

**VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
FOR 2013-2020**

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE
GEORGIA, 2013**

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Preamble

The 2013-2020 VET Development Strategy of Georgia is a VET policy defining document. The Strategy represents the Government's vision for the future development of vocational education in Georgia.

Drafting of the Strategy was informed by a broad consultation process, drawing upon the opinions and expertise of employers, trade unions and employees and their representative institutions, national and international VET specialists, civil society organisations, members of the donor and NGO community, and a range of public and private education institutions offering or wanting to offer VET programmes, including VET colleges, community colleges, general educational institutions and universities.

In elaborating the Strategy, the Government has taken into account its socio-economic objectives for the reduction of poverty within a more equitable and inclusive society and the broader reforms designed to bring that about within the context of dynamic economic growth and development. Notice has been taken of national and sector priorities, current education challenges, particularly as they apply to VET, and solutions developed and adopted in Europe and elsewhere, as well as the changes taking place in the education and VET framework in the European Union and the Neighbourhood countries.

The Strategy embodies the principles of inclusive education, human and child rights and gender equality. It considers access to education and the opportunities of VET to be a right of all segments of the population, regardless of social or economic grouping, or geographic location within the state of Georgia. The Strategy sets a number of priorities and goals, achievement of which through implementation of the Action Plan will facilitate the sustainable development of human resources: their capacities and potential; individual opportunities for employment, self-employment, income generation, and personal fulfilment; as well as the overall socio-economic development of the country and poverty reduction by meeting the needs of the current and future labour market demand for skills and expertise.

Successful realisation of the Strategy cannot be achieved by one ministry alone, but requires the active participation of the Government through the activities of several ministries and agencies, as well as the active engagement of employers, employees, and their respective representative organisations; educational institutions; teachers, students, their parents, and civil society as a whole.

Chapter 1. Strategy Objectives and strategic framework

1.1. Overall objectives

The **overall objective** of the Strategy is to support the Government's Socio-Economic Development and Poverty Reduction priorities for Georgia over the coming decade by maximizing the national and individual potential of the country's human resources through the promotion of the widespread availability of high quality vocational skills to flexibly meet the economy's labour requirements in the immediate, medium and longer term and the creation of opportunities for individuals from all segments of society to develop their talent and maximize their potential for personal and economic fulfilment. Particularly relevant is the inclusion of the disadvantaged and vulnerable in the social and economic development of Georgia, strengthening the sense of participation and integration in the country's moves towards a dynamic and prosperous society and economy.

The specific objectives of the Strategy are

- the creation of a nationwide flexible VET network promoting excellence in skills development that will equip the current and future economically active population to develop the management and technical skills necessary for Georgia to successfully compete in the modern economic environment both at home and abroad;
- the full and equal inclusion of all segments of the population in the opportunities for personal development of their potential and equip them to obtain well paid remunerative employment or self-employment to support ensured personal and family incomes within the context of sustainable career development and personal fulfilment.

1.2. Strategy outcomes

The Strategy envisages that realisation of these objectives will result in the following outcomes:

1. participation from the social partners and civil society in VET system management with Government in the development of policy and in decision-making on the nature and operation of regulatory, promotional, and financial and technical support mechanisms;
2. a nationwide flexible network of well funded and well managed VET providers (public and private), equipped with excellent facilities and modern up-to-the minute equipment, accessible to all participants regardless of their social status, geographical location, gender, physical or mental condition;
3. a series of well designed VET programmes relevant to the current and future labour needs of Georgia's growing and diversifying economy;
4. a cadres of VET educators prepared in accordance with modern education techniques and the latest developments in their field of expertise, skills and personal fulfilment;
5. a system of nationally and internationally recognized awards and qualifications that support flexibility for VET graduates in their search for employment or their establishment of businesses, whether in Georgia or elsewhere;
6. the full employability of VET graduates in meaningful and, where appropriate, well remunerated and personally rewarding occupations, with the prospect of a fulfilling and challenging career development throughout their future working lives.
7. widespread recognition that vocational education and training is an attractive and rewarding pathway for personal development, as an extension to basic or secondary education for young people, as a meaningful mechanism for career development for adults, and as a way to further develop talent in new areas of specialization for those needing to take advantage of and respond to shifts in labour market demands.

1.3. Strategy priorities

To achieve these outcomes, the Strategy targets a number of priority activities. These include:

- improvements to the regulatory environment of the VET system with a view to enhancing the capacity of VET institutions to meet the skill demands of the labour market and modern economic development by
 - ensuring facilities are of high quality and efficiently and effectively managed;
 - requiring well qualified educators, and market-oriented flexible programmes;
 - eliminating “dead-ends” and barriers in the system;
 - increasing the overall capacity of the network through diversification of authorised quality providers within both the public and private sector;
 - supporting, and promoting, development of a more optimal national network of institutions both in terms of geographic spread and availability of disciplines/specializations, promoting coordination and communication between public and private specialised VET institutions, schools and higher educational institutions;
- establishment of effective funding mechanisms enabling the achievement of excellence through both public and private sector institutions based on competitiveness; ensure full participation supporting access to a wide range of key VET programmes for the children of disadvantaged communities and vulnerable groups (students with disability and learning difficulties, ethnic minorities, IDPs, prisoners, probationers, host communities/remote communities etc.);
- preparation and training/re-training of VET teachers according to modern standards and the latest developments in teaching, and including regular training in companies to update skills; increase the attractiveness of the teacher’s profession, supporting involvement of new cadres in the system and ensure professional development of existing cadres;
- reinforcement of full social partners, employers, professional associations, and civil society participation at all levels of the system in decision-making as well as in the whole process of VET education: NVETC, TWG, Boards, working groups; ensure balanced and equitable composition of social partners in the development and delivery of VET reforms, with the sustainability and transparency of the functioning of all these units within the system embodied regulation and operational procedures;
- assurance of the quality and transferability of qualifications through improved quality assurance mechanisms at the system and institution level, establishment of an effective transferable credit system, ensuring comparability of qualifications with international standards to support international recognition and mobility, and establishment of a robust system for the recognition of non-formal and prior learning;
- strengthening of support mechanisms for all students including those with special educational needs or disabilities to ensure employment of VET graduates by providing relevant and high quality career development guidance, ensuring the quality of courses and work placement, providing students with suitable and sufficient employment experience during their studies in enterprises during the practical component of courses;
- promoting the role of entrepreneurship in VET in close cooperation with employers and the business sector generally, training a workforce with vocational skills specifically suited to particular trades or specialities as well as relevant general cultural competences (such as entrepreneurial skills, ICT knowledge, communication, foreign languages and etc) in order to raise employability.

Chapter 2. Addressing the Key Challenges of Georgia's Vocational Education System

The Strategy seeks to address various challenges to the establishment of a VET system of excellence in Georgia. Those challenges are:

1. Lack of participation of the social partners and civil society in VET sector management structures with Government in the development of policy and decision-making process as well as in the whole process of VET from planning to evaluation.
2. A less than comprehensive network of public and private VET providers, in terms of both geographic spread and coverage of a wide range of well resourced disciplines/specialisations, with many inadequately funded and poorly managed, and with variable standards and appropriateness of facilities and often limited availability of up-to-date and quality equipment.
3. Lack of relevance of VET programmes to the current and future labour needs of Georgia's growing and diversifying economy
4. Lack of capacity building and professional development of VET educators in line with modern standards and requirements. Lack of incentive for teachers to enter into and/or develop a long term career in VET (whether to teach the theory or practical application of vocational skills).
5. The low and variable quality of awarded VET qualifications and their lack of recognition by employers and education institutions both locally and internationally
6. The variable nature of employability of VET graduates with limited access to sustained well remunerated and personally fulfilling job opportunities with the prospect of further career development throughout their future working lives.
7. VET is not considered as an attractive and rewarding pathway by the population, nor required as a precondition for recruitment by employers.

Success in doing so will result in a series of related outcomes which together will, over the course of the next few years, achieve the objectives of the Strategy: a nationwide, flexible high quality vocational education network, promoting excellence in skills development, equipping the current and future economically active population to develop the management and technical skills necessary for Georgia to successfully compete in the modern economic environment both at home and abroad; and the full and equal inclusion of all segments of the population in the opportunities for personal development, equipping them to obtain well paid remunerative employment or self-employment within the context of sustainable career development and personal fulfilment.

