

DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT (SECRETARIAT)

 **2023 Monitoring Report of the 2022-2024 Action Plan of the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science for 2022-2030**

| **MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF GEORGIA**

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**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF GEORGIA**

Address: 52, Dimitri Uznadze Str, 0102 Tbilisi

Tel: (995 32) 2 200 220

Website: <https://mes.gov.ge/>

E-mail: pr@mes.gov.ge

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# Forward

The present report is the 2023 monitoring report of the 2022-2024 action plan of the Unified National Strategy of Education and Science for 2022-2030 (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy) approved by Resolution No. 446 of the Government of Georgia on 31 August 2022.

The Report was prepared by the Department of International Relations and Strategic Development of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (hereinafter referred to as the Ministry). The Department serves as the coordinating department (Secretariat) for monitoring the process outlined by the Strategy, based on the status reports submitted by the responsible departments of the Ministry. These reports are included as an appendix accompanying this monitoring report.

The monitoring report was processed by the Department of International Relations and Strategic Development using the methodology outlined in Appendix 7 of the Policy Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Guide approved by Resolution N629 of the Government of Georgia on 20 December 2019, as well as based on the standard working procedure (prepared by the Department and endorsed by Minister's Order N390129 of 3 April 2024) for policy planning, monitoring and evaluation within the Ministry of Education, Science, and Youth of Georgia.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **#** |  **Status** | **Progress** |
| 1 | Not yet started | 0% |
| 2 | In progress – partially completed | 1%-50% |
| 3 | In progress – mostly completed | 51%-99%  |
| 4 | Completed  | 100% |
| 5 | Completed behind the schedule  | 100% |
| 6 | Cancelled | 0%-99% |
| 7 | Suspended  | 0%-99% |

The Report assesses progress towards the objectives outlined in the 2023 Action Plan of the Strategy, identifies major challenges, and formulates recommendations.

The Unified National Strategy encompasses three sectoral priorities: quality, equity/inclusion, and governance. These sectoral priorities, in turn, delineate **15 strategic goals, 28 objectives, and 160 activities**.

**Organizing activities, objectives, and goals based on priorities:**

Sector priority 3: Education and Science Management and Accountability System

Sector priority 2: Quality and Sustainable Education and Science System Focused on the Needs of Learners, Society and the State

Sector priority 1: Quality and Sustainable Education and Science System Focused on the Needs of Learners, Society and the State

Activities

Objectives

Goals

Under Sector Priority 1, the following specific goals and objectives are established:

**Goal 1.1: Provision of high-quality, supportive and development-oriented educational process by all early childhood, pre-school and all other education institutions**

Objective 1.1.1: Raising the qualifications of caregiver-educators and ensuring continuous professional development in each early and preschool education institution

Objective 1.1.2: Improving the learning environment and quality of teaching in early and preschool education institutions

Objective 1.1.3: Promoting the involvement of the child's parents/representatives and the community in the activities of early and preschool education institutions.

**Goal 1.2: Providing an accessible learning process for each student in general education institutions, focused on achievable high results and holistic development of the student**

Objective 1.2.1: Raising the qualifications of teachers and principals and providing needs-based continuing professional development

Objective 1.2.2: Creating a favorable environment for learning and teaching in general education institutions and providing them with modern diverse resources

Objective 1.2.3: Increasing involvement of parents/representatives in school life and teaching-learning process

**Goal 1.3: Development of an innovative and flexible vocational education system focused on the needs of society and economy**

Objective 1.3.1: Equipping vocational education students/trainees with the necessary skills and competencies for continuous employment in the local and international labor market

Objective 1.3.2: Promotion of continuing professional development of vocational education teachers

**Goal 1.4: Personal development of each student and preparation for the labor market by the higher education institution (HEI).**

Objective 1.4.1: Provision of programmes adapted to the labor market by the higher education institution (HEI)

Objective 1.4.2: Facilitating an international learning experience and internationalization for students

Objective 1.4.3: Promoting the development of structured doctoral programmes corresponding to international standards

**Goal 1.5: Development of a knowledge-based society and an economy-oriented science, research, technology and innovation system**

Objective 1.5.1: Support of researchers in the implementation of research and innovative activities corresponding to international standards

Objective 1.5.2: Ensuring academic and research integrity in teaching and research

The following goals and objectives are outlined under the second sectoral priority:

**Goal 2.1: Promoting the participation of disadvantaged children in early education and school readiness programmes**

Objective 2.1.1: Ensuring an inclusive, safe and holistic development-oriented learning process in early childhood and preschool education institutions

Objective 2.1.2: Development of targeted support services of early and preschool education for disadvantaged children and children with special educational needs

**Goal 2.2: Creating equal opportunities for learning and development for every student at all levels of general education**

Objective 2.2.1: Raising the qualifications of special teachers and support staff and developing inclusive teaching competencies

Objective 2.2.2: Creation of a learning environment relevant to special educational needs in general education institutions and access to quality learning resources for each student

**Goal 2.3: Providing access to vocational education focused on diverse, inclusive and individual needs**

Objective 2.3.1: Enhancing lifelong learning opportunities through a flexible network of innovative, diverse and inclusive vocational education institutions

**Goal 2.4: Ensuring equal opportunities for access to and success in quality and inclusive higher education**

Objective 2.4.1: Development of targeted support services for disadvantaged students in higher education institutions

Objective 2.4.2: Creating a favorable learning environment for each student in higher education institutions

**Goal 2.5: Supporting public engagement in the creation of inclusive and diverse science, research, technology and innovation**

Objective 2.5.1: Enhancing interest in research, technology, science and innovation from an early stage of education

Objective 2.5.2: Supporting women's involvement in science, research, technology and innovation

The following specific goals and objectives are envisaged under the third sectoral priority:

**Goal 3.1: Strengthening the effectiveness and sustainability of the early and preschool education system**

Objective 3.1.1: Ensuring access to updated early and preschool education and development

**Goal 3.2: Improving the effectiveness and sustainability of the management of the general educational institution**

Objective 3.2.1: Development of monitoring and evaluation system of general education institutions

**Goal 3.3: Increasing the efficiency of the vocational education system**

Objective 3.3.1: Sharing of responsibility for the creation and implementation of vocational education policy between the public and private sectors

**Goal 3.4: Support for sustainable development of higher education institutions**

Objective 3.4.1: Development of financing system focused on sustainability of higher education

Objective 3.4.2: Development of digital information management system of higher education

**Goal 3.5: Increasing the effectiveness of national and regional research, science, technology and innovation systems**

Objective 3.5.1: Development of a long-term, result-oriented and targeted funding system for science, research, innovation and technology.

**Progress achieved in the development of pre-school education:**

**Progress achieved in the development of general education**

**Progress achieved in the development of vocational education**

**Progress achieved in the development of higher education**

**Progress achieved in the development of science:**

**Out of the 160 activities outlined in the action plan:**

* 51 activities completed;
* 26 activities mostly completed;
* 35 activities partially completed;
* 45 activities not started.
* 3 activities cancelled.

**Implementation status of activities:**

* Completed
* Mostly completed
* Partially completed
* Not started
* Cancelled

The budget of the action plan amounts to GEL3,665,320,313. Of this total, more than half, GEL1,871,414,752, is financed from the state budget, while GEL1,703,316,061 is sourced from other financing avenues, including international partners and donor organizations. During the development of the plan, there was a deficit of GEL90,589,500, indicating that public agencies lacked sufficient resources, with plans to secure these funds within the current year.

The adjusted budget of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia in 2023 amounted to 2,078,780,700 GEL, with cash expenditures totaling 2,081,244,160 GEL. This included budgetary funds of 2,046,928,290 GEL, a grant of 1,670,030 GEL, credit of 16,335,880 GEL, and a targeted grant of 16,309,950 GEL.

**Overall progress achieved under the Strategy 2023 Action Plan**

## Preschool Education

In 2023, the Ministry of Education and Science actively pursued the the implementation of events planned within the framework of the unified national strategy of education and science. This strategy prioritizes three key areas: 1. Quality and Relevance, 2. Equity, Inclusion, and Diversity, and 3. Governance, Funding, and Accountability.

To enhance access to high-quality preschool education, efforts have begun to develop a concept of diversified preschool education. This initiative involves creating tailored services to meet the needs of numerous groups of various urban communities, as well as municipalities with small families and ethnic minorities living in mountainous areas.

A quality assurance framework for early and preschool education and care was created. The framework regulates the authorization process, sets authorization standards, and establishes infrastructure and material-technical requirements. In line with the Georgian Law on "on Early and Preschool Education and Care", an electronic system of initial registration of early and preschool education institutions was created. This system ensured the registration of institutions across Georgia for the first time, serving as the basis for planning the authorization schedule for these institutions. Moreover, the system remains active in gathering information on any additions or changes in the places of activities (branches) of these institutions.

2047 institutions and/or individual entrepreneurs providing early education and/or preschool education or only school readiness programs have conducted a self-assessment. An Accreditation Council for Early Childhood and Preschool Care and Education Institutions was established and a corps of experts was established. A guide to early childhood education and/or early childhood education and/or early childhood education facility accreditation standards has been prepared. A methodology for analyzing the results of diagnostic self-assessment of gardens was developed and analysts were trained according to the methodology.

2047 institutions and/or individual entrepreneurs providing early education and/or preschool education or only school readiness programs have conducted a self-assessment. Furthermore, an Accreditation Council for Early Childhood and Preschool Care and Education Institutions was formed, along with a corps of experts. A guide outlining accreditation standards for early childhood education and care and/or preschool education and care institutions was drafted. Additionally, a methodology for analyzing the outcomes of diagnostic self-assessments in kindergartens was devised, and analysts were trained accordingly to implement this methodology effectively.

Capacity building activities, trainings, workshops were held throughout Georgia, covering representatives of private and public gardens, garden associations and municipalities. In order to strengthen the system of early and preschool upbringing and education and to ensure the effective functioning of the authorization process, targeted trainings were conducted for the members of the authorization expert corps and the members of the authorization council. 5 methodological guides were prepared within the framework of kindergarten support: a guide for the authorization process, a methodological guide for strategic planning, a methodology for determining the threshold number of children, a methodology for drawing up a communication plan, and a methodology for developing a regulatory mechanism for food organization and ration nutritional value norms.

Capacity-building activities, including trainings and workshops, were organized across Georgia. These sessions encompassed participants from private and public kindergartens, kindergarten associations, and municipalities. To fortify the early and preschool education system and ensure the smooth functioning of the authorization process, targeted trainings were also conducted for members of the authorization expert corps and theauthorization council. As part of kindergarten support initiatives, five methodological guides were developed: one for the authorization process, another for strategic planning, a methodology for determining threshold child capacity, a guide for creating a communication plan, and a method for developing a mechanism for regulating food organization and nutritional norms of the diet.

State Standards of Early and Preschool Care and Education underwent revision and were subsequently approved, with a notable emphasis on enhancing inclusiveness and improving educational quality. Through focused coaching and technical assistance, a strategy and action plan were developed in five Ministry-selected municipalities (Oni, Dusheti, Keda, Dmanisi, Marneuli) to ensure preschool education access for vulnerable children. Additionally, inclusive education strategies were formulated for six municipalities within the Adjara region.

To empower ethnic minorities and provide them with quality education, efforts have been made to implement bilingual education starting from kindergarten. Simultaneously, there is active development of high-quality educational resources tailored for ethnic minority representatives.

Guided by principles of inclusive and civic education, methodological and educational resources designed to support early and preschool education were implemented in 20 municipalities. These resources included a parent information brochure titled "Guide for parents of children under 6," "Methodological guide for 2-5-year-old and mixed-age groups," and practical guidelines/scenarios for 2-5-year-old and mixed-age groups. Meetings were organized across these municipalities to raise awareness about the significance of early and preschool education for children under 6 and to encourage positive parenting practices.

An international conference titled "Early Education and Care" was organized in collaboration with partners to engage the public in ongoing developments in early and preschool education, to inform and report to the public, as well as to share international experiences in this field.

Four training modules were developed to support the authorization processes, covering key areas: 1. Education; 2. quality; 3. Sanitation, nutrition, hygiene; 4. Infrastructure. To provide maximum support for the authorization process and ensure its effective implementation, specialists from the educational resource center received additional training using these modules provided by the Ministry. This training aimed to ensure the sustainability of the knowledge accumulated at the local level, promptly identify needs, and refer them for resolving emerging challenges.

Two new training modules, "Child Development" focusing on children's well-being and rights protection in early education, have been developed and approved by the National Center for Teacher Professional Development. Additionally, existing training modules were modified and approved: "Game", promotion of social-emotional development, early education curriculum "Game", how to implement early education curriculum "Game". 459 educational and 165 administrative personnel underwent training on the "Early Education Curriculum" module; 446 individuals received training on "Early Inclusive Education." 604 participants were trained on "Using Teams." Moreover, training modules were conducted specifically for pilot kindergartens in the Adjara region: 256 individuals were trained on "Game, Social-Emotional Competencies at an Early Age, Early Education Curriculum 'Game.'" The Center for the Training of Trainers/Coaches at the municipal level has trained 24 individuals to introduce quality standards in early education. Their training encompassed several areas: Early Education Curriculum "Game", Child Development, Social-Emotional Competencies at an Early Age, Training of Trainers in Preschool Education and Education Programs

Between 2021 and the end of December 2023, a total of 3,027 individuals completed the training module for the professional development of educators, with 1,895 of them successfully completing the training. Additionally, 271 authorization experts have been trained during this period.

