



DVV International

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STUDY

on Adult Learning and Education in Georgia



German Institute for
Adult Education
Leibniz Centre for
Lifelong Learning

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Editors: Maja Avramovska, Lali Santeladze,
Elisabeth Reichart, Sarah Widany

Authors: Andreas Pfanzelt, Hannah Pfanzelt, Shota Vashakmadze

Working group:
Emir Avdagic, Ramadan Alija, Maja Avramovska,
Nana Chabukiani, Ester Hakobyan, Elisabeth Reichart,
Biljana Mojsovska Manojlova, Lali Santeladze, Sarah Widany

Project partner:
German Institute for Adult Education
Leibniz Centre for Lifelong Learning
Heinemannstraße 12-14
53175 Bonn
Germany
www.die-bonn.de

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Contents

Preface	2
Abbreviations	6
Executive summary	7
Scope and research approach	10
I. Concept and terminology – understanding and perception of the concept of AE	12
Understanding and perception of the concept of ALE in Georgia	16
II. Country profile	
Sociodemographic structure.....	19
Economic characteristics.....	21
The political system and the state structure	23
The education system	24
III. The historical development of adult education	27
IV. Legal framework and governing structures	
Governing structures	30
Laws	31
Policies	32
V. Financing	
Public spending	37
Private expenditure.....	39
Donors	39
VI. Institutions and providers	
Professional associations	41
Private or commercial providers	42
Public providers	43
Non-profit providers and charitable interest groups.....	45
VII. Programmes	49
VIII. Participation and non-participation	53
IX. Personnel and professionalisation	59
X. The international context	63
Actors and current projects.....	67
XI. Challenges and future developments	
Challenges for AE in the future.....	69
Challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and conclusions for the further development of the AE system.....	71
XII. Conclusions and recommendations	72



Maja Avramovska

Regional Director
Caucasus and
Southeast Europe
DVV International



Dr. Elisabeth Reichart

Research Associate
DIE Bonn



Dr. Sarah Widany

Supported the project first as
Head of the System and Policies
Department at DIE, and then as a
substitute professor at the University
of Potsdam

Dear Readers,

DVV International and DIE Bonn started planning and implementing a complex regional project in 2019 which aimed to analyse the state-of-the-art of adult learning and education (ALE), and the participation of adults in education and training (formal, non-formal and informal learning). The qualitative study was conducted in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Kosovo, and the adult education survey was implemented in Armenia, Georgia and Kosovo.

The purpose of the complex project was to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the ALE sector, and to provide data that would be used when creating policy and legislation in the ALE, vocational education and training, employment, lifelong learning sectors, and in other relevant areas.

The qualitative and the quantitative studies, as well as the seven country reports, were conducted and prepared from the second half of 2019 until June 2021. The quantitative study was commenced first, and the implementation of the qualitative studies started when the initial results began to arrive.

Monitoring progress on the basis of data-based surveys plays an important role in European strategy development on lifelong learning. The studies and AE surveys presented constitute a substantial stock-taking effort for the countries represented here (Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Kosovo), aiming to provide a comprehensive picture of adult learning, as well as of its prerequisites and challenges.

Closely following the Adult Education Survey (AES) – which is a well-established international survey on adult learning –, national specificities and information needs were identified in the coordination of the cooperation partners and through the involvement of national experts. The standard questionnaire was thus adapted to national circumstances and supplemented with additional questions on learning attitudes and motivation, as well as on educational and support needs in the face of massive changes on the labour market. Questions concerning access to education and (digital) learning during the

pandemic were added at short notice in response to the Covid pandemic. The survey results answer a number of questions, and provide information about the extent and quality of adult learning. How are learning and attitudes towards learning distributed in the adult population? Which groups are involved, and to what extent? Are particular forms of learning used by different groups? What role do socio-economic conditions play, e.g. the employment context or residence in rural or urban areas?

The qualitative country reports provide additional in-depth information on the specific national context of the education system, and on the location and promotion of ALE, gathered in qualitative studies by a team of international and national experts according to a standard outline. Together, the two reports form an excellent basis for the participating countries to assess the current situation against the background of education policy objectives and to develop political strategies for improving the ALE system.

Since the studies were carried out in four countries according to a uniform scheme, the comparison offers additional possibilities for classifying the respective national situation. As such comprehensive analyses and studies and surveys in the ALE sector were conducted for the first time in all the countries involved in this project, we are confident that a number of governmental and non-governmental institutions and organisations in these four countries and beyond will use the data and knowledge obtained.

We hope that these publications will provide a basis for discussions on further policy development, and thus contribute to the establishment of an evidence-based design of the ALE systems in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, and Kosovo.

We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the members of the project working group, the authors, and the research institutes, for their professional and fruitful cooperation, and for the excellent results and achievements, which were largely finalised in a difficult period during the coronavirus pandemic.

We hope that you enjoy reading the reports!



Lali Santeladze

Country Director
DVV International Georgia

The present qualitative Study on Adult Learning and Education (ALE) in Georgia is the first ever attempt to question and analyse the routes, developments, challenges and problems of this sector of education in our country. It pinpoints critical challenges, and proposes steps to reform adult education in the interest of building a more educated, equitable society. A participatory, inclusive, holistic curriculum for adult learning and education should aim to support employment, promote social cohesion and active citizenship, and further the well-being of Georgian society as a whole.

In spite of multi-year reforms and many achievements in the education sector in Georgia, adult education remains one of the less developed sectors. It continues to be overlooked or seen exclusively in the context of vocational education, which both limits its true potential and prevents its benefits from being accessible to all members of society. Concepts of lifelong learning and adult education have yet to transcend generational boundaries and come to promote multi-component education and learning. It is therefore crucial to introduce a new model of adult education: not only to equip individuals with critical job-related skills, but also to foster a spirit of entrepreneurship and cultural development, a sense of civic responsibility, and other capabilities among Georgian citizens. As noted in the study, “adults’ [...] needs should be considered more comprehensively in future in order to improve their participation rates. All stakeholders should make efforts over the next decade to build a solid non-formal and informal AE infrastructure which goes beyond the economic and work-related context”. Furthermore, adult education has to be seen as an integral part of the education sector, the “fourth pillar” along with pre-school, secondary, vocational and higher education. The study at hand presents many valuable recommendations which can help foster reforms and

build sustainable adult education systems in Georgia, including implementing targeted AE activities and making them more visible in national strategies; defining a common, clearly-distinguishable understanding of AE; giving more space to the development of non-formal, informal and self-driven learning processes, raising awareness among citizens regarding the advantages of continuous non-formal AE, and ensuring the systematic monitoring of the involvement and motivation of the adult population. Adult education has to be recognised as a public good, and the administrative and financial authority of municipalities should be strengthened to allow for greater flexibility and freedom in their countrywide contributions to skills development among adults. This goes hand-in-hand with the concept that DVV International is striving to establish in Georgia by founding and supporting adult education centres throughout the country, in cooperation with the local municipalities.

Georgia is currently in the process of elaborating the National Education and Science Strategy for 2022-2032. Taking advantage of the unique timing, this document aims to both reflect on new approaches, and articulate specific ways of developing adult education. The present study provides government authorities and decision-makers with valuable information which can be used as a basis for creating new framework conditions for adult education. At the same time, the study is a valuable tool for analysts, andragogues and scholars aiming to influence developments in adult education.

The study creates a platform for nationwide and regional discussions, inter-sectoral collaboration, policy considerations, and the joining of forces for developments in adult education in Georgia that are critically necessary. This in turn will facilitate positive changes in human capital management, and serve as an important precondition for the country's sustainable socio-economic development.

Abbreviations

AE	Adult Education	ICT	Information and Communication Technology
AEC	Adult Education Centre		
ALE	Adult Learning and Education	ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
CONFINTEA	Conférence Internationale sur l'Éducation des Adultes		
CSO	Civil society organisation	LLL	Lifelong Learning
DIE	German Institute for Adult Education	MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
DVVI	Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (the German Adult Education Association)	NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
		NFE	Non-formal education
ETF	European Training Foundation	NGO	Non-governmental organisation
EQF	European Qualifications Framework	NQF	National Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
FED	Formal Education	TPDC	Teacher Professional Development Centre
GAEN	Georgian Adult Education Network	UIL	UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning
GDP	Gross Domestic Product	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH	VET	Vocational Education and Training
GRALE	Global Report on Adult Learning and Education	VTC	Vocational Training Centre

Executive summary

This study was commissioned by DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V. (DVVI), and the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE). It provides a comprehensive analysis of the state of the adult education (AE) sector in Georgia, and identifies recent developments and challenges in this sector. The study is part of a series of four country studies in the South Eastern Europe and Caucasus region, where DVVI has been an active advocate for strong adult education systems since the early 2000s (since 2000 in Bosnia and Herzegovina, since 2002 in Georgia and Armenia, and since 2005 in Kosovo). Information on the various topics reflected in this study – terminology, country profile, historical development, legal framework, financing, providers, programmes, participation, professionalisation, international context – was gathered online using desk-based research, which in turn was verified in a second step and then compared with the practical knowledge and on-site experience of six national experts through online interviews. The analyses reveal remarkable progress and dynamic developments in the Georgian AE sector, but also identify the gaps that should be addressed in the future.

Against the background of EU and UNESCO definitions, this study follows a broad conception of adult

education which considers all forms of formal adult learning and education (ALE) after the initial education cycle (such as compensatory education and vocational education and training (VET)), and all intended non-formal and informal forms of further and continuous training, as well as community, popular or liberal education, along with learning that aspires to promote professional or personal development.

The study shows that Georgian legislation rarely uses the terms and definitions contained in the EU's lifelong learning policies. The terms “adult education”, “non-formal education” and “lifelong learning” are not defined in any of the current policy or legal documents. Furthermore, no terminological distinction is made between non-formal and informal learning. The major governmental frameworks with relevance for adult education are the Law of Georgia on General Education, the Law on Vocational Education, the Law on Education Quality Improvement, the Law on Higher Education, and the Law on Employment Support. The Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021, and the Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy for 2013-2020, address and determine the concepts of adult education and lifelong learning more clearly. All in all, adult education is mainly perceived

in Georgia as consisting of continuous education, as well as of training and professional development aiming to promote economic development. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia is the leading political institution. The topic of adult education is anchored in the Vocational Education Development Department.

According to the Georgia state budget of 2017, public expenditure on education was around 295 million EUR, which accounted for about 13% of the country's overall planned budget expenditure. There is no specific line for adult education in the state budget. Around EUR 8.6 million were allocated to the budget line "Professional Education" in 2017, which contains programmes relevant to adult education. Public expenditure on professional education rose to EUR 10.6 million in 2020. Particularly the areas of private voucher financing and training/retraining show a significant proportional increase. Public voucher financing has also been substantially expanded.

Similar to the situation regarding legislation, governing structures and financing, adult education is not a standalone component in the education system in Georgia.

Adult Education is mainly perceived in Georgia as consisting of continuous education, as well as of training and professional development aiming to promote economic development.

The Law on Vocational Education distinguishes between two types of programme: vocational education programmes, which equip young people with a Bachelor's degree prior to entering the labour market, and short-term vocational training/retraining programmes, meant for adults who have already entered the labour market and who are interested in continuing education and in professionalisation.


Only fragmented, inconsistent information exists about participants in adult education programmes. Data is mostly reduced to formal education. Student distribution in vocational education and training programmes suggests that demand for this type of education is almost as high among adults as it is among young peo-

ple. Around 60% of all students were below the age of 24 in 2019, around 35% were aged between 25 and 50, and 5% were older than 50. Adults are more likely to enrol in public vocational schools, whereas the enrolment rates of younger people are higher at private schools. Overall, the total number of students enrolled in vocational schools remains small.

The challenge posed by insufficient teacher development impacts all areas of education in Georgia. For a long time, vocational education teachers were not required to demonstrate pedagogical knowledge. Almost half of the 3,260 teachers engaged in vocational education were above the age of 50 in 2019. Furthermore, those teachers mostly work part-time, and their jobs are insecure as they are not public servants. Most teacher training programmes offered at higher education institutions are directed at qualifying teachers for the general education level. Some programmes also qualify graduates to teach at vocational schools. There is no programme available to date that is specifically designed for vocational education teachers, or one that focuses on andragogical education theory.

In the international context, Georgia contributes continuously to CONFINTEA and to the GRALE reports. One national SDG indicator reflects adult education by measuring the participation rate of young people and adults in formal and non-formal education through the Lifelong Learning Index. The main international donors in Georgia include German development cooperation (represented by DVVI and GIZ), the European Union, the European Training Foundation, the World Bank and UNDP.

Based on the situation analysis, the study identifies several broad recommendations for the medium-



The greatest importance will attach to the adoption of a holistic approach to ALE, which implies ALE weaning itself off its dependence on VET logics.

and longer-term development of adult education in Georgia. The greatest importance will attach to the adoption of a holistic approach to ALE, which implies ALE weaning itself off its dependence on VET logics. Moreover, stakeholders should promote the integration of concrete measures on ALE in the 2017-2021 Action Plan of the Unified Strategy on Education and Science, and the establishment of a separate budget line for ALE under the state education budget. Other recommendations concern the administrative and financial authority of municipalities, strengthening the ALE division within the VET department in the MoES, the consideration of age group-related needs of adults in vocational training and re-training programmes, the expansion of NFE programmes with a non-monetary purpose, as well as the increased consideration of disadvantaged target groups in adult education programmes.

Scope and research approach

The aim of the study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the adult learning and education (ALE) sector in Georgia, and to identify recent developments and challenges. The basis for the study structure is a comprehensive table of contents which serves as a guide and has been developed by DVVI in cooperation with the German Institute for Adult Education.

This study was implemented by a team of researchers who worked closely together and were selected by DVV International. The team was made up of two international experts, Hannah Pfanzelt and Andreas Pfanzelt, and one national research assistant, Shota Vashakmadze.

The methodological approach that was adopted by the researchers combined intensive desk research with semi-structured expert interviews. This enabled data and information to be gathered and added step by step throughout the research process. A first step involved a systematic review of existing data, central national and international documents and strategies, as well as literature provided by DVVI and the national experts. The main source of information was secondary data, which was available at national, regional and international level, such as academic literature, analytical papers, policy briefs, evaluation documents, reports and publications from governments, international agencies and civil society organisations. Primary data from surveys or international databases was also analysed wherever available. In addition, information from the region which has recently been compiled by DVVI was examined (e.g. DVV 2021, Adult Education Survey in Georgia).

The main goal in the first research phase was to collect relevant data along the predefined chapters

and identify knowledge and data gaps. The resulting preliminary country portfolios set the stage for qualitative data collection in the next research step. Directed by the results of the desk research, semi-structured interviews were conducted, via video call, to externally verify, complement and supplement the preliminary research findings with the practical knowledge and on-site experience of national, regional and international ALE experts. These supplementary interviews were a decisive source of information about the state of ALE where online information was scarce. Based on their expert knowledge and experience, a total of five ALE experts from macro, meso and micro levels in Georgia were selected as interview partners (including one expert from the DVVI country office in Georgia). For all the interviews, questionnaires with various guiding questions were developed and shared with the interviewees in advance. These questions served as a broad thematic guideline during the interviews. The interviews lasted an average of one hour, and were held from mid-November 2020 to January 2021.

In a third phase of the research process, data and information gathered by means of desk research and interviews were clustered and put into written text. Comments from the German Institute for Adult Education, DVVI and the national experts guided the preparation of the final study document.

The study is structured as follows:

Chapter I is dedicated to the concept of ALE, outlining use and interpretation in Georgia, and its relation to UNESCO and EU terminology. Chapter II describes the country structure with information about the current socio-demographic, economic, political and education situation. The historical development of ALE, outlined in Chapter III, helps to contextualise the subsequent classification of ALE in Georgia. The latter results from a comprehensive analysis of the present national macro- (legal framework, policies and financing), meso- (institutions, providers, professionalisation and programmes) and micro- (participation)-level circumstances for ALE, reflected in Chapters IV-IX. International efforts (actors, projects and state commitments) regarding ALE in Georgia are scrutinised in Chapter X. The results from all the preceding chapters help identify current challenges and potentials for the future in Chapter XI. The final Chapter XII summarises the assessments and narrows them down to precise recommendations for the future development of ALE in Georgia.

I. Concept and terminology – understanding and perception of the concept of AE

International and EU definitions of ALE, lifelong learning and adult learners

Education is frequently associated with formal education only, that is education delivered by pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational and higher education institutions to children, adolescents and young adults. International human rights law has however repeatedly stressed that the main principle of education is universality, according the right to education to everybody, regardless of age.¹ The continuous aspect of education and learning, which is rooted in the principle of universality in education, is aggregated in the concept of “lifelong learning” (LLL). According to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL), one of the most important international actors in the field, lifelong learning is in essence “founded in the integration of learning and living covering learning activities for people of all ages (children, young people, adults and elderly, whether girls or boys, women or men), in all life-wide contexts (family, school, community, workplace and so on) and through a variety of modalities (formal, non-formal and informal) that together meet a wide range of learning needs and demands”². The following paragraphs outline the relationship between the concepts lifelong learning and adult education and learning (ALE), introduce major international actors and initiatives to enhance access to and provision of

LLL and ALE opportunities, summarise the aims of ALE, explain different modalities, and present the different learning contexts.

The relationship between lifelong learning and adult education and learning is established by the vision that, within the universe of lifelong learning, ALE covers all forms of education and learning that “aim to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work”³. Thus, ALE is a core component of LLL, and, when viewed in relation to the period in life covered, presumably the most substantial and long-term form of education. ALE commonly addresses a particular group of learners, namely adult learners.

In general, an adult learner can be considered a “person who systematically attends some form of adult education, belongs to a chronological period following adolescence, and voluntarily opts to partake of the learning and teaching process. Adulthood is characterised by different types of maturity, from biological to emotional and psy-

¹ Right to Education Initiative (2018). [Adult education and learning](#) website

² UNESCO UIL (2014). [Literacy & Basic Skills as a Foundation for Lifelong Learning](#)

³ UNESCO UIL (2015). [Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education](#), p. 6

cho-social, to professional, cultural and political”⁴. This implies that adult learners are an extremely heterogeneous group which is defined less by chronological age than by learning needs and motives. The “entry age” when a person formally takes on the status of an adult therefore also differs between countries, and is not necessarily linked to the age of legal maturity.

On a global level, the UNESCO UIL promotes LLL, and specifically ALE, with various programmes and projects. It has installed amongst others the “Global Observatory of Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning”⁵, and monitors recent developments in National Qualifications frameworks. International exchanges on advances made in ALE are facilitated in **International Conferences on Adult Education (CONFINTEA)**⁶, and progress in ALE around the world is visualised in regular **Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE)**.

GRALE 3 provides a comprehensive definition of adult education:

“ALE encompasses all formal, non-formal and informal or incidental learning and continuing education (both general and vocational, and both theoretical and practical) undertaken by adults (however this term may be defined in any one country). ALE participants will typically have concluded

their initial education and training and then returned to some form of learning. But there will be young people and adults in all countries who did not have the opportunity to enrol in or complete their schooling by the requisite age, and who participate in ALE programmes, including those aiming to equip them with literacy and basic skills or as a ‘second chance’ to obtain recognised certificates”⁷.

The institutions of the European Union can be considered the most important drivers when it comes to addressing the supply of and access to ALE and the harmonisation of adult education provision on the European continent. EU policy on education is currently guided by the **Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) Framework**, and is based on the lifelong learning approach, as defined in the **EU’s Council Resolution on Lifelong Learning**. Similar to the UNESCO definition provided above, lifelong learning according to the EU “must cover learning from the pre-school age to that of post-retirement, including the entire spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Furthermore, lifelong learning must be understood as all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective”⁸.

⁴ Mavrak (2018). Legal Socialization program – Adult Education Manual. PH international: Sarajevo

⁵ UNESCO UIL [The Global Observatory of Recognition, Validation and Accreditation of Non-formal and Informal Learning](#)

⁶ UNESCO UIL [International Conferences on Adult Education \(CONFINTEA\)](#) website

⁷ UNESCO UIL (2016). [3rd Global Report on Adult Learning and Education](#), p. 29 and Schweighöfer, B. (2019). Youth and Adult Education in the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Bonn: DVV International

⁸ European Council (2002). [COUNCIL RESOLUTION of 27 June 2002 on lifelong learning](#). Official Journal of the European Communities C 163/1

In its glossary on key terms used in European education and training policy, the EU defines adult education as “general or vocational education provided for adults after initial education and training”, and thereby stresses the difference between initial education and training and continuing or general education for adults⁹.

