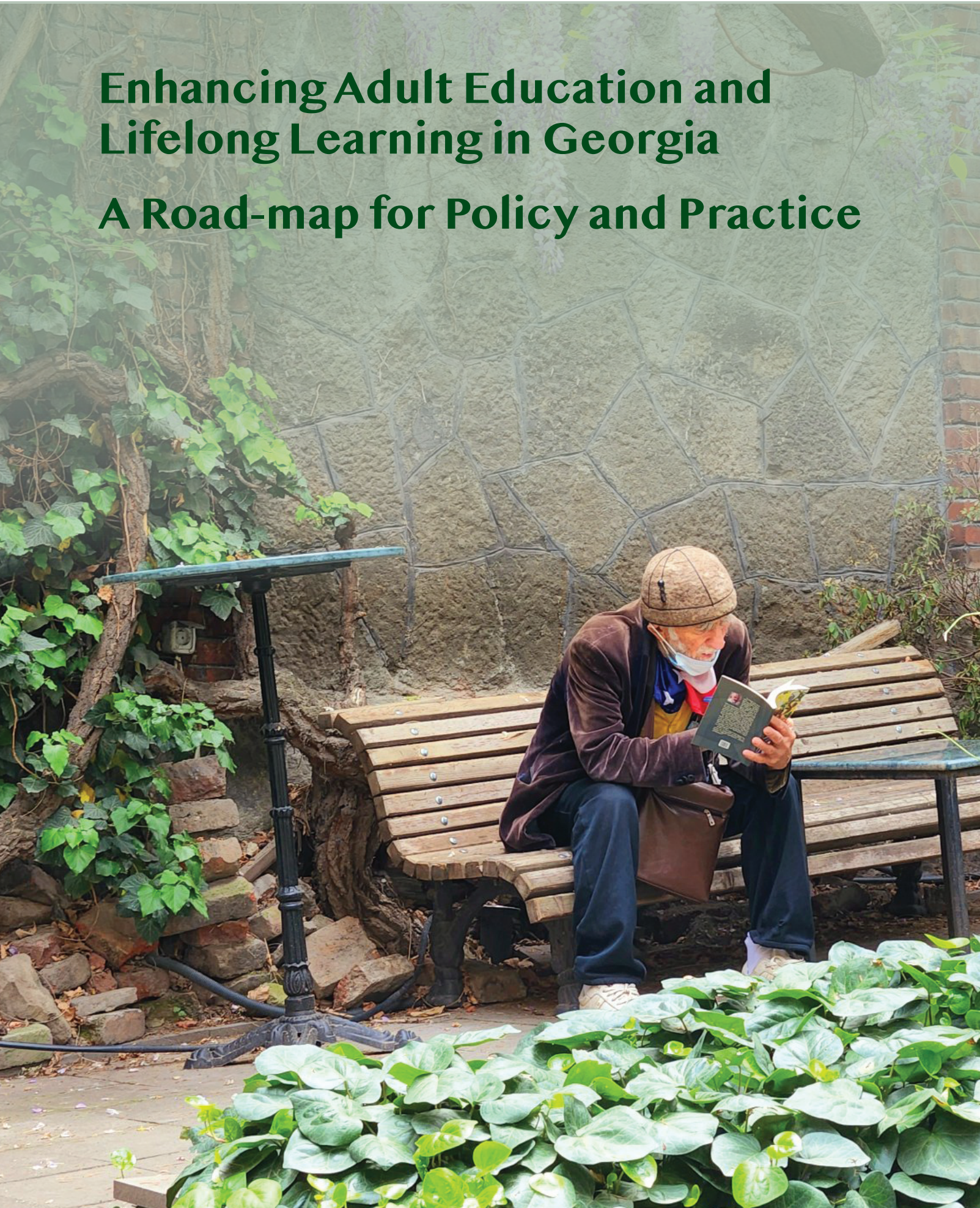




Enhancing Adult Education and Lifelong Learning in Georgia

A Road-map for Policy and Practice





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Katarina Popovic

Tamar Kitiashvili

Tamar Samkharadze

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Editor: Lali Santeladze

Authors:

Prof. Katarina Popovic, International Council for Adult Education (ICAE)
Tamar Kitiashvili, 4L - LifeLong Learning Laboratory
Tamar Samkharadze, 4L - LifeLong Learning Laboratory

Design: Nata Kubaneishvili

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Introduction

This document serves as a strategic guide to transform **Adult Learning and Education (ALE)** and **Lifelong Learning (LLL)** systems in Georgia, addressing critical challenges while aligning with international standards and best practices. It highlights the importance of ALE/LLL in fostering socio-economic development, reducing inequalities, and preparing individuals and communities for a rapidly changing world.

The analysis is grounded in global frameworks such as the **UN Agenda 2030 (SDG 4)**, the **UNESCO Marrakech Framework for Action**, and the **European Agenda for Adult Learning (2021-2030)**. These frameworks emphasize education as a cornerstone for sustainable development, recognizing lifelong learning as a human right and a driver of social inclusion, economic growth, and democratic participation. The document contextualizes these global goals within Georgia's unique challenges and aspirations, including its pathway toward European integration.

Georgia faces significant barriers to achieving a robust ALE/LLL system. The participation rate in adult education remains alarmingly low (1.6% compared to the EU average of 10.8%), with stark disparities across gender, regions, and socio-economic groups. Foundational skill gaps, including literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, further exacerbate inequalities, limiting the workforce's ability to meet the demands of a modern economy. Additionally, governance and policy fragmentation, insufficient funding, and limited stakeholder coordination hinder the system's effectiveness.

Despite these challenges, the document emphasizes the transformative potential of ALE/LLL in addressing Georgia's demographic and economic shifts. Expanding access to adult education can empower marginalized communities, bridge regional and gender divides, and enhance workforce readiness, particularly in sectors requiring green and digital competencies. Aligning with international standards provides an opportunity to integrate best practices, ensuring that Georgia's ALE/LLL framework supports sustainable development goals and EU aspirations.

The document presents a comprehensive roadmap for reform, encompassing policy recommendations, strategic actions, and capacity-building measures. It advocates for a holistic approach to ALE/LLL that extends beyond vocational training to include civic education, personal development, and lifelong skill acquisition. By leveraging partnerships, increasing public and private investments, and fostering inclusive governance, Georgia can build an equitable and resilient lifelong learning ecosystem.

Ultimately, this document aims to serve as a blueprint for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to reimagine ALE/LLL in Georgia, ensuring it becomes a central pillar of the country's socio-economic and democratic progress.

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT AND TRENDS AND THEIR RELEVANCE FOR GEORGIA



UN AGENDA 2030 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4)

Adopted in 2015 by all United Nations member states, the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development serves as a global blueprint for peace, prosperity, and sustainable development. It encompasses 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) that address urgent global challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, and quality education. This ambitious agenda aims to leave no one behind and calls for collaborative action across governments, civil society, and the private sector to achieve a sustainable and inclusive future. Each of the goals is interlinked, emphasizing the need for integrated and holistic approaches to development.

SDG 4 specifically focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Education is recognized not only as a fundamental human right but also as a critical driver for achieving all other SDGs. The goal encompasses access to quality early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education, as well as vocational training and adult learning. The central importance of SDG 4 lies in its potential to transform societies by equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values needed for participation in economic, political, and social life. This transformative power of education is key to tackling global inequalities and building more resilient and inclusive societies.

The relevance of SDG 4 is particularly significant for Georgia, which faces multiple educational and socio-economic challenges. The country has been grappling with demographic shifts, low participation rates in adult education, and significant regional disparities in educational access and quality. Achieving SDG 4 in Georgia requires a focus on lifelong learning as a strategy to improve both social cohesion and economic stability. Expanding LLL opportunities would address the skills gap and support both youth and adults in navigating a rapidly changing labour market.

By investing in inclusive and high-quality education, Georgia can not only foster individual growth but also promote social stability and democratic development. Therefore, the implementation of SDG 4 in the country is essential not only for individual empowerment but also for creating a more sustainable and prosperous future for all.

Additionally, aligning educational outcomes with SDG 4 would support Georgia's broader aspirations for EU integration, as it strives to bring its education system closer to European standards.

UNESCO, Marrakesh framework for action (2022)

The Marrakech Framework for Action was adopted at the Seventh international conference on adult learning and education (CONFINTEA VII), convened by UNESCO in Marrakech, Morocco, in 2022. The conference brought together representatives from governments, civil society, and international organisations to reaffirm global commitments to adult learning and education (ALE) as a cornerstone for sustainable development. This framework builds on the momentum of previous international agreements, including the Belém framework for action (2009) and the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, placing ALE at the forefront of the global educational agenda. It emphasizes that lifelong learning is not only a right but also a necessity in addressing the complex challenges of modern societies, such as economic instability, rapid technological change, and social inequalities.

The Marrakech Framework for Action specifically calls for member states to increase funding and create enabling policies to promote inclusive and accessible adult education, particularly for marginalized and underserved groups. It underscores that ALE is essential for personal, social, and economic empowerment, and for building peaceful and democratic societies. By focusing on the development of basic skills, digital competencies, and active citizenship, this framework seeks to ensure that adults can continuously adapt to new opportunities and challenges throughout their lives.

The relevance of the MFA is particularly significant for Georgia, a country facing fragile democracy, low adult education participation rates, and limited opportunities for lifelong learning. For Georgia, this framework highlights the need to invest in ALE to strengthen democracy and economic stability, particularly by creating programs that respond to the needs of underserved communities. With the country's low ALE participation rates, combined with its demographic and employment challenges, expanding both formal and non-formal ALE offerings is crucial to fostering an engaged and skilled citizenry. In addition, implementing the MFA could provide a roadmap to enhance Georgia's human capital development, support the labour market, and promote social cohesion, making it a vital component of the country's broader developmental strategies.

European agenda for adult learning (2021-2030)

The European Agenda for adult learning is a strategic policy framework adopted by the EU to promote and coordinate adult education across its member states and aspirant countries. First introduced in 2011 and updated for the 2021-2030 period, the Agenda recognizes adult education as a critical tool for personal growth, social inclusion, and economic competitiveness. The updated framework reflects Europe's renewed commitment to enhancing adults' skills, competencies, and participation in lifelong learning, considering the unprecedented challenges posed by digital transformation, demographic shifts, and socio-economic inequalities. The 2021-2030 agenda emphasizes not only formal education but also non-formal and informal learning, aiming to create inclusive and flexible pathways for adults to acquire new skills and competencies throughout their lives.

The European Agenda for adult learning aligns closely with the EU's strategic goals, including the European pillar of social rights, which underscores the right to quality and inclusive education, training, and lifelong learning. The 2021-2030 iteration of the agenda sets ambitious targets, such as raising the participation rate of adults in learning to 47% by 2025 and achieving a 60% share of employed adults engaging in LLL activities by 2030. It introduces the concept of "learning ecosystems" to integrate adult education into broader social and economic policies, promoting a cross-sectoral approach involving stakeholders from education, employment, and social welfare. Furthermore, the agenda aims to tackle digital and green transitions by supporting the development of green skills, digital literacy, and entrepreneurship.

Key priorities of the European Agenda for adult learning (2021-2030):

- improving access and participation: removing barriers to adult learning, particularly for underrepresented groups such as low-skilled workers, older adults, and marginalized communities.
- enhancing the quality and relevance of learning: developing high-quality learning opportunities that are aligned with labour market demands and societal needs.
- creating pathways for upskilling and reskilling: implementing comprehensive upskilling and reskilling programs to enable adults to acquire new skills and competencies.
- supporting digital and green transitions: fostering digital literacy and green skills to prepare adults for the future of work and sustainable development.
- strengthening governance and funding: enhancing coordination at the local, regional, and national levels and ensuring sustainable funding for adult learning initiatives.
- the European agenda encourages EU member states and candidate countries to adopt these priorities through national action plans and reforms, ensuring that adult education is not isolated but integrated into broader socio-economic strategies. By promoting a holistic view of adult learning, the agenda supports a culture of lifelong learning, which is crucial for personal empowerment and active citizenship.

