


TORINO PROCESS 2016-17 EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND RUSSIA



The background of the page features a photograph of people sitting at a table. In the foreground, there is a large, colorful felt artwork with various shapes in shades of blue, green, red, and yellow. A semi-transparent blue box is overlaid on the top half of the image, containing the title and introductory text. Another semi-transparent blue box is at the bottom left, containing publication details. The location 'Belgrade, Serbia' is noted in the bottom right corner.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP AND RUSSIA

Countries in the region have made progress in the use of evidence and monitoring for tracking VET developments and needs. These will be needed to shape the new wave of policies and strategies, which will start to be implemented from 2020 in most countries.

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INTRODUCTION



Inspired by the European Union (EU) Copenhagen Process – which aims to improve the performance, quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET) through enhanced cooperation at European level – the Torino Process is an evidence-informed analysis of VET systems promoted by the European Training Foundation (ETF).

The Torino Process was launched in 2010 as a biennial review exercise and was carried out for the fourth time in 2016–17. The Torino Process uses a common framework to analyse VET policies at both national and cross-country levels. The objective is twofold: to facilitate national policy making while at the same time fostering dialogue and peer learning across borders.

The Torino Process is based on country ownership and broad participation of stakeholders from the national and subnational authorities, social partners and civil society. At its heart lies the periodic monitoring of policy progress along the five building blocks of the analytical framework¹. The Torino Process enables partner countries to monitor the implementation of VET reforms and assess progress and impact on citizens.

All the ETF's partner countries from Eastern Europe – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as Russia, took part in the 2016–17 Torino Process and produced national reports. The Torino Process has a high degree of ownership in Eastern Europe where the main approach is self-assessment. For policy makers, VET has a growing popularity that is supported by a range of documented policy statements, legislation, or structured policy processes, which include short- and long-term strategies. International and EU perspectives are a source of policy reference for many of the countries.

This report takes a cross-country perspective towards VET developments in Eastern Europe, aiming to

identify the main issues, constraints and priorities for the further modernisation of VET policies and systems in the region. It has been developed from an analysis of the national 2016–17 Torino Process reports and the outcomes of discussions during the Torino Process Regional Forum organised in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 8–9 November 2016 under Platform IV of the Eastern Partnership.

The Tbilisi Forum provided the opportunity to discuss the outcomes of the 2016–17 Torino Process and the progress made by the countries since Torino Process reporting started in 2010 (and in particular, since the last round in 2014). The conference was also an occasion for the region as a whole to reflect together on trends, priorities and actions for the future, in the context of the sustainable development agenda and in terms of the 2020 perspective and looking towards 2030.

A summary of the main findings and conclusions of this report is provided in the ETF publication *Torino Process regional overview: Eastern Partnership and Russia* (ETF, 2017).

The region is improving its capacity to identify problems in VET and develop responses as well as to absorb international experiences. There is a shift from strategy to implementation in the region with the search for improved connections with employers, but there are delays due to institutional and budgetary limitations. The challenges faced by the countries are similar, with many of the countries targeting related problems.

Since 2012, there has been substantial growth in the range of policy initiatives for VET. Many of these have targeted 2020 as a key achievement date. All countries of the region have made substantial progress over the past four years. The VET systems of the region are gradually transforming themselves through policy priorities that target relevance, flexibility and quality and which are part of broader economic strategies. Funding is a major challenge in all countries and will continue to be so in the medium term.

There is a move from developing skills for specific occupations towards developing key skills for employment more generally. This is an important policy response to the region's labour markets, where people need to be adaptable and mobile and

¹ Building block A – overview of the VET system and its socio-economic context; building block B – addressing economic and labour market demand; building block C – addressing demographic, social and inclusion demand; building block D – internal efficiency of the VET system; building block E – governance and policy practices. The five building blocks are complemented by four transversal dimensions: gender, local dimension of skills, innovation and social partnerships.

can expect to work in several employment roles in their careers. Despite significant education reforms, employment and labour market variables are changing slowly. Stronger actions are needed to create pathways from education to employment using VET.

In all countries, VET supports access to the labour market for people facing some form of disadvantage but social support programmes that use VET are not integrated in the VET system as a whole. Quality assurance represents a major reform element in all countries; all countries are making progress in

qualification frameworks, but each with more scope to accelerate the process.

The organisation and management of VET across the region is in a state of change as governments seek to adjust the structure of their systems to better support the implementation of policies. A dual aim of making VET attractive to both employers and students represents the underlying ambition for VET across the region. The overarching challenge faced by each country is to accelerate the pace of implementation by a stronger management role for enterprises.

1. REGIONAL CONTEXT AND OVERVIEW OF VET SYSTEMS



1.1 Economic context

Eastern Europe features three lower middle-income countries (Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine) and four upper middle-income countries (Russia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Georgia). The recent economic experience of the countries is diverse. Armenia and Georgia grew at 3% and 2.8% respectively in 2015; Azerbaijan grew more slowly at 1.1%, while the remaining countries had negative growth in 2015.

The region is characterised by countries with ageing populations, high mobility, relatively high employment rates and high educational attainment. Population growth is very weak or negative in all countries except for Azerbaijan.

Dependency ratios in Belarus, Georgia and Russia are growing, meaning there is an increasing proportion of people younger than 15 years and older than 64 compared to the working-age population.

In terms of migration, Russia is clearly the recipient country, absorbing migrants from the neighbouring countries, while Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have a negative balance in net migration.

In terms of the EU benchmarks for employment and tertiary education, although the countries generally do not reach the EU objectives, many countries reach levels that are above or close to EU28 averages. Georgia is meeting the EU objectives for the percentage of early school leavers and the proportion of tertiary educated in the 30–34 age group; Russia and Georgia have levels above the EU targets.

Table 1.1 Gross domestic product (GDP) growth (annual %)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Armenia	2.2	4.7	7.2	3.3	3.6	3.0
Azerbaijan	4.9	0.1	2.2	5.8	2.0	1.1
Belarus	7.7	5.5	1.7	1.1	1.7	-3.9
Georgia	6.3	7.2	6.4	3.4	4.6	2.8
Moldova	7.1	6.8	-0.7	9.4	4.8	-0.5
Russia	4.5	4.3	3.5	1.3	0.7	-2.8
Ukraine	4.2	5.5	0.2	0.0	-6.6	-9.9

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Table 1.2 Population growth (annual %)

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Armenia	-0.1	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.4
Azerbaijan	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.2
Belarus	-0.2	-0.2	-0.1	0.0	0.1	0.2
Georgia	-1.3	-1.3	-1.3	-1.3	-1.3	-0.3
Moldova	-0.1	-0.1	0.0	0.0	-0.1	-0.1
Russia	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Ukraine	-0.4	-0.4	-0.2	-0.2	-0.5	-0.3

Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators.

1.2 Labour market context

The labour markets of the Eastern European countries are characterised by mixed activity rates, with some countries having relatively high rates and others lower. With the exception of Belarus, women participate less in the labour markets of all countries.

The activity rate of the 15+ age group has remained relatively stable since 2013, with the strongest changes demonstrated in Georgia, which grew at 2.4%, and Ukraine, which declined by 4%.

The employment rates show large variations between the countries; the region can be characterised as having three categories: high employment rates (Russia, Azerbaijan and Belarus), medium (Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine) and low (Moldova). Three of the countries (Belarus, Azerbaijan and Russia) exceed EU average for employment, including the rates for both males and females. Since 2013, the employment rates in Belarus, Azerbaijan, Russia and Moldova have

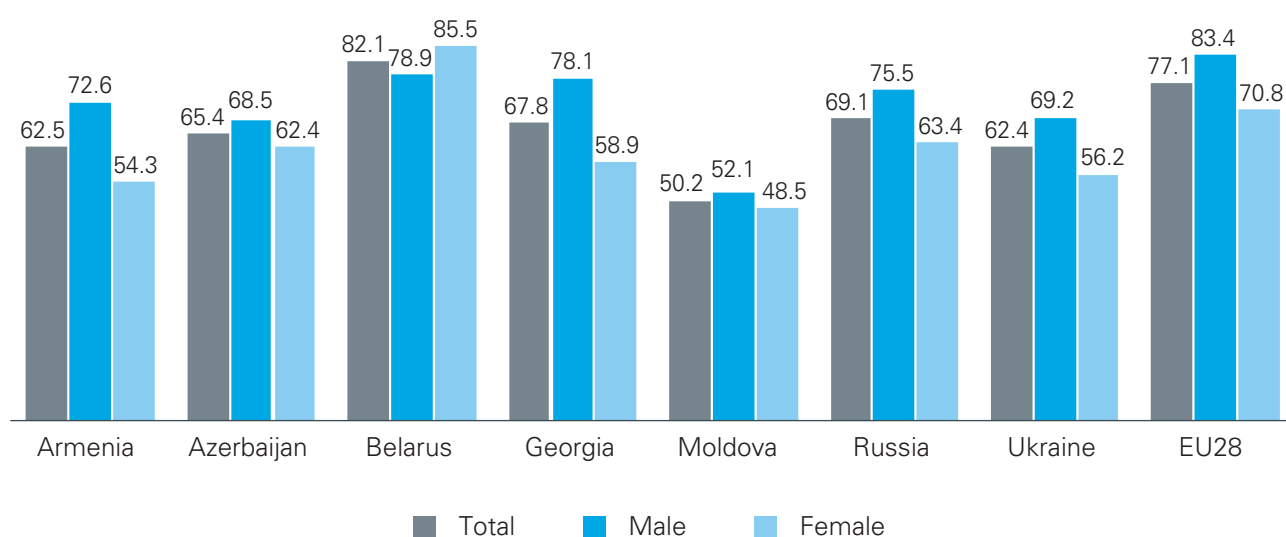
been largely stable, while in Ukraine and Armenia the rates have fallen significantly. In Georgia the employment rate grew substantially.

Aggregate unemployment has been falling or remained mainly stable in the region. Georgia had the largest decline. Youth unemployment fell in all countries in the region with the exception of Ukraine, where the rate grew from 17.4% to 22.4%.

The relative size of the youth population is declining across the region, therefore decreasing the pressure on the labour market.

For the region, with the exception of Georgia, the service sector is the largest area of the economy both in terms of employment and contribution to GDP. There are clear differences in the relative sizes of the agricultural sectors across the countries, ranging from 9.7% of employment in Belarus to 50.9% in Georgia, suggesting diverse rates of labour productivity.

Figure 1.1 Activity rates by gender (age group 15+), 2015 (%)

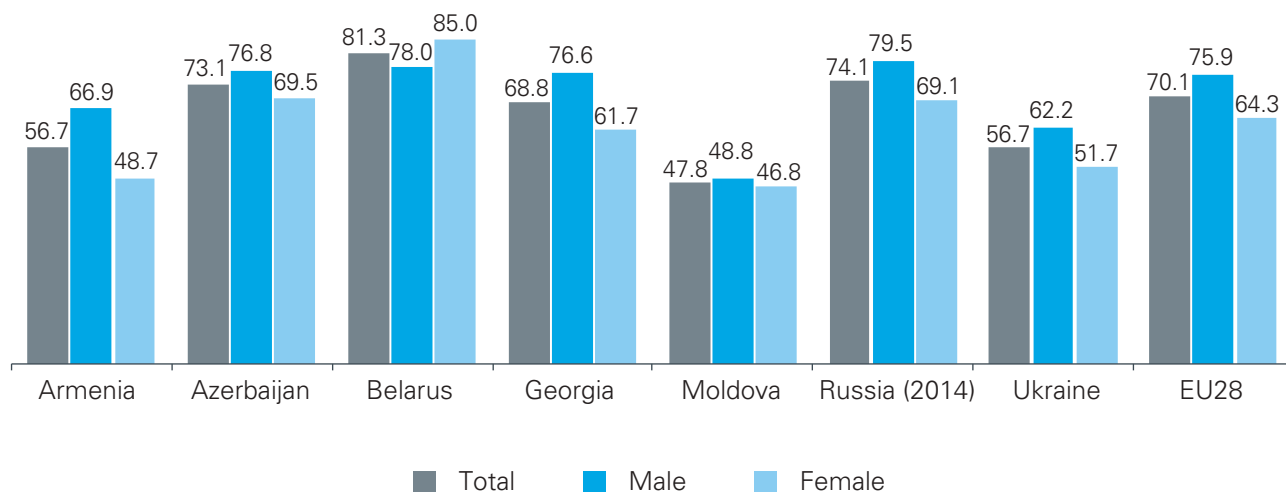


Change since 2013 (%)	AM	AZ	BY	GE	MD	RU	UA	EU28
	-1.4	1.1	0.9	2.4	0.6	0.9	-4.0	0.8

Notes: Armenia data refer to the population aged 15–75; Azerbaijan data refer to the end of year values; Belarus data refer to the annual average and labour resource estimates for the population aged 16–59 (men) and 16–54 (women); Moldova data refer to the population aged 20–64; Russia data refer to the population aged 15–72; Ukraine data refer to the population aged 15–70; EU28 data refer to the population aged 20–64.

Sources: National statistical offices and Eurostat.