As part of the project "Promoting the Introduction of State Standards of Early and Preschool Education through the Professional Development of Practitioners," the intervention results in pilot kindergartens were analyzed, and a research report was prepared. Additionally, two issues of the magazine "Early Education" were published. The publication "How to Use Group Supervision to Improve Early Education Practices" was also released. A competition was held to identify organizations willing to offer the training module for the professional development of educators. As a result, five new organizations were identified, and seven new trainers were successfully trained.

## General Education

A draft document outlining the national goals of general education has been prepared. This document primarily focuses on fostering and strengthening national values, national identity, state awareness, as well as general and universal values among students.

As part of the general education quality assurance reform, the authorization mechanism for general education institutions was updated. Starting in January 2023, new authorization standards and updated procedures were implemented. Additionally, a new corps of experts for the authorization of general education institutions was established. To enhance the capacity of these experts, trainings and workshops were conducted on the authorization process, new standards, and evaluation.

The new composition of the General Education Institutions Authorization Council was approved. Methodological guidelines were developed in accordance with the revised regulations and published on the Center's website at [www.eqe.ge](http://www.eqe.ge/), making them accessible to all interested parties.

Pilot evaluations of authorization using the updated standards and procedures were conducted in three public and six private general education institutions. Six recommended guidelines for internal quality development were developed for general education institutions. Furthermore, to strengthen the capacity of private schools, trainings were held on all four new accreditation standards.

The administrative authorization process was completed for 332 public schools and approximately 100 private schools. To enhance the capacity of educational resource centers, trainings were conducted on the new authorization standards and updated regulations.

Additionally, a summary conference for 2023 was held for experts involved in the authorization of general educational institutions. The purpose of this conference was to analyze the completed administrative procedures and share experiences.

The administrative aspect of the national curriculum was revised and approved, with school autonomy identified as a primary priority of the Ministry. By enhancing trust in schools and granting them greater creative and academic freedom, many tasks that cannot be centrally managed will be effectively addressed. The powers delegated to schools were identified, outlining the areas in which schools have autonomy and what kind of the accountability system is formed with the Ministry. The degree of independence and academic freedom for private schools has also increased significantly.

The revision of national curriculum standards is currently underway. This process involves all sectors of the education system to define the knowledge, skills, and values for each subject that should underpin classroom teaching and student education. Emphasis is placed on systematically integrating non-formal education into the educational process. School autonomy will increase, allowing schools to independently decide on the resources, approaches, and methods they will use to achieve educational goals. The middle-level education concept will focus on providing comprehensive support for students' self-determination and the realization of their potential. At the secondary level, beyond the core mandatory program, students will have access to advanced subject-specific courses and a variety of optional subjects based on their interests. Additionally, integrated professional programs will also be offered.

To implement the national curriculum, around 400 schools identified for authorization in the first stage received consultations as part of the school curriculum development support framework.

To properly define the policy in general education, studies were conducted to evaluate the implementation of the national curriculum, the satisfaction with textbooks, the teacher's professional development scheme, and the training offered to teachers. A total of 40,000 teachers participated in these studies.

Work is underway on a textbook design and development policy based on updated subject standards, which will incorporate feedback from students, parents, and teachers. In addition to textbooks, a variety of electronic, supportive, and adapted learning resources will be created to meet the needs and demands of schools.

The textbook approval competition for textbooks for grades I, II, and XI, as well as for certain subjects in grades III, IV, and X, has concluded. At the secondary level, 26 sets of competitive textbooks were awarded approval (2 for grade X and 24 for grade XI). At the primary level, approval was granted to 50 sets of textbooks (20 for grade I, 19 for grade II, 5 for grade III, and 6 for grade IV).

When the Ministry announced the textbook approval process, a competition was launched to select teachers and field scientists for the review process. Relevant subject groups were formed, which evaluated a total of 131 applications. The content and technical review was conducted in full compliance with legislative requirements. Detailed instructions were developed, and trainings were provided for all parties involved in the process. Additionally, the procedure and deadlines for the approval of the textbooks by the Ministry were established.

Efforts are currently underway to develop an alternative curriculum guide specifically designed for students with severe and multiple mental disorders, as well as those with autism spectrum disorders.

To ensure quality education in both native and state languages for ethnic minorities, a bilingual education program is being implemented in non-Georgian language schools. Specialized programs have been developed, and over 400 bilingual teachers have undergone training. Furthermore, special educational resources are being prepared to support this initiative. The program contributes to the capacity building of local staff, including youth, at the regional level.

To promote the adoption of approaches focused on national minorities, informational materials detailing students' rights and protection mechanisms were created and made publicly available on the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement's website at [www.eqe.ge](http://www.eqe.ge/), accessible in Armenian and Azerbaijani languages. Additionally, the new self-assessment questionnaire for general education institutions has been translated into the languages of national minorities.

The National Teacher's Day was established on 27 October of each year, commemorating the birthday of Iakob Gogebashvili, a renowned Georgian teacher, pioneer of scientific pedagogy, publicist, children's writer, and public figure. As part of this celebration, meritorious teachers are honored annually for their exceptional contributions to society and the education system. Recipients of the National Teacher Award receive a specially designed badge and a monetary prize of 10,000 GEL. In 2023, 11 teachers were honored with this national award. Efforts are also underway to improve teacher salary policies.

Georgia joined the International School Meals Coalition "Nutrition, Health and Education for All Children" and defined national commitments. A "school feeding program" has been approved, involving a comprehensive study of local needs at the municipal level to determine the optimal models for organizing school feeding. Additionally, in collaboration with partner ministries and local non-governmental organizations, minimum requirements for operating a catering facility in general education institutions have been established.

Eight national teams of students from Georgian schools participated in the international regional educational Olympiad, where they collectively won 9 gold medals, 10 silver medals, 17 bronze medals, and 5 certificates of honor. In five international educational Olympiads—mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and informatics—the Georgian teams earned 1 gold, 4 silver, and 9 bronze medals, along with 2 certificates of honor. The 7th European Youth Olympiad in Informatics (EJOI 2023) was hosted in Kutaisi, attracting around 100 contestants from 24 countries.

For the purpose of registering first-graders in public schools, general education institutions were allowed to set minimum limits for eligible first-graders, including those with special educational needs. The registration process took place in four stages. For the 2023-2024 academic year, a total of 53,903 students were registered in the first grade across public and private schools, with 46,854 students in public schools and 7,049 in private schools.

The LEPL Education Management Information System ensured the centralized administration of 12th-grade subject examinations, conducted as externships for the general education curriculum/programs, in an electronic format. A total of 731 students registered for these exams.

As part of the teacher professional development and career advancement scheme, the LEPL Education Management Information System implemented new functionalities and administered the existing ones.

A total of 3,900 gold and 1,200 silver medals were awarded to distinguished graduates of the 2020-2021 academic year.

To issue basic and/or full general education certificates to graduates of the 2022-2023 academic year from general educational institutions, information was requested from relevant institutions. This information was processed and entered into the electronic database of individuals entitled to receive documents confirming their general education. Specifically, 48,167 students were entitled to a full general education certificate, and 46,389 students were entitled to a basic general education certificate. Additionally, in 2023, proceedings were conducted for 2,615 applications from individuals who completed their general education before 2011 and requested duplicates of their basic and/or full general education certificates from the LEPL Public Service Development Agency. The issuance of electronic copies of these certificates continued throughout the process.

Up to 40 accused/convicted students were provided the opportunity to receive continuous general education. Of these, 34 students at different class levels participated in tests to advance through specific classes or semesters of the general education curriculum. These tests covered various subjects included in the general education curriculum and were conducted in the form of externships.

Access to general education has been continuously provided for minors seeking asylum in Georgia, those with international protection, and those placed in the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. During the reporting period, three beneficiaries were enrolled in a Georgian language course. Out of 11 beneficiaries enrolled in 2022, one passed the A1 level and five passed the A2 level. Additionally, nine beneficiaries enrolled in the current year are currently participating in the training.

During the academic semesters, beneficiaries of boarding school services received comprehensive, round-the-clock care in an environment designed to be close to a family setting.

The school competition "My First Georgian Role" and the school week "Abkhazia Seen Through My Eyes" were held. Schools that achieved first, second, and third places, as well as those who won special jury nominations, were awarded with pecuniary prizes and diplomas.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, the subject "Military Affairs" has been introduced in 80 pilot schools across Georgia, engaging approximately 4,000 students at the basic level, who learn about the various threats facing Georgia and the world, alongside mechanisms for responding to these threats, the basics of military affairs, information about the Georgian Armed Forces, and details of military service. Additionally, students are taught skills for safe behavior in emergency situations, self-preservation, and aiding others.

As part of this educational initiative, 800 students participating in the "Army Camp" were provided with transportation. Furthermore, a "Georgian Language Summer School" was organized for 150 students from non-Georgian schools or sectors. This summer school was held at the base of Public School No.2 in Salibauri village, located in the Khelvachauri municipality.

To support the functioning of Ukrainian sectors, two public schools were involved: Mikheil Grushevsky Public School No. 41 in Tbilisi and Public School No. 20 in Batumi. Additionally, non-formal education circles operated within Public School No. 41 in Tbilisi. Through these initiatives, more than 1,400 Ukrainian students benefited from the sub-program's services.

To provide a second opportunity for education and ensure the socialization of children living and working on the street, Georgia implemented a special educational service called the "Transit Educational Program." This program specifically targets beneficiaries from the care services for homeless children provided by the LEPL Agency for State Care and Assistance for the (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking located in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Rustavi, and Batumi. During the reporting period, 101 children participated in the program.

Additionally, various projects aimed at promoting social inclusion were carried out in 18 public schools across nine regions of Georgia. These initiatives involved a total of 430 students in clubs created under the project, with 161 of them being beneficiaries and 269 participating as volunteers.

Within the framework of the "Innovation, Inclusion, and Quality - Georgia" (Georgia I2Q) project, significant efforts were made to develop the functionality of the General Education Management Information System (eSchool). During the reporting period, the needs of various stakeholders involved in general education were identified through a comprehensive process that included observations, interviews, and analysis of secondary information. These identified needs were then documented, and an initial version of a working document was created. This document will serve as a foundation for ongoing active work.

To strengthen the analytical component of the education system, significant advancements were made in the development of complex spatial analysis tools and the formation of a unified geo-information system (GIS) for the education sector, as well as on mapping schools and creating thematic maps that provide informational support and modelling for spatial and infrastructural solutions. Web maps were integrated into the public portal for schools, allowing users to view the locations of schools and important facilities around them on a digital map. The data for kindergartens and vocational education institutions were processed and fully reflected on the digital map. An online interactive map and search system for school infrastructure and construction/rehabilitation projects was developed. Working web maps were developed to aid in the selection process for resource schools and satellite schools. A comparative analysis of the capacity of schools and the number of students expected by 2024 was conducted at both the district and section levels of Tbilisi.

A comprehensive centralized management and monitoring system has been implemented to support the data center. To ensure efficient data management and storage solutions, key initiatives included the introduction of a new file storage system (Dell EMC Isilon). This facilitated the automation and optimization of crucial processes such as electronic log synchronization, database optimization, and the development of new backup methods. To address the increased load and network demand, significant upgrades were made that included doubling Internet connection speeds in various cases: increasing radio connections to 30 Mb/s and optical fiber connections to 100 Mb/s. The number of optical connections was also expanded to 1500. Furthermore, to support the enhanced Internet speed and improve the examination process and student book support in schools, approximately 500 routers were upgraded. Additionally, specialized WiFi networks were established.

To enhance preventive measures and improve the school environment, the Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions implemented several significant actions in Georgia's public schools over the past year, similar to previous years. These measures included ensuring public order and safety in 719 public schools, one private school, and one vocational education institution, with 1,739 resource officers involved. According to the expansion plan, the Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions was introduced in 27 public schools in 2023. Additionally, 171 candidates, who completed the preparatory course at the Ministry of Internal Affairs Academy, were appointed as resource officers and assigned to public schools in Tbilisi and other regions.

In 2023, the Psychosocial Service Center actively continued providing both individual and group therapy for children and adolescents, along with psychoeducation for parents. The center operates a 24-hour hotline designed to offer timely and immediate psychological counseling. Additionally, the website befriend.mes.gov.ge allows users to receive qualified psychological counseling through a fully confidential online chat. The Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions employs 51 psychologists and 2 professional supervisors in Tbilisi and the regions to support psychological work.

Efforts continued in the educational space to strengthen the social work component and the role of social workers. This included supporting students, their parents, and teachers in the educational process, as well as reducing and eliminating factors that hinder effective social functioning for students. The Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions employs 61 social workers and 4 professional supervisors in Tbilisi and the regions. The Office of Resource Officers as a social work component is currently active in 63 public schools across Georgia. To improve support services, several initiatives were undertaken in 2023, including the development of a quality assurance rule for psychosocial services, and the creation of the concept and standards for psychological services. A suicide prevention screening tool was also introduced for specialists working directly in the education system. Furthermore, the substance abuse prevention program for students over 13 years old continued, alongside the evidence-based EU DAP Unplugged Program for students under 13 years old.

