

CRAFTSMANSHIP AND SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Sectoral Portrait for Azerbaijan

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This draft document has been developed through field interviews, desk research and focus groups involving participants working in the craft sector in Azerbaijan. The information contained in the document is subject to revision based on further research. The document has not been through the ETF's quality editing process for language or presentation and is provided on open space solely for information purposes.

PREFACE

The following Sectoral Portrait was developed as part of the ETF project “*Craftmanship and skills for the future - Study on skills development in the craftmanship and design sector in ETF’s partner countries*”. Eight Sectoral Portraits were developed that describe the main trends and developments of the craftmanship sectors in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. In particular, the Portraits identify the main trends and drivers of change that influence the skills necessary to work in the crafts sector.

Working Draft

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CRAFTS AND DESIGN SECTOR

Craftsmanship is a form of art, where one works primarily with their hands to create various items for artistic or commercial purposes. A fundamental feature of craftsmanship is avoiding the use of machinery and automation, leading to the production of unique pieces. While there is no strict definition of craftsmanship, according to an expert from the Azerbaijani Carpet Weavers' Unions, a craftsman can be considered someone who shows their talent in producing original goods, rather than copying premade designs. The Azerbaijani Law on Culture, states that the country's craftsmanship which includes applied arts, traditional decorative arts and national fine arts is on the list of intangible cultural heritage.¹

Azerbaijan has a rich variety of raw natural resources (wood, clay, stone, mineral dyes, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, wild fibrous plants), agricultural and livestock products (wool, leather, bone, linen, cotton, silk, etc.). Although the different types of crafts have a long and arduous path of development, they nevertheless combine into a coherent unit, offering a complete picture of the country's artistic and cultural life.

Examples of traditional craftsmanship, which are still practiced today include woodworking, pottery, carpet weaving, carving, jewellery, painting, blacksmithing, copper smithing, artistic embroidery, shawl-weaving and shoe making.

- **Woodworking** - "box"² production, is part of the woodworking sub-sector. The object is made from different types of wood such as elm, oak, ash, hornbeam, linden, ironwood, cornel, cherry, hawthorn, maple, chestnut, walnut, hazelnut, beech, etc. Throughout Azerbaijan, the "box" was one of the most important household items, in a sense playing the role of a safe, by acting as a container for storing valuable items, notably jewellery. With the advent of the second half of the twentieth century, significant changes were made to the interiors of houses, with various types of up-to-date furniture replacing the traditional boxes. However, some artists continue this legacy in different Azerbaijani cities.
- **Pottery** - consisting of clay made items hardened by heat, it is one of the most widespread decorative arts dating back to the Bronze age. Illustrating this point, excavations of fortresses in the Gabala and Shakmir territories of Caucasian Albania, revealed well-equipped pottery workshops.³ Even nowadays pottery centres continue their operations in some regions of the country.
- **Carpet weaving** - the most common type of folk art. It plays an important role in the life of Azerbaijani people acting almost as a symbol of the nation. Notably, pile and non-pile carpets have a high aesthetic importance when decorating the floors and walls of nomads' tents, huts and houses due to the depicted patterns and images.
- **Carving** - Stone carvings in Gobustan and Gemigaya, one of the oldest settlements in Azerbaijan, can be considered as some of the first examples of artistic carving. Nevertheless, other materials such as wood and bone are used within the medium. While the art is practised in many regions of

¹ Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Culture. <http://www.e-qanun.az/framework/25303>

² <http://intangible.az/front/az/aboutExample/20637>

³ <http://www.anl.az/down/meqale/azerbaycan/2012/noyabr/280686.htm>

the country, it is most frequently encountered in Sheki. Among the various handicrafts produced by carvers one can find animal figurines, accessories and national musical instruments such as the tar, kaman, tutek and balaban.

- **Jewellery** – in Azerbaijan, jewellery is decorated in 7 technical ways (forging, stamping, “garasavad”, netting, hat-making and enamelling), making it one of the most advanced arts in terms of the techniques applied. In order to enhance the artistic style and add more value to their production, jewellers (and so-called creative blacksmiths) use precious stones (rubies, pearls, diamonds), homogenous metals (gold or silver) or different mixtures of metals. Of the different patterns that are found, the most frequent tend to be geometric, floral, astral or zoomorphic. The “Garasavad” method is used mostly with small objects (belts, bracelets, chests, crosses, etc.) and weapons (swords, daggers, pistols, etc.).
- **Painting**⁴ - is a type of ancient decorative-applied art. The name derives from the Arabic word "pattern". Craftsmen were called engravers who engraved any shape, figure, or inscription on various metals, wood products, etc. with a cutting tool.
- **Blacksmithing** - has long traditions in Azerbaijan. Crafters specializing in this sphere make not only weapons but also household appliances and jewellery.
- **Copper smithing** - decorates items with intricate and delicate patterns. Copperware plays a key role in household decoration, with some families holding the belief that owning objects with copper elements contributes to the benefits of a healthy diet. The tradition of copper smithing is preserved in the village of Lahich in the region of Ismaili.
- **Embroidery (Takelduz)**⁵ - the art form, which translated literally means "one-handed sewing", is also called "chain stitching" in English. The method of production is based on using a chain stitch with a hook closely resembling chain sewing from ancient times. Although this type of embroidering can be found in many Azerbaijani regions, it is mostly prevalent in the Sheki region.
- **Shawl weaving (Kelaghayi)**⁶ - is the production of a rectangular headdress made of silk thread for women in Azerbaijan. Even though this head covering is produced in many regions, it is more widespread in the village of Basgal in the Ismaili region and the city of Sheki to the Northwest. Hand-made kelaghayis made of Sheki silk and natural dyes, are a specialty product of decorative-applied arts due to the original way of producing them.
- **Shoemaking (Bashmagchilig)** - Shoes, which people used to wear in ancient times, are now used in the process of reviving national traditions, and tourists can get them as souvenirs. Along with shoe production, accessories such as moulds, nails, twine, yarn, leather are also produced. Decorative sewing is also sometimes part of the production process.