Outcome 1. A VET sector management structure that elicits full and equal participation from the social partners and civil society with Government in the development of policy and in decision-making on the nature and operation of regulatory, promotional, and financial and technical support mechanisms.

Strengthening participation of the social partners, employers, trade unions involves their inclusion as equal partners in the process of policy development and implementation, instilling a sense of empowerment that they have an equal stake in the success of the system to meet both the objectives of employers of a well trained and competitive labour force relevant to the labour market needs for skills and to meet the economic opportunities for enterprises development and the objectives of employees for sustainable and well remunerated employment or income opportunities that are personally fulfilling and offer prospects of lifelong career development. Basic to this is the balanced composition of National VET Council, thematic working groups and sector committees, and their inclusion as necessary parts of the decision-making process, whether in terms of determining the vision of what the VET system will look like in the future or of establishing the pathway to realise that vision or of implementing the steps towards achieving that vision. This requires mutual respect among all stakeholders and a process whereby individual preferences can be translated in mutual and implementable consensus. Social partners, employers should actively participate at

all stages of VET, and this may need to include tax or other incentives for the social partners to commit resources (staff time, provision of work facilities, apprenticeship and other direct job related training, participation in courses, and support for funding) to improve the quality and relevance of VET for both youths and adults.

MoES has a central role in the management of the VET system: as a regulator to ensure quality VET provision; as a promoter of private investment and the use of general educational institutions and higher education facilities to broaden and deepen capacity; and as coordinator and stimulator of stakeholder actions and interventions (including by foreign donors and civil society organisations). To do this, MoES needs effective capacity to manage and monitor VET system development, to mobilise and exchange information (statistics, analysis, performance against indicators and targets) and to constantly reassess and evaluate activities in the context of achievement of outcomes and objectives, with a willingness to reconsider and revise approaches where appropriate.

Targets	Area of Activity
1.1 Participation of social partners in defining policy and in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of vocational education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce effective mechanisms of involvement (and collaboration) of social partners, employers, trade unions, civil society in decision making process at all levels of the system 2. Ensure balanced composition and enhance capacities of VET system structures (the National VET Council and working groups, sectoral committees, college and other education institution boards) responsible for directing the dialogue between the education system and the business community and labour representatives, and determining VET system development activities and the nature of participation. 3. Strengthen partnerships between VET institutions (public and private) and social partners (both representative bodies and specific enterprises, at local, regional and national level) in the whole process of VET education: development of curricula and teaching methods; strengthening management capabilities; providing opportunities for involvement in and experience of modern work practices and for gaining work experience in the real working environment; monitoring programme implementation; and participating in the process of awarding qualifications.
1.2 Management and coordination of VET system reform by MoES	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sustainable and efficient coordination between MoES and key stakeholders ensured through support to the NVETC and its 7 thematic working groups. 2. Regular and systematised coordination with donors and other agencies involved with VET in Europe and elsewhere, to ensure appropriate interventions in support of implementation of the VET Strategy. 3. Monitoring and evaluation capacity of the relevant MoES structures (VET Department, NCEQE, TPDC, etc.) strengthened and made increasingly effective.
1.3. Availability of information (statistics, indicators and analysis) to support monitoring, regulation, and evidence-based policy development.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure accurate and comprehensive data available (through EMIS) to provide information related to key process, system, social and economic indicators. 2. Establish routine analysis of data as a basis for monitoring and evidence-based decision-making for policy development, implementation planning, and regulation. 3. Develop regular information exchange to support stakeholder activities and provide assessment of effectiveness of donor interventions, with

	information and analysis shared between the MoES and other ministries, Governmental education agencies, NVETC, donors, and civil society, supported by mechanisms for re-examining approaches to VET system development (including financing).
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Outcome 2. A nationwide network of well funded and well managed public and private VET providers, equipped with relevant facilities and modern up-to-the minute equipment, accessible to all participants regardless of their social status, geographical location, gender, physical or mental condition.

The Strategy emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive network of well resourced VET institutions with high quality facilities offering a broad range of well delivered and well designed state-of-the-art VET programmes, based on national and regional labour market demand, to ensure accessibility for all. Important considerations include not just physical access, a function of both geographic location and the size of available capacity, but also financial access for those less advantaged sections of the community.

Access to vocational education for sparsely populated regions requires particular consideration. In this regards, the solution is not necessarily a public or private college offering courses relevant not only to local labour market needs but also to the potential broader aspirations of the local population. VET provision could also be through general or evening classes at local schools or other institutions or even, depending on the status of communication systems, e-learning via internet or telephone conferences, mobile courses or access to residential periodic courses at other locations. Most important is the development of a flexible approach that meets current and anticipated future needs and that provides opportunities for those that wish to enroll, whether adults or school children.

Besides the physical network of VET providers, the Strategy also identifies the need for these to be of high quality, and crucial for this is the quality of their management. While some institutions in both the public and private sectors are run efficiently in terms of the effective delivery of VET services, many are deficient and lack professional and competitive management capacity. The Strategy stresses the need for initial and continuing management capacity development of VET institutions, including the determination of priorities and the use and generation of funds; the composition, roles and functioning of management boards; internal relationships between management, staff and teaching functions; and external relationships with VET sector institutions, other VET providers, local and national business enterprises, and social partner and local community organizations.

Definition of basic quality standards is determined through the regulatory mechanisms of authorization and accreditation, set by Government in consultation with the NVETC but implemented through NCEQE. However, these are minimum requirements and the aim is to target facilities of excellence that will meet the needs for a strong growth in the availability of high quality skills to competitively meet local, national and international labour market requirements both in the present and in the medium term future. Key elements in the creation of an effective vocational education learning environment include the quality of courses and teaching covered below, but also need modern infrastructure, a material-technical base that reflects current and future technologies, and access to working environments either in the business community or through dedicated and well-equipped workshops and laboratories at VET provider institutions. These educational facilities need to reflect modern up-to-date technologies and high standards of construction and management. Creating an innovative, modern learning environment is a key factor in the motivation of students and teaching staff alike and in raising the public and business community perception of the quality of VET education and qualifications. Also important is the need to have institutions capable of meeting the special needs of those with diminished physical and psychological capabilities (and not just minimum legal requirements such as wheelchair access) according to the universal design standards and those that belong to socially, economically, and geographically disadvantaged communities, which could include residential and healthcare facilities. Another initiative is to establish a flexible system to provide VET providers with relevant equipment and material once they have candidates with special needs. Linked to this are broader educational programmes in Georgia to support inclusion at all levels of education.

Central to both the provision of quality facilities and access to all segments of the population is the establishment of an appropriately promotional financing mechanism. This is particularly relevant to motivate expansion of private sector provision, promotion of which is crucial if the scale of overall VET provision is to come close to meeting the needs of the labour market and of the potential student body. Over recent years, several financing models have been introduced but the frequent changes and at times lack of examine effectiveness have contributed to instability in the sector and have even created constraints on access and discouraged new private investment. The Strategy recognizes the need for early establishment of an effective financing model applicable over the medium term which (1) supports the generation of additional financing, particularly from the private sector; (2) improves the distribution of funds between institutions, disciplines, and programmes; (3) promotes effective and efficient institutional financial management; (4) supports compliance with regulatory requirements; (5) ensures access to disadvantaged groups (defined on the basis of social equity policies) to the full range of vocational education opportunities. An initial approach will involve the evaluation and redesign of the current voucher funding system but alternative approaches will also be examined to ensure establishment of VET financing mechanisms that are effective in terms of VET system reform objectives and the realization of the anticipated outcomes of implementation of the VET Strategy.