To develop the "process-oriented safe school" model, the Center for Psychosocial Services continues to introduce the concept of restorative relationships in educational institutions. This approach, which is based on international best practices, promotes healthy relationships in schools, enhances students' academic progress, and increases the effectiveness of teachers and school administrators.

A key component of the restorative relationships concept is school mediation, which the Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions has been piloting since 2021. School mediation is an effective mechanism for restorative processes, addressing conflicts and resolving them constructively within educational institutions. The mediation process is led by specially trained employees of the the Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions. Over the past year, these trained mediators offered school mediation in 46 cases.

In 2023, the Center for Psychosocial Services continued to provide free psychosocial and counseling services to individuals affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine. As part of collaboration with the Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions and the Peace Corps of the US Embassy, an American volunteer social worker visited Georgia to work with children impacted by the war, alongside Georgian and Ukrainian colleagues. In schools where the Office of Resource Officers is represented as the social work component, the volunteer conducts various goal- and task-oriented activities focused on topics such as tolerance, group work, self-esteem, self-expression,etc.

The Office of Resource Officers, within the framework of cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Embassy of Japan, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, also hosts a Japanese volunteer - a social worker. The volunteer conducts awareness-raising and educational events in the schools where the Office of Resource Officers is represented as the social work component on such topics as: Japanese culture, the art of origami, Japanese clothes, music, art, etc.

Within the framework of social work, employees of the psychosocial service center engaged in a variety of informational, educational, awareness-raising, sports, discussion, and intervention activities in 2023. These activities involved 9,323 teachers, 1,065 administrators, 123,510 students, and 13,200 parents/legal representatives. During the reporting period, Resource Officers conducted approximately 200 informational and educational meetings with students on issues such as violence and cyberbullying, and about 1,800 meetings focused on road safety. Additionally, regular school activities were held on topics including anti-discrimination approaches, combating hate speech, violence, bullying, cyberbullying, gender equality, tolerance, early marriage, domestic violence, human rights, and children's rights. Around 20,000 students participated in these activities.

The Office of Resource Officers actively conducted awareness-raising campaigns. As part of Equality Week titled "I Choose Equality," various informational and educational events on equality and tolerance were held in Georgian public schools. These included intellectual games focused on equality for tenth-grade students from 26 public schools in Batumi, Akhaltsikhe, Telavi, Zugdidi, and Kutaisi. Participants answered questions related to human rights, tolerance, and equality, with winners and participants receiving special gifts from the Council of Europe. Additionally, various awareness-raising and educational events dedicated to the International Day of Children's Protection were held in public schools across Tbilisi and other regions. Resource Officers and social workers from the educational institution held meetings with students covering topics such as children's rights, combating bullying, healthy lifestyles, and tolerance. An exhibition of paintings and posters was also organized.

As part of the global campaign on violence against women, focusing on early marriage, resource officers of educational institutions and coordinators from the planning and analysis department held informative and educational meetings with 600 students from 10 public schools. Additionally, an exhibition of posters created by the students of these schools was organized.

## Vocational Education

During the reporting period, emphasis was placed on implementing crucial issues such as access to vocational education, quality improvement, aligning vocational programs with labor market needs, and promoting lifelong learning. The goal of vocational education reform is to make vocational education accessible to everyone and to meet both local and international labor market demands. To achieve this goal, work on the main directions of the reform was carried out throughout 2023 and will continue actively in 2024. Additionally, the Ministry prepared and presented to the public important directions for the development of vocational education, which include: Integrating the vocational education component at the full general education level, offering the private sector the opportunities of providing vocational education, renewing and gradually implementing professional qualifications, training vocational education teachers on a par with international standards, strengthening the management of vocational colleges, and developing a new financing model.

A key part of the new vision for the development of vocational education is the initiative to engage the private sector, which the Ministry of Education and Science began actively working on in 2023. The dialogue between public and private sectors has gradually evolved towards devolving responsibilities and establishing equal partnerships. In this context, the direct involvement of the industry in the provision and management of vocational education is crucial.

This initiative aims to introduce participatory management models for vocational education institutions, thereby integrating business into the skills ecosystem. Alongside involving the private sector in the management of vocational education institutions, the Vocational Skills Agency coordinated the revision of professional qualifications and the development of new ones based on labor market needs. This process is guided by a new methodology for qualification development that incorporates international experience.

In 2023, the Government of Georgia approved the "Procedure for the Development and Approval of Professional Standard(s)" by Resolution No. 205. Upon the adoption of the aforementioned regulations, the review of professional qualifications and the development of new qualifications in accordance with labor market needs began. The methodology emphasizes the leadership role of the private sector in this process, ensuring that qualifications reflect the actual skills demanded by the labor market.

In 2023, 31 qualifications were developed/revised, with plans to update 55 qualifications in 2024 and 40 in 2025. By 2025, professional qualifications across all sectors will be aligned with both local and international labor market needs.

A key aspect of the reform framework is the internationalization of vocational education. Significant strides have been made to enhance the development of vocational education teachers by adopting international practices. In 2023, the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia issued Order No. 54/N, which established the "Rules and Conditions for the Development and Implementation of the Vocational Education Exchange Programme." Additionally, Order No. 55/N set forth the "Rules and Conditions for the Development and Implementation of the Joint Vocational Education Program." These orders aim to foster exchange and joint programs with foreign educational institutions, expanding the scope of cooperation. Furthermore, they will promote the effective use of the Erasmus+ program within vocational education.

During the reporting period, significant efforts were made to align the vocational education system more closely with the European educational framework. Since 2022, the Erasmus+ program has been implemented at the vocational education level, with its scale progressively increasing in 2023. During this period, two applications were submitted for the Capacity Building in VET competition under the Erasmus+ program. One of these applications titled "INVEsT in you: Promote International Traineeship Programs for Armenian, Georgian, and Moldovan Students in Central Europe" was successful and its implementation will begin in 2024. This project aims to enhance international mobility, develop essential vocational and key competencies for vulnerable students in Eastern Partnership countries, and support teacher development through meetings and international activities.

The implementation of the EQAVET (European Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training) standard indicators continued successfully. In 2023, 14 institutions offering vocational educational programs (5 public and 9 private) introduced 43 new vocational programs, all fully compliant with the new standard. Additionally, the Ministry continues to support colleges by providing infrastructure and equipment that meet international standards.

Improving access to vocational education remains a top priority. To this end, several colleges have started functioning in new locations in recent years. In 2023, the Lanchkhuti training base of College "Horizonti" began admitting students for the first time. Additionally, the Ministry is supporting the authorization process for new colleges in Khashuri and Tskaltubo. The educational base of Samtskhe-Javakheti State University in Akhalkalaki underwent complete rehabilitation in 2023 to facilitate the implementation of vocational educational programs. Efforts to develop vocational education institutions also continued in Borjomi and Bolnisi.

An important strategy for improving access to vocational education is to use public school resources for vocational training. Supported by the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Development Program, efforts have commenced with 30 public schools, expanding vocational education to an additional 29 municipalities. A new initiative that began in 2023 involves integrating vocational education with the national curriculum. This initiative will enable graduating students to learn a profession alongside their general education. The mechanisms for implementing this initiative are currently being developed, with the rollout planned for the new academic year in 2024.

To develop the vocational education system, it is essential to create an environment that meets international high standards. The Ministry is actively collaborating with donor organizations to achieve this goal. In partnership with the German credit institution for reconstruction (KFW), the Ministry is advancing the development of a Center of Excellence in transport/logistics and construction. In 2023, a detailed construction project and a working business model for the center were prepared. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2024 and be completed by 2025, with the college set to start accepting students in 2026. The total budget for this project is 23 million euros.

Additionally, in 2023, the Ministry continued its cooperation with KFW to develop two new international-level centers: the Telavi Wine School and the Dusheti Tourism School. A general and detailed agreement has been prepared, and once signed, the project will move into the active implementation phase. Through bilateral negotiations between Germany and Georgia, a grant of 24 million euros has been secured for these projects.

Due to the development of new locations and the expansion of study places in existing colleges, the number of available study places for vocational education programs increased to 17,700 in 2023, marking a 15% rise compared to the previous year. As a result of the 2023 admissions process, approximately 15,500 individuals were enrolled in vocational education programs.

In recent years, public interest in vocational education has grown significantly, as evidenced by the increasing number of individuals registering for vocational education programs.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **2020** | **2021** | **2022** | **2023** |
| **Number of available study places**  | 9056 | 13 871 | 17 183 | 17 700  |
| **Number of registered places**  | 14 324 | 18 784 | 24 449 | 27 891 |

It is worth noting that in 2023, there were 554 available study places for dual programs (with an additional 62 places reserved for persons with disabilities), and a total of 1,805 applicants registered for these programs. Out of these applicants, 463 students were enrolled in dual programs as part of the 2023 admission to vocational educationprograms.

Access to financial resources is crucial for the successful implementation of vocational education reform. In 2023, the trend of increasing the budget for vocational education continued. The total budget for vocational education in 2023 was 124.1 million GEL, and for 2024, it is planned to allocate 133.5 million GEL, showing a growth trend. This growth will also extend to institutional and labor remuneration for institutions. The hourly salary of vocational education teachers has tripled over the past few years, including a 20% increase in 2023. Furthermore, preparations have been made for a 10% increase in 2024.

The development of an efficient financing system is part of the vocational education reform. Supported by German international cooperation, a working version of the new funding model has been developed. The primary feature of this model is diversified funding that takes into account priorities and social factors. Additionally, a results-based funding component will be integrated into the new model, with outcomes assessed based on predefined indicators.

The Ministry regularly assesses the effectiveness of the reform by conducting a Tracer Study among graduates of vocational educational programs. In 2022, a survey of 2020-2021 graduates was conducted using a new methodology under the coordination of the Vocational Skills Agency. According to the 2022 survey, the employment rate for 2020 graduates was 60%, while for 2021 graduates, it rose to 74%, with 20% being self-employed. The employment rate by profession was 49%. By the fourth quarter of 2023, the data collection phase for the 2022 Tracer Study of vocational education program graduates was completed, with 63 participating institutions.

With technical assistance from the European Union, efforts continued on developing a strategy for professional orientation, counseling, and career planning in formal education, along with a corresponding action plan. This strategy aims to implement an inclusive career management policy within formal education, focusing on providing equal opportunities for young people and adults to realize their potential throughout their lives. One effective tool of the career management service is the program for promoting vocational education in public schools. This program offers orientation and certificate courses for developing vocational skills to students in grades eight through twelve, in collaboration with vocational and general education institutions. In 2023, over 3,300 students participated in 209 projects conducted by more than 160 institutions offering vocational education programs.

Significant strides have been made in vocational education towards inclusive development, which involves tailoring vocational education policies, services, and programs to cater to various groups with additional needs. A new orientation service for career management has been specifically designed for individuals with disabilities and special needs. The primary objective of this service is to provide support for informed career decision-making for these individuals and facilitate their transition to vocational education. To ensure the maximum participation of individuals with disabilities and special needs, a rule on the Identification of Special Educational Needs and the Implementation of Inclusive Vocational Education was developed. This rule includes provisions for an orientation service that operates throughout the year, allowing individuals with disabilities and with special needs to engage with the service and make informed decisions. Additionally, a detailed guide and a set of tools for the orientation service were prepared.

In the fourth quarter of 2023, the pilot phase of the orientation service for persons with disabilities and with special needs was successfully completed. Mentoring groups were established, and specialists from various institutions were assigned to these groups. During the pilot phase, 56 persons with disabilities and with special needs benefited from the orientation service, with approximately 48% of them enrolling in vocational programs in 2023. The service was piloted as part of the EU-funded project "Better Opportunities for Lifelong Learning through Partnerships," with support from the United Nations Development Program. The systematic implementation of the orientation service will commence from 2024 onwards.

With the support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and through collaboration from a diverse range of stakeholders, a concept for inclusive development in vocational education has been developed. This concept focuses on aligning vocational education with the needs of individuals with various additional requirements. Furthermore, an action plan has been devised with ADB's assistance to ensure gender mainstreaming at vocational education level.

Additionally, with the support of the EU technical assistance project, a continuous development model has been created for an inclusive development team within vocational education institutions.

## Higher Education

Within the social programs of the Ministry, 1,454 students received state training grants for the 2023-2024 academic year, and 90 students received master's degree training grants. The budget for these state programs amounted to 2,725,000 GEL. Additionally, under the study financing program for students living in villages near the occupation line, 1,836 students had their first-semester tuition fees covered for the 2022-2023 academic year. In 2023, the tuition fees for the first semester were additionally financed for 205 students, and for the second semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, 1,746 students received tuition fee financing. Moreover, between March and July 2023, 329 students living in villages near the dividing line, who are studying at universities located near the occupied territories of Georgia—specifically Gori State University or Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi—received a social scholarship of 300 GEL per month. The total expenditure for this program was 2,692,840.00 GEL.

Within the framework of the "State Scholarships for Students" program, 2,734 successful students from 11 legal entities of public law - higher educational institutions - received a scholarship of 150 GEL per month during the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. In the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, the number of scholarship recipients increased to 5,000 students, with the monthly scholarship amount rising to 300 GEL. Thus, 5,000 successful students are provided with scholarships in the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Additionally, 7 students received the Dimitri Gulia and Kosta Khetagurov scholarships of 300 GEL per month in the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, and 4 students received this scholarship in the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. The total expenditure for the program amounted to 7,447,800.00 GEL. Within the program for promoting higher education for students living in the occupied territories, 828 students received state educational grants in the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year. For the 2023-2024 academic year, the amount spent on 915 students was 1,957,500.00 GEL.