The crafts industry includes a wide range of works created by artists as well as small businesses and art galleries. Entrepreneurs in this industry often operate independently and, as a rule, rely on local raw materials and community support to maintain their customer base.

Despite UNESCO including Azerbaijani carpet weaving in the world’s intangible heritage list, the productive activity of the Carpet Museum, the teaching of carpet weaving at the Azerbaijan Academy of Arts, there is still scope to adapt the structure of the sector and use innovative solutions. One way of utilizing innovation is through transitioning from the physical space to online websites as a way to sell handicraft products and counteract the effects of decreased tourism due to Covid-19. Moreover, it

4 https://www.azerbaijans.com/content_169_en.html

5 <https://modern.az/az/news/158792/tekelduz-tikmek-ucun-hendeseni-de-bilmelisen-nadir-senet-ustasi-ile-musahibe->

6 <https://bakucorner.az/az/milli/about-kelaghayi.html>

is worth mentioning that areas encompassing carpeting, weaving, smithing, and jewellery-making should be more commercialized and made more attractive to tourists.⁷

While crafts such as the production of carpets, jewellery, rugs, wood carvings, pottery, metalworking and embroidery are included in the category of traditional crafts, one can still find them in workshops. Case in point being the Icheri Sheher Center for Traditional Arts. The centre's operations include four crafts which are ceramics, batik, jewellery and wood carving. Here, the preparation of each piece is aimed at recreating the principles and techniques used in the past, in harmony with the standard of perfection found in the modern era. Therefore, the activities of Icheri Sheher act as clear evidence of the ongoing revival of various traditional arts.

Alongside traditional art and craftsmanship centres, the Museum of Modern Art features the best works of Azerbaijani avant-garde artists from the mid-twentieth century to contemporary times. Together with traditional paintings and sculptures they make up the basis of the museum's exhibitions.⁸

THE CONTEXT OF THE CRAFTSPEOPLE

The workplace of the craftspeople

Artisans can only be registered as natural persons and are exempt from income and property taxes in the country.⁹ In regard to the workplaces of artisans, they are either individual or in organization.

The number of employees that make up the field of art, entertainment, and recreation numbered 55.1 thousand people in total. Out of this number, 21 thousand of them are men and 34 thousand of them are women. The distribution of the employed population by art, entertainment and recreation is 1.7% (2019) out of the total number of persons employed. Regarding the distribution of employees by art, entertainment and recreation the percentage was 3.4% (2019) out of the total. Overall, the economically active population numbered 5190.1 thousand in 2019.

Craftspeople work as entrepreneurs according to the "Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Entrepreneurial Activity" or as a Limited Liability Company (LLC). Artists usually carry out work in the form of sole proprietorship or LLC. According to the Ministry of Culture, there are currently 125 local individual entrepreneurs and LLCs in the field of handicrafts in the country.¹⁰ With the help of some state programs and individual initiatives, some people work as self-employed.

The principle of craftsmanship is that the craftspeople play an essential role in production.¹¹ Therefore, crafts are always made by hand, unless the help of tools and machines is required. As an example, alongside processes involving work by hand, blacksmithing uses tools which include bellows, clay moulds of different sizes, large and small scoops for pouring the alloy into the moulds, a long-handled

7 Farinha, C. 2018. Developing Cultural and Creative Industries in Azerbaijan.

<http://creative.az/files/2/pdf/180315%20Creative%20Industries%20Report%20for%20Azerbaijan.pdf>

8 <http://www.moma.az/en>

9 The Tax Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. <https://www.taxes.gov.az/az/page/ar-vergi-mecellesi>

10 Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The list of local entrepreneurs and LLCs. <https://creative.az/az/allparticipants/1>

11 Anna Viirela. Marketing prerequisites of rural Azerbaijan's traditional handicrafts through purchasing process. 2017. https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/128145/Viirela_Anna.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

trowel for cleaning the foreign matter in the alloy are used. In the case of jewellery production, various types of tools, such as bellows, tongs, a hammer, pliers, a fork, a wire, a knife, a press, a mortar, a fork, a pair of tweezers, are regularly used.¹²

National carpets still play a crucial role in the spiritual lives of citizens. The development of carpet weaving in Azerbaijan has an ancient history. Traditional Azerbaijani carpets are made by hand with the skill being a family tradition which is passed down from generation to generation.¹³ Although carpet weaving is predominant, there are almost no weavers of carpetbags, rugs, palaz and kilim¹⁴.

