

SUMMARY

ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts Regional Webinar

SKILLS ANTICIPATION AND LABOUR MARKET INTELLIGENCE: TOOLS, METHODS, AND POLICY APPLICATIONS IN THE EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD REGION

6 October 2026, 10.00 – 12.00 CET

This regional webinar of the ETF Skills Lab Network of Experts explored skills anticipation and labour market intelligence (LMI) practices across the Eastern Neighbourhood focusing on the tools, methods and institutional arrangements used to identify emerging skills needs and translate labour market evidence into education, training and employment policies. Against the backdrop of demographic change, migration, the green and digital transitions, and the disruption caused by conflicts, the webinar brought together experts from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine to share countries' experiences and examine how skills intelligence informs policy decisions. Particular attention was given to common challenges, institutional gaps and good practices in developing sustainable skills anticipation systems, as well as opportunities for stronger regional cooperation and peer learning.

Cristiana Burzio (ETF) opened the webinar by welcoming participants to the webinar and outlining the Network's upcoming activities. She announced a regional webinar on [labour market intelligence systems in Central Asia](#) on 27 October, an online peer learning session with the European Network of Regional Labour Market Monitoring (EN RLMM) on 9 November, and the last webinar of the year on enhancing the employment of persons with disabilities, scheduled for 18 November. She also highlighted the recently launched call for papers on "[Holistic approaches to youth transitions in times of disruption](#)", organised in cooperation with EN RLMM, and reminded participants that the deadline for submitting abstracts is 1 December 2026.

Vardan Baghdasaryan, Skills Lab Network's regional coordinator for Eastern Neighbourhood and webinar moderator, provided an overview of agenda and speakers and encouraged participants to engage within the discussions.

The first speaker, **Ioan Cristinel Raileanu (ETF)**, provided an overview of skills anticipation practices across ETF partner countries, highlighting the main challenges affecting their development and effective use. These include uneven governance and weak institutional coordination, limited access to timely and reliable labour market data, insufficient analytical capacity and the limited integration of skills anticipation findings into policymaking. He noted that many initiatives remain dependent on donor-funded projects rather than being conducted regularly, making it difficult to monitor labour market developments over time. Against this background, Raileanu introduced an ongoing ETF mapping exercise aimed at identifying, documenting and comparing skills anticipation practices across partner countries. The exercise, implemented in two phases between August 2026 and December 2027, will examine institutional arrangements, methods and tools, data sources and policy impact. Its findings will inform country profiles, comparative analysis, recommendations and peer learning activities to help countries strengthen their skills anticipation systems and translate labour market evidence into more responsive education, training and employment policies.

Raileanu then presented examples of ETF-supported skills anticipation initiatives, focusing on the analysis of online job vacancies and sectoral skills studies. He explained how online vacancy data can

provide insights into occupational demand, skills requirements and labour market trends, illustrating this through examples from Georgia and Ukraine (relevant data can be retrieved at https://solutions.lightcast.io/dashboard/ETF_UA). While highlighting the value of this data for identifying emerging digital, green and transversal skills needs, he cautioned that online vacancies capture only part of the labour market and should therefore be complemented by other sources. Turning to sectoral skills analyses, he outlined an approach combining background research, data science and stakeholder validation to identify future skills needs and inform policy responses. Drawing on the example of [Armenia's construction sector](#), he demonstrated how such analyses can identify drivers of change, emerging occupations and skills gaps, as well as barriers to sectoral innovation. He concluded by emphasising the importance of strengthening national capacities to conduct regular skills anticipation exercises and ensuring that their findings inform career guidance, adult learning and wider labour market policies.

During the Q&A, participants raised questions about the reliability and comparability of online job vacancy data.. Raileanu explained that the information on green and digital skills presented for Ukraine was derived primarily from online job advertisements.. Responding to concerns about inconsistent vacancy descriptions, duplicated advertisements and the limited use of standardised skills terminology, he outlined how artificial intelligence (AI) and the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification are used to process vacancy data, identify relevant skills and remove duplicates. The discussion also highlighted challenges related to fragmented institutional responsibilities and coordination. The cases of Estonia's [OSKA system](#) and Finland's approach to skills anticipation governance – which were the subjects of peer learning activities organised by the Skills Lab Network – as well as of [SkillsFuture in Singapore](#) were mentioned as examples of established practices.

The second speaker, **Sevak Hovhannisyan (Civitta)**, presented Armenia's experience in labour market modelling, drawing on two exercises conducted in 2012 and 2019 to illustrate how skills anticipation can support evidence-based policymaking. The 2012 exercise focused on estimating future demand for higher education graduates in eight government-priority sectors, using projections of sectoral output, productivity and employment to calculate recruitment needs, including both expansion and replacement demand. The 2019 Future of Jobs exercise adopted a broader, economy-wide approach, combining labour demand and supply models with employer surveys, focus groups and student perspectives to examine job creation, technological change and evolving skills requirements. Hovhannisyan explained that both exercises revealed significant limitations in the available evidence, particularly the lack of consistent occupational and task-level data, reliable information on graduate outcomes and employers' limited ability to anticipate long-term skills needs. He stressed that the quality of skills anticipation depends not only on the sophistication of forecasting models but also on the availability of reliable, regularly updated labour market intelligence.