The Ministry implements a state program for issuing state educational and master's grants to citizens of foreign countries, governed by the rules and conditions set by the order of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia. Within this program, a foreign citizen can receive state educational/ master's grant in the maximum amount of 2,250 GEL. In the 2023-2024 academic year, state study grants were awarded to 50 bachelor's students and 9 master's students, under the state program for issuing state education grants to foreign citizens. These grants were given to those who passed the unified national exams or common master's exams and earned the right to continue their studies at higher educational institutions.

In 2023, an unprecedented project was implemented, resulting in the financial debts of 32,172 students with suspended status being written off. The total amount transferred to universities for this purpose was 3,202,393.00 GEL.

The Ministry implements the teacher training educational program, within which 1,067 people received state training grants for the 2023-2024 academic year. The budget for this program in 2023 was set at 3,200,000.00 GEL.

Within the framework of the "Promotion of Higher EducationInstitutions" program, the budget allocated for the promotion and technical support of various training and research projects at state higher education institutions governed by the Ministry amounted to 1,501,392.00 GEL.

The program was implemented through the following sub-programs:

* Support for the Tbilisi Regional Educational and Research Center (Hub) of the Pan-European Academy of Sciences at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
* Funding for the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University Georgian-Ossetian Relations Scientific Research Center
* Support for the French-Georgian University Project sub-program
* The Tbilisi State Medical University project Research and Correction of Psychological Mood
* Promotion of the Peace Education program at Sokhumi State University
* Sub-program for the internationalization of educational programs in higher education institutions of Georgia
* The Sokhumi State University project Support of Psychological and Social Service Platform for Students
* Support for the development of academic staff at the State University of Gori
* Support for academic, research activities, and student projects at higher education institutions

The primary objectives of the "Study in Georgia" program are to bolster the academic and scientific capabilities of higher education institutions in Georgia. As part of this program, full support was provided for the ABET accreditation process for undergraduate STEM programs at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia Technical University, and Ilia State University. This support significantly enhances the credibility and appeal of Georgia's higher education system on the global stage.

Program budget according to higher educationinstitutions

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **N** | **Name** |  |
| 1 | LEPL Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University | 507,500.00 |
| 2 | LEPL Ilia State University | 176,380.00 |
| 3 | LEPL - Georgia Technical University | 100,480.00 |
| **Total** | **784,360.00** |

Within the framework of the mentioned financing, in October of this year, the Georgian Technical University's undergraduate English-language program in "Biomedical Engineering" and the Ilia State University's undergraduate program in "Computer Engineering" received ABET accreditation from the American Engineering and Technology Accreditation Council.

The list of programs fully financed by the state has been approved. For the 2023-2024 academic year, a new limitation was introduced for the continuation of program funding in subsequent academic years. Specifically, students will receive state funding for the priority program only if they have completed at least 45 credits under the program in the previous academic year.

The third component of the Innovation, Inclusion and Quality - Georgia I2Q (IBRD) project focuses on enhancing financing opportunities in higher education and promoting internationalization. The project encompasses five main components, scheduled for implementation from 2020 to 2025, with a total funding of 90 million euros.

The project is based on the international loan agreement signed by the Government of Georgia with the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) on 18 June 2019 (loan agreement N8955-GE). The project is being implemented by the Ministry and the Municipal Development Fund, with support from the World Bank.

As part of the third component, recommendations were developed to introduce a new financing model, including performance-based funding for financing higher education. To effectively administer this new model for financing higher education, to process relevant information, and to evaluate the institutional efficiency of higher education institutions, a management system for a higher education institutions' information database will be created. Currently, the team is working on integrating this data system with the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement and establishing funding indicators and a specific formula. Meetings are being held with higher education institutions to explain the system and gather relevant feedback.

Within the framework of the Ministry, the Competitive Innovation Fund (CIF) was established as a grant program to finance competitive initiatives of higher education institutions. This fund aims to enhance academic programs and the learning environment. The fund has a total budget of 4.2 million USD. Two grant competitions have already been announced. Thirteen projects were financed in the first grant competition, and the second competition was announced in September 2023.

The second grant competition has different priorities, with a greater emphasis on internationalization. Furthermore, specific directions of this competition have been outlined. Notably, the competition encompasses the development and enhancement of higher education programs in the following broad categories of the "Study Fields Classifier":

a) natural sciences, mathematics and statistics;

b) information and communication technologies;

c) engineering, production and construction;

d) agriculture, forestry, fisheries, veterinary medicine;

e) education;

f) Health care, social welfare.

The priorities of the competition are:

* Creation, development, and implementation of educational programs (joint training, internships, and/or other initiatives at various education levels, including structured doctoral programs) aimed at enhancing the quality of learning-teaching and meeting industry/employer needs. This includes partnerships with public and private higher education institutions.
* In cooperation with a higher education institution recognized under foreign legislation, the creation and development of educational programs to facilitate the awarding of joint academic degrees, including "double degrees" and/or international accreditation.
* Promotion of the higher education institution to obtain accreditation from a foreign organization recognized by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement.

The project also includes the development of a joint doctoral program in the field of education and science management. Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and Akaki Tsereteli State University were chosen for this purpose. By fostering active communication and involvement with these universities, students' entrepreneurial skills and sector-specific English language modules are being developed. Additionally, a three-season school design has been developed for PhD students and junior researchers, which will be implemented in 2024-2025.

On 2 October 2023, the meeting of the Council of the Bologna Working Group was held under the organization of the Ministry. It should be noted that in the period from 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023, Georgia is the co-chairing country of the Bologna Process (BFUG) together with the Kingdom of Spain. It is important that the Bologna process is Europe's broadest cooperation platform in the field of higher education, in which Georgia has been a participant since 2005, and it means promoting the integration of the Georgian higher education system and its institutions into the European and international educational space.

In 2023, the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement undertook several significant initiatives to enhance educational quality. For the first time in its history, the center conducted international accreditation of higher education programs offered in a foreign country. In 2023, three medical education programs were registered with the center for international accreditation. Additionally, accreditation has become mandatory for all types and levels of higher education programs. Consequently, all educational programs will be accredited according to the terms of cluster accreditation.

To harmonize higher education with the unified European system, starting in 2023, international experts have been involved in the evaluation process of all levels and types of higher education programs. These international experts, serving as chairs of the expert groups, work alongside local field experts, employers, and students.

In 2023, the cluster accreditation of higher education programs in art, defense, and security was completed. A total of 267 programs and 48 clusters successfully passed accreditation. Additionally, 12 sectoral characteristics of higher education were approved.

The improvement and development of quality assurance mechanisms for doctoral educational programs and scientific-research components were undertaken. A quality assurance framework document for the evaluation of doctoral-level educational programs was developed.

## Science

In 2023, 22.8 million GEL was allocated towards the scientific research support program to fund independent scientific and research units within higher education institutions.

This program was implemented through two sub-programs:

a) The scientific research support sub-program (20.3 million GEL was allocated) targeting the following institutions:

* 17 independent scientific research entities under LEPL Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
* 15 independent scientific research entities under LEPL Technical University of Georgia
* 8 independent scientific research entities under LEPL Ilia State University
* 2 independent scientific-research entities under LEPL Tbilisi State Medical University

b) Sub-program aimed at promoting the renewal of the material and technical base of independent scientific and research entities under LEPL higher education institutions.

The sub-program aims to support independent scientific research units within higher education institutions (such as Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Ilia State University, and Tbilisi State Medical University) that operate under the Ministry's governance. This support includes providing modern scientific research equipment, necessary computer software, computer hardware, essential materials, funding for the purchase of relevant literature, for the functional enhancement of existing scientific research equipment and/or for the acquisition of spare parts.

Participating scientific and research units of the program submitted 62 projects to the National Science Foundation of Georgia for the competition aimed at promoting the renewal of the material and technical base of independent scientific and research entities of LEPL higher educational institutions. Given the competition budget of 1,500,000.00 GEL, the commission selected 41 projects for financing, with a total budget of 1,499,751.00 GEL. For 18 of these projects, the budget was adjusted based on the commission's recommendation and with the approval of the project authors. Project estimates can be viewed in the Grant Management Unified System (GMUS).

To promote the advancement of science, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia organizes various scientific-cognitive events annually. These events involve higher educational institutions, scientific research centers, and other organizations. As part of the Science Promotion Program, several large-scale events were held:

An event celebrating the International Day of Women and Girls in Science was held, attended by young female scientists who won the competitions announced by the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation in 2021. Also present were students who won the "Leonardo da Vinci" competition, girls winning the 2020-2021 Millennium Innovations Award, and students participating in the Teachers' House program "Chkhirkedela."

An event celebrating the observatory's anniversary and Astronomy Day was held at the Abastumani Observatory. The event featured popular scientific reports and stand presentations from various universities.

As part of the XI National Congress of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology of Georgia, the VII European Congress on Asthma, COPD and Respiratory Allergy, and the I International Congress "Coronavirus Infection (COVID-19): Prevention, Diagnosis, Treatment, and Rehabilitation," a school/conference on "Molecular Allergology and Vaccination" supported by Science Promotion Program was held.

The project "Promotion of Science in Schools Along the Dividing Line" was implemented in rural schools along the dividing line. Its aim was to raise awareness among schoolchildren about various branches of science. As part of the project, Georgian scientists conducted interactive lectures on anthropology, palynology, and archaeology.

A scientific and educational event titled "Blue Policy of Maritime Countries" was held in Batumi. This event showcased the latest scientific research on biodiversity, ecology, natural resources, climate, and socio-economic, political, cultural-historical, and other areas related to the Black Sea and coastal regions. The event included exhibitions, conferences, workshops, quizzes, experiments for students, and various other activities.

As part of the science popularization program, the TSU Arnold Chikobava Institute of Linguistics held a contest for students of the Georgian diaspora titled "Ambassadors of the Georgian Alphabet." The purpose of the competition was to raise awareness of the Georgian alphabet and strengthen the knowledge of the Georgian language among Georgian students and young people living abroad. In December, an awarding ceremony was held for the winning contestants.

The inaugural "Open Science Forum" was conducted as a tripartite meeting, involving the European Commission and the European Open Science Cloud Association. During the first day of the forum, participants deliberated on the draft of the national open science policy and strategy, Georgia's involvement in establishing the European Open Science Cloud, and forthcoming prospects in this domain.

In 2023, the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia conducted 19 grant contests and 2 sub-programs under program code 32 05 01 02 to provide scientific grants and advance research efforts. These initiatives resulted in the funding of a total of 485 project applications submitted by 1593 researchers, including 634 young scientists. Regarding the gender breakdown of grant beneficiaries: 54.4% were women and 45.6% were men, with women constituting 46% of grant project leaders and men comprising 54%.

In 2023, there was an 11.7% increase in the number of beneficiary researchers compared to 2022. The overall success rate was 29.6%. Among the funded projects, the highest success rate in terms of multi-year fundamental research was observed in exact sciences and engineering, reaching 41%. Additionally, 111 young scientists, including postdoctoral, doctoral, and master's students, received individual research grants.

29 researchers received grant funding to internationalize science, expand international cooperation and conduct research in leading European scientific centers.

Grant funding was allocated for the publication of 35 monographs to disseminate and communicate new knowledge created in Georgia. Additionally, funding was provided for the organization of 22 international scientific events, aimed at promoting the exchange of scientific information, sharing new knowledge, and enhancing the international visibility and awareness of Georgian science.

In 2023, a total of 25 prizes and scholarships were awarded, including 1 special prize specifically for female scientists. These awards and scholarships are intended to recognize the merits of Georgian science and promote the popularization of science.

In 2023, research funded by the Foundation led to the publication of 173 articles authored or co-authored by Georgian scientists in internationally refereed, peer-reviewed journals.

53 projects were submitted for competition to the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia by the scientific-research entities participating in the Promotion of Scientific Research program, the 3rd sub-program "Supporting the renewal of the material and technical base of the independent scientific-research entities of LEPL higher education institutions". The competition commission selected 40 projects for financing, with a total budget of 1,499,916.00 GEL.

Under the "International Study Olympiads" sub-program of the "Encouraging Successful Students" program, the Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation of Georgia supported the participation of national teams in various educational Olympiads. These included physics (IPhO 53), informatics (IOI 35), mathematics (IMO 64), biology (IBO 34), and chemistry (IChO 55). In 2023, the Georgian national teams achieved a total of 16 awards at the International Educational Olympiads: 1 gold, 4 silver, 9 bronze, and 2 certificates of honor.

During 8-14 September 2023, the 7th All-European Youth Olympiad in Informatics took place in Kutaisi. Georgia was represented by 4 teams in the Olympics, and they collectively earned 6 silver medals and 2 certificates.

As per the directive from the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, the National Center for Educational Research (referred to as the Center) conducted three significant evaluations during the reporting period:

* Evaluation of the third-generation curriculum.
* Assessment of school textbooks based on teaching practice.
* Evaluation of the teacher's professional development and career advancement program.

The National Center for Educational Research organized a conference on 8 December titled "Research to Support Education Policy - Challenges in Schooling." During the conference, the Center presented the results of all three studies it conducted.