Embroidering is another ancient art of the Azerbaijani people, with girls and brides putting patterns on blankets, pillowcases, tablecloths and veils, head coverings, sleeves, and skirts. Nowadays there are some courses teaching girls about the art.

Seeing that some arts do not generate much income, young people do not want to spend their time at craftsmen's workshops instead opting to try themselves out in other fields. This makes it difficult to predict the direction of where these arts are headed.¹⁵

The financial position of the craftspeople

Looking at the support programs and assistance ensured to craftspeople, there is a need to mention several programs aimed at supporting the sector and its workers.

As it was mentioned before artisans in the country are exempt from property and income taxes.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Population (MLSP), with a loan from the World Bank, will implement a project called "Employment Support Project in Azerbaijan". It includes some types of craftsmanship such as blacksmithing, patterning, wool combing with the project's objective being the improvement of labour market outcomes among registered jobseekers and unemployed people in Azerbaijan, in support of the State Self-Employment Program. Production and service assets are provided by the program.

Another support program is provided by SMBDA (Small and Medium Business Development Agency), to support the promotion of handicrafts and their participation in exhibitions and sales.¹⁶

There are some programs like "Crafting Futures" the goal of which is to strengthen a sense of cultural belonging by providing a better understanding of arts in the sector, as well as attracting new audiences and markets, and improving the quality of creative practices.

On the other hand, more could be done to support craftspeople, because a lack of financial assistance remains one of the main difficulties they face. This claim is supported by an expert from the Arts Council of Azerbaijan. Moreover, this affects the activity of the artist, because in order to present themselves, artists must actively create works and use them for self-presentation in relevant institutions. Most artists do not participate in these financially demanding events, so they have poor

12 <https://azkurs.org/azerbaycan-respublikasi-tehsil-naziriyi-baki-dovlet-universit-v3.html?page=5>

13 Maintaining intangible cultural heritage in Azerbaijan in the context of globalization.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337929815_Maintaining_intangible_cultural_heritage_in_Azerbaijan_in_the_context_of_globalization

14 https://iravan.info/senetkarliq_incesenet.html

15 http://anl.az/download/meqale/baki_xeber/2011/iyun/el13.htm

16 <https://smb.gov.az/all-news/senetkarliqla-mesgul-olan-sahibkarlar-kobia-nin-desteyinden-yararlanir>

sustainability in their future careers. It is also worth mentioning that the council acts as a third party and organizes exhibitions and workshops that bring together artists and potential customers. Here, the artist, in a sense, must be present and exhibit their art. If somebody likes their work, an offer might be received from a potential buyer.

Most of the residents earn their livelihood by producing and selling their crafts and receiving financial support in rural regions.¹⁷ The average monthly nominal salary of people who are in the sector of entertainment, recreation and art in Azerbaijan is 423.8 manat, while in human health and social work activities it is 352.4 manat, 1005.3 manat in the field of ICT, 1607.3 manat in financial and insurance activities and 3055,6 manat in mining

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, most sectors were closed for a while.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CRAFTS AND DESIGN SECTOR

Traditions, heritage and cultural practice

The results of archaeological excavations and research, without a doubt prove that Azerbaijan has an ancient tradition of craftsmanship.

Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape is one example of Azerbaijan's craftsmanship, which was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2007.¹⁸ Moreover, artistic ceramics and metal products of Caucasian Albania, along with the examples of Tabriz miniature art, enrich the heritage of Azerbaijan.

Examples of Azerbaijani traditions and heritage can be found in Sheki which features architecture, shebeke¹⁹ (a unified artistic tradition), miniature art on walls²⁰, stone carving, wood carving, pottery, blacksmithing, copper, jewelry, colourful kelaghayis²¹ (scarves) made of silk, hat-making, blacksmithing, as well as the art of netting; Karabakh features crockeries, ornaments, metal crafts, clothes, embroidery, textiles, home appliances made of copper, bronze, gold, jewelry, blacksmith art, rock paintings, richly decorated tools and household items, carpet weaving²² patterns that are unique in their beauty and variety. Copper craftsmanship (Lahij, Ismayilli)²³ reflects the traditional and cultural heritage of the Lahij community in the Caucasus.