Targets	Area of activity
2.1.Stronger management of the VET institutions to improve the effectiveness of the provision	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve the capacity (including composition) of the Board in terms of institutional and financial management, quality management, working with social partners and other related issues. 2. Improve management capacity of educational institution management and staff in relation with financial and quality management, working with social partners and other issues. 3. Improve decision-making procedures (particularly those of strategic importance for the overall development of vocational education) in the field of financing, labour market relevance, development of qualifications, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation, inclusive education, at national, regional, local and institutional levels. 4. Develop effective mechanisms for recruitment of senior management and staff, and introduce dynamic human resource development practices to strengthen the quality of applicants and retention of experienced staff (including teachers).
2.2. Innovative and modern learning environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure institutions are equipped with excellent customised facilities (workshops, laboratories, classrooms for foreign languages, computer workshops etc) and modern equipment in accordance with the teaching standards and curricula determined with reference to current and future market requirements. 2. Require institutions to make use the latest relevant technologies throughout the study process (sufficiently prolific for access by all students) during both course elements conducted within the VET institutions and those conducted through work practice sessions in companies. 3. Improve the supply and relevance of materials-used during teaching within VET institutions and enterprises to meet student needs (including the specific requirements of those with disabilities or special educational needs) according to the universal design standards 4. Develop resources for vocational teachers and students. 5. including modern teaching aids according ro the needs of all types of students;

	6. Adapt learning materials for vocational and students with special educational needs and disabilities.
2.3. Comprehensive labour-market orientated VET provider network according to regional and national development criteria	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase capacity of vocational institutional network, and improve effectiveness of existing capacity to meet local, regional and national needs. 2. Promote coordination and communication between public and private institutions, schools and higher educational institutions that implement VET programmes. 3. Harmonise the school network with the national and regional needs. 4. Ensure geographic access to VET institutions (private and public) by regions. 5. Encourage local communities to participate in planning the needs for VET.
2.4. Access to a diversified system of VET and life-long learning for all citizens	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and if needed revise enrolment policy taking into account needs of different vulnerable groups 2. Ensure access to VET for all citizens regardless of their social status, geographical location, economic background, nationality, gender, physical or mental condition, including those socially excluded ((IDPs and IDP host communities, probationers and others in the justice system, in the care system, those from poor families, rural areas, remote areas, ethnic minorities, etc.). 3. Promote flexible training arrangements in VET (initial and continuing) such as (e-learning, evening training, training at the work place, in-company training, etc.) 4. Adapt infrastructure (special equipment and inventory) for educational needs of people with disabilities and special needs according to the universal design standards 5. Develop key competences needed for adaptation to workplace as well as social and personal development of a person. 6. Develop specific measures in VET institutions to enhance gender balance, participation of vulnerable groups, as well as the participation of citizens in danger of becoming excluded. 7. Provide preventive and remedial measures that reduce early leaving from the VET system.
2.5. Responsive and effective VET financing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase funding for VET from public and private sources. 2. Review and improve the universal voucher system in vocational education and training system, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collect information about the cost of vocational programs 2. Establish different cost levels (low, medium, high) 3. Implement legislative changes to the funding rules 3. Diversification of financing sources for system of professional VET courses : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Involvement of the private sector in the process of demand-driven short and long term training programs 2. Introduce a contract system for vocational students 3. Developing specific mechanisms to stimulate private sector involvement in VET 4. Development and implement cost saving mechanisms 5. Adoption of legislation to support full implementation of instruments for funding VET;

	6. Produce guidance material and training on implementation of diversified financing carried out;
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Outcome 3. A series of well designed VET programmes relevant to the current and future labour needs of Georgia's growing and diversifying economy is developed.

Reform of VET programmes is a basic element for the progress and modernisation of vocational education. Modern labour market demands require the student to develop complex personal and professional skills, achievable only through a comprehensive approach to education and flexibility in educational programming.

Labour market research should be conducted both at the regional and local levels. In order to elaborate a long-term plan, institutionalisation of processes at the system level is required, as well as integration with VET system, inclusion of different stakeholders and government. One of the initiatives is to establish National Coordination Committee with the aim of labour market analysis and development forecasting.

Occupational standards, the basis of all vocational educational and training programmes, have to be developed through analysis of the sector, the profession and the specific job, preferably by using standard methodologies but with specific focus. Employers and existing employees must play a key role in the development of these occupational standards. Management of the process is devolved to one of 14 sectoral committees which contract development of standards to particular working groups comprising individuals with relevant expertise. Each occupational standard must relate to the specific level of the National Qualifications Framework, based on learning outcomes. As a result, the process involves not just the development of standards themselves but also the building of capacities and expertise within the sector committees.

To increase the flexibility of educational programmes, and make it more adaptable to both labour market needs and the personal career aspirations of students, it has been decided to develop results-based, modular educational programmes. These would lay the foundation for a system for lifelong learning. Programmes will be developed with consideration to the following principles: outcome-based learning, promotion of training-entrepreneurial partnership, use of modern methods for teaching and assessment, focus on practice. The programmes will be translatable as credits, such that completion of a number of different modules will allow students to gain sufficient credits for awards or future course entry. The separate modules will together form the basis for professional training and retraining, allowing flexible educational programme delivery including through evening courses, distance learning, e-learning, part-time learning (while in employment), and so forth. For development and implementation of modular programmes, the provision of relevant resources in sufficient volume, at specific locations, and on time is crucial. The labour market is dynamic and technical requirements of occupations vary over time. To be effective, VET programmes have to be ready for constant revision, and with them the curricula and allocation of resources to deliver them.

Besides the quality of teacher development (see under Outcome 4 below), programme excellence is also dependent upon such practices as sharing experience between institutions and businesses, strengthening communication between the teachers and programme staff, ensuring involvement of stakeholders in the process of development and delivery of programmes, and constant revision to accommodate changes in the work environment, particularly where new technologies have been, or are about to be, introduced. This means that the quality of educational programmes needs to be constantly monitored and changes introduced as quickly as possible, and this process too needs to be institutionalized across the VET network.

Targets	Area of activity
3.1 Labour market analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement regular national, regional and local labour market surveys. 2. Ensure appropriate data on labour market demand (national and regional) available to relevant VET institutions. 3. Access to proposed job match database of MoLHSA. 4. Develop a system of skills needs assessment surveys to inform occupational standards and VET curriculum development.
3.2. Labour market orientated occupational standards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepare occupational standards based on the regional needs and sector analysis in close cooperation with employers and employees. 2. Ensure active and systematic participation of the private sector in occupational standard development. 3. Build capacity of sector committees to review and monitor occupational standards. 4. Renew the National Vocational Qualifications Framework to reflect labour market needs, ensuring compatibility with the qualifications framework for other forms of education and foreign frameworks.
3.3. Flexible, labour market orientated vocational educational programmes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Develop modular, credit-valued educational programmes based on learning outcomes. 6. Ensure capacity building of sector committees active and systematic participation of the private sector in curricula development. 7. Build the capacity of those cadres responsible for curriculum development. 8. Integrate key competences (communication, foreign language, history, intercultural skills, etc.), interdisciplinary competences and career management skills into educational programmes. 9. Introduce ICT-based new active learning and assessment methods in VET programme curricula. 10. Design curricula to allow early drop-outs, those postponing completion, and those transferring to other education/employment options to obtain partial qualifications and credits.
3.4. Matched facilities and teaching materials with programme requirements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Match programme accreditation with developing occupational standard based programmes. 2. Determine additional needs to ensure excellence of training and the level of skills developed. 3. Monitor availability and quality of facilities to meet enhanced VET programme needs and ensure excellence of training and of the skills developed. 4. Monitor availability and quality of equipment and materials to meet VET programme needs.

Outcome 4. *Cadres of VET educators prepared in modern education techniques and the latest developments in their field of expertise, and capable of drawing out the best from their students in terms of both skills and personal fulfilment.*

The third major element addressing the quality of VET programmes (after facilities (Outcome 2) and the design of the courses (Outcome 3)) is the quality of the teaching. The Strategy, therefore, stresses improvements in the preparation of cadres of VET educators, incentives to encourage their entry to the profession (including more secure contracts), and opportunities for their continuing career development

both to keep their subject and teaching expertise at the forefront of current developments and to retain the best teachers in the profession. Central to this is the raising of the status of VET teaching (linked to Outcome 7). Currently, while some VET teachers are excellent, better teaching professionals tend to focus on other aspects of education where security of tenure and hence income, and status are higher. The VET system has to become more attractive to both young newly qualified graduates and experienced personnel from the business sector, fully competitive with alternative enterprise and teaching options. This means an overhaul of current teacher contract arrangements, pay scales, and opportunities for personal career development, including periods to up-date expertise, exposing teachers to the changing circumstances of the occupations targeted by their students through work placement as well as educating them in the latest of teaching techniques (in both cases supporting new expertise by enhancements to teaching facilities, equipment and materials (Outcome 2)).