The Center remains engaged in a comprehensive evaluation of school textbooks. Following the evaluation based on teaching practice, the next steps include assessing the school textbook approval rules and conducting an analysis of international practices in this regard. The Center is actively working on these tasks at the moment. Additionally, the Center is involved in a project related to school education financing, and the preparatory work for this project has entered an active phase.

# Detailed progress with each task

## Development of preschool education

In 2023, the legal basis for the implementation of the authorization process was prepared. In particular, the Resolution N76 of the Government of Georgia of February 21, 2023 approved the “Temporary Rule for the Authorization of Early Childhood Education and/or Preschool Education Institutions, as well as the Suspension and Termination of the Institution's Authorization”, also, a corps of authorization experts was formed, the authorization council for early and pre-school education institutions was established by the Prime Minister's decree, a guide to the authorization process and authorization standards was prepared.

Three higher education institutions have received accreditation to implement the bachelor's program in preschool education. The program was fully funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia. Within the framework of the international conference – “Early Education and Care” sessions were devoted to the connection of qualified educational personnel in the field with child development. To attract students, a webinar was held on the topic “Why do I choose a bachelor's program in preschool education?”. The initiative of private universities is supported by the Ministry to train the academic staff of all universities across the country in order to develop pre-school bachelor programs.

The World Bank project, which will be completed in 2028, is working on the development of guidelines and requirements for the continuing professional development of caregiver-pedagogues, on the professional development of employed caregivers and on the development of salary policy.

The training module for the professional development of caregiver-pedagogues was approved by Order 68/N of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of Georgia (June 20, 2020), the online version - by Order 70/N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia.

organisations providing training modules for the professional development of caregiver-pedagogues have been identified, 36 trainers have been trained. Since 2021, 3027 people have been retrained, 274 people have been trained by the center.

 “The activity monitoring system of the provider of the professional development training module for caregiver-pedagogues” has been developed and approved.

The implementation of the early education curriculum – “Playing” (“methodological guide for 2 to 5 years old and mixed age groups" and practical guides/scenarios for 2 to 5 years old and mixed age groups) has been completed in selected target municipalities. The implementation process was carried out in 22 municipalities (Martvili, Borjomi, Bolnisi, Tsageri, Tkibuli, Baghdati, Lanchkhuti, Ozurgeti, Chokhatauri, Khoni, Shuakhevi, Keda, Kobuleti, Sagarejo, Khelvachauri, Sachkhere, Tetritskaro, Khashuri, Dmanisi, Gardabani, Chiatura, Kazbegi ), in 3 of them, in Bolnisi, Martvil and Borjomi, peer mentoring was piloted.

From 2023, the curriculum is being implemented in 21 more municipalities (Abasha, Zugdidi, Chkhorotsku, Tsalenjikha, Senaki, Tianeti, Aspindza, Adigeni, Akhaltsikhe, Lentekhi, Dusheti, Mtskheta, Akhalgori, Telavi, Kvareli, Rustavi, Gori, Akhmeta, Dedoflistskaro, Sighnaghi, Gurjaani).

The target groups consist of representatives of associations/kindergarten administrations, practitioners involved in the educational process, and representatives of educational resource centers. In the process of implementing the curriculum, the municipalities are provided with three training modules by the National Center for Teacher Professional Development: “Early Education Curriculum-Playing” for practitioners and administration and “Early Inclusive Education”.

25 groups - 22 online, 3 in FTF format – have completed the module “Early Inclusive Education” within the framework of the “Promotion of Inclusive Education” program.

The revised state standards of early and preschool education were approved by the Resolution N264 of the Government of Georgia. The document was changed not only structurally, but the features of the standard of inclusive education was also improved and some supporting indicators for children and parents of ethnic minorities were added.

An electronic system of primary registration of early and preschool education services and/or providers of preschool education services and/or institutions implementing only school readiness program was created, where public and private kindergartens operating throughout Georgia, who wish to continue their activities before receiving authorization, were registered until December 31, 2022. In addition, immediately after the implementation of the relevant regulation, all individual entrepreneurs were given the opportunity to register in the mentioned system until March 31.

For the purpose of self-assessment during 2023:

1. The self-assessment electronic platform kg.eqe.ge was prepared and piloted (January-April);
2. Self-assessment questionnaires were piloted and integrated into the platform for 4 target groups (administration, educational staff, technical staff, parents);
3. The concept of implementation of self-assessment was prepared;
4. 4. 2 streams of self-assessment specialists were selected by competition and trained;
5. 5. Self-assessment started in May and ended in December. Self-assessment of 2047 kindergartens has been completed.

Self-assessments are collected on the electronic platform kg.eqe.ge

The authorization schedule is based on the gardens' self-assessment analysis. To start the analysis, preliminary and preparatory work has been carried out, namely:

1. The methodology and tool for self-assessment analysis has been prepared;

2. Analysts are selected and trained.

In order to raise public awareness of the importance of early and preschool education, webinars were held in 2023 for parents of children aged 0-6, personnel of preschool education institutions and kindergarten associations, representatives of educational resource centers of the Ministry and municipalities, as well as other interested parties on the following topics:

1. The importance of alternative models for universal access to preschool education.
2. Protecting the rights of the child.

The importance of diverse forms of education for the well-being of children, parents and families.

1. Kindergarten is a parent-supporting institution.
2. Why do I choose a bachelor's program in preschool education?
3. A child's emotional safety in kindergarten: a foundation for lifelong well-being.
4. Early education curriculum implementation practice.

Each webinar aimed to raise public awareness of the importance of preschool education and parental involvement in the educational process. The webinar on the topic of positive parenting emphasized the special role of fathers and the equal distribution of responsibilities and obligations between parents in the process of raising children. The target audience of the webinars consists of both the preschool education community and representatives of other fields.

Meetings were held with organisations working on gender issues, girls and women. Also, it should be noted that hub colleges, "Iberia" and "Prestige" have developed a gender-sensitive communication campaign. For example, Prestige College started women-oriented information meetings in Pankisi Valley.

At the same time, the agency, together with its partner organisation, prepared an image video clip, which is gender sensitive and aims to promote vocational education among students, within the framework of which students had the opportunity to try themselves in various professions, which will help them make informed decisions in the future.

Methodological and educational resources (“Early Education Curriculum-Playing”) were implemented in 22 target municipalities, out of which peer mentoring was piloted in 3 municipalities. Meetings were held with about 1,500 parents of children under 6 years of age and representatives of advisory councils to raise awareness about early childhood and preschool education and to promote positive parenting.

In order to raise public awareness about early and preschool education, online webinars were held with the participation of professionals in the field, which are available on the Facebook page organised by the Department of Preschool and General Education Development – “Preschool Education for All Children”.

Research has been conducted in two directions:

1. Survey of parents of first graders regarding access to preschool education;
2. Conducting focus groups with parents of children under the age of 6 who are left out of pre-school education.

Also, a strategy and an action plan have been developed in four pilot municipalities.

The concept of development and implementation of alternative models of preschool education was prepared based on the research conducted in the following areas:

1. Survey of parents of first graders regarding access to preschool education;
2. Conducting focus groups with parents of children under the age of 6 who are left out of pre-school education;
3. Study of international early education systems;
4. Research and analysis of existing alternative service forms/models in Georgia.

## Development of General Education

Work is underway on the document of national goals of general education, where the main focus will be on the formation and strengthening of national values, national identity, state consciousness, general and universal values among students.

The administrative part of the national curriculum was revised and approved. School autonomy was defined as one of the main priorities of the Ministry. By increasing trust in the school, by giving it more creative and academic freedom, many tasks that cannot be managed centrally will be solved. The powers delegated to the school were identified and it became very clear in which direction the school is granted autonomy and what kind of accountability system is formed before the Ministry. The degree of independence and academic freedom of private schools has increased significantly.

Revision of national curriculum standards is underway. With the involvement of all links of the education system, the knowledge, skills and values in each subject are determined, which should be the basis of classroom teaching and student education; Emphasis is placed on the systematic integration of non-formal education in the educational process; The degree of independence of the school will increase - the school itself determines with what resources, what approach and methods it will achieve the goals of the level; The concept of the middle level will be focused on multifaceted support of the student's self-determination and realization of his/her potential; In addition to the basic, compulsory program for all, advanced courses in subjects will be offered to students based on their interests at the secondary level, as well as optional subjects for more variety, integrated vocational programs.

Work is underway on the salary policy for school teachers, which will be implemented from July 2024.

As part of the general education quality assurance reform, after the new authorization standards and updated procedures have been implemented since 2023, the process of gradual authorization of public schools has also started. Last year, 339 public school authorization applications were submitted to the center. In 2023, the administrative process of authorization of 332 public schools was completed. The decision on the authorization of all schools, together with the relevant conclusion and the attached protocol, is published on the website of the center (please see the link https://eqe.ge/ka/page/static/973/daskvnebi-gadatsyvetilebebi)

310 three-level and 22 two-level public schools were authorized. The list of authorized public schools was updated daily on the website of the center. The information Excel document about the authorized schools, including the mentioned 332 public schools, is presented at the given link <https://eqe.ge/ka/page/static/93/zogadsaganmanatleblo-datsesebulebebi>

In the direction of updating the professional standard and sectoral characteristics of teachers and developing and approving the appropriate policy document for the attraction and employment of teachers, the Higher Education Sectoral Council reviewed the project of "Sectoral Characteristics of General Education Primary Level Teacher Education" developed within the framework of external initiation, and implemented content changes within its competence. The new sectoral characteristic, developed in view of the external initiation project, fully covers the specifics of general education primary level teacher education. Thus, a new sectoral characteristic was developed - the sectoral characteristic of higher education of general education primary level teacher education.

Resolution N241 of May 23, 2019 of the Government of Georgia “About the approval of the teacher's professional development and career advancement scheme” included amendments to Resolution N97 of March 10, 2023 and Resolution N221 of June 12, 2023, which mainly refer to the evaluation of the practical activities of teachers, teachers employed in non-Georgian language schools and special education teachers.

The process of certification of applicants for public school directorship was conducted, the persons who obtained the certificate confirming the right to be the director of public school were identified and all certified persons were given the opportunity to submit an electronic consent application in order to be nominated for election to the board of trustees of the public school. The involvement of NCEQE in the implementation of the mentioned activity was expressed with the participation of the representatives of the center in the competition commission. Training modules were prepared for the career development of public school principals.

The share of certified directors in the total number - 1170 out of 2086 directors of public schools are certified, i.e. 56%. Within the framework of the Council of Europe project “Democracy Begins at School”, a practical guide “Students' participation in democratic school governance” was developed. See the link https://rm.coe.int/-/1680adefbc

The working version of the guide was piloted in 20 public schools. As a result of piloting, the final version of the guide was developed. The total budget of the project is 70,000 euros.

To update standards of the guides and selection criteria:

* The content and technical criteria of the primary level guides were approved;
* Rules for reviewing textbooks were approved (Acts N4 and N5 are available on the website https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=7147&lang=geo)
* The “Procedures and Terms of Agreement of the guide with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia” was approved. The review process of the guides was conducted in accordance with the updated criteria/requirements.
* Competition for approval was held on school textbooks of classes X, XI and primary level I and II.
* Competition for approval on the textbooks of classes I, II and XI has ended; Approval was awarded to 26 sets of competitive textbooks at the secondary level, and 50 - at the elementary level.

From the 2023-2024 academic year, the teaching-learning process will be conducted in accordance with the third generation national curriculum in the Georgian sectors of general education institutions in grades I-XI, and in grades I-X of non-Georgian-speaking sectors.

Subject training modules for senior, lead and mentor teachers were developed and updated (116 training modules in total), both face-to-face and online. Webinars were held for teachers in different subject areas, 25 webinars in total. Educational resources in 19 subject areas were created and placed on the “E-house of education” portal - in total, 250 resources of different formats have been prepared.

LEPL – Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions, with a security component, entered additional 27 public schools in the regions of Georgia. As of now, LEPL – Office of Resource Officers of Educational Institutions, throughout Georgia, is represented in 719 public schools, as well as in 1 private school and 1 vocational college.

The introduction of the social work component in schools and the strengthening of the role of social workers continued actively. With the social work component, the educational institution's resource officer service is currently represented in 63 public schools of Tbilisi and regions.

Within the framework of social work, various informative, educational, cognitive, sports, discussion and intervention activities were joined by: 9,323 - teachers, 1,065 - administration representatives, 123,510 - students, 13,200 - parents/legal representatives.

Regarding the construction of the European School, significant progress has been achieved: in particular, the construction of the structural part and earthworks:

 - 85% of ground works is completed

 - 90% of supporting walls are completed

 - 100% of the construction of the structural part of the buildings is completed

LOT#3-complete construction-repair and engineering works and improvement of the territory.

 - A contract for construction works has been signed

- A contract for supervisory services has been signed

- The mobilization is over

 -Construction-repair and engineering communication works are in progress

 LOT#4 Furniture and equipment purchase, transportation and installation

- The list of furniture and equipment to be purchased and the preparation of project documentation are in the final stage

- Tender procedures are planned to start in February 2024

Challenges

- Construction of access road

Negotiations are underway with Tbilisi City Hall

- Construction of sewage pipeline

Due to the lack of a central sewage network, negotiations are underway with the owner of the private network

- Magti mast

The "Magti" mast is located within the boundaries of the project area. Dismantling is delayed.