Jewellery, metal workers, art teachers, decorative painters and handicrafts in textile are more prevalent in Azerbaijani craftsmanship. On the other hand, handicrafts in wool, textile, basketry, leather; jewellery and precious metals; potters, engravers, etchers; glassmakers, and others have a smaller significance in crafts. Design and crafts companies are keen on preserving the traditional and

17 https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/128145/Viirela_Anna.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

18 Gobustan Rock Art Cultural Landscape. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1076>

19 The shebeki at Sheki Khans' Palace in Azerbaijan. <https://www.euronews.com/2017/07/14/the-shebeki-at-sheki-khans-palace-in-azerbaijan>

20 Art of miniature. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/art-of-miniature-01598>

21 Traditional art and symbolism of Kelaghayi, making and wearing women's silk headscarves. <http://unesco.az/index.php?option=content&id=40&language=en>

22 Karabakh Carpets – Overview. <https://karabakh.org/karabakh-culture/carpets/karabakh-carpets/>

23 Copper craftsmanship of Lahij. <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/copper-craftsmanship-of-lahij-00675>

mystical nature of art pieces, which are exhibited and available for sale at various locations around the country. The ancient art of the country and its various sectors are displayed in museums, acting as a testament to the meticulous preservation of the country's heritage.

To introduce schoolchildren to the historical past of Azerbaijan, they are taken on field trips to pottery and sculpting workshops.²⁴ This garners interest in the profession related to moulding and the combination of pottery and clay.

When conducting the comparison between the number of museums and attendees of museums per 1000 people from 2000 to 2019, it can be seen, that the number of museums rose from 150 to approximately 250, and the number of attendees rose from 150 to 350.

Azerbaijan Carpet Weavers Public Union creates databases of talented artists, supports them, finds projects and contributes to their development.

Meanwhile, it has to be noted that different art festivals and exhibitions take place.²⁵

Organisation of the crafts and design sector

It is worth mentioning that many associations have been created to develop and support craftsmanship in Azerbaijan including the Union of Artists of Azerbaijan²⁶, Union of Azerbaijan Architects²⁷.

The Union of Artists of Azerbaijan is based on the principles outlined in Charter of the Union of Artists of Azerbaijan which emphasize self-governance and democracy. It also adheres to values concerning the pluralism of views and freedom of creative self-expression found in the Constitution and Laws of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The Union itself actively participates in the organization of national and international symposiums, competitions, carries out serious work on the aesthetic education of children and youth, helps orphanages, the sick and disabled, and supervises military units. Events relating to the development of the artists potential and assistance to their creative activities are also held.

The Arts Council Azerbaijan, which is part of the International Arts Council Network operating in different countries around the world, is an international and independent art platform. The main purpose of the council is to promote Azerbaijani culture and art by operating on the basis of numerous social and public projects. These projects include shining a light on the culture, history, art, literature, ecology, education, and promoting the country's national values. In the implementation of various projects, the council closely cooperates with government agencies.

The Public Union of Azerbaijani carpet weavers is a voluntary self-governing public association founded in January 2010 by citizens who rallied to support Azerbaijani carpet weaving. The Union encourages reviving the tradition of carpet weaving and developing the national customs of the Azerbaijani people, consolidating the creative potential of active public figures in culture and society, providing support to talented children and youth. The Union also works on conveying factual

²⁴ <https://bakimektebleri.edu.az/285/az/news/read/49528>

²⁵ <http://mct.gov.az/az/umumi-xeberler/11987>

²⁶ Union of Artists of Azerbaijan. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Union_of_Artists_of_Azerbaijan

²⁷ Union of Azerbaijan Architects. <http://www.uaa.az/index.php/en/>

information about the unique national culture, rich historical heritage, and diversity of Azeri carpet arts to the international community.

Icherisheher Centre for Traditional Arts is responsible for scientific, historical and cultural studies of Icherisheher architecture, historical and cultural monuments in the Reserve territory, and the organization of cultural and public events aiming to encourage the development and promotion of national culture.

A Public and Private Sector Working Group on SME was established and works on development in the creative and cultural industries, supporting entrepreneurs and advocating for their interests, raising awareness of SMEs working in the creative and cultural industries. It also helps SMEs benefit from government support mechanisms, proposes the creation and promotion of new organizational models, including Startup Business Centers for Creative and Cultural Industries, clusters.²⁸

Projects such as Nazim Mammadov's Azerbaijan Animation Museum, youth networks, an art and drawing school, outdoor plein air art residences, workshops and even an art newspaper have been carrying out operations for many years. Furthermore, as a result of active cooperation, works of local and foreign artists are exhibited, festivals, biennials, symposiums, and other events are held.

A premium named after the artist-miniaturist of the 16th century, Soltan Muhammad²⁹ was instituted by the Union of Artists of Azerbaijan and is conferred once every two years to artists and art critics.

A market for the craftspeople

Craftspeople have opportunities to sell their handicrafts in shops, fairs, exhibitions, informal and online campaigns. Some exhibitions are arranged by the state or amateur³⁰ initiatives for craftspeople and act as a medium through which handicrafts can be sold. Exhibitions and fairs are held by Azerbaijan with the collaboration of other foreign countries³¹, ministries³², embassies, and other business support organizations like SMBDA.³³³⁴³⁵

Rural regions like Sheki³⁶, Ismaili³⁷, Guba³⁸, Gusar³⁹ feature traditional shops which happen to be rare in more developed Azerbaijani cities. Simplified Support to Family Businesses (ABAD) was established and supported by the state to deal with this issue, under the Presidential Decree dated 23 September 2016. The aim was to implement assistance projects for family businesses engaged in art.