Figure 1.2 Employment rates by gender (age group 20–64), 2015 (%)

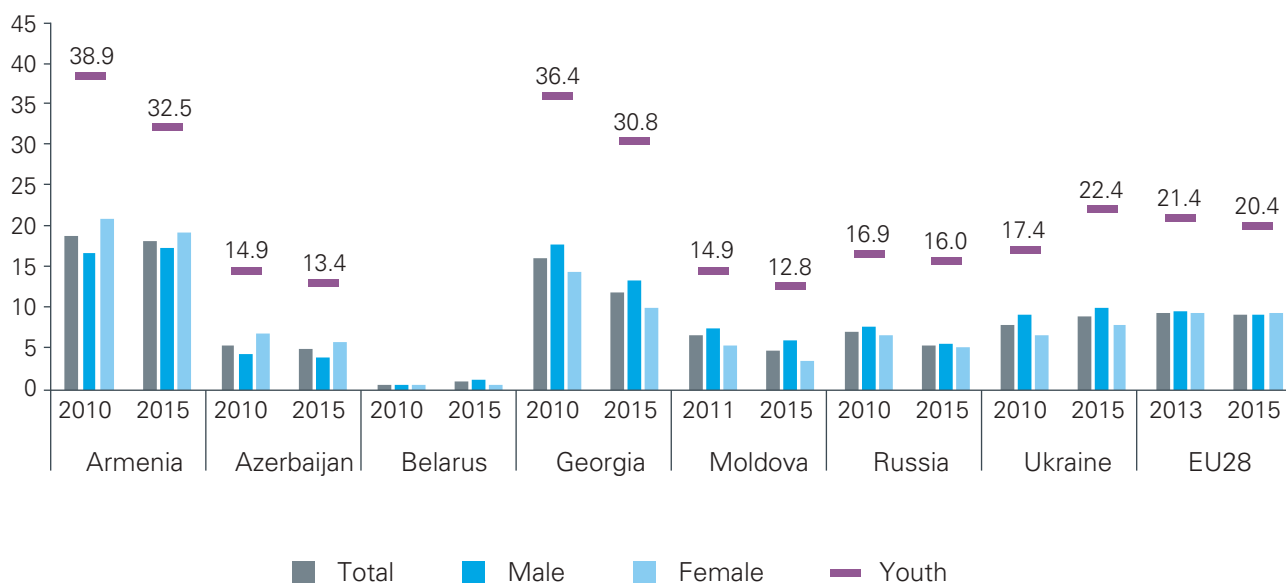


Change since 2013 (%)	AM	AZ	BY	GE	MD	RU	UA	EU28
	-6.0	0.1	0.4	5.0	0.8	0.5	-6.0	2.5

Notes: Armenia, Georgia and Russia: ETF calculation; Azerbaijan data refer to the end of year values; Belarus data refer to the annual average and labour resource estimates for the population aged 16–59 (men) and 16–54 (women); Ukraine data refer to the population aged 15–70.

Sources: National statistical offices and Eurostat.

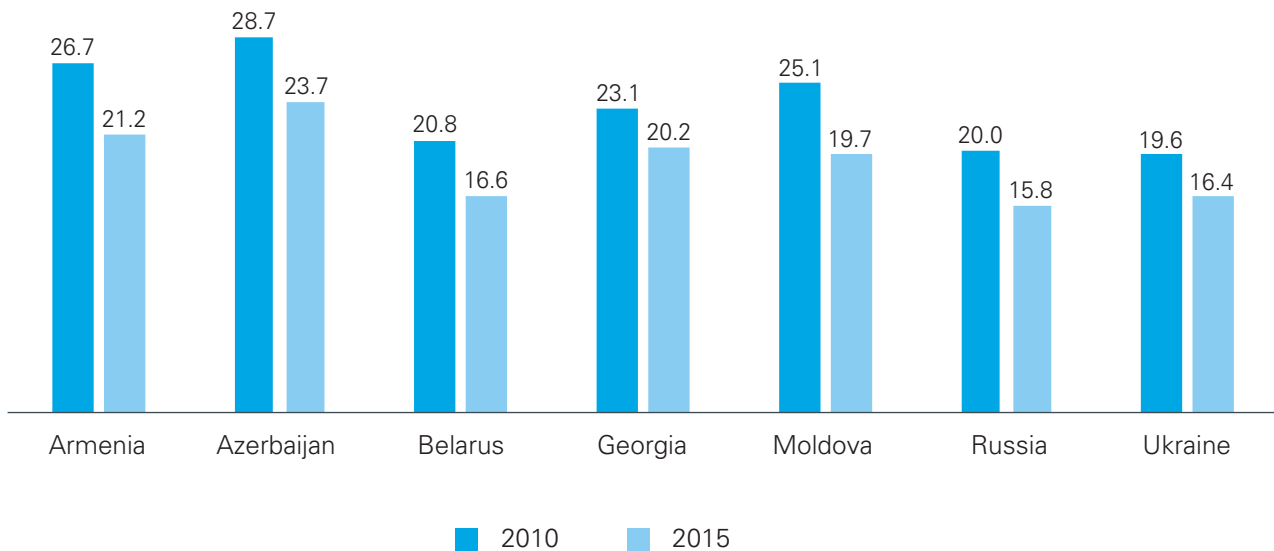
Figure 1.3 Unemployment rates by gender (15+) and youth unemployment rates (15–24) (%)



Notes: Armenia data refer to the population aged 15–75; Azerbaijan data refer to the age groups 15–62 (male) and 15–59 (female) and to the end of year values; Belarus data are based on the employment office records and refer to the population aged 16–59 (male) and 16–54 (female); Russia data refer to the population aged 15–72; Ukraine data refer to the population aged 15–70; Georgia and Russia data on youth unemployment calculated by the ETF; EU28 data refer to the population aged 15–74. Belarus youth unemployment missing.

Sources: National statistical offices and Eurostat.

Figure 1.4 Relative size of youth population (15–24) (%)

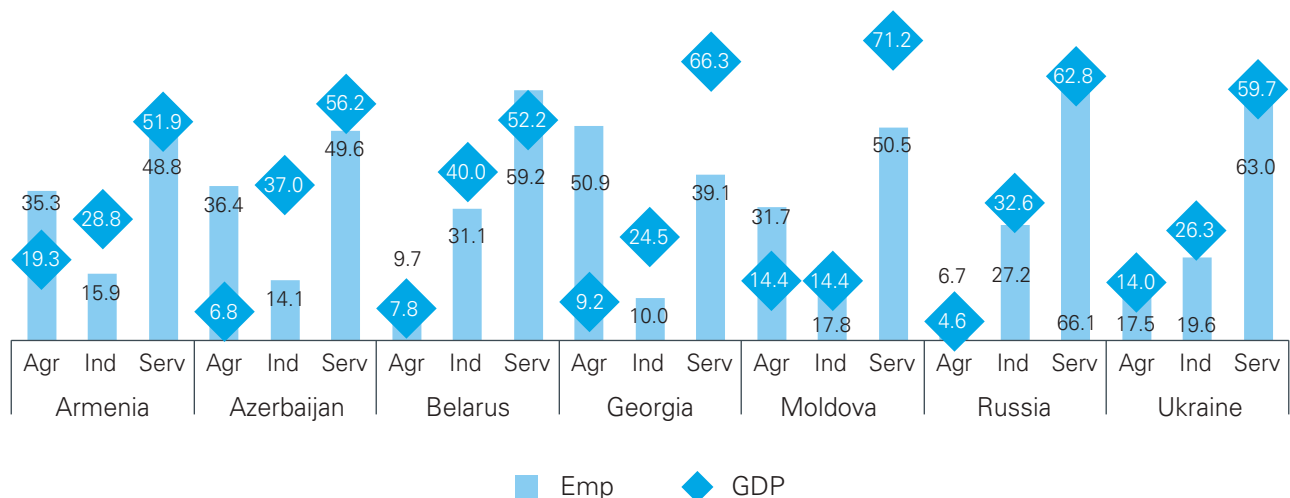


Notes: Azerbaijan data refer to the end of year values; Ukraine data refer to 2014.
Sources: National statistical offices and OECD.

Similarly, in Georgia, the industrial sector accounts for almost a quarter of GDP but only 10% of employment. In Moldova, the service sector

contributes over 70% of GDP, but 50.5% of employment, while in Azerbaijan, the industrial sector represents 37% of output, but 14.1% of employment.

Figure 1.5 Employment and GDP (value added) by sector, 2015 (%)



Notes: Armenia, Ukraine and Russia: ETF calculation; Belarus data for employment by sector refer to the annual average and labour resource estimates; Georgia data for employment by sector refer to 2014.

Agr: agricultural sector; Ind: industrial sector; Serv: service sector; Emp: employment.

Sources: World Bank, ILO and national statistical offices.

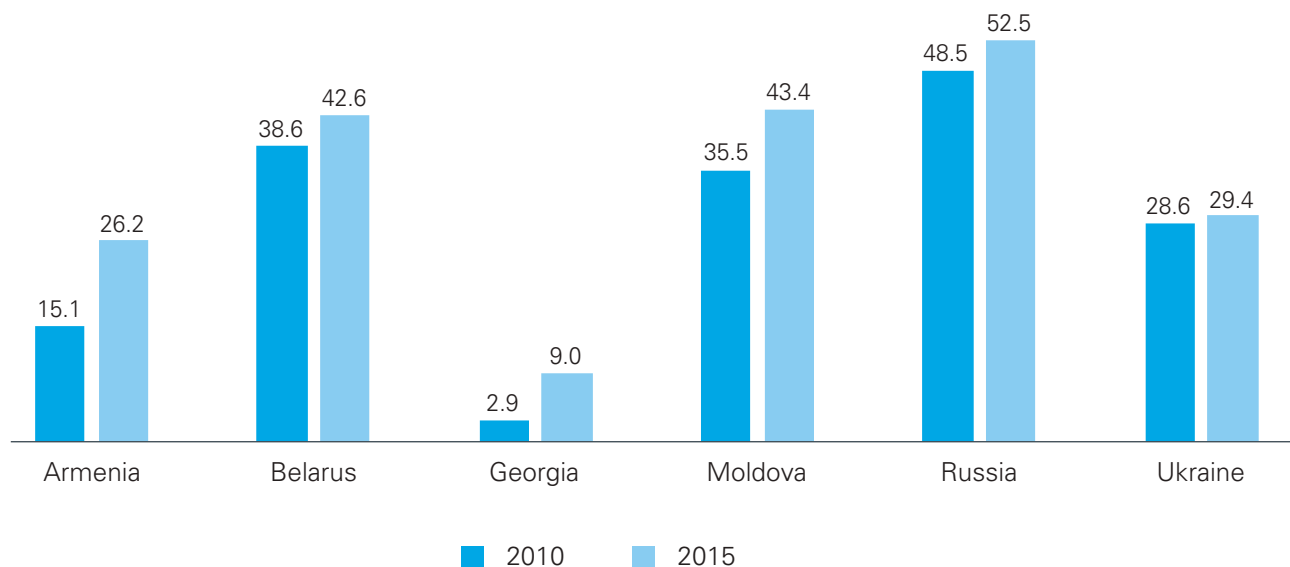
1.3 Overview of VET systems in the region

Vocational education in the region is mainly provided at the school level. The size of the VET sector varies considerably across the region. VET reforms have mainly targeted VET in secondary schools (initial VET) with less consideration given to post-secondary, higher or continuing VET.

In all countries, there has been an increase in the share of students choosing VET at the upper secondary level. However, the actual number of students has decreased in most of the countries.

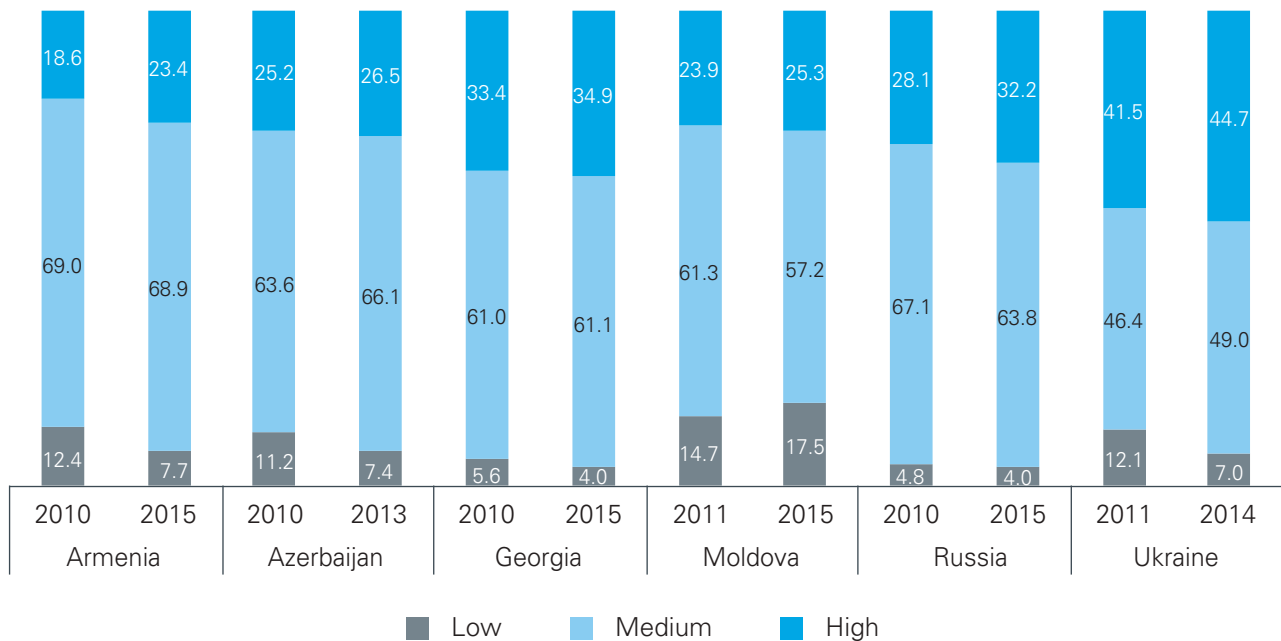
The proportion of the population with higher levels of educational attainment is rising in all countries. Similarly, the proportion of the population with lower levels of educational attainment is falling in all countries, except Moldova where it increased slightly.

Figure 1.6 Students in vocational programmes, percentage of total upper secondary students



Notes: Georgia data refer to 2009 and 2015; Russia data refer to 2009 and 2014. Azerbaijan data missing.
Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics – UIS.Stat.

Figure 1.7 Educational attainment of adult population (age group 25–64) (%)



Notes: Low – general basic education and lower; Medium – general secondary, vocational, secondary specialised (or primary and secondary vocational); High – tertiary; Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Russia: ETF calculation; Armenia data refer to the age group 15–75; Azerbaijan data refer to the age group 25–63 for males and 25–59 for females and to the end of the year; Moldova data refer to the active population; Russia data refer to the active population aged 15–72; Ukraine data refer to the population aged 15–70. Belarus data missing.

Sources: National statistical offices and ILO.



2. MAIN FINDINGS

A. Vision and progress

Across the region, policy makers perceive VET as a contributor to economic development. Since 2012, there has been substantial growth in the range of policy initiatives for VET. Policy development occurred frequently in the period 2010–15 with 2020 targeted as a key achievement date. In the years immediately prior to 2020, as many countries assess their achievements and prepare new measures to address new or continuing challenges, there is likely to be an increase in new policies.

