

COUNTRY NOTE

ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION IN GEORGIA (2023)



1. ABOUT THIS COUNTRY NOTE

This country note presents a snapshot of findings on adult education in Georgia: 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 KIESE¹ and the Torino Process² – two annual ETF initiatives which track developments in the domains of education, skills, and employment in partner countries 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 Georgia, 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 GEORGIA

2.1 Gauging demand for adult education

Understanding demand for adult education is an important prerequisite for crafting relevant educational programs 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, as well as engaging providers of non-formal, short-term courses that often are an appropriate match to adult learners.

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? 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. Focusing on these groups can serve as a useful proxy of wider educational and training needs across the workforce. The extent to which countries succeed in providing these groups with access to training and meeting their

¹ 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.

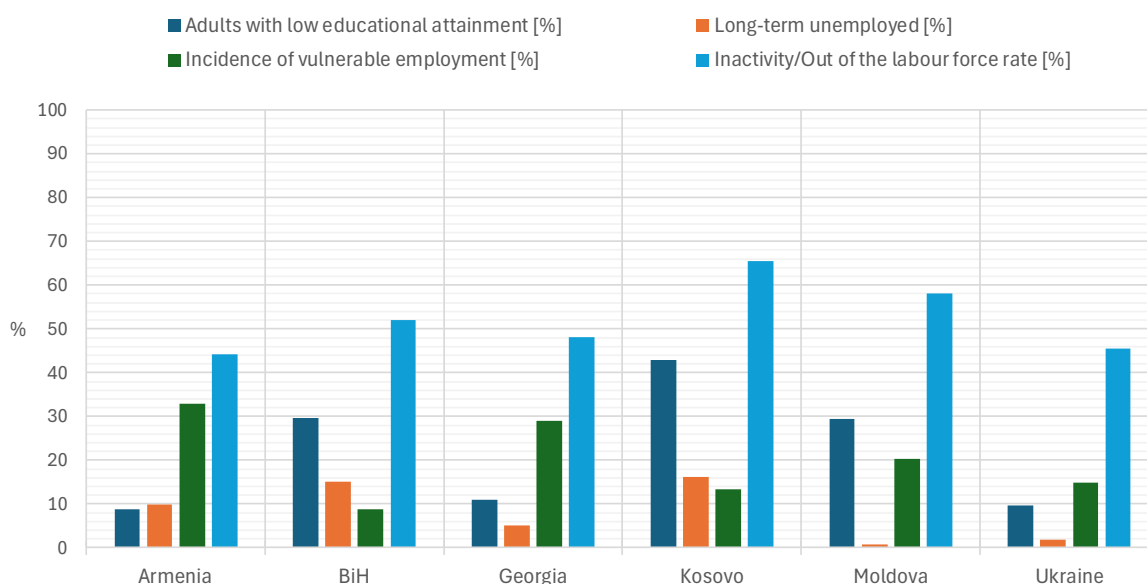
² The Torino Process is a multiannual review of policy and system performance in support of lifelong learning through vocational education and training (VET) in countries in East and South-East Europe (including Turkey), Central Asia, and the South and East Mediterranean region. The Torino Process is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

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 exposed to vulnerability and risk of socio-economic disadvantage can be significant. In Georgia, for instance, the data reveals that 29% of the adult population is in vulnerable employment – the second-highest proportion when compared to other countries in the sample of six presented in Figure 1. This group of adults is also the most likely to seek opportunities for reskilling and upskilling as a viable strategy to transition into more stable employment.

Georgia has a relatively modest share of adults who have a low level of educational attainment, and similarly, the share of long-term unemployed is relatively low. This situation reflects trends observed in other countries and could indicate the presence of a dynamic labour market. However, it might also be influenced by emigration and a relatively high inactivity rate, which reduces the domestic pool of jobseekers and, consequently, affects the figures reported in unemployment statistics

. Figure 1. Demand for adult 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).