In order to support adult education in particular, the EU Council has adopted the **Resolution on a renewed European Agenda for Adult Learning**¹⁰. The Resolution highlights the need to significantly increase adult participation in formal, non-formal and informal learning, be it in order to acquire work skills, for active citizenship, or for personal development and fulfilment. A further initiative by the Council was the adoption of a **Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways**¹¹, which aims to enable all adults to reach minimum levels of literacy, numeracy and digital skills. The European Commission has established a Working Group on adult education consisting of experts, representatives of social partners, and civil society. Moreover, it has set up the **Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)**, “a European, multilingual, open membership community of adult learning professionals, including adult educators and trainers, guidance and support staff, researchers and academics, and policymakers”.

As indicated by the definitions and activities above, aims and objectives of ALE in the sphere of LLL are manifold and may target different levels of society. On the individual level, ALE aims to develop the capacities and capabilities of each individual to be a socially responsible, critical,

self-reliant citizen who is able to shape the developments taking place in both the personal and the professional environment. At societal level, a community of aware, active adults helps create what is known as a “learning society”, where everyone has the opportunity to “learn and fully participate in sustainable development processes and to enhance solidarity among people and communities”.

All in all, comprehensive ALE fosters sustainable, inclusive economic growth, which in turn is indispensable for reducing poverty, improving health and the well-being of all, and protecting the environment¹².

The above aims and objectives can be achieved with various types of ALE:

- **compensatory learning and qualification for basic skills** (such as literacy, numeracy), targeting individuals who may not have acquired them in their earlier initial education or training,
- **continuous education, training and professional development**, targeting adults who are interested in acquiring, improving or updating knowledge, skills or competences in a specific field related to their work environment,
- **community, popular or liberal education** (also citizenship education) which provides general education and learning opportunities for adults on topics that are of particular interest to them for their personal development, to engage with social issues and lead a decent life.

⁹ CEDEFOP (2014). [Terminology of European education and training policy \(2nd edition\)](#)

¹⁰ European Council (2011). [Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning](#). Official Journal of the European Union C372/1

¹¹ European Council (2016). [COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION of 19 December 2016 on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults](#)

¹² UNESCO UIL (2015)

While basic education is commonly associated with formal learning, adult education and learning refer to the entire range of formal education, non-formal education (NFE), and informal education and learning activities. All forms of education are comprehensively defined in the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED)¹³. A second document providing detailed definitions of learning activities is the “Classification of learning activities Manual” issued by the European Statistics Office Eurostat¹⁴.

Formal education and training is delivered “institutionalised, intentional and planned through public organisations and recognised private bodies [constituting] the formal education system of a country”¹⁵. The recognition of the programme by the relevant education authorities or other institutions cooperating with national or sub-national education authorities is decisive for a learning activity to be formal. FED is usually associated with the continuous pathway of initial full-time education until an individual first enters the labour market. However, it may also include part-time vocational education, education for people with special needs, and other types of adult education, and thus education “for all age groups with programme content and qualifications that are equivalent to those of initial education”. In any case, formal programmes must have a minimum duration of one semester of full-time studies (equivalent to 30 ECTS).

Non-formal education, similar to formal education, is “education that is institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider”. However, the crucial characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an “addition, alternative and/or complement to formal education within the process of lifelong learning”. NFE programmes may lead to qualifications, but in general these are not recognised by education authorities as equivalent to formal qualifications. In some cases, formal qualifications may be obtained through specially-recognised NFE programmes. In contrast with formal education, NFE needs to follow a continuous pathway of education and learning, and therefore it is better able to address all age groups than are formal education programmes. NFE programmes are often short-term in nature, with lower intensity offered in workshops, courses, seminars, guided on-the-job training (organised by the employer with the aid of an instructor), and private lessons. This enables NFEs to cater for all three types of ALE mentioned above: compensatory education in the shape of literacy education for young people and adults, or formal education-substitution for out-of-school children, professional skills development and programmes on life skills and social, political or cultural development¹⁶.

NFE thus covers institutionalised learning activities which take place outside the formal education context and that may lead to recognised qualifications. In practice, NFE takes place in the context of courses, workshops and seminars, guided on-the-job training (organised by the employer with the aid of an instructor), and private lessons¹⁷.

¹³ UNESCO UIL (2012). [International Standard Classification of Education ISCED 2011](#), p. 11

¹⁴ Eurostat (2016). [Classification of learning activities \(CLA\) MANUAL 2016 edition](#)

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ UNESCO UIL (2012), pp. 11 et seq.

¹⁷ Eurostat, [Adult Education Survey metadata](#) website

Finally, **informal learning** covers all those “forms of learning that are intentional or deliberate, but are not institutionalised”¹⁸. Unlike education in formal and non-formal settings, informal learning is much less structured and organised. It may take place in daily-life contexts within the family, at the workplace, in the local community, through voluntary work, in the digital domain, in museums, or in libraries. The learning content is self-selected to meet personal learning goals or to keep up with societal development; the pace of learning is usually self-directed.

ALE as such, including all forms of education and learning for adults, profits from recent significant developments in the information and communications technology sector, especially with respect to access and inclusion.

With Information and Communication Technology (ICT), formal and non-formal face-to-face settings of education and learning are opened up, and individualised learning is enabled through the use of mobile devices, digital social networking and online courses, anytime, anywhere.

Against the background of EU and UNESCO definitions, this study follows a broad view on adult education, which considers all organised forms of formal adult learning after the initial education cy-

cle (such as compensatory education and VET), and all intentional forms of non-formal further or continuous training, as well as community, popular or liberal education, and learning aiming to enhance professional or personal development¹⁹. The term adult learning and education (ALE) will be used below in order to express all the relevant dimensions of this sector.

Understanding and perception of the concept of ALE in Georgia

Georgian legislation rarely uses the terms and definitions of the EU’s lifelong learning policies. The terms “**adult education**”, “**non-formal education**” and “**lifelong learning**” are **not defined** in any of the current policy or legal documents (see Chapter IV), such as the Law of Georgia on General Education, the Law on Vocational Education, the Law on Education Quality Improvement, the Law on Higher Education, or the Law on Employment Support.

Little awareness has been raised in Georgia as to the sub-sector of ALE as a whole. This is stressed in a publication by the DVVI country office in Georgia: “It must be noted that adult non-formal education is not currently regulated on the state level in Georgia. Involvement of the population in non-formal education is also very low. Awareness of the population of the values and advantages of education and lifelong learning is also low”²⁰.

In contrast to established international and EU language usage, a terminological distinction is made there between NFE and informal learning in Geor-

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Deviating from the definition of ALE provided in the 3rd GRALE, which also comprises incidental learning in ALE, this report focuses on intentional education and learning activities only, as defined in ISCED and the CLA.

²⁰ DVVI Georgia (2017). [Adult Education Centers in Georgia](#)

gia. It seems that the Law on Vocational Education uses “**informal education**” as a synonym for both terms. The definition of informal learning contained in this Law is the only specification which is related to common ALE terms in the broadest sense: “informal education [is] a part of a lifelong learning system that involves the acquisition of ‘knowledge and understanding’, ‘skills’ and/or ‘responsibility and autonomy’ beyond formal education”. There is further explicit naming of informal education, when the law proposes to create mechanisms for the recognition of informal education and to develop the National Qualifications Framework, as well as a credit accumulation and transfer system. In addition, Article 17 regulates the recognition of formal and informal education, and states that “[i]nformal education within a regulated profession shall be recognised under the procedure and conditions established by the Government of Georgia”.

Moreover, the fact of having integrated the definition of informal education into the Law on Vocational Education only, instead of defining it in the Law on General Education, seems unexpected and might express the low level of priority attached to learning outside the formal education system in Georgia. The Law on General Education mentions in one paragraph that “[g]eneral education may be acquired in alternative ways, in the manner prescribed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, taking into consideration the age peculiarities and labour and family conditions of pupils”. The addendum “in alternative ways” could be interpreted as NFE or informal learning, and “taking into consideration the age peculiarities” could be seen as a reference to adults as well.

Looking at ALE from an **age group** perspective, references in Georgian legislation are also weak. Besides the generalised reference to age groups

in the Law on General Education described above, this law does not use the term “adult” even once. The only current legislative document which uses this term in a single sentence together with the word “education” is the Law on Vocational Education, but this comes up in a quite negligible context. Under the principles for the management of a VET college, it is indicated that colleges are to “[...] take into account the educational needs of adolescents and adults when planning and implementing the study process”. It remains unclear to the non-specialised reader what is meant by the “study process”.

The term **lifelong learning** is comparatively well anchored in Georgian educational legislation. The Law on General Education postulates to “[...] ensure the openness of and equal access to lifelong general education for all persons”. The Law on Vocational Education also confirms that “[t]he objectives of state policy in the field of vocational education shall be to facilitate lifelong learning”. There is however neither a detailed definition of what is meant by lifelong learning, nor is any reference made to the usage of EU or international terminology.

In addition to the abovementioned laws, several strategies have been developed at policy level in recent years which more clearly address and determine the concepts of adult education and lifelong learning. At the forefront are the Unified Strategy for Education and Science for 2017-2021 and the Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy for 2013-2020 (see Chapter IV).

In its Education Strategy, the Ministry of Education and Science in Georgia announces that “[w]ith the aim of improving geographical ac-

cess to schools, [it] will begin offering alternative approaches to education for teenagers who dropped out of school, as well as to adults who have not completed their general education”²¹. With its strategic objective to also improve the educational environment of schools, the Ministry refers to the use of resources at schools in formal and informal formats: “At the base of schools, sports and art directions will be strengthened for children, adolescents and adults. Libraries and laboratories will be opened. Museums, conservation areas, historical and cultural monuments and other relevant spaces will be used as a resource”.

Besides mentioning ALE in the formal and informal school context, there is another reference within the education strategy under the section of VET. The Ministry proposes to promote the development of professional skills (study of a craft or profession), basic (literacy, mathematical skills, etc.), and key skills (entrepreneurship, communication in a foreign language, digital skills, etc.) through modular educational programmes: “The educational programme compiled from modules creates a good foundation for adult learning, since it will enable adults to upgrade their skills by studying an individual module or learning a similar profession, taking into consideration the education that they have already obtained”.

The Action Plan²², which fleshes out the education strategy with activities, expected outputs, a budget and a timeframe, does not contain specific measures on adult education. “Strategic objective 2: Ensure access to vocational education based on the principle of lifelong learning” subsumes the somewhat general goal of creating flexible curricula, models and services relevant to the needs

of various target groups, including adults. Activity planning in this context focusses on the establishment of a training/retraining system only.

The Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy for 2013-2020 perceives ALE as a part of VET which targets adults’ career development and employability. It highlights the importance of guidance services (employment services and counselling services), as well as career management skills, both for young people and adults, in order to enhance their labour market readiness. By splitting skills development into two tracks, e.g. short-term training/retraining courses alongside with the 3-year diploma course, the Georgian Government has enhanced the flexibility of the VET system (see Chapter IV). The establishment of short-term courses has set the stage for tailor-made offers for adults.

The previous outline of the terminology used in Georgia shows that adult education is mainly perceived as continuous education and training and professional development with the aim of promoting economic development. Aspects such as compensatory learning and qualification for basic skills such as literacy, as well as community or liberal education for active citizenship and personal development, play a highly marginalised role. Furthermore, the Government places greater emphasis on the younger age groups in the VET context. The conceptualisation of adult education in Georgia can therefore not be compared to a concept of lifelong learning which understands learning as a process which develops from school education to learning within or alongside work, to studying at retirement age. ALE has not yet been recognised as a public good in Georgia.

²¹ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2017a). [Unified Strategy of Education and Science 2017-2021](#)

²² Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2017b). [Action Plan 2019](#)

II. Country profile

Georgia is a country located in the Caucasus, just where the European and the Asian continents meet. It is bounded to the west by the Black Sea; it borders on Russia to the north, with Azerbaijan to the south east, and with Armenia and Turkey to the south. Its territory spans over 69,700 km², and its capital is Tbilisi.

Sociodemographic structure

Georgia has a population of 3.72 million. 86.8% are ethnic Georgians; Azerbaijanis form the largest minority group, making up 6.3% of the population. 4.5% are ethnic Armenian, and other minority groups in Georgia are Russians, Ossetians, Yezidis, Ukrainians and Greeks. Ethnic minorities make up 13.1% of the total population.

The ethnic diversity of Georgia's population is reflected in the languages spoken there. Georgian is the official state language. Both Georgian and Abkhazian are official languages in the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia. The de facto Abkhaz government adopted the Law on State Language of Abkhazia in 2007 in order to promote the Abkhaz language. Article 2 of that Law states that Abkhaz is the only state language in Abkhazia, and that Russian (alongside with Abkhaz) will be used in governmental institutions and official matters. The 2015-2016 academic year was the first in which the Georgian language lost its place as a language of instruction in primary schools in the Georgian-speaking district of Gali in Abkhazia. A total of 20 to 30 languages from different language families are spoken in Georgia, such as the Azerbaijani language, Armenian, Russian,

Ossetian, Kurmanji (which is a Northern dialect of the Kurdish language), Ukrainian, Greek, Chechen, Polish, Udi, German, Estonian, Avar and Assyrian.²³ A widespread source of social exclusion is the fact that many members of minority communities only speak their own language. While native Russian and Armenian speakers are quite fluent in Georgian (64% and 40% respectively declare proficiency), only 19% of Azerbaijanis state that they are proficient in Georgian.²⁴

In line with its ethnic and linguistic divisions, Georgian society is also religiously diverse. The Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) holds a privileged position among all the religions, almost tantamount to that of a state church. It is considered a marker of national identity and a holder of trust²⁵. Religious minorities comprise about 15% of the population, with Muslims being the largest minority group (10% of the population). The second-largest religious minority is Apostolic Armenian (3%). Other groups are Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics, Yezidis, Protestants and Jewish^{26,27}.

51.9% of Georgia's inhabitants are female. Georgian citizens are of medium age; 20% are below the age of 15, 65% are aged between 15 and 65, and 15% are 65 and older. Average life expectan-

²³ Council of Europe (2016). [Minority Languages in Georgia – Expressions of Cultural Wealth](#)

²⁴ World Bank (2017). [Social Exclusion and Inclusion in Georgia – A Country Social Analysis](#)

²⁵ Bertelsmann Stiftung (2020). [BTI 2020 Country Report – Georgia](#). Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung

²⁶ Freedom House, [Georgia 2019](#) overview

²⁷ World Bank (2017)

cy at birth is 74; women are expected to live to an age of 78.

Literacy is almost universal in Georgia, and over 98% of all age groups can read and write. The total number of illiterate individuals aged 15 and over amounted to 20,603 in 2017.²⁸ Illiteracy remains most problematic among minority groups; Azerbaijanis have the highest likelihood of illiteracy (2%)²⁹.

Georgia experienced a natural population increase of 1.2 per 1,000 inhabitants in 2018. 58.7% of the Georgian population live in urban settlements, and this tendency is growing. Total population numbers are however decreasing slightly due to low fertility rates and high outward migration.

Internal migration is mainly triggered by armed conflicts, natural disasters and socio-economic living conditions. Georgia has a comparably high total number of internally-displaced residents, at more than 300,000 individuals (around 8% of the population). The majority of these people were forcibly displaced during the 1991-1993 conflict in the occupied regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and as a result of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008. Only 44% of IDPs from Abkhazia lived in private housing in 2016. As the result of a state programme for permanent housing, 73 % of IDPs from South Ossetia lived in private housing in 2016³⁰.

There has been a steep decline in the share of rural residents among the population over the last 20 years, decreasing by 24% between 2002 and 2014. At the same time, the share of the urban population grew by 5%. The total fall in population registered in the villages is three times higher than in the cities³¹.

The net migration rate per 1,000 inhabitants was -2.2 in 2019 (96,864 immigrants and 105,107 emigrants). A large proportion of immigrants are returning Georgians (56%), followed by Russians (12%) and migrants from Turkey, Azerbaijan and India. A total of 79,000 international migrants lived in Georgia in 2019, mainly from Russia, Armenia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Greece, almost half of whom were born in Georgia³². Georgian emigrants are attracted mainly to Russia, followed by Greece, Turkey, Italy, Germany and the USA. A total of 6,365 Georgians held refugee status in countries abroad in 2016 (3,011 of whom in France)³³.

Ethnic minorities are emigrating at a higher rate than ethnic Georgians. With an average national out-migration rate of 15% between 2002 and 2014, the Russian community shrank by a disproportionate 61%, the Armenian community by 20%, and the Azerbaijani community by 18%³⁴.

The fact that more than two-thirds of emigrants are of working age impacts negatively on the country's demographic and economic situation.

²⁸ UNESCO UIL, [Data for the Sustainable Development Goals Georgia profile](#) website

²⁹ World Bank (2017)

³⁰ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, [Country information Georgia](#)

³¹ State Commission on Migration Issues (2017). [2017 Migration Profile of Georgia](#)

³² UN DESA (2019). International Migrant Stock 2019: Country Profile Georgia.

³³ State Commission on Migration Issues (2017)

³⁴ World Bank (2017), p. 16

There has been an increase of almost 14% in the share of households with Internet access since 2016, covering 83.8% of the population. While progress has been even greater in rural areas (17% increase since 2016), the urban-rural divide remains, as 90.7% of urban dwellers have access to the Internet, but this is only 75% in rural areas. Mobile connections are generally more widespread than computer access. There have been impressive developments with respect to mobile connectivity. The share of the population aged 15 and older using mobile devices (mobile phone, laptop, tablet, etc.) to access wireless Internet from any location has grown by 15% since 2017 to include 94.7% of the population in 2020. The older generations also use mobile connections quite frequently (88%). 86% of the population aged 6 and older owns a mobile phone; 92% indicate that they use a mobile phone which is shared amongst household members. Access to a computer is more limited, as 76% of households in urban areas own a computer, as against only 42% in rural areas³⁵. Georgia has established widespread Internet access in schools. Overall, Georgia's network readiness is in line with what can be expected given its income level³⁶.

With a human development index of 0.786, and a ranking of 70, Georgia ranks below its immediate neighbours Russia or Turkey, but above Armenia and Azerbaijan. The income share accounted for by the richest 10% is 29%; the poorest 40% earn 17.4% of income³⁷. The Gini coefficient³⁸

stood at 36 in 2019. This is comparatively high in comparison to other countries in the Balkans and Caucasus region, as Armenia stood at 29.9 in 2019, Bosnia and Herzegovina at 33.0 in 2011, and Kosovo at 29.0 in 2017.

Economic characteristics

Georgia suffered tremendous hardship in economic terms in the wake of the breakup of the Soviet Union, but it has embarked on major transformations both economically and socially. Georgia can be considered an upper-middle-income country today. Its GDP grew from EUR 10,255 million in 2017 to EUR 11,189 million in 2018, achieving a robust annual growth rate of 5.3% per year between 2005 and 2019. This positive development was possible despite major economic crises. The economy is expected to contract by 6% in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.³⁹ Georgia's per capita GDP amounted to EUR 4,040 in 2019 at current prices. The service sector contributes the largest share of value added to GDP (around 60%), followed by manufacturing and construction (18.5%) and agriculture (7.8%). The latter sector is becoming increasingly inefficient and unproductive, as it accounts for a major share of the workforce (53%, 83% of whom are self-employed), despite its low economic output. This particularly affects the rural parts of the country. An economic sector which is becoming increasingly important in Georgia is the tourism sector⁴⁰.

³⁵ National Statistics Office of Georgia, [Information and Communication Technologies Usage in Households](#)

³⁶ Portulans Institute (2020). [Network Readiness Index 2020 Georgia](#)

³⁷ UNDP, [Human Development Indicators Georgia](#) overview

³⁸ The Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income (or, in some cases, consumption expenditure) among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A value of 0 means perfect equality (everyone has the same income), and a value of 100 indicates perfect inequality (all income is accounted for by one person).