The range of policy initiatives developed and followed across the countries since 2010, while not identical, indicates that the countries are facing similar challenges.

Policies for VET in the region have, with some exceptions, mainly focused on initial VET (IVET), namely VET offered as part of the secondary school curriculum. Post-school VET is developing and is part of the policy perspective of governments, but it receives less policy focus than IVET receives. In this respect, VET is frequently approached in policy terms as an alternative to general secondary education, which continues to be, an important sector of education in all countries.

Most post-school vocational training is provided by the private sector, with more limited regulation with respect to curriculum, assessment and qualifications. Most of the countries have growing networks of private providers that service business skills requirements, for example procurement, real estate, and financial services or information technology (IT) training. There is limited interchange between this sector and the public sector. The emergence of a post-secondary VET sector that articulates with the IVET sector is more gradual.

VET policy formulation therefore favours the education sector and within that mainly the secondary school sector, while post-secondary education is generally focused on higher education (HE) rather than higher vocational education.

In general, the main policy priorities being followed relate to creating new content for VET and developing new modes of VET delivery. Changes frequently relate to the reorganisation or rationalisation of schools, the updating of standards and curriculum,

and the modernisation of qualifications and their placement in a national framework. In addition, modularisation is being used to enhance flexibility, while greater use of learning outcomes and reforms to teacher training are improving the quality of VET.

The vision for VET is that it becomes an attractive form of education for all students by demonstrating that it can lead to sound or valuable career opportunities. Similarly, policy aims to convince businesses and employers that VET graduates will possess the skills they need and that they can make a contribution to the productivity of their enterprises, and consequently to the overall growth of the economy.

This twin aim to make VET attractive to both employers and students represents the underlying ambition for VET across the region.

VET modernisation in the region is strongly influenced by international developments, frequently by the developments in Europe. International influences are sourced from several directions, for example cooperation through international programmes, such as bilateral donor cooperation in VET projects, and international policy processes, such as the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which contains key components that reinforce directions in VET reform in Eastern Europe, for example the use of qualifications frameworks and learning outcomes. Other influences include initiatives such as the Small Business Act for Europe (2008). The periodic assessment of this Act has given a higher profile to the use of key competences and entrepreneurial skills in the VET curriculum.

In the context of internationalisation, there are also implemented VET projects and indirect influences largely through the use of evidence contained in EU policy documents and reports, and through expert interaction, e.g., in Russia, and also the impact of international programmes such as World Skills International.

A further key trend in the region is the greater emphasis on the use of data to steer and shape policies. This has also been reinforced by international assistance projects, for example the use of the EU Budget Support Programmes, which set indicators to benchmark and track progress in the reform initiatives being followed by governments.

For example, in Armenia, the 2013 EU budget support programme underpinned many of Armenia's main recent achievements in VET. The programme also built the capacity of stakeholders, particularly outside the main departments, to follow policy developments. The new sector reform contract (SRC) for 2017–20 has a strong focus on rural development programmes and aims to improve the capacity for skills identification and matching to facilitate better coordination between labour supply and demand.

In Moldova, the SRC, which aimed to increase VET efficiency, also supported improved policy monitoring and implementation. The VET system was reorganised by creating a single training approach that includes all institutions specialised in training skilled workers, supervisors, technicians and other categories of specialists. The reorganisation of the VET system led to a reduced number of educational institutions and the creation of centres of excellence. The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education Training was also created.

Similarly, the EU SRC for employment and VET in Georgia signed in 2014 will end in 2017. Its general objective was to stimulate sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development through improved transition from training to employment. The 2016 interim evaluation of the SRC found that it contributed to the VET system's revision. The SRC is also raising awareness of the Ministry of Education for enabling the funding for VET and helps in keeping policy focus on consistent priorities.

In Georgia, the government has been highly active since 2010 with multiple policy initiatives being developed in VET. Priorities cover both the external and internal efficiency of the VET, including teacher training, the improvement of pedagogical materials, and the recognition of informal learning, entrepreneurship learning and quality assurance. The area of governance also included the introduction of new cooperation mechanisms between business and education, enabling the sharing of information between stakeholders in networks through improved autonomy and the involvement of the business sector.

VET funding in Georgia has tripled since 2013 and flexible, competence-based, modular programmes are the standard template for all programmes, with the teaching of entrepreneurship a mandatory

integrated component of all VET programmes. Further steps have included initiatives to improve the quality of practical learning and college-level cooperation with the employers. The strengthening of college infrastructure to ensure that they correspond to the requirements of educational programmes, including the needs of students with disabilities, has also been a priority. New colleges aim to improve geographic access to VET, including better services for provision of VET to students with special educational needs, convicts and former inmates.

Additional measures in support of VET include a focus on measures to improve attainment and school to work transition, such as professional guidance and career planning, which aim to enable the youth to make informed decisions on their future professions. A valuable innovation in support of implementation has been the development of framework programmes that act as guides for VET institutions during the elaboration of education programmes. This form of support has potential, not only in curricula but in other areas too.

Ukraine has shifted to a new focus in VET with the sector's modernisation being a high priority. The aim is consistent with Georgia's in that it is oriented towards growth and inclusion, but its approach reflects the significantly different economic and geographic context of Ukraine. It is expected that VET will gradually be transformed into an enabler of growth by aligning the VET system with strategies for development of the regions and cities. Taken together, these alignments are intended to support the possibility of increased trade with the EU.

In this context, the VET sector is also undergoing a major restructuring. The following priority has been identified for VET: reform of the legislative framework for VET in line with European standards by adopting proposed new laws for education and vocational education. These changes will embody new parameters for the operation of VET, including a new system of governance based on increased responsibilities of the regions; the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); sector-specific qualifications frameworks; competence-based professional standards; and public-private partnerships in education.

The main vision behind these adjustments was the change in the country's course of development

towards an alignment with EU practices and an increase in decentralised decision making. It aims to break from the centralised model of management, build capacity in local self-government, and implement the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, i.e. principles of subsidiarity and financial self-sufficiency of local governments.

The education reform implies the 'Europeanisation' of national education and the approximation to EU standards under the motto 'Quality Education and Fair Access to It'.

Ukraine envisages new regional mechanisms for skills training in line with the needs of regional (subnational) labour markets, social inclusion and streamlining the network of VET providers.

In Azerbaijan, the main national perspective is the further diversification of economic development. Underpinning this change is a development concept, 'Azerbaijan – 2020: Look into the future', which, as with other countries, aims to improve the conditions for the emergence of a knowledge-based economy. The concept foresees the integration of Azerbaijan's education system into global and European environments. It is a comprehensive agenda and envisages a full system change.

Until relatively recently, the VET sector operated with limited strategic guidance. There was a lack of a coordination mechanism or a platform, for example skills councils linking stakeholders together. However, as part of the new development strategy for the country, in December 2016 the government adopted a Strategic Roadmap for the VET sector². It focuses on the development of competence-based education and new management mechanisms based on state–society collaborations, including public–private partnerships. The strategy supports lifelong learning and the updating of infrastructure and financing mechanisms, as well as the development of new content and the training of teachers and trainers.

Similarly, the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2020 was developed to include priorities for long-term economic development, focused on solving critical problems in areas that constrain qualitative and inclusive

growth. The long-term development priorities aim for improved links between the education system and labour market needs with the goal of increased labour productivity and employment rates in the economy.

The national development strategy is complemented by a national VET strategy for the period 2013–20. The strategy targets the legislative and institutional framework for VET to correspond better with the labour market. As in other countries, the aim is to make VET more attractive to individuals and businesses by streamlining the networks of VET institutions and upgrading the content and the learning and training processes.

The initiatives in VET supplement a new employment strategy that seeks to improve the country's alignment with the EU policies. One of its main priorities is the establishment of a functioning system of vocational orientation and career guidance at all levels of education and professional training.

In Belarus, strategic perspectives were also strengthened by an updated policy³ with goals and objectives linked to a long-term national strategy for sustainable socio-economic performance.

The state programme priorities cover, inter alia, 'vocational and secondary specialised education', as well as 'the development of additional education for adults, and young people'.⁴ In the medium term, the main priorities in VET include establishing a forecasting system, workforce training, strengthening the qualification systems and developing occupational standards.

The programme integrates workforce forecasting based on an updated occupational classification system with improved qualifications that support a modular approach to course design. The reforms also incorporate additional measures on inclusive education, the introduction of field-specific education in secondary schools and facilitation of the WorldSkills International movement in Belarus.

In Armenia, the overall aim is to increase the size of the vocational sector and extend the range of services that it provides to businesses and individuals

² Based on Decree No 1897. Cited in the 2016–17 Torino Process report for Azerbaijan.

³ Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No 250 dated 28 March 2016 approved the State Programme 'Education and Youth Policy' for 2016–20.

⁴ 2016–17 Torino Process report for Belarus.

in both urban and rural areas. As with the other countries of the region, there is a policy background for vocational education linked to a national development strategy, which identifies the education sector as a fundamental tool for sustainable economic development.

Between 2017 and 2020, Armenia will extend the development of the sector through the continuing implementation of the existing initiatives and the introduction of further measures in the framework of a new budget support programme that targets VET in the agricultural sector.

Since 2014, policies in vocational education in Armenia have been stable and consistent with developments being more focused on the introduction of mechanisms that are designed to support the further implementation of vocational education. These mechanisms include legislative support for continuing vocational education and the validation of non-formal and informal learning and creation of networks between vocational education colleges for the exchange of information and experience.

In Russia, a roadmap has been designed and approved to implement a package of measures to improve secondary VET. A system has been developed for monitoring the quality of secondary VET training. Work is also underway to promote lifelong learning and provide mechanisms to keep young people aware of learning opportunities available to them and support scientific, creative and entrepreneurial activity.

Efforts are ongoing to develop, update, adapt and implement occupational standards. This work is led by the Russian Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs. It is coordinated by the National Agency for Qualifications Development. Progress has been made in areas such as the implementation and support of a qualifications assessment system and the training of regional experts.

The legislative framework for VET has been updated. In Russia, the VET system is decentralised. The overall trend has been towards decentralised models (cluster or network-based) of managing the VET system. Such models were found to support optimal use of public-private partnerships and resource allocation to VET (including human, physical, technological, financial and other resources).

All countries are supporting VET by a range of documented policy statements and legislation and structured policy processes. Vocational education is not an isolated policy area but is identified by all governments as a contributor to growth. It is specifically linked to employment and social policy, but is also incorporated in national economic development strategies.

Legislation

TABLE 2.1 lists the strategic and programme documents for VET in the countries of the region.

Table 2.1 Main legislative developments related to VET by country

Country	Document
Armenia	■ Regulation on assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes, Government Decree No 1062 on 10 September 2015
	■ Law on Education
	■ Armenia Development Strategy 2014–25, adopted by Government Decree in March 2014
	■ VET Reforms Programme and Action Plan 2012–2016
	■ Budget Support Programme: Better Qualifications for Better Jobs 2017–2019
	■ National Employment Strategy and Action Plan 2013–18
	■ State Programme for Regulation of Employment

Country	Document
Azerbaijan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategic Roadmap for VET, December 2016 ■ 'Azerbaijan – 2020: Look into the Future' ■ 'Action Plan on the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan' 2015 ■ State Agency for Vocational Education, Decree No 869, April 2016 ■ Accreditation and 'Nostrification' Decree No 129, 2016
Belarus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The Programme of Activities of the Government of the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020: Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No 274 dated 5 April 2016 ■ The Programme of the Socio-Economic Development of the Republic of Belarus for 2016–2020 ■ The State Programme for Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–2020 ■ The State Programme 'Small and Medium Enterprises in the Republic of Belarus' for 2016–2020 ■ The State Programme 'Education and Youth Policy' for 2016– 2020 ■ Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No 3 dated 2 April 2015 'On the Prevention of Social Dependency'
Georgia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ VET Reform Strategy of Georgia (2013–2020) ■ Law on VET 2015 ■ Comprehensive Service Standard for Professional Orientation and Career Guidance Services ■ Concept Document on Supporting the Development of Entrepreneurship by VET, 2015 ■ Access to Vocation Training (Ministerial Order No 64, 3 February 2015; and No 39, 22 January 2016)
Moldova	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Strategy for VET Development 2013–2020 ■ National Development Strategy 'The Republic of Moldova 2020' ■ Action programme of the Government of the Republic of Moldova for 2016–2018 ■ Innovation for Competitiveness 2013–2020
Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Measures to Improve Secondary VET, 2015–2020 ■ Strategy for the Development of the VET System and Occupational Qualifications 2020 ■ Strategy for Career Self-determination, 2015 to 2020 ■ National Presidential Council for Occupational Qualifications Presidential Decree No 249, 2014 ■ Federal Law of 3 July 2016 No 238–FZ 'On Independent Qualification Assessment'
Ukraine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Framework Law on Higher Education, 2014 ■ Proposed Framework Law on Education, 2016 ■ Proposal for Legislation of Vocational Education, 2016 ■ Action Plan for National Qualification Framework, 2016

B. Effectiveness and efficiency in addressing economic and labour market demand

The efficiency of the existing VET systems to develop the skills required for employment is mixed. There are two main reasons for this. First, the existing formal VET systems are mainly oriented towards the initial education sector. Although all countries have initiatives related to adult learning, e.g., in Russia, where the Ministry of Labour has a strong focus in providing training programmes for high demand occupations, there is a need in the region for further support to existing or adult workers that require skills development. Second, the existing VET systems are still being reformed and have yet to attain their expected higher capacity.

Skill development is not a sufficient means for improving the labour market in terms of employment. However, in all countries, there is a structural component associated with unemployment. Better employment results would follow from a closer match between the skills of graduates and the vacancies sought by employers, particularly by improvements in information and job search processes; for example, many Higher Education (HE) graduates often accept jobs far below their level of educational achievement.

Young people are also facing critical obstacles while transitioning to the labour market from education. This includes the inflation of qualifications, specifically a lack of trust of employers towards vocational qualifications, a preference for higher education, requirements of work experience, and the mismatch of skills between supply and demand.