VET teaching needs to be appropriately prioritised at all levels of professional development, from initial teacher training to continuous in-service teacher and subject training both through courses and periods of professional attachment. At all stages, training will promote the use of diversified and modern teaching methods (including virtual and simulation techniques), constant revision to adapt to modern and anticipated technologies, and the development of learning-entrepreneurial partnerships. This will involve the establishment of minimal normative requirements for equipment for teachers as also for each of the VET programmes, and a mechanism to ensure that these are met. A unified framework, regulating organisation and quality of learning and industrial practice, will be defined to ensure uniformity of quality of teaching across the sector and comparability in the quality of programmes between different VET providers, at the same programmes.

Through improved participation of social partners (Outcome 1), businesses and trade professionals will be involved in the introduction of educational programmes and their monitoring. While VET institutions, for reasons of cost, may not always be able to offer the highest quality or the latest of technologies, this will be compensated for through cooperation with businesses during course elements of industrial practice or work experience. In this, minimum standards will be defined for private sector enterprise involvement in practical training and in the examination of students.

Targets	Area of activity
4.1. Teacher training and continuous professional development, prior to entry, on entry and throughout employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish/Implement minimum teaching standards for VET, and guidelines on higher targets for teaching practice. 2. Develop a quality VET teacher training system, including teaching practice and enterprise exposure. 3. Prepare a guideline for VET teachers in vocational pedagogy; Stimulate entry of new teaching cadres through competitive terms of employment. 4. Introduce incentives (financial, career development, status) to retain effective teachers in the profession; 5. Prepare high quality accredited VET teacher training programmes – modules. 6. Establish high quality continuous professional development of VET teachers in accordance with the teacher standards. 7. Teacher training in teaching and assessment according to the inclusive education requirements 8. Ensure continuous capacity building of teachers (e.g. training courses, exchange programmes, study tours, work experience) in both teaching methods and professional disciplines including for adult education. 9. Increase occupational expertise of teachers through enterprise attachment, especially with respect to the introduction of new technologies. 10. Enhance the networking of teachers to promote experience and expertise

	<p>sharing and the exchanging of best practice.</p> <p>11. Develop the teacher database to provide up-to-date information on training levels and ensure regular participation in continuous career development.</p> <p>12. Stimulate professional development of VET teachers</p>
4.2. High quality teaching and assessment process	<p>1. Develop minimal normative requirements for equipment for implementation of educational programmes.</p> <p>2. Enhance mechanisms to ensure high quality of teaching according to adopted teaching standards</p> <p>3. Establish network-wide mechanism to ensure provision of real-life educational experience (improvement of material-technical capacity) and quality entrepreneurial practice</p> <p>4. Define minimal standard to ensure participation of the private sector in practical training</p> <p>5. Ensure active and systematic participation of private sector in teaching (practical training) and examination.</p> <p>6. Integrate ICT at all stages of the teaching process.</p> <p>7. Introduce innovative learning approaches.</p> <p>8. Incorporate key skills and career management skills in the teaching process with relevant means of assessment.</p> <p>9. Introduce competence-based assessment system for skills.</p> <p>10. Develop monitoring schemes for the implementation of educational programmes, including practice, and arise the quality of assessment mechanisms (formative and summative).</p> <p>11. Introduce activities for mutual learning and quality improvement between VET providers (peer learning, peer review, etc.).</p>

Outcome 5. *A system of nationally and internationally recognized awards and qualifications that support flexibility for VET graduates in their search for employment or their establishment of businesses, whether in Georgia or elsewhere.*

High quality vocational education is one of the key preconditions for formation of a knowledge-based society and economy. Recognition of the qualifications awarded to course participants and their relevance as a proxy for skills of job applicants is central to the impact such education has on meeting labour market requirements and employer expectations. It is also likely to be a key element in the access to financing for self-employment and small business development. Qualifications need to be frequently reviewed to ensure their continuing relevance, and if they are to act as building blocks in personal development and further education of VET graduates.

Integral to the award and transferability of qualifications is the need to recognize prior learning, experience gained through previous practice (non-formal education) and courses undertaken and qualifications gained elsewhere. While the legislative framework is largely in place, under the Strategy implementation of a valid approach to recognition of these other legitimate skills will be strengthened and this will support enhancement of competencies and lifelong learning. This particularly relates to persons with no or low qualifications, and those who had to leave institutions before the completion of training and without obtaining qualifications. Similarly, mechanisms to recognise prior education in the workplace or abroad will also be established.

The European approach to qualifications envisages international cooperation to enhance quality assurance, and includes the exchange of experience and the sharing of models and methods to develop common or comparable principles. Under the Strategy, the Georgian approach to quality assurance will

approximate to European experience, both at the system and educational institution level, supported through cooperation with international organisations and exchanges with foreign VET providers. Enhancement of quality assurance mechanisms will be based on a systematic approach: planning, introduction, evaluation and revision, building upon improvement of the existing quality framework. Internal and external mechanisms (authorization and accreditation) for quality assurance will be strengthened, bringing in professional (sector) unions and enterprises to raise market perceptions of the relevance and quality of qualifications. VET institutions, on the basis of experience gained and self-assessment will take greater responsibility for quality assurance and increasingly regulate their activities to enhance the relevance and flexibility of programmes to ensure qualifications address labour market requirements. The Strategy considers the further development of self-assessment a significant component of an effective VET system.

Involvement of more VET institutions, students and teachers in VET sector international mobility and exchange programmes will facilitate the sharing of international experience. One element of this will be the active participation of the Georgian VET sector in international VET competitions which will encourage the adoption of successful VET role models (champions) from elsewhere in Georgia for different elements of the VET system.

Targets	Area of activity
5.1. Quality assurance mechanisms in line with European approaches (e.g. EQAVET)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce unified quality assurance approach in vocational educational institutions based on international experience, also covering entrepreneurial practice. 2. Improve internal (self-assessment) and external (authorization and accreditation) quality assurance mechanisms through continuous and systematic cycle: planning, introduction, evaluation and revision. 3. Evaluation of VQF in cooperation with stakeholders. 4. Introduce a monitoring system based on detailed performance indicators. 5. Enhance the capacity of the cadres responsible for quality assurance at both the system and individual provider level including external evaluators. 6. Prepare and distribute methodology materials about the internal and external quality assurance mechanism (self-assessment, authorization and accreditation procedures), supported by regular training.
5.2. Vocational qualifications and their award according to the European experience	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish transparent procedures for the development, revision and renewal of vocational qualifications based on an agreed and publicly available methodology. 2. Improve mechanisms for the awarding of vocational qualifications. 3. Build the capacity of the cadres responsible for the development, renewal and awarding of qualifications (at both VET system and VET provider level were relevant). 4. Ensure compliance of Georgian occupational qualifications with relevant European qualifications. 5. Effective recognition of non-formal training or experience, prior learning, and qualifications earned and training carried out elsewhere.

5.3. Internationalization of Georgian VET and international mobility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce European transparency tools to support and encourage mobility. 2. Prepare occupational standards, curricula and teaching materials based on international experience. 3. Promote foreign language learning adapted to the specific needs of VET. 4. Introduce networks into the Georgian VET system to support mobility and work placements abroad.
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Outcome 6. VET graduates are employed in meaningful and, where appropriate, well remunerated and personally rewarding occupations, with the prospect of a fulfilling and challenging career development throughout their future working lives.

The measure of effectiveness of the VET system is the extent to which graduates achieve employment or are able to establish their own businesses that are sustainable and offer adequate remuneration, are personally fulfilling, and provide for longer term career development. This is a function of the relationship of VET programmes to the needs and opportunities of the labour market and the opportunities to develop small and medium sized businesses within the context of Georgian economic development. However, both employment and business opportunities are not limited to the Georgian market and VET graduates should also be able to take advantage of opportunities provided in foreign markets, either through employment or the sale of services and products.

This Outcome, therefore, is dependent on successful achievement of earlier outcomes: an effective social partnership (Outcome 1, labour market based quality programme delivery (Outcomes 2, 3, and 4), and recognized and worthwhile qualifications (Outcome 5). Additionally, however, VET students and trainees need to select appropriate courses that suit their aspirations and capabilities, be able to identify suitable employment and self-employment opportunities, and be supported in their applications for positions and/or in the establishment of enterprises. While programmes should provide graduates with the qualifications and skills required to take advantage of these opportunities, the VET system needs to be strongly pro-active in supporting the career development of VET graduates at all stages: prior to entry, during education and training, and after graduation. A framework for such support has been introduced into the Georgian VET system but remains very weak (and in particular does not cover prospective VET students at secondary school). Strengthening of these support services is a fundamental component of the Strategy, and monitoring of post training experience will be the key determinant for assessing the success of the Strategy and its implementation. For such monitoring, data collection and analysis will also need to be strengthened.