³⁹ World Bank, [The World Bank in Georgia overview](#)

⁴⁰ World Bank (2018). [Georgia from Reformer to Performer – A Systematic Country Diagnostic](#)

Due to a relaxation of fiscal discipline with a change of government in 2012, as well as increased social policy spending, public debt rose to 46% of GDP in 2019 (78% of which is external debt), amounting to an overall fiscal deficit of 3.1% of GDP. Georgia increasingly imports more than it exports, which leads to a current account deficit of 9.2%. Foreign direct investment remains a resilient source of finance, at 9.1% of GDP. Households profit from remittances, which have recovered to a GDP share of 12.7% after a sharp decrease in 2015.⁴¹

Georgia has made progress in reducing national poverty, particularly between 2010 and 2015 when more than 550,000 Georgians were able to escape poverty⁴². Nonetheless, poverty rates remain high, also in an international comparison. 4.5% of the population lived below the international poverty line of US\$ 1.90 per day in 2018 (compared with 12% in 2010). 15.5% lived below the poverty line of lower- and middle-income countries of US \$3.20 per day. While poverty has been similarly reduced in urban and rural areas, to 20.1% of people at the national poverty rate, rural areas still lag behind, and more than one in five Georgians in rural areas live in poverty (23.1%)⁴³. Female-headed households are at greater risk from poverty. Moreover, internally-displaced persons in cities and households of the Azerbaijani minority face higher poverty rates. Almost half of the population is at risk of falling into poverty. The Eastern regions of the country have higher poverty rates than the Western parts, where the capital Tbilisi is located.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ National Statistics Office of Georgia (2019). [Statistical Yearbook of Georgia: 2019](#)

⁴⁴ World Bank (2018), p. 42

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ National Statistics Office of Georgia, [Employment and Unemployment](#) website

A large share of the working-age population is either not in the labour force (26%), or is unemployed (10%), whilst 64% are in employment. But only 30% of the working-age population are formal wage-earners. Half of the employed population is self-employed (a large share in the agricultural sector). The female labour force participation rate stood at 57.8% in 2017 (which is about average for the region). The gender gap in labour force participation has remained constant, at 20%. Low levels of governmental support for childcare or elderly care responsibilities pose a major stumbling block to improving female labour participation. “The negative association between women’s labour force participation and childcare responsibilities is large enough to cancel out the positive impact of more education on women’s labour activity”⁴⁴.

The unemployment rate fell to 11.6% in 2018. Men (12.8%) are more likely to be unemployed than women (10.1%), and unemployment is more prevalent in urban areas (17.4%) than in rural ones (5.5%). Higher educational attainment does not necessarily reduce the unemployment rate. Those with higher education have higher unemployment rates. Around 40% of all unemployed people have obtained a higher education degree⁴⁵. Unemployment is highest among young people, with a rate of around 30%.⁴⁶ At the same time, many young people are not in education, and therefore fall into the NEET category. As many as 26% of young people aged 15 to 24 are not in employment, education or training. This rate increases to 31.9%, when the age group is expanded to also include people who are aged 25 to 29. The

NEET rate is up to 10% higher for women, and it increases with age to 43% for females aged 15-29. Overall, women constitute about two-thirds of all NEETs. Young people in urban areas are at a higher risk of being NEET. The level of education does not necessarily predict the NEET rate, and VET education also does not save young people from being NEET⁴⁷. Whereas the majority of female NEETs are occupied as caregivers, young men are largely registered as job-seekers. The family background (e.g. unemployed parents) and socio-economic status are important determinants of young people's NEET status.

The political system and the state structure

Georgia looks back on turbulent years in the aftermath of the Soviet Union. In terms of external affairs, the past 30 years have been marked by continuous tensions with Russia. Russia has supported the secessionist ambitions of the Georgian regions Abkhazia and South Ossetia since the early 1990s. Tensions with Russia soared after the peaceful Georgian Rose Revolution in November 2003, which paved the way for a distinctly pro-European foreign policy in Georgia. Russia reacted by launching a series of economic sanctions which put Georgia, a country that has always been heavily dependent on Russia for energy, into a sharp economic decline. The conflict culminated in a five-day battle between the two countries in 2008 over the breakaway territories Abkhazia and South Ossetia. A ceasefire was negotiated, with international diplomatic support. Russia nonetheless

unilaterally claimed independence for the regions, and continues to gradually extend its control over the territory to the present date⁴⁸.

Internal politics have been volatile due to frequent political turnover and popular discontent. Former Soviet Foreign Minister and Georgian Communist leader Eduard Shevardnadze headed the Government until 2003. Apparently manipulated national elections in 1999 and 2000, as well as corruption and crime, sparked popular mass protest, and paved the way for the Rose Revolution, headed by Mikheil Saakashvili and two fellow leaders who would later form the ruling United National Movement Party (UNM). Saakashvili became President, and remained in power until 2013 despite public protests (against his decision to close an anti-government media station) and economic decline after 2008. The first democratic change of power came with the parliamentary elections in 2012 and presidential elections in 2013, and the victory of the opposition coalition Georgian Dream (GD).⁴⁹

A new Constitution entered into force in 2013, changing the presidential system into a mixed political one⁵⁰. The powers of the President have been significantly weakened, whereas those of the Government and of Parliament have been enhanced. According to the Constitution, the President is the official Head of State, serving for a maximum of two 5-year terms. The Head of Government is the Prime Minister. Georgia has a unicameral Parliament (*Sakartvelos Parlamenti*), which is elected every four years in a mixed electoral system. 120 Members of Parliament are

⁴⁷ Bardak, U. et al. (2015). [Young People not in Employment, Education or Training \(NEET\)](#). European Training Foundation

⁴⁸ World Bank (2018)

⁴⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung (2020)

⁵⁰ Borisov, N. (2018). [From Presidentialism to Parliamentarism: Parliamentarization of Government Systems in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Armenia](#)

elected via proportional representation, and 30 are directly elected in single-member constituencies. The electoral threshold was lowered to 1% prior to the latest 2020 elections in order to allow for plurality⁵¹. The results of the last elections remain contested. While the Georgian Dream coalition claimed victory, the opposition parties (led by the centre-right UNM), refused to acknowledge defeat, and called for fresh elections. International observers described the elections as free, safe and competitive, but there were widespread accusations of voter intimidation.

Georgia is a unitary state with two autonomous republics (Adjara and Abkhazia), nine regions and 67 municipalities.⁵² Politics is made on two levels of government, at central and municipal levels. The municipalities have competencies in the areas of land management, cultural and social affairs and urban infrastructure. The self-governing entities act largely autonomously, and have independent budgets. Nonetheless they are dependent on transfers from the national budget, as local revenues are too small to cover expenditure.

Georgia is a member of the major international organisations such as the United Nations, UNESCO, WTO, IMF, OSCE and the Council of Europe. It has aspirations to join NATO. Its cooperation with the EU institutions in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy and Eastern Partnership was formalised in 2016 with the signature of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement⁵³. The agreement includes a Deep and Comprehensive

Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and visa-free travel to the Schengen area. Georgia receives EUR 120 million in annual grant assistance⁵⁴.

The education system

The Georgian education system has improved tremendously in recent years. Education is still not equitable, however, and many children struggle to attain basic skills.

Education is compulsory for nine years in Georgia, from age 6 to age 14⁵⁵. Pre-primary education is available for children aged 3-5. Primary education covers grades 1 to 6 for children aged 6 to 11. Secondary education is divided into lower and upper secondary education, with lower secondary education covering grades 7 to 9 and ages 12 to 14. Upper secondary education covers grades 10 to 13. Here students may choose between general education, an integrated model of general and vocational education, or a vocational education track⁵⁶. General secondary education leads directly to higher-education Bachelor's and Master's programmes⁵⁷. There is an intermediary post-secondary vocational education stage for the vocational education track.

Georgia has been a full member of the Bologna Process since 2005, and Georgia's education system has been based on a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) since 2010. This structures education qualifications into eight levels, comparable to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)

⁵¹ IPU Parline database, [Georgia parliament website](#)

⁵² European Committee of the Regions, [Georgia general website](#)

⁵³ European Commission, [Facts and Figures about EU-Georgia relations](#) fact sheet

⁵⁴ European Commission, [EU-Georgia Relations](#) website

⁵⁵ UNESCO UIL, [Data for the Sustainable Development Goals Georgia profile](#) website

⁵⁶ Li, R. et al. (2019). [OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Georgia](#). Paris: OECD Publishing

⁵⁷ European Commission (2017). [Overview of the Higher Education System in Georgia](#)

Figure 1: The Education System in Georgia

ISCED Level	Starting age	Grade	Education programme		
8	24/25		Higher Education - Doctoral studies		
7	22/23		Higher Education - Master's programmes		
6	18		Higher Education – Bachelor's degree		
5	18		Post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education		
4	18		Post-secondary vocational education		
3	15	13	Upper secondary education - general education	Upper secondary General and Vocational Education (integrated)	Upper secondary education - Vocational education
		12			
		11			
		10			
2	12	9	Lower secondary education		
		8			
		7			
1	9	6	Primary education		
		5			
		4			
1	6	3			
		2			
		1			
0	0		Pre-primary education		

Source: Li, R. et al. (2019), p. 51.

(see Figure 1). The NQF underwent a major revision in 2017/2018 to deepen coherence and increase comparability to the EQF. The National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) shoulders primary responsibility for the coordination and implementation of the NQF. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MoES) is the leading political institution⁵⁸.

The reform of the NQF is ongoing, and efforts are currently underway to support the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal qualifications obtained outside the formal education system, and to align them within the NQF (see Chapter 4 for more details).

Georgia has achieved almost universal primary and lower secondary education. The net enrolment rate in primary education stood at 97.1% in 2019, and at 99.97% for lower secondary education. Enrolment in upper secondary education increased from 87.31% in 2013 to 94.35% in 2019, with young women achieving a higher enrolment rate (96.15%) than their male counterparts (92.77%).

Despite efforts to upgrade the VET sector, only 11.2% of all upper secondary students are enrolled in vocational programmes (42.0% OECD average)⁵⁹. The academic pathway is still considered more the prestigious and flexible.

⁵⁸ UNESCO UIL (2015). [Global inventory of regional and national qualifications frameworks, v. II: national and regional cases](#)

⁵⁹ UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), Georgia, Indicator "Distribution of enrolment by programme orientation"

Almost three out of four Georgian schools (72%) provide comprehensive schooling for all grade levels. Enrolment in private schools is on the up, increasing from 6.2% in 2010 to reach 9.5% in 2019 for lower secondary education, for example. The highest enrolment rate at private institutions is registered for vocational education (40.6%). This might be due to the fact that VET is offered at only 34 public schools, compared to 90 private ones⁶⁰. The choice of a public or private school depends on a household's socio-economic status. The vast majority of disadvantaged students are enrolled in public schools (99%); the rate is 75% for advantaged students.

The gross enrolment rate at tertiary level reached 57% in 2017. Overall, more women than men attend university, and women (41.31%) are more likely to graduate from university than men (29.63%). 34.8% of tertiary students attend private institutions. The tertiary education attainment level reached 44.1% among the 30 to 34 age group in 2018.

Government spending on education increased from under 10% of total government expenditure in 2011 to 13% in 2018, thus equalling 3.5% of GDP.

In 2012, around 60% of government expenditure in education was allocated to primary and general secondary education, 6% to post-secondary non tertiary, 19% to higher education, and 14% to pre-primary education.⁶¹

Enrolment varies across the different student population groups, with generally lower net enrolment among minority groups. Major obstacles are language problems and shortages of teaching and learning materials. Students in rural areas have less access to quality schooling, and score lower on international assessments compared to students in Tbilisi and other urban areas⁶². Socio-economic status continues as a strong predictor of school performance according to the latest PISA results⁶³.

⁶⁰ Livny, E. et al. (2018). [Reforming the Georgian VET System: Achievements, Outstanding Challenges and Ways Forward](#). Policy Brief. International School of Economics at the TSU Policy Institute

⁶¹ Li, R. et al. (2019)

⁶² [UNESCO Institute for Statistics \(UIS\)](#), Georgia, Indicator "Government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP"

⁶³ OECD (2018). [Georgia - Country Note - PISA 2018 Results](#)

III. The historical development of adult education

Adult education has a long history in Georgia. Adult education first emerged back in the 4th century, when the provision of educational techniques to adult learners started at the Phazisi Academy (near the present-day city of Poti) in Western Georgia. Monasteries served as important hubs for adult education throughout the Middle Ages. The Petritsony monastery (11th century), the Ikalto Academy (11th to 13th centuries) and the Gelati monastery (12th century) near the modern-day city of Kutaisi were among the most influential monasteries. These hubs provided education not only in Theology, Philosophy and other academic disciplines, but also in other subjects such as goldsmithing, pottery, winegrowing and winemaking⁶⁴.

The structure of AE provision changed during the 19th century with the advent of capitalism. Numerous schools were established such as the Cadastral Survey School (1874), Tbilisi and Kutaisi Gardening and Horticulture Schools (1855), and

the Railway Technical School (1870)⁶⁵. In Soviet times, ALE was understood on the one hand as continuous professional education (basically permanent development inside one profession), and on the other hand it was used as a tool for permanent ideological propaganda. Stalin created the “Soviet Union Society for the dissemination of political and scientific knowledge” (Union – *Znanie*), which apart from providing vocational courses was at the same time used as a platform for praising the advantages of the Soviet regime and its political and economic line⁶⁶.

The Georgian education system underwent several reforms during the first decade of transition in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union. Major outputs were the Georgian Law on “Education”, which entered into force in June 1997, and the Law on “Primary Professional Education”, which was enacted in December 1998. Adult education was not specifically covered by either document, however, and both of them provided that education was to be available for Georgian citizens of all age groups, and that budget funding of secondary and professional education (including higher education and postgraduate studies) should be managed within the state system. The Law on “Primary Professional Education” was the first legislative act in Georgian history in the field of professional education⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ Sanadze, R. & Santeladze, L. (2017). Adult Education Centers in Georgia: History and Present. In: Avramovska, M. et al. (eds.). [Adult education centres as a key to development – challenges and success factors](#), pp. 29-45

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kvachadze, L. (2009). Adult Education in South Caucasus – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia. In: Gartenschlaeger, U. (ed.). [European Adult Education outside the EU](#). Bonn: DVV International, p. 135

⁶⁷ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2008). [National Report: Development and State of Art of Adult Learning and Education \(ALE\) in Georgia](#), p.8

Today, Article 35 of the Georgian Constitution guarantees a right to and freedom of choice in education to all citizens. While this is true in practice for young people, who can choose between different educational offers, there is room for improvement when it comes to the range of education that is on offer to older people.⁶⁸

Strongly influenced by the Georgian aspirations to move closer towards the European Union, the notion of “lifelong learning” first appeared in the public policy debate in the early 2000s. This consisted of the 2004 individual action plan for the implementation of the national programme by the Ministry of Education and Science, which intended to bring Georgian law into line with EC legislation. It stated that (1) a Lifelong Learning Strategy should be launched in order to enable people to become more competitive in using new technologies, to simplify social relationships, to create equal opportunities, and to improve quality of life. Moreover, (2) Georgia should be actively involved in the international “Education for All” movement, which would support Georgian ambitions to maintain past achievements and immediately overcome the recent negative tendencies⁶⁹. Georgia became part of the European Neighbourhood Policy in the same year, and developed a respective action plan, which entered into force on 14 November 2006. Implementation of the lifelong learning principles featured as an important commitment in this document.

Despite these developments, however, ALE has never achieved a coherent development path in Georgia. This may be primarily due to the fact

that the holistic vision of ALE was largely missing at national level, and it has often been equated with merely providing training and retraining opportunities for adults. This is why the Vocational Education system in Georgia has played an important role in ALE over the past decade.

A “Concept Paper on Vocational Education” was adopted in 2005, which defined the concept of adult education for the first time in Georgian history⁷⁰. This was followed by the adoption of the Law on Vocational Education in 2007, which was orientated along the principles of lifelong learning, and opened the doors for adults into VET colleges. Interestingly, as of 2009 approximately half of registered students in VET (about 48%) were adults (aged 22 and over). The Law also prepared the ground for the establishment of the NQF, and established the mechanisms and structures for the recognition of non-formal learning, these being crucial for ALE development.

The Ministry of Education and Science has so far been primarily responsible for the implementation of ALE. The MoES took some steps which can be considered important for the development of ALE. For example, it implemented special NFE programmes for members of ethnic minorities. It also established the Teacher Professional Development Centre (TPDC) in 2006 in order to promote continuous professional training for teachers⁷¹.

The TPDC aimed to introduce high standards for the professional development of teachers and to establish a unified system for professional train-

⁶⁸ UNECE (2015). [Road Map for Mainstreaming Ageing Georgia](#)

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 11

⁷⁰ Kvachadze (2009), p. 135

⁷¹ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2008)

ing, for the development of teachers, and for granting the right to be a teacher.

Probably the most crucial development for ALE in Georgia has been the creation of the Adult Education Association, which elaborated a draft National Strategy on Lifelong Learning⁷². The MoES and the Adult Education Association of Georgia signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2009 in which the MoES undertook to discuss the proposed draft of the strategy, and to approve it if appropriate. The drafted strategy primarily concentrated on promoting non-formal learning. This initiative on the part of the Adult Education Association was not unsuccessful, however, and the strategy was never adopted.

It is important to mention that, since the break-up of the Soviet Union, the primary actors and providers of ALE have always been civil society organisations. These NGOs operated with the financial support of donors and non-profit organisations abroad. The strongest player in the field appeared in 2002, when the German Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association – DVV International – opened a country office in Georgia⁷³. DVV International aims to serve as a catalyst for change in order to assist adults who have limited access to educational opportunities. Among the first Adult Education Centres (AEC) in Georgia were the two multi-faceted community centres for adult education in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of Georgia, established at the initiative of DVV International and funded with financial support from the EU and the German Federal Ministry for

Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). They were modelled on the German “Volkshochschule” (community adult education centres). Additional AECs were established in 2010 in the IDP settlements of Koda, Shaumiani, Senaki and Jvari (see Chapter VI).

The AECs have gradually evolved their training curriculum, offering a wide variety of free vocational and personal development courses to the adult population. They have also implemented capacity-building and awareness-raising projects and other social and civic education initiatives⁷⁴.

In order to ensure that AECs can operate sustainably, local community-based organisations were formed on the basis of these. These organisations have been established in close cooperation with the local municipalities. The centres rely on self-financing (through fee-based courses), funding from local government, and support from international organisations.

Another important development in the history of AE in Georgia was the establishment of the Georgian Adult Education Network (GAEN) in 2014. The network was initiated by DVVI and the AECs with the objective of supporting AE development in Georgia, providing support to AE providers, and advocating on their behalf.

The main educational activities of civil society organisations in Georgia have always been primarily related to civic education (democracy, active citizenship, gender issues, environmental protection, tolerance, etc.).

⁷² Kvachadze, L. (2009), p. 135

⁷³ Sanadze, R. & Santeladze, L. (2017)

⁷⁴ Ibid.

IV. Legal framework and governing structures

Governing structures

The key governing institution of adult education in Georgia is the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). The topic of adult education is anchored at an AE division, established in 2019 within the Vocational Education Development Department.

Another central actor is the National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE), supervised by the MoES. Two NCEQE departments play a major role in adult education: firstly, the VET Quality Assurance department, which is responsible for authorisation and accreditation processes, monitoring and controlling VET programmes and developing and improving standards, and secondly, the qualifications development division, which is in charge of developing the NQF, fostering methodology and rules for the elaboration of occupational standards and VET programmes (modules and curriculum), as well as of developing and promoting recognition of prior learning.

The Department of Labour and Employment Policy also recently started to play a role, with its policies being implemented by the State Employment Support Agency (SESA). The Youth Agency covers the wide range of topics related to youth (18-29), including learning and development opportunities.

There are plans for the MoES and the Chamber of Commerce to establish a new agency by the name of “Skills Georgia”, which is to be based on a public-private partnership. The agency is to operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Economics, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Regional Development, the Ministry of Agriculture and the largest business membership organisa-

tions (BMOs). This shared-responsibility governing model is an experiment. The new agency will focus on a variety of areas: development of qualifications (including occupational standards, educational standards with regard to national curricular in VET, learning resources and assessment instruments), institutional development, inclusive education and student services, work-based learning, service development, research and communication. Young people and adults are to receive equal consideration in all these areas. It remains to be seen how the responsibilities of Skills Georgia are to be distinct from those of the MoES, and where the area of adult education will be settled.