For Georgia, aligning with this agenda is essential to advance EU integration, as it promotes the adoption of common European benchmarks and frameworks for adult education. Georgia is a key partner in the EU's eastern partnership and has made substantial commitments toward harmonizing its policies with EU standards. Embracing the European agenda for adult learning would enable Georgia to not only enhance the quality and accessibility of its adult education system but also address regional disparities, support marginalized communities, and tackle skill mismatches that hinder its economic progress.

Georgia currently faces low participation rates in adult learning (1,6% compared to the EU average of 10,8%) and significant gaps in digital skills and vocational training. By implementing policies inspired by this agenda, Georgia can build a comprehensive LLL system that not only supports economic development but also enhances civic participation, aligns its educational outcomes with EU expectations, and prepares its workforce for future challenges. In the context of Georgia's aspirations for EU membership, adopting the European agenda's principles would signal a strong commitment to EU values and standards, facilitating deeper integration and cooperation.

Moreover, the EU's focus on supporting digital and green transitions through adult education is particularly relevant for Georgia. By fostering digital skills and green competencies, Georgia can position itself as a regional leader in sustainable development, creating new opportunities for its workforce and advancing its economic goals. Thus, fully implementing the European Agenda for adult learning would provide Georgia with a strategic framework to boost LLL participation, promote social cohesion, and strengthen its alignment with European union priorities.

European council recommendation on upskilling pathways (2016)

Adopted by the council of the European Union in 2016, the Upskilling pathways initiative is designed to provide adults with opportunities to acquire a minimum level of literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, while also offering clear pathways to progress toward higher qualifications. This recommendation specifically targets low-skilled adults, defined as those who have not achieved an upper secondary level of education. The initiative is part of the broader new skills agenda for Europe, which aims to help people develop the right skills to thrive in a rapidly changing labour market. The upskilling pathways recommendation recognises that improving adults' basic skills is essential for ensuring employability, social inclusion, and active participation in society.

Key components of the upskilling pathways initiative:

The recommendation calls on EU member states and partner countries to provide adults with a tailored and coordinated approach to upskilling through three key steps:

- skills assessment: identifying existing skills and competencies of individuals to determine their upskilling needs. This initial assessment provides a baseline for developing personalized learning pathways.
- tailored learning offers: developing flexible and accessible learning opportunities that cater to individual needs, focusing on improving literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, as well as providing vocational and job-specific training.
- validation and recognition of skills: ensuring that the skills acquired through these pathways are recognized and validated, allowing adults to use these competencies for career advancement or further education.

The goal is to provide a second chance for low-skilled adults to improve their basic skills and attain qualifications that enhance their employability. The initiative also encourages member states to create supportive environments for adult learners by removing barriers and providing guidance and financial assistance.

The upskilling pathways recommendation acknowledges that more than 60 million adults in the EU lack basic literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, making them vulnerable in an increasingly knowledge-based economy. Without addressing these foundational skills, these individuals face the risk of social exclusion, long-term unemployment, and limited access to lifelong learning. Therefore, the initiative calls for a holistic approach, linking educational and labour market policies, and involving multiple stakeholders, including governments, employers, and civil society, to build comprehensive support systems for adult learners.

For Georgia, aligning with the upskilling pathways recommendation is particularly relevant given the low proficiency levels in basic skills, especially among rural populations and ethnic minority groups. According to recent data, 64% of Georgian 15-year-olds score at the lowest proficiency level in reading and sciences, indicating a systemic issue in foundational skills development that extends into adulthood. Furthermore, many adults lack the digital skills necessary to participate in a modern economy, making them vulnerable to unemployment and social exclusion.

By integrating the upskilling pathways framework into its national policy, Georgia could create targeted programs to address these skill gaps, ensuring that all adults, including those in the informal sector, have access

to learning opportunities. This is especially critical for disadvantaged groups, such as women in rural areas, ethnic minorities, and older adults, who are often excluded from traditional educational systems. Implementing tailored skills assessments and providing flexible learning offers could significantly improve the employability and social mobility of these groups.

Additionally, the validation and recognition of skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning – key components of the upskilling pathways – are crucial in Georgia’s context. Many adults acquire valuable skills informally, particularly in rural and agricultural sectors, but these are often not recognised in the labour market. Establishing robust systems for skills validation would enable adults to leverage their existing competencies for further education or employment, reducing the barriers to participation in the formal economy. Integrating the Upskilling Pathways initiative into national policy could support Georgia in addressing regional disparities by targeting upskilling programs in rural and underserved areas to bridge the educational and economic gaps between regions. It would also enhance workforce readiness by equipping adults with the foundational and job-specific skills needed to adapt to the changing demands of the labour market. Moreover, the initiative would promote social inclusion by providing disadvantaged groups with opportunities to improve their skills and engage more fully in society, thereby reducing inequality. Finally, aligning with European standards in adult education and LLL would strengthen Georgia’s commitment to EU values and further its aspirations for EU membership. Therefore, full implementation of the upskilling pathways recommendation would enable Georgia to create a more inclusive and competent workforce, strengthen social cohesion, and support its broader developmental goals.

The context of international data

Georgia’s adult learning and education participation rates remain significantly below international and European averages, reflecting the broader challenges the country faces in developing a culture of lifelong learning. According to the latest data from Eurostat, the EU-27 average participation rate in adult learning stands at 10,8%, with a target to increase it to 47% by 2025 and 60% by 2030. By contrast, Georgia’s overall participation rate in lifelong learning (LLL) is only 1,6% for men and 1,3% for women. Even among women, who typically demonstrate higher educational engagement, the rate of 1,8% is a stark indication of how far Georgia lags behind the EU averages. This low participation rate is concerning as it suggests that a significant portion of Georgia’s adult population is not engaging in any form of structured learning, limiting their ability to adapt to a rapidly evolving labour market.

When looking at foundational skills, Georgia also performs below global benchmarks. Results from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2020 indicate that 64% of Georgian 15-year-olds are at the lowest proficiency level in reading and sciences, compared to the OECD average of 22%. These figures suggest systemic weaknesses in the foundational education system, which inevitably carry over into adult learning and skill acquisition. Similar trends are observed in the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), which measures adult skills in literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving. The PIAAC average for literacy proficiency across OECD countries is 268 points, whereas Georgia’s scores typically fall significantly lower, indicating a substantial gap in foundational competencies.

The employment outcomes in Georgia further highlight the critical need for investment in adult learning. The country’s labour force has seen a significant decline, with only 1.596.200 individuals actively participating as of 2023. Women and girls remain relatively passive in the labour market, with a participation rate of only

43% compared to 65% for men. This disparity underscores not only the challenges women face in accessing employment opportunities but also suggests potential barriers to their engagement in further education and training. When compared with the EU, where the average female labour force participation rate is 51,5%, Georgia's gender disparity is evident and needs urgent attention.

Further compounding these issues, the transition from education to employment is alarmingly low. According to recent data, only 54,8% of graduates from formal education programs are able to secure jobs within three years of completing their studies. By comparison, EU graduates have an employment rate of 85% within the same period. The situation is especially severe for graduates of general education and universities, whereas VET graduates in Georgia report a much higher employment rate of 74%. This data highlights not only the struggles of the education system to align with labour market needs but also the critical role that vocational education and training (VET) can play in boosting employability.

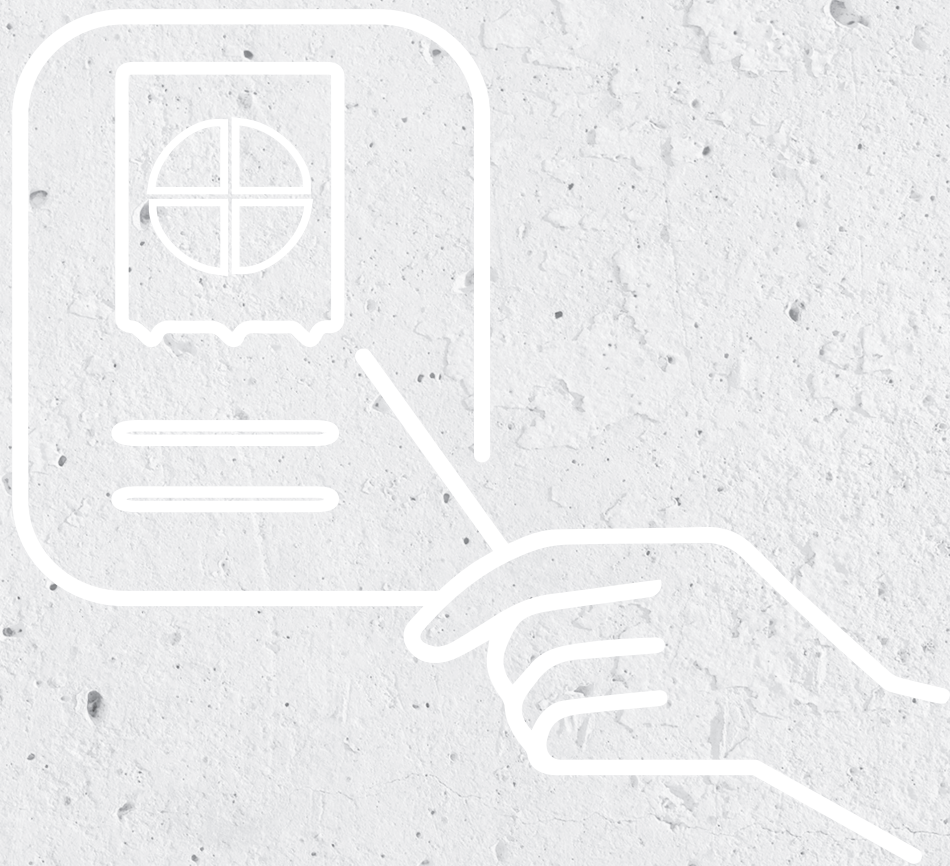
Additionally, Georgia's high NEET rate (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) further reflects the gaps in skills development. Approximately 25% of young people aged 15-24 fall into the NEET category, compared to the EU average of 12,6%. This figure is even higher among women and ethnic minorities, particularly in rural areas, indicating severe educational and economic marginalization. In contrast, neighbouring countries like Estonia and Lithuania have managed to reduce their NEET rates to 9% and 10.2% respectively through comprehensive LLL strategies and targeted youth employment programs.

Digital skills represent another critical gap in Georgia. According to Eurostat, 56% of adults across the EU report having at least basic digital skills, while in Georgia, this figure drops to 34%, with a noticeable gender gap between men and women. For ethnic minorities and rural populations, digital literacy rates are even lower, further exacerbating inequalities in access to learning and employment opportunities. In the context of a rapidly digitizing global economy, these gaps place Georgia at a significant disadvantage, particularly as the labour market increasingly demands digital competencies.

When comparing Georgia to other countries in the post-Soviet region, disparities become even more apparent. For example, countries like Estonia and Lithuania have already exceeded the EU's 10,8% adult learning participation rate, achieving 19% and 15,5% respectively. Both countries have invested heavily in LLL initiatives, focusing on digital and green skills, as well as vocational upskilling for their adult populations. Meanwhile, Latvia's participation rate is at 8,4%, which, while still below the EU average, is considerably higher than Georgia's. Even Ukraine, which faces its own set of unique challenges, reports a participation rate of around 4,3% - more than double Georgia's rate. These comparisons highlight Georgia's need to accelerate its efforts to build a comprehensive and inclusive lifelong learning system.

In conclusion, Georgia's adult education system is still developing, it is unevenly distributed, with substantial disparities across different demographic groups. Addressing these gaps requires targeted interventions that align Georgia's adult learning and education policies with European standards and best practices. By leveraging frameworks such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning and the Upskilling pathways initiative, Georgia can establish a more robust foundation for adult education, increase participation rates, and improve the overall quality of learning opportunities for all citizens.

