



Report

VET Development Strategy of Georgia (2013-2020) 2015 Strategy Implementation Action Plan

VET Development Department
Ministry of Education and Science
Tbilisi, 2015

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Abbreviations	3
Preamble	4
Chapter I. Implementation of the 2015 Action Plan under the VET Development Strategy	5
1. VET Development management and coordination	5
1.1. Coordination of Strategy Implementation.....	6
1.2. Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET Reform implementation.....	6
1.3. Capacity Building	7
1.4. Access to Information.....	7
2. Social Partnership	8
2.1. Social Partnership at a Macro Level – National VET Council	9
2.2. Social Partnership at Mezzo level - Sector Committees	10
2.3. Social Partnership at Micro level – Board of Trustees.....	11
3. VET Accessibility	12
3.1. Expansion of the Vocational Education Institutions network, improving infrastructure	12
3.2. Capacity Building of Professional Colleges.....	13
3.3. Access to Vocational Education for Vulnerable Groups.....	14
3.4. Offering living allowance to students	14
4. Alignment Vocational Education Programs with Labor Market Demands	15
4.1. Labor Market Research.....	15
4.2. Occupational Standards and Assesment	16
4.3. Framework documents for modular vocational education programs and assessment instruments.....	16
4.4. Launching Modular VET programs.....	17
4.5. Instructional Resources.....	18
5. Opportunities for VET teachers and Continued Professional Development	19
5.1. VET Teacher trainings.....	19
5.2. VET teacher database	19
5.3. Capacity Building of VET teachers	19
6. Quality of VET	21
6.1. Improving Internal and External Mechanisms for Quality Assurance.....	21
6.2. Recognition of non-formal education	22
6.3. International and National Competitions	22
6.4. Quality Management in VET institutions	22
7. Employment and Career Development Support for VET graduates	22
7.1. Preparing a Regulatory Document	23
7.2. Trainings.....	23
7.3. Research.....	23
8. Improving the Image and the status of VET	24
8.1. Informational Meetings	24
8.2. Communication Outreach Activities	24
8.3. Capacity Building	25
8.4. Regular Research	25
Chapter II. Summary of the 2015 Strategy Implementation Action Plan – Main Findings and Recommendations	26

Abbreviations

EU	European Union
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
MCA-G	Millenium Challenge Account - Georgia
NCEQE	National Center for Education Quality Enhancement
TPDC	Teacher Professional Development Center
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
SIAP	VET Strategy Implementation Action Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

Preamble

The report presents main trends and outcomes of the 2015 Action Plan implementation of the VET Development Strategy (2013-2020).

VET Development Strategy of Georgia (2013-2020)¹ is a VET policy defining document and presents the vision of the Government of Georgia (GOG) for the future development of the vocational education. The strategy was created through broad range of consultations with multiple stakeholders.

Purpose of the VET strategy:

- Support the GOG's social and economic development and poverty reduction priorities;
- Maximize the national and individual potential of the country's human resources to meet the immediate, medium and longer terms labor requirements of the country;
- Provide access to vocational education to individuals from all segments of the society, including the disadvantaged and vulnerable population to foster the actualization of their potential and economic well-being.

The specific objectives of the Strategy are the creation of the flexible nationwide VET network promoting excellence in skills development supporting the current and future economically active population to develop highly qualified competencies to successfully compete both on national and international labor market; to ensure full and equal opportunities for the individuals from all segments of the population, support their capacity building for employment or self-employment within the context of sustainable career development and personal fulfillment.

The Strategy outlines seven outcomes that determine the formation of priorities, objectives and implementation steps:

1. Full and equal participation of social partners in VET system management, policy development and decision-making;
2. Developing an unified and flexible network of vocational education institutions (private and public) and ensuring their accessibility;
3. Ensuring compatibility of the vocational education programs with the current and future demands of the labor market;
4. Teacher preparation and continued professional development of teachers;
5. Recognized vocational qualifications at a national and international level;
6. Supporting employment and career development of VET graduates;
7. Enhancing the image and attractiveness of vocational education.

¹Approved on December 26, 2013

Chapter I. Implementation of the 2015 Action Plan under the VET Development Strategy

1. VET Development management and coordination

Brief Summary

Ministry of Education and Science has a central role in managing, monitoring and evaluating the VET development process. Thereby, the Strategy and the 2015 Action Plan places primary focus on the enhancement of Ministry resources and capacity building (as well as its affiliated agencies and LEPLs) in VET management and monitoring, as well as sharing international good practices.

For the effective implementation of the reform relevant and effective coordination mechanisms shall be established. VET development department of the Ministry developed an agency coordination plan in 2014, which incorporates specific action plans of LEPLs, implementation and reporting timeline. The Ministry of Education and Science also instituted a coordination mechanism for regular coordination meetings involving relevant donor organizations (EU, MCA, UNDP, GIZ, etc).

The Strategy outlines the importance of access to information for the effectiveness of evidence-based policy development and monitoring activities. To provide open access to information, VET system monitoring database was created in 2013-2014, and is being updated regularly.

To relevant strategy outcomes are:

1. Ministry of Education and Science to be leading and coordinating the VET development process;
2. Ensuring access to information – statistics, indicators and analysis.

Activities and Outcomes

1.1. Coordination of Strategy Implementation

Strategy implementation is coordinated by the VET Development Department of the Ministry of Education and Science. Coordination meetings are held quarterly. The Ministry organized four coordination meetings with the respective LEPLs in 2015 (16-17.01.2015; 28-30.05.2015; 18-19.09.2015; 15.10.2015), where strategy implementation accounts, achievements and challenges were presented and discussed.

The Ministry of Education and Science also hosted four coordination meetings with the donor organizations (02.04.2015; 24.07.2015; 23.10.2015; 17.12.2015) such as EU, MCA, UNDP, GIZ, Norwegian Project), that are involved in the strategy implementation process. Coordination meetings were utilized to present international projects/programs, their implementation process and future forecasts.

Review of Institutional Arrangements in VET (RIA)

Through the technical assistance of EU, project review of institutional arrangements in VET (RIA) was conducted using the European Education Fund (ETF) methodology. The goal of the review (RIA) was to identify critical points in the 2015-2017 Strategy Implementation Action Plan (SIAP). Review of Institutional Arrangements (RIA) involved consultations with stakeholders and participating parties. RIA results showed the need for changes and adjustments in the following four areas:

- **Legislation** – adoption of new laws and legal acts, including the National Qualifications Framework;
- **Functions and Roles** – well-balanced and clear division of roles and functions;
- **procedures and methods** – introduction of procedures for automated management and evidence-based policy implementation;
- **Staff Capacity** – introduction of institutional mechanisms for staff career development and professional growth

Based on the four priority areas “Reform Agenda” was developed, which continues to be the continued focus of the 2016.

1.2. Monitoring and Evaluation of the VET Reform implementation

Monitoring unit of the VET Development Department at MES is responsible for the monitoring activities of the strategy implementation. With the help of the EU-funded Technical Assistance to VET and Employment Reforms in Georgia”(EUVEGE), Matrix Management Model (MMM) was introduced as a way to enhance effectiveness of Strategy Action Plan implementation. MMM incorporated activities within four main categories:

1. Thematic policy development areas:

- quality enhancement;
- inclusion and accessibility;
- skills compatibility and employment;
- teacher development;
- improved awareness;
- Institutional development and capacity building;
- Infrastructure development.

