

# COUNTRY NOTE ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN ARMENIA (2023)



# 1. ABOUT THIS COUNTRY NOTE

This country note presents a snapshot of findings on adult education in Armenia: on access to and prospective demand for adult education, on adult skills and competences, and on the extent to which opportunities for lifelong learning benefit specific groups of adult learners (women and adults at risk of socio-economic disadvantage).

The country note is based on evidence collected each year for monitoring purposes through KIESE<sup>1</sup> and the Torino Process<sup>2</sup> – two annual ETF initiatives which track developments in the domains of education, skills, and employment in countries - partners of the ETF. In the context of these initiatives, adult education is an element of the broader concept of lifelong learning and may refer to any formal, non-formal, or informal learning activity, both general and vocational, undertaken by adults after leaving initial education and training.

The findings in this note focus on policy and system performance in support of adult education in Armenia, as well as on the learners. The note does not provide a description of adult education arrangements in the country. Where necessary and appropriate, the note may draw on information from third-party reports.

## 2. ADULT EDUCATION IN ARMENIA

### 2.1 Gauging demand for adult education

Understanding demand for adult education is an important prerequisite for crafting relevant educational programmes and policies. It allows to identify which adult populations need learning opportunities, helping policymakers and practitioners create and provide courses that fill specific skills gaps and meet personal and career aspirations.

So far, there is no uniform, internationally agreed-upon metric for measuring demand for adult education. To gauge the educational needs and aspirations of prospective adult learners, one can leverage existing data sources for a blend of indirect indicators instead. Which indirect indicators, however?

Assuming that education and training in a country can be judged by how it treats those most in need, focusing on indicators related to vulnerable adults – the long-term unemployed, the economically inactive, and those with low or no educational attainment – can be a promising strategy to understand the broader demand for adult education. Giving attention to these groups can serve as a useful proxy of wider educational and training needs across the workforce. The extent to which

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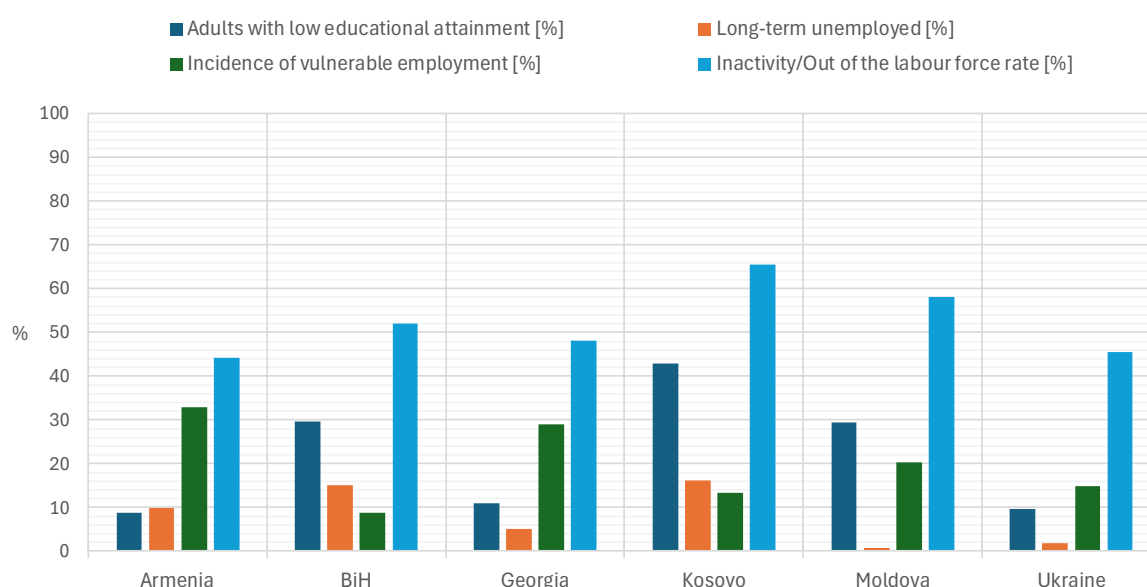
<sup>1</sup> The Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment (KIESE) are a collection of statistics that form part of a broader set of information proposed by the ETF to enable a review of developments in the field of education, skills and employment in the partner countries.

<sup>2</sup> The Torino Process is a multiannual review of policy and system performance in support of lifelong learning through vocational education and training (VET) in countries in East and South-East Europe (including Turkey), Central Asia, and the South and East Mediterranean region. The Torino Process is carried out in partnership with countries in these regions on a regular basis since 2010.

countries succeed in providing these groups with access to training and meeting their educational needs can significantly influence both the demand for and the supply of skills in the labour market.