LOCAL CONTEXT ANALYSIS



Participation in Adult learning and education

Georgia faces significant challenges in its efforts to foster a culture of lifelong learning and address workforce sustainability. Over the past decade, the country has experienced a steady population decline of nearly 10%, with projections estimating the population at 3.7 million by 2024.¹ This demographic trend, coupled with emigration and an aging population, has reduced the labor force to 1.6 million as of 2023.² The growing 60-70 age group, up by 13-14%, highlights a critical gap in workforce replenishment as younger generations increasingly choose to leave the country or abstain from labor market participation.

Transitioning from education to employment remains a significant obstacle, with only 54.8% of graduates securing jobs within three years, far below the EU average of 85%. Graduates of vocational education and training (VET) fare better, with a 74% employment rate³, underscoring the importance of VET in addressing skill mismatches. However, the broader education system struggles to align with labor market demands, leaving many individuals underprepared for employment opportunities.

Gender disparities exacerbate these challenges. Women's labor market participation is only 43%, compared to 65% for men, and falls below the EU average for women at 51.5%. Despite this, women display higher motivation to pursue education, with 20% seeking learning opportunities compared to 13% of men. However, systemic barriers such as caregiving responsibilities, limited childcare support, and cultural expectations significantly hinder women's engagement in lifelong learning and the workforce.

Participation in lifelong learning remains critically low across the board. Only 1.6% of men and 1.8% of women aged 25-64 engage in education or training, compared to the EU average of 10.8%. Broader surveys indicate that only 20% of adults aged 18-64 participated in any form of education in 2020, with 7% in formal education and 13% in non-formal education. These figures are far below the EU's targets of 47% by 2025 and 60% by 2030. The countries like Estonia (19%) and Lithuania (15.5%) have significantly higher participation rates, demonstrating Georgia's lagging performance.

Several barriers contribute to this low engagement. **Cultural attitudes** discourage adult learning, with 75% of Georgians believing that education is easier before age 30. A significant portion of adults over 30 (61%) feel they are too busy to participate in education or training. **Family obligations and a perceived lack of need for further education** are additional obstacles, cited by 25% and 19% of respondents, respectively. **Geographic barriers** also play a role; rural populations, in particular, face limited access to training centers and poor public transportation infrastructure.

Ethnic minorities experience compounded disadvantages. For example, Azeris in Georgia have a secondary education completion rate of only 33%, compared to 69%⁴ among Georgian youth. Their participation in VET programs is critically low at just 2%. Furthermore, digital literacy remains a significant challenge across the country, with only 34% of Georgians possessing basic digital skills, compared to the EU average of 56%. These gaps are especially pronounced among rural populations, women, and ethnic minority groups, further limiting their opportunities for lifelong learning.

1. GEOSTAT, Population and Demography of Georgia, 2024 <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/316/population-and-demography>

2. GEOSTAT, Labor force and Employment, 2024 <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/683/Employment-Unemployment>

3. National Tracer study, Skills Agency, 2024

4. Georgia Education Fact Sheets, 2020, UNICEF

The lack of a centralized career guidance system exacerbates the issue. Existing initiatives like “Skills in Schools” provide orientation courses for students but are limited in scope and resources, covering only a fraction of the population. Additionally, adult education in Georgia is narrowly defined as vocational training, neglecting broader goals such as personal development, civic engagement, and social inclusion. This limited vision undermines the potential of lifelong learning as a tool for empowerment and societal progress.

Economic and structural barriers further impede progress. Public funding for lifelong learning is inadequate, with no dedicated budget line for adult education. Most programs rely on donor funding, leaving them vulnerable to resource constraints. Employers contribute minimally to workforce training, with small and medium-sized enterprises unable to afford upskilling programs and larger companies lacking incentives to invest in employee development. NGOs, which could play a crucial role in bridging these gaps, face high costs and regulatory hurdles in providing skills education.

The combination of these challenges places Georgia far behind international benchmarks for lifelong learning participation. To address this, a systemic approach is required—one that promotes a cultural shift towards valuing lifelong learning, improves access to educational opportunities, strengthens foundational and digital skills, and provides adequate support services for underserved groups. Only through such comprehensive reforms can Georgia unlock the full potential of its workforce and foster a more inclusive and equitable education system.

Definition, legal background and policy

In Georgia, the understanding and perception of Adult Learning and Education (ALE) are still evolving, with significant gaps between the country’s approach and the broader European or international concept of lifelong learning (LLL). Although there have been efforts to align Georgia’s education system with European standards, particularly following the signing of the **Association Agreement**⁵ with the European Union in 2014, ALE remains a marginal concept within the country’s educational and policy frameworks.

The **Association Agreement**, which entered into force in 2016, marked a key moment in Georgia’s political and educational reforms, driving the country towards deeper integration with the EU. As part of this process, significant revisions to the education legislation were undertaken. The focus was on harmonizing terminology and ensuring that Georgia’s education system met EU expectations, which included promoting lifelong learning and developing a national qualifications framework. In 2019, Georgia adopted its **National Qualifications Framework**⁶, a key step towards embracing lifelong learning and making qualifications more transparent and comparable with the European system. However, despite these advancements, a critical gap remains: the term “adult education” is not defined in any of the existing legal or policy documents, leaving ALE largely unregulated and underdeveloped.

5. In June 2014, the EU and Georgia signed an Association Agreement, which entered into force on July 1 2016. This, along with the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) Agreement, builds a foundation for far-reaching Georgian political and economic integration with the EU

6. The new National Qualifications Framework and Learning Fields Classifier was approved by Order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Georgia in 2019 (order N69/n). The National Qualifications Framework considers the requirements of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF LLL) and European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework (QF-EHEA). The document unites all the qualifications existing in Georgia, reflects the learning outcomes of different levels of general, vocational and higher education.

One of the most significant issues is that adult education in Georgia is still not treated as a distinct area within the educational system. While the concept of **non-formal education** was introduced into the legislation⁷ alongside formal education in order to establish a legal basis for its recognition, it was primarily aimed at acknowledging non-formal learning rather than actively supporting it. The existing **definition of non-formal education** in Georgian law describes it as part of the lifelong learning system, focusing on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and responsibility beyond formal education. However, this definition, while important for assessing and recognizing non-formal learning, does not reflect the holistic, inclusive, and flexible approach to ALE recommended by the European Commission. Specifically, it fails to integrate ALE into broader lifelong learning strategies that emphasize inclusivity, active citizenship, and social participation.

Furthermore, the term “adult” is barely used in Georgian education regulations. The **Law on Vocational Education** is the only piece of legislation that references adults in the context of education, but this mention is minimal and occurs in a general statement about considering the educational needs of both adolescents and adults when planning vocational education. However, there is no strategic framework or policy dedicated to addressing the specific learning needs of adults across different stages of life, which is a major point of contrast with EU approaches that advocate for comprehensive adult learning opportunities aimed at promoting active citizenship and personal development.

In terms of **legislation**, the **Law on Vocational Education** does promote the idea of lifelong learning, which is a step towards integrating adult education into the broader educational framework. However, this focus is primarily on vocational education and skills development to support economic growth and employability. **Lifelong learning** is mentioned positively in several legal documents, including the Law on **General Education**, but there is no clear articulation of the role adult education should play in enhancing personal growth, social inclusion, or community development. The absence of adult education as a central focus in Georgian legislation means that ALE remains largely viewed through an economic lens, often as a means to improve workforce skills rather than as a fundamental right or public good.

Additionally, in 2022, the **Ministry of Education and Science** approved a new strategy for the development of education and science, which included references to adult education and lifelong learning. The strategy emphasizes the need to improve literacy, quantitative literacy, and digital skills among adults, and encourages greater participation in formal and non-formal educational processes. However, the action plan accompanying the strategy lacks specific, systematic measures to promote adult learning across all areas of life, such as civic education, community learning, and personal development. Instead, adult education is still primarily viewed through the lens of vocational education and training (VET), leaving out its broader social and civic functions.

In sum, while there have been some positive steps taken in Georgia, such as the introduction of non-formal education and the recognition of lifelong learning, the conceptualization of **Adult Learning and Education** remains narrow. ALE in Georgia is largely seen as an extension of vocational education aimed at economic development, with little emphasis on the broader goals of personal empowerment, social cohesion, and active citizenship. This contrasts sharply with the European understanding of ALE, which views adult education as a public good, essential for the well-being of individuals and societies alike⁸. As it stands, ALE in Georgia has not yet been fully integrated into the national education policy as a comprehensive, lifelong endeavor that spans across all stages of life and encompasses a range of learning purposes beyond economic development. To align with European standards and fulfill its potential, Georgia will need to expand its understanding and support of ALE to include the full spectrum of its social, personal, and civic benefits.

7. LAW OF GEORGIA ON EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT; LAW OF GEORGIA ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION.

8. STUDY on Adult Learning and Education in Georgia; 2021, DVV International

Formal provision

In Georgia, the provision of adult learning within formal education is limited and primarily focused on public providers and vocational education and training (VET).

The **State certificate T/R courses** aim to upskill and reskill adults, promoting continuous learning throughout their careers. This system allows various providers—public, private, and NGOs—to participate and is aligned with EU practices focused on lifelong learning. However, the focus in Georgia has been primarily on employability, leaving other educational goals such as personal growth, financial literacy, and civic education underdeveloped and largely outside the formal system, often funded by international donors. In 2023, over 7,000 adults participated in formal vocational training/retraining programs, which typically last between 2 to 8 months. However, the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector is restricted due to stringent and costly safety measures, preventing many from offering skills education. Funding for these programs comes from multiple sources: the **Skills Agency**, private providers, and donors. The diversity of funding reflects a multi-stakeholder approach, but also highlights the fragmented nature of Georgia’s adult learning system, which lacks a unified strategic vision. VET providers include 41 private and 35 public institutions, with a network spread across the country, though 40% of providers are located in Tbilisi, leaving rural and underserved areas with limited access to programs.

Despite efforts to expand access, geographic barriers, including difficult terrain and limited transportation, persist, making it challenging for adults in rural areas to access educational opportunities. Moreover, vocational education programs are primarily designed for younger learners, leaving adults to compete for spots in programs that often do not meet their needs. These programs tend to be slow-paced and rigid, making it difficult for adults to balance their learning with work and family commitments. As a result, many adults are shifting towards T/R courses, which are more flexible but still geographically concentrated and insufficient in number to meet demand.

The government recognizes the need to increase adult participation in education, with a goal to reach the European target of 47% by 2025 and 60% by 2030. However, Georgia’s current participation rate is far below the European average of 10.8%. Recent efforts to digitize adult education, such as the development of a new **Learning Management System (LMS)** in 2023, aim to improve access to both formal and non-formal learning. This system will support the creation of modular learning paths and blended learning, aligning with EU trends towards digital education.

In 2024, changes to the **Vocational Education and Training (VET) law** will allow for more digital learning, including fully online certification courses, which will improve accessibility, especially in IT and digital literacy. However, fully digital learning may not fully address the broader challenges of engaging adult learners, particularly those in remote areas or socially vulnerable communities with limited digital skills or access to technology.

In summary, while Georgia has made strides in adult education, particularly in vocational training, significant challenges remain, especially in terms of geographic access, the alignment of programs with adult learners’ needs, and the integration of broader educational goals. To meet EU targets and ensure more inclusive participation, Georgia will need to scale up its adult learning initiatives and address the barriers that limit access to quality education for all adults.

Non-formal provision

Non-formal education in Georgia has deep historical roots, originating long before the establishment of formal education. Traditional Georgian education was primarily religious, centered around church schools and monasteries. Informal learning was also prevalent within communities, often through oral traditions and the transmission of local knowledge, including crafts. The late 19th century saw a rise in secular education driven by national movements, leading to literacy campaigns and adult education initiatives, particularly in rural areas. Following independence in 1918, Georgia established People's Universities to provide adult education focused on civic engagement, national identity, and practical skills. This period mirrored European efforts to provide education for working-class adults.