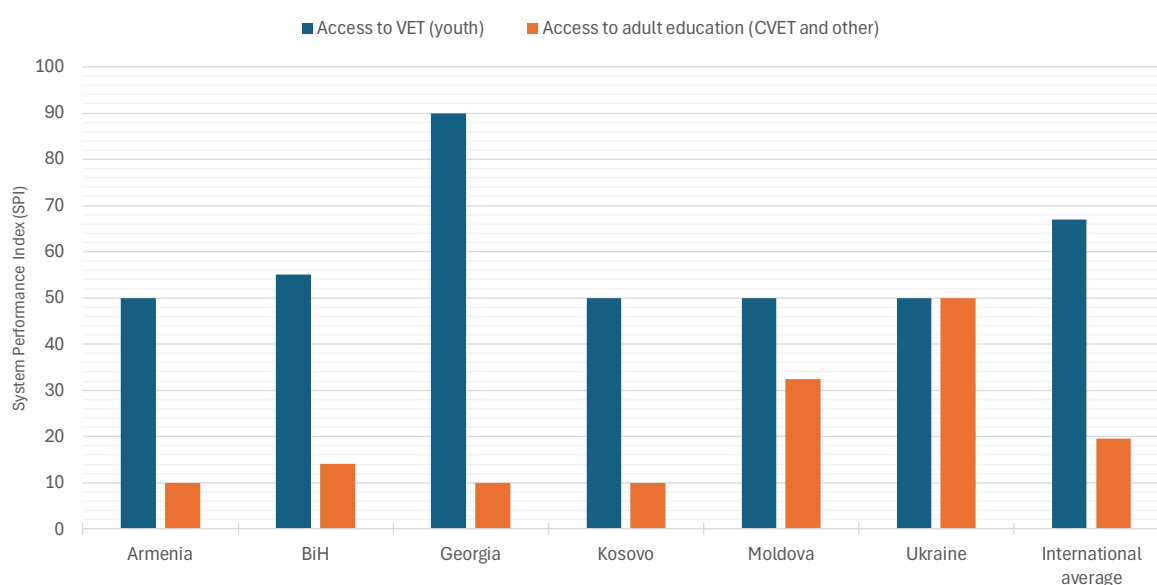
The share of those who are economically inactive is high, but still below the average for the group and below that of many other countries in the Torino Process sample. Here too, there may be a degree of overestimation, as the measurement of economic inactivity may be influenced by other factors. One is a relatively high rate of emigration, where individuals working abroad are still counted within the working-age population despite not seeking jobs locally. Another is the size of the informal sector in

Georgia which, according to some estimates, is still one of the largest in the region.³ Therefore, like in other countries, the effectiveness of this indicator in informing adult education policy in Georgia is somewhat constrained.

2.2 Access to and participation in adult learning

VET in Georgia performs well against certain outcomes like the accessibility of initial VET and progression of learners towards graduation (Figure 2), but there are evident gaps in the degree to which continuing VET and other opportunities for lifelong learning are accessible and attractive to adult learners. According to information by national authorities, system performance in support of access to initial VET is notably high, presumably as a result of the conducive regulatory framework and financial support available for participation in programmes of national priority.

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.

However, when it comes to CVET and other opportunities for adult education, the situation is more complex. According to responses by national authorities to the Torino Process monitoring questionnaire, CVET in Georgia has seen a significant increase in interest, with enrolment growing by an impressive 159% between 2020 and 2022, albeit starting from a low base. This reported surge in enrolment suggest the presence of ample demand for adult education and also that CVET is an

³ Tsimintia, Kakhaber. (2024). SHADOW ECONOMY IN GEORGIA. 2024. 1347-1350.

attractive option for prospective learners. However, system performance is hampered by limited capacity, with the demand for CVET far exceeding the available supply of places.

In response, national authorities have initiated efforts to formalize short-term training and retraining programs under CVET, engaging private sector providers in a bid to swiftly meet labour market needs through simpler yet quality-assured accreditation⁴. While these efforts represent a positive step towards enhancing CVET's reach, the scale of improvement has yet to align with the high level of accessibility and attractiveness observed in the initial VET system.

The education and training system of Georgia is also not particularly effective in providing adult learning opportunities outside the conventional VET framework, for instance through regulations that encompass lifelong learning across formal, non-formal, and informal education. Access to such learning presents an area of concern, with markedly low results. The stark contrast between the accessibility of initial VET and these other educational opportunities highlights a significant gap in the provision of adult education and training, indicating a pressing need for focused attention to broaden access and participation in CVET and other LLL programs for adults in Georgia.

