educational institutions.

Vocational training and retraining programs are available in all regions of Georgia. As of December 2022, more than 12 100 people have been enrolled in these programs. It is also interesting to consider the abovementioned initiative in terms of vocational education institutions – as of 2022, 67% of authorized institutions implementing vocational education programs carry out vocational training and retraining programs. In 2022 up to 150 programs have been financially supported, which is 50% more than the previous year.

The priority of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is to increase the scale of the above-mentioned programs, which is also declared in the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science of Georgia (2022-2030). That is why the funding allocated by the Ministry for the implementation of the mentioned programs is increasing annually. Implementation of the mentioned programs is coordinated by the Vocational Skills Agency.

Within 2022, significant activities were carried out with regard to the development of approaches and mechanisms related to the development of key competences. In particular, within 2022, the Concept of Development of Key Competencies at the Level of Vocational Education was developed, that covers needs analysis and recommendations. Based on this Concept and through the support of the Ministry, the Agency has begun work on developing non-formal education courses and resources focused on the development of key competencies. Furthermore, through the support of the United Nations Development Programme, the concept and implementation mechanisms of digital and hybrid learning in vocational education have been developed, which formed the basis for the development of the e-platform for vocational education (LMS) and which is currently being developed through the assistance of the Asian Development Bank.

At the level of vocational education, significant attention is paid to the involvement of VET students in public life since the formation of an informed and responsible citizen is the basis for the development of human capital. Education system is aimed at raising such generations. For this purpose, in 2020, at the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the existing educational module of civic education was evaluated, and **the new module of civic education was developed and approved in accordance with the identified needs.** The updated module provides a holistic approach to the teaching process of civic education and is focused, on the one hand, on acquiring factual and conceptual knowledge, and on the other hand, on developing the necessary skills for citizenship in a democratic society. Within the framework of the project, the Teacher's Roadmap and the Student's Guide were developed and a cycle of civic education teacher trainings was implemented (107 civic education teachers were trained). Since June 2022, a new civic education module was launched. Working process is still ongoing by the IFES and Skills Agency. Further work includes increasing the vocational development capacity of teachers.

While implementing the activities related to key competences, the Ministry is guided by the recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 22 May 2018 on Key Competences of Lifelong Learning (2018/C 189/01). Therefore, while considering the activities implemented in terms of key competencies, it is also

important to emphasize the competence related to teaching of foreign languages. In this regard, in 2022, within the framework of Asian Development Bank (ADB) project, in order to pilot a new approach to foreign language teaching, a technical assignment document for the introduction of a new model of English and German language teaching was developed. Such approach envisages the assessment and teaching of student needs according to the relevant levels of competences of the European CEFR language framework for foreign language teaching. The piloting of the foreign language teaching center concept is planned based on regional hubs (Kutaisi and Telavi), and afterwards, a plan to implement the concept in other vocational education institutions will be developed and a final foreign language teaching policy document will be formed.

It should be emphasized that in recent years, the development of entrepreneurial competencies at all levels of education has gained special importance. Since 2015, in all vocational education programs, a module for developing entrepreneurial competencies has been integrated and it is currently a mandatory component of the program. This module has been revised and updated in the context of the European Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp). Within the reporting period, a new electronic textbook corresponding to the “Entrepreneurship” module and relevant toolkit were developed (this digital textbook is available in Georgian and English languages at the following link: <http://entrepreneurship.ge>). In order to introduce the entrepreneurship module, Skills Agency in cooperation with the “Action Against Hunger” organization and in accordance with the Shuttle methodology, developed vocational education roadmaps for teachers and vocational education students. The objectives of this methodology are as follows: promotion of social inclusion, increasing employment/self-employment opportunities of the participants and promoting the development of entrepreneurial skills of the participants. A new electronic textbook “Entrepreneurship” and a toolkit of relevant tasks were developed for teaching entrepreneurship. Furthermore, through the support of the United Nations Development Programme and in cooperation with the Skills Agency and Consultation and Training Center (CTC), the methodology of organizational evaluation of vocational institutions was developed in order to promote the introduction of intra-institutional entrepreneurship.