Vocational education system should play an important role in terms of promoting innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in VET and be a kind of a bridge between local, regional, national or international partners. An active relation with innovative industries, research centres and universities is a new form of partnership, which is an incentive for students to stay in the educational system and strive for professional growth.

Targets	Area of activity
6.1 Career orientation and employment guidance system	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop reliable vocational guidance, career management and information system, with networked interchange of information between the various elements. 2. Support development of a career guidance system at secondary schools. 3. Improve services of information centres and VET institutions in initial professional orientation, raising awareness of VET programme opportunities and prospective benefits 4. Improve capacity of the relevant public and private VET provider

	<p>staff (including pedagogical and psychological cadres) in vocational guidance, counselling and information.</p> <p>5. Ensure availability of relevant, correct and accessible labour market information about labour market demand, career-opportunities, income-perspectives, and employment options to secondary students, teachers, parents, private sector by relevant institutions.</p> <p>6. Provide students and pupils with the possibility to make connections with entrepreneurs and learn about various occupations throughout their participation in VET programmes.</p> <p>7. Continue to support VET graduates in their search for employment after completion of courses.</p> <p>8. Provide support for own business establishment, including links to financing possibilities, with possible supplementary small business management training.</p>
6.2 Innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in VET	<p>1. Formation of “knowledge partnerships” with innovative enterprises, design centers, cultural sector, institutions of higher education for identification of new developments, new competences, professional excellence and innovation</p> <p>2. Promotion of entrepreneurship in VET, in close cooperation with employers, national business support centers</p> <p>3. Promotion of start-up for VET graduates and of learning mobility for young entrepreneurs</p> <p>4. Involvement of the Georgian VET system in international processes/movements for innovation (e.g. World Skills International)</p>
6.3. Information on VET graduate activities	<p>1. Establish rigorous system for recording graduate post-training activities including students with disabilities and learning difficulties</p> <p>2. Introduction of regular tracer studies to determine effectiveness of VET system and identify needs for additional activities and revision.</p>

Outcome 7. Widespread recognition that vocational education and training is an attractive and rewarding pathway for personal development, as an extension to basic secondary education for young people, as a meaningful mechanism for career development for adults, and as a way to further develop talent in new areas of specialization for those needing to take advantage of and respond to shifts in labour market demands and opportunities.

The Strategy seeks to raise the status of VET from its previous secondary position relative to academic secondary and higher education. The aim is for VET to be a recognized and valid pathway for career development, with equal status. The key to this will in large measure be the evident benefits for income and employment of participating in a VET programme (Outcome 6). VET will, however, be promoted as an integral part of the education system as a whole not a separate system.

Promotion of VET attractiveness will include several elements, not least the dissemination of information about the successful employment of VET graduates (Outcome 6). Other factors that will be taken into account include awareness raising campaigns to promote knowledge of VET opportunities and benefits, effective career guidance and counselling (see Outcome 6), improving pathways within and to and from VET (eliminating dead-ends), and increasing opportunities for employment and career growth (see Outcome 6).

An important element in increasing the attractiveness of VET, is improved access for individuals from all segments of society, particularly those that are socially or economically disadvantaged (see Outcome 2)

The attractiveness of VET will also be increased with the elimination of dead-ends which discourage entry to VET as they have, in the past suggested that selection of a VET education pathway precludes

opportunities to re-enter other academic pathways. These can be eliminated, however, and indeed VET integrated into the rest of the education system.

Effective dissemination of information about vocational education is a precondition for informing, awareness raising and analysing. The aim of awareness raising campaigns can be to motivate the population as a whole or specific segments. Under the Strategy a full range of promotional campaigns will be regularly conducted. Such campaigns not only focus on potential students but also on those involved with career decisions, in particular parents of those still at school. The idea is both to inform and to change attitudes towards VET.

Targets	Area of activity
7.1. Flexible pathways between VET, general education and higher education	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Elimination of educational “dead ends”, with adoption of relevant legislative amendments. 2. Strengthen the links between VET, general education and higher education by introducing relevant courses/modules into the curriculum and integrating vocational courses in the national Curricula, enabling the combination of general education with VET. 3. Guarantee learners in VET transversal competences, that enable them to follow further education and training within VET or higher education. 4. Provision of integrated guidance services (employment services and counselling services) as well as career management skills (both for young people and adults). 5. Enable credit accumulation and transfer at higher levels of education. 6. Establish VET mechanisms for recognizing competences obtained through non-formal and informal education.
7.2. Awareness raising of the VET stakeholders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise stakeholder awareness through involvement of enterprises, other ministries, NGOs etc in media campaigns (audio, visual, print), peer-group and study visits, seminars and conferences, thematic meetings, etc.. 2. Organize activities to promote VET attractiveness and excellence, such as campaigning with successful people with the background of VET, skills competitions, etc.. 3. Strengthen the capacity of VET system institutions in the use of communication techniques and the raising of visibility. 4. Develop and implement a mechanism for monitoring the impact of VET communication and information campaigns.

Annexes

Annex 1. The Current Environment for VET

1.1. New Government Beginnings, Political and Socio-economic Trends

Government Priorities: in the **Government programme** “For a Strong, Democratic, and United Georgia”¹ the key issues are: democratic development of the country, rule of law, establishment of institutions based on democratic forms and mechanisms of governance, and liberal-democratic values. One of the state’s economic **policy priorities** is to ensure competitiveness by means of: entrepreneurship and small and medium business development; infrastructure development; social protection, access to quality healthcare, human capital development by means of modern-standard education. It is important to stimulate exports by deepening relations with the existing partners, establishing ties with new partners, maximizing Georgia-EU wide free trade agreement benefits which shall in turn ensure Georgia’s integration in the European market. A focus will be on active working process concerning the conclusion of a free trade agreement with the USA, strengthening of economic and political relations with neighbouring countries.

Key elements of the Government's policy towards **Education** include its depoliticization, the introduction of modern standards, an increase in funding, the development of effective financing mechanisms, the enhancement of education quality and access to education, the provision of academic, administrative and financial autonomy of vocational educational institutions.

Economic Trends: Since 2008 financial crisis and war with Russia, the country’s GDP growth is noted. Since decrease of GDP in 2009 (-3.8%) it was increased with 6.3% in 2010 and 7.2% in 2011. According to the preliminary data the GDP in 2012 was 6.1%.

Georgia's foreign trade, as well as other indicators shows a positive trend. During 2009-2012 foreign trade was increased almost twice and reached USD 10.2 billion, while the export rate during the same period improved almost 2.1 times and reached 2.4 billion U.S. dollars.

According to the World Bank's "Doing Business 2013" Georgia ranked the 8th place among 189 countries. In 2013, according to the Corruption Perception Index "(Transparency International), Georgia ranked 55 among 177 countries that is the best indicator for the Commonwealth Independent States. Further improvement of the business environment for achieving fast economic growth, is the top priority of the government.

Employment: major problems in Georgia’s labour market are the high level of urban unemployment (26.2% in 2012, compared to 15.0% overall) and the low productivity of employment (or underemployment) in rural areas, major factors in the high level of poverty: 23.6% of population lives below the poverty line. The highest level of unemployment in Tbilisi, where 29.1% of the labour force are without regular employment, followed by Ajara with 16,4% and Samegrelo-ZemoSvaneti region with 16.8%. To make matters worse, the highest level of unemployment is within the 15-19 year age group (36.9%). Unemployment is of long duration (more than 1 year) particularly for highly educated workers. The outflow from unemployment to jobs is low due to weak labour demand and mismatch of skills. Yet, despite this high unemployment, employers find it difficult to find the personnel they require.

Since 2008, however, employment rates have been gradually improving and in 2011, employment levels overall were up 0.6% compared with the year before. Of particular note is that employment is highest among individuals that have had some form of vocational education, about 70% (with unemployment for this group at only 14%). In addition, individuals with vocation education have more opportunities for self-employment than those with higher education.