According to last annual data collected by the ETF on active labour market policies implemented in Georgia, in 2022, out of almost 6000 registered jobseekers, only about a half (3,244 persons) participated in training courses, which included vocational training for 2,517 people (mostly women and adults over 29) and core competence training for 727 participants. Core Competence Training is a relatively new measure, which started in 2022 following the revision of labour market programmes and reflecting the need for diversification of skills development opportunities for jobseekers.

Career guidance systems, providing seamless support over the lifetime of individuals from early schooling onwards until retirement, deal as key enabler for increased access to and participation in learning and work. While Georgia had made great progress at policy and service level, there is still no well-coordinated cross-sectorial approach that would allow for improved effectiveness and cost efficiency of services.

For instance, despite the structured approach to provide services to registered jobseekers, the capacity of State Employment Support Agency (SESA) is limited and insufficient to provide efficient services, especially looking at additional target groups like workers or inactive. More importantly, with only seven regional offices, SESA has weak geographical representation and poor outreach to potential beneficiaries. SESA's self-service area and its inventory of online resources are underdeveloped, hampering the capacity to provide sufficient outreach and services. Despite all these challenges, around 50% registered jobseekers in 2022, benefited from career counselling services, two thirds being women (ETF, 2023 ALMP data collection, Georgia).

When it comes to system performance in support of female learners, the data suggests that there is a degree of age-based discrepancy in the accessibility of VET in Georgia. In terms of access, the education and training system favours young female learners over adult female learners. Once enrolled in a programme, however, both young and adult female learners are equally likely to participate and graduate successfully.

As to gender-based discrepancies, the Skills Agency of Georgia has implemented the Gender Action Plan (GAP) to tackle disparities in access, focusing on gender-sensitive policies and encouraging the

⁴ In 2023-24, the ETF is facilitating mutual learning between Georgia and Moldova on quality-assured accreditation of short-term courses.

inclusion of women in sectors traditionally dominated by men. The plan includes initiatives such as social marketing campaigns and the provision of facilities like children's rooms in colleges for young parents, underlining a commitment to accommodating the diverse needs of learners. There are also recent adjustments in the policies regulating admission to VET to prevent gender biases, ensuring all students have equitable opportunities to follow their educational choices and career paths.

The Torino Process evidence also shows that the VET system in Georgia is accessible in equal measure to disadvantaged adults, irrespective of whether they are long-term unemployed, economically inactive, or have low educational attainment. The support addressed to these groups of learners seems to function, since they have a better chance of accessing a learning opportunity than any other learner, on average.

In terms of education and training, the policies and services tailored for the long-term unemployed also extend to economically inactive adults, as the national education system does not differentiate between these groups. Both groups have the opportunity to benefit from formal CVET programs mainly at Level 2, as well as non-formal CVET programs that do not require prior education. This is particularly beneficial given the relatively low percentage (4.2% in 2021) of the population with low education (less than 9 grades).

2.3 Quality and relevance of skills and competences

The practical relevance of IVET and CVET programs in Georgia benefits from a strong linkage to the work environment. This is supported by the regulation of Work-Based Learning (WBL) types and legislative amendments that define dual and cooperative learning models, focusing on practical experience. The strong VET and work linkage is underpinned by the National Skills Agency, which was established by the government and the Chamber on equal basis.

This model of governance in a national VET body is a unique case in the region. Despite these strengths, VET graduates face challenges in securing employment, indicating a gap between the training provided and the needs of the job market. Employer and Graduate Opinion Surveys reveal a skills mismatch, with employers often sceptical of the readiness of graduates and young adults for the workforce and anticipating a need for retraining and additional training.