In terms of strengthening the direction of inclusive education, the program for the promotion of inclusive education fully ensures the development of modules composed of inclusive-related issues and the training of teachers with these modules. The training modules include teaching-learning strategies for students with specific difficulties, as well as general teaching-learning concepts and strategies.

In accordance with the change in the principle of conducting trainings, within the framework of the inclusive education promotion program, on the basis of the applications of schools, the training of subject teachers provided by the national curriculum was carried out in the following modules: classroom management, crisis behavior management, individual curriculum, professional support of a practicing special education teacher.

In the framework of the inclusive education promotion program, an introductory course for the professional development of a special teacher, training of an individual assistant for a special education student, in the sensoral direction - teaching and teaching theories of visually impaired students, a sign language course, and a certification program for Surdo interpreters were implemented. In order to promote the profession of a special education teacher, a regional training tour was held in two stages.

In order to conduct diagnostic evaluations of students of IV, VI and IX classes, preparatory works are being carried out, after the completion of which the specific term and forms of conducting will be determined.

Curriculum for catch-up and accelerated learning as a remedial program is defined by the National Curriculum (Article 8).

In the general education management information system (eSchool), an appropriate module has been created, where information about a student with special needs shall be displayed.

The Department of Preschool and General Education Development implements state standards using the bilingual education approach in preschool and school communities of national minorities.

For the academic year 2023-2024, 184 public schools and 34 preschool institutions are included in the program (37 kindergartens were included, although the outflow of human resources led to a decrease in the number)

The following is implemented in 184 public schools:

* About 400 bilingual education specialists were trained in 4 subjects (mathematics, natural science, fine arts, self and society) based on the resources developed at the primary level (the mentioned status was given to the so-called auxiliary teachers);
* Student work resources created in Self and Society and Mathematics were printed and distributed;
* The first part of the bilingual textbook in natural science has been prepared, printed and distributed to 170 schools. Due to the fact that the national curriculum is being updated, work on the bilingual textbook will resume only after the updated curriculum is approved;
* The introduction and strengthening of non-formal education and the implementation of developed bilingual projects continue.

For non-Georgian-speaking schools/sectors, newly approved school textbooks of classes I-X have been translated and provided. Textbooks of class XI are being translated.

All public and private schools are included in the electronic management information system, the operation and development of which is ensured by the Education Management Information System. The mentioned system ensures equal access of schools to informational and software resources, and the information about students, teachers, school administration and teaching process, including learning outcomes and student movement is fully reflected in it.

## Development of Vocational Education

According to the survey of graduates conducted in 2022, the employment rate of 2020 graduates is 60%, and the employment rate of 2021 graduates is 74%. In the fourth quarter of 2023, the data collection stage of the 2022 study of graduates of vocational educational programs was completed, in which a total of 63 institutions implementing vocational programs participated.

Number of graduates of dual programs - as of 2023, 886 people have completed dual programs.

Proportion of those enrolled in vocational education programs who dropped out - the dropout rate was 24% (data calculated from the cohort of vocational students enrolled in 2020)

According to the survey of graduates conducted in 2022, the employment rate of 2020 graduates is 60%, and the employment rate of 2021 graduates is 74%. The share of the self-employed among the employed graduates of 2020-2021 is 20%.

In 2023, the “Profession Standard/Rule for Development and Approval of Profession Standards” was approved by Resolution N205 of the Government of Georgia. After the approval of the mentioned regulation, on August 23 of the current year, the “Procedure for designing, developing and approval of the vocational educational standard and module/modules” was approved by order N80/N. After the adoption of the mentioned regulations, the methodology for developing and processing professional qualifications was approved by the order of the Director General of the N(N)LE Professional Skills Agency, and the revision of professional qualifications and the development of new qualifications in accordance with the needs of the labor market began. The main direction of the methodology is that the private sector has become the leader in this process and the qualifications will take into account the skills that the labor market actually needs.

The process has already started and the development of 31 qualifications was completed in 2023. By 2025, professional qualifications in all sectors will respond to local and international labor market needs.

1. The rules and conditions for the development and implementation of the joint and exchange vocational educational program have been approved (Order N55/N and Order N54/N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia; June 27, 2023);

2. In order to improve the administration of joint and exchange vocational education programs, a technical task for the development of digital modules of joint and exchange programs was created for the electronic system of vocational education management - eVET;

3. Agricultural students of vocational education institutions have the opportunity to participate in international practice in the Federal Republic of Germany. The program is implemented to promote international mobility and aims to study the best practices in the field of agriculture. International practice is carried out in cooperation with AgroKontakte International.

4. From 2023, a project financed within the framework of the institutional strengthening of vocational education component of the Erasmus+ program - Beyond Europe with Microcredentials, is being implemented, the partner of which is the Professional Skills Agency from Georgia; In 2023, in the competition "Institutional cooperation in vocational education" (Capacity Building in VET) announced within the Erasmus+ program, 2 applications were submitted, one of which - INVEsT in you: promote international traineeship programs for Armenian, Georgian and Moldovan students in Central Europe - won and its implementation will begin in 2024;

5. In order to share international experience, during the reporting period, cooperation between the institutions implementing vocational education programs and the experts of the “Senior Expert Service (SES)” organisation continued. Cooperation also continues with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Within the framework of cooperation, with the support of SES and JICA, a visit of German and Japanese experts was carried out Georgia. The purpose of the visit was to support the improvement of the educational process and teaching methods. Also, with the coordination of colleges and the support of various partners, foreign experts were hosted in order to share their experience;

6. From 2023, the Institute of European Languages started implementing the training program "Hotel Manager".The theoretical part of the program will be carried out in Georgia, and the practical component will be carried out for 3 months in high-class hotels and sanatoriums in Germany, which will be led by highly qualified instructors. The purpose of the program is to get closer to the European educational space, work culture, increase professional skills, develop German language teaching and promote employment.

Resolution N416 of the Government of Georgia dated August 9, 2022 “On the approval of the rules and conditions for the implementation of the vocational education program/short cycle educational program/professional training program/professional retraining program in the form of work-based education” was approved;

Resolution N451 of the Government of Georgia dated September 5, 2022 “On the approval of the rules and conditions for obtaining the status of an educational enterprise by a person” was approved.

During the reporting period, work continued in the direction of integrating the general education component invocational education. Training on integrated programs is available in almost all regions of Georgia. According to the information provided by the LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, in 2023, 21 out of 26 public vocational education institutions (colleges) implemented integrated vocational programs, which is 80% of public vocational education institutions.

783 students were enrolled in integrated programs within the framework of admission to vocatinal educational programs in 2023. In 2023, 6 new integrated programs were added to the system. In addition to the above, 2 existing integrated programs were re-authorized. As of 2023, 91 integrated programs were implemented in the system.

In 2023, with state funding, the process of developing the adult education system continued, which involves the introduction of diverse programs, securing funding, promoting services and creating new flexible procedures. 216 professional training and retraining programs were financed with the support of the Ministry. It should be noted that in 2023, 188 programs of 54 legal entities were added to the system. As of 2023, 500 professional training and professional retraining programs were available to anyone. In 2023, 7,158 people were enrolled in professional training and retraining programs, and as of 2023, the total number of people enrolled since the system was launched was 19,646.

The analysis related to the development of key competencies has been completed. The “Concept of Development of Key Competencies at the Vocational Education Level: has been developed, which includes needs analysis and recommendations. Based on this concept, work has been started on the development of non-formal education courses and resources focused on the development of key competencies.

Civic education is taught in all vocational educational institutions in accordance with the updated module. The new module of civic education provides a holistic approach to the teaching process of civic education and is focused, on the one hand, on acquiring factual and conceptual knowledge, and on the other hand, on developing the necessary skills for citizenship in a democratic society.

By order #1109249 of September 8, 2023 of the Director General of the Vocational Skills Agency, an independent general module of entrepreneurship was approved, which is in full compliance with the European framework of entrepreneurship - EtreComp. In order to support the implementation of the module, the appropriate textbook for the module "Entrepreneurship" was also developed (the said digital textbook is available in Georgian and English languages); Also, according to the Shuttle methodology, teacher and student guides have been created.

Within the framework of the "Skills4Job" program of the European Union, in line with the CBLLL project of the United Nations Development Program, the Skills Agency developed the concept and implementation mechanisms of digital and blended learning in vocational education, which was the basis for the development model of the learning electronic platform (LMS) for professional education. The LMS platform was developed in 2023 with the support of the Asian Development Bank.

Within the framework of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) project, in order to pilot a new approach to foreign language teaching, a technical task document for the introduction of a new model of English and German language teaching was developed. The mentioned approach envisages the assessment of students' needs and teaching according to the relevant levels of competences of the European CEFR language framework for foreign language teaching. The piloting of the foreign language teaching center concept is planned within the framework of skill hubs (in Kutaisi and Telavi), after which a plan to replicate the concept in other vocational schools will be developed and the final foreign language teaching policy document will be formed. This document should be developed by an independent organisation selected as a result of the tender. According to the requirements of the Asian Development Bank, the company selection procedure covers a long period, therefore, it was not possible to select the company in 2023 as planned, which led to the postponement of the language teaching concept to 2025.

Within the framework of the United Nations Development Program project, electronic textbooks were created to support the teaching of integrated general modules in the following directions: “Science and Technology”, “Mathematical Literacy” and “Citizenship”. Additionally, a set of complex tasks was developed for the integrated general module “Science and Technology”. In addition, in cooperation with the organisation “Action Against Hunger” Shuttle methodology guides for students and teachers were developed. The objectives of this methodology are: promotion of social inclusion, increasing opportunities for employment/self-employment of participants, promotion of development of entrepreneurial and professional skills of participants.

In addition, a new electronic textbook "Entrepreneurship" and a collection of relevant tasks (toolkit) were developed for teaching entrepreneurship. In 2023, within the framework of the integrated programs, a sports teaching guide and an aesthetic integrated module teaching guide were additionally developed.

By the end of 2023, a total of 9 (nine) different learning resources have been developed in the direction of integrated modules and entrepreneurship. All of them are in digital format. In addition, to promote online and blended learning, 14 different self-directed and blended learning types of courses have been created on the vocational education e-learning platform to support both students and teachers/potential course authors.

From 2022 to December 31, 2023, 23 educational institutions have been authorized by the new authorization standards of vocational educational institutions.

In the months of April and October 2023, workshops were held with the support and active involvement of the European Training Foundation (ETF) regarding the integration of EQAVET indicators and the issues of implementation of evaluation with said indicators.

2023, out of ten EQAVET indicators, two new indicators were selected, according to which no assessment was carried out in 2022, these indicators are:

* Employment rate of graduates of vocational educational programs;
* Application of acquired skills in the workplace. Using these indicators, in the pilot mode, the evaluation of the agricultural direction programs was carried out and a report was prepared. In addition to the above, steps were taken in the direction of integrating EQAVET indicators into the authorization procedures of vocational educational institutions. At this stage, eight indicators of EQAVET (2; 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 8 and 9) have been integrated by professional educational institutions in the form of documents of program evaluation and feasibility of program implementation to be presented at the center within the framework of administrative proceedings.

On May 25, 2023, according to the program approved within the framework of the agreement signed between the UNDP and the LEPL – National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement (On the Development of Vocational Education in Georgia - Agreement N10), a number of activities for the development of a 360-degree electronic self-evaluation system for vocational educational institutions began.

With the support of the United Nations Development Program, with the joint cooperation of the National Center for the Educational Quality Enhancement and the Skills Agency, self-assessment tools were created for vocational education institutions, which will be subsequently (1) used by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement for external evaluation, and (2) used by the Skills Agency to identify the needs of vocational education institutions and provide opportunities tailored to the needs to implement/suggest enhancement activities.

In order to share best practices and promote teacher collaboration, 18 sectoral networks were created, through which teachers of the sector were united around professional goals and projects. More than 1,300 vocational education teachers are united in sectoral networks. The directions of sectoral networks are: education; art; journalism and information; business and administration; information and communication technologies; engineering and engineering work; production and processing; architecture and construction; agriculture; forestry; fishing; veterinary medicine; healthcare; personal services; security assurance services; transport services; general modules; integrated modules.

A concept of sectoral teacher networks was developed, including an overview of directions for cooperation and recommendations. Within the framework of the network, with the support of the Professional Skills Agency and the United Nations Development Program, a number of activities were carried out, the purpose of which was to share knowledge and experience and to promote the cooperation of teachers. 4523

For the same purpose and for the development and improvement of digital educational resources, a competition was held for teachers, within the framework of which 17 new digital educational resources for various programs and modules will be created.

The share of teachers who use the professional development services offered on the basis of vocational educational institutions - in 2022, based on the research of teachers' needs, the Professional Skills Agency developed a 3-day training-module in the direction of teaching and assessment, according to which approximately 20% of teachers of vocational educational institutions (509 teachers) were trained. In 2023, the mentioned service was continued and 371 teachers were trained. Currently, approximately 25% of teachers have received training.

Professional Skills Agency, in cooperation with partner agencies and parties, has developed working versions of the following documents: 1. Professional standard of vocational education teacher; 2. Rules and conditions for starting the job of a vocational education teacher, professional development and career advancement; 3. The manner and conditions of remuneration of vocational education teachers in the educational institution established by the state or with its participation; 4. Code of ethics of vocational education teacher. 5. The vocational education teacher's ethics textbook has been developed. Discussion of the mentioned model with relevant authorities has been started for further approval.