Drawing on these lessons, Hovhannisyan emphasised the need to move beyond one-off forecasting exercises towards a continuous and institutionalised system of labour market intelligence. Such a system should combine regularly updated evidence from employers, job vacancies, occupational standards and graduate tracer studies with a permanent institutional structure capable of analysing and validating findings. He highlighted the role of sector skills councils in connecting this evidence to qualifications, curricula, career guidance and active labour market policies. Referring to Armenia's experience, he noted that the studies contributed to subsequent workforce development initiatives and informed the country's Employment Strategy adopted in 2024. He also underlined how artificial intelligence and technological change are making long-term forecasts less reliable, reinforcing the importance of adaptability, foundational skills and lifelong opportunities for upskilling and reskilling. He concluded that the objective of skills anticipation should not be to predict every future job precisely, but to enable individuals, employers and institutions to respond more effectively to changing labour market needs.

In the Q&A session, participants raised questions about the extent to which Armenia's labour market modelling exercises accounted for differences in company size and incorporated graduate tracking data. Hovhannisyan explained that the analysis relied on sectoral averages rather than distinguishing between small and medium-sized enterprises and larger companies, partly because of the need for internationally comparable productivity data. He also highlighted challenges related to occupational

classifications, noting that the studies had contributed to discussions leading to the adoption of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) in Armenia, although its practical implementation remained limited. Responding to a question about graduate tracking, he confirmed that findings from a nationwide graduate tracer survey had informed the earlier modelling exercise, but that such surveys had subsequently been discontinued. He emphasised the importance of regular graduate tracking as a key component of a permanent labour market observatory, helping to inform education planning and provide prospective students with reliable information on graduate outcomes.

The third speaker, **George Gamkrelidze (Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia)**, presented Georgia's approach to skills anticipation and labour market forecasting, highlighting the Ministry's efforts to strengthen the collection and use of labour market evidence. He explained that, since 2017, the Ministry has conducted establishment skills surveys and prepared annual labour market analysis reports. Based on a methodology developed jointly by the European Training Foundation (ETF), the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop) and the International Labour Organization (ILO), the surveys alternate between economy-wide and sector-specific studies, examining employment structures, skills requirements, vacancies, workforce demand and cooperation between employers and vocational education and training (VET) institutions. Gamkrelidze also introduced the Ministry's [public labour market data portal](#), developed in cooperation with the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) to improve access to survey findings and raise awareness of labour market trends. He explained how the Ministry's annual reports combine official statistics, public and private job vacancy data, planned investment programmes and findings from other studies, including graduate tracer surveys, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of labour market developments and emerging occupational needs.

Gamkrelidze then outlined the development of Georgia's five-year macroeconomic skills forecasting model, introduced in 2023 in cooperation with Cambridge Econometrics under an EU budget support initiative. The model combines projections of economic output and productivity with demographic and labour force data to estimate future employment demand by sector, occupation and qualification level, alongside labour supply and replacement needs. He explained how the model integrates different sources of historical data and forecasting assumptions, allowing policymakers to explore alternative scenarios for sectoral growth and employment. Reflecting on the challenges encountered during its development, he highlighted the limited availability of historical statistical data and insufficient occupational detail, which initially restricted forecasts to major occupational groups under the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). He identified the expansion of the model to more detailed occupational groups and the reduction of manually entered assumptions as key priorities for further development. Gamkrelidze concluded by emphasising the importance of improving data availability and strengthening forecasting methodologies to produce more reliable and detailed labour market intelligence that can inform education, training and employment policies.

In the discussion, participants explored the use of occupational and skills classifications in Georgia's labour market forecasting system. Responding to a question about whether the system could be linked to the European Skills, Competences, Qualifications and Occupations (ESCO) classification rather than relying solely on the ISCO-08, Gamkrelidze explained that ISCO-08 is used as the basis for occupational classifications because it is also applied by Georgia's national statistical office, GeoStat, ensuring consistency across official data sources. He clarified that ESCO is also used to provide more detailed information on skills and qualifications, highlighting the complementary roles of the two classifications in moving from occupation-based analysis towards a better understanding of skills requirements.

The fourth speaker, **Ilgar Zarbaliyev (SumProduct Pty Ltd., Azerbaijan)**, presented the findings of an independently conducted Skills and Jobs Survey 2024, illustrating how employer and employee surveys can be combined with Excel and Power BI to generate practical labour market intelligence. The study brought together responses from 697 employers and 1,000 employees across Azerbaijan to examine recruitment patterns, skills requirements, qualification mismatches and workforce development needs. Zarbaliyev explained how the two surveys provided complementary perspectives, with employers identifying recruitment needs and difficulties, while employees offered insights into how their qualifications and skills were used in the workplace. He outlined the research process, from survey design and data collection to data preparation and analysis in Excel and visualisation through interactive

Power BI dashboards. He emphasised that the value of these tools lies not simply in presenting data but in making labour market evidence more accessible and useful for decision-making.