In 2022, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, the Skills announced a competition, the purpose of which was to develop the key competencies of VET students through extracurricular activities and non-formal education. It should be noted that 6 of the 22 projects financed as a result of the competition were aimed at developing entrepreneurial competencies. The **“Determination of the Cost of Products / Rendered Reimbursable Services Created in the Educational Process by an Educational Institution Established by the State or with Its Participation, the Rules and Conditions for Disposal of Income Received from the Activities”** was adopted by the Decree of the Government of Georgia dated 12 January 2022; in order to promote the entrepreneurial activity of vocational education institutions, a roadmap to the implementation of economic activity was created, information seminars were held for colleges, and a plan for piloting economic activity was developed. The abovementioned will contribute to the strengthening of the institutions and increase entrepreneurial experience of VET students.

In order VET students / trainees to be equipped with necessary skills and competencies for employment, it is essential to strengthen the institutions which are implementing vocational education programs. In accordance with the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia dated 11 February 2020, new standards

for authorization of vocational education institutions were approved, which evaluates all the constituent parts of the educational process in terms of a single, orderly mechanism and puts before the institution the necessity of having a vision for its continuous development. **By 2027, all institutions implementing vocational education programs will be authorized/reauthorized in accordance with the new standards.** In 2022, 8 state-based vocational education institutions underwent re-authorization (with a total of 138 programs), 5 private institutions (with 18 programs) underwent re-authorization, and one institution obtained authorization with 1 program.

In this direction, intensive work continues by the Ministry, as well as the Skills Agency and the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, in order to maximize the mobilization of relevant resources and supporting mechanisms to successfully conduct the authorization process of the institution.

In 2022, for the purpose of sharing the best European experience within the process of introducing the quality assurance system of vocational education, the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement has started to evaluate the quality of the vocational education system in accordance with the indicators of the European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET). In the reporting period, EQAVET indicators were adjusted taking into consideration the conditions of the vocational education system of Georgia; the sources and methods of data retrieval were defined; the information requested from the relevant agencies was processed according to the indicator and **the system assessment 2022 analysis document was developed in compliance with the five EQAVET indicators.** Within 2023, the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement will continue to work in the mentioned direction.

The adoption of the new Law on Vocational Education created the basis for active work in the direction of the internationalization of the vocational education system, which implies both the implementation of internationally recognized standards, as well as sharing the best international practices in terms of policy development, regulation or various approaches and methodologies. In recent years, a number of fundamental changes have been implemented at the system level. The national qualification framework now aligns with the requirements and principles of the European qualification framework, which promotes the compatibility and recognition of the qualifications issued in Georgia in the European Education Area. Vocational Education credit system was introduced, which is based on European mechanism – ECVET. In accordance with the European standard, updated forms of vocational diplomas and certificates, as well as their annexes, were developed and introduced. The new Law on Vocational Education also created a legal basis for the implementation of joint and exchange programs in vocational education. **The rules for the development and implementation of joint and exchange vocational education programs were drafted in 2022.** This document represents the legal basis for Georgian vocational education institutions, to deepen international partnership relations, to consider the best international practices in the educational process and to promote the mobility of students. Moreover, in order to improve the administration of the said programs, for the electronic system of vocational education management - eVET - the technical task necessary for the development of digital modules of joint and exchange programs was created. In addition, since 2022, the Erasmus+ program has been launched at the level of vocational education, and the scale shall be gradually increased in this direction.

For sharing international experience, within the reporting period, cooperation between institutions implementing vocational education programs and experts of the “Senior Expert Service (SES)” organization continued. Within the framework of the cooperation, through the support of GIZ, German experts visited Georgia (20 experts). The purpose of the visit was to support the improvement of the educational process and teaching methods. Moreover, institutions actively cooperate with various donor and international organizations in order to attract foreign experts and engage them in the educational process. In 2023, a 50% increase in the number of visiting experts is planned.

To share international best practices in skills development, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, the Skills Agency and institutions implementing vocational education programs are involved in international platforms; including, the institutions implementing vocational education programs are involved in Network for Excellence (ENE) under the European Training Foundation (ETF) (<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/projectsactivities/projects/network-excellence>). The objective of the initiative is to establish an international network, so that its members have active communication and share their experience and knowledge with each other. All this will contribute to the establishment of new partnerships, sharing of knowledge and experience as well as creation and implementation of new ideas. Within 2022, institutions involved in the network participated in a number of events. In the direction of internationalization, it should also be highlighted that during the reporting period, the Skills Agency became a member of several international platforms: official representative of Georgia at WorldSkills International; member of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EaFA) and the member of the World Economic Forum (WEF) Skills Accelerators Network.