The Soviet era saw a shift to centralized formal education, but non-formal education continued, often focused on political indoctrination and cultural preservation, especially regarding the Georgian language and arts. After regaining independence in 1991, Georgia renewed its focus on educational reform, with NGOs and international organizations promoting non-formal education programs aimed at marginalized groups, youth, and women, fostering skills like civic engagement and critical thinking.

Today, non-formal education in Georgia includes a wide range of programs, from language courses and vocational training to community workshops and cultural activities. While formal education is largely provided by universities, with 82 institutions in total, the involvement in adult education outside of academic programs is limited. Few universities offer extracurricular adult education, but some, like Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU), provide career development services, including adult learning opportunities.

The **Georgian Innovation and Technology Agency (GITA)** offers digital skills training, and the **Academy of the Ministry of Finance** provides professional development courses. Sectoral associations, such as the Georgian Farmers' Association and the Tourism Association, also play a role in non-formal education, often providing training tailored to specific industries.

In contrast to European countries where employers significantly invest in adult education, Georgia's employer engagement is minimal. Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) struggle to afford workforce training, and even larger companies have yet to fully invest in employee development. This lack of employer involvement places a heavy burden on public funds and individual learners, hindering the growth of a comprehensive adult learning system.

A key player in non-formal education in Georgia is **DVV International**, which has supported the establishment of Adult Education and Learning Centres (ALEs) in various regions. These centres offer flexible, community-based learning and serve as important resources for adult education. These ALEs provide a broad range of courses, including personal development, vocational training, cultural education, and civic engagement. However, they rely heavily on international funding and are still underdeveloped compared to European standards.

Georgia's non-formal education system remains underdeveloped, with participation rates significantly lower than in EU countries, where non-formal education accounts for over half of all adult learning activities. According to international data, Georgia's non-formal education offerings lag behind global benchmarks, particularly in comparison to countries with higher participation rates like Sweden and Denmark. Despite progress, Georgia still faces significant challenges in building a comprehensive, accessible, and sustainable non-formal adult education system.

Financing

In 2023, the Georgian government allocated a total of **2,078.78 million GEL** to the Ministry of Education and Science, with **2,081.24 million GEL** in expenditures⁹. However, public education spending remains relatively low at **3.6% of GDP**, below the EU average of **5.0%**. The lack of a specific budget line for adult education leads to underfunding and inadequate coverage of adult learning programs. The budget for vocational education, which includes adult education, amounted to **124.1 million GEL** in 2023. Efforts to fund private education providers have been introduced, including voucher funding for regular programs and program funding for short-term courses, which cover direct and indirect costs.

Public investment is crucial for ensuring equal access to adult learning, especially for underserved communities. International benchmarks, such as those from UNESCO, recommend dedicating **0.5-1% of GDP** specifically to adult education. European countries like Denmark and Sweden exceed this, often allocating more than **1%** of their GDP to adult learning. This contrast highlights Georgia's relatively low investment in adult education, particularly compared to EU countries where employer contributions are more significant. In Finland, employers contribute over **50%** to adult learning financing, a model that Georgia could emulate by introducing financial incentives to encourage employer investment.

In Georgia, there is no clear data on private household or company expenditure on adult education. Public VET institutions offer free education to all learners, funded by state vouchers, while private institutions often combine state funding and participant payments. The country has also received substantial international support for its vocational education and training (VET) sector. Key donors include the **EU**, which has contributed **EUR 97 million** since 2009, and other international organizations such as the **Asian Development Bank** (EUR 41.2 million) and **USAID** (USD 24 million for 2021-2026). These funds support various VET reforms and skill development programs.

DVV International (DVVI), a key player in adult education, has invested over **EUR 4 million** from 2006 to 2023 in supporting Adult Education Centres (ALEs) across Georgia. These centres rely heavily on international donors, local municipalities, and private organizations for funding, but the lack of state support is a major challenge. Many rural areas, in particular, face infrastructure limitations that restrict access to non-formal education. Programs in these areas are often limited, targeting specific groups and sometimes charging higher fees due to the absence of state funding. This creates an affordability issue for adults, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who often prefer free or low-cost courses.

The overall lack of consistent and sufficient funding for adult education in Georgia highlights significant challenges, particularly in reaching wider and more diverse populations. There is a pressing need for more predictable state funding, employer engagement, and long-term financial commitments to strengthen Georgia's adult education system and ensure broader access to learning opportunities.

9. 2023 monitoring report of the 2022-2024 action plan of the unified national strategy of education and science for 2022-2030, Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia, 2024

Governance

The governance of adult education (ALE) systems differs significantly across countries, with successful models often involving clear coordination between various stakeholders at both national and local levels. In countries like Denmark, Finland, and Germany, the roles of ministries, municipalities, and private entities are well-defined, fostering effective implementation and monitoring of adult learning policies. In contrast, Georgia's approach is fragmented, with responsibility spread across multiple agencies with overlapping mandates, resulting in inefficiencies and limited impact on ALE initiatives.

Internationally, UNESCO's **Marrakech Framework for Action** recommends a holistic governance model, integrating a variety of stakeholders, including government, the private sector, trade unions, and community organizations, to create a more coherent ALE system. The Framework advocates for establishing national coordination bodies to ensure collaboration among these actors and the effective implementation of lifelong learning strategies.

In Georgia, the Ministry of Education and Science is tasked with promoting adult education, but its role is fragmented due to unclear policies. The **National Center for the Development of the Quality of Education** plays a key role in ensuring the quality of education, managing accreditation, and overseeing the national qualifications framework. All providers of vocational education programs must meet national standards, undergo evaluations, and conduct regular self-assessments to improve quality. However, smaller training or retraining providers, such as small businesses or professionals, face challenges in maintaining quality due to limited resources and a lack of qualified trainers.

In 2021, Georgia introduced the **Skills Agency**, a joint initiative by the Ministry of Education and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The Agency's purpose is to develop sector-specific policies and consolidate resources from private sector entities and organizations. While the agency focuses on developing qualifications, institutional strengthening, and work-based learning, its mandate is still insufficient to play a central role in the overall adult education landscape. Nevertheless, the Agency supports vocational training and retraining programs by advising providers and providing funding after program approval.

Additionally, the **State Employment Agency** implements vocational training for job seekers annually, contributing to adult education efforts. Looking ahead, there is an expectation that **municipalities** will take on a more central role in adult education administration, particularly concerning infrastructure and funding. The **European Agenda for Adult Learning (2021-2030)** advocates for greater local autonomy, enabling municipalities to tailor ALE programs to regional needs, as seen in countries like Austria and Italy. While Georgian municipalities are legally responsible for promoting non-formal education in areas like culture and social affairs, their involvement is currently hindered by centralized government priorities and budget constraints.

With increased flexibility and budget autonomy, municipalities could play a crucial role in raising awareness of available adult education opportunities, supporting local providers, and implementing national programs in collaboration with the central government.¹⁰ This localized approach could enhance the relevance and participation in adult learning across the country.

10. STUDY on Adult Learning and Education in Georgia; 2021, DVV International

RECOMMENDED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK OF ACTIONS



Holistic vision for policy formulation

Legal framework

The relationship between lifelong learning (LLL) and adult education and learning (ALE) is grounded in a vision where, within the LLL framework, ALE encompasses all forms of education and learning aimed at enabling adults to participate fully in society and the workforce. Consequently, ALE serves as a core component of LLL and, when considering its coverage throughout the adult life span, represents one of the most significant and enduring forms of education, offering continuity in learning that adapts to their changing roles and responsibilities. Therefore, a key task is to foster a comprehensive understanding of ALE's importance within the Georgian context, reflecting this in relevant legislation and strategic frameworks.

The Ministry of Education of Georgia has repeatedly voiced the idea of creating a unified education code. This idea became particularly relevant after the approval of the new national qualification framework, which aims to promote the principles of lifelong learning. However, current education legislation remains fragmented, comprising several laws that address different levels of education, often leading to systemic inconsistencies. If the prospect of developing a unified educational code is to re-emerge, it will be important to integrate adult education principles, policies and approaches. This integration will be essential for creating a cohesive and effective educational framework that addresses the diverse needs of all learners throughout their life stages.

In case the government does not return to the idea of creating a unified education code, an alternative version is the adoption of a separate law to regulate adult education, which in turn will lead to changes in other laws regulating education. A comprehensive Adult Learning and Education Law should clearly define ALE and be consistent with international standards, such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning and the Marrakech Framework for Action. This law should outline ALE as a public good that serves personal, social, and economic purposes, and address the needs of diverse learner groups, including older adults and marginalized communities.

Legislation and educational strategies need to make use of consistent ALE concepts and terminology which are aligned to international policy vocabulary anchored in key UNESCO and EU documents. This implies progress with a broad view on ALE which considers all forms of adult learning after the initial education cycle and all forms of vocational and non-vocational learning contributing to an individual's quality of life. Global Reports on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) provides a comprehensive definition of adult education: "ALE encompasses all formal, non-formal and informal or incidental learning and continuing education, both general and vocational, and both theoretical and practical, undertaken by adults. However, this term may be defined in different way by every country. ALE participants will typically have concluded their initial education and training and then returned to some form of learning. But there will be young people and adults in all countries who did not have the opportunity to enroll in or complete their schooling by the requisite age, and who participate in ALE programmes, including those aiming to equip them with literacy and basic skills or as a 'second chance' to obtain recognised certificates"¹¹. On the individual level, ALE aims to develop the capacities and capabilities of each individual to be a socially responsible, critical, self-reliant citizen who is able to shape the developments taking place in both the personal and the professional environment. At societal level, a community of aware, active adults helps create what is known as a "learning society", where everyone has the opportunity to "learn and fully participate in sustainable development processes and to enhance solidarity among people and communities.

11. UNESCO UIL (2016). 3rd Global Report on Adult Learning and Education, p. 29 and Schweighöfer, B. (2019). Youth and Adult Education in the Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals. Bonn: DVV International

“ALE encompasses all formal, non-formal and informal or incidental learning and continuing education, both general and vocational, and both theoretical and practical, undertaken by adults. ALE participants will typically have concluded their initial education and training and then returned to some form of learning. But there will be young people and adults in all countries who did not have the opportunity to enroll in or complete their schooling by the requisite age, and who participate in ALE programmes, including those aiming to equip them with literacy and basic skills or as a ‘second chance’ to obtain recognised certificates”

Strategy

Mapping of stakeholders and opportunities has to be undertaken to see the big picture and analyze available resources needed to prepare and implement the strategy. With broad stakeholder engagement should be prepared holistic adult education policy and strategy, that integrates aspects/goals of economic empowerment, social inclusion and personal development. It is necessary to establish a partnership platform and institutionalize the coordination mechanism of the involved parties. To this end, the mandate of the Skills Agency should be expanded and the experience and expertise of DVV-international should be used as much as possible.