The result is that notwithstanding large numbers of people seeking work, employers find it difficult to locate the personnel they require. Some of the key reasons unemployed individuals are unable to fill available vacancies include unequal distribution of jobs across the region; low labour mobility; inadequate pay offer; lack of qualifications, education or work experience required by employers; health problems; and remote residence location.

Public employment services

All countries operate networks of public employment services (PES) designed to support people into employment. These use a variety of measures including short courses for retraining, job and employment counselling, and orientation and job placements. The services focus on active measures.

In Belarus, after a period of non-employment and economic inactivity, VET is used to support the transition to work with individuals registered as unemployed being forwarded by the PES to VET schools for training/retraining in occupations in demand in the labour market.

For VET students and graduates, as well as other individuals concerned, the PES regularly hold regional job fairs offering an opportunity to jobseekers to meet representatives of businesses located in the region and those having jobs available. The PES provide jobseekers with access to a databank of professions which includes information about general characteristics and requirements for different occupations and information about the possibility of training. The 'Data Bank of Job Openings' includes regular dispatch of CVs made by jobseekers to potential employers, as well as e-mail notifications sent to jobseekers each time there is a new job opening posted on the PES portal.

In Moldova, the PES also use their websites to disseminate information on vacancies. The National Employment Agency organises training, retraining and professional training courses for unemployed people to support their integration.

Likewise, in Armenia, the State Employment Agency organises continuing vocational training to support people into the labour market. New active labour market programmes (ALMP) started in 2015 include incentives for both employers and trainees in relation to work-based learning (WBL).

In Russia, unemployed individuals accessing PES are advised on local job vacancies and, if needed, are referred to relevant courses financed from the public budget. By taking such courses, it is intended that individuals will improve their chances of finding employment. Working and unemployed adults can request career guidance as a service from regional offices of the PES. Such guidance can include

assessment tests or individual and group counselling. The PES also track business creation by people who have followed a VET course.

The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs in Georgia manages a programme for vocational training and retraining of the jobseekers registered at worknet.gov.ge. Jobseekers obtain funding for an internship of up to three months at the companies. This kind of practice is not a part of formal education and does not lead to a qualification/diploma.

In addition, the ministry manages vocational training for 'in-demand' professions and internships through a public programme on training, retraining and qualifications for jobseekers called Worknet. The programme's target group are persons older than 20 who are registered as jobseekers on the web portal (www.worknet.gov.ge). In order to use the service, it is necessary for the jobseeker to have a primary education.

In Azerbaijan, central executive agencies, local government bodies and private organisations provide continuing vocational training.

Vocational training, retraining and improvement of occupational skills of jobseekers and unemployed citizens is an active employment measure and is also carried out by the State Employment Service. The target groups cover those who need to upgrade their skills or change their previous occupation. Employment offices of the State Employment Service operate in every administrative region (rayon), offering guidance to jobseekers and unemployed people in searching for jobs based on an individual's skills.

In Ukraine, the State Employment Service supports unemployed people, including VET graduates, to master new skills and expand their area of expertise through training or internships directly in the workplace. It provides career guidance for those who have no available vacancies to apply for; the State Employment Service has also devised a system of guiding unemployed people towards entrepreneurship and self-employment, which involves the provision of entrepreneurship-oriented information and consultation services.

In order to develop and support entrepreneurial initiatives among unemployed people, the State Employment Service provides a one-off unemployment allowance for starting enterprises.

Understanding skills demand

A key trend is the use of measures to improve labour market intelligence through the collection and use of labour market data to enhance planning in the education sector. All countries are developing or seeking to improve their systems of labour market analysis.

As part of their participation in the 'Make it Match' programme of the EU's Eastern Partnership, Ukraine, Moldova, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia and Belarus aim to develop better and more systematic collaborations for skills intelligence.

The main objective is to improve skills anticipation and matching approaches in the region through the exchange of experience and practice across the countries by a network of skills-matching experts. Some countries are committed to establishing coordinating councils for this purpose, while others are moving forward in establishing labour market observatories. This will support the use of methods which combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, including different time horizons, such as the short and long term.

In Ukraine, the mismatch of skills and qualifications with the needs of the economy and with the changing social and technological environment is an important cause of underutilisation of the labour force and of recruitment bottlenecks. A system of forecasting national and regional labour market demand by skills, competences, occupation and qualification is still underdeveloped.

The current forecasting capabilities of Ukraine are perceived as needing to be upgraded due to the lack of comprehensive statistical data on the occupational and qualification structure of the workforce. In Ukraine, there is a need to create a system for regional VET planning and funding.

In Armenia, the labour market information monitoring system is diverse. Current approaches to monitoring of the labour market include 'barometer' analyses conducted by the State Employment Agency based on employer surveys and unemployment records as well as annual research carried out by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs through interviews with employers. The aim is to collect qualitative and quantitative information on labour market demand regarding qualifications. In addition, there are ad hoc surveys by VET institutions, employer associations and, occasionally, international institutions.

In Belarus, to identify skills in demand in the labour market, the State Programme for Social Protection and Employment Promotion for 2016–20 is introducing an initiative entitled Monitoring the occupational and qualification structure of the labour force demand and supply. It will be managed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, regional executive committees, and the Minsk City Executive Committee.

Skills monitoring and forecasting in Azerbaijan is assessed as needing to develop more in order to contribute to improving labour market matching outcomes. The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection is planning to implement a project in this field with technical support from the EU, which will draw on international practices.

In Russia, the Regional Public Employment Services' survey employers on a quarterly basis in order to identify skills needs and thus train unemployed individuals for specific jobs. Each year, the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs publishes a report on business climate in Russia, informed, inter alia, by surveys of their member companies. Since 2011, the survey respondents have consistently reported shortages of qualified employees as a major constraint to business growth.

In Moldova, the National Employment Agency has developed 'a barometer' of professions, to be updated on an annual basis, to identify changing labour market requirements. In December 2015, the government introduced a methodology for tracking the professional development of graduates of VET. The methodology is being piloted in 20 VET institutions and assesses the employability of graduates in the labour market and the rate of transition to the next level of education.

The main objectives are analysis of generated data on graduates; a review of graduates by institutions, and the degree of satisfaction; their preferences for accessing other levels of education; employability, including the relevance of skills acquired in VET with the requirements of the job; and opportunities for career growth for VET graduates. A further objective is also to analyse the data on the number of graduates who started their own business.

To increase the link between labour supply and demand, programmes for the effective and timely use of labour market data have been updated. This includes the official website of the National

Employment Agency, the 'Labour market in the Republic of Moldova' portal, the 'Labour migration' department information system, and an electronic document circulation system between the National Employment Agency's subdivisions.

Other measures involve links with different state structures; for example, the automated information system, 'evidence of labour migration', ensures registration of migrant workers in Moldova.

The government has also implemented a set of application programmes, 'Jobless', and additionally supported the development and management of the central databank for the effective management of jobs and people looking for a job. Beyond this, there are websites (for example www.anofm.md and www.angajat.md) and a platform for conducting electronic job fairs (www.e-angajare.md).

In Georgia, the main difficulties of labour market data generation relate to the planning and research of the labour market indicators and establishing a labour market information system (LMIS). In 2015, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs started work on establishing the LMIS to collect, process, analyse and disseminate labour market information to jobseekers, students, employers, policy makers and other stakeholders. By the end of 2016, the ministry aimed to establish an LMIS as a 'one-stop shop' public web portal to provide up-to-date labour information. The new LMIS will enable users to have access to information to support them in the decision-making process when planning education and programmes.

The trend towards improved labour market information is supplemented by a diverse range of measures that target the ability of people to access the labour force and participate in employment.

Work-based learning

The search for the means to connect education with business needs, including better matching of skills and labour market needs, has increased the interest in the region in WBL as a policy initiative.

The concept of WBL is focused on IVET, rather than continuing vocational education. WBL in the sense of a dual or cooperative apprenticeship system faces several challenges. Challenges can relate to a lack of modern technological equipment and machinery as well as the financial resources for the purchase

of materials necessary for the training of learners. In addition, internships with an appropriate structure of learning outcomes and learning experiences are sometimes difficult to develop, given that enterprises may not be actively involved in the training process. There are mixed experiences throughout the region with all countries able to identify positive developments in the context of different constraints.

The trend throughout the region is that most countries are exploring the issue in order to improve the efficiency of the transition to employment. In some cases, the focus on WBL is new; in others, it is developing through a reform of existing systems. Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine have pilots running which will be evaluated with recommendations for policy. Armenia, where the apprenticeship system is small, is also exploring the introduction of WBL in the agricultural sector through its EU budget support programme.

In Russia, where there is a significant emphasis on the approach, there are three coexisting models of WBL:

- apprenticeship with a company (dual or cooperative VET for adults);
- WBL as part of a VET course for both youth and adults;
- work-based training at dedicated, specially equipped workplaces run by a VET provider (e.g. workshops, laboratories, workplace simulation facility, practice ground or resource centre).

Since 2010 in Georgia, there has been a practical learning component of not less than 40% of total credits for each VET programme as well as requirements for formal agreements with employers for the provision of practical training places.

In a research study by the United Nations Development Programme in 2015 on the 'Attitudes of Employers to VET'⁵ in Georgia, the results show that 13% of interviewees have had experience of providing internships for students/graduates of vocational schools within the last three years. Among them, 90% eventually hired some of the interns. Of the interviewed employers, 12% have had or are currently employing students or graduates of vocational colleges.

In Belarus, focus is placed on the following types of WBL: qualification upgrading of workers (employees),

retraining of workers (employees), vocational training of workers (employees), training in organisations, and industrial training. WBL is being gradually improved to introduce new forms of work and to assess traditional practices that have proven effective.

In the framework of the ETF Skills Connexion Project on WBL in 2015, Belarus carried out a survey with representatives of the Ministry of Education, business associations, trade unions and educational institutions. The aim of the survey was to study the status and trends of WBL in Belarus and it concluded that there is a need to strengthen and support WBL.

Azerbaijan has established traditions of WBL mainly dating from Soviet times. However, these traditions are characteristic of a planned economy and are limited to only a few types: internships at IVET level and traineeships at continuing VET (CVET) level. The following types of WBL currently exist in the country:

- internships – mostly a formality;
- traineeships and advanced training – usually take place in the public sector (mostly a formality);
- apprenticeships – almost non-existent in the formal system; instead, they take place in an informal way (for traditional crafts).

Cooperative education and other types of WBL are not common in Azerbaijan.

Currently WBL has a low status in society. However, the Action Plan on the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan provides for policy measures in priority areas identified in the strategy that relate directly or indirectly to promoting WBL. These include:

- developing and approving rules for applying the internship model in the teacher training system;
- preparing proposals for the creation of a legislative framework for a state–business partnership system in education;
- preparing proposals for the creation of a legislative framework for organising lifelong education and informal education and assessing the knowledge and skills of those using this pathway.

The VET Strategy in the Republic of Moldova 2013–2020 identifies the need to consider the implementation of a dual education system as a benchmark. In Moldova, WBL is present at all levels

⁵ Cited in 2016–17 Torino Process report for Georgia.

of VET: secondary, professional, technical post-secondary and vocational education for adults.

A new type of WBL – dual training for the country – was introduced in secondary VET in September 2014 in order to increase the quality of learning in the workplace and to enhance cooperation between VET institutions and companies. The employer is obliged to create appropriate conditions and to encourage vocational and technical training for employees, who are involved in production training, improving or studying at educational institutions⁶. Additionally, employees are entitled to vocational training, including getting new professions or new specialities.

The government believes that since 2011, there has been an increase in the number of employees who attend continuous training.

Entrepreneurial learning and key competences

A feature of the region's systems has been the increasing presence of key and entrepreneurial competences as part of the VET system, which indicates a movement away from VET as primarily associated with specific industrial skills towards a broader perspective of VET also providing transversal skills that support resilience across different occupational roles. This is evidence of a changing perspective for VET and a move from developing skills for a fixed occupation towards developing skills for employment more generally.

This is increasingly important in the region as people will need to be adaptable and mobile.

Entrepreneurship curricula are diverse in the region and might cover issues such as generating innovative business ideas, business and strategic planning, finance, marketing, and the use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) to achieve better business results.

Entrepreneurial learning is a strategically important area in Armenia. The country has made significant progress since 2010, including implementing government measures for financial education in upper secondary schools; developing university business

cooperation; putting in place policy measures to promote entrepreneurial efforts by women; and supporting small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) start-up training. In all these areas, the government has successfully put together its own institutional support systems and resources, and engaged international development assistance.

The Ministry of Education and Science is active in the implementation of a lifelong entrepreneurial learning programme.

Since 2015, the National Centre for Vocational Education and Training Development has been developing a module for entrepreneurship that will become a compulsory module in all vocational education and cover a series of skills relevant to starting a business, for example organisation, planning, budgeting, knowledge of law and accounting. The module will be integrated as learning outcomes in the national curricula.

The trend in Armenia also exists in Ukraine. With the introduction of a new programme called the New Ukrainian School, all secondary school graduates need to develop 10 key competences. These overlap with the European Key Competences framework.

In Armenia, the following skills are seen as indispensable: reading ability, oral and written expression, critical thinking, the ability to give one's opinion logically, the ability to constructively manage one's emotions, initiative, creativity, problem-solving skills, evaluating risks and decision making, and the ability to work in teams. This will also have a significant impact on the VET curriculum, making it possible for better adaptability of the labour force to changing reality in the society.

'The Fundamentals of Sectoral Economy and Enterprise' has been introduced into the content of national VET standards at an IVET level in order to develop entrepreneurship as a key competence.

Module- and competence-based national VET standards include the basic professional competence 'Understanding fundamentals of sectoral economy and enterprise'. In addition, there are optional subjects such as 'Fundamentals of entrepreneurship' and 'Fundamentals of economic activity'.

In Azerbaijan, key competences such as literacy, numeracy, IT and entrepreneurship are included in the national curriculum for lyceums and technical

⁶ According to Title VIII 'Vocational training', the Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova No 154–XV of 28 March 2003, Article 213.

and vocational education schools. Entrepreneurship is included as a key competence in 56 new pilot curricula developed by the Institute for Education based on occupational standards.