Separate initiatives, within the framework of which VET students were given the opportunity to gain international experience, are also important. During 2022, the negotiations on cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science and U.C.M. – Italy association were successfully completed. Within the framework of cooperation, vocational education students from “Blacksea”, “Ikarosi”, “Aisi”, “Modusi” colleges and from Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University and Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University underwent Italian language courses, and moreover, master classes were held by Italian chefs. 63 vocational students engaged in the project will visit Italy in June of this year for a 3-month internship. The cost will be fully funded by the inviting party. Furthermore, paid internship is foreseen. In addition, agricultural students of vocational education institutions have the opportunity to participate in international practice in the Federal Republic of Germany. The program is implemented to promote international mobility and aims to study the best practices in the field of agriculture. International practice is carried out in cooperation with AgroKontakte International. Six students participated in the program in 2022.

The development of an innovative and flexible vocational education system focused on the needs of society and the economy is impossible without a corps of qualified teachers. In order to share best practices and promote teacher collaboration, 12 sectoral networks were created, through which teachers of the sector were united around professional goals and projects. These directions are as follows: agricultural sector, healthcare, personal services, entrepreneurship, integrated modules (communication in the Georgian language, quantitative literacy, entrepreneurship, citizenship, science and technology: chemistry, physics, biology,

physical geography). Moreover, 12 subject experts of integrated general modules were selected and trained, who provide facilitation and methodological consultation to the teachers of the sectoral networks. In order to facilitate the effective organization of the work of sectoral networks, the concept of sectoral networks of vocational education teachers was created, which includes an overview of cooperation directions and recommendations. All the above mentioned will contribute to strengthening of flexible and effective network of providers of vocational education.

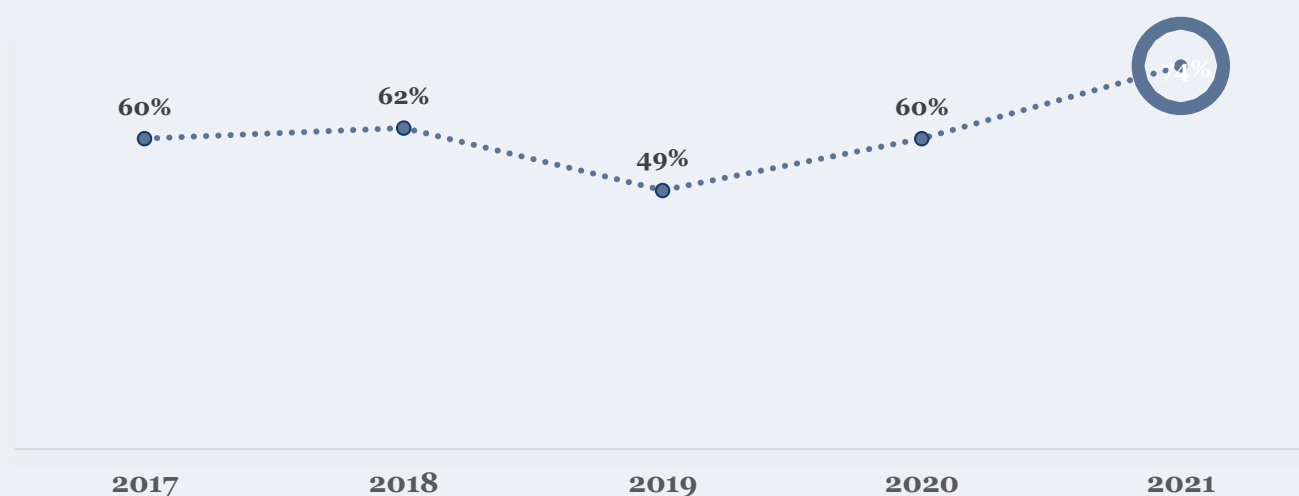
Within 2022, work continued regarding the regulatory framework developed with the support of the World Bank within which the concept of the vocational education teacher standard, concept of vocational education teacher training, assessment and continuous professional development; code of ethics and manual of ethics for vocational education teacher have already been created; the approach also implies the development of an electronic platform for teachers. The main part of the technical task of the electronic platform for teacher development has already been created.