2. Legislation;

3. Financing;

4. Monitoring and Evaluation.

Strategy Implementation Action Plan (SIAP) Matrix Management Model (MMM) 2015 is an electronic document, allowing further revision and development. Based on the Strategy Implementation Action

Plan (SIAP) Matrix Management Model (MMM) 2015, Monitoring unit of the MES conducted the monitoring activities for the action plan implementation. The results are documented in the monitoring report.

1.3. Capacity Building

Throughout 2015 a number of activities were implemented to build the capacity of the VET Development Department of MES and various staff in MES-affiliated LEPLs. On December 2-9, 2015 EU-funded Technical Assistance to VET and Employment Reforms in Georgia”(EUVEGE) project organized a training on project monitoring and evaluation for EU-funded grants, where Ministry staff representatives from the VET Development Department were trained.

To facilitate international exchange and learning staff from the VET development department and other LEPLs participated in the donor-funded organized study tours, including:

- study tour in Germany to learn about German experience (UNDP; 03-08.05.2015);
- study tour in Vienna to learn about Austrian experience (23-26.03.2015);
- International Forum: „Integrated and networked approaches to skills anticipation and matching experiences in the EU and Eastern Partnership region“ - Helsinki (ETF; 09-13.06.2015)
- Workshop in Paris (ETF; 17-20.11.2015);
- Study tour in Croatia (EU; 27.09-03.10.2015);
- Workshops in Munich, on private sector involvement in VET (GIZ; 17-23.05.2015);
- workshops in Lviv, discussion on establishing new VET institutions in Georgia (GIZ and Eberhard Schock foundation; 10-13.11.2015);
- Study tour in Bavaria (Bavaria, Ansbach and Regensburg) for the group of authors working on Teacher Methodology Manual. (UNDP; 18-24.10.2015);
- Study tour in Madrid to introduce employment services support programs (“Movement Against Hunger” (ACF Spain) 5-11.07.2015).

In July-August 2015, with the assistance of the EU technical support project, needs assessment and analysis of training needs were conducted with the VET sector agency managers; Based on the expressed needs, the trainings were planned and will be conducted in 2016.

1.4. Access to Information

EMIS Database

Currently, the EMIS database is being redesigned. With the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and technical assistance project of EU, technical working group was created, who will take the responsibility in the future on the maintenance and development of EMIS. The goal of the group is to support evidence-based policy development, use of Information and Communication Technologies and development of automated management system for VET strategy implementation. Three meetings were facilitated in 2015, where Terms of Reference for future development of EMIS was developed.

The goal of the thematic group is to support evidence-based policy development, integration of ICT and establish an automated management system for VET strategy implementation. There were three coordination meetings held in 2015, where Terms of Reference for EMIS work in VET sector was drafted.

In 2015, VET system monitoring database was expanded with additional information entry cells: instruments and materials needed at the professional college, equipment purchase form for the new

equipment needed in the implementation of the modular training programs and purchase confirmation form.

Financing modules and electronic journal was created for the verification of the quarterly disbursements made by the state-funded vocational education institutions. All public and community colleges (20 in total) are connected with the database. At this point it is voluntary for private colleges to enter information in the database.

2. Social Partnership

Executive Summary

VET development strategy emphasizes the importance of engagement from social partners, as equal stakeholders, in the process of VET policy formation, implementation and evaluation. The Strategy accentuates the need for enhancing social partners' engagement at every state of VET development:

- **Macro (policy) level** the prime institution for social partner engagement is National VET council;
- **Mezzo (technical) level** mechanisms for social partner engagement are sector committees;
- **Micro (institutional) level** partnership is focused on the engagement with vocational education institutions.

The Strategy also places a central focus on the capacity building of existing institutional framework, including National VET council, sector committees, board of trustees, thematic working groups. Capacity building interventions address the needs for balanced/representative composition of this structure, methodological assistance, various types of professional seminars, workshops, trainings, etc.

National VET council is a main decision-making body in VET sector established at the national level. The council was established in 2009 based on the principles of social partnership upon such request from the employers' associations, trade unions and other professional associations. The main purpose of the council is to support VET development, ensure stakeholder participation in the VET policy formation, policy planning and implementation, and solicit stakeholder input and recommendations on policy planning and implementation for the Government of Georgia and Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

Since 2014 the National VET Council functions as a quadripartite body² - composed of the government representatives, employer and employee associations, and civil society sectors. Nine thematic working groups function in affiliation with the National VET Council starting from 2015, coordinated by the VET Development Department and donor organizations; The working groups focus on the following thematic areas:

1. Development of the National VET Council Regulations;
2. Work-based learning;
3. Mechanisms of private sector involvement in VET;
4. Professional orientation/career planning and entrepreneurial education;
5. Quality management in VET;
6. VET teacher professional development;
7. Inclusive education development in VET;
8. Recognition of non-formal education;
9. Vocational education and extension in agriculture.

The Social Partnership division of the VET Development Department plays secretarial functions for the

² governed by the decree N720 issued on December 26, 2014

National VET Council.

In 2015, with the support of the EU-funded project “Technical Assistance to VET and Employment Reforms in Georgia”(EUVEGE), the framework document for the capacity building of the National VET Council, secretariat and thematic working groups was developed. Some new activities were also launched in 2015, which continue to be implemented in 2016.

From 2010 LEPL National Center for Education Quality Enhancement has been hosting the sector committees in 14 areas³. A number of importance changes were implemented in the sector committee operations, however, in a long-term perspective, further capacity building of the sector committees are planned in coordination with the MCA-G project “Industry-led skills and Workforce Development Project”.

Social partnership at the VET institution level is implemented through the Boards of Trustees. The board is composed of five members: employer, parent, student, local self-government and non-governmental organizational representative. Research has shown that⁴, partnership between the VET institutions and private sector is weak; partnership is not structured or systematic; and need to be enhanced. One of the first steps is to analyze and promote “best practices” of partnerships between VET institutions and private sector.

Activities and Outcomes

2.1. Social Partnership at a Macro Level – National VET Council

The following activities were implemented from the 2015 Action Plan in support to social partnership development.

1. Annual Informational Seminars of National VET Council

With the support of the European Union a needs assessment of the National VET Council was conducted to plan a relevant informational seminars; Needs assessment results showed that the National VET Council members requested additional information in the following areas:

1. Social partnership – Social dialogue;
2. Public-private partnerships at all levels;
3. Labor market data; labor market research and other relevant information;
4. Policy development, laws and regulations;
5. VET financing models/practices;
6. Quality Assurance – models and mechanisms;
7. International good practices in VET sector.