In 2023, the modules of the vocational education teacher training program were developed (9 modules in total). One of the modules "Technology-based learning" has been piloted in 2 regions (Adjara and Kakheti, total of 7 vocational education institutions).

As part of the announced admission in 2023, 15,409 people were enrolled in vocational education programs, and 7,158 people were enrolled in training/retraining programs - a total of 22,567 people.

As of 2023, institutions implementing vocational education programs have been developed in Tbilisi and 37 municipalities.

Of the students with disabilities/special educational needs who completed their studies in the 2022-23 school year, 92 with basic education and 90 with complete general education were enrolled in vocational programs.

Transition rate from school to vocational education for persons with basic education and complete general education - 5.9% of complete general education graduates in 2023 enrolled in vocational programs - 1.8% of basic education graduates in 2023.

The Ministry of Education and Science and the Skills Agency work on the methodology and tools for evaluating the effectiveness of the service already in the process of its development, therefore, the service policy document must include the evaluation and support mechanisms and methodology. Taking this into account, the evaluation methodology and tools have been developed for all those services or projects financed within the framework of the competition, which are implemented with the coordination or funding of the Skills Agency, including: short-term training and retraining programs, extracurricular activities, orientation and basic vocational courses for the development of vocational education in public schools, career management services and informal education courses focused on the development of key competencies.

Within the framework of the new methodology for the development of qualifications, in cooperation with sectoral skills organisations, the so-called sectoral maps are created, which implies the identification of important skills in a specific sector and the formation of relevant qualifications. The process is multi-stage and involves the engagement of broad groups of employers in the identification of important competencies for the market and the process of developing vocational programs based on these competencies.

Within the framework of the Asian Development Bank's “Modern Skills for Better Employment” program, together with the contractor organisation ACT, the Skills Agency developed a local labor market research methodology and a toolkit for vocational education institutions. At the end of 2023, with the involvement of vocational educational institutions, the field work of the quantitative survey of the labor market began. The quantitative study will be completed in the second quarter of 2024.

It should be noted that since 2023, active work has also started in the direction of introducing vocational education programs in public schools. Based on the relevant analysis, by 2024, public schools will be identified where vocational education programs (integrated programs) will be introduced.

In 2023, for the first time, the admission of students was announced at the Lanchkhuti training base of N(N)LE College “Horizonti”, and with the support of the Ministry, the works for the authorization process continued in Khashuri and Tskaltubo colleges. In 2023, the rehabilitation of the educational base of the Samtskhe-Javakheti State University in Akhalkalaki, which is intended for the implementation of vocational educational programs, was fully completed. Also, work continued in the direction of the development of vocational educational institutions in Bolnisi, Borjomi and Gurjaani. In addition, in 2024, the development of the center of excellence in the direction of logistics and construction in Tbilisi will begin.

With the support of the Asian Development Bank, the United Nations Development Program and the European Union, the strengthening of 30 selected public schools to obtain the right to implement vocational education programs and short-term training-retraining programs has started. In order to develop vocational education in public schools, in 2023, 2-2 basic vocational courses were introduced in the target 30 public schools. With the involvement of partner vocational educational institutions, work is actively underway to obtain the right to implement training and retraining programs in the target schools. In 2024, it is planned to introduce short-term programs in 15 public schools. At the same time, project work is underway for 20 schools targeted by ADB.

Within the framework of the partnership of the Ministry and the German Reconstruction Credit Bank (KFW), the development process of the so-called Center of Excellence in the direction of transport/logistics and construction is underway in Tbilisi.. In 2023, a detailed project for the construction of the center was prepared. A working version of the center's business model was also prepared.

During 2023, cooperation between the Ministry and the German Reconstruction Credit Bank (KFW) also continued in the direction of the development of a new center of international level. A general and detailed agreement was prepared, after the signing of which the implementation of the project will enter the active phase.

During the reporting period, the concept document for the development of regional hubs was developed, according to which two regional hubs (Kakheti and Imereti) are being developed. The development of skills hubs is supported by the Asian Development Bank's program - "Modern Skills for Better Employment Sector Development". Skills Hubs ensure the provision of high quality and relevant vocational programs. Skills hubs will become leaders in the provision of vocational education in the region. During the reporting period, work continued in different directions with two colleges, "Iberia" and "Prestige". Based on the methodology, working versions of the new organisational structure of both hub colleges have been prepared.

1. With the support of ADB, a communication strategy project was developed, which provides for the promotion of the opportunities of a number of professions and fields and raising public awareness with complex approaches.

2. In 2023, the Vocational Skills Agency implemented a vocational education promotion campaign within the framework of the sub-program for the promotion of vocational education, which was aimed at raising public awareness of vocational education, including professions, and increasing the prestige and attractiveness of vocational education. As a result of the implemented communication strategy, a record high rate of applicants - 27,891 applicants was recorded in 2023.

Consultation is available for institutions wishing to obtain the right to recognition of non-formal education.

To support participation in vocational education, a specific career management service was developed for persons with disabilities and with special educational needs - an orientation service, the piloting of which was completed in 2023 with the support of the United Nations Development Program in 6 vocational educational institutions. To support the implementation of the service, guides were developed for vocational educational institutions and specialists. Activities aimed at strengthening the capabilities of specialists were carried out.

In order to support the involvement of students and people living in the community, including vulnerable groups, in non-formal education services, in 2022, the agency started to develop mechanisms for extracurricular activities in the form of a competition, within the framework of which 30 projects were funded in 2023.

A career counseling strategy project has been prepared for all levels of formal education, in which the concept of development of career management services at the level of vocational education has been determined; 2. The continuous development model of career management managers is being developed; A professional network of career management managers was created and capacity building activities were implemented in several stages; A career education course was developed and piloted in 6 vocational education institutions, which will help vocational students develop career management skills.

A new service concept for open door days was developed. The new service was piloted in 7 vocational education institutions.

The analysis of gender equality issues at the level of vocational education was done within the framework of the research conducted in the process of developing the concept of inclusive vocational education. Based on the findings of the research, the recommendations outlined in the concept document were developed; In addition, gender-segregated statistical data of two vocational education institutions, “Prestige” and “Iberia”, were studied. Based on the obtained results, recommendations were developed and a working meeting was held with the mentioned vocational education institutions in order to strengthen the capacities in the direction of the production and implementation of gender-sensitive policies based on statistical data.

During the reporting period, work was carried out in the direction of the development of a new program of training in the state language. Modules of the state language from A1 to B2 levels were prepared.

Supporting learning materials for A1 and A2 levels have been developed. An A1 level textbook package has been created. Also, training modules for teacher training and a system supporting continuing development of teachers were prepared.

Sectoral Skills Organisations’ initiative groups were formed and strengthened in 10 different economic sectors: construction and engineering, tourism, health and personal services, artisan, energy, agriculture, wine, ICT, sports, clothing and fashion.

 Within the scope of the survey of employers' satisfaction with vocational education carried out in 2022, the satisfaction with personnel with vocational education was assessed, which amounted to 87%.

In the reporting period, the regulatory framework of joint and exchange programs was approved. In particular, the order 2023 N55/N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia dated June 27, on the “Rules and conditions for the development and implementation of the joint vocational education program” and also, the order 2023 N54/N of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia dated June 27, on the “Rules and conditions of development and implementation of exchange vocational educational program” were approved.

In 2023, the "Profession Standard/Rule for Development and Approval of Profession Standards" was approved by Resolution N205 of the Government of Georgia. On August 23 of the year of approval of the said regulation, the “Procedure for designing, developing and approval of vocational education standard and module/modules” was approved by the order N80/N.

In addition, in order to increase the effectiveness of the management of colleges, changes were approved in the law on vocational education, on the basis of which the standard of the director of vocational education institutions was prepared. The standard will be made mandatory for principals of all colleges established by the Ministry. Qualification requirements of directors will also be based on the mentioned standard.

Resolution N416 of the Government of Georgia on the implementation of programs in the form of work-based learning was approved, where the regulatory rules for the creation and registration of sectoral skills orgnisations are set forth. A Guide to Sectoral Skills Organisations has been developed, which provides information to interested sectors on the main key issues related to the sectoral skills policy and the new institutional mechanism - the Sectoral Skills Organisation. It also reviews the procedures needed to establish a sectoral skills organisation.

The procedure for the creation and operation of the working group for review and evaluation of applications submitted for registration as a sectoral skills organisation was developed and approved. In 2023, the Agency actively strengthened the capabilities of sectoral skills organisations in relation to the implementation of functions, including 9 sectors actively participated in the process of developing qualifications.

Professional Skills Agency is a member of several international platforms:

- Official representative of WorldSkills International Georgia;

- Member of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships (EAfA);

- Member of World Economic Forum (WEF) Network, Skills Accelerators.

Professional Skills Agency and Vocational Education Institutions participate in various European Training Foundation (ETF) platforms (GRETA, SISI, GLAD). Webinars are held within the networks, where participants have the opportunity to get to know the news, innovative teaching approaches in the direction of green skills, digitalization, innovative management, social inclusion.

Work is underway on an electronic platform supporting the management, assessment and monitoring of vocational education. The technical task of the platform has been designed and the development of the platform is in progress.

With the support of GIZ, ISET and the involvement of the Professional Skills Agency and the Ministry, a model of the financing system of vocational education was prepared, which, along with the existing components, also considers the possibilities of financing according to KPI indicators. Based on the existing module, within the framework of the Asian Development Bank project, local consultants are working on financing simulations. After the completion of the simulation, it will be planned to pilot the financing system components.

## Development of Higher Education

Calculation of graduate employment rate and student satisfaction rate: (1) foreign students; (2) local students - based on indicators, is planned for 2024.

During the reporting period, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, with the support of the World Bank, for the first time announced a competition within the competitive innovation fund, one of the main priorities of the competition was: “Entrepreneurial education development projects/programs”. See: https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=13273&lang=geo. At the first stage of the competition, 4 projects were identified and financed in the mentioned direction. For information about the results, see:[**http://iiq.gov.ge/ge/2023/06/22/cif-%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%9E%E1%83%98%E1%83%A0%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%99%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9C%E1%83%99/?fbclid=IwAR3aQ-iUFuLHJJPduEA1-s0eU5H8f2TwjiL5SYN9p3i0ARPOekyysjP\_mX8**](http://iiq.gov.ge/ge/2023/06/22/cif-%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%9E%E1%83%98%E1%83%A0%E1%83%95%E1%83%94%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%A2%E1%83%9D-%E1%83%99%E1%83%9D%E1%83%9C%E1%83%99/?fbclid=IwAR3aQ-iUFuLHJJPduEA1-s0eU5H8f2TwjiL5SYN9p3i0ARPOekyysjP_mX8)

As a result of the revision of the project Georgia I2Q - Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project funded by the World Bank, the activity was canceled.

In order to ensure the implementation of cluster accreditation, changes were made to the legislation in 2022, the deadlines for the accreditation of educational programs were fully adjusted to the new cluster system. The first stage of cluster accreditation was introduced.

In 2023, the productions of the second stage of cluster accreditation were carried out, which were related to the accreditation productions of educational programs in the fields of art, defense and security, sports and tourism.

Cybersecurity courses are integrated into the educational programs of all three levels of STEM majors.

Within the process of harmonizing the framework of national qualifications with European directives, the sectoral council of higher education of dentistry was approved, which developed the sectoral characteristics of higher education of dentistry. Regarding the issue of regulation, the council addressed the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia. In this direction, the following sectoral councils have been created: the sectoral council of higher education of nursing (taking into account the European directive), which works on the sectoral document of nursing. The sectoral council of higher education of medicine was created (the said council also developed the sectoral document of the regulated branch/field of medicine), which is currently working on the development of the concept of the monitoring system of the university/partner clinics of HEIs implementing single-level higher educational programs of medicine.

The Ministry, in cooperation with higher educational institutions, has prepared a package of legislative changes in the direction of distance learning, which has been submitted to the Parliament of Georgia for discussion at the spring session.

In 2023, in the direction of the recognition of non-formal education, the Qualifications Development Service of the Center, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia and the Professional Skills Agency, developed “the document for the analysis of the recognition of non-formal education within the framework of education” of the existing system of non-formal education at the level of general and vocational education.

The Ministry's vision document on strengthening and promoting the third mission of universities has been developed. See: [**https://mes.gov.ge/uploads/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%A2%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/3M-Vision-GE%20(1).pdf**](https://mes.gov.ge/uploads/%E1%83%A1%E1%83%A2%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%A2%E1%83%94%E1%83%92%E1%83%98%E1%83%90/3M-Vision-GE%20%281%29.pdf)

Creation of skill centers within the third mission - relevant centers have been created in 7 state and 1 private HEI participating in the project.

Number of joint/dual degree awarding programs - as of 15.11.2023, the number of joint programs was 32.

The share of students participating in the programs to the total number of students - as of 15.11.2023, the share of students of joint programs was 0.17% of the total number of students.

Within the framework of the "Study in Georgia" program, the Ministry continues to promote three state universities: Iv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Technical University of Georgia and Ilia State University with financial support for obtaining international accreditation (according to ABET accreditation and ACS certification standards) and further development of higher undergraduate STEM programs.

With the support of the Ministry, in 2023, the undergraduate English-language educational program of Georgia Technical University "Biomedical Engineering" and the undergraduate educational program of Ilia State University - "Computer Engineering (International)" were awarded ABET accreditation by the American Engineering and Technology Accreditation Council.