In addition, the Skills Agency was working on the draft of the vocational education teacher standard and the regulatory act on teacher training, evaluation and continuous professional development. Furthermore, the plan of the modules of the vocational education teacher training program and the concept of teacher training and entry into the profession were developed. In 2023, it is scheduled to develop a plan for the introduction and implementation of the vocational education teacher training program, to strengthen communication with colleges and to pilot the training program.

It should be emphasized, that in order to evaluate the efficiency of the Reform, the Ministry of Education and Science regularly carries out the survey of graduates of vocational education programs (Tracer Study). The Skills Agency, in 2021, through the support of the United Nations Development Programme, studied the existing practice in the direction of regular research of graduates and based on the study of international practice developed a new methodology for the research in terms of graduate students. The new research design allows for data analysis in various contexts, including qualifications, vocational programs, regions, vocational education institutions, etc. In 2022, a survey of graduates of 2020-2021 was conducted in accordance with the new methodology, under the coordination of the Skills Agency.

According to the survey on graduates conducted in 2022, the employment rate of graduates in 2020 is 60%, and the employment rate of graduates in 2021 is 74%, and the share of self-employed is 20%.

Graduate employment rate by year



Outcome indicator: 1.3.1.1: Number of dual program graduates are 653.

Outcome indicator: 1.3.1.2: According to the tracer study conducted in 2022, the share of self-employment of graduates of 2020-2021 is 20%.

Outcome indicator: 1.3.2.1: In 2022, based on the research of teachers' needs, the Skills Agency developed 3-day training module in the direction of teaching and assessment, according to which approximately 20% of teachers of vocational educational institutions (509 teachers) were trained.

Objective 2. Ensuring accessibility to diverse, inclusive, and individual need-based vocational education

For the purpose of ensuring diverse, inclusive and individual need-based vocational education, it is significant to strengthen lifelong learning opportunities through the development of a flexible network of innovative, diverse and inclusive VET institutions.

One of the important conditions for improving accessibility to vocational education is the expansion of the geographic network of vocational education. For this purpose, in recent years, a number of colleges have started functioning at new locations (Chokhatauri, Marneuli, Kaspi, Shuakhevi, Khulo, Keda, etc.). And in 2022, the development of vocational education institutions at new locations - in Khashuri, Tskaltubo and Lanchkhuti municipalities was completed.

PEM consult has been selected, which prepared the project implementation concept report, the verification of the needs of the sectors and the architectural project of the Center of Excellence. Work has also begun on a business model and institutional arrangement plan, which will be available in early 2023.

Within 2022, negotiations continued between the Ministry and the German Credit Institute for Reconstruction (KfW) in the direction of the development of two new institutions of international level - Wine Center in Telavi and Tourism Excellence Center in Dusheti. For this purpose, preparatory works were carried out during the reporting period; in particular, feasibility study was conducted, and various working meetings were held, including with the local government. In order to implement the mentioned projects, the allocation of grant funding in the amount of 24 million euros has been agreed within the framework of bilateral negotiations between Germany and Georgia. The agreement is scheduled to be signed in 2023.

At the same time, a new direction of reform began in the vocational education system, which envisages strengthening of public schools in order to gain the right to implement vocational education programs. Through the support of the Asian Development Bank and United Nations Development Programme (project is funded by the European Union), work has been actively started with 30 public schools, and as a result, it will be possible to receive vocational education in additional 29 municipalities. From 2023, through the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), capacity development of additional 30 general education institutions will begin in order to implement vocational courses. As a result of the implemented works, vocational education will be available in all municipalities of Georgia by 2027.

In addition to the new locations, infrastructure works are constantly underway to meet the needs of the existing facilities; including, the construction of the new building of Shota Meskhia Zugdidi State Teaching University has been completed, which will be used for vocational education purposes. During the reporting period, the rehabilitation works of the building of Samtskhe-Javakheti State University continued in Akhalkalaki and the works for the development of the new building of “Blacksea” college in Batumi have started.

When discussing the availability of vocational education, the issue related to accommodation of vocational education students should also be emphasized. In order to promote the study of vocational education students, in 2022, a dormitory was rehabilitated and equipped in LEPL College "Spectri" (Tbilisi). As a result, at the current stage, student dormitories are available in 6 vocational education institutions (**“Aisi” college – Kachreti, “Construct2” college – Zestaponi, “Iberia” college – Kutaisi, “New Wave” college – Kobuleti, Shota Meskhia Zugdidi State Teaching University – Zugdidi, “Spectrum” college**). For the vocational education students of those institutions, where accommodation is not developed at this stage, however there is a need for it, the Ministry offers an alternative way to provide students with accommodation - the Ministry supports the rental of living space in accordance with the needs of vocational education students.