Two informational seminars were conducted based on the results of the needs analysis:

1. On May 29, 2015 Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia hosted the National VET Council seminar. 24 participants attended including the National VET Council members, social partners, representatives of Ministry of Education and Science. The seminar addressed the following topics:

- Proactive labor market politics and vocational education in the 21st century – main trends and perspectives;

³1. mining and geo-engineering; 2. automobile construction, technology, metallurgy and materials science; 3. Art; 4. Business Administration; 5. Tourism; 6. Public health; 7. Marine, rail, air, land transport; 8. Energy and trade; 9. Agricultural Sciences; 10. Mass media and journalism; 11. Construction and environmental protection; 12. Computer Sciences / Telecommunications; 13. Architectural design; 14. Sciences/ exact science

⁴ Based on the framework of “Work-based learning situational analysis” conducted by UNDP in 2015, the research was conducted (focus groups and interviews); EU supported the research on “Social Partnership in Georgia: ETF conducted research at the 2014 conference on “Social partner support to VET sector of Georgia”.

- National VET Councils, international practices; 2015 Action plan.
- Capacity building methodology, procedures and instruments for National VET Council and the secretariat;
- VET Strategy 2015 Action Plan implementation.

2. On September 2015, National VET Council informational seminar was held in “Courtyard Marriott”. The seminar was attended by 25 members, including the representatives of National VET Council, social partners, representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science. The seminar addressed the following topics:

- 2015 findings and recommendations;
- Sharing international experience – vocational education in Ireland;
- Strengthening the National VET Council capacity;

Participants provided positive evaluations on the content and organization of the seminar; the evaluations also pointed out that it is important to continue such meetings to review and discuss international and local practices.

With the assistance of the EU-funded project guidelines for the National VET Council secretariat was developed. The guidelines describe the role and functions of the secretariat, as well as the recommendations for effective operation.

VET Development department together with the EU and MCA-G projects facilitated the monitoring of the thematic working group meetings.

2.2. Social Partnership at Mezzo level - Sector Committees

1. Structure and Roles of the Sector Committees

Sector Committee regulations were renewed in 2015 based on the following documents: “Establishment and operational regulations of sector committees”, “composition of the sector committees”, and “remuneration of the sector committees”⁵.

Roles of the sector committee were expanded in the following ways:

- Supporting the alignment between the vocational education and the labor market;
- Discussing the initiatives on the development of occupational standards, vocational education program framework documents;
- Reviewing the projects related to the development of occupational standards, vocational education program framework documents;
- Developing policy recommendations for life-long learning and/or continued vocational education.

The structure of the sector committees were renewed to now is based on the principles of social partnership. 11 sector committees were established with the total of 97 members. The sector committees are:

1. Arts, education and humanities;
2. social studies, journalism and mass communication;
3. business, administration and law;
4. engineering;
5. industry and food processing;

⁵ LEPL National Center for Education Quality Enhancement, Decree N489, N 490 and N 491 July 13, 2015

6. construction and architecture;
7. Information and Communication Technologies;
8. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and veterinary studies;
9. Health care and social welfare;
10. service industry;
11. transportation.

Sector committees meet regularly from the summer of 2015.

- 11 sector committee meetings were held between July 20-26, 2015, where 54 occupational standards were reviewed and recommended for approval along with the relevant vocational education program framework documents;
- 11 sector committee meetings were held between October 26, 2015 and December 23, 2015, where 27 occupational standards were reviewed along with the framework documents for vocational education programs. Out of these, 23 were recommended for approval and four were recommended for revision.

Occupational standards recommended by the sector committees are reviewed and approved by the director of the Center.

2. Capacity building of Sector Committees

In 2015 the National Center for Education Quality Enhancement conducted the following informational seminars with the sector committees: “Expansion of roles and functions of the sector committees” and “Methodology for developing and revising occupational standards”. Total of 65 sector committee members participated in the seminars.

2.3. Social Partnership at Micro level – Board of Trustees

1. Developing short- and long-term action plans

All public vocational education institutions approved short- and long-term action plans in 2015 that now are used as the guides throughout the year.

2. Information Seminars for the Boards of Trustees

With the assistance of the EU-funded project Technical Assistance to VET and Employment Reforms in Georgia”(EUVEGE), the needs assessment of the Boards of Trustees was conducted; The needs assessment showed that the Boards of Trustees would like to get more information on the following topics:

1. financing the colleges; effective budgeting;
2. social partnership; public-private partnership;
3. information on the labor market demands;
4. Georgian law on the vocational education; regulatory documents; vocational education reforms and VET structure;
5. private sector participation in the management of the vocational education institutions;
6. Quality assurance – self-assessment process.

Based on the needs assessment results conducted with the assistance of the EU-funded project, two informational seminars were conducted for the Boards of Trustees. The main purpose of the seminars was to inform the Boards of Trustees on the current reforms and operational roles of the Boards of Trustees, sharing international experience and more.

1. On July 27, 2015 the Ministry of Education and Science hosted the seminar for the members of the Board of Trustees. The main topics for the seminar were:

- Boards of Trustees in the 21st century; International experience and perspectives;
- Capacity building of the Boards of Trustees;
- Implementation of the VET Development Strategy (2013-20);
- New regulations for the Boards of Trustees – review of the draft version

2. On October 21, 2015 the Ministry of Education and Science and on November 20th, professional college “Iberia” in Kutaisi hosted the second informational seminar. The main topics for the seminar were:

- Information sources on the labor market in Georgia;
- Internal quality assurance – self-assessment process in Georgian VET system;
- Inclusion of students with special needs in VET;
- Private sector involvement in the management of vocational education institutions – sharing international practice.

Participants expressed in the evaluations the need for regular information seminars to share local and international experience in the variety of VET-related topics.

3. VET Accessibility

Executive Summary

The Strategy document prioritizes the improved accessibility of vocational education and training for all interested individuals; other key priorities are the expansion of vocational education networks, capacity building of vocational education institutions in terms of institutional and financial management, quality assurance, social partnerships and enhancement of the decision-making processes.

In 2013, with the goal to increase the geographic accessibility, the Ministry established a special committee that surveyed the needs across Georgia and developed recommendations for the establishment of new vocational education institutions. These recommendations guide the process of opening the new vocational education institutions.

Few selected goals from the Strategy are:

- Creation of the educational network focused on the labor market with due consideration to the regional development trends and national interests;
- Improving the management of the vocational education institutions to enhance the effectiveness of the provision;
- Building the innovative and modern learning environment;
- Provision of modern infrastructure, material and technical facilities and technologies; creation of innovative education space suitable to the contemporary demands;
- Improving the physical environment of the vocational education institutions considering the needs of people with disabilities and special needs and based on the universal standards of inclusion; Adapting the educational resources.

Activities and Outcomes

3.1. Expansion of the Vocational Education Institutions network, improving infrastructure

In 2015, Professional College of Transportation was established in Tbilisi (in collaboration with the JSC “Georgian Railway”)

With the purpose to expand the geographic accessibility of the vocational education institutions existing VET college buildings are being renovated in eight additional municipalities (Lagodekhi, Dedoplistskharo,

Alvani, Khobi, Senaki, Baghdati, Stepantsminda, Tianeti). The following colleges were also rehabilitated in 2015:

- LEPL " community College “Aisi” " – Alvani and Dedoplistskaro buildings;
- LEPL “community college “Lakada”;
- LEPL “community college “Iberia” - building located in Baghdati
- LEPL Meskhia Zugdidi State University – Senaki building devoted to VET programs.