28 <https://smb.gov.az/az/all-news/medeniyyet-ve-incesenet-biznesine-dair-forum-teskil-olunub>

29 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sultan_Mohammed

30 <https://www.salamnews.org/az/news/read/238358/bakida-heveskar-senetkarlarin-el-ishleri-sergisi-acilib-fotolar/>

31 <https://marja.az/21803/bakcellen-incesenet-senetkarliq-ve-sahibkarliq-sergisinin-kecirilmesine-destek>

32 <https://azim.az/medeniyyet/3694-sntkarliq-v-milli-mtbx-yarmarkasi-kulinariyamizin-xaricd-tbligin-boyuk-dstkdir.html>

33 <https://smb.gov.az/az/all-news/naftalanda-kob-larin-mehsullarindan-ibaret-sergi-satis-yarmarkasi-kecirilib>

34 <https://smb.gov.az/az/all-news/kob-lar-i-senetkarliq-festivalinda-istirak-edir>

35 <https://smb.gov.az/az/all-news/senetkarliqla-mesgul-olan-sahibkarlar-kobia-nin-desteyinden-yararlanir>

36 <https://azerbaijan.travel/call-into-shekis-craft-shops>

37 <https://azerbaijan.travel/learn-the-secrets-to-kelaghayi-making-in-basgal>

38 <https://azerbaijan.travel/quba-xalcalarinin-naxislari-haqda-oyrenin>

39 <https://azerbaijan.travel/qusarin-yun-xalca-geyimlerinden-zovq-alin>

It is based in 26 geographic areas to account for the place of origin of beneficiaries and offers 11 selling points for handicrafts.⁴⁰

There are some other selling platforms such as websites and social media (mostly Instagram and Facebook), which craftspeople use to demonstrate and sell their work. Frequently, unless the artisans and especially artists want to sell their work themselves, they have to hire individuals or companies who would be willing to carry out this task.⁴¹

Azerbaijani craftsmanship and fine art are highly valued by museums and art researchers around the world due to the aesthetic standard. Among the vast collections of Victoria and Albert of London, the Louvre of Paris, the Metropolitan of Washington, Vienna, Rome, Berlin, Istanbul, Tehran, Cairo, one can find art created by the craftsman of Tabriz, Nakhchivan, Ganja, Gazakh, Guba, Baku, Sheki, Shamakhi and Karabakh.⁴²

Employment in crafts and design

Individuals who have interest and talent in crafts and design are able to work in their own houses or workshops. Their rights are protected by the unions of arts, handicrafts and architecture.

As mentioned above, ABAD⁴³ is a public legal entity run by the State Agency for Public Service and Social Innovations under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The organization was established with the aim of carrying out socially oriented projects that ensure the active participation of citizens in the socio-economic life of the Republic of Azerbaijan, developing small and medium entrepreneurship, raising the employment rate of the population and supporting the formation of competitive family businesses in the country. To achieve this goal it provides business planning, equipment, marketing, training courses, branding and design, financial accounting and legal assistance services to family households. Family households or individuals who are registered as craftspeople and supported by ABAD are called “ABADçılar” (beneficiaries)⁴⁴.

Early on, ABAD sought to attract craftspeople to the crafts process. ABAD's skills development programs (completely free of charge) cover a wide geographical area, such as Sheki, Nardaran (ceramics), Morocco and Turkey (carpet weaving and jewelry). **Training is usually organized in the form of apprentice and master.** In a three-year EU-supported training project, 44 families from the Sheki-Zagatala economic region were involved in woodcarving training. Nowadays, the standards for the craftspeople involved are high and include all kinds of handicrafts, as well as takelduz (Sheki)⁴⁵ and straw bags (Masalli)⁴⁶, which until recently were nearly forgotten. However, due to the efforts of ABAD, they have returned to markets and helped ABAD acquire 2 new members.

Although ABAD's involvement in face-to-face training is currently suspended due to the pandemic, efforts are underway to sell online. Products for export are transformed from small souvenirs into large ornaments. ABAD products have already been exported to Ukrainian and Russian cities.

40 <https://abad.gov.az/sale-centers>

41 Difficulties and love of art of Icheri Sheher artists. <https://www.bbc.com/azeri/azerbaijan-42139646>

42 <https://azerbaijan.az/related-information/54>

43 Simplified Support to Family Businesses. <https://abad.gov.az/>

44 <https://abad.gov.az/beneficiaries>

45 <https://abad.gov.az/beneficiary/69?locale=az>

46 <https://abad.gov.az/beneficiary/10?locale=az>

According to statistics at end of 2020, ABAD served 468 beneficiaries. Of them, 359 (55%) were women, 188 (40%) were men, and 21 (5%) were LLCs⁴⁷. Of the 468 beneficiaries, 335 contain craftspeople and are active. According to an expert, this amount is just the registered people; hence it is reasonable to suppose that their family members are also involved in the process. Because of this predicament the number of members can be multiplied by at least 3.