In terms of increasing accessibility to vocational education, it is also worth noting the **new program for teaching the state language**; and after its implementation the education field will ensure offering a state language learning program, which will create opportunities for professional and personal development and

civic integration for the non-Georgian speaking population, including representatives of ethnic minorities. Within the reporting period, the Draft Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia on the Procedure for Development and Implementation of the State Language Teaching Program and the Approval of the Service Fee Provided by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement related to the State Language Teaching Program was developed. The rules for enrolling students in the program, a methodological package for the selection of applicants, supporting study materials for A1 and A2 levels were also developed. Work has begun on the Program Funding Procedure, Program Implementation Roadmap, Teacher Training Module and A1 Level Textbook.

It should be mentioned that Vocational education system allows learning results achieved within the framework of non-formal education to be recognized at the level of vocational education. The purpose of this is to recognize the education achieved beyond of formal education for the interested person, to promote lifelong learning, personal development, continuing education, qualification for employment or career growth. In accordance with the regulation, the institution implementing the vocational education program and the legal entity authorized to implement the vocational training/retraining program are authorized to recognize non-formal education, if the organization meets the requirements established for obtaining the right to recognize non-formal education. During the reporting period, re-certification of nine certified consultants and additional certification process of new consultants was carried out by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement. As of December 2022, 8 institutions have obtained the right to recognize non-formal education. Non-formal education recognition services are available in almost all broad areas where vocational qualifications are presented. During 2022, the process of recognition of non-formal education took place in two educational institutions. As a result, 19 persons obtained partial recognition and the study results necessary for the achievement of the qualifications stipulated by the vocational education standard were fully confirmed by 1 seeker, and the institution issued a document confirming the qualifications - a diploma.

Due to the development of new locations and the increase of study places in existing colleges, in 2022, the number of places announced for vocational education programs increased significantly and reached 17 200. In 2022, within the framework of the announced admission, **13 859** people were enrolled in vocational education programs.

In 2022, the admission process was carried out in accordance with the unified rule of enrollment in educational institutions, which came into force in 2021 and provides enrollment through a common platform within the framework of the unified admission of VET students by all authorized, including private institutions. Various mechanisms are used in the process of enrolling applicants, which, considering the specifics of the programs, provides more flexible approaches in the direction of student selection and evaluation. Vocational education institutions, together with partner organizations, including employers, themselves ensure the student selection process.

In order to establish an innovative, diverse and inclusive network of institutions implementing vocational education programs, it is of key importance to strengthen the institutions and to share their best experiences

with each other. To share experience and strengthen institutions, work has been started in the direction of development of regional hubs. The transformation of the college into a regional hub is a continuous process and involves the constant development of the capabilities of the main colleges of the region, in order to combine and strengthen the functions of the regional hub. Through the support of the Asian Development Bank, the Skills Agency developed the Regional Hub Development Concept Document. It is significant that the new organizational structure of 8 vocational education institutions (“Iberia”, “Modus”, “Gldani Vocational Education and Training Center”, “Icarus”, “TSU College of Media and Television Arts”, “IT Academy”, “Ilia Tsinamdzghvrishvili College”, “Adventure Tourism School”) has been prepared on the basis of the mentioned methodology. The Statute and organizational structure of “Prestige” college is being revised according to the mentioned methodology. Through the support of UNDP and the Sunny House, the policy documents for the development of youth and student services in regional hubs were developed.

In order to increase the degree of inclusiveness of vocational education institutions, it is important to have a unified framework of inclusive education at the level of vocational education and to offer various additional services to the beneficiaries.

During 2022, work continued regarding the agreement on the rule “on the Identification of Individual Special Education Needs and the Implementation of Inclusive Vocational Education”, which will promote involvement of persons with special educational needs and disabilities in vocational education, as well as the practical implementation of the principles of inclusiveness at the level of vocational education. Within the reporting period, through the support of the Asian Development Bank, the Concept of Inclusive Development at Vocational Education Level was developed, which implies tailoring vocational education services to groups with different additional needs. In 2022, additional services were developed for students, including groups with additional needs: (1) **guiding service for people with disabilities and special educational needs** has been developed; (2) **Document on the development of psychosocial services** was prescribed; (3) **Mechanisms for the development of extracurricular services** were developed and introduced through the financial support of the Ministry.

