

ETF FORUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING - PEER VISIT TO GEORGIA

TBILISI, GEORGIA, DECEMBER 6-8, 2022



Quality Assurance Forum

DRAFT

The contents of this paper reflect the views of the peer visit participants and do not necessarily represent the views of the ETF or the EU institutions.

SUMMARY

The meeting of the ETF Forum for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training (ETF QA Forum) in Tbilisi, Georgia, December 6 – 8, 2022 focussed on the evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of external quality assurance mechanisms for the implementation of CVET (Continuous VET) vocational training/vocational retraining programs.

The ETF QA Forum, established in 2017, is a multi-national collaborative initiative composed of a network of national-level institutions with a VET quality assurance mandate in ETF partner countries in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean, the South-Eastern Europe regions and Turkey and the Eastern partnership. ETF Forum members collaborate to improve quality assurance in VET by pooling knowledge and know-how, monitoring, and reporting on national developments in quality assurance, engaging in joint projects, including Peer Visits, and developing and disseminating good examples of policy and practice.

The ETF Forum's Peer Visit methodology foresees peer assessment of, and feedback on, the effectiveness of quality assurance related to a selected VET policy area. The Georgian peer visit looked at the effectiveness and efficiency of external quality assurance mechanisms for the implementation of CVET (Continuous VET) vocational training/vocational retraining programs.

The meeting in Georgia included the participation of twenty representatives of the main national level stakeholders' institutions. The Georgian host institution's objectives were to receive feedback on the efficiency and effectiveness of standards and processes for granting the right for the implementation of continuing vocational training/vocational retraining programs in Georgia.

The peer visit was organised as a hybrid event. The face-to-face meeting in Tbilisi was preceded by an online meeting held on 17/11/2022. The peer visit in Tbilisi was hosted by the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement of Georgia.

During the first 2 days, the peers had a chance to meet and discuss with VET providers, assessment experts, trainees and CVET Council members to get better understanding of their roles within the authorisation process.

NCPs participants suggested some improvements of the peer visit process, included: longer duration to allow for a better understanding of the national system, a preliminary preparatory meeting with visiting peers and the hosting NCP to make sure that there are no unclarities, dedicating some time to the host country to analyse the feedback provided by the peers, organisation of an online meeting to discuss the follow-up phase of the host country.

The host institution was reassured of being 'on the right track'. Peer feedback concluded that the Georgian approach to the evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of external quality assurance mechanisms for the implementation of CVET (Continuous VET) vocational training/vocational retraining programs is well developed including participation of a wide range of stakeholders, clear procedures and digital solutions.

Ideas for reflection/improvement included considerations related to higher visibility, clearer quality assurance standards for the assessment experts, quality culture and quality as a way of management, transparent data, labour market data collection and matching to decrease the gap between demand and supply side.

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of the 3-day peer visit of the ETF Forum for quality assurance in vocational education and training (ETF QA Forum) in Georgia, and an insight on the quality assurance of continuing vocational programmes in Georgia and other ETF QA Forum member countries. It opens up an important area of quality assurance – that of short upskilling and reskilling courses with high potential for responding to immediate needs of the labour market. The report offers timely points for reflection on the role and contribution of quality assurance to lifelong learning.

Beyond the thematic focus, the report offers a comprehensive overview of the methodology systematically used by the ETF QA Forum – that of peer visits. Although the Peer visit methodology was specifically developed for the ETF QA Forum, it can be used outside of the context of the Forum. It can inspire other professionals working in the field of education, training and employment to apply it for active and effective peer learning. This report simply provides a ‘taste’ of the experience. The report follows three phases of the four-phases approach of the ETF Forum’s Peer Visit methodology: Preparation, Implementation, Reflection and Feedback.



Photo: ETF Quality Assurance Forum peers and the Director of the Business Academy Georgia on 7 December 2022 in Tbilisi

BACKGROUND

On 6-8 December 2022 members of the ETF QA Forum convened in Tbilisi, Georgia, upon invitation of the Georgian member of the ETF QA Forum - National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement of Georgia (NCEQE) represented by Mr Kakhaber Eradze - the Deputy Director of NCEQE, and the National Contact Person for Georgia in the ETF QA Forum. NCEQE hosted a specific type of peer learning event – Peer visit.



Photo: Kakhaber Eradze, Deputy Director of the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement of Georgia; National contact person for Georgia in ETF QA Forum

A Peer Visit is a form of external feedback from visiting peers that aims to support the host country in its quality assurance development efforts. NCEQE requested external peers from other Forum member countries to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the standards and for obtaining the right to implement the vocational training and retraining programs.

One of the core activities of the members ETF QA Forum is collaborating to develop solutions to common challenges. It is in this context that the Forum has adopted Peer visit as its core working method.

Peer Visits serve as catalysts for:

- Engagement of national stakeholders in an international review of VET quality assurance measures.
- Receiving of external, critical but supportive observation and feedback on quality assurance measures.
- Supporting the host country in self- reflection and self-assessment of its own quality assurance in VET approaches and measures.
- Gathering evidence with inputs from external peers for the effective reform of VET quality assurance.

The ETF Forum for Quality Assurance in VET [Peer Visit Guidance and Training Manual](#) - Working Paper was developed by ARQA-VET (Österreichische Referenzstelle für Qualität in der Berufsbildung) in collaboration with the ETF quality assurance team. The Manual provides guidance and a training concept for the implementation of Peer Visits as well as a 'toolbox' of instruments.



Photos from left to the right: Anahit Terteryan, alternate NCP Armenia, Rkia El Mahmoudi, NCP Morocco

THE PEER VISIT – PHASE ONE, PREPARATION

- ZOOMING IN ON THE GEORGIAN REQUEST FOR PEER FEEDBACK
- GEORGIA SWOT ANALYSIS
- SELF-REFLECTIONS BY PEERS ON NATIONAL PRACTICES

In the preparatory phase, the Peer Visit is planned and organised by the host institution with relevant stakeholders. Peers must be informed and prepared for their role and their tasks.

Peer visit methodology – PHASE 1 - PREPARATION

Value for involved actors:

Hosts

- Stimulating a national level reflection on a selected policy area with involvement of wide circle of national stakeholders,
- Increasing international trust and transparency towards the national system

Visiting peers:

- Supporting analytical and critical thinking capacities vis a vis own country and international developments in quality assurance of VET
- Stimulating a self-reflection on own country arrangements in the selected policy area

In July 2022, NCEQE of Georgia responded to the call for proposals of the ETF QA Forum, by submitting a proposal to host a peer visit. NCEQE proposed to focus it on the external quality assurance mechanism for the implementation of continuous vocational training/retraining programs in Georgia.