According to the OECD et al. (2015), awareness and understanding of entrepreneurship as a key competence has improved in general. There are good examples of entrepreneurship promotion in non-formal learning, but these need to be more visible and available for education and training institutions to learn from within the formal education system. The learning methods and pedagogy that are needed to facilitate the skills are still being implemented.

In the Moldova's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, regular vocational and entrepreneurial training courses are being organised.

Entrepreneurship education as a compulsory subject is found in all training programmes and educational plans both in vocational schools and colleges. The Basics of Entrepreneurship course takes 120 hours in VET institutions (96 hours' theory/practice and 24 hours' consultations) and post-secondary VET institutions (including 90 hours of direct contact). All the students of those institutions received *Specifications for students* and the teachers benefited from the teaching material *Tips for designing lessons* and *Methodological guide for teachers*.

For unemployed people who have post-secondary/higher vocational education, the National Employment Agency organises training courses in management (basics of entrepreneurship). During 2014, 16 unemployed people graduated from such classes, with 68 unemployed persons doing so in 2015.

In Georgia, the concept of entrepreneurship has been introduced into vocational education. The role and functions of the VET system are described in terms of development of entrepreneurship and supporting self-employment.

Entrepreneurship skills (e.g. business planning, finance and sales) are generally well addressed in vocational schools. The concept of 'entrepreneurial learning' needs further support with a strong focus on innovative approaches. As this develops, vocational education will lose its reputation as being essentially about acquiring a set of occupational task skills, and instead be about a skill set that facilitates further learning and occupational mobility.

In the future, the vision of a qualified VET graduate from the region suggests that he or she would have not only occupational expertise but also be an independent and self-managing learner, collaborative team member, confident user of technology, and an enterprising problem solver.

Career guidance

Career guidance is a developing field across the region. In many countries, it is seen as an important investment in individuals that can improve their efficiency in making the transition to the labour market.

The overall objective of career guidance is the same in all countries, but there are differences in how it is approached, with some systems focusing on young people and others on adults or both; in some systems, career guidance is most associated with the Ministry of Education, but in others with the Labour Ministry or its agencies.

In Ukraine, the career guidance system is being developed for both young people and adults. The career guidance system envisages providing career information, education and promotion. Considerable positive effects of the attractiveness of VET are emerging in practical training centres organised by social partners at the VET providers' premises. Such centres aim to improve practical training of students and learners and to introduce modern technology, tools and materials in the training process. At present, there are about 90 such centres all over Ukraine.

Likewise, career guidance has been a focus of policy in Armenia for several years. Since 2014, it has evolved to become an important feature of the national VET infrastructure.

A network of career guidance services has been developed since 2013 in 22 VET colleges (12 regional state colleges and 10 other VET colleges) in cooperation with the Methodological Centre for Professional Orientation under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. In 2016, the Centre updated its strategic implementation plan for the period 2016–20, with key areas of operation to include classroom materials, occupational information, and professional support to establish websites for career consultants and liaison and marketing.

Following a national forum on career guidance in October 2016 and the elaboration of a national

strategy, the approach incorporates a monitoring process to assess the viability of the national network of career guidance professionals.

The implementation plan will be linked to Armenia's strategic plans for employment and education. The Centre is also developing a methodology for career coaching, as well as implementing training of career counsellors from higher education institutions and colleges.

The Centre is creating a series of modules that will support the development of career management skills. The modules will focus on employability skills, entrepreneurial skills, how to link with the labour market and how to develop employability skills. The package will include 10 modules for career guidance professionals. The package has been approved for use in five higher education institutions and between 2014 and 2016, Armenia established professional orientation and career guidance centres in 22 VET institutions.

In Georgia, a vocational counselling and career planning service is being developed and is supported by an action plan to guide its implementation for 2015–2017. The long-term objectives are that all persons in Georgia, either in education or in the labour force and regardless of status, are entitled to high-quality information and services regarding professional orientation and career guidance. As with Armenia, training and materials, including a National Quality Standard, support the move to implementation of career guidance. The standard incorporates a handbook for careers, covering, inter alia, the role of the career counsellor, the process and techniques for career education, and guidance to show how individuals can develop self-awareness and how to identify work or training for which they are most suited.

In Azerbaijan, career guidance is undergoing further development at initial VET level. In CVET, career guidance and professional orientation services are usually conducted by local employment offices of the State Employment Service.

Whenever occupational standards envisage self-employment and entrepreneurship as career options, respective career information and advice is provided by employment offices to jobseekers and unemployed people. Improving career guidance will be a priority of the new VET centre.

C. Effectiveness and efficiency in addressing demographic, social and inclusion demand

Factors that shape demand for VET provision

Moderate economic growth and demographic pressures are driving inclusion issues. There is a need for greater visibility of VET as an effective contributor to social inclusion.

The national figures for the Gini coefficient suggest that the countries have a reasonable degree of equality, with the incidence being slightly higher in Georgia and Russia. In general, the figures have been stable, with only Moldova showing a significant change, for example falling during the period 2010–14.

Table 2.2 Gini index

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Armenia	31.1	31.3	30.5	31.5	31.5
Azerbaijan	MD	MD	MD	MD	MD
Belarus	28.6	27.2	26.5	26.6	27.2
Georgia	42.1	41.6	41.4	40.0	40.1
Moldova	32.1	30.6	29.2	28.5	26.8
Russia	40.9	41.0	41.6	MD	MD
Ukraine	24.8	24.6	24.7	24.6	24.1

Note: MD – missing data.

Source: World Bank (data accessed 13 March 2017).

Access, participation, progression

In all countries, VET operates as a core element of social inclusion. As well as a source of skills for competitiveness, VET is used as an instrument to create access to the labour market for people facing some form of disadvantage. The use of VET as a social inclusion measure is well established in the region. There have been few major changes since 2014.

The region has had prolonged spells of joblessness among unemployed people.

In Moldova and Russia, the incidence of long-term unemployment was less than a third of unemployed people, while in Armenia and Azerbaijan, long-term unemployment constituted twice this ratio. In general, these proportions, with the exception of Armenia, are stable, suggesting that current policy settings are having a limited effect.

VET is used across the region as a measure that supports social inclusion in three main ways. First, it is used as an alternative education stream within secondary education for students that have been identified as being unlikely to complete upper secondary education. Second, VET is used in short courses to provide skills to unemployed people or

those seeking to upgrade their skills. Third, VET is commonly used as a programme of assistance to vulnerable groups or to people with specific needs.

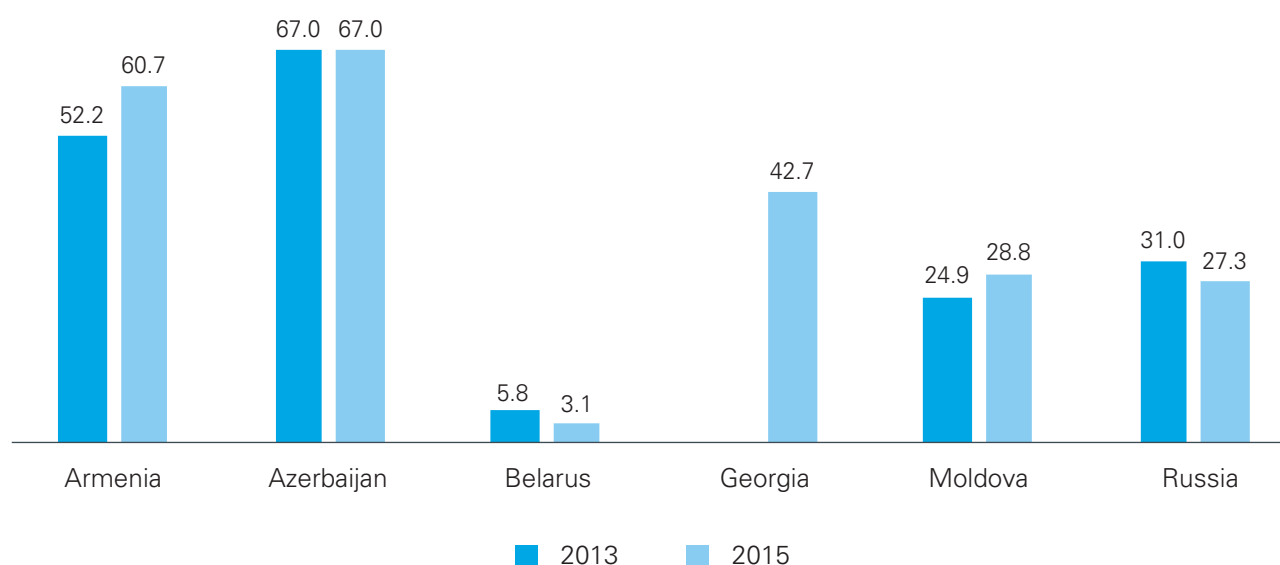
The extent to which VET performs this role varies across the countries. It is usually supported by additional measures, such as subsidies for training or for employment, and in all countries, VET is incorporated in the suite of assistance measures offered by the state employment services. In general, access to VET for disadvantaged groups is universal.

The main development in the area of VET for social inclusion is that it is frequently combined with other assistance services and the nature of these additional services is changing or being improved. Additional measures include the improved targeting of VET assistance to specific groups, such as those not in employment, education or training (NEETs), to facilitate their re-engagement in the labour force or in education.

In Armenia, Moldova and Georgia, however, more than a quarter of young people are NEETs.

Assistance may involve the use of pre-vocational programmes or courses that provide participants with 'enabling skills' that will support their learning or their ability to undertake employment. These

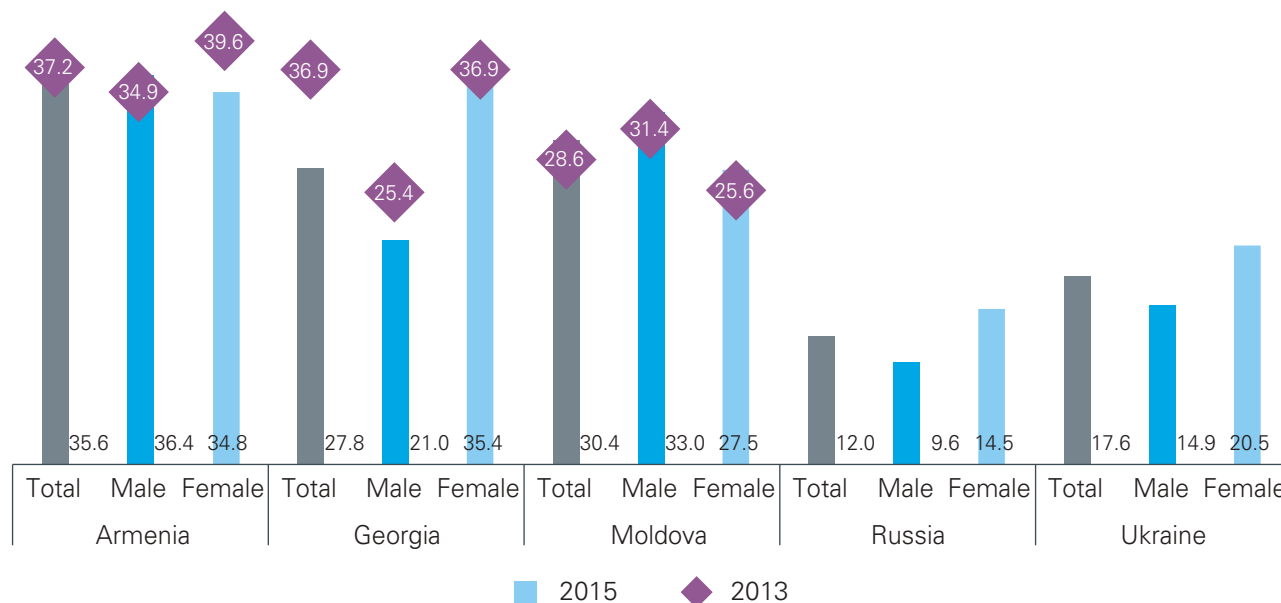
Figure 2.1 Proportion of long-term unemployed people out of the total unemployed population (aged 15+) (%)



Notes: Armenia data refer to the population aged 15–75; Belarus data refer to 2011 and 2015, based on the employment office records, and to the population aged 16–59 (male) and 16–54 (female); Russia data refer to the population aged 15–72; Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Russia are ETF calculations.

Sources: National statistical offices and ILO.

Figure 2.2 People not in employment, education or training (NEETs, age group 15–24), by gender (%)



Notes: Georgia: ETF calculation; Armenia, Russia and Ukraine: participation in education in the week prior to the survey is considered.
Sources: National statistical offices and ILO.

courses could be delivered in different contexts, such as regional or rural areas that are distant from mainstream services, or they could be offered in specific languages to support student participation. Other supplementary support to VET programmes involves job search assistance or guidance.

Delivering to socio-economic and inclusion demands and objectives

There is an emerging awareness of the benefits of the validation of prior learning. In several countries, for example Armenia, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, there are programmes that offer the recognition of experience and skills.

For example in Ukraine, since 2016, the State Employment Service has run a programme for the validation of non-formal and informal learning for cooks, welders and safety guards in three locations. However, across the region, such programmes are often not well known or sufficiently connected with training or qualifications systems to have a widespread impact. The approach contains significant potential as an assistance measure, particularly as a migrant support measure, where it could be used more widely as a means of

recognising skills achieved by migrants when abroad, or as a means of documenting the skills of migrants prior to their departure.

To maximise the contribution of VET to social inclusion requires a broad range of partnerships between education providers, community service organisations, employers and relevant government agencies. These partnerships exist; however, their effectiveness is not clear. The partnerships are not mirrored in programme arrangements that link marginalised or disadvantaged groups to mainstream possibilities. Some institutional arrangements exist; for example, in Russia, there is a network of over 700 local testing centres where migrants can pass Russian exams and receive certificates.

The skills testing centres in Russia are valuable, but these need to be more common in the region. Potential also exists in a number of practices that aim to connect different services; for example, in Armenia, there is a move towards regional integrated service centres that co-locate different community support services in one service structure.