Defining the holistic vision of adult education in Georgia should be accompanied by the development of an appropriate strategy according to which ALE will be recognized as a distinct policy area beyond vocational education to ensure that it is not confined to economic purposes alone. ALE should promote active citizenship, community engagement, and personal development, in addition to employability. The above aims can be achieved with various types of ALE:¹²

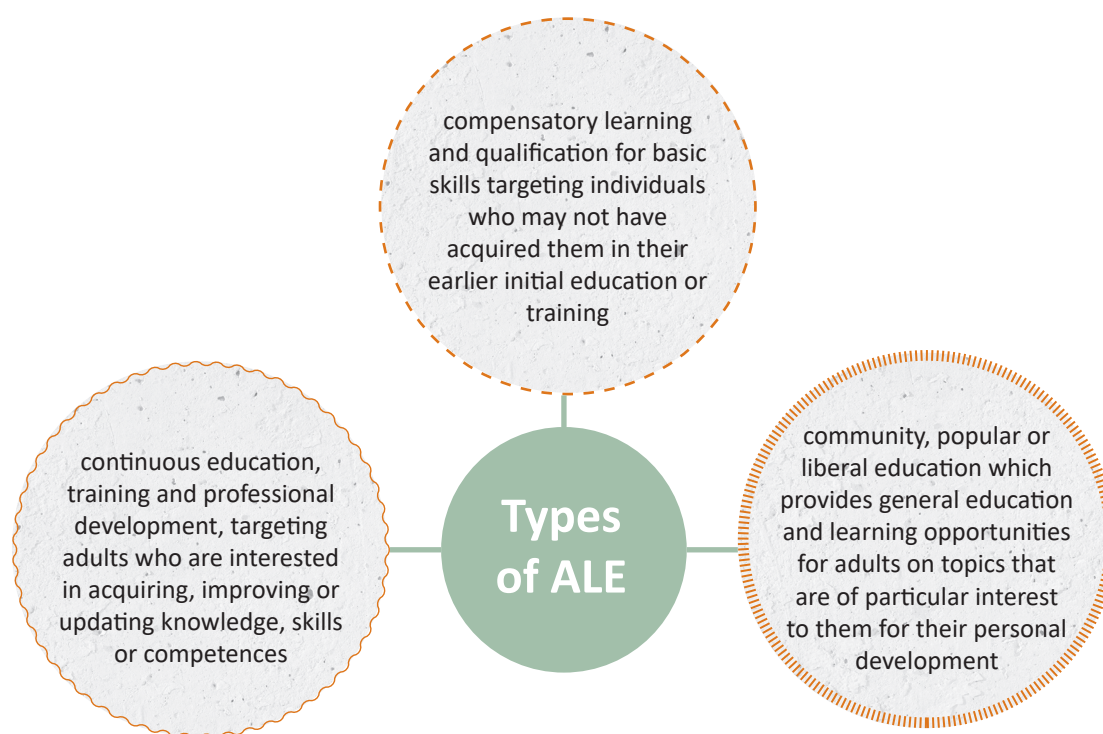
- compensatory learning and qualification for basic skills (such as literacy, numeracy), targeting individuals who may not have acquired them in their earlier initial education or training,
- continuous education, training and professional development, targeting adults who are interested in acquiring, improving or updating knowledge, skills or competences in a specific field related to their work environment,
- community, popular or liberal education (also citizenship education) which provides general education and learning opportunities for adults on topics that are of particular interest to them for their personal development, to engage with social issues and lead a decent life.

With regard to the implementation of vocational training and re-training programmes, adults’ age group-specific needs should be considered more comprehensively in future in order to improve their participation rates. It is also important to increase the quality, scale and flexibility of delivery. At the same time all stakeholders should make efforts over the next decade to build a solid non-formal and informal AE infrastructure which goes beyond the economic and work-related context. Particularly NFE programmes with a non-monetary purpose – such as civic education and personal development courses – should be fostered.¹³

It is important to Integrate non-formal and informal learning into the national strategy that includes the recognition, validation, and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning in line with the UNESCO Guidelines on RVA. This will provide adult learners with clearer pathways to progress from informal learning experiences to recognized qualifications.

12. This categorization aligns with UNESCO’s Recommendation for adult education from 2015

13. STUDY on Adult Learning and Education in Georgia; 2021, DVV International



The strategy should incorporate an awareness-raising component on the value of ALE, emphasizing its role in fostering social cohesion, lifelong employability and active citizenship. Drawing on successful EU campaigns like “Learning is for Life” can help shift societal attitudes toward adult learning.

Establishing a systematic research and evaluation mechanism is essential for developing evidence-based adult education policies. Introducing regular monitoring and evaluation of ALE, aligned with EU and OECD benchmarks, will ensure continuous tracking and analysis of participation rates, gender parity, and skill acquisition. The evaluation framework should be in line with EUROSTAT’s guidelines on adult education statistics. Additionally, joining the PIAAC initiative alongside other OECD countries is recommended to enhance benchmarking opportunities and deepen analytical insights. However, it is essential to approach PIAAC data cautiously, as this type of assessment may provide only limited insights into the broader reality of adult education, reducing it to a narrow set of skills and a restricted range of ALE fields.

It is important to include a well-being dimension in the evaluation framework of adult education programs. Tracking impacts on happiness, mental health and life satisfaction will demonstrate the broader social benefits of adult education and align it with holistic developmental goals. Countries with high participation in adult education (e.g. Denmark and Sweden) score highly also on happiness indexes, suggesting a potential correlation.

Proposed Priority Actions:

Establish a Unified Legislative Framework

- **Create a Comprehensive ALE Law:** Develop a distinct Adult Learning and Education Law that clearly defines ALE, aligning with international standards such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning and the Marrakech Framework for Action. This law should recognize ALE as a public good serving social, personal, and economic purposes, and include mechanisms for its implementation and funding.
- **Integrate ALE into Existing Legislation:** If a unified education code is not pursued, introduce specific ALE provisions within existing laws or adopt separate legislation. Ensure coherence and consistency across all educational policies, facilitating coordination between ministries, sectors, and stakeholders involved in ALE.

Adopt Consistent Terminology and Frameworks

- **Align with International Standards:** Utilize consistent ALE terminology that aligns with UNESCO and EU policy documents to foster a broad understanding of ALE, encompassing all forms of adult learning, both formal and non-formal.
- **Define ALE's Scope:** Include all educational opportunities that support adults beyond initial education, such as foundational skills programs, lifelong learning pathways, and community-based initiatives
- **Foster Diverse ALE Types:** Recognise and promote diverse ALE forms to address different learning needs:
 - Foundational Skills Programs: Provide compensatory learning for adults needing literacy, numeracy, and basic skills.
 - Continuing Education and Vocational Skills: Focus on professional development, skill-building, and vocational training.
 - Community and Liberal Education: Encourage personal development and civic engagement through community-based and liberal education programs.

Holistic Policy and Strategic Vision for ALE

- **Engage Stakeholders:** Conduct a comprehensive mapping of stakeholders, resources, and opportunities to develop a holistic ALE policy that supports economic empowerment, social inclusion, and individual growth.
- **Define a Holistic Vision:** Articulate a vision for ALE in the form of the long-term strategy 2025-2030, that extends beyond vocational training to include active citizenship, community engagement, and personal growth, ensuring a multifaceted approach to adult education.
- **Promote Lifelong and Lifewide Learning:** Emphasize a vision of ALE that values learning throughout all stages of adulthood and across diverse life contexts, fostering skills and knowledge that enhance both professional and personal lives. This approach supports adults in adapting to societal changes, participating fully in civic life, and nurturing their own well-being.

Encourage research and Evaluation

- **Invest in Research:** Support ongoing research to inform evidence-based policy formulation and improve ALE practices.
- **Implement Systematic Evaluation:** Create a robust mechanism for monitoring and evaluating ALE policies, using EU benchmarks to ensure effective tracking of participation rates, gender parity, and skill acquisition.
- **Join International Initiatives:** Consider participating in initiatives like PIAAC to facilitate benchmarking and analysis, enriching the evidence base for policy development, but complement it with national surveys and data to capture a broader understanding of ALE's diverse impacts and needs.

Governance

Roles and responsibilities

Drawing on the recommendations from the Marrakech Framework for Action, to ensure alignment with international benchmarks and facilitate a more integrated approach to policy implementation, as well as to ensure the efficient and responsive functioning of the system, it's essential for Georgia to establish a governance model that combines an inclusive, learner-centered approach with a systematic framework to organize existing scattered and sporadic practices.

To identify the most suitable governance model, we need to analyze current institutions, considering the complexity of their roles. This analysis should encompass both non-formal and formal ALE provisions, assess their capacity for multi-stakeholder engagement—including public-private partnerships—and evaluate their effectiveness at international, national, and regional levels. Three potential solutions for governance can be proposed:

- Create a **dedicated entity** to serve as the central ALE coordination point.
- Forming an **inter-institutional body**: Develop a committee comprising representatives from all relevant institutions to oversee ALE, ensuring collaborative governance and shared responsibility across sectors.
- **Appointing an Existing Institution**: Designate an existing organization to fulfill the coordinating role, streamlining resources but potentially limiting scope if the institution's mandate doesn't fully encompass ALE.

The first option involves creating a new institution, which would require a substantial budget that may be difficult to justify, especially given the potential overlap of functions with the Skills Agency. Coordination of ALE primarily pertains to policy implementation rather than formulation, making it unsuitable to delegate this responsibility to any single ministry.

Regarding the formation of a committee, successful examples of committee work for coordinating activities across multiple ministries are limited. Committees typically lack implementation capabilities, and frequent changes in membership undermine their sustainability, negatively impacting efficiency.

A third scenario could consider a skills agency if its mandate goes beyond vocational education and includes lifelong learning. In this case, it may become the coordinating body of ALE. The Skills Agency operates under a Public-Private Partnership model. However, safeguards should be established to ensure that educational goals remain at the forefront.

Moreover, coherence between ALE initiatives and national decentralization policies is critical. The inclusion of a regional development ministry official on the Skills Agency's governing board would further strengthen this alignment. However, a potential limitation of assigning ALE coordination to the Skills Agency is its restricted authority to hold engaged institutions financially accountable. Although a deputy minister of finance is represented on the governing board, additional mechanisms may be necessary to ensure that the ALE system operates within a framework of checks and balances. (see chapter on Funding). Additionally, as a Skills Agency, there is a risk of prioritizing a narrow skills-based approach that may overlook broader educational objectives, such as civic engagement, personal development, and social inclusion, which are essential components of a comprehensive ALE strategy.

Governance modality	Advantages	Disadvantages
Creation of new institution and appoint it for coordination focal point for ALE	One window approach for all ALE stakeholders High sustainability	If not under GoG, challenges to engage other institutions Duplication of functions with SA and its board High costs
Creation of the inter-institutional body, committee to govern ALE and supervise all involved institutions in charge	All stakeholders on board equally deciding Multi-stakeholder decision making Financial accountability	Low sustainability No operational capacity
Selection of Skills Agency as a coordinating body	High sustainability High operational capacity - one window for all skills policies and stakeholders Low costs Multi-stakeholder decision making Synergies between skills sub-systems	Lack of national financial accountability potential prioritization of business interests over public educational needs, which could limit ALE's accessibility and inclusiveness. a risk of prioritizing a narrow skills-based approach

Modalities of coordination

Empowerment of municipalities, as key ALE actors, by enhancing the capacity and autonomy of municipalities in ALE governance, is one of the key success factors of the ALE reform. By allocating more financial resources and granting local authorities greater decision-making power, municipalities can become more active in promoting community-based adult learning. This approach aligns with best practices from European models, where local governments play a central role in shaping adult education according to local needs.