ETF QA Forum members from other countries were invited to get an in-depth familiarisation with the Georgian system and provide their constructive peer feedback. In order to present the Georgian system to peers, NCEQE prepared a set of information and supporting documents. This set included an analytical National Context Report (specifically drafted by NCEQE for the peer visit), a SWOT analysis and a number of regulatory documents (nationally approved laws, procedures, and state programmes).

Policy area at the centre of the peer visit: standards and processes for granting the right for the implementation of continuous vocational training/retraining programs

Background:

Formalised procedures for continuous vocational training/retraining (short courses 2 weeks to 12 months) were introduced in Georgia in 2019. Before that, non-formalised continuous vocational training and retraining programs were functioning.

In the new formalised system, quality assurance has obtained a prominent role. Institutions aiming to become providers of vocational training/retraining courses were given a possibility (but not mandatory requirement) to obtain the right to implement these courses through a nationally defined authorisation procedure. Georgian stakeholders stressed current relevance and priority of this policy area for the country. One of the underlying issues (identified in the SWOT analysis) is the high rate of economic growth in the post-pandemic period that leads to an increased demand for upskilling of people. Vocational training/retraining programs are also an integral and important element of the ongoing State employment support programme in Georgia. They are used as Active labour market measures in order to increase the competitiveness of job seekers and to support the employment.

Context for the Peer Visit:

A government resolution approved on 15.03.2019 (Nr 131) regulates procedures and conditions for obtaining the right to deliver vocational training and retraining programs and for considering them recognised by the State. Any legal entity registered in Georgia and intending to provide training and retraining courses can apply for this right: VET colleges, higher education institutions, general education institutions, as well as other public and private institutions and NGOs. The procedure also establishes standards and assessment criteria for compliance by providers.

There are 2 possible tracks for obtaining the right to deliver vocational training and retraining programs: a regular track and a simplified track.

The simplified track applies if the program is based on an already authorised Vocational Education Program. It means that the Vocational training or retraining program represents the compilation of learning outcomes from a “bigger” program, that Vocational college, HE or GE institution is implementing under the umbrella of “big” authorization.

The regular track applies when not authorized legal entities or VET colleges, higher education institutions or general education schools aim to deliver program that is not related to an already authorised “bigger” vocational education program. The peer visit looked at this regular track.

Rationale for the Peer Visit:

NCEQE of Georgia asked for feedback from peers on the efficiency and effectiveness of standards and processes for granting the right for the implementation of CVET vocational training/vocational retraining programs in Georgia.

Specifically, NCEQE posed the following questions to the peers:

- 1) Evaluation of the effectiveness and efficiency of the standards and processes (including procedures) for obtaining the right to implement the vocational training program and vocational retraining program (CVET - Continuous VET)? Are these processes reliable and transparent?
- 2) Do you have any advice to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of standards and processes for granting the right for the implementation of CVET vocational training/vocational retraining programs in Georgia? Does it take into consideration modern challenges and demands?
- 3) Is the existing monitoring system sufficient to identify the gaps in the training-retraining program implementation level? What can be improved? What kind of system should exist to support the permanent capacity building of experts and the council?
- 4) How do you support obtaining the right for the implementation of internationally recognized certification courses?



Photos from left to the right: Ivan Marković, alternate NCP Montenegro, Ruben Topchyan, NCP Armenia

In order to present its system to external peers, it is crucial that the hosting country selects and engages relevant national stakeholders in the peer visit from the very beginning. These stakeholders should be engaged in the joint national reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the selected quality assurance measure (national SWOT analysis), in the definition of the questions to the external peers, and, finally, they should also benefit from the peer feedback. Such consistent engagement of relevant stakeholders allows to properly follow up on the feedback from external peers and their recommendations.

NCEQE of Georgia shared the following nationally prepared SWOT of the external quality assurance mechanisms for the implementation of CVET training/retraining programmes:

<p>Strengths (internal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed legal framework; • Providing the labor market with qualified personnel in a short period of time; • Existence of State funding programs; • Existence of flexible standards and procedures • Existence of electronic proceedings (digital procedures); • Satisfactory competences of the parties involved in the development process; • Flexible system of enrolling trainees within the year; • Existence of internationalization strengthening policy; • Increased possibility of employment in the international labor market. 	<p>Weaknesses (internal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty of using the electronic portal from the user side; • Insufficient awareness of the training system; • Insufficient coordination among stakeholders; • Complicated bureaucracy of budgetary financing procedures; • Absence of a diversified financing system (funding is carried out mainly from the state budget); • low rate of offering programs in foreign languages; • Ignoring the use of the system given in circular migration schemes.
<p>Opportunities (external)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority declared by the state. • Increasing State budgetary funding. • High interests of international and donor organizations; • The high rate of economic growth in the post-pandemic period, which leads to an increased demand for raising the qualifications of personnel; • Converting opportunities in non-formal education into formal education; • An attractive alternative of formal education in a short period of time. 	<p>Threats (external)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less awareness of the employer concerning the given system; • Absence of areas of regulated activities at the legal level; • Difficult geopolitical situation; • High rate of migration; • Limited possibility of conducting training programs remotely; • Low trust compared to qualification programs.

Table: SWOT analysis of the external quality assurance mechanisms for the implementation of CVET training/retraining programmes in Georgia

Visiting peers

Peers (representing ETF QA Forum member institutions) from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Israel, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia and Turkey have taken part in the peer visit. As an observer and critical friend in this peer visit activity Mr António Carlos Luz Correia from the National Agency for Qualification and Vocational Education and Training, EQAVET National Reference Point Portugal complemented the discussions with the peers.

The main preparatory task for the visiting peers was to read the National Context Report, seek clarifications and further information, and consider the special assessment questions presented by the host institution for review and feedback.