In addition, significant attention was paid to the direction of professional orientation and career planning. During the reporting period, **the Strategy on professional orientation, counseling and career planning in formal education** was revised, in which the concept of development of career management services at the level of vocational education was prescribed. Within the reporting period, the Skills Agency started working on a continuous development model for career managers, professional network of career managers was created, and capacity building measures were implemented in several stages. Work has begun on a career education course that will help VET students develop career management skills. Work continued on new open door day services at the vocational education level.

Since 2017, **courses aimed at developing the skills of pupils** have been implemented, which serves as one of the effective tools for career management services. The initiative had a significant impact on the promotion of vocational education among young people, and also contributed to the strengthening of cooperation between the schools and colleges. It is worth noting that the **program, from 2018 to December 2022, has covered more than 22 000 students**, developed the material and technical base of schools, and increased the

awareness of the sector, both among students and their parents. Given the circumstances caused by the pandemic, increasing the scale of the “Developing Skills among Pupils” program in 2020-2021 obviously became impossible, however, from 2022, the implementation of the abovementioned program, with the financial support of the Ministry, continued under the coordination of the Skills Agency. During the reporting period, applications related to the prolongation of the programs implemented in 2017-2019 were financed. As a result, in 2022: (1) guiding courses for the development of skills were available for 6 855 students of general educational institutions; (2) Skills Development Certificate Courses are available to students of 10-12th grades in up to 40 schools. Furthermore, within the framework of the partnership with the ADB and UNDP, preparatory work is underway to introduce short-term vocational training courses for 10-12th grade students of general educational institutions.

Creating an inclusive environment means considering the needs of beneficiaries/potential beneficiaries in the process of offering services. It is especially important to create a gender-sensitive environment in institutions. For this purpose, the Skills Agency has developed the Gender Action Plan for 2022-2026, within the framework of which it is envisaged to promote the effectiveness of vocational education and skills development by introducing gender-sensitive approaches. In the end, the mentioned development should be reflected in increased quantitative indicators related to participation of women in vocational education, employment, and self-employment. One of the key issues for creating a gender-sensitive environment in vocational education institutions is equipping vocational education teachers and staff with appropriate competencies and creating appropriate institutional mechanisms. Therefore, the plan envisages the preparation of a training module focused on the development of gender equality competencies for VET teachers; retraining of VET teachers, management of vocational education institutions with the mentioned modules; and training of female teachers in the direction of leadership.

Despite the positive trends in the change of public opinion towards vocational education, the stigmatization of vocational education, as well as insufficient awareness of the reform and existing services make it necessary to develop and implement a Communication Strategy. With the support of the Asian Development Bank, **draft Communication Strategy** was developed, which envisages promotion of the possibilities of a number of occupations and fields as well as raising public awareness with complex approaches. The new Strategy shall also focus on communicating with groups with different additional needs in a variety of ways and means, establishing a network of public relations specialists, which will create a supportive platform for sharing experiences among specialists, uniting to overcome common challenges, and launching new initiatives. All promotion activities will be carried out taking into consideration the gender mainstreaming issue.

For the purpose of raising the level of public awareness regarding the vocational education, in 2022, Skills Agency was implementing the vocational education promotion sub-program. Within the framework of the sub-program, a campaign for the promotion of vocational education was implemented, which was aimed at raising public awareness of vocational education, including professions, and increasing the prestige and attractiveness of vocational education. **As a result of the campaign, the number of registered persons (interested persons) for vocational education programs has increased by 30% compared to the data of 2021 and amounted to 24 449.** In 2020, 14 324 people were registered for 9 056 places announced for vocational

education programs; in 2021, 18 784 people were registered for 13 871 places; and in 2022, 24 449 people were registered for 17 183 places. In this context, it is also interesting to consider the “Public Opinion Survey on Vocational Education” conducted by ACT in 2022, according to which, attitudes towards vocational education change over the years and positive perception increase. According to the Report, about four out of ten interviewees would choose vocational education (37%).

Outcome indicator: 2.3.1.1: In 2022, 156 people with disabilities/special educational needs enrolled in vocational programs from the basic education and full general education level.