Cooperation between non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and public authorities to provide assistance services is an important feature of the

region. The NGO services are often supported by international donors and complement the work done by public authorities. They also enhance the capacity of the countries to support disadvantaged groups by training staff or by offering services not available through existing public programmes. Although there are well-established protocols for cooperation, there is a need in the region for overarching policy structures to use the cooperation with NGOs as a tool for achieving policy objectives.

D. Internal efficiency of the VET systems

The VET systems in the region are being transformed by priorities that aim to improve relevance, flexibility and quality.

Trends in the region towards relevance are growing, with occupational standards drawn from analyses of the skills needs of employers and through programmes that seek to develop constructive cooperation with employers.

Flexibility exists through the development of new methods of delivery based on modularisation and through the increasing use of learning outcomes to identify and structure course content. These trends enable providers to select and deliver training to the specific needs of their locations, students or clients. This leads to more opportunities for cooperation between employers and providers. These developments have great potential to increase the overall provision of VET throughout the region, particularly to small businesses and to enterprises in the area of WBL.

Quality is one of the main themes across the region; holistic system-wide approaches to quality are still emerging.

Teaching and learning

As in previous Torino Process reviews of the region, considerable work is underway in the professional development of teachers. In many of the systems, teacher training underpins the main strategy for quality and is a major area of action in the region. VET systems face multiple challenges, ranging from ageing teacher populations, declining

recruitment patterns and shortages of teachers with contemporary skills, to difficulties in changing existing teaching service regulations.

In Azerbaijan, formally, in the IVET system, teachers are expected to pass training courses every five years. However, the level of teaching quality is a key issue in the field of IVET. Most of the subject teachers and masters of industry training working in IVET institutions need to upgrade their knowledge and skills with contemporary educational methodologies. The result is that teachers face difficulties in establishing relations with learners.

In Belarus, quality assurance in VET is supported through education based on a standardised training curriculum and national standards using educational literature, computers, and educational and industrial equipment. In order to improve the learning and teaching environment in VET schools, effort has been made to optimise the network of VET schools and determine the optimal number of educational institutions and the appropriate distribution of specialities, to establish resource centres, and to set up continuing vocational training.

Colleges and lyceums are being linked to higher education institutions and inter-school educational and industrial training centres, and career guidance centres are being linked to VET institutions.

The Ministry of Education of Ukraine has also placed a strong focus on teachers. There is a shortage of workshop trainers for some occupations in Ukraine, arising from lower salaries compared to industry and the complexity of the teaching job. These tendencies are also linked to a decrease in the total number of VET students and lower conditions of employment of this category of teacher (low salaries, no benefits and social guarantees for medical treatment and health care). Currently, teaching staff is at approximately 86% of the required level.

The government is making efforts to ensure continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers through VET training and methodology centres. These centres are available in every region and provide course-based further training and internship services. In Ukraine, the new quality assurance system intended to support the decentralised VET system is not yet in place but is covered in the proposed new law on vocational education.

In Russia, teachers can access professional development courses in their teaching specialisation at least once every three years. However, the existing system of VET teacher training and professional development is to be updated. The Ministry of Education and Science's Department of VET and Continuing VET Policies has drafted a 'concept' for providing human resources to the secondary VET system for the period until 2020.

Some of the concept's declared priorities are to design, test and implement modular programmes, which should be practice-oriented, for university-level training of VET teachers and to upgrade the regional infrastructure for professional development and reskilling of VET teachers.

Additional internship opportunities have opened up for VET trainers, providing practical instruction, teachers and directors since the establishment of six Inter-regional Competence Centres and the Resource Centre for Vocational Training, Retraining and Continuing Training.

In all countries, there is a desire to update the skills and methodologies of VET teaching and in all systems, there is an increasing trend for the use of ICTs, problem-solving techniques, project work, non-standard lessons, binary lessons, classroom discussions, role and business plays, working in pairs, working in small groups, and interactive technologies.

Quality assurance

There are different approaches to quality assurance across the region. Georgia is an example of a holistic approach to quality. The approach not only covers the professional development of teachers, but also the management of quality overall for the VET system.

Quality assurance is undertaken through internal (self-assessment) and external (authorisation and accreditation) mechanisms. VET colleges are responsible for the quality of theory and practice and they are required to meet minimal authorisation standards associated with material/technical infrastructure, human resources and programmes.

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) was formed based on EU systems and practices in 2010 but in 2015, a Quality Management Thematic Working Group prepared recommendations on the improvement and updating of the QAF. Work on

improvement and refinement of the VET QAF is underway with the aim of ensuring that it meets European standards (EQAVET⁷).

From 2016, educational institutions will be granted authorisation for six years (instead of five) and accreditation will be granted for a period of seven years. Authorisation criteria are being piloted in VET. Authorisation will be associated with concrete education programmes and failure to meet the authorisation conditions will result in cancellation of authorisation of programmes (and not for the whole institution). This is a significant development and is perhaps the most advanced in the region.

Based on the experience of the past five years as well as the international experience, the period of administrative proceedings needed for authorisation and accreditation was increased to 180 days (instead of 90).

Accreditation councils have formed a council of appeals for the authorisation and accreditation processes. This is intended to relieve pressure on the court system and support the quality of decisions. A new code of ethics for authorisation and accreditation of experts has also been approved, as well as additional qualification requirements for the authorisation and accreditation experts. Correspondingly, a process aimed at ascertaining the meeting of qualification requirements by the existing experts was launched during the reporting period.

In Armenia, the Armenian National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance (ANQA) is responsible for both VET and higher education. Since 2014, a new phase of cooperation with VET institutions has been underway. In 2015, the Centre organised and conducted training for 12 regional state colleges on the topic of internal quality assurance and expertise, leading to a self-assessment of their institutions in 2016 followed by a process of peer-review assessment between those 12 colleges.

The process is targeting quality of management, teaching, cooperation with local employers, performance management systems, and implementation of training in each college and school. The 12 regional colleges connect with international

⁷ European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training, see www.eqavet.eu/gns/home.aspx

partner institutions for student exchanges and exchange of materials and approaches.

In Moldova, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education is the administrative authority. It has an emphasis on the creation and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms and a more efficient use of funds.

Quality assessment in vocational education is aimed at institutional capacity; educational effectiveness, including academic outcomes; the quality of vocational training programmes; institutional quality management; and the correlation between internal evaluation and the real situation.

Quality assessment in technical vocational education is expected to be both external and internal. External quality assessment will be conducted by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and other authorised structures. Internal evaluation will be carried out through each institution's structures of quality assurance, based on reference standards and accreditation developed by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Vocational Education.

In 2015, the government introduced a new 'Quality management guide in VET' to provide information on the quality concept. The guide demonstrates how quality can be developed and implemented by involving stakeholders in improving the educational services of VET.

In Azerbaijan, quality assurance at the national level is regulated by educational standards covering internal quality arrangements. Quality assurance at college level is regulated by the Requirements and Criteria for Organisation of Attestation and Accreditation of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education Institutions approved by Decree No 187 of the Minister of Education on 24 March 2005.

The accreditation of education establishments is carried out to specify conformity of the organisation's education process, the material and technical basis of the establishment, curricula, personnel potential, financial resources and educational infrastructure to the requirements of state education standards and other normative legal acts. Moreover, the rules establish a legal basis for determining the status of an educational institution and legal guarantee for an extension of its activity for the next five years

(three years for educational institutions established by foreigners and/or persons without citizenship and foreign legal entities).

The accreditation of an educational institution is implemented and the requirements and criteria for the implementation of accreditation are specified by the Ministry of Education. Since 2016, this function has been managed by the 'Nostrification' and Accreditation Office under the Ministry of Education.

A new system of quality assurance needs to be established or the existing system upgraded. Adoption of the draft NQF is expected to assist, as it serves for quality assurance of all relevant processes, including description of expected learning outcomes, assessment and validation of an individual's learning achievements and application of both internal and external quality assurance arrangements. According to the draft NQF, qualifications are based on competence-based standards (occupational and educational standards), and learning outcomes are the basis of study programmes (curricula) and the assessment and certification processes.

Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes are increasingly used across the region as the basis of curriculum content. Similarly, in all countries, there are established practices for the development of occupational standards from which the learning outcomes are drawn. Modular programmes are also a well-recognised training pattern in the region for ministries of education, having piloted the form through many international projects over the years. In general, qualifications are not yet defined comprehensively by learning outcomes.

Qualifications frameworks

The countries are working on NQFs, which can help replace the system of the former Soviet Union that prevailed in all countries of the region. With some exceptions in Moldova and Ukraine, the systems are not yet achieving the synergies that NQFs can bring to other VET developments. The relation between VET and wider developments of qualification systems reforms is unclear, which suggests that the region is still developing institutional arrangements for dealing with NQFs.

There is scope to accelerate the VET reform process by creating closer relations between different policy initiatives, most of which are targeted at increasing the quantity of programmes available to individuals and businesses and the quality of the skills developed from those programmes. Most of the successful initiatives in VET that are taking place in the region are not integrated into the NQF but are taking place alongside NQF development and to some extent in competition for resources and policy attention.

Quality assurance measures could be combined to improve the implementation of VET reforms if these were placed within the context of NQFs.

In Ukraine, a nascent framework exists which enables articulation between VET and higher education. A VET graduate holding a certificate of General Secondary Education and a Skilled Worker diploma is eligible to enrol for the second year of studies in a higher education institution based on the results of an interview process. In addition, some VET institutions in Ukraine issue Junior Specialist diplomas and thus provide initial higher education along with a certificate of General Secondary Education and a Skilled Worker diploma. These links offer the potential to address a range of VET issues in an integrated way with synergies that could create new opportunities and pathways.

In light of the transformation of the VET system and the closer relationship of Ukrainian education with the European systems, NQF implementation is becoming more relevant. The draft law 'On Vocational Education' provides for the alignment of the educational qualification levels with the qualification levels of NQF.

The law also elaborates on certain provisions of the NQF and identifies that there be both national and sector-specific qualifications frameworks with a National Qualifications Agency acting as a bridge between the education system and the labour market.

In December 2016, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the Action Plan for the implementation of the NQF for 2016–20. The plan foresees modernisation of the skills demand forecasting system and development of occupational standards, development of various types of qualifications (learning outcome-based educational

standards and programmes), and formation of the vocational learning outcomes validation system (awarding professional qualifications), ensuring international recognition of the NQF and national qualifications.

The NQF in Belarus is at the initial stage of the process. The basic, fundamental document in this case is the decision of the Council of Ministers No 34 of 17 January 2014, 'On some issues of development of the national qualifications system of the Republic of Belarus'. It has been approved for two pilot sectors: IT and management.

Qualifications development in Armenia has been slow to emerge for VET. The original proposal for NQF was adopted in 2011 regarding an NQF that closely mirrors the structure of the EQF. Each sector is expected to develop its own framework that will fit into a generic national framework with the HE sector following the framework for qualifications in the European Higher Education Area.

An NQF could support the development of vocational pathways to facilitate occupational mobility. For example, in Armenia, current graduates of preliminary VET tend to have specific labour market destinations. In 2014, 74.8% of preliminary vocational graduates worked as skilled workers, craftspeople or factory assembly workers. However, only 5.8% of VET graduates worked at the higher skill level of professional technicians compared to 21.1% of secondary specialised graduates and 11.4% of tertiary graduates⁸. A framework of articulating qualifications would support increased occupational mobility.

In Moldova, the NQF is developed by the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with ministries of reference, sectoral committees, VET institutions, economic agents and other social partners, and is approved by the government. Skill levels define quantitative and qualitative parameters of professional skills that the graduate must have in order to exercise the job/profession, or speciality obtained in accordance with the descriptors of the NQF.

Currently, 53 qualifications have been developed. In VET institutions, qualifications are available in

⁸ National Statistical Service of Armenia, *Labour market in the Republic of Armenia*, 2015, Table 4.25.

accordance with the NQF or the nomenclature of areas of vocational training and trades/professions and the nomenclature of vocational training for the specialities and qualifications for secondary and non-tertiary post-secondary VET.

The concept of the NQF was developed and approved in 2010 together with higher education reforms. In recent years, with the support of the ETF, the NQF concept was developed from the perspective of technical vocational education with a draft methodology for description of qualifications based on occupational standards. The NQF development process is underway involving descriptions of qualifications in the NQF.

In Georgia, the NQF approved in 2010 describes qualifications that already exist in the Georgian education system and shows their interconnection at national and international levels. It is based on the principles of the EQF.

Georgia is implementing a project for the NQF aimed at ensuring its compatibility with the EQF. As a result of that project, the NQF is being upgraded and it will encourage the process of elaboration of new qualifications based on learning outcomes; it will also support transparency of the existing qualifications in Georgia and their recognition abroad. The first stage of the project was implemented in 2014 with the second stage being launched in 2015.

In Russia, efforts are ongoing to develop, update, adapt and implement occupational standards. Issues relating to the occupational standards and their use for the modernisation of VET and higher education curricula, sector qualifications and sector skills councils is vested with the National Council for Occupational Qualifications established by a Presidential Decree. On the federal level, the Ministry of Labour and Social Development is in charge of occupational standards development.

Overall, the progress in NQF development needs to be assessed if significant advancements are to be made in the region. In respect of NQFs, there is a difference between Eastern Europe and EU Member States. To some degree, the NQFs of Member States are facilitated by referencing their systems against the EQF. This is presently absent in most of Eastern Europe and its explicit use could accelerate the process.

E. Governance and policy practices in the VET systems

Update on governance arrangements

The most dramatic change in the region is the move to decentralisation in Ukraine. Transformations in the country's social and political life and the change of Ukraine's geopolitical course towards alignment with the EU have brought about major reforms, including the decentralisation of power initiated in 2014. The State Strategy for Regional Development for the Period to 2020 envisages the economic recovery of regions. The process of VET decentralisation is a major initiative of the Ukrainian government in the area of education.

Sector skills councils

Sector skills cooperation mechanisms exist across the region in different structures, either in formal structures, such as skills councils, or informal structures, such as regular working groups of employers and educationalists, at national or local level. In most cases, while there are opportunities for employers to suggest and represent approaches to VET, the influence of sector skills councils is limited due to the inability of ministries to control funding and the overall regulation of vocational training.