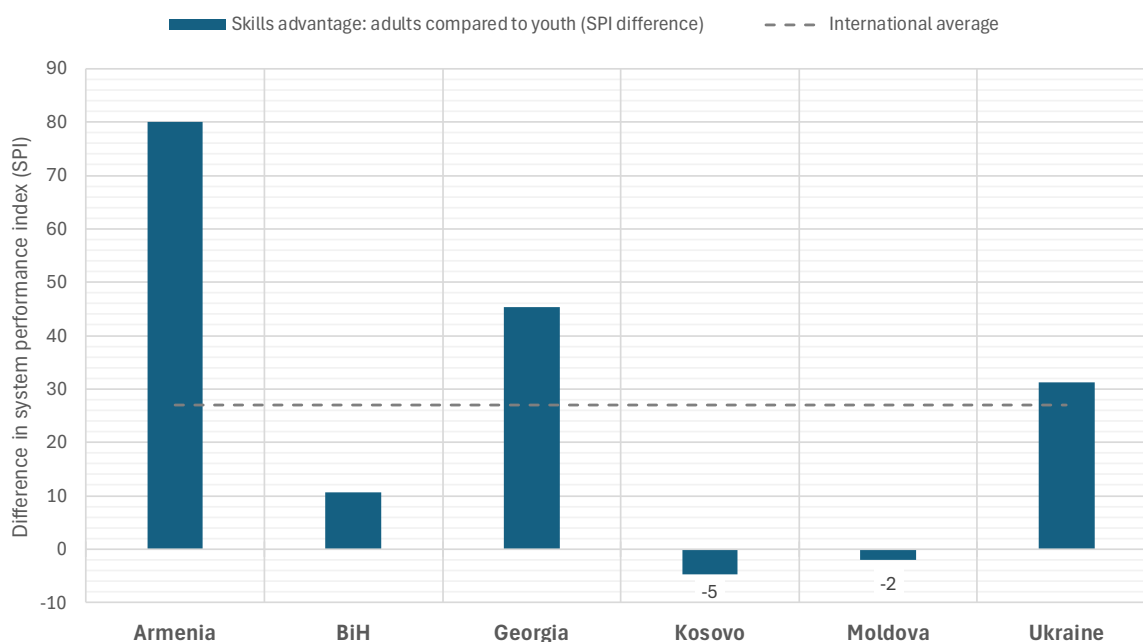
Indeed, like most countries in the sample shown in Figure 3, Georgia adhered to a common pattern observed in other countries, where adults typically outpace youth in key skills and competences. This could be indicative of gaps or at least areas in need of improvement that have emerged in recent years in formal training and VET for youth. It may also suggest that foundational skills are more likely to be obtained and developed in the course of working life than during attendance of formal education and training.

The availability of information on professions and education programs affects the ability of VET students to make informed decisions, potentially impacting their employability. However, the larger concern is that there are overall weakly developed career education and career guidance services and processes in general education already.⁵ Career education content included across the National Curriculum stays undelivered because schools lack resources for implementation, responsible teachers do not have relevant qualifications and introduction of the curriculum was not accompanied with relevant

⁵ See ETF (2022): <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/document-attachments/career-development-support-system-review-georgia>

capacity building activities. Hence, supporting decision making before VET already is weak, while weakly developed career guidance at VET and Higher Education levels add to this situation

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.

.As to the quality of learning between different groups of learners, adult females generally receive better training in basic skills and competences relevant to employment. The quality of basic skills and key competences other groups of adult learners can expect to receive, is uneven. The long-term unemployed – a group which is traditionally in focus of active labour market policies in any country, including Georgia – benefit from a training which is much more sensitive to their needs than to the needs of adults who are economically inactive.

The national authorities have initiated vocational training and retraining programs, particularly targeting long-term unemployed individuals, aiming to update their knowledge and skills within a short timeframe. The State Employment Support Agency plays a pivotal role in this regard, offering a range of services including career counselling, basic skills programs, and employment incentives to job seekers registered on www.worknet.gov.ge. In 2021, 3,812 job seekers found employment through these programs and services, indicating a positive impact.

Furthermore, international collaborations such as the Skills4jobs program of the European Union and the USAID Industry-led Skills Development Program are contributing towards improving the employability of the population, especially in regions. These programs, with a combined investment of several million Euros, aim to bridge the gap between skills training and high-value employment opportunities, targeting underrepresented members of society including women, ethnic minorities, and residents of rural communities.

3. FURTHER READING

For more information on the monitoring results of Georgia, 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/georgia-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>