¹In the governmental programme “For Strong, Democratic, United Georgia «of the Georgian Coalition Government, 2012

By sector, the highest levels of employment (GeoStat, 2012) are in industry (with 21.5% of the total), trade and repair (21.4%), health and social welfare (9.2 %), transport and communications (10.3 %); real estate-related procedures and leasing (9.7%) and construction (13.1 %) fields. But large numbers are involved in occupations without formal employment, with over 50% of the population being involved in agriculture (essentially self or family employed).

Technology: according to a study by the World Bank in 2009, enterprises in Georgia on average take advantage of only 50% of opportunities available from the application of technology in their field, and only 18% take advantage of 80% or more. Introduction of new technologies is carried out at a slow pace, and changing this is one of the priorities for future reform.

1.2. Legislative Framework in Georgia

Since 2005 the Georgian VET system has been in reform. A number of initiatives are declared as a priority for development of the VET system. These include the relevance of the labour market, concentrating on providing skilled personnel to meet the competitive demands of both the local and international labour markets; the involvement of the social partners in the decision making process at all levels of the system; ensuring access to lifelong quality education for all citizens, supporting individual self-fulfilment as well as social welfare; increasing the autonomy of educational institutions but within a regulatory framework that ensures the quality of vocational education in terms of both the skills created and the potential for employment generated; the integration of Georgian vocational education into European educational system; the development of alternative financing models (programme, target, voucher) to promote access and relevance; full recognition of skills learned through informal and non-formal education and experience; and the recognition and transferability of qualifications within Georgia and beyond. However, problems have been experienced in the implementation of legislative initiatives, their assessment, the search for enhancement mechanisms and the maintenance of continuous improvement. The introduction of legislative initiatives has been framed in the context of a number of challenges, such as a lack of suitable financial and human resources; management, staff, and teaching capacities; unclear and non-transparent methods and policy instruments; and insufficient or inconclusive dialogue between the parties involved. Identification of gaps in the legislative framework to meet these and other concerns, and aid in the implementation of the strategy, will follow from approval of the action plan of the VET Strategy.

The vocational education system is based on the following legal and strategic documents:

- Georgia joining the Bologna Process in 2005;
- “Vocational Education Concept Paper” (2005);
- Law of Georgia “About General Education” (2005);
- UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)
- Law of Georgia “About Vocational Education” (2007);
- Provision “About National VET Council” (2009);
- Law “About Education Quality Enhancement” (2010);
- Amendment to Law of Georgia “About Vocational Education” (2010);
- National Qualifications Framework (2010), an integral part of which is the Professional Qualifications Framework;
- Order “About Conditions and Rules for Approving Informal Vocational Education” (2011);
- 2009-2012 Medium Term Strategy of VET reform;
- 2009-2012 Medium Term Strategy of VET reform – A report about the achievements and current challenges (ETF, 2012).
- Memorandum on Social partnership (2011)
- State conception on social integration of persons with disabilities, National Action Plan (2013-2016 DRAFT)

1.3. Major European Directions in the Development of Vocational Education

Georgian vocational education aspires to be fully integrated into the European system to support access of local professionals to the international labour market and their employment, in accordance with their qualifications. In order for Georgia to be able to train competitive, highly qualified professionals strong enough to tackle competition and get employed in the European market, it is important to reflect modern European directions and priorities in the Georgian vocational education system.

The major trends in EU policy and strategy that may have an impact on the VET reform process in Georgia is Europe 2020 (2010), linked the Bruges Communiqué.

The Europe 2020 strategy is "about delivering growth that is: smart, through more effective investments in education, research and innovation; sustainable, thanks to a decisive move towards a low-carbon economy; and inclusive, with a strong emphasis on job creation and poverty reduction. The strategy is focused on five ambitious goals in the areas of employment, innovation, education, poverty reduction and climate/energy." (European Commission website, June 2012).

The Europe 2020 strategy includes the following Initiatives:

- Smart growth: Digital agenda for Europe; Innovation Union; Youth on the move
- Sustainable growth: Resource efficient Europe; An industrial policy for the globalisation era ;
- Inclusive growth: An agenda for new skills and jobs, European platform against poverty

By 2020, European VET systems (including initial-VET and continuous-VET) should be more attractive, relevant, career-oriented, innovative, accessible and flexible than in 2010, and should contribute to excellence and equity in lifelong learning.

In addition to these objectives, the Bruges Communiqué has a number of transversal objectives. These are: greater involvement of VET stakeholders and greater visibility for the achievements of European cooperation in VET; coordinated governance of European and national instruments in the areas of transparency, recognition, quality assurance and mobility; Intensifying cooperation between VET policy and other relevant policy areas; improving the quality and comparability of data for EU policymaking in VET; and making good use of EU support.

1.4. Current Situation of Georgian Vocational Education

1.4.1. Institutional Framework

Governance of vocational education in Georgia is enacted through government structures. The Government of Georgia develops broad national development policies and strategies; the Ministry of Education and Science develops and manages sector policies, strategies and programs consistent with broad national policies, and through its agencies, the National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE), the National Centre for Teachers' Professional Development (TPDC) and the Information Management System (EMIS) enforce the regulatory framework and through that implement sector programmes.

The VET Development Department of MoES is responsible for the following activities: the formulation of issues and proposals for introduction to the Minister; the development of draft orders for the Minister; the coordination of programmes on VET, the implementation of the Medium Term Action Plan, support for the National VET Council and its 7 thematic working groups; the monitoring of the educational process in VET colleges and the implementation of EU programs in support of the VET sector; and the planning of public relations activities.

The major functions of the National Centre for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) is assurance of quality in the provision of vocational education, the development and update of the national qualifications framework, the implementation of the process of authorisation of education institutions and accreditation of education programmes on the basis of agreed quality standards, coordination of occupational standards development etc.

The main function of the National Centre for Teachers' Professional Development is developing standards for teachers' professional development, and the planning and conduct of teacher training.

The EMIS is responsible to develop modern information - communication technologies and the new electronic management systems and bases in the educational sector, for the monitoring of the VET.

In order to ensure participative governance, the National VET Council was established in 2009 together with seven thematic working groups. The objective of the Council is the "coordination of the activities of the social partners – the state, employers, trade unions and civil society". Currently, the largest share of Council membership is drawn from the government sector (12 of the 24 members), but this is subject to revision.

Currently 18 public and 78 private VET institutions, 26 higher educational institutions and 10 schools are authorised to provide vocational education programmes. In total 80-100 different vocational education programmes are taught at these institutions, in 2012 to about 12,326 students (MoES). The total number of teachers in public VET institutions is 574.

In order to carry out educational activities, educational institutions have to pass a process of authorisation, which once granted has a validity of 5 years. The institutions have to meet minimum standards of correspondence with education programmes, human and material resources. Accreditation is a procedure of validating correspondence of vocational educational programmes with accreditation standards, the objective of which is to promote development of education quality provision. Accreditation is also valid for 5 years and is a precondition for the receipt of state funding.

Annex 2. Key Challenges of Georgia's Vocational Education System

2. *Lack of participation of the social partners and civil society in VET sector management structures with Government in the development of policy and decision-making process as well as in the whole process of VET from planning to evaluation.*

One of the key challenges is establishment and development of a strong vocational education system, on the basis of a regular dialogue with stakeholders.

Involvement of the social partners at all levels of the system is generally low. There is an imbalance in the composition of the National VET Council, sector committees, and thematic working groups in favour of Government and against the social partners. The National VET Council has limited involvement in the process of policy development at a system level, and participation of social partners in decision-making process, and elaboration, introduction and monitoring of educational programmes. This lack of empowerment undermines their sense of ownership and demotivates them from full participation, yet they are critical to the success of the sector in both meeting labour market needs and in ensuring the employability of VET graduates in meaningful and well remunerated positions.

Coordination between the activities of the various agencies and institutions involved in the reform process, and with the donor and NGO community needs to be strengthened. This requires the reinforcing of MoES capacity to monitor and coordinate the sector as a whole, including the private sector, and at the same time to strengthen from the Ministry side. A unified monitoring system (statistics, indicators and analysis) is also a problem, existence of which would facilitate evidence-based decision-making.