Photos: 1st row from left to the right: Evis Gishti, National Agency for VET and Qualifications, Albania and Rkia El Mahmoudi, Ministry of economic inclusion, SMEs, employment and competences, Morocco, and Ruben Topchyan, National center for professional (vocational and higher) education quality assurance, Armenia

2nd row: Tamar Makharashvili, First Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, Director of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, Kakhaber Eradze, Deputy Director of the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement of Georgia; National contact person for Georgia in ETF QA Forum, and Lasha Zivzivadze, Nani Dalakishvili, Ketevan Tsikhiseli, Lana Gachechiladze from the NCEQE

Additionally, visiting peers conducted research and self-reflections on the state of play of the external quality assurance of short training courses in their own countries. Their self-reflections addressed the following questions:

- Do vocational education and training providers (public and private VET schools, professional and employers' associations, single companies) need an authorisation to deliver short term courses? What is the procedure: authorising body, criteria, etc
- Is the authorisation a pre-requisite to any public funding?

- Challenges in the existing system and practice of authorisation of VET providers to deliver short term courses,

Synthesis of visiting peers' notes on quality assurance of short courses in their countries

To deliver short-term courses, there are some forms of authorisation requirement present in most of the participating countries in the peer visit. Countries have national specificities as regards procedures, often differentiating between public and private providers, types of certificates issued, as well as upskilling for staff in the companies. There are specificities that regard recognition status of certificates and diplomas and relation of the learning outcomes to the national NQFs. Some of the most prominent issues are summarised below.

Quality assurance procedures related to the delivery of short courses, public funding

In some countries there are different procedures (tracks) for short training courses delivered by public VET institutions and non-public entities.

This is the case in Albania, where the already functioning public VET institutions delivering CVET courses do not need to go through a separate authorisation procedure, but just an approval. At the same time, non-public entities need to be licensed through the National Business Centre in Albania.

Also in Moldova, the approval of the respective programmes by the Teachers' Council of the educational institution (but no authorisation procedure as such) is required for the continuous training programmes of a maximum of 20 credits/600 hours delivered in the same field of initial VET programs.

A similar system is in place in Morocco, where public providers can deliver short diploma vocational training (specialization and professional qualification level) if the ministerial decree creating the public vocational training institution mentions the training in question and authorizes the institution to deliver such training. For short diploma courses, the training programs are developed according to methodological guides. The same institutions may provide short non-degree courses that are not mentioned in the creation order and whose training program does not follow the same steps mentioned in the methodological guide. If the short-term training leading to a diploma (specialization and professional qualification level) is provided by a private vocational training institute in Morocco, the establishment must be authorized by the vocational training department and must also be accredited so that the diploma issued at the end of the training is recognized by the State. In general, for short term non-degree training, a quality assurance system must be introduced for the development of training programs/content.

Similarly, in Tunisia, all private training providers need a registration at the VET services of the Ministry of employment and vocational training – the resulting authorisation to carry out activities as a VET provider is then valid both for initial training and for VET short-term courses. As regards public training providers in Tunisia, they are not enough implied in the short-term training, and when they do that, they delegate this task to private providers.

In other countries, all entities planning to deliver CVET training are subject to quality assurance procedures. In Armenia, providers of CVET trainings are subject to evaluation (to ensure compliance to established criteria) by an organization selected by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports as a result of a competition. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the provider of short-term courses (public or private) is obliged to submit a request to the competent Ministry of Education. In Turkey, public education centers planning to deliver short-term courses are required to obtain authorization from provincial directorates of education which are the authorising bodies - the needs of a region and requests of the sector are taken into account for delivery of short-term courses. Private companies in Turkey may deliver short term courses by signing cooperation protocols with schools and provincial directorates of education.

Other countries may have procedures based on the type of qualifications issued by the provider at the end of the course. In Azerbaijan, if official documents (diplomas) are issued, it is required to get an authorization with the State Agency for Vocational Education (while for short term courses not providing official diplomas/certificates in the end, there is no need to get an authorisation from the Agency). Also in

Montenegro, all public and private providers of adult education have to be licenced by the Ministry of Education if they train for qualifications that have been adopted at the national level and issue a nationally valid certificate.

One defined area where CVET training plays an important role is for the in-service upskilling of employees in companies. In Morocco, it is provided by consulting and training organizations that are subject to external quality assurance by a qualification commission, appointed by decision of the Minister in charge of Vocational Training. To promote the quality of this type of training in Morocco, the state reimburses up to 70% of the costs if its content has been developed by following steps ensuring its good quality and its adequacy with the needs of the labour market (it goes down to 40% if the content is not based on the needs of the labour market). In Israel, CVET training of employees in the companies is not regulated through external quality assurance mechanisms. Similarly, also in Turkey, institutions which do not report to Ministry of National Education (including companies) are not required to obtain authorization from any authorising body if the short-term course that they plan to deliver is limited to their staff.

In Albania, licence is commonly used for benefiting from public funding especially in the framework of active labour market policies. In Azerbaijan, for public VET providers an authorization is a pre-requisite to get public funding, for private VET providers it is not. In Montenegro, to be able to access public funds, the provider must have a license from the ministry of Education and a nationally valid educational program. The authorization is not a pre-requisite for any public funding in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey.

Quality assurance criteria and standards related to the delivery of short courses

As regards criteria and standards used for the external quality assurance processes, if no specific quality assurance exists for providers of short courses (in case of VET institutions that provide both formal VET and short-term courses and do not need a separate authorisation), quality assurance requirements valid for initial VET programs are usually also applied to provision of short-term courses. This is the case of public VET institutions in Albania, Moldova, Morocco, public and private providers in Tunisia.

Where there are dedicated authorisation procedures for short-term courses, countries have developed various quality assurance criteria. Thus, consulting and training organisations that deliver in-service training to employees of companies in Morocco, have to prove their competences in the field of Strategic analysis, On-the-Job Training Engineering, Human Resources Management, Quality Management and Training Strategic analysis. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, providers of CVET courses are to comply with defined requirements in terms of space, equipment and teaching staff. Similarly, also in Montenegro, licencing conditions refer to spatial capacities (classrooms, cabinets, sanitary facilities), personnel (which lecturers can conduct training), material (which equipment must exist in order to organize the training).

Challenges in the existing system and practice of authorisation of VET providers to deliver short term courses

According to the reflections submitted by QA Forum members, Quality assurance of CVET is clearly an area that is undergoing changes and is in the spotlight of ongoing reforms in many countries. Short training and retraining courses are part of countries' efforts to promote lifelong learning, to upskill and reskill people that are in employment, as well as the jobseekers. Several QA Forum members indicated as challenge the need to improve criteria related to licencing/authorisation of CVET courses, in order to support quality assurance of provision. This is the case in Albania, Armenia.

Other countries (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Azerbaijan, Turkey) indicated as a challenge the problem for the providers of short-term courses to comply with existing standards (such as related to infrastructure or trainers' qualifications).