A more central role in the administration of adult education is expected to rest with the municipalities in future, especially with respect to the provision of infrastructure and funding. By law, the municipalities are already tasked with promoting non-formal education in the area of culture and social affairs. Currently, however, their active involvement in adult education is mainly impeded through central government provisions which set different budgeting priorities. Local municipalities can play an important role in heightening citizens’ awareness of available adult education offers, for example at AECs. Provided with sufficient freedom and budget flexibility, municipalities can implement activities themselves or in cooperation with local adult education providers. Alternatively, they can be valuable intermediaries to implement national programmes where content and guidance comes from the central level. According to information from the interviews, some municipalities have already become active in funding teacher training in the past.

Laws

Laws directly and indirectly referring to adult education in Georgia include:

- the Law of Georgia on General Education¹
- the Law of Georgia on Vocational Education²
- the Law of Georgia on Education Quality Improvement³
- the Law of Georgia on Higher Education⁴, and
- the Law on Employment Support⁵, which has indirect relevance for ALE in Georgia.

Lifelong learning and education for all are underlying principles of the Georgian **Law on General Education**. Article 3.2.a) stresses that “openness of and equal access to lifelong general education for all persons” is a prerequisite to meet the basic goals of state policy in general education. Article 9 grants to everyone the right to obtain a complete general education, and specifies that “general education may be obtained in alternative ways [...], taking into consideration students’ age peculiarities and labour and family conditions”. The law thus reserves the right for adults to remedy gaps in basic education at an older age.

¹ Legislative Herald of Georgia (2005), [Law of Georgia on General Education](#)

² Legislative Herald of Georgia (2018), [Law of Georgia on Vocational Education](#)

³ Legislative Herald of Georgia (2010), [Law of Georgia on Education Quality Improvement](#)

⁴ Legislative Herald of Georgia (2004), [Law of Georgia On Higher Education](#)

⁵ Legislative Herald of Georgia (2020), [Law on Employment Support](#)

After numerous amendments had been introduced to the original VET Law of 2007, the **new Framework VET Law** was adopted in 2018 which addresses some of the major gaps in the system. Notably, the new VET Law opens up opportunities for better implementation of lifelong learning principles in the training system (facilitation of lifelong learning and equal access to education for everyone). More precisely, in addition to formal education the law now introduces and legally defines the concept of “informal education”, which has always been a buzzword in VET policy (Article 3.b). It was included in the earlier strategy

papers, but was never formally defined by law. Moreover, the new VET Law aligns vocational education programme criteria with the levels of the NQF (Article 6). The Law thus acknowledges the needs of the adult learners in VET, and most importantly it eradicates the problem of dead-ends in VET. The situation until 2018 was that secondary school graduates (9th grade) were able to enter the initial VET system. However, if students wanted to continue to higher VET or tertiary studies, they had to return to the general education system in order to graduate from high school (12th grade), after which they could continue their stud-

ies. The new Law makes it possible for entrants into initial VET to obtain general education in parallel to engaging in vocational studies. This enables them to continue in higher education without encountering any obstacles.

The **Law of Georgia “on Education Quality Improvement”** defines the legal basis for mechanisms to facilitate education quality improvement, and establishes a National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) as the main body in charge of quality enhancement and authorisation of education programmes. The Law further defines authorisation and accreditation standards, as well as institutions eligible for authorisation.

The higher education sphere is regulated by the **Law of Georgia “on Higher Education”**. This is also based on the obligations undertaken within the Action Plan of the Government of Georgia, the Association Agenda with the European Union⁷⁵, the Bologna Process, and the framework document of European Higher Education.

The Georgian Parliament adopted the **Law on Employment Support** on 14 July 2020. The Law defines some of the key concepts for the operation of employment policy, such as “unemployed”, “job-seeker” and “employment”. It is important to mention in relation to ALE that the Law also defines the terms “career guidance” and “active labour market measures”. The functions of the newly-established State Employment Support Agency are also explained, and these include providing short-term professional training/retraining courses for job-seekers.

⁷⁵ European Council (2014). [Decision of 16 June 2014 on the signing, on behalf of the European Union, and provisional application of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States and Georgia](#). Official Journal of the European Union L 261/1

⁷⁶ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2017a)

Policies

The **Unified Strategy for Education and Science 2017–2021**⁷⁶ is currently the umbrella strategy paper in the field of education. It was adopted in 2017 with a comprehensive vision for education at all levels: early/pre-school upbringing and education of children, general, vocational and higher education, adult education, science and studies. The overall objective of the strategy is:

“to develop an accessible, high-quality education and science system based on the principles of lifelong learning which will enable all citizens of the country to achieve high-quality, sustainable results and promote the development of Georgia as a regional centre of higher education and research.”

The specific goal of the strategy is to increase access to high-quality education at all levels, including pre-school, secondary and higher education. The strategy also capitalises on increasing enrolment in VET, the internationalisation of higher education, and the modernisation of the science, technology and innovation system for supporting the sustainable development of the country. The strategy envisages the modular restructuring of the VET system to “create a sound foundation for adult learning”, and as with the modular system, learning and further training can focus more closely on specific topics. Efforts to ensure access to VET based on the principle of lifelong learning are summarised in Strategic Objective 2 in the area of vocational education. The Unified Strategy places increasing emphasis

on interconnecting efforts in education in order to achieve sustainable socio-economic development and the respective goals which have been defined in the economic development strategy “Georgia 2020”⁷⁷. The strategy emphasises that the establishment of lifelong learning is key for the new economy, as the latter is becoming increasingly dependent on digital skills, foreign languages and soft skills which have to be developed, also among older age groups after the completion of basic and secondary education. It also mentions that it is necessary to elaborate special large-scale measures in order to promote active lifelong learning opportunities. In order to achieve this, the strategy paper specifies that the national qualification framework will have to be updated and self-certified, and that the procedures for the recognition of vocational education credits in higher education institutions will have to be developed and enacted.

Evaluation and monitoring of the strategy’s implementation progress is guided by output indicators specified in the Education and Science Strategy Action Plan 2019⁷⁸. Five sub-objectives have been formulated for VET Strategic Objective 2, but none of the objectives or outputs refer to the inclusion of adults or to the provision of education and learning opportunities for older people. Interestingly, increasing adult participation in educational programmes is mentioned as Outcome Indicator 2 in the Midterm Evaluation of the Implementation of the Unified Strategy for Education and Science 2017-2021⁷⁹. The evaluation refers

to a survey conducted by the Statistics Office of Georgia which determined that 1.7% of adults had taken part in educational programmes in 2017. Due to a lack of references, it remains unclear how this value has been generated and whether it includes participation in non-formal education as well (more on adult participation in Chapter 8).

According to an interview partner from the MoESCE, there are currently no plans to develop a distinct policy strategy on adult education. In the eyes of the MoESCE, this would not be in line with an inclusive approach to education. Adult education should rather become part of the national skills development strategy, and thus stand on an equal footing with youth education.

The objectives set out in the Unified Strategy build on the goals defined in the **VET strategy paper**⁸⁰, which was adopted back in 2013 for the 2013-2020 period. The VET strategy was the only strategy paper that was kept active even after adopting the Unified Strategy. This speaks for the high political importance attached to improving VET in Georgia. The Georgian 2013-2020 VET reform strategy aimed to achieve the following outcomes: improved VET infrastructure, improved quality and relevance of VET programmes, full employability of graduates, and high quality of VET instructors.

The VET system has undergone some major changes in recent years⁸¹. It has moved away from subject-based programmes to the modular

⁷⁷ Government of Georgia (2020b). [Social-economic Development Strategy of Georgia “GEORGIA 2020”](#)

⁷⁸ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2017b)

⁷⁹ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2019). [Midterm Evaluation of the Implementation of Unified Strategy for Education and Science 2017-2021](#)

⁸⁰ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2013). [Vocational Education and Training Development Strategy for 2013-2020](#)

⁸¹ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2020). [Report on the Implementation of Vocational Education Action Plan 2019 for the Unified Strategy on Education and Science \(2017-2021\)](#)

curricula. The latter refers to the practice of dividing the vocational education course into learning modules. Students are not obliged to take all the modules in order to obtain state certification. They can choose to take up only one module, or a combination of modules, and accordingly receive a partial qualification. Another important development has been the introduction of dual education programmes, which ensure that at least 50% of learning outcomes are achieved within real work environments (more information about VET programmes is provided in Chapter VII).

The 2013-2020 VET strategy paper is considered to be outdated today, and the VET department at the MoES is currently in the process of updating it in order to reflect the vast magnitude of changes introduced by the new VET Law.

Among the recent developments directly related to promoting adult education is the introduction of short-term training courses for adults. While it was possible to provide short-term courses even before the adoption of new VET Law, those were not considered formal training, and no appropriate certificates were issued. With the current changes, the VET system introduces short-term training courses: Alongside the general VET diploma courses (which run for 2 to 3 years on average), there is now the opportunity to carry out short-term vocational courses (up to 3 months) leading to a formal qualification. The pool of training providers is widening, and can now include private enterprises and non-formal providers which receive appropriate authorisation. This marks a sea change, since it opens up the pool of training providers to any interested legal body (including private companies and non-formal providers).

Widening the pool of training providers has prompted the need to elaborate the procedures to licence them, and to ensure that the training providers meet the national educational standards. As a result, the government adopted **Decree No. 131 on the “procedures for obtaining the right to implement short-term vocational training/retraining courses, and the rules and conditions for acknowledgement as a training provider”**⁸². The Decree states that short-term vocational courses may be implemented by any legal body, providing that they meet the quality standards. The decree sets out the steps and procedures that the applicant has to go through. The NCEQE is in charge of ensuring that training programmes which are submitted are in compliance with national standards. The VET department maintains the database of acknowledged training providers, including “training enterprises”.

Georgia’s **higher education system** has undergone a significant transformation over the past decade. A number of steps have been taken for the purpose of integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area, for the development of the quality of education, and the internationalisation of the Georgian higher education system: the introduction of a three-stage system of higher education, the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS); internal and external quality assurance systems have been put into place; the National Qualification Framework has been created; the mobility of students and academic personnel has become possible with Georgian participation in the EU’s Erasmus programme.

⁸² Government of Georgia, [Decree No. 131 on the procedures for obtaining the right to implement short-term vocational training/retraining courses and rules and conditions to be acknowledged as a training provider](#)

Some of the recent changes in the higher education system include: introduction of the public financing model of higher education based on a fixed grant per student – a “voucher system”, initiation of the higher-education system for financing doctoral programmes, and launching the standards and criteria for the authorisation of higher educational institutions, as well as procedures for the accreditation of educational programmes⁸³.

The NCEQE is responsible for the management and development of the **National Qualifications Framework (NQF)**⁸⁴. This Framework was revised and adjusted to the local context in early 2019. It aims to organise different educational levels within a single framework and achieve comparability between the local NQF and the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning. Another major objective is to upgrade the NQF and encourage the process of elaborating result-orientated education programmes, as well as supporting the transparency of the qualifications and their recognition. The content of qualifications is defined by occupational standards, and the national framework programmes developed by NCEQE. The new NQF is expected to contribute to improved permeability between sub-sectors, to achieve better matching between qualifications and labour market needs, to support quality assurance of education and training, and to increase public information on qualifications.

The key challenge regarding the NQF development is that there are still a number of economic fields of activity for which occupational standards

have yet to be developed. One of the contributing factors to this issue is the lack of private sector involvement in the elaboration of curricula and educational standards. Creation of the **National VET Council (NVETC)** in 2009 was supposed to tackle this issue, but it proved to be ineffective as a regulatory body, and was discontinued.

The NCEQE is also governing the **authorisation process of the educational institutions** and accreditation of the educational programmes within these institutions. All formal education providers in the country (both public and private) are subject to periodic authorisation and accreditation.

Last but not least, NCEQE regulates the process of **validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL)**. The establishment of a system that allows individuals to document what they have learned outside the formal education system (which is commonly officially documented) to be able to use it for advancing their careers and for further education and training is a central prerequisite for the establishment of a true learning society⁸⁵. Recognition of non-formal prior education was one of the priority areas of the VET reform. The legal basis for recognition of non-formal learning has been defined by the new VET Law, which has expanded the scope of the process. The Law establishes a link between the development of the NQF and the creation of mechanisms for the recognition of informal education (Article 2e)⁸⁶. Before 2018, VNFIL was only possible up to initial VET (level 3 in the NQF). The new VET Law provides for the opportunity to recognise educational outcomes at the fourth and fifth levels

⁸³ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2017a)

⁸⁴ NCEQE, [The National Qualifications Framework](#) website

⁸⁵ CEDEFOP [Validation of non-formal and informal learning project](#) website

⁸⁶ Legislative Herald of Georgia (2018), [Law of Georgia on Vocational Education](#)

of VET as well. State decree No. 188n on the “Establishment of the rules for the recognition of non-formal learning outcomes”⁸⁷ sets out detailed procedures and guidance in this process. The recognition procedure is made up of four stages: identification, documentation, assessment and certification⁸⁸.

Apart from the formal education system, another important component of adult education consists of the training/retraining courses for the unemployed and job-seekers organised by the State Employment Support Agency. The programme is run under the overall aegis of the Labour and Employment Policy Department at the Ministry of Internally-Displaced People, Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoIDPLHSA). Upskilling and requalification of job-seekers is an important objective set out in the **National Strategy of Labour and Employment Policy**⁸⁹.

Job-seekers receive training through short-term vocational courses (up to 3 months), which until 2019 used to be delivered primarily by VET colleges. After adopting the new VET law, significant revisions were also made in the MoIDPLHSA-funded short-term training/retraining courses. Pursuant to **Decree No. 9 of 2019 on the “approval of the state programme on job-seekers’ professional training and retraining and requalification”**⁹⁰, the pool of training providers for these courses has been expanded. Any educational institution (including non-formal providers) can now deliver the training. Educational institutions are encouraged to partner with industry representatives.

Starting from 2020, MoES and DVVI have been working on the development of methodologies for financing formal, non-formal and informal adult education and learning. The results will be finalised in 2021.

⁸⁷ Government of Georgia, [Decree No. 188n on the establishment of the rules for recognition of non-formal learning outcomes](#)

⁸⁸ Government of Georgia, [National Strategy of Labor and Employment Policy](#)

⁸⁹ Tserodze, I. et al. (2019). [Georgia – national Torino Process report](#), p. 38

⁹⁰ Government of Georgia, [Decree No. 9 of 2019 on the approval of the state program on job seekers’ professional training and retraining and requalification](#)

V. Financing

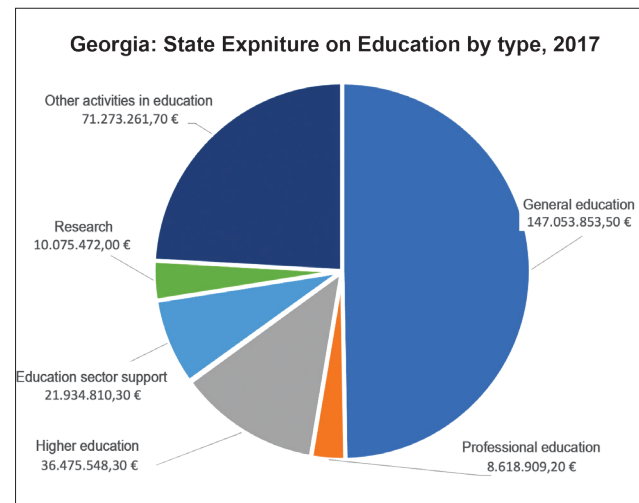
Public spending

The Georgian Government's expenditure on education averages 3.5% of GDP between 2016 and 2018⁹¹, which is low compared to international benchmarks. However, spending on education as a percentage of total government expenditure has nearly doubled, from under 7% in 2012 to 13% in 2017⁹². In March 2019, the Prime Minister announced⁹³ massive investments in education and human capital development. The percentage of education expenditure in proportion to GDP is to be increased to 6% by 2022. In order to reach that goal, the Government has planned to allocate up to 25% of its budget to education.

The most recent data available on state budget expenditure (including the functional classification by different sectors) is from 2017, and is accessible via the website of the Ministry of Finance⁹⁴. The largest share of the more than EUR 295 million allocated to the education sector belongs to expenditure on general education (see Fig 1). As there is no specific line for ALE in the state budget, expenditure for this area can be assumed to be included under "Professional Education" and "Other non-classified Activities in Education". Professional Education is used in Georgia synonymously for VET, which in turn is widely perceived as the predominant form of adult education (see Chapter I). Given this lack of clarity in terminology,

which influences data collection, it is not yet possible to precisely calculate public expenditure on ALE in all its various forms (formal, non-formal, informal) and programmes. For the purpose of this study, financing of ALE will focus on VET expenditure only.

Figure 1: State expenditure on education by type.



Source: Own presentation based on data from www.mof.ge, amounts converted into EUR.

Financing of VET is regulated by Governmental Decree #244 (September 2013). The decree defines the framework for voucher and programme funding for public VET institutions⁹⁵. Voucher-based funding enables VET institutions to cover costs that are necessary for conducting the

⁹¹ UNESCO UIS, Georgia, Indicator "Government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP"

⁹² Li, R. et al. (2019)

⁹³ Agenda.ge, website article [Gov't promises to invest 1/4th of budget on education](#)

⁹⁴ Ministry of Finance of Georgia (2017). [Georgian state budget expenditure](#)

⁹⁵ Tserodze, I. et al. (2019)

learning process (including teachers' salaries). Programme funding includes the remuneration of internal and external staff of VET institutions, as well as meeting operational costs and other running costs of the facility. The Government also funds short-term training programmes. These programmes may be implemented by an educational institution, or by a legal entity under private law which meets specific standards (see Chapter VII). After authorisation, the entity can apply for state funding in certain priority areas, and these are specified and approved by the MoES on a yearly basis. Compared to state funding, contributions to VET by the private sector/employers, donors or the learners themselves are very limited.

A reform project entitled “Diversified Financing Mechanisms in Vocational Education” was launched in 2019 with support from the UK Good Governance Fund GGF. Performance-based funding models were developed as part of this project alternative⁹⁶. One major outcome was that private TVET providers were entitled to receive voucher funding in priority areas for the first time in 2019. This enabled 234 vocational students from private vocational education institutions to receive state funding that year⁹⁷. Moreover, amendments were made regarding the administrative costs of higher education institutions implementing vocational education programmes. Voucher financing now also enables higher education institutions' administrative costs to be covered. This was not permitted under the previous funding approach.

Table 1: State expenditure on VET by type

Type	2018 (EUR ⁹⁸)	2019 (EUR)	2020 (EUR)
Voucher financing	3,521,291.02 €	4,701,387.67 €	6,057,373.86 €
of which public	3,521,291.02 €	4,686,451.48 €	5,547,671.64 €
of which private	0.00 €	15,010.88 €	509,702.22 €
Targeted programmes	3,203,161.20 €	4,506,468.55 €	4,360,113.46 €
Training and re-training	0.00 €	79,969.35 €	193,387.65 €
Total:	6,724,452.22 €	9,287,825.57 €	10,610,874.97 €

Source: Own presentation, based on data provided by MoES in February 2021, amounts converted to EUR.

Public expenditure on VET increased by 173% in the period between 2013-2016, which reflects the growing interest of the Georgian Government in this sector⁹⁹. The VET budget of more than EUR 8.6 million represented around 3% of overall state expenditure on education in 2017 (see Table 1). After a decline in 2018 to EUR 6.7 million, public expenditure rose to EUR 9.2 million in 2019, and to a new peak of EUR 10.6 million in 2020.

Particularly the areas of private voucher financing and training/retraining show a significant proportional increase. Public voucher financing has also been substantially expanded.

⁹⁶ Deasy, O. et al. (2019). [Policy Options for VET Financing in Georgia](#)

⁹⁷ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2020)

⁹⁸ At the time when the study was prepared, the exchange rate was 1GEL= 0.2489 EUR.

⁹⁹ Tserodze, I. et al. (2019)

Private expenditure

Credible data is available neither on expenditure on ALE for private households, nor on investments by private companies in Georgia. All learners can study free of charge at public VET institutions; the tuition fee is covered by state vouchers. Education at private institutions is usually financed through a mixture of state funding (for education in priority sectors) and private payments made by the participants¹⁰⁰.

Donors

Georgia received substantial multilateral and bilateral donor support in the development of its VET system (see Chapter X). The EU has been the biggest donor to VET in Georgia over the course of three programme phases since 2009. The EU invested a total of EUR 97 million in budget support and technical assistance in the context of employment, VET sector reform and skills development¹⁰¹. A loan agreement of EUR 41.2 million with the Asian Development Bank for “Modern Skills for Better Jobs-VET sector development programme” is currently under preparation at multilateral level, and is expected to start by 2021¹⁰². Another important initiative is a loan of EUR 82.5 million from the World Bank for the Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project.