Full rehabilitation of the vocational college “Tetnuldi” in Mestia is underway, Tsinamdzgvrishvili College in Mtskheta, Tsinamdzgvriantkari. Five colleges are going through a full infrastructural adaptation (“Mermisi”, “Aisi”, “Iberia”, “Opizari”, Speqtri”).

Partial rehabilitation of the following colleges have been completed: LEPL community college “Speqtri”, LEPL community college “New Wave”, LEPL professional college “Modusi”, LEPL professional college “Erqvani”, LEPL professional college “Pazisi”, LEPL Gldani professional education center and LEPL professional college “Black Sea”.

In 2015, student campus in Zugdidi was rehabilitated; currently the student campus building is being rehabilitated in Kutaisi and the student campus construction project was prepared for Mestia College.

Based on the minimum required technical equipment standards, professional colleges purchased necessary equipment and instruments. Specifically, Education and Science Infrastructure Development agency funded 21 LEPLs – professional colleges or higher education institutions to meet the needs of the technical equipment for 45 vocational education programs approved by the LEPL National Center for Education Quality Enhancement.⁶

3.2. Capacity Building of Professional Colleges

A number of activities were implemented in 2015 to support the capacity building of vocational education colleges. ISO certified trainings were conducted in the professional colleges “Iberia” and “Pazisi” for administrative staff. The training was on internal systems for quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation.

Estonian project – “Sharing Best Practices from Estonia” and with the support of “Innove”, two-day seminar was conducted in community college “Mermisi”. Administrative and teaching staff from eight colleges attended the training on how to improve internal communication.

Representatives of professional colleges participated in various **study tours** offered by various donor organizations in various countries (Germany, Spain, Italy, France) to facilitate organized exchange of international experience.

In the VET sector, 320 managers completed a training needs assessment within the EU-funded project “Technical Assistance to VET and Employment Reforms in Georgia”(EUVEGE), with the purpose to enhance VET manager competencies. Based on the needs assessment results it was determined to conduct training for 294 managers in six regions of Georgia⁷.

⁶ Vocational Education Institutions: “Lakada”, “Erqvani”, “Modusi”, “iberia”, Gldani professional college “Mermisi”, “Tetnuldi”, “Speqtri”, “New Wave”, “Pazisi”, “Black Sea”, “Opizari”, “Aisi”, “Emisi” technical university, Samtskhe-Javakheti University, TSU, Gori University, Batumi University, Telavi University, Akaki Tsereteli Kutaisi State University.

⁷ 1. Understanding the economy, labor market and education system in Georgia;

3.3. Access to Vocational Education for Vulnerable Groups

In 2015, a research was conducted and a report was released on the “VET Access to Vulnerable Groups – Situational Analysis” within the Ministry of Education and Science project “Inclusive Education in VET sector”. The report presents information and analysis of the access to VET from eight types of vulnerable groups⁸. The report also provides recommendations on necessary improvements to increase access to vocational education for vulnerable groups. The same project entailed the development of the concept framework for higher access of vulnerable groups to VET.

With the goal to improve **physical accessibility** of the VET institutions 5 infrastructural projects at five VET institutions were initiated in 2015 to redesign the building into universal standards (VET institutions: “Iberia”, “Aisi”, “Mermisi”, “Opizari”, “Speqtri”)

To develop the Georgian sign language and support the ease of the learning process, the Ministry of Education and Science initiated and supported the compilation of 400 signs by the Georgian Union of Deaf people, which was uploaded on the web space. There is more work to be done in this direction, while in 2015 the learning process of hearing impaired students was facilitated by the translators.

The Ministry of the Education and Science also collected the list of technical equipment and instruments that are necessary for the hearing-impaired in the learning process. The purchases will be made next year. One audio book was created to support use of Braille alphabet.

Throughout 2015, special program for prisoners, former prisoners and their family members supported their enrollment in **vocational educational programs**; the programs were implemented at public VET institutions. More than 400 beneficiaries completed the vocational education courses in 2015.

To strengthen the competitiveness on the labor market, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the Ministry of Labor, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia initiated job-seeker training program. The Ministry of Education and Science coordinated the labor market research and identified top 50 most demanded occupations. Following the research, short-term training courses were developed.

3.4. Offering living allowance to students

One of the key initiatives of the Strategy is to offer living allowances to vocational education students. Discussions and negotiations were held in 2015 with various Ministries (Ministry of IDPs, Ministry of Finances, Ministry Economic Development) regarding the student living allowances. The “Action Plan

2. Vocational Education Policy, Strategy and Action Plan;

3. Qualifications Framework and Georgian qualification framework;

4. Vocational Education legislation;

5. Financing Vocational Education;

6. Teaching in the 21st century and the role of ICTs in education;

7. Vocational Education Sector management;

8. Planning VET school activities based on the recommendations in the ETF-provided module;

⁸1. socially vulnerable individuals;

2. ethnic minorities;

3. beneficiaries withdrawn for state welfare;

4. people with disabilities and special needs;

5. Internally displaced people;

6. people living and working in the streets, including children;

7. veterans;

8. Repatriated Meskhs.

on IDP provision with minimum living allowance” now includes the statute by which the Ministry of IDPs will provide the living allowance to vocational students with IDP status.

4. Alignment of Vocational Education Programs with Labor Market Demands

Executive Summary

One of the priorities of the Strategy is to ensure alignment of the vocational education programs with the current and future demands of the labor market. The vocational educational programs have been reforming since 2013 to prepare modular VET programs. In 2013, with the assistance of the EU-funded project a new methodology for developing occupational standards and vocational education programs was introduced, which requires active involvement of employers in preparation/revision of the occupational standards using the standard methodology (DACUM).

NCEQE has been implementing “vocational qualifications development support program” since 2013. The goal of the program is to transfer vocational education programs into modular programs using the standard methodology with the help of the EU-funded technical assistance project. Before 2015 only few VET institutions had experience in piloting or launching modular programs, mostly in the field of agriculture. In 2014, with the support of the UNDP program, seven modular programs were launched in agricultural field.⁹ 2015 was marked by the completion of pilot programs, their review and introduction of 45 more modular programs in VET.

Preparation and establishment of modular VET programs requires resource mobilization at macro and micro levels, which is one of the objectives in the VET Development Strategy. The Strategy also outlines the need for standardizing the minimum required equipment and mechanization for the implementation of modular VET programs, as well as creating a plan for the active utilization of such equipment and mechanization in partnership with the private sector. VET institutions that piloted modular programs were equipped in compliance with the requirements of the relevant modular programs and technical normatives.

Activities and Outcomes

4.1. Labor Market Research

Conducting the labor market research and developing respective projections is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs of Georgia. In 2015, the Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Affairs of Georgia conducted quantitative and qualitative research on the current and future demands on the labor market.