Another issue indicated as a challenge is assessing learning outcomes at the end of the training (due to the lack of licenced examiners in Montenegro, absence of mechanism for assessment in Armenia). Lack of competent external quality assurance evaluators was reported as a challenge in Palestine.

Some countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Albania) stressed the importance of capitalising on the skills gained through the training even if not leading to a diploma, through their formal recognition. In this respect, Albania is in the process of including qualifications resulting from short term courses in the National qualifications framework – a further challenge for the quality assurance.

THE PEER VISIT – PHASE TWO, IMPLEMENTATION

In this phase, the Peer Visit takes place. The host institution presents its VET system-level quality assurance approach with emphasis on the selected quality assurance measure for the Peer Visit. Peers visit the host institution and relevant institutions, listen to presentations and other forms of inputs, observe, and gain a deeper understanding.

Peer visit methodology – PHASE 2 - IMPLEMENTATION

Value for involved actors:

Hosts

- Obtaining an external view on national practices and procedures
- Developing capacities to present, appraise and support the sense of ownership of the national system and procedures vis a vis external peers,
- Developing a self-awareness on the importance of own role as a stakeholder in the implementation of the national system,
- Supporting the motivation of national stakeholders to collaborate and commit to the improvement of current practices and procedures

Visiting peers:

- In-depth familiarisation with practices and procedures implemented by peer organisations in other countries
- Supporting the development of important communication competences and techniques: active and effective listening, observing and questioning
- Establishing working relationships with practitioners from peer organisations at international level

The Peer Visit started with an introductory online session led by the Georgian hosting institution - National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement of Georgia (NCEQE) and its Deputy director and representative in the ETF QA Forum – Mr Kakhaber Eradze.



Photos: 1st row from left to the right: Kakhaber Eradze, Deputy Director of the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement of Georgia; National contact person for Georgia in ETF QA Forum
 Tamar Makhashvili, First Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Georgia, Director of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, Kakhaber Eradze, Nino Revishvili, Institutional Strengthening Team Leader, Skill Agency of Georgia, Skill Agency of Georgia, and Mounir Baati, ETF
 2nd row: Mounir Baati, ETF, Ketevan Tsikhiseli, LEPL EQE, Lasha Zivzividze LEPL EQE

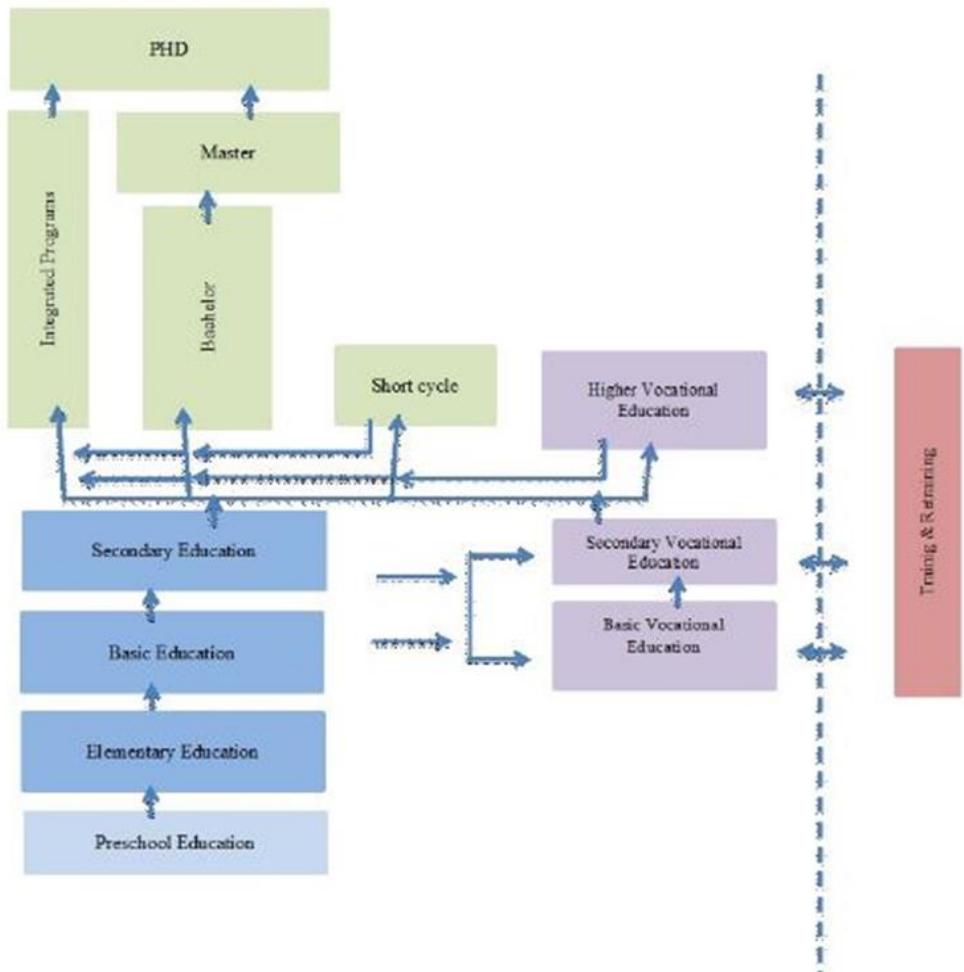
Introduction into the context - Vocational Education and Training system in Georgia

Vocational education in Georgia is voluntary. Public and private vocational educational institutions / colleges, higher and general educational institutions have the right to implement vocational educational programmes; including private companies and other legal entities implementing vocational training-retraining programmes. Learning in public educational institutions is fully funded by the State. There are both State-funded and self-funded programmes in private educational institutions.

Education system of Georgia consists of four stages:

- Early Childhood and Preschool Care and Education;
- General Education;
- Vocational Education;
- Higher Education

Chart 1: Georgian Education System



Quality assurance in Vocational education and training in Georgia

Quality assurance of vocational education in Georgia is carried out using internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. Internal quality assurance mechanism is implemented by institutions delivering vocational education programs (VET schools). External quality assurance mechanisms are defined by the current legislation of Georgia and the National Center for Education Quality Enhancement is responsible for its implementation.