Amongst bilateral donors, the UK Government provided EUR 41.2 million through its Good Gov-

ernance Fund (GGF), which funded three large projects that are currently being implemented by the World Bank, the British Council and PricewaterhouseCoopers. The projects focus on VET teaching, public-private partnership mechanisms and short-term vocational education programmes in higher education institutions. On behalf of BMZ, GIZ spent EUR 30 million on its regional Private Sector Development and TVET Programme in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Millennium Challenge Account implemented its Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development project between 2014 and 2019, with a budget of EUR 13.2 million provided by the US Government. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation is providing a budget of EUR 10.7 million between 2013 and 2022 for the “Modernisation of VET in Agriculture” project, implemented by UNDP, to support work-based learning in agriculture. Finally, a new project funded by the government of Denmark entitled “Inclusive Labour Markets for Job Creation in Georgia” is currently being implemented by the International Labour Office with a budget of EUR 3.7 million.

DVVI, the biggest player in ALE in Georgia, has been providing financial support to 13 Adult Education Centres across the country. Its financial support covers mainly institutional and administrative costs, as well as a small amount of programme costs. DVVI invested almost three million Euro from 2019 to 2021 in support of AECs and the development of the AE sector. Other main sources of funding for the AECs come from local municipalities, other donor organisations and the revenues from paid courses.

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Education and Science, Information Portal vet.ge, [Vocational Education Funding](#) website

¹⁰¹ Bardak, U. (2020). [Policies for Human Development Georgia. An ETF Torino Process Assessment](#).

European Training Foundation

¹⁰² Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2020)

Table 2: Summary of donor funding

Donor	Programme	Period	Amount
ADB	Modern Skills for Better Jobs	2021 onwards	EUR 41.2 million
Danish Government	Inclusive Labour Markets for Job Creation in Georgia	2020 onwards	EUR 3.7 million
DVVI	Adult Education Centres	2019 to date	EUR 3 million
EU	Skills4Jobs	2009 to date	EUR 97 million
GIZ	Private Sector Development	2013 to date	EUR 30 million
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation	Modernisation of VET in Agriculture	2013-2022	EUR 10.7 million
UK GGF	VET teaching, PPP mechanisms and short-term VET programmes in higher education institutions	2015-2023	EUR 41.2 million
US Government, Millennium Challenge Account	Industry-led Skills and Workforce Development project	2014-2019	EUR 13.2 million
World Bank	Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project	2019-2026	EUR 82.5 million

Source: Own presentation.

VI. Institutions and providers

Professional associations

The Georgian representation of DVV International is the major non-governmental stakeholder and leading professional organisation in the adult education sector. DVVI opened its office in Tbilisi in 2002, and today implements numerous projects financed by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, the German Federal Foreign Office, the EU and UN agencies¹⁰³. DVVI's main objective is to support the development of a fully-fledged system of adult education, especially in the area of non-formal education. It does so by supporting the institutional development of national AE institutions, by implementing non-formal education projects addressing poverty and sustainable environment protection, and by raising awareness among politicians and citizens about the importance of AE for societal development. DVVI managed to transfer many activities to the digital domain in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent activities included online training for trainers of AECs, online training for employees of the MoES VET department and AE division and NCEQE on approaches to distance learning¹⁰⁴.

DVVI initiated the establishment of the first Adult Education Centres (AEC) in Georgia (see below), and of the Georgian Adult Education Network¹⁰⁵. GAEN was established in 2014, and is

a combination of 13 AECs. The network strives to anchor the principles of LLL and adult education in Georgian society, and to involve local and national political stakeholders. Moreover, GAEN implements training sessions and workshops for the professional development of its member organisations, and develops training material. It has recently launched a comprehensive website¹⁰⁶ which brings together information about all available adult training opportunities in various regions of Georgia. The portal currently contains information on 241 organisations and 2,496 courses. Not surprisingly, the majority (79%) of these courses are available in the capital city of Tbilisi.

GAEN, in cooperation with 9 AEC, was authorised in 2020 to implement the vocational training programme entitled “Basic Tailoring”, and to issue state-approved certificates for participants who successfully completed the course¹⁰⁷.

The remainder of this section provides an overview of other major providers of ALE in Georgia. These are grouped into private, public and non-governmental/non-profit organisations. It should be noted that the majority of the providers discussed below do not focus on providing non-formal or informal adult education only, but rather they have a diverse profile, also including courses for the adult population.

¹⁰³ [DVVI Georgia](#) website

¹⁰⁴ [DVVI Georgia news](#) website

¹⁰⁵ [GAEN](#) website

¹⁰⁶ <https://dvv.gaen.org/ge/en>

¹⁰⁷ DVVI Georgia website article [Lifelong learning and the state-approved certificate](#), September 2020

Private or commercial providers

Private universities

There are 82 universities in Georgia, 30 of which provide all levels of higher education training, including Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral programmes¹⁰⁸. The remaining universities are so-called "teaching universities" – meaning that they do not engage in doctoral training and research. The majority (63) of the 82 universities are private.

Apart from teaching regular academic courses, only a few universities in Georgia provide extra-curricular adult education courses. Some of the private universities operate career development centres for their students and graduates. For instance, the Georgian-American University¹⁰⁹ and the University of Georgia¹¹⁰ provide a somewhat advanced set of services. They maintain online databases of their students'/graduates' CVs, as well as a database of vacancies sourced by their partner employers. This enables students or employers to easily search for vacancies or employees, respectively. On top of this, the career centres of these universities carry out regular training series (for example on CV writing or preparation for job interviews) and events (e.g. job forums) to better facilitate their students' labour market integration. Caucasus University operates a training centre which provides a wide range of courses for students and adults alike¹¹¹. It operates on a commercial basis, and develops training programmes in accordance with its clients' requirements.

¹⁰⁸ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, [Authorised Higher Education Institutions](#) website

¹⁰⁹ [Georgian-American University](#) website

¹¹⁰ [University of Georgia](#) website

¹¹¹ [Caucasus University](#) website

¹¹² Posadas, J. et al. (2018). [Georgia at Work: Assessing the Jobs Landscape](#)

¹¹³ Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia (2020). [Survey of Businesses' Demand for Skills](#)

¹¹⁴ [TBC Bank IT Academy](#) website

Employers and companies

Companies and employers make a very modest contribution to adult education in Georgia. Small and medium-sized companies are facing difficulty with workforce training, which is difficult for them to afford¹¹². Larger companies have a clear advantage in this respect, as they have much more resources for in-house training. However, not many of them are yet investing in workforce development. According to a study by the Ministry of Economics and Sustainable Development, only 8% of the enterprises surveyed provided training to their employees¹¹³. This primarily included companies in wholesale and retail trade, construction and health and social work activities.

Some prominent examples include:

- The Goodwill training centre, which is run by the large supermarket chain Goodwill. It operates to prepare managers for the company, as well as to provide continuous training for staff.
- The TBC Bank IT Academy¹¹⁴ – The academy offers courses to interested individuals in several IT fields, specifically: front-end development, back-end development, Android mobile development, IOS mobile development, UX research and Strategy and Test Automation. It also runs a programme in "Risk Management" for final-year university students who wish to study the field and seek a career in a TBC bank. It is important to note that all the training activities at the Academy are offered for free.

- The Tegeta Academy¹¹⁵ established by Tegeta Motors – a leading automotive company in the Southern Caucasus region. The Academy is primarily focused on recruiting and training young talents for the 26 member companies of the Tegeta Motors holding. The Tegeta Academy provides studies of authorised professional programmes related to motor vehicles, crash re-training courses, student seminars and training with participation of the international partners. It also carries out professional re-training of employees.

It is important to note that several companies have established joint training companies together with the MoES. For instance, college “Construct2” (construction company “m2 development”), Railway transport college (Georgian Railway Company), Adventure Tourism School (Mountain Tourism Development Company). These colleges operate as public-private partnerships, in which the State, represented by the MoES, and the private company each hold a 50% share.

Public providers

VET Schools

VET is provided by both public and private colleges in Georgia. Compared with other countries, provision of VET at private institutions is quite important in Georgia¹¹⁶. There are total of 67 VET colleges in the country, 17 of which are public, 44 are private, and 6 represent public-private

partnerships – colleges established jointly by the MoES and the private companies¹¹⁷. The student intake of private providers is lower than that of public providers, primarily owing to the lack of access to public funding in previous years. Since 2019, however, private TVET providers have been involved in voucher financing within the priority areas for the first time. 234 vocational students from private vocational education institutions received state funding¹¹⁸.

It is important to mention, however, that VET still remains largely unpopular compared to higher education. VET is considered as a second choice behind academic pathways that lead to higher education. Enrolment in VET has also been decreasing. For instance, the share of VET students in upper secondary education fell from 14.6% in 2013 to 8.8% in 2017¹¹⁹. Increasing enrolment in VET courses is therefore one of the specific targets set by the MoES.

There are several sectorial associations in Georgia which are cooperating closely with the VET department, and have taken on the role of coordinating dual VET programmes in their field. These include the Georgian Farmers’ Association and the Winemakers Association¹²⁰. They are also often involved in developing educational curricular in cooperation with VET colleges. Another example is the Packaging Manufacturers Association of Georgia (PMAG)¹²¹, which together with the Georgian Technical University Training Centre have been involved in developing the vocational education courses in their industry.

¹¹⁵ [Tegeta Academy](#) website

¹¹⁶ ETF (2020). [Georgia – Education, Training and Employment Developments 2020](#)

¹¹⁷ Ministry of Education and Science, [Vocational Education Institutions](#) website

¹¹⁸ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2020), p. 13

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ [Packaging Manufacturers Association of Georgia](#) website

Public universities

Just like the private universities, the public universities are also engaged in supporting their students' career development. For instance, two of the most prominent public universities, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) and the Ilia State University, run career development centres. Career counsellors in these centres primarily provide job mediation and matching services. Large numbers of students, limited vacancies and limited numbers of staff in the career services are obviously major challenges faced by these universities. They are nevertheless setting a good example for other universities in Georgia, which currently do not provide any kind of employment services to their students.

The TSU centre for Lifelong learning¹²² deserves a particular mention, as it is active in providing various training courses for adults (including but not limited to their own students). The LLL centre has shifted to online training activities since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the most recent online courses offered by the centre include: leading technologies in improving the quality of medical services, food security and inspection.

Youth centres/councils

A good example of municipal engagement in youth development is Tbilisi City Hall. The Department of Youth and Education within the City Hall is in charge of operating the National Youth Palace¹²³ and the Youth Houses¹²⁴. These represent the public hubs for the provision of NFE to

young people. The National Youth Palace has already been operating for 79 years, and currently it caters for young people aged 6 to 26. According to the latest statistics, 4,500 students were registered in various classes at the Palace. The National Youth Palace provides free courses in Georgian language, literature and folklore. It also offers free psychological consultation, participation in musical bands and various clubs (book club, creative club). In addition to these, the Palace runs a range of fee-based courses in foreign languages, maths and technology, architecture and engineering, social sciences, audio-visual art, choreography and musical classes. Similar programmes are provided at Youth Houses in various districts of Tbilisi.

State institutions

The **Georgian Innovation and Technology Agency** (GITA) provides IT and digital skills training to the public. These include training in innovation management, IT project management and courses in different programming languages such as Android, Java, iOS, PHP, Python, etc. With the aid of the World Bank, GITA created "Community Innovation Centres" where they develop broadband fibre Internet connections for all, so that everyone in the community has access to the Internet through these centres. GITA regularly organises IT competitions, start-up opportunities and internships for university graduates in the field of IT.

The **Academy of the Ministry of Finance** (MoF)¹²⁵ was initially established to provide con-

¹²² [TSU Centre for Lifelong Learning](#) Facebook profile

¹²³ [Youth Palace](#) website

¹²⁴ [Youth Houses](#) website

¹²⁵ [Academy of the Ministry of Finance](#) website

tinued professional development opportunities to the staff of the Ministry and of Legal Entities under Public Law (LEPL) within the Ministry's portfolio. As of today, the Academy operates as a formal training provider for any interested stakeholder. It offers training in four main directions: finance, management, legislation and skills. The latter refers to training in soft skills, and offers a wide variety of courses such as: presentation skills, development of emotional intellect, gender equality, a package of IT courses such as Word, Excel, PowerPoint, etc. The MoF Academy has implemented several projects in cooperation with NGOs and the donor community. For instance, in partnership with UN Women, it has provided training to female entrepreneurs in financial literacy. With donor support, the academy plans and implements various types of social projects each year which serve to promote student employment, improve the qualifications of various vulnerable groups, and economically empower women.

The **Training Centre of the Ministry of Justice** was established in 2001.¹²⁶ Its main function is to train staff as well as newly recruited personnel in the Ministry of Justice. Apart from training, it also carries out testing of the applicants to public sector jobs (for instance, applicants who would like to start working at City Hall). Training is carried out in four directions: social, legal, IT and financial. In addition, there are special training courses designed for specific audiences. For instance, special courses (29 in total) have been designed for local municipality staff. These cover all topics related to the operation of the municipality.

The **National Centre for Teacher Professional Development (TPDC)**¹²⁷ is a legal entity under public law within the portfolio of the MoES. It aims to improve the quality of teaching and learning at schools through continued training and development of teachers' professional knowledge, as well as professional standards for teacher development. The centre is open to teachers from public as well as private educational institutions, and provides both various structured and unstructured programmes for them (see also Chapter IX).

Non-profit providers and charitable interest groups

As mentioned earlier, non-profit organisations (mainly NGOs) are important providers of NFE in Georgia. Other actors such as trade unions, professional organisations and foundations only play a marginal role.

Adult education centres

There are a total of 13 AECs operating in eight regions of Georgia today. These include centres in the following locations:

- Kvemo Kartli region: Koda (Tetrtskaro municipality), Marneuli (Marneuli municipality) and Bolnisi (Bolnisi municipality)
- Kakheti region: Leliani (Lagodekhi)
- Samegrelo – Zemo Svaneti region: Jvari (Tsalenjikha municipality) and Senaki (Senaki municipality)
- Guria region: Chokhatauri (Chokhatauri municipality)

¹²⁶ [Training Centre of the Ministry of Justice](#) website

¹²⁷ [National Centre for Teacher Professional Development](#) website

- Adjara region: Keda (Keda municipality)
- Samegrelo-Zemlechkhvili region: Akhaltsikhe (Akhaltsikhe municipality) and Akhalkalaki (Akhalkalaki municipality)
- Racha-Kvemo Svaneti region: Ambrolauri (Ambrolauri municipality)
- Imereti region: Kharagauli (Kharagauli municipality) and Khoni (Khoni municipality)

The centres' operation was made possible through funds from the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development, along with financial assistance from local municipalities and a number of local and international donors¹²⁸.

AECs are flexible resource institutions established in accessible places, open to people of all ages and available seven days a week. The centres plan their activities based on the requests, requirements and current needs of local people. AECs follow holistic educational approaches with the purpose of preparing learners to meet the challenges of daily life. Beneficiaries can select courses from an Adult Learning Package, with a diverse range of training programmes, each with a different nature and direction which complement and enrich each other:

1. Personal Development Programme (transversal skills such as languages, IT, accountancy, job search skills, successful communication and presentation, cooperation and conflict management)
2. Vocational Education (short-term professional courses based on learning by doing methodology)
3. Cultural Education (exhibitions, theatre performances, art workshops)

¹²⁸ DVVI Georgia (2017)

¹²⁹ DVVI Georgia (2017)

4. Civic Education (public lectures, discussions and debates, training in advocacy and lobbying, critical thinking, implementation of community projects)
5. Entrepreneurship Education
6. Financial Literacy (training for families using games, services for community members on relations with banks, loans and credits, family savings)
7. Sport and Health Education
8. Social Mentorship Programme
9. Psycho-social Support Services
10. Legal Counselling

The AECs' mission is to provide lifelong learning opportunities to all citizens regardless of class, gender, education, age, religion or nationality. More than 200,000 beneficiaries have attended the educational courses offered at the AECs since 2006. Apart from the immediate results (such as increasing employment opportunities), the course offered at the AECs has an additional positive impact on the local communities such as facilitating integration (ethnic minorities and internally-displaced people become more integrated into local communities), bringing hope and confidence to the community members, and serving as an important anchor to civic, educational, business and other initiatives. Even more so, these centres have become a linking point to other governmental or non-governmental actors and programmes¹²⁹.

Trade unions

When it comes to trade unions, the major player is the Georgian Confederation of the Trade Union Association (GTUC), which is an umbrella

organisation counting 21 sectorial trade unions as its members. Their human and financial resources are however rather limited, and almost none of them report that they offer regular training courses for their members¹³⁰. A notable exception is the Educators' & Scientists' Free Trade Union of Georgia (ESFTUG), which strives to provide professional development opportunities to its members. The latter are primarily teachers from public secondary schools. The projects and programmes offered by ESFTUG to its members are contingent on donor funding since the union's budget raised through membership fees is not enough to serve all 32,000 members¹³¹.

Professional organisations

Just like trade unions, professional organisations are only marginally active in providing adult education. Again, there are notable exceptions. Some of the most active professional associations include HR associations such as HR Hub¹³² and the HR Professionals Association (HRPA)¹³³. Both of them place a particular focus on providing professional development opportunities for their members.

For instance, HRPA organises training courses, seminars and conferences on the most important issues related to the field of human resources. Most recently it has carried out online training regarding the changes in the Labour Code and its implications for the work of HR professionals. In addition to training provided to members, the HR Hub operates an innovative project "HR Hub Next" for future HR professionals. This pro-

ject started in 2018, and is open to any person interested in becoming an HR professional. Ten classes are held over the course of two months, during which the participants are assigned an individual mentor who provides individual guidance and counselling. The association also provides support in finding future job opportunities for their programme participants. The course fee is GEL 295 (EUR 98).

Another example from the social field is the Georgian Social Workers' Association (GASW)¹³⁴. Established in 2004, GASW has been at the forefront of developing the social work profession in Georgia. Given this focus, they provide regular training and seminars for social work professionals as well as other interested stakeholders on topics related to social work and social policy.

NGOs and foundations

NGOs and civil society organisations in general are among the major providers of adult education. It is nonetheless important to note that ALE is seldom the main focus of these organisations. The vast majority of NGOs operate in a specific field (e.g. youth empowerment, gender issues, human rights, economic development, etc.), and different types of training feature to a greater or lesser extent within the course of their projects or programmes. Training topics differ according to the field of NGO activity. The table below provides an overview of fields of activity along with examples of such active NGOs and typical training courses.

¹³⁰ [Georgian Confederation of the Trade Union Association](#) website

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² [HR Hub](#) website

¹³³ [HR Professionals Association](#) website

¹³⁴ [Georgian Social Workers' Association](#) website

Table 3: Fields of NGO activity in Georgia

Field of activity	Key organisations in the field	Typical training activities
Children & Youth Empowerment	World Vision Georgia (WVG) UN Association of Georgia (UNAG) Association "Atinati"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leadership - Public speaking - Communication - Time management
Female economic empowerment	Taso Foundation UN Women CHCA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparing grant proposals - Developing business plans - Vocational training in various fields
Agricultural development	CNFA Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Georgian Farmers' Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preparing grant proposals - Developing business plans - Pitching - Presentation skills
Education	Education, Development and Employment Centre (EDEC) Georgian Association for Education Initiatives	Various types of vocational and transversal skills training

Source: Own presentation.

Apart from the NGOs, there are number of well-known training institutions with long-standing experience in civic education which provide non-formal training to Georgian citizens of all ages. The most prominent example is the Centre for Training & Consultancy (CTC)¹³⁵, which provides training,

consultation and facilitation services to all interested stakeholders. The training content covers: civil society development, good governance, education and entrepreneurship. CTC emphasises that its training activities are designed in full compliance with adult learning principles.

¹³⁵ [Centre for Training & Consultancy website](#)

VII. Programmes

The vast majority of adult education and learning programmes in Georgia operate within the framework of vocational education:

- Vocational education programmes
- Vocational training and retraining programmes
- Short-term training and retraining courses for job-seekers
- Other programmes independent of qualification but liberal in their subject matter such as community participation, civic education and cultural programmes

The new 2018 Law on Vocational Education distinguishes between two types of education programme: vocational education programmes and vocational training and re-training programmes. Both programmes are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science, and both can be considered types of formal education in the sense that they lead to certification which is recognised by the state.