The goal of the quantitative research was to identify employers’ demands on the labor market. Specifically, analyze information on the current, past and future vacancy announcements; identify the employment trends and project future needs. Quantitative research was conducted in 11 regions with 6000 organizations (both in public and private sector). The information was analyzed by regions, by the type of the economic activity of the organization, by education level and profession. This was the first large-scale research of labor market in Georgia. The information is accessible to any interested organization. The Ministry plans to conduct labor market research regularly from 2016.

The main goal of the qualitative research was to study the current and future prospective demands on workforce by the employers;

⁹7 modular programs were launched in the fall of 2014 in four VET institutions: LEPL “Opizari”, “Prestige”, LEPL “Aisi” and Shota Meskhia State Institution agricultural programs: milk processing, wine-making, fruit/vegetable processing, veterinarian services, zoo technician, farmer, fruit.

- Employment opportunities in specific geographic areas;
- Factors influencing the creation of new employment opportunities;
- Qualifications – personnel qualification and their professional development practices.

Total of 240 interviews were conducted in country; 20-25 companies/organizations were identified in each region.

MCA-G project prepared a report “Access to information on Labor Market in Georgia”; the report was prepared for the VET institutions in Georgia. The report unifies all information sources on labor market, such as statistical information, information on labor market demand and supply, and workforce; in 2016 the VET institutions were provided the guidebooks on the needs of the local labor market; VET institutions attended trainings on how to reflect the labor market research results in the VET programs.

“Professional Qualifications Support Program” conducts small-scale market research on the professions on demand and required competencies (using DACUM methodology). 20 sector meetings were conducted in 2015 with the leading companies and experts (throughout development of the occupational standards by the working groups).

4.2. Occupational Standards and Assessments

1. Occupational Standards

In 2015 NCEQE implemented a program “Occupational Standards Development Support program”. 99 occupational standards were created for most highly demanded professions:

1. Construction and architectural design;
2. Agriculture, forestry, fishing and veterinary studies;
3. industry and food processing;
4. social studies, journalism and mass communication;
5. business, administration and law;
6. Health care and social welfare;
7. Other types of service industries.

Sector committees reviewed, validated and approved 54 occupational standards¹⁰.

2. Assessment Standards

The goal of the assessment standards is to improve the assessment process in the education sector and enhance the quality of qualifications. In 2015 101 assessment standards were developed for relevant qualifications (For modular programs developed in 2014). 54 standards were approved¹¹.

4.3. Framework documents for modular VET programs and assessment instruments

1. Developing Modular VET programs and assessment instruments

101 framework documents for modular programs were developed in 2015, 54 of those were approved in 2015. VET institutions implementing the modular programs developed the assessment instruments, which were then analyzed and recommendations for improvement were released; Total of 150 assessment instruments created by 36 VET institutions were reviewed.

Sample instruments were developed for practice project module of the modular programs; About 150 assessment instruments were developed for 101 practice projects.

¹⁰ Approved occupational standards can be accessed electronically from the web site www.vet.ge.

¹¹ NCEQE Directors' Decree N 529(27/07/2015)

2. Capacity Building in the development of Modular Programs and Assessment Instruments

Competency-based teaching and learning is a novelty to the VET sector in Georgia. More than 300 participants involved in the development of the vocational education programs attended the training on competency-based assessment, including: the program facilitators, members of sector committees, authors of the vocational education programs and vocational education teachers involved in the implementation of the modular VET programs.

In 2015, the “Vocational qualifications support program” supported the trainings in modular program development methodology for 69 sector specialists and 43 education facilitators. 663 individuals attended the trainings¹².

Additionally, trainings on program development, authorization and accreditation were conducted for VET institution quality assurance and program development staff. 77 individuals participated in these series of trainings.

Field visits to VET institutions were implemented throughout two months and online consultations on the adaptation of programs and completion of authorization forms were conducted. Total of 72 field visits were conducted.

3. Developing minimum normative requirements for learning environment and technical equipment

In February 2015, “Vocational Qualifications Support Program”, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Science and LEPL Education and Science Infrastructure Development Agency, developed a methodology for establishing the minimum normative requirements for learning environment and technical equipment.

The normative were used as a guide for modular vocational programs developed in 2015, and learning environment and facilities for public VET institutions (LEPL - Education and Science Infrastructure Development Agency). The normative were utilized in the authorization process to assess how well the VET institutions met the infrastructure standards.

In 2015, 170 normative were developed for vocational education programs, including the programs established in 2014 under the UNDP project “Modernization of the Vocational Education and Training and Extension Systems Related to Agriculture in Georgia”. More than 50 workshops were held, where more than 100 specialists participated.

4.4. Launching Modular VET programs

Organization of Teaching and Assessment

45 new modular VET programs were launched in 2015 (748 mandatory VET modules). For the fall admissions of the 2015, 32 VET institutions (including 10 higher education institutions) submitted applications to 122 programs in 52 areas of instruction. 2873 applicants registered and took the test for the modular VET programs; 1154 students enrolled in public VET institutions and 109 students enrolled in private VET institutions.

“Vocational Qualifications Development Support Program” is responsible for the monitoring of the modular program implementation. In 2015, 26 VET institutions were visited for the monitoring

¹² 67 VET institutions, 18 training centers and 131 public and private organizations

purposes. Findings from the field visits were used to identify future priorities. On November 14-15, with the support of the UNDP program, seminars were held in Kachreti, hotel “Ambassador” to support the piloting of the modular VET programs. In collaboration with the UNDP program “Modular VET program Support Strategy” was developed, which envisions continued internal and external observation and facilitation of the modular program implementation.

Work-based learning

In 2015, with the support of the UNDP “Situational Analysis of the Work-based Learning in TVET” was conducted and the final report was drafted. Multiple stakeholders were involved in the development of the report. It describes the role of the work-based learning in TVET, types of work-based learning opportunities in Georgia, advantages and shortfalls of the work-based learning, existing gaps. The report also outlines the format of the work-based learning acceptable to all stakeholders. Based on the report the concept paper on work-based learning was prepared.

On December 28, 2015 National VET Council reviewed the concept paper on work-based learning, and continued to work on it throughout the 2016. The work-based learning programs will be piloted in 2016.

4.5. Instructional Resources

In 2015, the resource development component of the “Vocational Qualifications Development Support Program” facilitated the development of resources for 54 modular programs. (more than 400 vocational training modules)¹³.

Teacher Professional Development Center developed seven guidebooks for vocational education teachers; guidelines for creating the individual development plan were completed. A consolidated guidebook was compiled outlining the requirements and features of the individual development plans.

Electronic Resources

In 2015, instructional resources were developed for 30 vocational education programs (tour guide, hospitality, make-up specialist, sewing specialist, computer network administrator and more). All resources are uploaded on the following website: (www.eqe.ge).

Resources for Teaching with ICT and piloting teaching with ICT in VET Institutions

Resources for teaching with ICT were developed and trainings were piloted in few vocational programs: electricians, milk processing, wine-making, fruit farming, vegetable farming, in which teachers and IT specialists from various VET institutions participated.

Online training course was also developed, the technical lab started to operate and the instructional resources were piloted in VET institutions.