In Ukraine, there is a consolidation of efforts at the sectoral level. Since 2014, sectoral employers' organisations have created five sector councils for the development of occupational standards and qualifications: metallurgy, chemical, coal industries, fuel and energy complex, and machine-building for the agricultural complex. A network of sector skills councils is gradually being developed to support the Ministry of Education with planning and to link the education sector more closely to the business community.

Regional skills councils are an important trend in the decentralisation context; such councils already exist in all regions, but are not always effective yet. The regional skills councils comprise local executive authorities and local self-government bodies, employers and their associations, trade unions and professional associations, educational institutions and

VET providers, parent self-government bodies, and international and domestic experts.

In Azerbaijan, sector skills councils (sector committees) function on an ad hoc basis in 10 sectors. These committees are coordinated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population and their major role is the development of occupational standards. Sector skills councils are established by official correspondence between the stakeholders led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population. They are not underpinned by legislation.

In Georgia, sector committees are used to facilitate cooperation between the technical development of content and its coordination by the wider VET governance structure, usually at the 'meso' level of the system. In 2015, important changes were introduced to sector committees. The priority is to have active sector committees with expanded functions that support collaboration between education and the labour market. Since 2015, sector committees have been established in 11 areas.

The Ministry of Education and Science plans to continue to support sector committees with social partners through the Millennium Challenge Account–Georgia (MCA–G) project. The project has been implemented since 2013. Sector councils are responsible for validation of occupational standards and VET framework programmes. VET institutions develop their own VET educational programmes based on the VET framework programmes. The National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement approves both documents based on the recommendations of the sector councils.

In line with the other countries of the region, sector skills councils in Moldova operate as a means of partnership between business and education. Their involvement in the development of methodologies is very important and they can make a meaningful contribution to the identification of relevant training and the development of professional qualifications and prior learning recognition methodologies. The mechanism has supported the development of occupational standards as part of the VET reform process.

Presently, they use the legal framework to support their position within the institutional landscape of

VET in Moldova, which is still evolving. The Education Strategy for the VET Development for 2013–20 aims to create sector councils in 12 areas of specialisation and development.

In Russia, the National Presidential Council for Vocational Qualifications has established sector-specific councils for occupational qualifications based on employer associations, or other types of organisations, to bring together or represent relevant industries. The National Council will provide overall coordination, while sector councils for occupational qualifications will support independent assessment of occupational competence. These councils are empowered to select skill assessment centres.

Councils for occupational qualifications coordinate efforts to develop qualifications frameworks for specific types of occupations. Currently there are 28 qualifications councils.

Secondary legislation to support public and professional accreditation and the independent assessment of qualifications has been approved by the National Council.

In Belarus, sectoral councils operate on a voluntary basis. They generally involve representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Ministry of Education, High-Tech Park Administration (State Institution), Academy of Public Administration under the aegis of the President of the Republic of Belarus, and the Confederation of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs (Employers) (Union of Non-Profit Organisations).

Efforts in Armenia to improve the operation of the sector skills councils are creating a new model. This model has two main components: first a governing council that covers all sector skills councils, and second, a product and services arm which is organised on a sector basis. Each sector will follow up on three sets of activities: research and development of skills; policy dialogue and advice related to legislation and programmes; and a business services area related to private companies. It is from the last area that the income (and eventual self-funding) will arise. The model will be the vehicle for the development of WBL initiatives.

Assessment of governance arrangements

Governance is in a state of change across the region as governments reorganise institutions in order to support the implementation of policies. This is likely to continue and be an ongoing feature of future reform. No single model of governance prevails; diverse policy processes and pressures are leading to different approaches. Governance structures generally comprise a combination of line ministries (e.g. education and labour), specialist agencies (national VET centres), industry cooperation bodies (sector skills councils) and provider organisations (schools, colleges or private providers).

The experience of the last four years suggests that successful implementation is facilitated by maximising the flow of information, knowledge and experience between different levels and parts of education, training and employment systems. This can be achieved by building greater collaboration and partnerships between the stakeholders and actors in the systems

There is frequently a lack of practical agreement between stakeholders about who should be in the lead in advancing VET; for example, should it be the education community as the majority funder and regulator who wishes to ensure level of attainment, or should it be the business and economic community who is seeking to employ the students.

An emerging trend is the existence of a tripartite system: a public part, focused on IVET, which offers publicly accredited qualifications; a private system offering short post-school courses that are informally accredited; and an NGO part offering training and skills development to marginal and disadvantaged parts. In order to maximise synergies from these different parts, current ways of engaging stakeholders need to be reviewed to create implementation structures that empower stakeholders from education, industry, civil society and other relevant groups.

Although policy aims to support the business sector, employers do not yet lead skills development. The lack of clarity becomes evident when considering which group 'owns' qualifications or regulates the implementation of the standards in courses.

There is a gap in all countries for the closer incorporation of the private sector into the governance of vocational education.

Arrangements between national and subnational levels of governance

Most countries follow an approach that is based on some form of decentralisation or discretionary management that aims to link more closely with social partners through consultation, cooperative decision making, or direct representation on key advisory or development committees or agencies.

At the level of public VET providers, particularly schools, management and policy making are functions of institutional (provider) directors and a collective body of staff working in the VET institution. Some providers also have supervisory boards or trustees involved in management and policy making.

Challenges operate at both the macro level and the delivery level in the relationships between policy development and implementation; for example, weak regional levels in Georgia mean that social partners lack influence on VET policy-making decisions around sector-specific skills.

There is a mixture of national and subnational (regional) cooperation in all states. All systems contain significant autonomy for institutions, particularly for schools in respect of content setting and in some areas for revenue raising and funding.

Moldova is developing a platform for social dialogue in VET as a new type of approach. The need to develop the platform concept derives from the consideration that the new terms of relationship between educational institutions and the labour market need active involvement in the training of future specialists of all stakeholders.

Armenia and Moldova are developing centres of excellence that aim to be the hubs of regional or national networks from which innovations can be generated and distributed. In Armenia, this covers 12 regional centres involving bilateral and trilateral cooperation agreements that were signed between 35 preliminary and middle VET institutions. In Moldova, the network involves 44 professional schools, 10 centres of excellence, and 38 colleges.

In the future, the centres of excellence will be strengthened by integrating programmes for initial and continuing VET.

As part of its roadmap for VET strategy, Azerbaijan also aims to develop centres of excellence by upgrading 10 VET schools that will act as key reference centres for other VET schools in the system. This is a significant change in the institutional framework for VET in the country. It is accompanied by the establishment in 2016 of the State Agency for Vocational Education with an increased capacity for the preparation and implementation of programmes.

In the context of power decentralisation in Ukraine and strengthening the role of regions in the decision-making process, social partners and employers on the regional level are becoming more actively involved in the decision-making process regarding the socio-economic development of the regions, which has an immediate impact on the regional VET systems.

The All Ukrainian Association of VET Employees, the objective of which is to preserve and develop vocational education and training and to ensure social protection for employees and students of VET institutions, plays an important role. In all stages of developing the draft law, 'On Vocational Education', the Association was determined to ensure that the collective proposals of the public had been taken into account; the Association is also committed to the development of a social partnership between VET institutions and employers' unions in Ukraine.

In Belarus, resource centres connected to the initial and secondary VET institutions play a key role. The centres carry out practical student training for high-tech industries. Resource centres operate in 14 areas of education and in 39 institutions, forming a network of specialised resource centres with predominantly regional importance, with national importance for some specialities.

In Russia, inter-regional competence centres are being established to facilitate the piloting of newly developed standards, curricula and assessment tools and serve as model 'VET colleges of the future'.

Partnerships are the key trend in the region. Public-private partnerships are widely discussed and many examples exist, but most are localised or ad hoc,

and there is significant scope to shape their further development so that they are an integral feature of the system.

In Azerbaijan, there are initiatives for the development of public-private partnerships in which cooperation of VET providers with employers is supported by ad hoc initiatives involving projects implemented with support of donor organisations. Cooperation agreements are also being trialled between the Ministry of Education and social partners and large companies (e.g. Azerbaijan Confederation of Employers' Organisations (ASK), the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR), and Azersun Holding.

Finance

Across the region, financing remains one of the major challenges for all countries. There are three main policy approaches that to a greater or lesser extent are being followed to support the VET systems: increasing VET budgets, improving efficiencies, and attracting additional resources to VET through increased private sector expenditure. Donors also play an important role, either at the level of technical assistance, loan assistance or budget support.

Public expenditure on education as a whole varies in the region, falling in Armenia and Azerbaijan, but rising in Georgia. Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan have low expenditure patterns while Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova have higher levels.

In Ukraine, the VET sector has been under-financed during the whole period of Ukraine's independence, which has resulted in the decline of quality. The State Budget for 2017 guarantees subventions to the regional budgets from the state budget for VET schools that are providing secondary education, and for those that are engaged in VET provision defined based on professions with national significance. VET institutions located in cities of regional significance are financed from the budgets of those cities, while other institutions obtain funding from regional (oblast) budgets, with Kyiv receiving finance from the municipal budget. Regions are developing their models of governance and financing.

In Azerbaijan, public expenditure on VET spending is low, which is an impediment for VET development and hinders effective implementation of reform.

Table 2.3 Expenditure on education as % of GDP

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Armenia	3.3	3.1	3.1	2.7	2.2	MD
Azerbaijan	2.8	2.4	2.7	2.5	2.6	3.0
Belarus	5.4	4.8	5.1	5.2	5.0	4.9
Georgia	MD	2.7	2.0	MD	MD	MD
Moldova	9.1	8.3	8.4	7.0	7.5	6.9
Russia	MD	MD	3.9	MD	MD	MD
Ukraine	MD	6.2	6.7	6.7	6.3	MD

Notes: MD – missing data.

Sources: National statistical offices and UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Most IVET providers are public and regulated by finance plans. IVET providers have limited freedom in management. The budget of IVET providers is formulated in accordance with the number of classes (groups) at the educational institution. The main part of an annual budget of VET providers is comprised of wages, scholarships and social insurance payments. For example, 92% of the overall annual budget of Cabala VET School consisted of wages, scholarships and social insurance payments in 2016.

The need to increase expenditure on VET, as well as involving employers' contributions in the system as vocational training, is a priority in the 'Main Directions of the Strategic Roadmap of the National Economy and Main Economic Sectors'⁹.

In Moldova, for the years 2014–15, expenditure on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) had a slight increase. Expenditure for 2016 increased by MDL 158.7 million for technical and vocational education and MDL 108.6 million for post-secondary technical and vocational education. The TVET share of the total budget for education (state budget) for 2016 was 12.6%.

In order to improve the quality of education, allocations are included in the state budgets for 2016 for implementation of reform measures in the field of technical and vocational education – MDL 160.0 million from the Ministry of Education's project 'Technical assistance for the education and training

in the Republic of Moldova' for creating the centres of excellence, strengthening the capacities of the Republican Centre for the Development of Vocational Education, developing standards in occupational areas etc. Of the total amount of MDL 160.0 million, 96.0 million constitutes the investments made for the vocational centres of excellence under the ministries of Agriculture, Education, Culture, and Health.

In Belarus, a shortage of funding leads to the slow update of the curriculum documents and a decrease in market research in the VET system, and results in the outflow of teaching staff.

In Armenia, the main source for IVET financing is the state budget. Donors have helped improve the system. The EU donated around EUR 40 million from 2007 to 2015. EU help has focused on innovation and on refurbishing colleges, which act as models for developing the system nationwide.

With the extension of free compulsory education from nine to 12 years, all IVET will be financed accordingly by the state budget for students enrolled in the education and training system after basic general education. Middle VET has until now mainly been privately financed through enrolment fees. Funding is on a per capita basis. When compared with 2010, the state budget (2014) for preliminary VET has increased by 49% and by 96% for middle VET (since 2012, the number of free seats in educational institutions providing middle VET programmes has increased by 50%).

⁹ See 2016–17 Torino Process report for Azerbaijan.

In Georgia, since 2013, the government has been following a system of differential vouchers that provides full coverage of VET for all students in public VET institutions who successfully pass the unified VET admission test. Public VET institutions receive voucher- and programme-based funding to cover costs that are necessary for conducting the learning process (including VET teacher remuneration). Programme funds are allocated for remuneration of general internal and external staff of VET institutions, covering various costs necessary for the functioning of the institution and other current costs.

Voucher-based funding does not cover the learning process in private colleges. State VET institutions may get their income from state contracts, which are reflected in institutions' budgets.

In addition to revising its funding approach, Georgia has introduced an updated VET policy planning process, the so-called Strategy Implementation Action Plan Matrix Management Model. This model aims to simplify the translation of policy into practice and improve monitoring. The initiative was trialled online in 2015. All stakeholders (legal entities of public law and donor organisations) that take part in the management and implementation of the 2015 plan were required to enter information concerning their activities into the matrix. At the end of each quarter, the Monitoring Office of the VET Development Department assessed the work carried out together with the work planned for the next quarter.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY MESSAGES



The effects of advancing technology and rationalisation in industry and commerce, together with trade and competitive forces, are affecting labour markets, skill requirements and skill formation in all countries. At the core of this is a continuing need to renovate the relationship between education and the labour market in order to translate positive achievements in VET into better labour market outcomes.

The region is improving its capacity to identify problems in VET and develop responses as well as to absorb international experiences. There is a shift from strategy to implementation in the region with the search for improved connections with employers, but there are delays due to institutional and budgetary limitations. The challenges faced by the countries are similar, with many of the countries targeting related problems.

Since 2012, there has been substantial growth in the range of policy initiatives for VET. Many of these have targeted 2020 as a key achievement date. Policy development was strong in the period 2010–15. As 2020 approaches, these policies will be updated to incorporate experiences learned since 2010 to guide future policies.

Vision and policy

All countries of the region have made substantial progress over the past four years. The VET systems of the region are gradually transforming themselves through policy priorities that target relevance, flexibility and quality and which are part of broader economic strategies.

- Policies are successfully targeting IVET.
- There is a demand for enlarging policies to include continuing vocational education with a stronger enterprise focus.

Effectiveness and efficiency in addressing economic and labour market demand

An increasing presence of key competences and entrepreneurial learning indicates changing perspectives for VET and a move from developing skills for specific occupations towards developing key skills for employment more generally. This is

an important policy response to the region's labour markets, where people need to be adaptable and mobile and can expect to work in several employment roles in their careers.