This is particularly relevant for ETF partner countries, where the proportion of adults at risk of socio-economic disadvantage can be significant. In Armenia, for instance, a third of the workforce is exposed to precarious working conditions and/or is involved in low-quality work. Often due to lack of skills that are in demand on the labour market (Figure 1). This is the highest share of all six countries included in Figure 1 and is also above the average for ETF partner countries. Over 40% of the population in working age in Armenia is also economically inactive. At least some of this inactivity could be traced back to an educational and skills mismatch which could be discouraging active job seeking.

Figure 1. Demand for education: vulnerable and at-risk population in working age (2022 or latest available year)



Source: ETF KIESE database

Notes: Reference year before 2022 for Armenia is 2017 (long-term unemployment). Reference years before 2022 for Bosnia and Herzegovina are 2018 (long-term unemployment) and 2021 (educational attainment and inactivity). Reference year before 2022 for Georgia is 2018 (long-term unemployed). Reference years before 2022 for Kosovo are 2019 (long-term unemployment) and 2020 (educational attainment). Reference year before 2022 for Moldova is 2018 (long term unemployment). Reference years before 2022 for Ukraine are 2018 (long-term unemployment for age group 15-70), 2021 (vulnerable employment for age group 15-70) and 2021 (educational attainment and inactivity).

When interpreting this last set of data, it is also important to note that the Armenian labour market may also be influenced by other factors such as the composition of the population, migration and the size of informal sector. Therefore, like for other countries, the effectiveness of this indicator in informing adult education policy in Armenia may be constrained as it might not fully capture the local demand for education and training.

On a more positive note, the share of adults in Armenia who have low educational attainment or no education, is relatively low. At the same time, about a tenth of the workforce is long-term unemployed. Typically, this is a group of adults at risk whose circumstances may be improved through upskilling or reskilling.

## 2.2 Access to and participation in adult learning

In Armenia, both youth and adults may find it challenging to access learning through VET. System performance in this domain is below the average of other countries participating in the Torino Process monitoring. Additionally, there appears to be a noticeable discrepancy in the degree to which various segments of VET are accessible to the learners they are meant to target. For instance, VET is a considerably more attractive alternative for youth than it is for adults. Other opportunities for adult learning beyond VET, such as those provided in the framework of active labour market policies, are also struggling with access.

A major factor which perpetuates the challenge is the absence of policies to support the implementation of an otherwise sound legislative framework, which has been put in place to promote access and attractiveness of CVET. Provisions include the modularisation of programmes, the targeting of specific groups of learners, and the introduction of mechanisms to validate non-formal and informal learning. Based on the latest data, lack of capacity and limited resources is currently preventing the system from becoming operational in validating non-formal and informal learning.

In any country, CVET is a major learning avenue for adults and its success and attractiveness is closely tied to the level of employer engagement and the quality of social dialogue. In Armenia, there is an acknowledged gap in this area. Efforts to bridge it, such as the creation of a National Training Fund, have yet to yield substantial progress in VET-related social dialogue. However, existing instances of successful public-private cooperation for skills development are promising. They could serve as models to enhance systemic social dialogue in VET.

From a gender perspective, the VET system shows a bias towards supporting the participation of young female learners over adult female learners, which in turn reveals an overlooked potential in terms of human capital development and adult learning. Moreover, women in Armenia tend to favour higher education over VET. Once enrolled in VET, adult female learners also often face challenges in completing their courses as successfully as younger females or males, despite showing a lower dropout rate than their male counterparts.