Vocational education programmes are implemented by institutions with official education status, which comprise general education institutions, vocational education institutions and higher education institutions (all have to be authorised by the NCEQE according to the Law on Development of Educational Quality, Article 8.1). 119 authorised VET providers existed in Georgia in 2019: 9 general education schools (all private), 87 VET colleges (20 public, 67 private) and 23 HEI (14 public, 9 private). The intake of participants is higher in public schools, but with the revision of the general funding scheme by MoES in

2019, private institutions are also entitled to profit from public funding. The measure is expected to increase enrolment at private institutions¹³⁶. Enrolment in vocational education programmes usually precedes a person's entry to the labour market.

All VET programmes have been modularised and aligned with NQF descriptors since 2019, meaning that they lead to qualifications which allow students to continue education at a higher level. VET programmes are designed at the level of providers. All educational programmes must comply with the legal framework and with the criteria specified in the respective occupational standards. Occupational standards define the tasks and duties that employers should perform in a given occupation and the skills required of employees. The system of quality assurance requires all providers to carry out annual self-assessments. VET programmes can be broken down into four different types¹³⁷:

- Basic vocational education programme (reflecting NQF level 3)
- Secondary vocational education programme (reflecting NQF level 4)
- Higher vocational education programme (reflecting NQF level 5)
- Short-cycle programme (reflecting NQF level 5)

Short-cycle programmes have been introduced only recently to facilitate the transition from the secondary VET educational level to higher education. Upon successful completion of a short-cycle programme, participants are

¹³⁶ ETF (2020), p. 7

¹³⁷ Tserodze, I. et al. (2019), p. 11

awarded credits and a so-called ‘associate degree’ which entitles them to continue education in a Bachelor’s programme. The credits also count towards the Bachelor’s programme (in a short-cycle programme, students can earn up to 180 out of the 240 credits needed to complete a Bachelor’s programme).

Work-based learning schemes and dual programmes have received greater support and attention in recent years in order to bring about greater alignment between the provision of education and labour market needs, and to increase private sector involvement in VET. The number of dual programmes increased from 3 in 2016 to 29 in 2019. 13 educational institutions and 51 companies were engaged in providing dual programmes in 2019¹³⁸.

Whereas vocational education programmes target young people prior to entering the labour market, **vocational training and re-training programmes** target adults who have already entered the labour market and who are interested in continuing education and professionalisation. These programmes were launched by the MoES in 2019 in order to offer possibilities for development from a lifelong learning perspective, and to help formalise the professional training and re-training of adults¹³⁹. As well as serving employment and entrepreneurship goals, the programmes aim to contribute to personal development and self-realisation within the context of lifelong learning¹⁴⁰.

Vocational training and re-training programmes are short-term and flexible in nature; courses can be completed within 3 to 4 months, also part-time (e.g. alongside regular working hours).

This enables the programmes to respond to immediate labour market needs. Vocational training and re-training programmes can be anchored at levels 2 to 5 of the NQF. The learning outcomes of vocational training and re-training programmes do not have to be fully aligned with the NQF. Vocational training and re-training programmes addressing priority areas defined by the government are supported with public funds.

Programmes of vocational training and re-training can be implemented by actors outside the formal education system (private training centres, associations, small enterprises, NGOs). This means that the providing institution is not required to have official educational status, but it must be authorised to implement the programme and award the qualification. Authorisation not only ensures a basic level of quality in such cases, but also reflects the state’s recognition of the providers. Official education institutions that already offer vocational education programmes are permitted to add short-term programmes to their portfolios without undergoing additional quality assurance stages. Around 5,000 offers for continuing VET have been created through this circle of providers since September 2019. After successfully completing the programme, participants receive certificates recognised by the state, and respective credits earned can be transferred to other VET

¹³⁸ Tserodze, I. et al. (2019), p. 16

¹³⁹ ETF (2020)

¹⁴⁰ Council of Europe (2020). [13th National Report on the implementation of the European Social Charter submitted by the Government of Georgia](#), p. 51

qualification programmes in case of continuing on the formal education path.

A comprehensive overview of vocational education, as well as of training and re-training programmes, is available on the new online portal www.vet.ge. In addition to further education opportunities, the portal provides information about VET in Georgia in general, its governance structure and other services available (such as career guidance, inclusive education and recognition of non-formal education), as well as resources for teachers and learners. Moreover, it offers a statistics section, which is still at an alpha stage of development and is currently only available in Georgian.

Another overview of professional training and re-training programmes, vocational education programmes, and possibilities for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, at three authorised certification centres where individuals can have their skills certified by the state, is provided on the online platform www.vet.emis.ge.

Short-term vocational training and re-training programmes are also specifically offered to job-seekers. The state programme entitled “**Vocational Training – Retraining and Qualification Upgrading of Job-seekers**” is implemented by the LEPL Social Service Agency and supervised by the Ministry of Internally-Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs¹⁴¹. After registering with the employment service, job-seekers can receive ALMP support in the form of counselling and informa-

tion provision, career guidance, job search assistance, mediation, job fairs, support in obtaining work experience, and training programmes. The target group is not restricted to young people, but prioritises people from disadvantaged groups, people with special needs, and ex-offenders¹⁴². Short-term and continuous VET, which has been operational since 2014, makes up the largest part of active labour market programmes in Georgia. The goal is to train registered job-seekers to be able to enter occupations for which there is currently a demand on the labour market, and thus to improve their employment opportunities. Registered job-seekers receive a state voucher (worth between GEL 1,000 and 1,500) which they can use to enrol in short-term courses offered by VET colleges. Attendance at job-seeker training increased from 500 in 2015 to more than 2,500 in 2018. However, a major problem is that the employment success of such alumni remains rather low. Only one in five attendees reports that they were able to find employment after attending a training course, a fact that points to an ongoing mismatch and between programme design and demand on the labour market¹⁴³.

A large part of adult education provision is made up of NFE programmes which are targeted at adults but do not lead to official, formal qualifications. Examples are training in education for democracy, human rights and tolerance, courses on EU integration, health protection, entrepreneurship (start-up skills), environmental protection, cultural and intercultural development. In addition, there are other specific occupational training activities aimed at further professional

¹⁴¹ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2020), p. 12

¹⁴² Tserodze, I. et al. (2019), p. 29

¹⁴³ Dekanoidze, A. (2020). [Employment policy in a development context](#). Tbilisi: Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre – EMC

development. Participants are usually awarded a symbolic certificate of attendance upon completion of these programmes. These forms of adult education are organised in training sessions, conferences, workshops, seminars, debates or fact-finding visits for example. NFE programmes for adults are offered by a wide range of providers such as national and international non-governmental organisations, companies, enterprises, public and private training providers, institutes, libraries and chambers (see Chapter VI).

An interviewee from the MoES stressed that Georgia has improved tailor-made offers for its citizens with the distinction that has been made between vocational education and on-the-spot vocational training. There are programmes that focus on youth needs and on adults' needs. Since there is as yet no age limitation for the two target groups, both can enter each of the two tracks. Having said that, in order to enhance young people's opportunities to attend diploma courses, MoES communication aims to direct adults to short-term courses instead of to the longer-term ones. The MoES thus hopes to prevent higher drop-out rates among adults attending longer-term courses taking away places from motivated young students.

No country-wide programme currently exists that specifically targets people of older or retirement age. Such a programme could support people in their transition from work to retirement and open new learning horizons for them. The newly-recognised importance of short-term vocational training and re-training as a complement to vocational education nonetheless has the potential to establish a culture of further and continuous on-the-job training¹⁴⁴. An emerging culture of continuous learning and diversification of programme content could spark a broader interest in further education within society and open the door to lifelong learning in practice.

¹⁴⁴ UNECE (2015)

VIII. Participation and non-participation

A detailed analysis of participation and non-participation in adult education in the Georgian context is difficult due to the lack of a comprehensive and transparent national monitoring and evaluation system. Georgia does not participate in the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), and public authorities have not yet implemented a regular, comprehensive monitoring system for adult education. The gap in statistical data hampers the evidence-based development of national policies as well as the target group-orientated alignment of adult education offers.

Only fragmented and inconsistent information currently exists about people who take part in adult education programmes. The data is however mostly reduced to formal education, participation numbers, and occasionally age groups. Virtually no information is available on the motivation to participate or not participate in programme offers, or on the participant's socio-economic background.

The “Report on the Implementation of the Vocational Education Action Plan 2019 for the Unified Strategy on Education and Science (2017-2021)” refers to a study conducted by the Georgian Statistics Service (Goestat), according to which Lifelong Learning (LLL) in the population above the age of 18 was 4.7% in 2017 and 4.2% in 2018. The report does not describe the learning activities incorporated in the calculation, e.g. whether these numbers also refer to non-formal and informal learning activities. The Georgian SDG Council provides data that indicates the “Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the last 12 months, by sex and age group – 25-64” (see Chapter IX). However, no information is provided about how the data is generated, and the electronic monitoring system does not permit the data to be filtered by sex and age groups.

Data from 2019 provides an insight into participation by adults in formal education programmes¹⁴⁵¹⁴⁶. The data on the student distribution in VET suggests that demand for VET education is almost as high among adults as it is among young people. Around 60% of all students were below the age of 24 in 2019, around 35% were between 25 and 50, and 5% were aged above 50. Adults are more likely to enrol in public VET schools, whereas the enrolment rates of younger people are higher at private schools. Overall, however, the total number of students enrolled in VET schools remains small (between 10,000 and

¹⁴⁵ Bardak, U. (2020), p. 33

¹⁴⁶ Bochorishvili, E. & Peranidze, N. (2020). [Georgia's Education Sector – Industry Overview](#). Galt & Taggart Research, p. 23

15,000), and therefore the presence of adults in VET should not be overestimated.

A tracer study on 2018 VET graduates indicates that adults above the age of 25 are mostly interested in further education in the areas of education, natural sciences and arts. In addition, adults above the age of 45 are attracted by agrarian sciences. 79% of the respondents indicated that they were working or unemployed before attending the programme, and 44% stated that they continued working at least part-time alongside their studies¹⁴⁷.

Moreover, research finds that adult demand for higher education is on the increase. While students older than 25 made up only 7% of the student body in 2009, their share almost doubled, rising to 14% in 2019¹⁴⁸. Requests for multiple diplomas in different subjects, certification at Master's level, and poor prospects on the labour market, are mentioned as reasons for the increase in demand.

DVVI and DIE Bonn Adult Education Survey (AES)

As a response to fragmentation and to gaps in statistical monitoring as well as evaluation of adult education participation (especially for non-formal and informal learning activities), DVV International and DIE Bonn jointly ran a representa-

tive adult education survey in Georgia which is conceptually aligned with the Eurostat Adult Education Survey, and which was implemented by CRRC Georgia¹⁴⁹¹⁵⁰. 4,294 people between the ages of 18 and 64 living in Georgia took part between September and November 2020 (26% from the capital, 29% from other urban areas, and 44% from rural areas). The weighted share of ethnic minority respondents was 12%¹⁵¹. The respondents were asked in the survey about their participation in formal, non-formal and informal learning in the twelve months prior to the survey. The following paragraphs summarise the central preliminary survey findings¹⁵².

Table 4 below gives an indication of the status of adult education participation in Georgia. It shows that only a small share of the survey participants aged between 18 and 64 are attending some form of formal education (7%). The share is slightly larger than the EU 27 average, and is plausible given that the EU sample excludes 18-to 24-year-olds, who are more likely to be participating in initial formal education. The generally minor significance of continuous education amongst adults becomes evident in the NFE participation rate. Only 13% of respondents had participated in some form of NFE within the past 12 months prior to the survey. This is considerably less than the EU 27 average. Informal learning is also less widespread than in the EU 27 countries on average.

¹⁴⁷ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2018). [Tracer Study of 2018 VET Programme Graduates](#), p. 8

¹⁴⁸ Bochorishvili, E. & Peranidze, N. (2020), p. 32

¹⁴⁹ Eurostat, [Adult Education Survey metadata](#) website

¹⁵⁰ Eurostat, [Adult Education Survey](#) database thread: Population and social conditions -> Education and training -> Participation in education and training -> Adult learning -> Participation in education and training (last 12 months)

¹⁵¹ Note that the inclusion of people aged between 18 and 25 in the survey sample implies that adult education for this group can be equated with initial education, whereas for older age groups AE participation relates to further education, qualification or re-qualification.

¹⁵² The survey results are in the process of publication. This study refers to information provided in the unpublished document "ADULT EDUCATION SURVEY IN GEORGIA" by CRRC Georgia.

Table 4 Adult education participation rates in Georgia compared with EU 27 averages

	Georgia (2020, aged 18-64)	EU 27 (2016 ¹ , aged 25-64; UK not included)
Formal education	7%	5.0%
Non-formal education	13%	41.4%
Informal learning	46%	59.5%

Source: Own presentation based on CRRC Georgia (2021)

It tends to be the group of young adults which makes use of adult education opportunities (see Table 5). The survey results show that participation rates are highest for young adults aged 18-24, and that participation decreases with age.

Table 5 Participation rates in AE by age groups

	Formal	Non-formal	Informal
Ages 18-24	no data available	25%	60%
Ages 25 -44	no data available	13%	49%
Ages 45-64	no data available	7%	38%

Source: Own presentation based on CRRC Georgia (2021).

The survey results show that in general only small numbers of people (17%) are looking for information about further learning opportunities. The demand for information is greater in the capital than in other urban or rural areas.

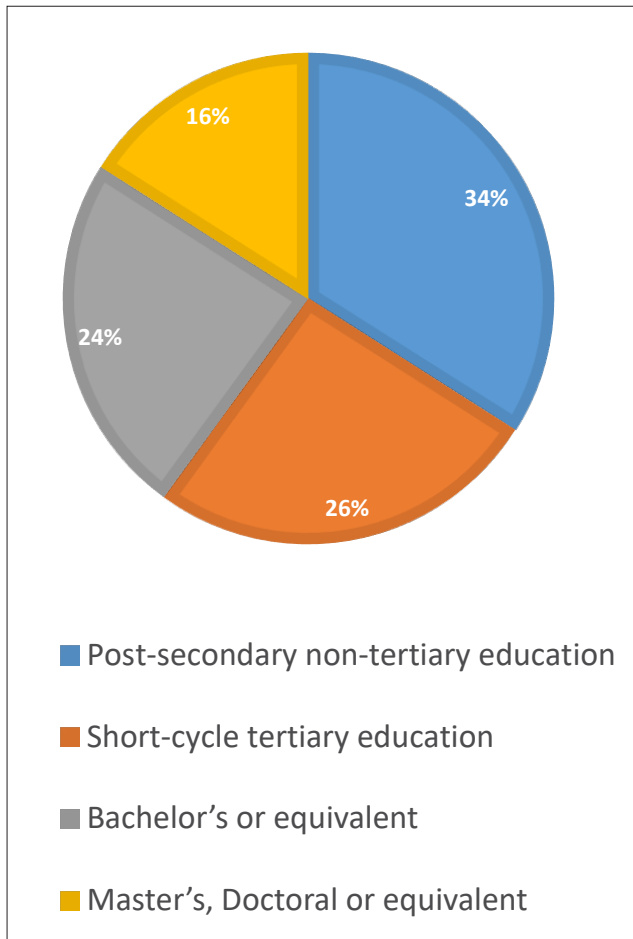
Women (21%) are more likely to seek information than men are (13%). Young people aged 18 to 24, and people outside the labour force, are most actively seeking learning opportunities (both 40%). They are more active than older age groups (19% among the those aged 25 to 44, and 7% among those aged 45 to 64), and employed people (19%). People from minority groups are less likely to seek information (10%). Moreover, people who come from households with a higher income (25%) are more likely to seek information about further education. People found the information that they were looking for in the majority of cases (81%), mostly through Internet research and via social media.

Adults in formal education

As indicated above, 7% of the survey respondents had attended some form of formal education within the past 12 months prior to the survey. More than one-third of the respondents had attended education at post-secondary non-tertiary level, and 26% had attended short-cycle tertiary education programmes.

¹⁵³ The next Europe-wide AES will be conducted in 2022.

Graph 2: Adult education enrolment levels



Source: Own presentation based on data from *CRRG Georgia (2021)*.

While the younger age group of 18- to 24-year olds is mainly involved in education at Bachelor's level or equivalent, further education at post-secondary non-tertiary level, and in short-cycle tertiary education, is more popular among the older age groups. 49% of formal education participants in the 45 to 64 age group state that they have taken part in post-secondary education, and 42% in short-cycle courses. Post-secondary non-tertiary education is also the most common choice for further education among ethnic minorities. While men are more likely to attend post-secondary non-tertiary education, a larger share of women has enrolled in short-cy-

cle tertiary courses and education programmes at Master's level. Unemployed people make greater use of educational opportunities at Bachelor's level than employed people do.

Presumably also due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, 48% of the survey respondents who attended formal education programmes report that their education programme was mainly organised online and implemented in the form of distance learning. Given the larger share of theoretical work at Bachelor's and Master's levels, it is plausible that distance learning is more likely at those levels (66%) than for post-secondary or short-cycle courses (38%).

Around 50% of participants in formal education attended the training whilst remaining in gainful employment. Among them, 15% report that the training took place during paid working hours, whilst 35% state that it took place mostly outside working hours. More than 80% of respondents from the 18 to 24 age group, and from the group which took part in education at Bachelor's level, indicate that they did not work whilst training.

Adults in NFE

The following paragraphs examine participation in NFE in greater detail. 13% of all survey respondents state that they are attending some form of NFE. The ratio of socio-economic indicators to the likelihood of participation is similar to that of participation in formal education during adulthood. The likelihood of participating in NFE activities increases with younger age; women are somewhat more likely to participate than men, and more people participate in urban than in rural areas.

The most frequent non-formal learning activity is guided on the job training (6%), followed by participation in courses (5%), workshops and seminars (5%) and private lessons (3%). Compared with other occupational skill levels, highly-skilled white-collar workers are most likely to be involved in NFE activities in general (38%), and in detail. 23% participate in guided on-the-job training, 20% in workshops or seminars, and 15% participate in courses. The data shows that the largest share among all NFE activities is job-related. Most non-formal job-related activities are sponsored by employers.

For a large share of respondents, the most important reason to engage in NFE is related to the work environment. Many people want to do their job better (49%), especially older people and white-collar workers. Improving career prospects (mentioned by 19% of the respondents) is an encouragement for people in the middle age group (aged 25 to 44) in particular. Others take part because of organisational and/or technological changes at work (12%).

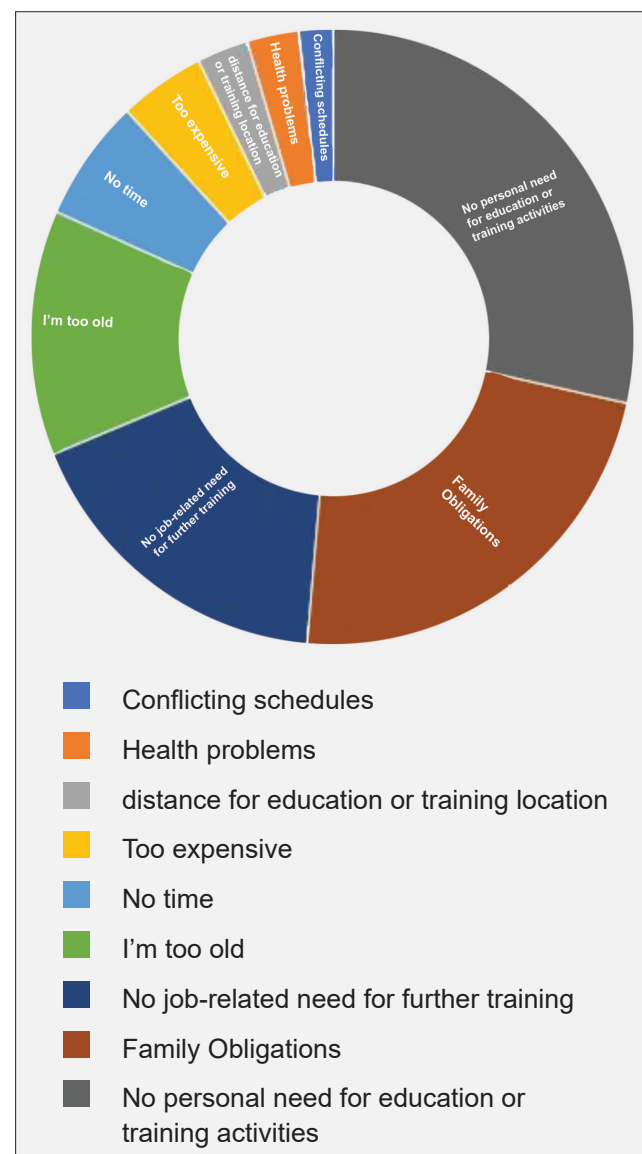
People attend NFE programmes for their personal development or for the common good to a lesser extent. 19%, especially from the younger age group, state that they would like to improve their everyday life skills; 17% wish to increase their knowledge of a topic of personal interest, whilst only 1% state that they are attending NFE activities to meet new people or for fun.