External quality assurance mechanism is regulated by the following legislation:

1. Law of Georgia on the Development of the Quality of Education
2. Law of Georgia on Vocational Education

The Order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia №99 / N of October 1, 2010 on the Approval of the Regulation on Authorization of Educational Institutions and Fees describes:

1. Authorization of a vocational education institution;
2. Obtaining the right to implement a vocational education program by an authorized higher or general education institution or a seeker of this status;
3. Submitting a self-assessment report of a vocational education institution;
4. Planned monitoring of the implementation of the authorization standards of the vocational education institution;

5. Unscheduled monitoring of the implementation of the authorization standards of the vocational education institution;
6. Procedures for adding a vocational education program;
7. Procedures for increasing the maximum number of professional students;
8. Procedures for changing the place / area of implementation of the vocational education program;
9. The procedure for obtaining the right to implement a secondary vocational education program, which integrates the learning outcomes of the secondary level of general education.

The National Center for Education Quality Enhancement is responsible for the external Quality Assurance across all education sub-sectors – from early childhood – to higher education, including also CVET. For the purpose of external quality assurance, the Center carries out authorization of educational institutions and accreditation of educational programs, as well as monitors implementation of authorization and accreditation standards. The Center works on improving the external as well as the internal quality assurance mechanisms, its implementation and creation of relevant recommendations. The Center carries out intensive professional development activities for members experts, monitoring their work, evaluating and periodically updating member of the experts.

The Board of Authorization of Vocational Education Institutions reviews the conclusions on the compliance of the educational programs, infrastructure, resources and activities of the vocational education institutions with the standards established by the legislation. The composition of the Board is approved by the order of the Prime Minister of Georgia, and its work is administratively supported by the Secretariat of the Center.

Quality Assurance of education in Georgia is closely linked to the implementation of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) comprising 8 levels uniting all the qualifications existing in Georgia and reflecting the learning outcomes of different levels of general, vocational and higher education. The National Center for Education Quality Enhancement is mandated with steering the implementation and improvement of the NQF.

Focus of the peer visit – standards and processes for obtaining the right to implement the vocational training and retraining programs (CVET)

According to the nationally approved definitions, a **vocational training programme** is a programme to train individuals to develop the skills needed to perform specific tasks and duties related to their profession. A **vocational retraining programme** is a programme that aims for individuals to acquire and/or develop the skills needed to carry out professional activities in the same field. The results of the training provided under the vocational training/retraining programme may correspond to the 2nd/3rd/4th/5th levels of the Georgian National Qualifications Framework.

Process

There are 2 possible tracks for legal entities wishing to obtain the right to deliver vocational training and retraining programs: a regular track and a simplified track.

The simplified track applies if the program is based on an already authorised Vocational Education Program. It means that the Vocational training or retraining program represents the compilation of learning outcomes from “bigger” program, that Vocational college, HE or GE institution is implementing under the umbrella of “big” authorization.

In this case, the following procedural steps are envisaged:

1. Educational institution submits an electronic application through the electronic system,
2. The application is to have a clear reference to the vocational educational programme that will form the basis the short vocational training or retraining programme,
3. NCEQE, within 3 working days, verifies the compliance of the electronic application and the submitted vocational training and/or retraining programmes with the authorised professional educational programme and the nationally approved Procedure for the development and approval of vocational training and retraining programmes.

Links to the labour market relevance and requirement is an important ground for the development of the training/retraining programme. This requirement is integrated in the Procedure.

4. The Center may, on the basis of a substantiated decision, change the level of the national qualifications framework determined by the vocational training or retraining programme between the second and fifth levels,
5. The Center issues (within 30 days) a legal act regarding registration or non-registration of the vocational training or retraining programme in the electronic system, with authorisation valid for a period of 3 years.

The regular track applies when not authorized legal entities or VET colleges, higher education institutions or general education schools aim to deliver program that is not related to an already authorised "bigger" vocational education program. The following procedure is envisaged in this case:

1. Legal entity submits an electronic application through the electronic system for the review by NCEQE,
2. NCEQE conducts desk review to ensure compliance of the vocational training and retraining programmes with the standards established by the nationally approved Procedure,
3. NCEQE may change the level of the national qualifications framework determined by the vocational training or retraining programmes of the legal entity within the framework of levels from 2 to 5, which shall be reflected in the Council's decision;
4. NCEQE sets up an expert group that visit the Legal entity and produce expert report;
5. Report is sent to National Council for CVET (under Prime Minister) and the Legal entity,
6. NCEQE organizes a public oral hearing presided by the Chair of the National Council for CVET,
7. Based on the report submitted to the Council by the expert group and the oral hearing held, the Council adopts a decision on whether to grant the right to deliver the vocational training or retraining programme. In case of positive decision, program is introduced in the CVET program register for 3 years.
8. Council can provide mandatory recommendations to the institution and set the time for monitoring.

The peer visit focused on the regular track.

Standards

The standards established by the nationally approved Procedure for obtaining the right to deliver vocational training and retraining programmes apply to:

- a) vocational training and retraining programmes;
- b) the resources required for the delivery of vocational training and retraining programmes;
- c) the administration of vocational training and retraining programmes.

For each of the above standards the nationally approved Procedure details:

- the list of assessment criteria that describes the standard in detail,
- the indicators/evidence that describe how the compliance with the standard's assessment criteria will be verified.

Actors involved

1. Actors directly involved in the authorisation process:

The National Center for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) - responsible for quality assurance of CVET, makes decisions on simplified registration of CVET programs and acts as secretariat for National

CVET Council in case of the “regular task” for the authorisation of the Legal entities wishing to obtain the right to deliver training/retraining programmes

National CVET Council – responsible for the decisions on granting the right to deliver vocational training/retraining programs. Members of the Council are appointed and dismissed by the Prime Minister of Georgia on the recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia.

Experts' corps – responsible for verifying the compliance of the Legal entity wishing to deliver vocational training/retraining programs with the established standards (do desk research of the submitted documentation, carry out visits, produce technical reports). Experts are highly qualified specialists in the relevant field of vocational education and are certified in the quality of education. They are appointed by the Center. In addition to the group of experts, the Center can invite other specialists as experts in the relevant field, including the representatives of sectoral associations and professional unions.

2. Actors indirectly involved or benefitting from the authorisation process:

Skills Agency - initiates VET policy documents, provides administrative support for development of new professional qualifications and occupational standards (via Sector Skills Councils), provides consultations and capacity building activities to CVET providers and makes decisions on budget financing of particular CVET programs.

National Employment Supporting Agency (Under MoHS) uses only registered programs for training provision for state employment programs and provides access to budget finances as well as info based on trainee feedback.