Outcome indicator: 2.3.1.2: Rate of transition from school to vocational education for people with special educational needs with basic education is 5.4% and for people with special educational needs with full general education is 18.9%.

IT should be noted that within the framework of the "European Neighborhood Program for Rural and Agricultural Development Phase IV" (ENPARD IV) agreement, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia was responsible to support women's participation in vocational education with the state contribution, aiming to enhance their social conditions and living standards. In particular, indicator envisaged a 5% increase of females enrolled in vocational educational programs (except for the field of agriculture - 081) with state funding across the country compared to the base rate (base rate in 2019 - 3324 Female). Based on the data provided by the LEPL Education Management Information System, within the admission to VET Institutions in 2022, 6267 women were enrolled in vocational educational programs (except for the field of agriculture - 081) with state funding, which was an increase of 88.5% compared to the base rate in 2019.

Objective 3. Enhancing the efficiency of the vocational education system

Enhancing the efficiency of the vocational education system is aimed at transforming the system into an ecosystem of skills, which implies creating of diverse opportunities for capacity building within the country through the involvement of multiple actors, the emergence of new roles, the distribution of responsibilities and close cooperation between parties. The private sector has a special role in such arrangement.

As noted in the report, as a result of the Vocational Education Reform, in order to ensure participatory management, in 2021, Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia jointly established non-entrepreneurial non-commercial legal entity – the Skills Agency. The joint establishment of the Agency aims, through public-private partnership, the following: promotion of the development of modern skills adapted to the needs of the economy of the country; promotion of inclusive

vocational education and development tailored to the needs of the individual; promotion of internationalization of human capital development policy.

In order to support the introduction of new approaches to the management of vocational education, intensive work was carried out during the reporting period in the direction of revising the regulatory framework of vocational education and initiating the necessary changes.

In particular, an important achievement for the institutionalization of private sector participation in vocational education was the Work-based Learning Regulatory Framework (N416) approved by the government of Georgia in 2022. As already mentioned, the parties involved in work-based learning and their responsibilities were clearly defined based on the aforementioned decrees; in addition, the private sector has entered the system as a stakeholder in the form of Sectoral Skills Organizations. Within the reporting period, work was actively carried out in the direction of the development and agreement of the acts that will regulate the powers of sectoral skills organizations within the framework of vocational education.

Evidence-based policymaking is a key to the effectiveness of vocational education management, so the current processes in the system are managed accordingly. Various statistical data is available in vocational education management information system managed by the LEPL Education Management Information System (EMIS). In addition, one of the important focuses of the Skills Agency is to strengthen the research component in the vocational education system; for this purpose, a special team works in the Agency, therefore the Agency will systematically schedule and implement key studies, which shall further promote the production of evidence-based policies in vocational education.

For the development of an efficient and flexible system of vocational education, it is essential to introduce a renewed model of financing, which shall contribute to the growth of financial and human resources and more effective management of the budget in the conditions of the growth of the scale of vocational education. Within the reporting period, through the support of the German Agency for International Cooperation and taking into consideration best international practice, a new approach to financing vocational education was developed, which foresees performance-based funding model for institutions.

Outcome indicator: 3.3.1.1: Employer satisfaction rate - according to the "Study of Employer Satisfaction with Vocational Education" conducted in 2022, the employer satisfaction rate is 60%¹.

¹ The study conducted by the Skills Agency in 2022 with the support of the UNDP

Other issues

It should be emphasized that significant components of the vocational education system are supported by donor organizations. Among them are the European Union (EU), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Asian Development Bank (ADB), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), KfW Development Bank (KfW), European Training Foundation (ETF), the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development (SDC), etc. It was through the mobilization and support of the financial resources of the state and donor organizations that the possibility of gradual modernization of the vocational education system was developed in accordance with international standards and recommendations. For the purpose of achievement of this objective, a number of important initiatives were implemented within the reporting period, which would not have been possible without the partners supporting the vocational education system.

The development of the vocational education system is one of the priorities of the government, and it should be highlighted that, in addition to the growing donor funding, the budgetary funding of vocational education is also increasing annually. In particular, the budgetary financing of vocational education in 2021 – amounted to 76.2 million GEL (actual expenditure), and in 2022, it amounted to 92.6 million GEL (actual expenditure).

Herewith, it should be noted, that within the framework of the EU budget support program, 1 million euros were allocated for the purpose of successful implementation of the 2021 indicator.