2. *A less than comprehensive network of public and private VET providers, in terms of both geographic spread and coverage of a wide range of well resourced disciplines/specialisations, with many inadequately funded and poorly managed, and with variable standards and appropriateness of facilities and often limited availability of up-to-date and quality equipment.*

The current spread of VET providers is restricted geographically. There is a conflict between the desire to provide regional coverage, meeting both local market needs and the broader aspirations of local students, and the desire to concentrate specialisations close to potential employers of particular specialisations. Government is investigating the options, particularly linking public and private provision, to develop a policy on the rationale for promotion of VET providers, particularly the role of the public sector in filling the gaps left by private provision, which even where regional is usually limited in terms of the disciplines and specialisation covered. Issues include the economies of bunching supply and the need to ensure access to students from more remote and less developed regions.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia set up a “Commission for identification of the need, expediency and implementation procedures for founding a new vocational education institution”. The Commission aims at making recommendations on the issue of founding a vocational education institution in a region in order to ensure access to the existing network.

Also of concern is the quality of facilities available, both the physical fabric of buildings and the suitability for different kinds of activities, particularly where workshops or laboratories are an integral part of quality provision. Linked to this also the variable quality, current relevance, and capacity of equipment and materials provision. Although regulatory mechanisms of authorisation stress the need for certain standards of institutions, backed by the regulations for accreditation of programmes, the standards required are of minimal provision rather than necessarily focussed on the provision of excellence.

Equipping educational institutions with modern infrastructure and material-technical base, essential for the training of students to meet the needs of the modern working environment, addressing current and anticipated technologies and techniques, is a major challenge. While the infrastructure of some public sector institutions has been improved in recent years, many colleges (both public and private) remain inadequate to meet current and future labour market requirements, and often the availability of resources

for both teachers and students is limited and counterproductive to the achievement of excellent transferable skills.

Even though the legislative base has been improved, the link of vocational educational institutions with higher education institutions, research organisations and schools is weak, both in terms of pathways (see challenge 7) and in terms of experience sharing, capacity building and student awareness. The networking process is not clearly structured and the initiative mainly comes from outside agencies. Public and private colleges are established in independent clusters. Capacities of private educational institutions are not fully utilised, and VET at secondary school is almost non-existent. Opportunities for mobility are limited, and reduced further by current financing mechanisms.

Access to and flexibility of vocational education for all potential interested target groups is also highly variable and one of the recognised challenges of the current system. The rate of involvement in vocational education is generally low. In 2010, average share of those enrolled in vocational institutions among 15-22 years age group was 2.3%, and 15-65 years age group - 0.4% (GeoStat Household Survey). Accessibility is particularly constrained for the disabled and those with special education needs, as well as for less advantaged social groups such as IDPs, former prisoners, probationers, ethnic minorities, and those in more remote parts of the country. The system is also fairly inflexible in meeting the needs of adults who want or need to enhance their skills in the short term. The reduction in number of public VET colleges over recent years, the presence of dead-ends in the system, and difficulties in obtaining financing all have a negative impact on accessibility and participation.

Central to the issue of access is the issue of financing, especially of students from less advantaged backgrounds and for courses that require more equipment and material input. Establishment of an effective, fair and diversified approach to financing vocational education, which would also a competitive public-private environment, and promotes greater and more relevant private investment, remains a challenge. A voucher system was introduced, but introduced more inequalities and constraints on access to certain classes of students and for certain kinds of specialisation. Funding for VET over the course of the Strategy is set to expand, but access to financing by institutions and students remains to be resolved. Nonetheless, the share of VET in the overall education budget remains low at less than 4%.

3. Lack of relevance of VET programmes to the current and future labour needs of Georgia's growing and diversifying economy

The system current capacities are not sufficient to allow quick and effective response to labour market needs. Except small-scale surveys (IOM, 2007, 2012, GIZ, 2010-2012, USAID) there is no systematic labour market research at either country, regional or sector level. Government abolished the State Employment Services Agency and unemployment benefit in 2006 and with them the direct feedback from the labour market of skill needs and deficiencies. While reinstatement of such services is being considered, the institutionalization of a regular analysis of the labour market and the current and future demand for skills is a major challenge for the creation of a labour-market responsive VET system. Determination of programmes and capacities as a response to labour market needs is a critical requirement if the VET system is to meet the twin demands of enabling the growth of thriving competitive enterprises to take advantage of Georgia's development opportunities and of ensuring that graduates of the system quickly enter into remunerative employment or self-employment.

Educational programmes are developed based on occupational standards. Many of the current occupational standards, developed relatively quickly over recent years to lay the foundation for a revived VET system, require revision to more fully reflect the specific requirements of employers and the career perspectives of employees and to raise their relevance to current and anticipated labour market needs. Current occupational standards profiles are often incomplete, or amalgamate different levels of specialisation such that it has been difficult to establish different level of qualifications to cater to different stages of employment and different elements of skill requirements within a single occupation. The majority of qualifications cover five levels, but levels 1 and 2 are often not relevant to job opportunities within the

labour market. With the support of technical assistance provided by ETF and the EU, the revision of standards and programmes and the establishment of a standard methodology has been initiated. The process of standards development needs to be dynamic, however, as changes in technology and shifting nuances of consumer and industrial demand result in frequent variation and increasing sophistication of skills requirements over time.

Students and employers have referred to the fragmentation of educational programmes. Many existing programmes are based on traditional employment skills, and this has made them less flexible in meeting changing labour market requirements. Many of the programmes for development of professional skills for teenagers are too short to adequately instil sufficient understanding and technical capacity to meet occupational requirements, while those for adults are less relevant for current and future technology and market quality standards. Vocational competences are often well integrated into curricula but key competences less so, in part because there has been a lack of involvement of the social partners in the drafting of the programmes and development of curricula has been decentralized to VET providers without adequate related capacity development.

4. Lack of capacity building and professional development of VET educators in line with modern standards and requirements. Lack of incentive for teachers to enter into and/or develop a long term career in VET (whether to teach the theory or practical application of vocational skills).

There is no established system for the training of new vocational teachers to ensure the ongoing supply of new and appropriately qualified professionals, nor any system for regular in-service continuous training of vocational teachers. Indeed, some features of the employment of vocational teachers are antagonistic to the establishment of an experienced and well qualified cadre of VET teachers. These include short-term and intermittent employment contracts, low remuneration, and inadequate opportunities to expand and up-date skills and qualifications. In particular, although some training on general teaching skills has been initiated according to the approved Standard of Teachers of Vocational Education (2011), there have been limited opportunities directed at extending particular subject matter knowledge and experience, and with it the capacity to teach specific disciplines or specialisations.

As a result, the quality of VET teaching and, therefore, programmes varies from institution to institution, reinforced by the similar variability in the availability of complementary training resources (practical facilities, equipment and materials). Inspection and assessment of teaching competences and practice at different institutions and for different programmes needs to be strengthened, and innovative approaches to meet deficiencies and upgrade quality introduced.

5. The low and variable quality of awarded VET qualifications and their lack of recognition by employers and education institutions both locally and internationally

With the quality of teaching and facilities varying across institutions and across programmes, the qualifications awarded are of varying relevance and standard between and within occupations, and are not really comparable from one institution to another. As a result, the qualifications provide only a limited guide to the skills and capabilities of graduates from VET institutions such that employers have little or no trust in their formal qualifications. To counter this, the majority of larger corporations rely on their own staff training programmes and pay little heed to many of the VET qualifications of job applicants, especially those of younger graduates without evidence of sustained experience of the workplace. This means that the benefit to VET graduates of having completed courses and of holding VET certificates or awards is often limited when it comes to competing for employment opportunities.

In similar vein, while procedures for the recognition of informal or non-formal education are defined (2011) and some piloting initiated, recognition by employers, and by VET and other educational institutions of previously developed and practised skills is limited. At the same time, while qualifications earned abroad are increasingly accepted by Georgian employers, depending on the nature and reputation of the courses and institutions attended, the transferability of Georgian qualifications in the European or

wider international market-place is also minimal. There is a need to raise the consistency of credits and the standard, reputation and comparability of Georgian VET qualifications if they are to fulfil the function of signalling the capacity of job applicants and their capability to both meet particular employment requirements and to be able to further develop both at work and through further education.

6. The variable nature of employability of VET graduates with limited access to sustained well remunerated and personally fulfilling job opportunities with the prospect of further career development throughout their future working lives.

Several features affect the employability and employment of VET graduates. These include the quality of the skills development programmes supported by the VET system (challenge 4), the relevance of the skills gained to local, national, and foreign labour market opportunities (challenge 3), and the consequent low value of VET qualifications in the eyes of employers and next step education institutions (challenge 5).