Disaggregating the data for gender, the number of women employed in activities related to recreation, entertainment, and art equalled to 34085, meaning that as a percentage of women working in different sectors, this sector employed 5.2% of the women. The number of men working in the recreation, entertainment, and art sector equalled to 21021, meaning that out of all sectors, this one employed 2.1% of men. Therefore, the proportion of women (61.9%) exceed the proportion of men (38.1%) in this economic activity.⁴⁸

Current and emerging skills demand in the sector

The term **"craftsmanship"** is defined as an activity related to skills and experience in the creation of material objects, especially relating to the production of works that are useful to humans. This usefulness can be considered in terms of functionality, decoration or both. Craft items can include birdhouses, mats, woven baskets, embroidery, blankets, handbags, candles, jewelry, pottery, glassware, etc.

Some multifaceted institutions are created on the basis of individual initiatives and play the main role in the development of art and creativity, as well as professional services and society. These spaces provide opportunities for collaboration, professional development, and presentation. Some centres also offer educational programs for a wider audience. There are also a number of places in Baku that offer collaborative and informal work environments for young freelancers, entrepreneurs, programmers and designers.

"ASMART" creative hub⁴⁹ is a private creative company created by a group of experts specializing in the development of culture and art. The main goal of the centre is to provide a creative space for young artists, designers, art professionals, and people interested in art. It organizes long-term and short-term courses, seminars, speeches, exhibitions, debates and provides free venues for artists to work in.

Baku Business Factory was founded in 2015 and supports youth business initiatives. Young people with business ideas in various fields can turn their ideas into business at the BBF. They receive an office, mentor, and financial support from the BBF and regularly participate in various training activities.⁵⁰

YARAT a Contemporary Art Place founded in 2011, deals with the public perception of contemporary art in Azerbaijan and the representation of Azerbaijani art domestically and internationally. The centre, which promotes modern art, organizes countless events in the field of education and professional

47 <https://abad.gov.az/open-informations>

48 The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/labour/>

49 <https://www.facebook.com/AsmartCreativeHub/>

50 <https://bbf.az/>

development, including fine and performative arts. YARAT Art Residence is home to international and local artists selected through open selections.⁵¹

With the support of the Ministry of Education, organized by the Republican Centre for Child and Youth Development, in partnership with the State Committee for Work with the Diaspora, virtual lessons "Let's get to know Azerbaijan" were launched for Azerbaijani children and youth living abroad. One of the 10 lessons is about "Craftsmanship" (carpet weaving, weaving, design).⁵²

Training institutions include vocational education centres for culture and arts, carpet weaving, art and painting schools, state, and non-state institutions. According to an expert from the State Employment Agency, one of the important active employment measures implemented by the agency is the organization of vocational training. In accordance with the "Rules for the organization of vocational training of job seekers and unemployed people", the Agency organizes vocational training courses for job seekers and unemployed people depending on labour market demand and takes appropriate measures to ensure their employment. During 2020, the "carpet weaver" vocational training course in the field of handicrafts was organized in accordance with the relevant decisions from the Cabinet of Ministers "On the organization of educational institutions", while also accounting for the sanitary measures implemented due to Covid-19 in the country.

Throughout their vocational training, those in the program are paid a stipend that amounts to the minimum monthly wage established in the country, and those who successfully complete the vocational training courses receive certificates.

The British Council has launched a regional program called "Crafting Future", in which the State Agency for Vocational Education is also a beneficiary. The program includes topical research and awareness-raising initiatives aimed at supporting arts, craftsmanship, as well as development.⁵³ Cooperation has begun with the British Plymouth Art College and Baku State Vocational Education Centre for Culture and Arts.

Recent innovations in technology made an impact on the artwork, skills, and styles of the artisans.

THE NATIONAL APPROACH TO CRAFTS AND DESIGN

Laws and policies for the crafts and design sector

According to the "Article on Social Development" and the country's Constitution, the state of Azerbaijan promotes the development of culture, education, health, science, and art, protects the nature of the country, the history, material, and spiritual heritage of the people. At the same time, everyone has the right to participate in cultural life, to enjoy cultural institutions and resources. Article 40 of the Cultural Law states that everyone must respect, care for and protect historical, cultural, and

51 <https://www.yarat.az/>

52 <https://edu.gov.az/az/page/9/19445>

53 <https://edu.gov.az/az/page/9/19687>

spiritual heritage.⁵⁴ According to an expert from the Ministry of Culture, the development of crafts and design in the country is divided into three parts centring on protection, development, and promotion.

Training courses, sales fairs, exhibitions of handicrafts, and circles for forgotten crafts are organized by the Ministry to protect craftsmanship. In connection with all this, before the pandemic, artists were sent to countries such as China, Italy, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Exhibitions are organized in foreign countries in accordance with the "Strategic Action Plan for the Development of Azerbaijani Folk Art for 2018-2023."⁵⁵ Competitions and exhibitions are organized to develop Article 1 Section 5 of the action plan which aims to promote traditional crafts.