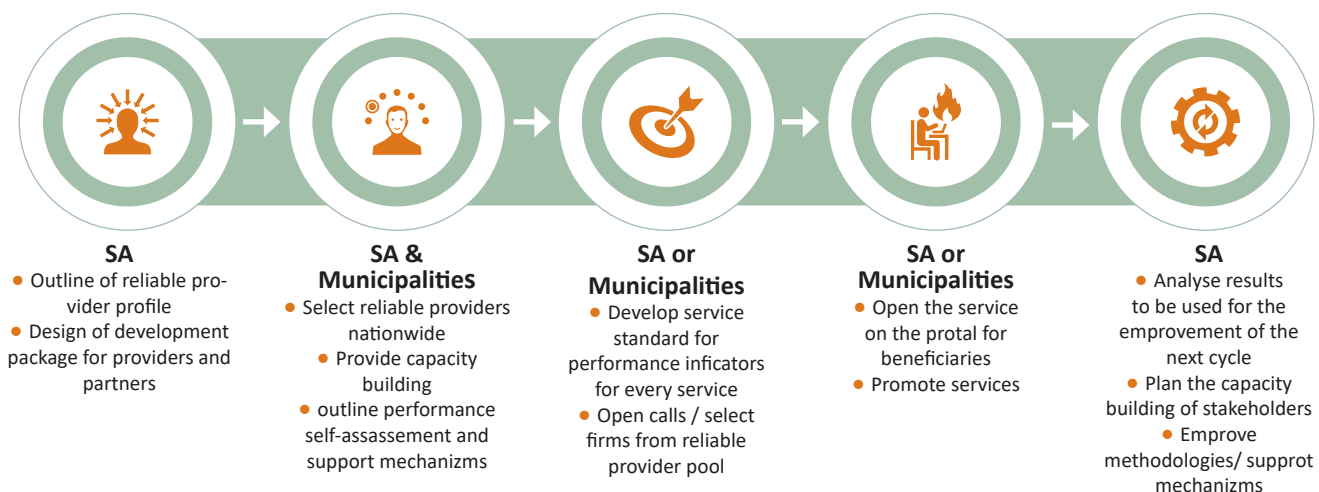
The national policy framework for decentralization reform is supported by the Decentralization Strategy 2022-2025 and its accompanying Action Plan for 2024-2025, which was approved by the Government of Georgia through Decree #186 in June 2024. The 2024-2025 strategy aims to enhance the efficiency of self-governing units in carrying out their exclusive functions while also increasing the volume of delegated functions in several areas, following the principle of subsidiarity (delegation of functions from the central government). Among various policy areas, the action plan identifies education as a potential area for delegation, though it does not specify what is encompassed within the education domain. This presents a valuable opportunity to recognize ALE as a subject for delegation and include it in pilot initiatives.

With planned legal amendments, it is crucial to revise the legal framework to expand the scope of exclusive functions that municipalities can own. The funding and support of ALE provision should become the matter of exclusivity for self-governing bodies, while the shaping of overall ALE policy and quality enhancement my remain as a function to be centrally governed. Additionally, simplifying the process for municipalities to transfer premises to ALE institutions, secure funding, and support local initiatives in a more flexible manner will be important.

ALE requires extensive multi-stakeholder and multi-level coordination. Within the proposed framework, the Skills Agency and its board will oversee the overall coordination of both formal and non-formal ALE provisions. They will collect and analyze data, prepare national reports, and engage in international discussions on ALE. Additionally, the Skills Agency will collaborate with non-governmental and private stakeholders to

enhance the quality and efficiency of ALE offerings, increase participation, and ensure nationwide inclusion. On the other hand, municipalities will identify local development needs, plan budgets, and provide flexible services. This approach can be characterized as a model of collaborative multi-level provision of ALE, which can be outlined in the following steps:

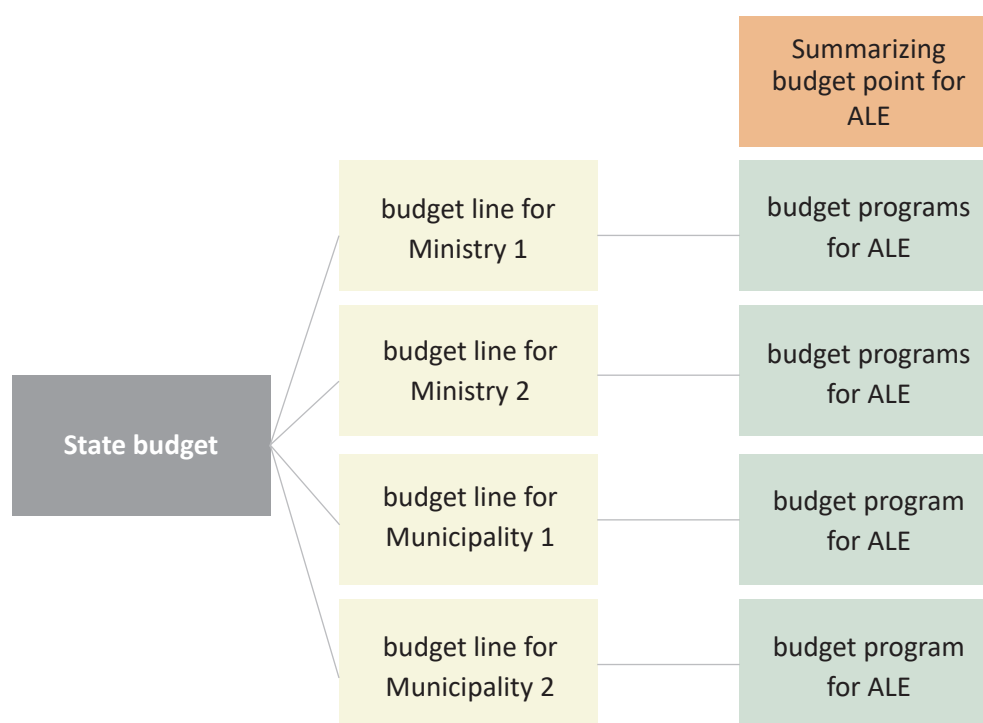
- **Development of Minimum Requirements-** The Skills Agency (SA), in collaboration with stakeholders, will establish the minimum requirements and profile for non-formal adult learning institutions. This framework will be informed by international best practices while taking into account the local socio-cultural and economic context of the country. Additionally, the SA will design self-assessment tools, capacity-building programs, and instructional packages tailored for providers and ALE partners.
- **Coordination of Provider Selection -** In the next phase, the SA will coordinate with municipalities to administer the selection of future providers of both formal and non-formal education, using established standard profiles. A diverse range of international, national, and local organizations will be invited to apply for the status of reliable provider, making them eligible for financial support from the SA or municipalities. The SA will also offer capacity-building and support for all providers as needed, including self-assessment and other quality assurance measures. In this process, the role, and also contribution potential of DVV International, due to its exclusive experience in supporting ALE for more than 20 years in Georgia, as well as Georgian Adult Education Network (GAEN) will be essential.
- **Profiling of Government-Funded Services -** All services funded by the government, including non-formal training, key competence development, social integration projects, etc. will be pre-defined/standardized according to the international frameworks for ALE (Curriculum GlobALE, etc.) and guided by detailed instructions. To ensure effective funding, new eligibility criteria and relevant indicators will be introduced to measure the efficiency of non-formal provision. This approach has already been successfully tested by the SA, the National Employment Agency (SESA), and the National Agency of Social Services.
- **Open Calls for Providers -** Subsequently, funding calls may be issued by the SA, SESA, municipalities or other government institutions. These calls will focus not only on the quality of service-provision but also on the inclusion and integration of citizens with diverse needs.
- **Promotion and Cultural Change -** In the short term, the SA will prioritize the promotion of ALE and the encouragement of adults to attend courses. In the long term, it is essential to target cultural and mindset shifts towards recognizing the value of ALE.
- **Analysis and Continuous Improvement -** The SA team will analyze all collected information to identify mistakes and areas for improvement within the services and institutions involved in ALE. This ongoing evaluation will help enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of adult learning initiatives.



Strategies for financing and funding ALE

Adequate allocation of financial resources is the key factor for the success of every reform, especially for ALE, being the subject of multi-level governance and coordination. To match with UNESCO and OECD standards, Georgia should aim to create a dedicated ALE budget line, allocating at least 0.5% of GDP specifically for adult learning. This investment would enhance program availability, particularly in rural areas, and support lifelong learning for marginalized groups. Additionally, in alignment with the Marrakech Framework for Action, Georgia should prioritize increasing public funding for education to a minimum of 6% of the total national education budget. This recommendation underscores the need to make adult learning a central part of the national education agenda and ensure adequate resources are allocated for its sustainable development.

To ensure the smooth delivery of both formal and non-formal adult learning, sustain budget affordability, and adapt to the rapidly evolving ecosystem of ALE, it is essential to implement a matrix-style budget planning, expenditure, and reporting system in cooperation with ministry of finance. This system will facilitate budget-responsibility sharing based on a checks and balances approach, promoting accountability and efficiency in resource allocation. Each ministry responsible for providing ALE activities will prepare budget programs that specify the sub-articles and amounts allocated to ALE. By distributing these funds across various agencies, we can ensure that the root article remains traceable within each ministry and municipality across budget lines. All budget articles will consolidate into a single line of expenditures for ALE in the state budget, overseen and coordinated by the Ministry of Finance.



The proposed funding and coordination model aims to democratize adult learning and education (ALE) rather than establish a new network of state providers or grant exclusivity to existing units. Instead, this approach focuses on leveraging and further developing the diverse range of institutions that have experience in implementing donor-supported capacity-building activities throughout the country, particularly in rural communities. Many of these institutions are non-governmental, community-based organizations that have built significant human resources and expertise in identifying and addressing local social challenges. In urban areas, numerous non-formal training institutions offer high-quality upskilling and personal development programs but often lack access to state funding, resulting in courses that only a limited number of adults can afford. The

suggested model provides an opportunity for education and training, as well as community organizations, to access state funds to address local challenges faced by adults. The risks of this model consist mainly of complex coordination, diluted accountability, inconsistent prioritization across agencies, potential overlaps in function, and increased administrative demands.

As an alternative, there could be also considered **Centralized Flexible Fund Allocations Model**: In this approach, a central ALE fund would be established and overseen by the Ministry of Finance, which allocates funds based on specific project proposals submitted by each ministry or agency involved in ALE. This model allows flexibility in responding to changing needs, as funds can be reallocated annually or mid-term according to priorities set by the central ALE policy framework. Each ministry would still be responsible for detailing ALE activities within their budget, but funding would be approved and disbursed centrally to maintain oversight, ensuring alignment with national ALE goals.

mainly of limited responsiveness to local needs, potential bureaucratic delays, susceptibility to political influence, reduced commitment from individual ministries, and challenges in making timely budget adjustments.

It is vital that the funding model is individual-centered, allowing learners to choose their preferred institutions and courses. Three main variables need to be managed: connecting *eligible adults with reliable ALE providers for prioritized service or program* provision. To facilitate efficient connections and service delivery, it is essential to implement technological tools through a comprehensive electronic platform at every stage of the system's operation, including promotion, selection, recruitment, and funding.

Courses may vary in priority status based on the funding priorities of different state institutions. The system should be flexible enough to allow for co-funding opportunities, incorporating both learner self-funding and support from donor organizations or private sector sponsors. Additionally, a deposit system could be introduced to discourage non-motivated learners from seeking free services without a genuine desire to learn. Given the 26% early school leaving rate¹⁴ in the Georgian VET sector, addressing this issue is critical for ALE as well. While the deposit system may not be suitable for young learners, it can help select motivated adult applicants, ensuring a higher likelihood of course completion. Learners would receive their deposits back upon successful completion of their courses. However, this approach must be applied judiciously, taking into account the needs of vulnerable communities. This model may lead to inequality, as not all individuals or employers may be able to contribute, creating disparities in access to learning. It may also place a financial burden on individuals, particularly in sectors where employers are less supportive of lifelong learning. Additionally, the funds accrued might be insufficient for more costly or long-term educational programs, limiting broader participation in ALE. Lastly, this model may unintentionally focus ALE efforts on job-specific skills, as individuals and employers might prioritize immediate work-related training over broader educational goals.

The funding mechanism should address both direct learning costs and indirect administrative expenses. Calculations can be based on individualized learning costs (per capita funding) or group learning costs, depending on the optimal approach for each program or service. Both methods should be applicable to various types of offerings. Ultimately, the cost calculation model and funding mechanism must promote quality provision, flexibility, and inclusion for adults with specific needs.