EMIS - maintains central registers in VET (providers, programs, trainees, qualification documents etc), provides data for evidence-based decision making to the VET system.



Photos from left to the right: Dr Yaron Doppelt, NCP Israel, Kadir Eren Gülsøy, NCP Turkey, Ahmad M. A. Al Othman, NCP Palestine

Quality monitoring

After authorisation, during the 3 years of its implementation, the CVET program is monitored via scheduled or unscheduled monitoring, to verify compliance to the established standards. Scheduled monitoring is based on EMIS data analysis and risk analysis or based on the Council recommendation on monitoring of particular provider or program. Non-scheduled monitoring is based on information provided to NCEQE by a trainee, trainer, employer, other responsible agencies or interested persons or based on public information. If non-compliance with a standard is identified, the Council may, adopt a decision revoking the right to deliver vocational training or retraining programmes or set a deadline of 15 working days for the legal entity to rectify the errors. In case of an educational institution, the Centre may have the relevant vocational training or retraining programmes removed from the electronic system or set a deadline of 15 working days for the educational institution to rectify the errors.

Data

In total, there are 79 educational institutions implementing vocational educational programs in Georgia, of which: 27 educational institutions implement 86 training/retraining programs (training - 62, retraining - 24); 32 educational institutions implement 265 training/retraining programs through registration (preparation - 227, retraining - 38). In addition, 21 legal entities implement 38 training/retraining programs by obtaining the right (training - 21, retraining - 17). In 2022, planned monitoring was carried out for the first time in the vocational training/retraining system. A total of 5 planned monitoring visits were carried out. The third standard was defined as the scope of monitoring evaluation along with all evaluation criteria (7 evaluation criteria).

Link to supporting the employability in Georgia

Vocational training and retraining programmes play an important role in supporting the employability of jobseekers and upskilling of employees. The 2022 State Employment Support Programme integrates vocational training and retraining programmes in its agenda of active labour market policy and employment support services in the country.

Under the 2022 State Employment Support Programme, **Legal entities that have obtained the right to implement vocational training/retraining programmes can sign an agreement with the State Employment Support Agency for the financing of training/retraining activities** (those costs that are necessary for the supply of quality and complete training programme will be financed, while direct expenses shall be fully financed, and indirect expenses shall not exceed 20% of the total cost). The statement of confirmation as a supplier shall imply the supplier's consent to be subject to the rules and procedures for supervision and monitoring of the services provided, which shall be determined by the Agency.

The Agency is authorised to terminate the agreement with the supplier before the expiry of the term of activity, if unsatisfactory services are provided or other violations, which are confirmed based on the results of supervision and monitoring of the service.

The 2022 State Employment Programme defines 2 indicators relevant for overall monitoring of the implementation of the programme related to training and retraining:

1. The number of job seekers, including those from vulnerable groups, who are beneficiaries of vocational training and retraining,
2. The number of persons, including those from vulnerable groups, being employed after undertaking vocational training or retraining.

Deepening the understanding of authorisation process: clarifications from involved actors

A series of panel discussions were held to provide a comprehensive picture on the implementation of the quality assurance measure related to obtaining the right to deliver training and retraining programmes, and to get an insight from the implementors of the process and from its final beneficiaries. Panel discussions were facilitated by the Coordinator of the ETF Forum for QA in VET, the ETF Senior specialist, Mr Mounir Baati.



Photos from left to the right: António Correia, EQAVET National Reference Point for Portugal, Elmar Mustafayev, National Contact Point (NCP) Azerbaijan, Stela Guvirc, NCP Moldova,

Zooming in – panel discussion with members of the National CVET Council

The panellists were:

Nino Babalashvili, Director of Georgian Adult Education Network and Chairman of the Council granting the right to professional training/professional retraining programs

Marika Zakareishvili, Partnership Development Division of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

Mariam Kuchuloria, Private Sector Engagement Advisor, Centre for International Private Enterprise, European Business Association.

Giorgi Gamkrelidze, Head of Labor Market analytics Agency, Department of Economic Politics, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development



Photos from left to the right: 1st row: Giorgi Gamkrelidze, Mariam Kuchuloria, Nino Babalashvili, and Tornike Jobava; 2nd row: Tornike Jobava, Giorgi Gamkrelidze

Zooming in – panel discussion with assessment experts

The panellists were:

- Manana Moistrapishvili, Director of Railway Transportation (expertise area: transport and construction), Georgian Technical University
- Giorgi Evgenidze, Administration Faculty, Georgian Aviation University
- Lasha Tsagareishvili, Rustavi 2 Georgian free-to-air television channel
- Zaira Beridze, Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (expertise area : tourism)
- Valeri Gulbani, Development Agency (expertise area: physical sport)



Photo from left to the right: Zaira Beridze, Giorgi Egenidze, Valeri Gulbani, Manana Mostrapishvili

Zooming in – site visit in the Business Academy of Georgia and panel discussion with public and private providers of vocational training and retraining courses

The panelists of the discussion were:

College "Modusi", Nino Kavtaradze (Director),
LLC Swiss Agricultural School "Kavkasia", Tina Makharadze (Director),
LLC Georgian Wine Guild, Mariam Khomasuridze and Levan Ujmajuridze,
Association of Distributors of Georgia, Iva Chkonia (President of the association),
College "Konstruct2", Tamar Zakarashvili (Director)



Photos: from left to the right: Tamar Zakarashvili, Director of the College "Konstruct2", Ia Eradze, Director of the Business Academy of Georgia (SBA) and Iva Chkonia, President of the Association of Distributors of Georgia,



Photos: from left to the right: Tina Makharadze, Director of the LLC Swiss Agricultural School "Kavkasia", Nino Kavtaradze, Director of the College "Modusi" and Mariam Khomasuridze, LLC Georgian Wine Guild

The peers got clarifications on the following issues:

CVET Council: on the role, members, and the procedures implemented by the Council. What are key criteria for the approval of the right to implement training / retraining programmes? What happens if criteria are not respected. After the authorisation, how does the monitoring and external QA of programmes implementation occur and what is the Council's role there.

Assessment experts: how are they selected and prepared to become assessment expert, are they certified, how are they appointed, is their work regulated, do they have quality standards, what is their role in different phases of the authorisation process; what challenges they face in the assessment process.