Grants

MCA-G Project “Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development Project” administers a small grants scheme to strengthen the TVET provider practice. The total budget of the project is 16 million USD; the goal of the project is to offer new and improved VET programs that are directly linked with the labor market demands (especially in STEM, agriculture and tourism). The grant application opening was announced on July 22, 2015. Public and private VET institutions, higher education institutions, companies, non-profit organizations and other legal entities currently working or planning to implement project in the VET sector were eligible to apply. Decisions on the grant allocations will be made in 2016.

¹³ Resources are available at : www.vet.ge.

MCA-G Project “Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development Project” administers a small grants scheme with the total budget of 250, 00 USD. The goal of the small grants scheme is to identify, develop, document and disseminate the good practices across the TVET sector, both in formal and non-formal aspects of it. The opening of the grants proposals was announced on December 4, 2015. Decisions on the grant allocations will be made in 2016.

5. Opportunities for VET teachers and Continued Professional Development

Executive Summary

One of the major focuses of the Strategy is to support VET teacher professional development and VET teacher entry into career, incentivizing teachers to stay in this profession, providing continued professional development opportunities and generally, promoting the status of VET teachers. Notably, the modular VET programs are an important challenge for VET teachers and they need essential help and support in implementing them.

The Strategy as well as the 2015 Action plan envisions the development of regulating framework and documents, amplifying teacher opportunities in diverse forms, such as trainings, seminars, workshops, consultations, study tours, etc. Capacity building also entails acquiring ICT skills, teaching and assessment through modular programs, inclusive education and more. One of the new initiatives in the Strategy is to offer professional development opportunities at various workplaces/enterprises, especially for teaching with technologies and introducing new vocational areas of study.

The Action Plan outlines the activities of creating the database of teachers and continued update of information to be able to implement evidence-based policy formation and interventions.

Activities and Outcomes

5.1. VET Teacher trainings

In 2015, Teacher Professional Development Center conducted activities under Action Plan for the VET teacher preparation and professional development concept paper. With the support of the EU technical assistance project TPDC developed “VET teacher career entry, professional development and career advancement regulatory” document and package of decrees (total of 6 decrees); VET teacher training course in pedagogy was developed. The course was reviewed by the thematic working group and made accessible for the review by the teachers.

UNDP is supporting the development of the handbook – “Teaching Handbook for VET teachers”. The goal of the handbook is to help VET teachers in organizing the teaching and assessment process, motivating students, creating resources and learning environment conducive to students.

5.2. VET teacher database

Unified database of VET teachers was developed and analyzed in 2015; EMIS database was expanded to include new information (data entry points) on remuneration and workload.

For 52 new modular VET programs database of practice instructors was created. 417 instructors (249 teachers from 19 public colleges, 94 teachers from 15 private colleges and 74 teachers from 7 higher education institutions) are registered in the database.

5.3. Capacity Building of VET teachers

This chapter overviewed the activities implemented in 2015 in support of VET teacher capacity building,

such as trainings, consultation workshops, consultations and study tours.

5.3.1 Trainings

- **“ICT Trainings for VET Teachers”**

TPDC organized trainings in 17 VET colleges: 452 VET Teachers participated in the trainings, which is 60% of the total number of teachers.

- **VET Teacher Training in Enterprises**

Training the VET teachers at various enterprises is one of the priorities of the in the Strategy, which is a novelty. TPDC organized trainings for launching the modular vocational education programs in 29 occupations; More than 210 teachers participate in the trainings, which is 30% of the total number of teachers.

MCA-G funded “Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development Project” in collaboration with the TPDC conducted pilot training for VET teachers and work-based learning instructors on the topics of teaching an learning. The goal of the training was establish communication lines between the VET teachers and work-based learning instructors. More trainings will be conducted in 2016.

- **VET teacher training in teaching modular VET programs**

In collaboration with the National Center for Education Quality Enhancement, training modules were developed for VET teachers. The trainings were conducted in two phases:

1. “Training in Modular Teaching for VET Teachers – Introductory Course” was conducted in 18 public and 1 private VET institution; 545 VET teachers participated in the training (which is 72% of the total number)
2. „VET teacher training in Modular Instruction – Developing Assessment Instruments” was conducted in 16 public VET institutions; 460 VET teachers participated in the training (53% of the total numbers). VET teachers participated in the training on developing assessment instruments: trainings were conducted in 16 public VET institutions; 60% of teachers participated in the training. The goal is to organize more trainings on developing assessment instruments in the future.

119 VET teachers participated in general professional skills trainings in “entrepreneurship”, “quantitative literacy”, “communications” and “interpersonal skills”.

- **Teacher Trainings in Inclusive Education**

Teacher trainings in inclusive VET education focused on the following areas: “Individualized strategy for teaching special needs students and testing in VET institutions: 15 public colleges hosted the trainings and 399 teachers participated (53 % of the total number);

5.3.2. Information Seminars and Consultations with VET Teachers

“Vocational Qualifications Development Support Program” facilitated the informational seminars with public and private VET institutions. 59 public and private institutions participated (including colleges and higher education institutions). Total of 222 individuals attended the seminars.

Throughout November and December of 2015, while the VET institutions were in session, program facilitators provided consultations to VET teachers on the assessment instruments for teaching and learning for modular VET programs.

5.3.3. Learning about International Experience – Study Tours

In April 2015, 19 VET Teachers from 9 VET institutions across Georgia participated in international VET study tours 2015 in Estonia.

6. Quality of VET

Executive Summary

Some of the prime challenges identified in the VET strategy are the quality of VET provision and lack of trust from employers towards vocational qualifications.

Thereby, the Strategy places an emphasis on the improved quality assurance mechanisms both internally and externally, quality of vocational qualifications, compatibility of vocational qualifications with the international standards to ensure international recognition and mobility. Georgian quality assurance system shall become more aligned with European standards both at a national level and within the VET institutions.

One of the priority areas is the recognition of non-formal (prior) education. Under the Strategy implementation of a valid approach to recognition of knowledge and skills will be strengthened and this will support enhancement of competencies and lifelong learning. This particularly relates to persons with no or low qualifications, and those who had to leave institutions before the completion of training and without obtaining qualifications.

VET institutions, on the basis of experience gained and self-assessment will take greater responsibility for quality assurance and increasingly regulate their activities to enhance the relevance and flexibility of programmes to ensure qualifications address labor market requirements. The Strategy considers the further development of self-assessment a significant component of an effective VET system.

Involvement of more VET institution students and graduates in VET sector international mobility and exchange programmes will facilitate the sharing of international experience. One element of this will be the active participation of the Georgian VET sector in international VET competitions which will encourage the adoption of successful VET role models (champions) from elsewhere in Georgia for different elements of the VET system.

Activities and Outcomes

6.1. Improving Internal and External Mechanisms for Quality Assurance

MCA-G funded “Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development Project” in collaboration with NCEQE and “Quality Assurance Thematic Group” analyzed VET quality assurance framework and prepared recommendations on necessary improvements and enhancements; the analysis was conducted for internal and external mechanisms of quality assurance. The recommendations mainly outline the following points: enhancing the self-assessment functions, review/revision of the authorization and accreditation procedures in accord with the modular VET programs, launching internal and external inspection (verification) mechanisms to ensure sound assessment system and quality assurance. The following documents were developed:

1. Quality assurance needs and situational analysis of VET system in Georgia;
2. Feasibility study of the external quality assurance requirements for the assessment of the vocational qualifications;
3. Self-assessment analysis of the VET institutions.