According to the experience of EU member states, a widely spread voucher system in ALE financing provides individuals with vouchers or credits, typically funded by the government or other institutions, to cover the costs of specific adult learning activities. This system enables learners to directly apply their vouchers toward education providers and programs that best suit their needs, whether for vocational training, skills

14. Analytical report on Skills reform. Skills Agency, 2023

development, or non-formal learning. By giving learners choice and flexibility, the voucher system fosters a personalized approach to adult education while supporting equitable access. Funding usually comes from public sources, and only approved providers or certified programs can accept vouchers, ensuring a level of quality. The voucher system's main advantages include empowering individuals in their learning journey, promoting equal access to learning opportunities, and allowing for targeted use of public funds. However, it can also present limitations if only a narrow range of providers is eligible, or if the vouchers primarily support short-term skill programs rather than comprehensive educational needs, potentially restricting broader ALE objectives.

Stakeholder engagement

Engaging stakeholders in ALE is essential for creating a comprehensive and inclusive educational framework that meets diverse adult learning needs. Effective stakeholder engagement brings together governments, educational institutions, employers, civil society organizations, and learners themselves, ensuring that all perspectives are represented in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of ALE programmes. This collaborative approach helps align ALE with labor market demands, social inclusion goals, and lifelong learning pathways, creating shared responsibility and ownership among stakeholders.

With a growing aging population, it is increasingly important to revise retirement and other policies to encourage adults to remain in the workforce longer while providing them with physical, mental, and guidance support. As the economy evolves rapidly, upskilling and reskilling measures are becoming essential. It is crucial for ALE to align with and reflect the economic and social policies of the country.

At the national level, the SA board, representing line ministries and the private sector, serves as a key coordination instrument to ensure policy coherence. However, multilevel mechanisms must be deployed, particularly to engage employers effectively.

At the sub-national or meso level, the SA should closely coordinate with the State Employment Support Agency (SESA) and other agencies focused on social policies to promote inclusion, integration, and support for groups with additional needs. This includes addressing components of state welfare policies, such as social protection, unemployment support, state language provision, and assistance for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and migrants. Strong emphasis should be placed on activating women and individuals who have been long-term unemployed.

At the sectoral level, the SA will collaborate closely with Sector Skills Organizations, state sectoral agencies, and the Labor Market Information System (LMIS) of the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development. This cooperation will provide access to data and analysis of sector needs and dynamics, enabling the effective translation of this information into skills development and ALE for proper planning and delivery. Collaboration with SSOs will also create opportunities for long-term initiatives and targeted projects.

At the regional and municipal levels, it is vital for local governance to cultivate a culture of participatory policy-making. There should be a commitment to identifying societal challenges and a shared aspiration among all stakeholders to address these issues. The participation of non-governmental organizations and businesses is essential. Local governance and community organizations also play an important role in mediating between ALE providers and businesses. Furthermore, the widespread deployment of ALE will contribute to the development of a democratic and efficient local governance culture in a long-term perspective.

Proposed Priority Actions

Establishment of the new governance system

- **Identify coordinating body** – Assigning Skills Agency as a key coordinating body for implementation of ALE, according to the new legal framework
- **Allocate funds and resources** – Agency creates new division under its core structure for coordination of methodology design and operation of ALE funding and capacity building programs

Multi-level governance

- **Amend legal framework** – To enable local governance to participate in ALE coordination and provision system, local changes need to be reinforced, for both subsidiarity approach-based delegation of functions and implementation of exclusive functions
- **Empowerment of local governance** – Introduction of the collaborative model of ALE provider selection in coordination with SA and allocation of sufficient funds for versatile program offering.

Develop a Sustainable Financial Model

- **Develop a Funding Model:** Ensure that adequate financial resources are allocated to implement ALE policies and programs, leveraging public, private, and international support.
- **Multi-Stakeholder and diverse Financing Strategy:** Create a comprehensive funding model that leverages contributions from public, private, and international sources, similar co-financing approaches commonly used in EU member states. Explore innovative funding mechanisms to reduce dependency on single sources, ensuring the long-term sustainability of adult education programmes.
- **Matrix-type state financing** – Introduce the model of budget line distribution, which collects all ALE related funding across the state budget lined under one budget point, to be overseen by the ministry of finance.
- **Flexible and learner-centered funding approach** – allocation of the budget considering interest of learner, besides state economic and social policy-based priorities, in an easy to administer way, providing per-capita cost calculation, as well as co-funding, deposit funding opportunities.

Strengthen Partnerships

- **Establish multi-level partnerships** – On national level use SA board as a partnership platform. Establish sustainable sectorial partnership mechanisms.
- **Enhance partnership on municipal level** – Encourage culture of participatory planning and decision making under coordination of local governments, with involvement of businesses and local community organizations.
- **Implementation and accountability mechanisms:** Define specific, measurable goals within the ALE strategy, along with designated responsibilities, to ensure consistent progress tracking and accountability. This could include establishing regular progress reviews and involving stakeholders in periodic assessments to adapt to emerging needs.
- **Grant Schemes and Partnerships:** Develop funding mechanisms that enable NGOs to align their initiatives with national adult learning goals.

Provision and Quality of ALE

Provision of ALE

ALE has great potential to support individuals, communities and societies in addressing many of the key challenges of the contemporary world, such as ageing, labour-market transformation, digitalization, global citizenship and climate change. ALE, through offering multiple flexible pathways, delivery modes, assessment and certification regimes, provides learners with lifelong opportunities to develop the skills and competences they need to thrive in the twenty-first century. ALE is a key component of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on quality education and lifelong learning and contributes to the achievement of many of the other 16 SDGs.

Increasing the provision of adult education programs is a key task in order to achieve a dynamic increase in participation rates. A strategy for dynamic growth of supply should take into account the economic, social and individual aspects of adult learning and focus on a systemic approach based on the principle of accessibility and solving the challenges facing it in flexible, innovative ways.

Adult education centres/Providers of AE programs should be expanded to cover more regions, particularly underserved rural areas, and given greater autonomy in designing and implementing programs that respond to local needs. Providing ALEs and other selected providers with adequate funding, capacity-building for staff, and flexible operational models would enable them to play a pivotal role in promoting inclusive adult learning.

Exploring the potential of the non-formal education sector and its appropriate inclusion in adult learning is key to increasing the scale of delivery. Further non-formal learning opportunities should be expanded and institutionalised, taking into account elements of the EU's 'Upskilling Pathways' strategy, which emphasizes tailored learning offers for low-skilled adults, along with skills validation and progression pathways. This would enhance the credibility and impact of non-formal education and help align with EU standards.

The role and involvement of the private sector in adult learning in general and program delivery in particular must be increased. It is important to encourage work-based learning through various flexible mechanisms. Currently, the government has created some mechanisms to involve the private sector and sectoral organizations in the provision of formal education, but it is important that the holistic strategy takes into account the involvement of employers in non-formal education and creates supporting mechanisms for this. This approach could significantly boost the training capacities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are currently struggling to afford workforce training. Facilitating mechanisms could include the introduction of Employer Learning Charters, which would be signed by employers, committing to annual investments in employee training. This initiative, used in the UK's Skills Pledge, could be combined with public recognition programs and awards, promoting a culture of lifelong learning within the private sector. Also, based on international practice, a national a National Fund for Workforce Development could be created, where companies contribute a small percentage of their payroll (similar to the French 'taxe d'apprentissage' model), which would be used to finance training initiatives, especially for SMEs. This could create a sustainable financial base for adult education and reduce reliance on external donors.

It is essential to approach this engagement to avoid potential pitfalls. There is a risk that private sector participation may overly emphasize short-term, skills-based training aligned primarily with immediate business needs, potentially overshadowing broader educational objectives such as civic engagement, personal development, and social inclusion. To maintain a balanced approach, the holistic strategy should ensure that em-

ployer involvement in non-formal education supports a well-rounded ALE agenda that includes personal and social growth, not just work-based skills. Additionally, oversight mechanisms should be in place to monitor private sector contributions and uphold quality standards, ensuring that training initiatives serve the wider objectives of adult education.

The involvement of non-governmental organizations and civil society in adult learning should be encouraged so they can expand their ALE offerings by providing grant schemes and partnership models that align their activities with national adult learning goals. This would enhance the reach of non-formal education, particularly for targeted groups (including IDPs, migrants, residents of mountainous regions, socially vulnerable persons, persons with disabilities, representatives of ethnic minorities, residents living in the occupied territories and adjacent to the so-called dividing line, returnees from emigration, former prisoners, women living in rural areas and others).

Increasing the provision of adult education programs is a key task in order to achieve a dynamic increase in participation rates. A strategy for dynamic growth of supply should take into account the economic, social and individual aspects of adult learning and focus on a systemic approach based on the principle of accessibility and solving the challenges facing it in innovative ways.

It is important to diversify programs and focus on the broad aims of adult learning, along with increasing the scale of delivery and diversifying providers. Vocational education, retraining, updating of skills should continue to be a priority direction, as the economic activity of adults is of key importance for the development of the country. At the same time, there is a need to expand adult education programs beyond vocational training by developing a broader range of formal and non-formal adult education programs that go beyond vocational training to include civic education, democracy learning, and personal development. The emphasis should be on creating integrated learning pathways that offer adults opportunities to acquire basic skills, professional qualifications, and personal enrichment.

Quality of ALE

The key to the systematic and consistent development of adult education is the promotion of quality development, which does not imply strict standardization and regulation of the field, but rather - support for compatibility with international benchmarks and creation of incentives for development. Monitoring and quality assurance mechanisms should be improved in line with in line with European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQAVET) to monitor the effectiveness of adult learning programs, ensuring that both public and private providers meet high standards.

There is a need to introduce adult-specific didactical approaches by adapting the andragogical methods used in successful European models to ensure that adult learners' specific needs are met. This includes using flexible schedules, modular courses, competency-based learning and interactive, participatory didactics, to enhance engagement and reduce dropout rates. Implementation of these approaches requires high competence of teachers, for which it is necessary to introduce a systematic model of their professional development. Offering high-quality training for adult educators is key to improving ALE programmes and learning outcomes. As a standard qualification framework for adult educators worldwide, Curriculum globALE, provides a reference point for knowledge and competencies that can be used at international scale while allowing the integration of diverse contexts. DVV International and DIE developed the first edition of Curriculum globALE in 2012; the first field tests were carried out in some of DVV International's partner countries starting in 2013. It has since been successfully piloted in several countries in Latin America, Asia, the Arab region and Europe. The renewed Curriculum globALE builds on these experiences, satisfies international scientific standards and is suitable for use on a transnational scale. A steering group comprising representatives of the four partners –

UIL, DVV International, DIE and ICAE – consulted international experts from all regions to ensure that the new curriculum is capable of catering to the diversity of regional and cultural contexts in which ALE is unfolding. Moreover, the development of a renewed Curriculum globALE and a common reference framework for ALE aligns with UIL’s goal to assist UNESCO Member States with the implementation of the BFA and the RALE, which, in turn, contributes to the achievement of the SDGs. More specifically, Curriculum globALE aims to:

- enhance professionalization of ALE by providing a common reference framework for adult learning programmes and a suggested standard of competencies for adult educators;
- support adult learning and education providers in the design and implementation of ‘train-the-trainer’ programmes;
- foster knowledge exchange and mutual understanding between adult educators worldwide.

For the development of the quality of adult education in Georgia, it is important to adapt and implement the Curriculum globALE, in which direction the role of DVV-international, together with other partners, will be key. In developing the quality assurance model, GAEN’s experience and expertise as a non-formal education promoting organization should be explored and taken into account. Moreover, GAEN may be a good base for institutionalizing a systematic model of quality development in non-formal education, since it implements training sessions and workshops for the professional development of its member organisations, and develops training materials. It has launched a comprehensive website¹⁵ which brings together information about all available adult training opportunities in various regions of Georgia.

In addition it is important to strengthen cooperation between ALE providers and Universities. The course on andragogy needs further strengthening at higher pedagogic education. This cooperation might provide an opportunity to future educators to attend internship programs and practical learning at ALE centers and rise an interest on research of ALE.