Public and private providers: on the process of application, challenges for providers, how to make process more efficient, balance between requirement for quality assurance and flexibility of provision of short courses. Do current QA measures support reaching the objectives of short courses (eg., increase employability or advancement in further studies). Complementarities with internal QA measures, and/or with external QA of provision.

Authorisation process: what phases, procedures, standards, tools, internal and external QA measures are being used to obtain the right to implement CVET programs. What actors are involved, at what stage and which criteria they follow, how is the process monitored and what QA standards applied. What type of challenges and demands are present. What is the role of the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement of Georgia?

Assessment report: how is the report drafted, what does it include, is it shared with the schools before submitting it to the CVET Council for the final decision.



Photos from left to the right: Dr Yaron Doppelt, NCP Israel; Fayçal Ben Brahim, NCP Tunisia and Ejvis Gishti, NCP Albania



Photos from left to the right: Rkia El Mahmoudi, NCP Morocco; Ahmad M. A. Al Othman, NCP Palestine



Photos from the site visit in the Business Academy Georgia on 7/12/2022 and meeting with short-term training students

THE PEER VISIT – PHASE THREE, FEEDBACK

In phase 3, peers give feedback to the host institution during a moderated final feedback session of the Peer Visit. They can give feedback as single persons or as a group of peers.

Peer visit methodology – PHASE 3 – PEER FEEDBACK

Value for involved actors:

Hosts

- Getting elaborate external peer assessment on specific national practices and procedures

Visiting peers:

- Being exposed to a multitude of peer comments and analytical reflections on specific policy areas
- Being part of an international expert group and actively participating in discussions on specific policy areas

Reflection and preparing the Joint Peer Feedback

Peers were grouped into 3 subgroups to prepare their feedback. The peers identified strengths and areas for improvement in a balanced way and based on facts and evidence and discussed how best to give reflective, constructive and motivating feedback to the host institution.



Subgroup 1: photo from left to the right: Fayçal Ben Brahim, Ministry of Vocational Training & Employment of Tunisia; Anahit Terteryan National center for professional (vocational and higher) education quality assurance of Armenia; Zulfiyya Shafiyeva, Quality Assurance Agency of Azerbaijan; Vladislav Koprivica, Centre for Vocational Education and Training of Montenegro; Slavko Karan, Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina; National contact person for Tunisia in ETF QA Forum;



Sub-group 2: photo from left to the right: Elmar Mustafayev, NCP Azerbaijan, Ivan Marković, alternate NCP Montenegro, Stela Guvir, NCP Moldova, António Correia, EQAVET National Reference Point for Portugal, and Dr Yaron Doppelt, NCP Israel



Sub-group 3: photo from left to the right: Ahmad M. A. Al Othman, NCP Palestine, Ejvis Gishti, NCP Albania, Ruben Topchyan, NCP Armenia, Elena Petrov, alternate NCP Moldova, Rkia El Mahmoudi, NCP Morocco

Following the peer visit methodology, peers' feedback discussions and final feedback delivery focused on 2 issues:

- Strengths of the QA measure
- Shortcomings and ideas for improvement of the QA measure

Key points from peers' feedback were the following.

Strengths of Georgian QA measures related to authorisation process of short-term training and retraining programs:

- Formal process exists and is required by law. Legal framework is effective and flexible. Procedures are clear.
- National CVET Council is committed to their responsibility and has clear understanding of needs
- Expert selection by the National Center for Education Quality Enhancement is transparent and Impartiality and independence of these experts is ensured. Employers and other relevant actors are involved in the process
- Financial stability of the process is ensured
- Starting digitalization of processes. Simplified electronic system for providers to apply for authorization and re-authorization. Digitalisation and database leads to Transparency of QA procedures
- Legal basis and regulations on training and re-training of short programs in line with the EU approach to micro-credentials, lifelong learning, and employability
- Trained and certified pool of experts verifying the applicant and producing the expert report
- Monitoring is implemented. Selection of programs to monitor (good practice of sampling)
- Risk analysis mechanism is introduced
- Governance:
 - Clear distribution of roles
 - Financial support for public and private schools implementing short term courses.
- Implementation of Skills Agency
- Existence and implementation of the external QA system
- Sufficient number of HR of the Agency to implement external QA



Photo, from left to right: Fayçal Ben Brahim, Ministry of Vocational Training & Employment of Tunisia, National contact person for Tunisia in ETF QA Forum, Mounir Baati, ETF QA Coordinator, Vladislav Koprivica, Centre for Vocational Education and Training of Montenegro; Anahit Terteryan National center for professional (vocational and higher) education quality assurance of Armenia; Zulfiyya Shafiyeva, Quality Assurance Agency of Azerbaijan; Slavko Karan, Agency for Pre-Primary, Primary and Secondary Education of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ideas for improvement related to the authorisation process:

- Invest some mechanisms for IQA of Council's work and decisions consistency
- Published annual report shows the processes and the outcomes. Review the standards with the experts and take feedback after each administrative processing to avoid overlapping. Making use diverse data to better support training providers in quality development
- Internal QA system that corresponds to the need of short-term programs: Having needs assessment and needs analysis (collecting data, review, and renewal of the program)
- Support applicants on how they can meet standards
- Monitoring is not clearly planned. Develop the methodology of monitoring procedure to address shortcoming.
- Link monitoring with IQA
- Provide an annual report on authorisation activities to the Council.
- Establish network of experts and systematic peer learning activities.
- Capacity building for vocational education providers to be authorized: QA and LO
- Set up of the Labor Market Management System
- Giving more flexibility to providers to amend the content of the program based on urgent needs of the labor market without applying for re-authorization (within 3 years for which the program was already authorized)
- At the end of the procedure, collecting feedback from stakeholders on the authorization process, analysis, and periodical revision of the authorization procedure

- Bridging stakeholders: Having informal and formal meetings of different stakeholders in order to facilitate the communication among the stakeholders (Council members, experts, providers, businesses, etc.)
- Video tutorials both for raising awareness of civil society on QA in CVET and briefing of experts
- Examine the needs of the labour market and design curricula that meet the labour market's needs. Make sure curricula is updated according to international standards



Photo of the final feedback session on 8/12/2022 at the LELP-NQEQE

THE PEER VISIT – PHASE FOUR, FOLLOW-UP

In the last phase of the Peer Visit procedure, the focus is on the usage of peer feedback as a source for improvements in the host country. The host institution is advised to analyse and reflect on the peer feedback and disseminate it, as appropriate, to relevant stakeholders. As an important additional learning outcome, peer visitors are also encouraged to think about if and how they might adapt/ transfer good practice observed during the Peer Visit in their own countries.