In addition, the current VET system only poorly prepares VET graduates for employment, and provides little in the way of support for graduates in the establishment, start up, and successful operation of their own businesses. For many VET students, the work practice offered during the practical elements of their courses is their first experience of employment but it little prepares them for the reality of day-to-day working on repetitive and demanding jobs under supervision and instruction of employers, and for the possibility of unemployment or loss of employment. While adults undertaking retraining or further development of their skills are more familiar with the realities of the workplace, they too need to be properly aware of the limitations, as well as the opportunities, of their chosen careers. For self-employment, additional small business skills are required and knowledge of the approaches to meeting financing and regulatory parameters, as well as the need to meet not simply offer products and services but to ensure they meet the requirements of future customers and compete with alternative sources of supply.

Of equal relevance, however, is also the way in which potential students of VET choose their courses and make decisions as to the level of training to which they aspire, a function of personal career guidance before and during their vocational education and training, based on their personal attributes and potential and a proper knowledge and understanding of their future employment opportunities. Professional orientation and career development support services are weak both before starting VET (which for youths should be integral to secondary school education, but for adults needs to be before enrolment) as well as during the process (when choices of specialisation within a discipline are made, and future employment applications need to be made). Indeed, current career guidance is more predicated by the need to fill available courses than by the need to mould course structures and availability to meet students' personal capacities, or to match student potential with employment and career possibilities.

In both these areas, capacities of VET institution staff (including both teachers and other professionals) is limited, in part because their own exposure to the workplace is limited, a problem that to some extent can be addressed by more extensive training (linked to challenge 4), but also needs the attraction of work professionals into full or part-time employment within VET (also challenge 4). Preparation for the workplace, training for small business management, and career development all need to be included as mainstream elements within all VET courses, and part of the VET qualifications framework, and not thought of as issues that can be resolved through short ad-hoc interviews or presentations.

7. VET is not considered as an attractive and rewarding pathway by the population, nor required as a precondition for recruitment by employers.

Even though the attitude towards vocational education is changing and the demand is increasing, it still does not represent a recognized attractive educational alternative to many school graduates of equal or superior value to more academic education nor a viable personal investment to raise income potential and career prospects to adults faced with uncertain employment or career dead-ends. Causes of this negative attitude include the dubious quality of VET in the past, and the continuing need to improve the quality and relevance of VET options available, but are also a function of a lack of information and awareness among

school students, their parents and the general public as to what is available and the positive boost such VET can provide to income and career prospects (provided recognized by employers at home and abroad - see challenge 5). Wider public awareness about VET remains low. VET institutions and information centres have limited resources in terms of information provision and career guidance to school students and adults. Awareness of local self-government about the vocational education or on-going reforms is low.

Linked to this low esteem of VET are problems with the ability to either progress to higher levels of VET or to re-enter more academic education to build a broader range of experience and qualification. The presence of these so-called “dead-ends” in the VET system hinders acceptance and effective implementation of the concept of lifelong learning and the attractiveness of VET as a serious component of education. Students with only basic education up to Grade 9 have found it difficult to move to VET level 4 without additional and extra-curricular learning to gain Georgia's general education certificate, it being necessary to pass from VET level 3 to VET level 4 to pass the national school certificate exams. Further, transfer from VET level 5 to other higher education disciplines has not been possible because VET credits are not recognized by the higher education system. Indeed, the credit system remains little developed and unable to fulfil its main function of interdisciplinary and intertemporal transferability, including to education and training outside of Georgia.

Vocational training and continuous vocational education are not well regulated and main focus has so far been on vocational training. VET system reforms have likewise focussed on teenagers, though more often on those that have been less successful in more academic secondary education. There is, as a result, no organised system for the vocational education, training and re-training of adults, a further degradation of the concept of the personal and national benefits of lifelong learning. It is important to establish a VET system that equally recognizes the importance of adult learning as the need to increase the sophistication and coverage of education for the young. This requires the reorientation of VET to make it more closely adapted to the different requirements of people at different stages in their personal development and with different levels of experience of the workplace and different awareness of their capabilities and skills. This includes people with special needs and learning difficulties, either as a result of particular personal physical or psychological characteristics, or because of difficult social and economic circumstances, whether during adulthood or upbringing, with greater emphasis on the development of key competences, important for a person's social and career development.

Annex 3. Strategy implementation costs

Financial costs are estimated and presented in the action plan for the Strategy implementation over 2013-2020.

Strategy implementation costs will be covered from the following:

- State budget, in the limit of expenditures approved for the institutions involved in the Strategy implementation;
- Technical and financial assistance projects and programmes supported by foreign donors and development partners;
- Savings from the streamlining measures of the state budget;
- Contributions by the private sector;
- Sponsorships and other sources accepted by the legislation in effect.

The establishment and funding of the priority actions, by including them into the strategic expenditures framework will be performed according to the institutional funding volume and expenditures ceiling provided in the Medium-Term Budgetary Framework in effect, and the annual funding of activities will be performed within the limit of allocations approved in the national public budget for education and/or from additional sources.

Annex 4. Action plan for the strategy implementation

The action plan on the Strategy implementation will represent the basic tool for the systemic and continuing Strategy implementation, incorporating all its components, with specific objectives, planned actions, funding, and institutions responsible for implementation.

The plan includes (2013-14) medium-term (2015-17) actions and is flexible, allowing changes to be made depending on changes of circumstances and eventual problems faced during the Strategy implementation process. It is recommended to carry out assessment once in two years (especially from 2015 and make relevant amendments).

Annex 5. Strategy implantation monitoring and assessment

The institutional framework for the strategy monitoring and assessment will include the following main actors:

1. The Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia will supervise the Strategy implementation, monitoring and assessment process, will analyse the progress and problems and will put forward solutions for overcoming the barriers and ensuring the plenary implementation of the Strategy;
2. Representatives of the NVET Council, Sector Committees, employers;
3. Civil society, d partners, which will independently monitor the Strategy implementation process and will intervene with proposals aiming at improving the implementation process.

The monitoring activity will be performed by:

1. Annual monitoring and reporting, which supposes a detailed reporting for a one-year period;
2. Half-yearly monitoring and reporting of results;
3. Final monitoring and reporting on the achievement of Strategy objectives during the whole implementation period.

The annual, half-yearly and final monitoring reports on Strategy implementation will be submitted to the authorities responsible for Strategy implementation for review and approval by the Ministry of Education's Board.

The overall monitoring and evaluation system will be developed in a consistent manner, aligned to reporting process for the National Development Strategy for Georgia and Government's Program. For the monitoring the data collected by EMIS on the relevant indicators will be used. The monitoring and evaluation reports will be open and will be posted on the website of the monitoring / evaluation authorities.

The Ministry of Education, through direct contacts, through the media and its website, will inform the civil society about the progress and about how it can engage for a successful Strategy implementation, ensuring a transparent and participatory interaction of all stakeholders involved in Strategy monitoring and evaluation.

Annex 6. Strategy implementation communication activity

To increase the visibility of reforms started based on the Strategy, to raise awareness and to inform the public about the purpose, scope and expected impact of Strategy implementation, the communication and information activity on Strategy implementation will be carried out continuously in two integrated campaigns:

- (i) Awareness campaign, which involves informing target groups on the Strategy and its benefits; different activities will be implemented based on the target group demand and interests.
- (ii) Support campaign is a continuation of information and communication activities, aimed at enhancing the effect of the previous communication, keeping the interest for the phenomenon of modernization and development of the education system.

Annex 7. Risks mitigation in the strategy implementation process

Potential risks	Risks mitigation measures
Shortage of financial resources, imposed by eventual unfavourable trends in the national economy evolution or by the reduction of foreign support.	Release resources from the system by raising the effectiveness of public expenditures in the VET sector. Involve the private sector in the provision of educational services.
Modify priorities at the national or sectoral levels.	Mobilize the private sector, teaching staff and public opinion for Strategy promotion. Disseminate information about costs for the budget and economy and modest results of the current system.
Resistance to reforms by some decision-making factors, particularly at the level of institution's administration.	Increase the role of direct beneficiaries in the VET in the administration of education institutions and Strategy implementation.
Limited capacity of institutions involved in the reform implementation and coordination.	Implement capacity building projects, including with financial support.
Resistance towards innovation and new ideas	Strengthening of international exchanges, e.g. EU VET Systems, International VET Competitions etc.