The status of adult educators and facilitators is critical to the success of ALE. Despite their pivotal role, adult educators often face limited recognition, precarious work conditions, and relatively low salaries compared to other educational professionals. Ensuring that adult educators are adequately compensated and recognized is essential for attracting and retaining skilled professionals in this field. Beyond compensation, improving work conditions – such as offering stable contracts, career progression opportunities, and access to professional development—would contribute to their job satisfaction and effectiveness. Establishing a professional qualification and certification pathway not only sets a standard for competencies but also strengthens the professional identity and credibility of adult educators. Recognizing the unique expertise of adult educators and investing in their professional status is essential for improving the quality of ALE programs and achieving meaningful learning outcomes for adults.

Integrating digital tools into adult learning is an important task. Technologies should be used to enhance learning experiences, such as online resources, interactive platforms, and learning management systems. More focus should be placed on Digital Literacy training for both educators and learners to improve digital skills necessary for modern education. Access and quality of digital learning should be improved through adopting best practices from the EU Digital Education Action Plan to ensure that digital learning offers are of high quality and accessible to all.

The above-mentioned complex actions require appropriate financial resources, for which a multi-stakeholder financing strategy and funding model should be developed, that leverages contributions from public, private, and international donors, similar to EU Member States’ co-financing models. This would ensure sustainable funding and reduce dependency on individual sources.

15. <https://dvv.gaen.org/ge/en>

Proposed Priority Actions:

Expand Access and Coverage

- **Expand Adult Education providers network:** Encourage entry of new providers through efficient funding mechanisms, especially in undeserved rural areas, to improve access to education.
- **Strengthen the network:** Empower providers with strengthened role in community and permanent capacity building, using resources and experience of GAEN.

Diversify and Innovate Program Offerings

- **Broaden Program Scope:** Expand adult education beyond vocational training to include civic education, personal development, and digital literacy, creating integrated learning pathways.
- **Leverage and integrate Non-Formal Education:** Develop a robust framework for non-formal and informal learning that includes recognition, validation, and accreditation processes in line with UNESCO guidelines. Institutionalize non-formal education opportunities by aligning them with frameworks like the EU's 'Upskilling Pathways' strategy, emphasizing tailored offers for low-skilled adults.
- **Support NFE Programs:** Encourage NFE initiatives that emphasize civic education and personal development, moving beyond purely economic objectives.
- **Promote validation of non-formal learning:** Expand the validation and ensure recognition in formal education to encourage non-formal learning among adults and better linkages between formal and non-formal learning.

Enhance Partnerships for provision

- **Partnership with the private sector for work-based learning:** Foster collaboration with employers to support adult education through flexible mechanisms, such as Employer Learning Charters, which encourage companies to commit to regular workforce training investments. This approach helps embed continuous learning within the workplace and aligns with broader ALE goals.
- **Partnership with civil society for targeted support:** Strengthen cooperation with NGOs and local governments to improve outreach and tailor ALE programs for vulnerable groups, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), migrants, and individuals with disabilities. Such partnerships ensure that ALE reaches those most in need and addresses specific challenges faced by these populations.

Invest in Professional Development for Educators

- **Training and Support:** Provide ongoing professional development opportunities for adult educators, focusing on andragogical methods, digital literacy, and innovative teaching practices. Ensure that adult educators are adequately compensated and recognized.
- **Create/apply a Competency Framework:** Use international standards like Curriculum globALE to guide the development of adult educators, facilitating knowledge exchange and best practices.

Integrate Digital Tools and Resources

- **Enhance Digital Literacy:** Prioritize digital skills training for both educators and learners to ensure effective participation in a digital learning environment.
- **Adopt Best Practices:** Implement recommendations from the EU Digital Education Action Plan to ensure that digital learning resources are high-quality and accessible.

Promote Quality Assurance and Improvement

- **Adapt International Frameworks:** Integrate models like Curriculum globALE to enhance the professionalization of adult education and set common standards for educator competencies.
- **Develop Quality through support:** Implement large scale institutional capacity development for non-formal ALE providers to ensure high educational standards across providers.
- **Feedback Mechanisms:** Establish systematic methods for gathering feedback from learners and educators to inform program improvements.
- **Research and Adaptation:** Regularly assess the effectiveness of adult education initiatives and adapt them based on emerging needs and global trends.

Encouraging and strengthening Learners

Promotion of ALE

To effectively promote Adult Learning and Education (ALE), it is crucial to focus on transforming societal attitudes toward lifelong development in the contemporary context. This vision must first be integrated into the national curriculum at all educational levels.

A comprehensive framework for lifelong career guidance should be introduced, encompassing all stages of personal development and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Youth, along with the State Agency, should enhance their cooperation on career guidance initiatives, implementing coherent policies that engage non-governmental organizations, community groups, and businesses. Alongside with local solutions, centralized career guidance system needs to be operationalized, that offers tailored advice and resources for young people and adults, similar to those found in successful EU Member States such as Germany and Finland. Such collaboration will facilitate the reimagining of career guidance for adults, making it an attractive service through updated methodologies, technology, and digital tools.

Uniting society—including all state, CSO and private stakeholders and the media—around the promotion of ALE is vital for establishing it as a national priority. Creative media campaigns can effectively shift mindsets and set trends, thereby motivating individuals to engage in lifelong learning. Given the high access to the internet and digital devices in Georgia, social media campaigns will also be particularly effective. Involving businesses is essential, not only for cost-sharing but also for enhancing the credibility of ALE as a pathway to economic strength and prosperity for adult learners.

Uniting society—including all state, CSO and private stakeholders and the media—around the promotion of ALE is vital for establishing it as a national priority

Reliable ALE providers, selected by the State Agency in collaboration with local governments, should be showcased on a dedicated platform, ensuring accessibility for potential learners. These providers will have the capability to manage their own profiles, promoting their courses and attracting students. The portal will offer comprehensive information on professions, skills, courses, and personal development opportunities, thereby equipping adult learners with the necessary resources for success.

A widespread national public campaign aimed at changing societal perceptions about LLL and ALE is an important activity by the government in cooperation with CSOs to increase participation and shift attitudes towards adult education as a norm and as a right.

Inclusion and Activation

The group of adults eligible for the service may vary based on factors such as age sub-groups, vulnerability, geography, and language. The platform's algorithm will select available courses tailored to each group, providing guidance for service selection. It is important to ensure gender-sensitive guidance and counselling services that can support women in choosing learning pathways aligned with their career aspirations.

Recent studies conducted by the Skills Agency indicate that a good selection of courses, high motivation, and full funding for training are insufficient for ensuring course completion and successful transition to employment or self-employment. External factors, such as accommodation and catering for students residing in remote municipalities, pose significant barriers. In some areas, the lack of municipal transport means that students often cannot cover the distances required, particularly in adverse weather conditions.

To address these challenges, it is essential to develop a study allowance as a support mechanism for learners in need, particularly to encourage participation among women. In addition to guidance and stipends, budgetary support programs should be established for individuals and educational institutions to adapt environments to meet the special and additional needs of adult learners. This could include creating children's corners and accessible pathways for individuals with disabilities, as well as offer tailor made programs for the low skilled learners, as "catch-up" courses or other individualized learning modalities.

For social integration, it is crucial to expand the offering of key competencies, especially in state language acquisition, which is a fundamental life skill for ethnic minority populations. These individuals often face limitations in accessing information and making informed career choices. Democracy and peace education are competency areas that individuals may choose infrequently. However, targeted budget programs can encourage the provision of such courses or their integration into technical and professional skills training. Particular attention should be given to individuals who have been outside the economy for an extended period. Successful reintegration requires extensive inter-institutional cooperation, including collaboration with the State Employment Support Agency (SESA) and the State Agency for Social Services and Protection. Women are particularly vulnerable in these circumstances, especially when they are responsible for caring for children until they reach school age. Reintegration efforts must not only focus on upskilling but also provide package of services targeting reintegration on the labor market, including therapeutic support, encouragement, and psychological services.

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Flexibility and versatility

Promoting flexible educational provisions is essential for accommodating the diverse needs of adult learners. By introducing digital and blended courses alongside traditional face-to-face practical and interactive learning, educational institutions can create a more inclusive and accessible learning environment. Investment in Digital Skills Development by implementing in large-scale digital literacy programs similar to EU's Digital Education Action Plan, targeting disadvantaged groups, including older adults, ethnic minorities, and those in rural areas, will not only strengthen the modern key competences among adults, but also open new opportunities of learning and employment.

By offering a comprehensive selection of courses that encompass various disciplines and skill sets, educational programs can ignite curiosity and enthusiasm among potential learners. This broader choice empowers individuals to take ownership of their learning journeys, ultimately enhancing their motivation and commitment to education.

These flexible courses can be offered at various times, as evening classes and community-based learning hubs to overcome time and access barriers, allowing adults to balance their educational pursuits with work and household responsibilities. This adaptability is crucial for many individuals who juggle multiple commitments, as it enables them to engage in lifelong learning without compromising their existing obligations.

Moreover, expanding the range of available courses and services is vital for fostering motivation among adult learners. A wide array of options not only caters to different interests and career aspirations but also encourages individuals to explore new fields and subjects. This versatility significantly increases the likelihood of participation, as learners can find courses that resonate with their personal and professional goals.

By offering a comprehensive selection of courses that encompass various disciplines and skill sets, educational programs can ignite curiosity and enthusiasm among potential learners. This broader choice empowers individuals to take ownership of their learning journeys, ultimately enhancing their motivation and commitment to education. As adults discover opportunities that align with their interests and career objectives, they are more likely to engage in the learning process, leading to positive outcomes for both the individuals and society as a whole.

In essence, by prioritizing flexible learning options and expanding course offerings, educational institutions can create a dynamic and supportive environment that encourages adult participation. This approach not only meets the diverse needs of learners but also cultivates a culture of lifelong learning that is essential in today's rapidly changing world.

Proposed priority actions

Awareness-Raising and Promotion

- **Campaigns for Social Change:** Launch awareness campaigns highlighting the importance of ALE in promoting social cohesion, lifelong employability, and active citizenship.
- **Engage media** – For comprehensive campaigns engage media, publishing houses, and CSOs to transform ALE into the national idea and movement
- **Engage businesses** – For economic value creation find synergies with business operators to promote upskilling opportunities.
- **Nationwide Prize for Excellence** in Adult Education to recognize outstanding contributions in the field of adult education in Georgia, rewarding institutions, educators and learners who demonstrate exemplary commitment and innovation.
- **Adult Skills Competition** can be introduced to celebrate the achievements and capabilities of adult learners, especially those who have upskilled or reskilled through adult education programs.

Electronic Platform

- **Creation/adaptation** – create the new or adapt existing upskilling/reskilling platform to ALE needs, by creating the space where people are attracted, they find opportunities and increase motivation. Centralized comprehensive Adult Education Information Platform can be created as an effective tool for improving accessibility and personalizing learning experiences.

- **Further expansion** – not only spread the voice on ALE but target the changes in mindset, develop information resources, interaction and guidance opportunities on the platform

Inclusion

- **Accessibility to ALE for all** – include the accessibility enhancement component in national strategy to improve connectivity, municipal transport systems and internet connection for all
- **Special stipends** – Introduce educational allowances to enable participation of vulnerable adults, women and people with additional support needs
- **Specialized programs** – Introduce specialized programs and budget lines for women and other target groups in need. Programs can be directed to providers as well, to improve and adapt their infrastructure.
- **Ethnic minorities** – Establish targeted programs and dedicated budget lines for ethnic minorities. The programmes will focus on skill-building, language acquisition and civic education to help ethnic minority groups integrate more fully into Georgia's social and economic landscape.

Flexibility and versatility

- **Promote flexible provision** – Introduce digital, blended courses alongside with face-to-face practical and interactive learning, which will be offered in flexible hours to adults, enabling them combination of working and household activities.
- **Widen the choice** – Create wide offer of courses and services, to encourage learners and increase motivation, versatility increases the chances of adults participation.