Peer visit methodology – PHASE 4 – FOLLOW UP

Value for involved actors:

Hosts

- Possibility to engage in a national level discussion on the obtained peer feedback and devise a nationally shared plan to implement improvements in a specific policy area

Visiting peers:

- Possibility to disseminate the good practices observed and discussed among the national stakeholders
- Possibility to transfer good practices in own country



Photos from left to the right: Elena Petrov, alternate NCP Moldova, Zulfiyya Shafiyeva, alternate NCP Azerbaijan, Slavko Karan, NCP Bosnia and Herzegovina

The form members will meet (online) again in September-October 2023 to review what improvements the host country intends to do with the feedback of the peers.

In this respect, the ETF methodology for peer recommends a series of guidelines on this follow up phase, such as discussing the feedback with a circle of relevant stakeholders, decision on the utilisation of the feedback, setting up of an action plan and devising responsibilities for implementation.

The peer visit concluded with a feedback and reflection session between the Forum members' representatives. Generally, all have expressed strong positive impressions and firm willingness to continue the application of peer visit methodology for peer exchange. They particularly noted that the peer visit approach allows to pursue active learning and in-depth analysis of the quality assurance measure. A series of improvements/proposals were suggested for the future peer visits, both related to the process and actors involved:

- “Preparation phase” of the peer visit could be extended to allow more time for analysing background information and reflecting on issues, asking questions and receiving answers from the host in advance;
- Foresee time in the agenda for meeting the extended groups of stakeholders (employer organisations as providers, teachers, students, schools – to have possibility to talk to them)
- Involve peers in the preparation of the peer visit agenda
- Include a session for peers to discuss the QA measure selected by the host
- Foresee a short timeslot in the agenda for the hosting country stakeholders to think through the peers' feedback.
- Foresee possibility of having extra places to join peer visit to help implementation of changes/lessons learned.



Photos from left to the right: Vladislav Koprivica, NCP Montenegro, Fayçal Ben Brahim, NCP Tunisia

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

ETF FORUM MEMBERS

ALBANIA	MS EJVIS GISHTI, National Agency for VET and Qualifications
ARMENIA	MR RUBEN TOPCHYAN, Director of the National center for professional (vocational and higher) education quality assurance MS ANAHIT TERTERYAN, Specialist at Institutional and Programme Accreditation Division, ANQA
AZERBAIJAN	MR ELMAR MUSTAFAYEV, Acting Head, Quality Assurance Agency MS ZULFYYYA SHAFIYEVA, Advisor, Accreditation and Licensing Unit, Quality Assurance Agency
GEORGIA	MR KAKHABER ERADZE, Deputy Director, National Center for Quality Enhancement
ISRAEL	DR. YARON DOPPELT, Ministry of Education
MOLDOVA	MS STELA GUVIR, Head of the Public Relations and International Cooperation Office ANACEC (National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education and Research) MS ELENA PETROV, Vice President, ANACEC
MONTENEGRO	MR VLADISLAV KOPRIVICA, Centre for Vocational Education and Training MR IVAN MARKOVIĆ, Centre for Vocational Education and Training
MOROCCO	MS RKIA EL MAHMOUDI, VET department, Ministry of economic inclusion, SMEs, employment and competences
PALESTINE	MR AHMAD M.A. AL OTHMAN, TVET Commission (NTC)
TUNISIA	MR FAYÇAL BEN BRAHIM, Director of evaluation and quality of training, Ministry of Vocational Training & Employment
TURKEY	MR KADIR EREN GÜLSOY, Ministry of National Education

EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION (ETF)

MR XAVIER MATHEU DE CORTADA, Director ad interim

MR MOUNIR BAATI - Senior Human Capital Development Expert - VET Quality Assurance - Country Liaison for Jordan and Libya

MS NADEZDA SOLODJANKINA - Human Capital Development Expert - Country Liaison for Tajikistan

MS LIIA KAARLOP – Project Officer

NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS FROM GEORGIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

MS TAMAR MAKHARASHVILI - First Deputy Minister; Director of the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement

MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

MR GIORGI GAMKRELIDZE -- Department of Economic Politics – Head of Labor Market Analytics Agency – Council Member

LEPL NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

MR LASHA ZIVZIVADZE

MS NANI DALAKISHVILI

MS KETEVAN TSIKHISELI

MS LANA GACHECHILADZE

LEPL EDUCATION MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (EMIS)

MR DMITRI BERIDZE

SKILLS AGENCY

MS TAMAR KITIASHVILI – General Director

MS NINO REVISHVILI - Institutional Strengthening Team Leader

COUNCIL FOR GRANTING THE PERMISSION OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND RETRAINING PROGRAM

MS NINO BABALASHVILI - Director of N(N)LE Georgian Adult Education Network and Chairman of the Council granting the right to professional training/professional retraining programs

MS MARIKA ZAKAREISHVILI - Partnership Development Division of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, Member of the Council

MS MARIAM KUCHULORIA - Private Sector Engagement Advisor, Centre for International Private Enterprise, European Business Association, Member of the Council

BUSINESS ACADEMY OF GEORGIA (SBA)

MS IA ERADZE - Director

COLLEGE "KONSTRUCT2"

MS TAMAR ZAKARASHVILI - Director

COLLEGE "MODUSI"

MS NINO KAVTARADZE - Director

LLC GEORGIAN WINE GUILD

MS MARIAM KHOMASURIDZE and MR LEVAN UJMAJURIDZE

LLC SWISS AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL "KAVKASIA"

MS TINA MAKHARADZE - Director

ASSOCIATION OF DISTRIBUTORS OF GEORGIA

MR IVA CHKONIA - President

ASSESSMENT EXPERTS:

MS MANANA MOISTRAPISHVILI - Director of Railway Transportation (expertise area: transport and construction), Georgian Technical University

MR GIORGI EVGENIDZE, Administration Faculty, Georgian Aviation University

MR LASHA TSAGAREISHVILI, Rustavi 2 Georgian free-to-air television channel

MS ZAIRA BERIDZE, Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (expertise area : tourism)

MR VALERI GULBANI, Development Agency (expertise area: physical sport)

For more information, please contact the ETF quality assurance team: Mounir Baati (Mounir.Baati@etf.europa.eu) and Nadezda Solodjankina (Nadezda.Solodjankina@etf.europa.eu)

www.etf.europa.eu
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