On December 28, 2015 National TVET Council reviewed (and approved) a proposal on launching internal and external monitoring (verification) mechanisms to ensure the quality of vocational qualifications and assessment.

Amendments were made to the “Rules of Credit Accumulation in VET programs”.

6.2. Recognition of non-formal education

In 2015, with the support of the MCA-G funded “Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development Project”, the “Non-formal Education thematic group” renewed the concept paper and action plan for recognizing non-formal education created in 2014 with the assistance of European Training Foundation (ETF).

The concept paper provides situational analysis and recommendations on developing a system for non-formal education recognition. The proposal will be further examined in 2016, piloting and capacity building activities will be implemented.

6.3. International and National Competitions

In June 2015, National Center for Education Quality Enhancement, on behalf of the WorldSkills Georgia, officially became full-fledged members of the WorldSkills International.

In August 2015, Georgian team participated in the 43th international competition of the WorldSkills International, in San Paolo. Six team members were selected to participate in the competition. Preparations have started to prepare for the WorldSkills Georgia, third national competition.

For the internationalization of vocational education, with the support of the EU technical assistance and GIZ projects, currently Georgian VET system is being analyzed.

6.4. Quality Management in VET institutions

In 2015, ISO 9001 – Quality Management certificate was granted to Poti and Kutaisi VET institutions; With the support of the GIZ EFQM Excellence Model- (Quality Management model of ETF), certificates were awarded to three public (community college “Speqtri”, community college “Opizari”, community college “New Wave”) and three private VET institutions (Batumi Professional Academy – BPA; Georgian Business Academy; professional college “Georgia”)

7. Employment and Career Development Support for VET graduates

Executive Summary

Strengthening career development and professional orientation services is one of the priorities in the Strategy. Under the strategy VET system should actively support students (applicants) at all stages: before the enrollment, throughout the enrollment and after graduation.

VET system shall play a critical role in developing entrepreneurship, innovation and creative skills and should serve as a link to local, regional, national and international partners.

Target objectives under the strategy and the action plan are:

1. Improving the Career Development and Professional Orientation System;
2. Supporting innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in VET sector;

3. Collecting information on employment status and type of the VET graduates

Activities and Outcomes

7.1. Preparing a Regulatory Document

With the support of the EU-funded “Employment and Vocational Education Development Technical Assistance Project”, Professional orientation and Career Planning Standards were developed through active inter-agency partnership with the thematic working group for “Professional consultancy/career planning and entrepreneurial skills”.

Through UNDP assistance draft version of the concept paper was prepared “Professional orientation introductory course” The goal of the course is to help Georgia develop human capital; meet the labor market demands in a long-term perspective; access to education for individuals from any social /economic group (including socially vulnerable or other disadvantaged groups; employment opportunities and self-realization; prevention of youth to become NEET¹⁴ .

With the support of the EU-funded project “Technical Assistance to VET and Employment Reforms in Georgia”(EUVEGE) a handbook for Career Counseling was created.

Ministry of Education and Science prepared a draft framework “Supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship in VET system”; The goal of the concept paper is to support self-employment of VET graduates. The concept paper was discussed at the National VET council on November 30, 2015.

7.2. Trainings

With the support of the EU-funded project “Technical Assistance to VET and Employment Reforms in Georgia”(EUVEGE), “Career Planning” module was developed; the training was offered to the head of the Education Resource Center Heads, VET institution directors and career development officers. Career development was the prime focus for the EU-funded study tour in Croatia. Training on career consulting is planned in 2016.

MCA-G project implemented the situational analysis of the professional orientation and career development in VET sector in Georgia; based on the outcomes of the research, training programs were developed for various target groups, including the Career Managers at VET institutions to be recruited in 2016.

With the support of ACF needs assessment for professional orientation specialists was conducted; additionally, three-day training was offered to VET institution professional orientation and career planning managers.

7.3. Research

1. Tracer Study with VET institution graduates: study of graduates (tracer study), had been implemented since 2014.

- 2591 graduates from 2014 were surveyed in 2015 (55.7% female and 45.5% - male; average age – 26; the range of ages was 16-68).
- 30.4% of the respondents started a job after graduation, 17.2% of the respondents already had a paid job before the graduation. Total employment index is 47.6%; most of the graduates who

¹⁴out of school youth, who do not study or work

- started a job after graduation (64.8%) were able to find a job within 1-3 months from graduation.
- Majority of the graduates (81%) are employed at private institutions/organizations;
- Respondents felt that (65%) their job is related to the VET qualifications they have acquired;
- 95% of the respondents are satisfied with their choice of VET institution.

2. Graduates in Agricultural Sector

In 2015, 407 graduates from agricultural programs in 2014 (246 males and 161 females) participated in the study.

- Only 23 % of the respondents had a working experience from the year before enrolling into the VET institution, 5% was self-employed, and 34% was unemployed;
- After graduation from the VET institution, 43% of respondents started a job; 73% of the graduate started a job within the first 1-3 months from graduation.

8. Improving the Image and the attractiveness of VET

Executive Summary

One of the goals in the Strategies is to improve the VET status which is currently viewed as a secondary alternative to higher and general education. The Strategy aims at making the vocational education as a realistic and valuable career development path for individuals.

The attractiveness of VET is influenced by multiple factors such as information dissemination on the successful employment examples of VET graduates, awareness raising campaigns about the prospects and benefits of VET, establishing effective professional orientation and consultation services, access to other educational systems. It is important to increase access of vulnerable groups to vocational education, who generally have limited access to educational opportunities.

Effective information dissemination on VET is a pre-condition to increased awareness and understanding. The Strategy Action Plan entails implementation of the awareness raising activities to reach general population and specific target groups.

Activities and Outcomes

8.1. Informational Meetings

Informational meetings are discussed in chapter two; The National VET Council conducts annual informational seminars and VET institutions facilitate informational meetings with Boards of Trustees.

8.2. Communication Outreach Activities

2015 was marked with a number of communication activities, including:

1. Administering the VET portal implemented by the social partnership unit of the VET development department;
2. Open informational days – VET institutions conducted two open informational days prior to 2015 spring and fall admissions;
3. Exhibition of national costumes – three exhibitions were organized in 2015;
4. Promotion of employment fairs;
5. VET students participated in the sustainable development conferences;
6. Radio programs;
7. Social advertising on television;

8. Flyers in Georgian language - prior to fall admission; in September, with the support of GIZ, informational booklets were printed and distributed in the regions of Georgia through the initiative “Caravan”;
9. Informational clip, thematic poster and a calendar was prepared for the 2015 fall admissions.