Non-participation

The respondents justify non-participation in formal and non-formal education activities with similar reasons. Primarily, people do not participate because they do not see a personal need for fur-

ther education (a reason selected by 20% to 30% of respondents). Conflicting family obligations which do not leave time for participation in further education, and no job-related need for further education, are further reasons for non-participation. Around 15% consider themselves to be too old to participate and that further education would no longer be worthwhile.

Graph 3: Reasons for non-participation in formal and non-formal education



Source: Own presentation based on data from CRRG Georgia (2021).

Adults who learn informally

Almost 50% of the survey respondents indicated that they were undergoing some form of informal learning. Informal learning is more widespread in the capital (50%) and in urban areas (48%) than in rural areas (43%). As shown in Table 6 below, respondents most frequently state that they are learning via a computer (32%). Respondents are least likely to make use of guided tours in museums or at historical, natural or industrial sites for informal learning, as only 5% of the respondents have engaged in this activity over the past 12 months prior to the survey.

Table 6 Participation in informal learning by form of learning

Form of learning	Participation rate
Learning using computers	32%
Learning from a family member, friend or colleague	30%
Learning through television/ radio/video	21%
Learning using printed material	19%
Learning by visiting learning centres (including libraries)	6%
Learning through guided tours in museums or at historical, natural or industrial sites	5%

Source: Own presentation based on data from CRRC Georgia (2021).

As shown in Table 5 above, participation in informal learning decreases with increasing age. The data shows that particularly learning with computers is still very uncommon for people aged between 45 and 64, with only 22% of people in this age group stating that they were learning using a computer, compared with 48% among the 18-24 age group. Similarly, they learn from family members, friends or colleagues (24%) much less frequently than young people do (41%).

The results from the Adult Education Survey largely reflect the impressions that were conveyed in the interviews as well. Many people are not aware of the possibilities that adult education holds for them. The population still largely associates adult education with formal education, re-training and recertification. Participants are usually highly motivated if the goal of the further training is to obtain a job or to advance further up the career ladder.

Adult education does not seem to be recognised as a serious pursuit during times of unemployment, and people do not see the chances and advantages of permanent adult education for their personal and professional development. Especially among the older generations, the assumption prevails that, in an individual's lifetime, learning and education are finished on completion of formal education. With greater flexibility required by the changing job market, young people are starting to realise that continuous education and permanent learning are becoming more and more necessary in order to survive on the labour market. AE and lifelong learning will play a much bigger role for them in the future.

Not many people in Georgia are currently participating in adult education with the "sole" motivation of personal self-development.

IX. Personnel and professionalisation

The andragogic qualification of adult educators is an essential element for the thorough development of a lifelong learning infrastructure in any educational system. The EU's Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning states that "improving the quality of adult education staff, for instance by defining competence profiles, establishing effective systems for initial training and professional development, and facilitating the mobility of teachers, trainers and other adult education staff", is necessary to improve the quality and efficiency of education and training. This implies that it is not suitable to assign teachers to adult education programmes who have been trained to teach children. Compared with children, participants in adult education already possess knowledge and skills, and can fall back on their experience. More so than teachers at primary and secondary level, adult educators therefore have to take on roles as group leaders, facilitators and trainers, a demand which places different requirements on the educators' personal and social as well as methodological and didactical competences.

The workspaces of today's adult educators include a wide range of didactical and non-didactical activities. Didactical activities include learning as well as educational counselling and planning, teaching, learning guidance, as well as developing learning and education material, and evaluation. In addition, adult educators might also engage in management and marketing tasks, public relations work, as well as educational policy committee work. The diversity of activities and focal areas of each single adult educator makes the establishment of an overarching definition of professionalisation and qualification standards in AE both difficult to achieve and crucial at the same time.

Adult educators' individual professional qualifications are generally based on formal scientific education, as well as on formal and informal further training in didactics and methods. The systematic acquisition of theory-based knowledge and practical skills is usually transmitted through the education system (which ideally offers university education for teachers on certain subjects as well as theoretical and practical training in didactics and methodology to work with adults). Formal academic education may be further expanded and consolidated individually through informal self-learning, for example from professional-scholarly communication such as websites, journals, magazines and conferences.

A professional lifelong learning environment is furthermore characterised by the existence of policy committees and professional associations which regulate and guide the process of licencing and continuing professional development (CPD). The development of the sector may be guided by common, precise professional standards and socially-mediated descriptions of expected behaviour within the domain (in the sense of desired competencies and ethics).

In combination, professional development, common (ethical) standards and societal orientation have the potential to increase public recognition of the value of adult education for society and to contribute to the general professionalisation of this area within education¹⁵⁴.

In terms of the abovementioned characteristics of a professional adult education environment (composed of laws, education, ethics and exchange), the level of professionalisation and professional de-

¹⁵⁴ Lattke, S. & Strauch, A. (2019). [Competency framework for adult educators in teaching GCED, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning](#). UNESCO Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding

velopment of AE in Georgia remains rather low, albeit there is an awareness of the problem. In its 2008 report for CONFINTEA IV, the Ministry of Education and Science underlines the need to “introduce a new type of educational strategies and approaches” for adult education¹⁵⁵. The report stressed that training and re-training in the organisation of adult education, up-to date approaches for teaching, and evaluation, would be necessary in particular.

The problem of insufficient professional development does not exist in adult education alone, but occurs in all areas of education. The Unified Strategy for Education and Science 2017-2021 acknowledges that “there is still a need to improve teachers’ qualification and to modernise the learning process”, and that “teaching is not a popular profession”; particularly teachers in the field of vocational and adult education have a low status¹⁵⁶.

For a long time, VET teachers were not required to demonstrate pedagogical knowledge. VET teacher salaries and pensions are generally low, and this in combination with the lack of a general retirement age leads to teachers working far beyond the usual retirement age. Almost half of the 3,260 teachers in vocational education were above the age of 50 in 2019. Furthermore, many teachers work part-time, and their jobs are insecure, as VET teachers are not public servants but directly employed by the schools¹⁵⁷.

Article 2 of the Law of Georgia on Vocational Education states that the state is to ensure “j) the establishment of a system of training, professional

development and career promotion of vocational education teachers” and “k) the facilitation of the mobility of [...] vocational education teachers”¹⁵⁸. Article 28, which is dedicated to vocational education teachers, however fails to determine common standards for adequate professional qualification and their regulation.

There has been some development regarding the policy and institutional landscape in continuing professional development. Vocational education and adult learning are covered in Chapter 5.3 of the Unified Strategy for Education and Science 2017-2021. This document states that:

- together with the introduction of the modular system, Georgia has started “improving teaching and assessment quality and developing teachers’ capacities”,
- the hourly wages of VET teachers have been increased by 30% via an increase in the amount of voucher funding,
- a “new model of professional development of professional education teachers” has been developed as a response.

The central actor in the area of teacher development in Georgia is the National Centre for Teacher Professional Development, which operates under the aegis of the MoES and was founded in 2006. The Centre’s aim is to “improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools through implementation of teachers’ professional knowledge and high performance standards, and by improving the status of the teaching profession”. The Centre has implemented several programmes in the past to enhance teachers’ professional qualification level. Most of these programmes however target teachers in general education schools. The programmes include the

¹⁵⁵ Ministry of Education and Science (2008)

¹⁵⁶ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2017a), p. 15

¹⁵⁷ Bardak, U. (2020), p. 10

¹⁵⁸ Legislative Herald of Georgia (2018), [Law of Georgia on Vocational Education](#)

- Non-Georgian teachers' professional development programme, which promotes state language teaching and the civil integration of ethnic minorities living in Georgia. Georgian language training is conducted by assistant teachers working on the programme¹⁵⁹.

Teach for Georgia – a programme to attract teachers to remote regions of Georgia. The programme involves selecting consultant teachers and sending them out to public schools in Georgia to fill vacancies, especially in mountainous regions. Part of the programme is to provide teachers with specially-designed training courses in teaching skills, information and communication technologies, and general education issues¹⁶⁰.

Excellence training for STEM teachers and school principals, a programme which aims to improve students' academic results in the technical fields by providing professional development for 7th-12th grade teachers of STEM subjects and public-school principals¹⁶¹.

Training programme for teaching in inclusive classes that targets secondary and also VET teachers. The course is recommended for all special teachers, psychologists and inclusive education coordinators who are employed in schools. The Centre has developed and conducted training on individual approaches to teaching vocational students with special needs which were attended by 399 vocational education teachers¹⁶².

The Centre carries out ICT training for teachers, librarians and school principals. The goal is to

ensure teachers' professional development and to improve educational environment through the integration of ICT¹⁶³.

Most teacher training programmes offered at higher education institutions aim to qualify teachers for the general education level. Some programmes also qualify their graduates to teach at vocational schools. There is as yet no programme available that is specifically designed for vocational education teachers or that has a focus on andragogical education theory. A new Master's programme entitled "Vocational Education and Human Resource Development" is however under development with support from GIZ. The Georgian Technical University, Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University and Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University were involved in the development, and plan to accredit the programme soon¹⁶⁴.

According to the 2020 ETF "Policies for Human Capital Development" review, successive changes implemented by the MoES to professionalise VET teaching included increasing the qualification requirements to become a teacher and introducing a merit-based career structure. Teachers are now required to pass exams on pedagogical and subject knowledge in order to become a senior teacher¹⁶⁵. In this context, the National Centre for Teachers' Professional Development successfully trained around 900 VET teachers in 2019 as part of the "Professional Development Programme for VET Teachers and Principals". Teachers from public TVET institutions attended training in five subject areas: teaching course for

¹⁵⁹ TPDC website article [Non-Georgian teachers' professional development programme](#), April 2017

¹⁶⁰ TPDC [Teach for Georgia project](#) website

¹⁶¹ TPDC [Training Educators for Excellence project](#) website

¹⁶² TPDC [Programme for Facilitation of Inclusive Education](#) website

¹⁶³ TPDC [Information-Communication Technologies](#) website

¹⁶⁴ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2020), p. 8

¹⁶⁵ Bardak, U. (2020), p. 46

VET teachers, individual counselling on competency-based assessment, modular teaching for beginners, development of entrepreneurial competencies, and training in enterprises¹⁶⁶. The offer of teaching awards is intended to increase the popularity of and innovation in the VET teaching profession.

The MoES has started drafting regulations on the VET teaching profession and professional development. Most of the documents have yet to reach implementation status.

According to information provided by the MoES, more than 40% of VET teachers had a Master's degree in 2019 (with a larger share of women having an MA than men). Around 35% held a Bachelor's degree, and 10% were VET graduates¹⁶⁷.

Both financially and technically, a major impetus for professionalising teaching staff in the context of adult education in Georgia comes from non-governmental and international organisations (see for example the engagement of the World Bank or ETF in Chapter X). Particular input is provided by a range of project activities implemented by DVV International¹⁶⁸.

A main focus of DVV's work in Georgia is to improve the standard of professionalisation in adult education. DVV's approach is to offer structured capacity building programmes for educators and trainers, and to include AE training programmes in the curricula of formal education¹⁶⁹. Trainers at adult education centres are selected in a multiple-stage selection process, and are hired based on experience and knowledge. Depending on

the subject, trainers have to pass written tests or provide samples of handicrafts. In addition, they have to submit their educational programme, describing learning goals and activities¹⁷⁰.

Learning from one another, as well as training and retraining of administrative and managerial staff, are encouraged through a continuous exchange among the AECs, where newer AECs can learn from more experienced ones (for example on programme and financial management, exchange of experience in collaborating with NGOs or governmental bodies, strategies to attract participants). In addition, DVVI regularly organises international exchanges with adult education experts from Adult Education Centres (Volkshochschulen) in Germany.

DVVI Georgia regularly organises training activities for trainers and administrative staff of AECs. Training topics cover AE methods, group work planning and intercultural dialogue, career planning and job skills, project management, administration, performance appraisal, monitoring and evaluation. The training is implemented online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, for example on Entrepreneurship and Business Planning or Social Mentoring.

AECs cooperate directly with local training providers in some instances. KODA AEC for example had its trainers participate in training conducted by the Centre for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia (CSR DG), an organisation which aims to strengthen the Georgian civil society sector, amongst others through consulting and training activities¹⁷¹.

¹⁶⁶ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2020), p. 8

¹⁶⁷ Tserodze, I. et al. (2019), p. 47

¹⁶⁸ DVVI Georgia (2017)

¹⁶⁹ [DVVI Georgia website](#)

¹⁷⁰ DVVI Georgia (2017)

¹⁷¹ [Centre for Strategic Research and Development of Georgia website](#)

X. The international context

State commitments to and participation in international initiatives

UNESCO commitment

In 1949, UNESCO Member States got together in Elsinore, Denmark, to discuss how ALE could help promote world peace and international understanding in the post-World War reality. That meeting became the first International Conference on Adult Education, known as CONFINTEA (CONFérence INTERNationale sur l'Education des Adultes). Six CONFINTEAs have taken place every twelve years from 1949 to 2017¹⁷². The Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), held in Belém, Brazil, in 2009, concluded with the adoption of the Belém Framework for Action. The Framework is a strategic guide defining member states' commitments, as well as the monitoring mechanisms for implementing those commitments. The Belém Framework states that the Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) should be produced at regular intervals in order to periodically report on progress in adult learning and education¹⁷³.

The GRALE presents the state of adult learning and education throughout the world. The first report was published in 2009, and served as central input for negotiations at CONFINTEA VI in Belém, Brazil. Four GRALE Reports have been published since 2009 (2009, 2013, 2016, 2019). The next GRALE is planned to be issued in 2022. GRALE monitors whether UNESCO member states are exercising their international ALE com-

mitments in practice. It combines policy analysis, case studies and survey data, and reflects the status of ALE in the world based on the reports submitted to the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning by the member countries¹⁷⁴.

Georgia joined UNESCO in 1992. It has submitted five National Reports – in 2008, 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2020 – as its contribution to the GRALE reports. The 2008 report on the “Development and State of the Art of Adult learning and Education”¹⁷⁵, prepared by the MoES, covered the topics of policy, legislation and financing, discussed the quality of ALE, its provision, participation and achievements, and presented research and good practices as well as expectations and future perspectives of ALE in Georgia. In anticipation of CONFINTEA VI, the report listed priority issues for ALE in Georgia. These included the provision of adult learning opportunities for different risk groups (refugees, national minorities, persons with special needs, etc.), the development of a strategy of lifelong learning, the introduction of constant statistical recording, the elaboration of a National Qualification Framework with mechanisms for recognising informal education, popularisation of and advocacy for ALE, the development of andragogy as a science and a profession, the creation of a unified information and consultation system/network of adult education in the country, as well as the acknowledgement of general and civil adult education in parallel with

¹⁷² UNESCO UIL, [International Conferences on Adult Education \(CONFINTEA\)](#) website

¹⁷³ UNESCO UIL (2010). [CONFINTEA VI. Belém Framework for Action](#)

¹⁷⁴ UNESCO UIL, [Global Report – GRALE](#) website

¹⁷⁵ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2008)

the recognition of adult formal and informal professional education and training.

As a follow-up to CONFINTEA VI, national progress reports were submitted by national governments in preparation for the GRALE and the end of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD). In accordance with the commitments stated in the Belém Framework for Action, the survey template provided by UNESCO was filled in and submitted in 2012 by the MoES¹⁷⁶. The report reveals once more that “Adult Education in Georgia is not officially defined and regulated on the legislative level”. The Ministry refers to the recently developed Strategy for the Development of Vocational Education, which “[...] takes into consideration the principles of the EU Memorandum on ‘Lifelong Learning’, promotes the development of non-formal and informal education along with formal education, and creates recognition mechanisms for adults”. No specific activities are mentioned within the framework of the UNLD in the report.

Monitoring survey results for Georgia for the 3rd Global Report were submitted in 2015¹⁷⁷. Among the most significant indicators of progress in ALE since 2009, the national report mentions the adoption of various political and legal documents such as the 2014 policy document entitled “Continuing Vocational Training in Eastern Europe – Validation of Non-Formal/Informal Learning”, and adopted and a executed strategy of professional education (developed in 2009-2012 with the assistance of the EU), an order to recognise NFE (developed and ratified in 2011), the Social-Economic Strategy of Georgia “Geogia-2020”, as well

as the “Strategic Direction of the Development of the Education and Science” from 2014.

The GRALE 4 survey was conducted in 2018, and the results were reflected in the 4th Global Report “Leave no one behind: Participation, equity and inclusion” published in 2019¹⁷⁸. The national report for GRALE 4, as well as the national report for GRALE 5 (scheduled to be published in 2022), were both not publicly available online at the time when this study was being researched.

Commitment to Global Goals

The UN’s Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Quality Education aims to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”¹⁷⁹. SDG 4 has seven targets, three of which relate to ALE (Table 7). The Georgian Government set up the Sustainable Development Goals Inter-Agency Council in order to facilitate the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs. Based on the Decree of the Prime Minister dated 23 January 2020, the SDGs Council was separated from the Public Administration Reform Council, and was established as a stand-alone body¹⁸⁰. The SDGs Council is responsible for compiling data on SDG indicators, which is published through an electronic monitoring system on a website specifically designed for SDG reporting¹⁸¹. SDG 4 targets related to ALE and their respective indicators are presented in Table 7 below. Some targets and indicators were adjusted in their formulation in line with the Georgian national context by the SDG Council¹⁸². These are marked as national indicators.

¹⁷⁶ Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (2012). [Follow-up of CONFINTEA VI National Progress Report](#)

¹⁷⁷ UNESCO UIL, [GRALE 3 Monitoring survey results for Georgia](#)

¹⁷⁸ UNESCO UIL (2019). [4th Global Report on Adult Learning and Education](#)

¹⁷⁹ United Nations, [SGD 4 website](#)

¹⁸⁰ Institute for Development of Freedom of Information, website article [Amendments to the Rules of Operation of the SDGs Council in Georgia](#), February 2020

¹⁸¹ Web portal [sdg.gov.ge](#)

¹⁸² Web portal [sdg.gov.ge](#) tracker [Goal 4 – Quality Education](#)

Table 7: SDG 4 targets relevant to ALE, with global and adjusted national indicators

SDG 4 Targets (related to ALE)	Indicators
4.3. By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university	<p>4.3.1. Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex</p> <p>National Indicators</p> <p>4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the past 12 months, by sex and age group (25-64)</p> <p>4.3.b.1 Number of refugees and persons with humanitarian status included in the “state programme on professional/vocational education, training and increasing qualification for job-seekers”</p> <p>4.3.c.1 Percentage of prison inmates by sex who are engaged in education (including higher education) and/or vocational training programmes</p>
4.4. By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship	<p>4.4.1. Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill</p> <p>National Indicators</p> <p>4.4.1.1 Percentage of employed/self-employed VET graduates</p> <p>4.4.1.2 Percentage of employed/self-employed graduates of higher education</p>
4.6. By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy	<p>4.6.1. Proportion of population in a given age group achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex</p> <p>National Indicator</p> <p>4.6.1 Percentage of youth (15-24) and adolescents (15 years and older) achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex</p>

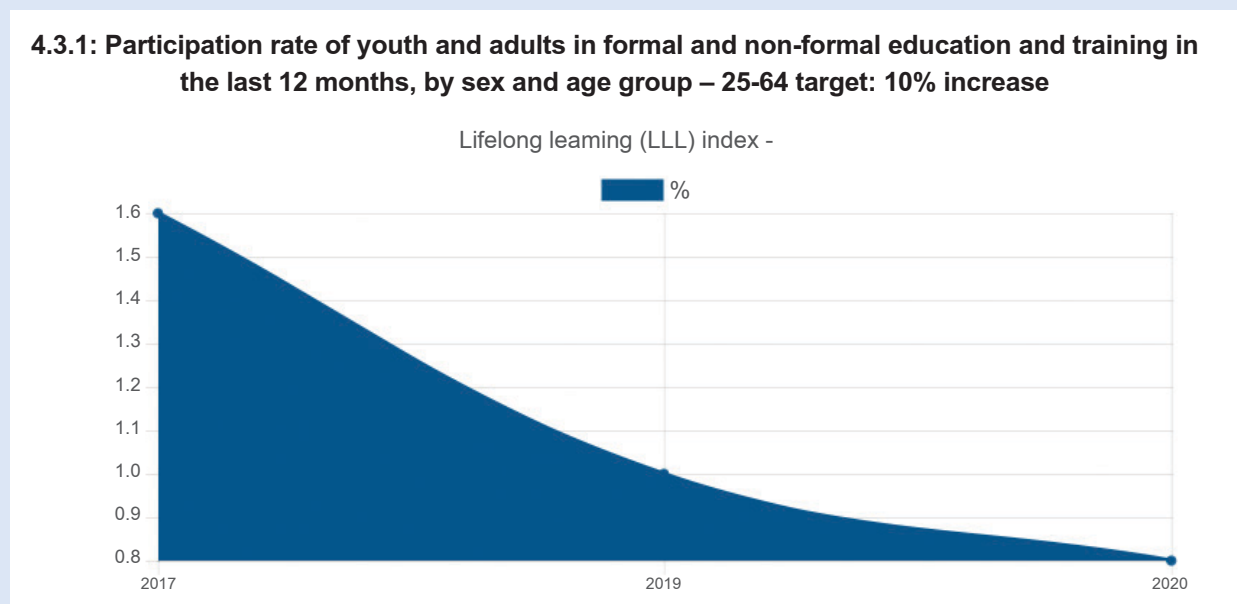
Source: Own presentation based on data from the Georgia SDG web portal www.sdg.gov.ge.