A competition was announced in September 2023 within the framework of the Competitive Innovation Fund (CIF) established by the program “Innovation, Inclusivity and Quality Project - Georgia I2Q (IBRD)” approved by the first paragraph of the Order N338 of the Minister of Education and Science of Georgia dated March 09, 2020, one of the priority areas of which is the creation/development of educational programs for the purpose of awarding a joint academic degree (including the so-called "double degree") and/or promoting international accreditation in cooperation with a higher education institution recognized in accordance with the legislation of a foreign country. Competition results 2024 It will be announced in February (see: [**http://iiq.gov.ge/ge/2023/09/26/%E1%83%AA%E1%83%AE%E1%83%90%E1%83%93%E1%83%93%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%90-cif-%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%9B%E1%83%94%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C/**](http://iiq.gov.ge/ge/2023/09/26/%E1%83%AA%E1%83%AE%E1%83%90%E1%83%93%E1%83%93%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%90-cif-%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1-%E1%83%9B%E1%83%94%E1%83%9D%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94-%E1%83%A1%E1%83%90%E1%83%92%E1%83%A0%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C/)**)**

In addition, with the support of the Ministry and the World Bank, the preparation of the joint doctoral program of the Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University and the National University of Athens Kaodistrias in the direction of education and science management has been started.

In 2023, scholarship programs were implemented: fully financed by the state budget, co-financed with partner organisations and fully financed by foreign governments (bilateral).

220 Georgian citizens were selected as winners of the competition to study at higher educational programs abroad, as well as to raise their qualifications (196 Georgian citizens took the grant).

In order to take short-term, seasonal and other courses in an authorized higher education institution in Georgia for the 2023-2024 academic year, the enrollment/financing procedure is underway with 6 citizens of foreign countries.

1. Scholarship programs in Hungary "Stipendium Hungaricum" 2023-2024 - 52 citizens of Georgia were competitively funded to study at bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs in Hungary, 41 citizens took the scholarship.

2. Academic programs in Italy 2023-2024 - 5 citizens of Georgia were selected as winners of the competition (3 of them received the grant).

3. Scholarship program at San Diego State University 2023-2024 - 2 citizens of Georgia were selected as winners of the competition (one winner received the grant).

4. Master's programs in France 2023-2024 - 9 citizens of Georgia were identified as winners and received the grant.

5. 37 Georgian citizens were selected as winners of the International Master's Program 2023-2024 (29 of them received the grant).

6. International doctoral program 2023-2024 - 4 citizens of Georgia were identified as winners (3 winners received the grant).

7. 8 citizens of Georgia were identified as the winners of the international artistic academic program and received the grant.

8. 12 Georgian citizens were selected as winners of the 2023-2024 qualification raising program abroad (out of which, 10 winners took the grant).

9. 2023-2024 qualification raising program abroad (second announcement) - 36 Georgian citizens were selected as winners of the competition (out of which, 35 winners accepted/agreed to use the grant).

10. Within the framework of the Fulbright scholarship program – 4 citizens of Georgia were financed with the financial contribution of the center.

11. Czech Scholarship Program 2023-2024 - 4 citizens of Georgia were funded by the Ministry of Education, Science, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic for the purpose of attending a short-term course/research visit to higher education institutions of the Czech Republic.

12. Scholarship programs For Czech Students and Researchers 2023-2024 - applications were submitted by three Hungarian citizens. Enrollment/funding procedure is in progress.

13. Scholarship for Hungarian Students and Researchers 2023-2024 - Three Hungarian citizens applied. Enrollment/funding procedure is in progress.

14.Armenia Scholarship Program 2023-2024 - 2 citizens of Georgia were funded.

15. Review of applications of current grant holders - 36 scholarship holders enrolled in an academic program lasting more than one year for the 2023-2024 academic year have had their funding extended based on their high academic performance.

The number of joint doctoral programs with international partners - as of 15.11.2023, the number of joint doctoral programs was 14.

In the month of November 2023, 6,500 students were funded within the framework of grants awarded by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (the funding provided for the following categories: State educational grant granted within the framework of the social program, state educational grant for citizens of foreign countries, state educational grant awarded on the basis of recognition of education received in the occupied territory, state educational grant for persons with compatriot status, state educational grant for persons living in the territory of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, state educational master's grant for students within the social program, state educational master's grant within the framework of a special program for a foreign citizen).

Within the framework of the program “State Scholarships for Students”, 2734 successful students of 11 legal entities of public law - higher education institutions are provided with a scholarship in the amount of 150 GEL per month in the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, and in the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, the number of scholarship recipients has increased to 5000 students, as well as the amount of scholarship to be given per month - up to 300 GEL. In the first semester of the 2023-2024 academic year, 5,000 successful students are provided with scholarships. Also, 7 students are provided in the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year with the Dimitri Gulia and Kosta Khetagurovi scholarship, in the amount of 300 GEL per month, and 4 students are provided in the fall semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. 7,447,800.00 GEL was spent within the program.

On June 28, 2023, an amendment was made to the Law of Georgia “On Higher Education” and the educational program of training in the Georgian language was extended to include the 2030-2031 academic year.

Within the framework of the study financing program for students living in the villages near the dividing line with the occupied territories of Georgia, 1,836 students were financed with the tuition fees of the first semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, and in 2023, the tuition fees of the first semester were additionally financed for 205 students, and for the second semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, 1,746 students were financed. In addition, in the months of March, April, May, June and July 2023, 329 students living in the villages near the dividing line, who are studying in the universities located near the dividing line with the occupied territories of Georgia – LEPL Gori State University or LEPL Shota Meskhia Zugdidi State University - are provided with a social scholarship in the amount of 300 GEL per month. The total amount spent within the program was 2,692,840.00 GEL.

Within the social programs of the Ministry, in the academic year 2023-2024, 1454 students of 16 categories won state educational grants, and 90 students of 5 categories received master's educational grants according to various vulnerable groups.

Within the framework of the program for the promotion of higher education of students living in the occupied territories, in the spring semester of the 2022-2023 academic year, 828 students were financed with a state educational grant. In the academic year 2023-2024, the amount spent on 915 students amounted to 1,957,500.00.

All authorized HEIs are adapted to meet the needs of students with disabilities and research on the needs of students with disabilities has been initiated.

The research of needs has been started, based on the results of which the necessary resources for learning/teaching will be created.

With the support of the World Bank, within the framework of the “Innovation, Inclusion and Quality Project - Georgia I2Q”, a company has been selected that works together with the Ministry in the direction of creating a database system for information management of higher education institutions. Working meetings are actively taking place.

During the reporting period, workshops were held and a new enrollment system concept project was developed. The term of the said activity was also changed and 2027 was determined as the new term.

The methodology is planned to be updated after the development of a new model of higher education financing.

Within the framework of the project financed by the European Union program Erasmus+, relevant training courses have been developed and educational programs are being developed.

Information about students with active and suspended status is collected in the higher education management information system, the primary source of which and the subjects responsible for its reflection in the system are higher education institutions. Access to this information is restricted for personal data protection purposes within the relevant legal framework. In addition, LEPL - Education Management Information System ensures the maintenance of a special electronic program (digital archive) in order to reflect information about authorized and closed/liquidated educational institutions.

Uni-Grants have been created and implemented. The functionality of the calculation of state master's grants and state program financing has been added to the system, through which the automated calculation of state educational and state educational master's grants is carried out. Higher education institutions are provided with a view of the calculated amounts and lists of students to be financed, and if necessary, a way to request corrections with the appropriate functionality. After verification of the data in advance and confirmation by the HEIs through a special button, the calculated amounts will be submitted to the Department of Economic Development of the Ministry. Continuous work is being done to improve the system.

Only the authorization module of higher education institutions has been developed, the implementation process is planned in 2024, as well as the completion of the accreditation module.

## Development of Science

According to the internal statistical data of the European Commission, as of today, within the framework of "Horizon Europe" (2021-2027), 31 projects were financed with the involvement of Georgian participants, with the participation of 28 organisations, where the direct contribution of the European Union is 3,633,399 euros. 166 project applications were submitted by 101 organisations with the participation of Georgia.

The number of innovative “startups” that have received grants from the state co-financing schemes - within the framework of the co-financing grant program, a total of 11 rounds were carried out, within which a total of 215 startups were financed.

154 projects were funded in state grant competitions.

In order to improve the system of technology transfer on a national and global scale, in order to improve the support system, the Resolution N111 of the Government of Georgia was approved on March 19, 2021 – “On the approval of the procedure for the transfer of technology of innovative projects by the legal entity of public law - the Agency of Innovation and Technology of Georgia and the determination of service fees”. In addition, along with the development of the relevant legal act, the “Pilot Program of Technology Transfer” was underway, the implementation of which began in 2019 and ended in 2022. Within the framework of the mentioned pilot program, a “Joint Research and Licensing Agreement” was signed between the Innovation and Technology Agency of Georgia and “The Technological Research Institute for Materials, Metallurgy and Processes (IRT M2P)”, within the framework of which , the French research institute will, on the one hand, finance the final development of Georgian technologies and, on the other hand, ensure its sublicense transfer to French companies. Also, in 2023, 4 projects were selected for commercialization and in December, call for new applications were announced, on the basis of which the agency received 28 new applications.

Regarding the development of the methodology for measuring the commercial potential of research ideas, it appeared during the work process that the development of a single methodology would be ineffective, as each project requires an individual assessment and analysis of each specific case; In addition, projects may target different industries and defining universal approaches is difficult.

In 2023, Shora Rustaveli National Science Foundation provided the sub-program “International Learning Olympiads” of the incentive program for successful students (program code 32 02 04). A total of 25 teams participated in the International Olympiads in Physics (IPhO 53), Informatics (IOI 35), Mathematics (IMO 64), Biology (IBO 34) and Chemistry (IChO 55) and in the 7th All-European Youth Olympiad in Informatics. Budget execution = 386216.49 GEL

Creation of a digital platform for career planning and promotion of girls/women in STEM fields, the number of women winners in the 2023 competitions of Shora Rustaveli National Science Foundation has been counted and amounts to 866 women. An increase in the number will be estimated in 2024. 2.5.2.2(1) Indicator execution has not started.

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The rule of determining the budget for the scientific directions was introduced in the pilot mode for the scope of 4 grant competitions of the Foundation in the pilot mode.

In 2023, the adjusted budget of the program amounted to: 28,965,374.00 GEL. Number of beneficiaries of the program: 42 scientific-research units integrated with four universities (TSU, GTU, TSSU and Iliauni).

An important moment: in 2023, a 30% increase in salaries of persons employed in scientific research units participating in the program was implemented.

Within the framework of the program for the promotion of science and scientific research, the funding allocated for state grant competitions has increased by 10% (compared to the base figure).

This activity was fully implemented in 2022. In 2022, more than 600 training and competition-type events in innovative entrepreneurship, technology and STEAM directions were implemented in Tbilisi Fablab and regional technoparks. (524,000 GEL was spent on 23 events). Additionally, it should be noted that 157 trainings were held in 2023.

In order to create a laboratory of the mentioned type on the basis of Ivane Beritashvili Experimental Biomedicine Center, state procurement procedures have been implemented to a large extent.

54 competitive applications passed both stages of project registration for the 2023 competition for the promotion of the renewal of the material and technical base of independent scientific and research units of higher education institutions. The presented projects passed the technical examination and 53 projects moved to the evaluation stage, of which 40 projects won, with a total value of 1,499,916.00 GEL.

Within the framework of the "Open Science" development promotion sub-program of the scientific research promotion program, the institutions involved have created individual platforms. A single platform has not been created.

The agency, within the framework of the 500 global program, together with its partners, accelerates startups. This acceleration program aims to cooperate with a world-class accelerator in Georgia, which supports startups entering the international market, provides mentoring and provides them with technical assistance. Within the framework of the 500 Georgia program, selected startups undergo a three-month intensive acceleration course. In 2023, a total of 886 applicants were registered and 35 startups were accelerated.

In addition, the agency implemented 11 pre-accelerator programs that were held in the regions of Georgia (Racha-Lechkhumi, Samegrelo, Svaneti, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Shida Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, Adjara, Guria, Imereti). In 2023, the program had 424 beneficiaries.

Also, in 2023, the agency implemented the Hardware Startup Incubator, which was held at 8 locations for 9 groups. 141 beneficiaries participated in the program. The trainings covered the following topics: business model, electronics (Arduino & Raspberry PI) and 3D modeling for product manufacturing. The project included mentorship sessions and prototyping.

# Challenges and recommendations

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| **Challenges**  | **Recommendations** |
| Incomplete determination of target indicators at the planning stage, both with respect to activities and task outcome indicators | Review the target indicators of the action plan |
| Cancellation of planned activities due to changes in several policy directions | When developing a new action plan, prepare such measures, the probability of delay in implementation to be reduced as much as possible |
| In some cases, due to the lack of basic data, the task outcome indicator could not be fully/failed to be evaluated | When developing a new action plan, develop tasks for which baseline indicators are available |
| In some cases, lack of financial resources | New activities should be planned in accordance with the activities of the state budget and the medium-term action plan of the Ministry |
| Lack of human resources involved in the strategy and action plan implementation process | To strengthen the capacities of the representatives of the departments/LEPLs coordinating the process of planning and monitoring of policy documents |