Zarbaliyev then highlighted several findings illustrating the challenges facing Azerbaijan's labour market. Although recruitment activity was particularly high for professionals, clerical support workers and managers, hiring difficulties were more pronounced in technical occupations, demonstrating that high recruitment demand does not necessarily indicate a skills shortage. He also identified mismatches between educational qualifications and occupational requirements, including overqualification among some graduates alongside shortages of job-specific technical and transversal skills. Particular attention was given to the predominance of micro-enterprises, which accounted for approximately 87% of surveyed employers and often face limited capacity to invest in employee training. Drawing on these findings, he emphasised the need for more targeted vocational education and training, improved career guidance, accessible training opportunities for smaller employers and programmes supporting upskilling and reskilling. He also demonstrated how similar analyses could be conducted using open Eurostat labour market data, referring participants to a [practical video tutorial](#) on extracting and analysing these data using Excel and Power BI. He concluded that effective skills anticipation requires combining employer and employee perspectives, interpreting labour market evidence carefully and translating findings into concrete education and employment policy responses.

During the Q&A session, participants raised questions about the relationship between the employer and employee surveys and the choice of analytical tools. Zarbaliyev clarified that the employee respondents came from the companies included in the employer survey. The discussion also addressed the use of open-access alternatives to Microsoft Excel and Power BI. Zarbaliyev acknowledged that other tools could achieve similar analytical objectives but explained that he had chosen Microsoft applications to manage data processing and visualisation within a single integrated environment. He highlighted the advantages of Power BI for presenting and exploring labour market data through interactive dashboards.

The fifth speaker, **Rodion Kolyshko (Institute of Professional Qualifications, Ukraine)**, presented the challenges of skills anticipation and labour market intelligence in Ukraine against the backdrop of Russia's ongoing war and its profound economic, demographic and educational consequences. He highlighted the impact of damaged infrastructure, population decline, migration and internal displacement on the labour market and the education system. These developments have reduced student enrolment and intensified competition among education and training institutions, encouraging greater flexibility in learning provision and closer cooperation with employers. Kolyshko cautioned that the growing pressure to attract students can also undermine educational quality, while efforts to respond to individual employers' demands may lead to fragmented curricula and skills development. He noted that the combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the war have further disrupted learning, creating additional challenges for the development of a skilled workforce capable of responding to changing labour market needs.

Kolyshko then examined the implications of these challenges for Ukraine's skills anticipation system, drawing on his involvement in the ongoing ETF mapping exercise on skills anticipation practices. He explained that, although Ukraine has an established system for forecasting workforce requirements over a five-year period, it primarily estimates the number of workers needed rather than the specific skills required. As these forecasts are closely linked to public funding allocations for education and training institutions, moving towards a skills-based approach would require significant institutional and policy changes. He acknowledged existing initiatives, including employer surveys conducted by the State Employment Service with support from HELVETAS and employers' organisations, as well as studies undertaken by international organisations. Nevertheless, he stressed that these efforts do not yet constitute a sustainable national skills anticipation system. Kolyshko called for a shift from workforce forecasting towards systematic skills anticipation, supported by a clear national policy framework, an authorised coordinating institution and mechanisms for collecting and validating evidence with employers and other stakeholders. He identified the National Qualifications Agency as a potential institutional actor and emphasised that, despite the uncertainties created by the war, strengthening skills anticipation would be essential for improving education and training provision and supporting Ukraine's future economic recovery.

Following Kolyshko's presentation, the discussion turned to the gender dimension of skills needs in Ukraine, particularly whether wartime labour shortages were creating opportunities for women to enter occupations traditionally dominated by men. Kolyshko explained that several initiatives had sought to encourage women to take up roles such as truck and tractor driving, challenging established occupational stereotypes. However, he noted that these initiatives had so far achieved limited success in addressing workforce shortages. He acknowledged that the changing relationship between gender and skills demand warranted further investigation.

In her closing remarks, **Cristiana Burzio (ETF)** thanked the speakers for sharing their national experiences, Vardan Baghdasaryan for moderating the discussion, and participants for their active engagement. Reflecting on the presentations, she highlighted several common challenges affecting skills anticipation systems across the region, particularly gaps in labour market data, limited analytical capacity and weak institutional coordination. She emphasised that, although there is no single governance model suitable for every country, effective cooperation among relevant stakeholders is essential. Burzio also stressed the importance of moving beyond one-off forecasting exercises towards continuous and systematic labour market intelligence processes that can support policy development. She concluded by encouraging participants to continue exchanging experiences through the Skills Lab Network's [LinkedIn group](#), reminding that the webinar materials would soon be available on [OpenSpace](#).

Resources

All presentations and materials presented at the event can be found at:

<https://openspace.etf.europa.eu/events/regional-webinar-skills-anticipation-and-labour-market-intelligence-tools-methods-and-policy>