Career guidance is now more widespread in the school systems of the regions, enabling students and teachers to make better, more informed choices. Significant but unrealised potential exists to increase the overall provision of VET throughout the region, particularly to small businesses and to enterprises in the area of WBL.

- Countries are developing their capacity to identify skills and the use of evidence and data to support policies for employability.
- Despite significant education reforms, employment and labour market variables are changing slowly.
- The region needs to further develop and test systematic approaches to entry-level training to bridge the school to work transition.

Effectiveness and efficiency in addressing demographic, social and inclusion demand

In all countries, VET operates as a core element of social inclusion to create access to the labour market for people facing some form of disadvantage. Although measures that facilitate access to VET through greater flexibility (e.g. short courses and modularisation) are increasing, social support programmes that use VET are not integrated in the VET system as a whole.

- Stronger actions are needed to create pathways for vulnerable groups to employment using VET.

Internal efficiency of the VET system

Quality assurance represents a major reform element in all countries with improvements targeting input and output measures, for example improved teacher training, new curriculum, or the adoption of new assessment arrangements based on learning outcomes. In countries that have yet to create strong links between their VET systems and the labour market, progress in quality assurance reform is slower.

All countries are making progress in many of the components of NQFs, but more rapid developments in this area (e.g. pathways that offer access to post-school higher-level VET) would support improved links between VET and higher education.

Governance

Governance is in a state of change across the region as governments seek to adjust the structure of their systems to better support the implementation of policies. This is likely to continue and be a key aspect of future reform and include such developments as new agencies for VET, decentralisation and sector skills councils.

Partnerships are the key trend in the region. Public-private partnerships are widely discussed and many examples exist, but most are localised or ad hoc, and there is significant scope to make them an integral feature of each system.

- To make the VET systems more efficient in terms of employment, there needs to be a shift towards VET governance patterns with the business community in the lead.
- Funding is a major challenge in all countries and will continue to be so in the medium term.

Future priorities

A dual aim of making VET attractive to both employers and students represents the underlying ambition for VET across the region. The overarching challenge faced by each country is to accelerate the pace of implementation by a stronger management role for enterprises.

Quality assurance mechanisms should be emphasised with additional investments used to enhance the reputation of VET among students and employers.

Reform initiatives should be integrated within national frameworks that facilitate flexibility for students and employers and to enable progress between qualifications to promote the attractiveness of VET, in particular among students, adults and enterprises with access to and participation open to all, particularly people or groups at risk of exclusion.

Annex I. Labour market, education and contextual indicators

ANNEXES



	AM			AZ			BY			GE			MD			RU			UA		
	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13
Activity rate (15+) (%)	62.5	2.1	-1.4	65.4	0.9	1.1	82.1	0.9	0.9	678	5.6	2.4	50.2	-1.9	0.6	69.1	2.1	0.9	62.4	-2.0	-4.0
Employment rate (20-64) (%)	56.7	-2.1	-6.0	73.1	-1.1	0.1	81.3	0.7	0.4	68.8	8.9	5.0	478	1.9	0.8	74.1	1.7	0.5	56.7	-3.1	-6.0
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)																74.5					
Unemployment rate (15+) (%)	18.5	-2.6	14.2	5.0	-10.7	0.0	1.0	42.9	100.0	12.0	-26.4	-178	4.9	-1.8	-3.9	5.6	-24.2	1.6	9.1	12.3	26.4
Unemployment rate (15+) by education (%)	Low	15.0	10.3	2.0	9.4	0.1				7.0	-17.9	-34.3	6.5	-21.7	20.4	13.9	-16.8	0.3	12.1	61.4	84.1
	Medium	19.1	-2.1	17.2	4.6	0.9				11.2	-24.0	-13.8	4.4	-42.1	-15.4	6.1	-24.2	1.0	10.0	10.8	32.5
	High	17.9	-8.2	9.9	4.7	-8.3				14.4	-18.9	-22.6	4.8	-26.1	2.1	3.4	-13.5	10.0	8.2	13.1	20.6
	VET	21.5	5.9	29.6	5.2	-5.0				11.0	-10.8					5.1	-22.9	5.2	10.4		
Youth unemployment rate (15-24) (%)	32.5	-16.5	-10.0	13.4	-10.1	-2.2				30.8	-15.4	-13.7	12.8	-28.0	4.9	16.0	-5.3	15.9	22.4	28.7	28.7
Youth unemployment ratio (15-24) (%)	12.9	-3.0	-2.3	5.0	0.0	6.4				12.4	-10.0	-11.4	2.7	-30.7	8.0	6.1	-12.9	10.9	8.1	15.9	19.3
Incidence of self-employment (%)	42.8	-0.7	0.0	67.8	-0.4	2.0	3.1			57.2	-7.6	-6.2	34.6	18.1	10.9	7.2	5.9	-1.4	15.9	-15.9	-16.8
Skill gaps (%)	6.4			0.5			17.9			9.9			31.2			25.4			7.5		
Participation in lifelong learning (25-64) (%)				6.5									1.0		-16.6						
Tertiary educational attainment (30-34) (%)	30.6	41.0	2.7	24.1						42.3	-6.0	4.3	34.3	12.5	1.5	65.4					
Underachievement in PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) (%)	Maths			45.3						57.1			50.3			18.9		-21.3			
	Reading			72.7						51.7			41.9			16.2		-27.4			
Science			70.0							50.8			42.2			18.2		-3.2			
Early leavers from education (18-24) (%)										7.0	-27.2	18.9	21.2	-4.1	0.5	24.3					
People not in employment, education or training (NEETs) (15-24) (%)	35.6	-20.2	-4.3				12.1			278		-24.7	30.4	78	6.3	12.0		1.7	176		
Students in VET programmes in upper secondary (%)	26.2	73.5	14.9				42.6	10.4	1.9	9.0		-38.2	43.4	22.3	17.0	52.5		0.9	29.4	2.8	-5.2
Students in VET programmes in upper secondary	25 281	72.7	3.8				85 086	-25.2	-3.6	12 421		-41.8	30 819	-13.2	-6.0	1 483 443		-4.2	193 164	-20.1	-28.8

	AM		AZ		BY		GE		MD		RU		UA								
	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13							
	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13	2015	D10	D13						
Students in combined work- and school-based training as % of total upper secondary students																					
Low	7.7	-37.7	-28.6	7.4	-33.6		4.0	-27.5	-16.2	17.5	25.9	4.8	4.0	-16.8	-3.5	7.0	-28.7				
Medium	68.9	-0.2	3.2	66.1	4.0		61.1	0.1	-1.1	57.2	8.8	-0.2	63.8	-4.9	-1.8	49.0	4.5				
High	23.4	25.7	4.2	26.5	4.8		34.9	4.3	4.4	25.3	8.1	-2.7	32.2	14.7	4.3	44.7	3.3				
Public expenditure on education as % of GDP	2.2	-31.1	-15.5	3.0	7.1	20.0	4.9	-9.3	-5.8	6.9	-24.2	-1.4	3.9			6.3					
Public expenditure on education as % of total public expenditure	9.4	-24.4	-15.9	9.0	-10.0	20.0	17.2	2.4	-3.9	18.2	-18.8	-0.5	11.0			13.9					
Proportion of teachers who have followed continuing professional development in the last 12 months (%)										45.6						24.0	1.7	-3.2			
Total population ('000)	2 998.58	-1.9	-0.9	9 705.64	7.9	3.7	9 498.40	0.0	0.4	3 729.50	-15.9	-16.8	-0.2	-0.1	146 267.29	2.4	2.0	42 759.70	-6.6	-5.8	
Relative size of youth population (15–24) (%)	21.2	-20.6	-3.6	22.6	-21.3	-12.4	16.0	-23.1	-12.1	20.2	-12.6	-3.6	19.7	-21.5	-10.0	15.8	-21	-10.7	16.4	-16.3	-4.8

Sources:

National statistical offices; ILOSTAT (ILO database of labour statistics), OECD (World Indicators of Skills for Employment database), UNESCO Institute for Statistics, World Bank, Ministry of Education.

Legend:

D13: percentage change from 2013 – $[(\text{lay}-2013)/(\text{lay}-2013)] * 100$

D10: percentage change from 2010 – $[(\text{lay}-2010)/(\text{lay}-2010)] * 100$

Yellow cells: positive value of change; Blue cells: negative value of change

lay: last available year

Low: general basic education and lower; Medium: general secondary, vocational, secondary specialised (or primary and secondary vocational); High: tertiary

Notes:

Activity rate – AM: 15–75; AZ: data refer to the end of the year; BY: data refer to the annual average estimates of labour resources; BY: 16–59 (male) and 16–54 (female); MD: 20–64, information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU: 15–72; UA: 15–70, data without the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Employment rate – AM: ETF calculations; AZ: data refer to the end of the year; BY: data refer to the annual average estimates of labour resources; BY: 16–59 (male) and 16–54 (female); GE: ETF calculations; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU: ETF calculations, lay: 2014; UA: 15–70, data without the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Unemployment rate – AM: 15–75; AZ: data refer to the end of the year, 15–62 (male) and 15–59 (female); BY: data based on the employment office records, 16–59 (male) and 16–54 (female); MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU: 15–72; UA: 15–70, data without the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Unemployment rate by education – AM: 15–75, ETF calculations; AZ: ETF calculations; GE: ETF calculations; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU: 15–72, ETF calculations; UA: 15–70, data without the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol, ETF calculations.

Youth unemployment rate – GE: ETF calculations; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU: ETF calculations; UA: data without the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Youth unemployment ratio – AM: ETF calculations; GE: ETF calculations; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU: ETF calculations; UA: ETF calculations, data without the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Incidence of self-employment – BY lay: 2009; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; UA: ETF calculations.

Skill gaps – lay: 2013.

Participation in lifelong learning – AZ lay: 2014; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender.

Tertiary educational attainment (30–34) – AZ lay: 2009; GE: ETF calculations; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender.

Underachievement in PISA – AZ lay: 2009.

Early leavers from education – GE: ETF calculations; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender.

People not in employment, education or training (NEETs) – AM, BY, RU, UA: participation in education in the week prior to the survey considered; BY lay: 2009; GE: ETF calculations; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; UA: data without the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Students in VET programme in upper secondary – MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU lay: 2014.

Students in combined work- and school-based training – MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender.

Educational attainment of adult population – AM: 15–75, ETF calculations; AZ lay: 2013, data refer to the end of the year, ETF calculations, 25–63 (males) and 25–59 (female); GE: ETF calculations; MD: active population considered, information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU: 15–72, ETF calculations, active population considered; UA: 15–70, ETF calculations, lay: 2014, data without the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Public expenditure on education – AM lay: 2014; GE lay: 2012; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU lay: 2012 (% of GDP) and 2014 (% of public expenditure); UA lay: 2014 (% of GDP) and 2013 (% of public expenditure), change calculated with the use of two different data sources.

Proportion of teachers who have followed continuing professional development in the last 12 months – MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender, data refer to the share of VET teachers.

Total population – AM lay: 2016; AZ lay: 2016; BY lay: 2016; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; UA: data without the population of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.

Relative size of youth population – AM: ETF calculations; AZ lay: 2016; BY lay: 2016; GE: ETF calculations; MD: information presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender; RU: ETF calculations; UA lay: 2014.

Annex 2. Benchmarking: Eastern Partnership and Russia 2016–17 Torino Process – EU 2020 targets in education and employment

		AM		AZ		GE		MD		RU		EU		EU 2020 objectives	
		2015	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013	2015	2013		
Headline targets	Early leavers from education (18–24) (%)	m	m	m	m	5.9c	7.0c	21.2	21.1	24.3	m	11.0	11.9	< 10%	
	Tertiary educational attainment (30–34) (%)	30.6	29.8	m	m	42.3c	40.6c	34.3	33.8	65.4	m	38.7	37.1	≥ 40%	
	Employment rate (20–64) (%)	56.7c	60.3c	73.1	73.0	68.8c	65.5c	47.8	47.4	m	73.8c	70.1	68.4	≥ 75%	
Other targets	Participation in lifelong learning (25–64) (%)	m	m	m	m	m	m	1.0	1.2	m	m	10.7	10.7	≥ 15%	
	Underachievement in PISA (%)	Reading	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	51.7	n/a	41.9	n/a	16.2	22.3*	19.7	17.8*	< 15%
		Maths	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	68.7	n/a	50.3	n/a	18.9	24*	22.2	22.1*	
		Science	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	62.0	n/a	42.2	n/a	18.2	18.8*	20.6	16.6*	
	Employment rate of recent graduates (20–34) (%)	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	m	74.5	m	76.9	75.4	≥ 82%	

Notes: n/a: not applicable; c: ETF calculation; m: missing; * reference year 2012

Sources: National statistical offices, Eurostat, OECD.



ACRONYMS

CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
EUR	Euro
GDP	Gross domestic product
ICTs	Information and communications technologies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information technology
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
LMIS	Labour market information system
MDL	Moldovan leu (national currency)
NEET	(Young people) not in employment, education or training
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National qualifications framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PES	Public employment services
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
SRC	Sector reform contract
TVET	Technical and vocational education training
VET	Vocational education and training
WBL	Work-based learning

COUNTRY CODES

AM	Armenia
AZ	Azerbaijan
BY	Belarus
GE	Georgia
MD	Moldova
RU	Russia
UA	Ukraine

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Azerbaijan – State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan: www.stat.gov.az/?lang=en

Belarus – National Statistical portal of the Republic of Belarus: www.belstat.gov.by/en/

Georgia – National Statistics Office of Georgia: www.geostat.ge/

Moldova – National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova: www.statistica.md/index.php?l=en

Russia – Federal State Statistics Service: www.gks.ru/wps/wcm/connect/rosstat_main/rosstat/en/main/

Ukraine – State Statistics Service of Ukraine: <https://ukrstat.org/en>

Other websites

Eurostat: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

ILOSTAT: www.ilo.org/ilostat

OECD: www.oecd.org/pisa/





The ETF is an EU agency that helps transition and developing countries to harness the potential of their human capital through the reform of education, training and labour market systems in the context of the EU's external relations policy.

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