8.3. Capacity Building

To ensure effectiveness of information dissemination, EU-funded project “Technical Assistance to VET and Employment Reforms in Georgia”(EUVEGE) in collaboration with the PR department of MES conducted a situational analysis and identified the needs for staff training; Based on the needs assessment the following trainings were prepared and facilitated:

- Defining the needs, expectations and stereotypes held by the target groups;
- Evaluation of communication channels and mechanisms and selecting relevant communication options;
- Targeted messaging with target groups;
- Review of media sources and finding alternate means to reach the communities;
- Monitoring and Evaluation of awareness raising communication activities;

Additionally, in-depth analysis of the Ministry website (mes.gov.ge) and vocational education portal (vet.ge). Recommendations on how to disseminate simple, easy to digest and needs-based information were developed.

8.4. Regular Research

In 2015 the Ministry of Education and Science with the UNDP support, conducted independent research of community, employer and student attitudes;

1. Study of Social Attitudes to VET

In 2015, 2801 respondents were surveyed:

- 88% of the respondents have heard about the vocational education;
- 61% of the respondents evaluated the vocational education as prestigious, 5% - as very prestigious, and 29% - as not prestigious;
- More than half of the respondents (51%) have not heard about the VET reforms; 44% of the respondents feel like that the informational campaigns on the VET reforms are insufficient, 38% as adequate, and 11% - as sufficient;
- The main source of information is television, next to it are friends and acquaintances;
- 73% of the respondents desire their children to pursue higher education, 11% - for vocational education.

2. Study of Employer Attitudes to VET

The main goal of the research was to study the employers’ attitudes towards VET institutions and vocational education. 297 interviews were conducted:

- 86% of the interviewed employers have some information on the VET institutions. 21%, among these, has a good understanding/knowledge of the VET institutions;
- The main sources of information are the television (2/3), friends and acquaintances (27%) and social networks (20%);
- 50% does not know about the VET reforms; 72% of the interviewees think that information dissemination on the ongoing VET reforms is insufficient;
- 53% of the employers think that VET diploma is not an testament of qualifications;
- 2/3 of the employers think that attitudes to VET are changing in positive trend, though very slowly (60%); 17% think that no changes are observed in the attitudes.

3. Study of Students' Attitudes to VET

The goal of the study was to examine students' attitudes to VET programs and VET learning process. 2207 students were surveyed:

- Students are satisfied by the VET institution they are enrolled in (96%), as well as with the occupation they are training in (97%).
- Vast majority of the students (96%) think that the subjects taught within their programs are relevant to the occupation; they think that teachers have high level of professional skills, practical experience and communication skills (98%).
- 34% of the students receive information on the reforms in VET from the school administration and teachers, 21% - overhears it, 15% - receives information from television and press.

Chapter II. Summary of the 2015 Strategy Implementation Action Plan – Main Findings and Recommendations

The report outlines the main trends and outcomes 2015 Strategy Implementation Action Plan.

Successful implementation of the Action Plan cannot be reliant fully on a single Ministry and/or the department; the agencies, social partners, educational institutions, international organizations shall actively participate in the implementation of the VET development strategy, while the Ministry of Education and Science shall create effective coordination and monitoring mechanisms. It is critically important to continue coordination activities that started in 2014; to further strengthen the capacity of Ministry-affiliated LEPLs, it is important to share international and local good practices in the process of monitoring and implementation. For the successful implementation of the Strategy, it is crucial to continuously update information and provide access.

To achieve the goals and outcomes of the VET development reform it is important to continue working on the effective mechanisms/models of VET financing, expanding the sources of financing, motivating private sector and attracting funding. It is also critically important to develop effective system of resource allocation across VET institutions and enterprises providing industrial practice by VET programs.

2015 Action Plan focused on the support of the social partnerships at macro, mezzo and micro level, capacity building of existing institutions, however social partnerships yet remain a challenge for the system. In the future years, strengthening social partnerships shall remain as a priority for VET development. To ensure the effectiveness of the National VET council and thematic working groups, it is necessary to analyze/evaluate their current work and design future steps based on the evaluation outcomes. It is essential to strengthen the role of the secretariat and their effective operation. It is important to establish sector-level social partnerships to ensure the compatibility of vocational skills with the labor market demands. It is also recommended to target the capacity building of sector committees and expansion of their roles in a long-term perspective. Strengthening social partnership at a micro level, providing incentives and supporting collaboration are the priority areas and will positively affect the quality of VET provision and compatibility of vocational skills with labor market demands. Social partners' involvement in entrepreneurial practice design, teaching assessment, monitoring and qualifications award processes is imperative, as well as creation of public-private partnership models in the framework of work-based learning.

Another priority in the 2015 Action Plan was to align VET programs with the labor market demands and development of quality assurance mechanisms. Development and piloting of modular VET programs was

the key initiative that entailed preparation of methodological materials and capacity building activities. Throughout 2015 VET institutions implementing the modular VET programs underwent through infrastructural and technical equipment process to meet the standards for the modular VET programs. Currently the VET institution space and resources are being adapted for people with disabilities and special needs. It has been observed that while launching the modular VET program is the prime reform in the VET sector, there is a significant lack of experience in this field both at national and local level. For further success of the reform, it is important to support continued enhancement of infrastructure and teacher capacity in teaching and assessment components both at the VET institutions and practice-implementing enterprises, preparation/adaptation of instructional resources and technical facilities. It is also recommended to continue sharing good practices among VET institutions and enterprises, teachers and program staff through enhanced communication, stakeholder involvement in program development, implementation, monitoring and assessment.

Despite the wide range of activities implemented in 2015 (and throughout several years before) the quality of VET education still remains a challenge. 2015 research has shown that employers' have lower level of trust to vocational qualifications. Continued work on quality assurance framework, internal/external quality assurance mechanisms, and qualifications award procedures is critically important; it is also necessary to establish the system of non-formal education recognition utilizing the experience of the European countries.

VET access to all individuals, regardless of social and economic status, geographic location, nationality, sex, physical and mental abilities shall be ensured, especially for vulnerable groups (such as people with disabilities, special needs, socially vulnerable, IDPs, ethnic minorities and more). Future focus areas shall lie on creating flexible educational networks, opening new VET institutions, offering routine, short- and long-term courses to schools, other institutions or workplaces, including electronic and mobile courses. VET institution infrastructure shall continue to be modernized following the international standards. It is also recommended to review the student admission policy, whereby due consideration will be given to the needs of the vulnerable groups; using prevention and interventions means to reduce the number of drop outs.

In 2015, a number of activities were implemented to support career development and professional orientation objectives. Relevant documents were prepared and capacity building activities were conducted. Career development and professional orientation system is under development currently and it is important to effectively coordinate donor support. VET institution capacity building in professional orientation, consultancy and information dissemination services is very important; providing trustworthy and relevant information is foundational to career development.

Research has shown that attitudes of population and employers are changing towards vocational education in positive ways, however it is a slow process. Vocational education compared to higher education is yet less demanded. Stakeholders have limited information on the ongoing reforms in VET sector. At this moment while the strategy is under the implementation, it is important to raise awareness, promote vocational education, and implement diverse communication activities, meetings, excursions and others. It is also important to conduct research regularly to monitor stakeholder attitudes.