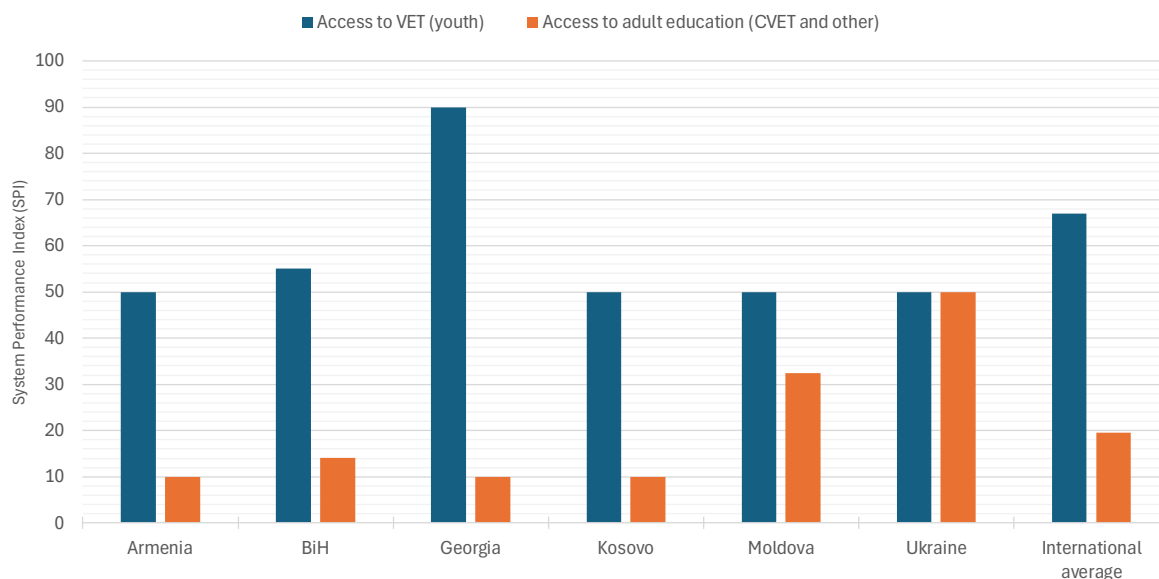
The monitoring data reveals that, like all other groups of learners, the vulnerable categories of adult population (long-term unemployed, economically inactive adults and adults with low or no educational attainment) are struggling to gain access to learning within the VET system. There is a prioritization of these learner groups within the limited resources, making VET system of Armenia more accessible for this group of learners compared to the average for other countries in the Torino Process. Still, more remains to be done to promote inclusive, learner-centred education for all. This is key to making VET a more appealing option for prospective learners, especially for the vulnerable and the marginalised.

To enhance employability and facilitate workforce integration, it is not enough to discuss only access and attractiveness of opportunities for learning. It is also necessary to look into career guidance. Effective career guidance is integral to making adult education and VET more accessible and attractive by providing individuals with tailored advice, information on available opportunities, and support in navigating their career paths.

There are gaps in the national career development support system of Armenia, particularly in adult career guidance. Although Armenia pioneers in allocating funds for career guidance experts in each VET school, challenges persist in ensuring broad access to that guidance, in providing quality information for all user groups, and with the utilisation of ICT-based solutions in support of access. Despite the availability of extensive information on learning options through VET, more efforts are needed to improve outreach, provide career counselling, and facilitate relevant work experience

opportunities. The Unified Social Services (USS) should strengthen its role in offering career counselling services to young graduates, jobseekers, and other vulnerable groups, such as those not engaged in employment, education, or training.

Figure 2. Access to learning for youth and adults (2023): index of policy and system performance



Source: ETF Torino Process database

Notes: The System Performance Index SPI is a metric of performance calculated on the basis of quantitative and qualitative data collected annually through the Torino Process. It ranges from 0 (min/low performance), to 100 (max/high performance). International average refers to the average of countries which participate in the 2023 round of Torino Process policy and system performance monitoring. These countries are Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, North Macedonia, Palestine, Serbia, Tunisia, Turkey, and Ukraine.

Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) serve as one of the principal conduits for adult education, especially for vulnerable groups. By focusing on upskilling and reskilling, ALMPs directly facilitate access to learning opportunities, ensuring that adult education aligns with labour market demands and supports individuals not currently engaged in the workforce. This is also the case in Armenia, where vocational training programs as part of the active labour market measures by USS for registered jobseekers, aim to upskill and reskill, particularly focusing on entrepreneurship and business start-up competencies in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and UNDP.