There are "Rules of Use And Protection Of Monuments"⁵⁶ which ensures the protection of monuments and entire objects such as various carpets, paintings, samples of applied and decorative arts, etc. There is an article on tax benefits and exemptions which includes manufacturing of copper, tin, pottery and earthenware, household appliances, gardening tools, folk musical instruments, toys, souvenirs, household items from reeds and canes, artistic processing of ceramics, embroidery, woodworking. The buildings of craft workshops or the parts of the buildings of natural persons engaged in the activity where these workshops are located are not subject to property tax.⁵⁷

According to the Law on Culture⁵⁸; matters in the domain "On the protection of historical and cultural monuments", "On publishing", "On cinematography", "On theatre and theatre activities", "On library work", "On museums", "Azerbaijani folklore", "On legal protection of samples", "On protection and development of Azerbaijani carpet art", "On television and radio broadcasting", "On copyright and related rights" and "On education" are regulated by the Laws and the Civil Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In addition, the organization of art and artistic events, creative competitions, exhibitions, creative evenings, cultural and art presentations, festivals, conferences and symposiums for promotion and development of Azerbaijani culture, national cultural heritage are included in the cultural activities of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Furthermore, in the field of culture, state funding is used for the development of literature, art, design, architecture, music, choreography, theatre and circus, cinema, museums and libraries, painting and sculpture, folk art, folklore, and the implementation of educational and research projects in the field of culture.

The economics of crafts

As there are no separate statistics on craftsmanship, the necessary information and statistics on this topic will be provided through the statistics within the sections of culture, arts, recreation and entertainment.

For the current year (January-November, 2020), Gross Domestic Product including the non-oil sector was 45 391,7 million manat (22008.43 million euro)⁵⁹.

54 The Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan. <https://mincom.gov.az/az/view/pages/13/>

55 <http://culture.gov.az/az/umumi-xeberler/florensiya-beynelxalq-l-sleri-sergisi-davam-edir>

56 <https://icherisheher.gov.az/en/normative/10>

57 Tax Code of the Republic of Azerbaijan. <https://www.taxes.gov.az/az/page/ar-vergi-mecellesi>

58 Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Culture. <https://president.az/articles/7392>

59 The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. <https://www.stat.gov.az/news/macroeconomy.php?page=1&lang=en>

Funds allocated from the state budget for social-cultural measures in 2019 consisted of 335,8 million manat and accounted for 0.4% GDP.

Distribution of the employed population by art, entertainment and recreation decreased by 1.7% to the total number of persons employed.⁶⁰

Number of employed population by art, entertainment and recreation is 55.1 thousand. 3.4% of those performing in the service sector worked in the fields of recreation, entertainment and art.

As of January-September 2020, the average monthly wage per employee in the field of recreation, entertainment and art was composed of 423.8 manat. The average monthly nominal wages of women by this type of economic activity in 2019 was 360.2 manat, while for men it was 528.9 manat in total. For women, it was 346.7 manat in the public sector and 761.5 manat in the private sector in 2019. For men, it was 420.5 and 1135.5 manat, respectively, during the same period. Overall, the minimum wage in Azerbaijan is 250 manat, while an average salary is around 712.3 manat.

TABLE 1 CULTURAL OCCUPATION (2018)

Code (ISCO 08)	Occupation	Number employed
2355	Other art teachers	328
7313	Jewellery and precious- metal workers	496
7314	Potters and related workers	54
7315	Glass makers, cutters, grinders and finishers	57
7316	Sign writers, decorative painters, engravers and etchers	198
7317	Handicrafts in wool, basketry and related materials	91
7318	Handicraft workers in textile, leather and related material basketry	137
7319	Handicraft workers not elsewhere classified	N/A

UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators. Azerbaijan's Technical Report.

<http://creative.az/files/2/pdf/180216%20UNESCO%20CDIS%20Technical%20Report%20Azerbaijan%20FINAL.pdf>

The structure of exports by product: works of art, collectors' pieces and antiques- USD 110.0 thousand out of total export – USD 19,635,580.4 thousand. The structure of retail trade turnover, by types of goods: souvenirs and arts comprised 11 322,3 thousand manat, which was 0.03 % of the total share of goods in retail trade turnover in 2019. While its share of goods in wholesale trade turnover was 0.7% in the same year, amounting to 10 872,2 in thousand manat.

TABLE 2. COUNTRY PROFILE AZERBAIJAN

Creative Industries Trade Performance, 2005 - 2014	Values in Million US\$
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60 The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan. <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/labour/?lang=en>

Azerbaijan	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Exports	4,94	6,31	12,53	12,53	7,41	7,26	6,30	7,47	3,13	3,95
Imports	51,77	40,49	67,43	76,44	105,43	78,99	112,36	149,65	126,22	138,04
Balance of Trade	-46,83	-34,18	-54,90	-63,91	-98,02	-71,73	-106,06	-142,18	-123,09	-134,09

Creative Economy Outlook. Country Profiles. <File:///C:/Users/User/Downloads/UNCTAD.Pdf>

Drivers of change in the crafts and design sector

The number of design graduates in Azerbaijan was less than 200 in 2017. Currently, this tendency continues. For this reason, there is an imbalance between supply and demand in the country. Also, design companies prefer experienced designers to new graduates.