According to adjusted national indicator 4.3.1, the participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training is measured through the Lifelong Learning Index. Although the target is to achieve a 10% increase, the data provided by the SDG Council¹⁸³ shows that there was a reduction in the percentage from 1.6% to 0.8% between 2017 and 2020 (see Graph 4). The further decrease in 2020 can be attributed to the closure of schools and other education facilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The electronic monitoring system does not permit data to be filtered by sex and age groups, nor does it provide information about how data for this indicator is collected¹⁸⁴.

After a continuous increase over the past decade, the level of proficiency in functional literacy and numeracy skills in turn reached almost 100% among the population aged 10 and above in 2019 (see Graph 5)¹⁸⁵. Similar to the drop in NFE participation rates, the decrease in literacy rates in 2020 can be attributed to impeded learning conditions due to COVID-19. Here too, the electronic monitoring system does not allow data to be filtered by sex and age groups.

The country has submitted two **Voluntary National Review (VNR)** reports to the UN, in 2016¹⁸⁶ and 2020¹⁸⁷, since the SDGs were adopted in Georgia. The reviews reflect the

Graph 4: Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training



Source: Georgia SDG web portal www.sdg.gov.ge.

¹⁸³ Web portal sdg.gov.ge tracker [Goal 4.3.1](#)

¹⁸⁴ Compare to footnote 151

¹⁸⁵ Web portal sdg.gov.ge tracker [Goal 4.6.1](#)

¹⁸⁶ Government of Georgia (2016). [First Voluntary National Review on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals](#)

¹⁸⁷ Government of Georgia (2020a). [Voluntary National Review Georgia 2020](#)

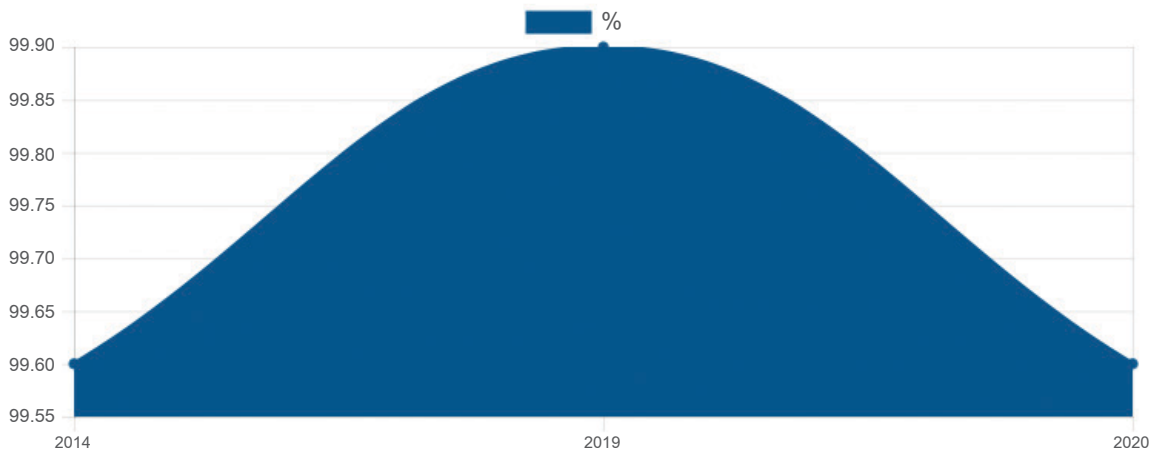
state of implementation of the SDGs from 2014 to 2015 and from 2015 to 2020, presenting Georgia's initiatives and the progress made towards the 2030 Agenda. They describe the

situation on each SDG, including SDG 4, but none of the reports presented data on ALE when discussing SDG 4.

Graph 5: Percentage of young people and adolescents achieving a fixed level of proficiency in literacy and numeracy skills

4.6.1: Percentage of youth (15-24) and adolescents (15 years and older), achieving at least a fixed level of proficiency in functional (a) literacy and (b) numeracy skills, by sex

According to the 2014 General Population Census of Georgia, literacy among the population aged 10 and above is



Source: Georgia SDG web portal www.sdg.gov.ge.

Actors and current projects

Georgia has received substantial donor support over the past decade, particularly for the development of its education and VET systems. The **European Union** has been the biggest donor to VET, with continuous support programmes in place since 2009. The current, third EU programme, Skills4Jobs, runs from 2019 to 2023,

and provides budget support of EUR 30 million for skills development and matching labour market needs¹⁸⁸. The programme aims to improve the employability of women and men in selected regions by means of skill-matching services, life-long learning skills provision, and entrepreneurship training opportunities.

¹⁸⁸ EU4Georgia, [Skills Development and Matching for Labour Market Needs – Budget Support Contract project](#) website

One of the major players involved in adult education in Georgia is DVVI (see Chapter VII). Since 2002, DVVI has focussed on developing a functioning adult education system in Georgia, skills development, conflict resolution and peace-making, capacity building for educators, policymakers and education authorities (at local, regional and national level), as well as networking and exchange activities. It supports the establishment and operation of adult education centres in different regions of the country, and promotes cooperation and exchange between Georgian adult educators, technical specialists and decision-makers¹⁸⁹.

German bilateral development cooperation implements dual education programmes in various sectors (construction, tourism, ICT, logistics, transport, wine production) as part of the GIZ Private Sector Development and TVET Programme¹⁹⁰ (budget: EUR 30 million), a regional programme operating in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. The programme started in 2013, and is now in its second phase (2017-2020). In

addition, KfW recently started to support a VET centre of excellence for construction and logistics in Georgia¹⁹¹.

The **World Bank** launched the project entitled “Strengthening Teacher Quality in Vocational Education and Training”¹⁹² in 2019. This collaborative project between the World Bank, the UK Government and the Georgian MoES aims to improve the quality of VET in Georgia by enhancing teacher management and professional development¹⁹³. Funding to the tune of around EUR 2 million is provided by the UK Government. The implementation phase, led by the World Bank, was 2019-2020. A tangible result of the project was the launch of the new website for the VET sector www.vet.ge (described in Chapter VII) in February 2021.

The **European Training Foundation (ETF)** has produced a great number of different publications on skills development in Georgia, such as “Skills Mismatch Measurement in Georgia”¹⁹⁴ and “Youth Transition to Work in Georgia”¹⁹⁵. In 2018, the ETF launched the new cycle of the “Torino Process” in Georgia, a periodic assessment of progress in modernising skills development in countries neighbouring the EU. The Torino Process is a participatory process leading to an evidence-based analysis of VET policies in a country. Introduced in 2010 and carried out every two years, the Torino Process provides a snapshot of the state of development of VET systems in the

¹⁸⁹ [DVVI Georgia](#) website

¹⁹⁰ GIZ [Private Sector Development and Technical Vocational Education and Training, South Caucasus project](#) website

¹⁹¹ KfW [Georgia](#) website

¹⁹² World Bank, press release [World Bank and Government of United Kingdom to Support Development of Vocational Education and Training in Georgia](#), May 2019

¹⁹³ World Bank, [Georgia Strengthening Teacher Quality in Vocational Education and Training \(VET\)](#) project fact sheet

¹⁹⁴ ETF(2019). [Skills Mismatch measurement in Georgia](#)

¹⁹⁵ Diakonidze, A. & Bardak, U. (2018). [Youth transition to work in Georgia](#). European Training Foundation

ETF's partner countries, an overview of the progress that has been made, and of priorities for the future. The most recent report, entitled "Policies for Human Capital Development"¹⁹⁶, was prepared as part of the 2018-2020 Torino Process.

In its second phase (2019-2022), the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** implements a programme entitled "Skills for Agriculture"¹⁹⁷, which focuses on public-private partnership in agricultural VET to provide farmers with access to quality VET and agricultural extension services.

The programme is funded by the Government of Switzerland. Activities comprise training and professional development of vocational teachers, extension officers and agricultural specialists, as well as scaling-up of educational standards and curricula of VET colleges.

Given the lack of a specific budget line for ALE, the sector lacks budgeting and financial predictability. In this respect, a major issue in the years to come will be to strengthen the role of the municipalities.

¹⁹⁶ Bardak, U. (2020)

¹⁹⁷ UNDP, [Vocational Education and Training in Agriculture project](#) website

XI. Challenges and future developments

Challenges for AE in the future

The fact that adult education in Georgia – because of its historical national development – is deeply rooted in the VET system unleashes various challenges for this sector. The strong focus of the Georgian Government on formal skills development among adults has implications at both policy and implementation levels. So far, the concepts of lifelong learning and adult education have been at least partially introduced into the laws on general and vocational education, but separate legislation for ALE is not in place, and probably will not be enacted in the next few years.

Given the lack of a specific budget line for ALE, the sector lacks budgeting and financial predictability. In this respect, a major issue in the years to come will be to strengthen the role of the municipalities. Further decentralisation, through shared responsibilities and shared budget allocation, will be key for the dissemination of ALE offers in the whole country. Intensive involvement on the part of the central government has so far prevented the municipalities from planning and allocating resources for ALE independently. On the side of the municipalities, there is a need to capacitate administrative staff to act more proactively in order to advance skills development, both for youth and adults.

Over and above this, the private sector still invests too little in NFE, which is why there is a need for popularisation and awareness-raising

campaigns in order to get potential business partners on board. Where the scope of formal education programmes is limited, the practical knowledge of private providers and companies regarding labour market requirements and needs must be considered in order to develop flexible, market-orientated training programmes which will enhance people's employability.

There is a mismatch between labour market needs and the skills being imparted. Even though considerable effort and public financial support have been input into the VET system since 2013, it still lacks efficiency in the sense that human capital is not being fully exploited by the market. The private sector is not satisfied with the skills provided through formal VET schools. Companies in turn rarely make efforts to obtain accreditation as service providers within the Government's skills development programmes. Since there is no skills anticipation mechanism in Georgia, skills needed in system-relevant sectors (e.g. tourism) are not translated into qualifications offered by the education system. Finally, the economy is not yet sufficiently well developed to generate enough workplaces and diversify occupations (future digitalisation and automatisisation in factories is likely to exacerbate the situation).

Compared to five years ago, when no tailor-made services for adults existed in formal education, positive developments have taken place at implementation level.

The introduction of vocational training and re-training programmes has enabled adults to access a separate track which makes it possible to obtain job-relevant certified professional qualifications. However, it seems that training programmes

do not yet fully meet adults' age group-specific needs. General demand is still low, and many interested adults prefer to opt for a 3-year diploma course, which creates the problem of high drop-out rates among adults taking away spots from young students. Regarding non-formal education in Georgia, there is no mechanism yet to fund courses for adults which do not require certification and do not have direct relevance for the labour market or employment. Non-governmental actors have taken over responsibility, and offer courses on civic education, personal development and hobby learning. But they often depend heavily on international co-funding, and thus struggle with a lack of financial sustainability. A policy paper entitled "Development of financing methodologies for formal, non-formal and informal adult education and learning programmes" will be published by MoES and DVVI in 2021.

Another challenge is the pedagogical dimension of teaching adults in Georgia. Many teachers in VET institutions come from industry, but have never received didactic training to enable them to train adults. Instructors in companies where students attend lessons as part of their dual VET programme also often lack didactic skills. This is detrimental to the quality of VET programmes, and to an even greater extent in institutions where the performance-based evaluation of teachers is scarce. There is virtually no state regulation of training programmes for VET teachers. The non-obligatory training module on teaching in state-run teacher professional development centres falls far short when it comes to familiarising teachers of adults with andragogy and age group-specific teaching methods. Private training providers are more likely to engage consulting agencies and civil society

organisations to capacitate their trainers, who as a result are more knowledgeable with regard to the principles of AE.

Challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic and conclusions for the further development of the AE system

When first restrictions came into effect due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the TPDCs in Georgia set up a wide variety of different online training opportunities on how to use technologies and online communication tools (e.g. MS Teams, Zoom). At the same time, the MoES conducted research in order to map learners' resources (e.g. number of students with devices). The overall resource situation was assessed to be good. School principals created different channels for teachers on which they could exchange and obtain practical knowledge on topics such as cooking, skiing and other spare-time activities.

The pandemic heavily affected courses containing classroom-based practical activities which cannot be provided online. Technical courses usually require practical exams, which are carried out under supervision in a class setting, in order to issue certificates. These types of formal education had to be halted very early. In many cases, civil society organisations were able to quickly switch their adult courses to an online mode and thus continue with their offers, a fact that indicates that the NFE system is more

flexible in terms of adapting to such difficult circumstances.

DVVI Georgia developed a digitalisation strategy at a very early stage of the pandemic situation, and trained adult educators in IT skills. DVVI also commissioned a “white paper”¹⁹⁸ in 2020 targeting VET specialists and practitioners involved in policy development which provides an overview of global megatrends in VET and of the effects of the pandemic on the VET sector in Georgia.

Although AECs supported by DVVI re-opened in March 2021 after a period of closure caused by the pandemic, they continued providing their courses online. The availability of online learning offers significantly increased the numbers of participants.

One of the online offers is a psychosocial support programme which records very high participation numbers (not only local participants, but also international migrants). The Koda Community Education Centre plans to offer courses which do not include practical teaching in online formats on a regular basis even after the pandemic is over in order to enable people from remote areas to take part.

¹⁹⁸ Kiziria (2020). COVID 19 – Formal and informal VET and the new normal.

XII. Conclusions and recommendations

There is a need for a more targeted approach to ALE in Georgia which implies making it less dependent on initial VET logic. While Georgia has made progress in installing a comprehensive legislative framework for VET, the interpretation and application of the LLL and AE concepts has not significantly evolved towards crossing age boundaries and promoting non-commercial education and learning. The main educational laws need to make use of consistent ALE terminology which is aligned to international policy vocabulary anchored in key UNESCO and EU documents (see Chapter I). This implies progress with a broad view on ALE which considers all forms of adult learning after the initial education cycle and all forms of vocational and non-vocational learning contributing to an individual's quality of life.

- ⇒ Promote the alignment of national adult education concepts with international ALE terminology
- ⇒ Acknowledge ALE as a public good

The 2017-2021 Action Plan of the Unified Strategy on Education and Science requires concrete measures that explicitly address adult education. In addition, a separate budget line under the educational state budget would substantially facilitate needs-based planning of ALE measures in the long run, as well as decreasing dependence on international donor funding. The national government could recognise and acknowledge outstanding commitment to AE provision through tax incentive schemes. Moreover, the municipalities' administrative and financial authority should be enhanced in order to allow greater flexibility and freedom in their country-

wide contributions to skills development among both young people and adults.

- ⇒ Programme specific national AE activities and enhance their visibility in national strategies
- ⇒ Monitor and coordinate public and private AE spending across ministries
- ⇒ Reduce social inequality and make adult education accessible and affordable for everyone, for example through learning vouchers or stipends for individuals and tax incentives for employers and providers
- ⇒ Allow more targeted involvement of municipalities in the provision and support of adult education

The new ALE division within the MoES' VET department plays an important advocacy role for ALE in the Georgian Government. In addition, the establishment of "Skills Georgia" as a new managing agency is a very important step towards the diversification of VET. Participating ministries should consider how future collaboration can have an added value for strengthening the adult education sector in the context of lifelong learning in future. In order to ensure that planning and programming of adult education activities are based on evidence, Georgian authorities should work towards a comprehensive, transparent monitoring and evaluation system for adult education activities. The results from the recent Adult Education Survey can provide important insights.

- ⇒ Define a common, clearly distinguishable understanding of AE within "Skills Georgia"
- ⇒ Ensure evidence-based AE policymaking by consulting and incorporating findings from the latest population surveys and best practice projects

With regard to the implementation of vocational training and re-training programmes, adults' age group-specific needs should be considered more comprehensively in future in order to improve their participation rates. All stakeholders should make efforts over the next decade to build a solid non-formal and informal AE infrastructure which goes beyond the economic and work-related context. Particularly NFE programmes with a non-monetary purpose – such as civic education and personal development courses – should be fostered. Additional room for informal learning would align Georgia's LLL approach to the global and EU understanding.

In addition, cooperation and networking between new and established players in the field can contribute to capacity building. Enabling providers to share best practices, as well as information on funding opportunities and relevant learning content, will enhance providers' profiles and improve the quality of AE offers.

- ⇒ Activate and recognise the work of providers of non-formal and informal ALE activities through targeted awareness-raising campaigns
- ⇒ Promote closer cooperation between public and private stakeholders and the formation of networks

This study reveals that adult education in Georgia is still largely concentrated on formal learning activities which relate to the work environment. It is recommended to give more space to the development of non-formal and informal self-driven learning processes when AE measures are established and implemented. Adults need to be encouraged to take responsibility for their own personal development throughout their lifetimes.

In order to promote inclusiveness and diversity in AE in Georgia, access and active involvement for lower educated, older and inactive or unemployed people in adult education programmes needs to be increased. In order to reach those disadvantaged groups, costs for further training and other forms of learning need to be reduced. Systematic monitoring of involvement and motivation to participate in all forms of AE would help to set up programmes which are responsive to the needs of the target group and could help trigger demand for lifelong learning and education, in particular with regard to non-vocational learning content. Regular data collection on participation and non-participation needs to be extended beyond mere attendance numbers and include information on socio-economic backgrounds (especially age) and personal motivation.

- ⇒ Raise awareness among citizens about the advantages of continuous non-formal AE for personal, social and economic development
- ⇒ Increase access and active involvement in AE by middle-aged and older participants, as well as by women and vulnerable groups
- ⇒ Establish regular and systematic monitoring of participation and motivation in all forms of AE, especially non-formal education

In order to professionalise teaching in AE in the future, greater emphasis should be placed on the importance of teaching quality and the special characteristics and needs of adult learners. Teacher training frequently fails to encompass an andragogic perspective which considers special requirements for teaching adults. AE providers and political stakeholders should develop a common understanding

of professional and ethical standards in adult teaching which is still sufficiently flexible to encompass the diversity of AE and resulting demands for AE teachers and trainers. A shared understanding of andragogy which is actively promoted by public stakeholders could contribute to the professionalisation of this educational sector and increase public recognition of the value of teaching adults.

- ⇒ Develop a common understanding of andragogy and of the desired competencies and qualities of AE teachers
- ⇒ Expand the availability and provision of adult educator training programmes, for example at universities or through work-based training

International support for the adult education sector is less targeted when compared with foreign contributions to initial VET development. International donors could contribute to a more unified approach to AE by aligning their interventions to national strategic goals and registering and labelling activities which are relevant to AE explicitly as programmes for adults.

- ⇒ Align international projects to national development goals, and coordinate adult education activities
- ⇒ Register, label and visualise AE activities funded by international donors, especially if AE is only a partial activity within a larger project





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