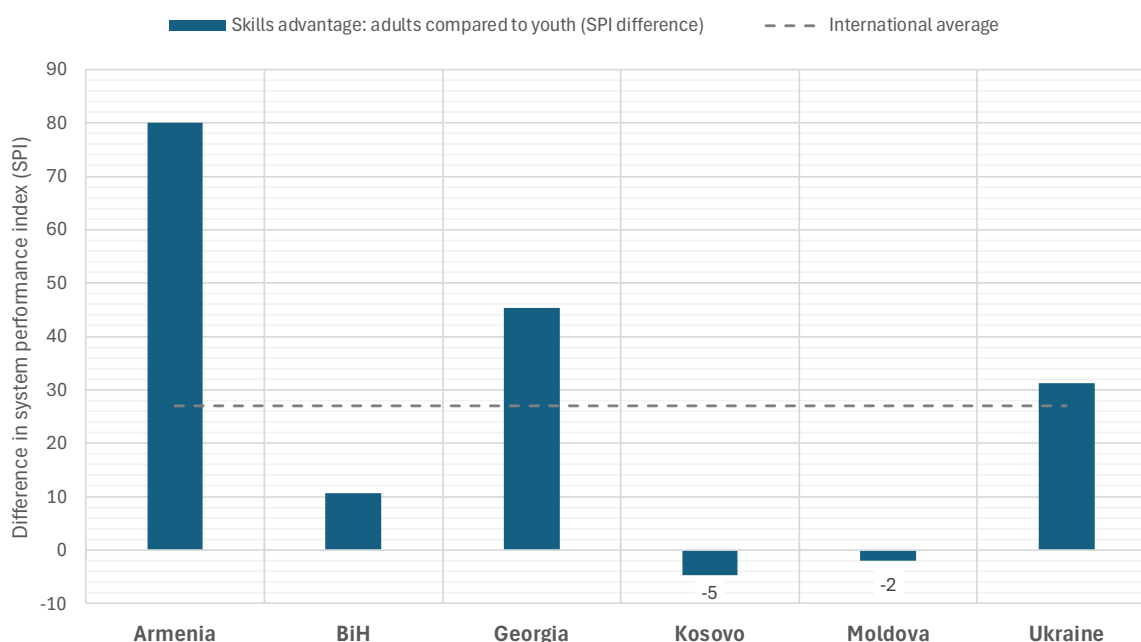
The 2023 emergency situation, due to the displacement from Nagorno-Karabakh, highlighted the need for integrated approaches in career guidance, skills development, and rapid labour market integration for over 100,000 displaced individuals, stressing the urgency of streamlined access to job opportunity information and support systems.

## 2.3 Quality and relevance of skills and competences

VET in Armenia offers only a moderate level of quality and relevance to its beneficiaries. There are, however, sizeable differences in the degree to which two broad groups of learners - youth and

adults – dispose of the basic skills and competences required for successful participation in the economy. Adults in Armenia, whether educated through the national system or abroad, are well equipped with skills of relevance for work. The challenge youth face in underperforming in skills and competences is further compounded by the fact that assessment of learning quality in VET is limited to academic achievement and compliance with educational standards. Furthermore, the learning opportunities provided through VET often include programmes with weak connections to the labour market, as measured by the extent of work-based learning components in these programmes.

Figure 3. Skills gap between youth and adults (2023): difference in system performance



Source: Torino Process database

Note: The "Skills Gap between Youth and Adults (SPI difference)" represents the difference in the System Performance Index (SPI) scores between two key Torino Process monitoring targets (MTs): the skills and competences of youth in VET (MT35) and those of adults (MT39). This measure is calculated by subtracting the SPI score for MT35 (youth) from the SPI score for MT39 (adults). Positive values indicate areas where the skills and competences of adults surpass those of youth, while negative values indicate the opposite.

It should be noted, however, that adult female learners are considerably less likely than adult male learners to possess key competences and labour market-relevant skills. They are not only disadvantaged in terms of key skills and competences, but they are also less likely to find a job. In contrast, both adult and young female learners face significant challenges when acquiring job-relevant skills and entering the labour market. While individual experiences may vary, systemic barriers create noticeable difficulties for female learners across age groups.

Armenia is addressing the quality and relevance of its adult education through systemic and structural efforts aimed at modernizing and improving its VET system. This includes improving governance and management with a focus on modernisation, digital transformation, international-standard quality assurance, teacher development, and funding revisions.

In the period of 2023-24, for instance, Armenia is reviewing its accreditation system using the peer review learning methodology of the ETF Quality Assurance Forum. Challenges such as updating educational offerings, enhancing infrastructure, reforming funding procedures, and addressing structural issues within the system remain, indicating a significant transformation underway to improve

the quality and efficiency of the VET sector. There is evidence suggesting the presence of regular communication with stakeholders. However, the involvement of employers in the steering of the VET system and its management is still limited.

### 3. FURTHER READING

For more information on the monitoring results of Armenia, see the Torino Process policy and system performance report for 2023 at:

<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/trp-assessment-reports/armenia-2023>

For more information on key developments in education, skills and employment in ETF partner countries in 2023, see the cross-country monitoring report at:

<https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/education-skills-and-employment-trends-and-developments>

For information on key developments in education, skills and employment specifically in Armenia, see the 2023 ETF Country Fiche for Armenia at:

[https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-01/Country\\_Fiche\\_Armenia\\_2023\\_EN\\_web.pdf](https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-01/Country_Fiche_Armenia_2023_EN_web.pdf)