The **lack of a unified and systematic design centre and database** in Azerbaijan may result in poor cooperation or the absence of cooperation between organizations operating in the field of design (organizations, institutions, trade unions, associations, companies, etc.).

Suggested steps to create a Design and Innovation Center are:

- Creation of a design department within the Institute of Architecture and Art
- Establishment of the Design and Innovation Center within the Department of Humanities of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences
- The Union of Designers of Azerbaijan (UDA) should be reorganized as a non-governmental organization and a Design and Innovation Center should be established within the organization.
- Establishment of the Design and Innovation Center within the Azerbaijan State Academy of Arts
- Establishment of the Design and Innovation Center as an independent, self-financing organization.⁶¹⁶²

National

Examples of folk art are still reflected in the socio-economic formations that have continued from the Stone Age to the present day.

Regional

Influence of different cultures such as Hellenism and Arab influence.

Various religions such as Greek Hellenism, Byzantine Christianity, and finally Arabic Islam have mixed. As a result of the Hellenic influence which began from the 3rd-4th centuries, Azerbaijan got new styles and schools of art in the development of its own culture.

61 Promoting Culture for A Stronger Azerbaijan. 2018. factsheet_eu_support_to_culture_azerbaijan.pdf (europa.eu)

62 Creation of A Design and Innovation Centre in Azerbaijan. 2017.

[http://www.culturepartnership.eu/upload/editor/2017/Policy%20Briefs/Nadir%20Jafarov_Policy%20Brief_Eng_2%20June%202017%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.culturepartnership.eu/upload/editor/2017/Policy%20Briefs/Nadir%20Jafarov_Policy%20Brief_Eng_2%20June%202017%20(1).pdf)

Caucasus Albania is one of the oldest areas of Azerbaijani culture, being the history and regional art centre of the Ancient East, especially, in jewellery.

Azerbaijan was affected by Arabic culture due to occupation and adoption of Islam. Starting from the VIII-IX centuries, Islamic ethical and aesthetic standards were beginning to influence different spheres of Azerbaijani culture. Some ornaments on engraved objects were often combined with Arabic language inscriptions supplementing ornaments.

Global

Through **eco-friendly** and recycled art, artists give a second life to used paper, car parts, glass, scrap metal, and other waste that is considered unusable, and created works of art from them. An exhibition "From Waste to Art" has been organized since 2012.⁶³

⁶³ http://ideacampaign.org/photocontent/publications/IDEA_annual.pdf

ANNEX 1. LIST OF STATISTICS

Below is an indicative list of statistical data that could be identified. If no data is available on the crafts sector specifically, data on the cultural sector as a whole could be valuable to help contextualize other information collected on the crafts sector.

Category	Data that can be collected (if existing)
Economics	<p>Sector share of the GDP; N/A Sector share of a country's trade; 0,07% (Share of goods in wholesale trade turnover, 2019) Sector share of investment; N/A Sector share of the R&D; N/A Sector share of the innovative firms; N/A Share of companies operating in the crafts sector; N/A</p> <p><i>See if any data exist on individual sub-sectors (e.g., pottery, woodwork etc.).</i></p>
Employment	<p>Share of crafts employment as part of total employment; 82,0 thsd persons Art, entertainment, and recreation (2019) Share of the self-employed in the crafts sector; N/A Share of formal/informal employment within the sector. N/A Share of people working on a full-time basis in the crafts sector; N/A Share of the craftspeople who are single job holders (i.e. crafts are their main economic activity); N/A Average salary of the craftspeople; 423.8 manat. (2019) Data on unemployment of craftspeople; N/A Share of women and men in crafts employment; women-5.2%, men-2.1% (2019) Labour productivity. N/A</p> <p><i>See if any data exist on individual sub-sectors (e.g., pottery, woodwork etc.).</i></p>
Education	<p>Number of education programmes offered in crafts and design related fields; Share of tertiary students in the crafts-related fields of education; Number of yearly graduates from crafts and design schools / share of total graduates; Literacy rate within a country; The literacy rate of the population is 98.8%; 99.5% for males and 98.2% for females.⁶⁴ Early school leaving rate within a country.</p>
Financial aspects of companies	<p>Number of grants awarded for the craftsmen and people; N/A Share of financial support awarded to craftspeople and crafts companies as part of national / private funding schemes. Funds allocated from the state budget of Azerbaijan for social-cultural measures in 2019 - 335,8 million manat, 0.4% to GDP Amount of foreign investment / donor contributions (e.g. EU, UN, etc.) N/A</p>
Digitalisation	<p>Share of population having digital access / skills. Proportion of computer users- 74.1 %. Internet access of enterprises by arts, entertainment, and recreation of activity- 332.0 total unit. Proportion of enterprises using computers- 62.8%. Proportion of employees using computers- 33.9% (2019)</p>
Additional aspects	<p>COVID-19: Any data that relates to the COVID-19 and its impact on the economics and labour market (specifically the crafts sector)</p>

⁶⁴ Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan <https://edu.gov.az/en/page/406/5365>

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