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საქართველოსთვის  
The European Union for Georgia

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# BASELINE RESEARCH ON THE EFFECTIVE APPLICABILITY OF DUAL VET IN TWO PUBLIC COLLEGES IN GEORGIA, ADJACENT TO THE ABL

FRAMEWORK, OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES AND  
LINKAGE WITH MARKET SYSTEMS



JULY, 2021



The project “EU4Youth – Enhancing Youth Education, Employment and Participation in Conflict-affected Areas in Georgia and in Ukraine” is implemented by Danish Refugee Council in Georgia and in Ukraine with the financial support of the European Union in close partnership with Education Development and Employment Center (EDEC) and Mariupol Youth Union (MYU).

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1.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**



The Danish Refugee Council currently is implementing multiple projects in Georgia focusing on 3 main directions. One of the core directions is economic empowerment and the promotion of self-reliance and skills development to protect and promote durable solutions for IDPs. Matching market needs through effective interventions in the field of Vocational and Educational Training is central to DRC work in Georgia. DRC constantly empowers unemployed youth and other vulnerable groups to build up a stronger resilience and access employment.

DRC foresees herewith to enhance lifelong learning opportunities of IDP youth and capacitate whenever relevant identified VET colleges in different areas. The present consultancy falls under this global perspective and is initiated to provide an overview of the challenges, gaps and opportunities, detect possible partnerships with the business sector, and promote new collaborations that can help secure dual VET approaches in the current system with a special focus on 2 targeted colleges as pilot locations.

The main goal of the study is to review the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of dual vocational education and training, to detect opportunities for expansion of dual VET in selected professional directions, based on a review of systems in place and good practices.

## **Main Findings of the Research**

### **Legal framework and current teaching approaches**

- Along with the stare regulations on VET for program approval, enrolment, certification, the colleges have developed and apply internal regulations that govern various processes related to teaching and learning of long-term and short-term programs. The relevant regulations for Zugdidi University can be found here: <http://www.zssu.ge/zssu2/node/1555> and for Gantiadi college can be found here: <http://gantiadi.ge/samartlebrivi-aqtebi/>. The brief description of the rules are given in the text;
- The VET is taught at NQF levels 3-5 through modular/CBTA, dual, integrated and training and retraining programs. Short descriptions of each of the approach is given in the report;
- The MoES prioritizes close relations with employers (through company-based practices within CBTA programs, dual education programs and joint with employers training and retraining programs), requires all programs meet labour market requirements (they are based on occupational standards, through authorization colleges prove that the programs are demanded at the local market);
- The students can enroll in VET after 9 grade (basic or integrated secondary vocational education programs) or after 12th grade (secondary or higher vocational education programs, associate degree programs) there are options for adults through training and retraining short-term programs. Enrolment process is managed by centralized web-portal [www.vet.ge](http://www.vet.ge), however, apart from higher education programs is administered by education institutions themselves. For dual education programs employers participate in selection. There are privileges for socially disadvantaged students. TSA recipients receive extra points in VET admissions rankings. 9th grade graduates are also prioritized in enrolments for basic vocational education programs, while integrated vocational education programs are only open for 9th grade graduates;
- Dual education programs are conducted in two training locations (colleges and employers) at the same time and more than 50% of the training is done on the job. Students have to pass final qualification examination at the end of the program (unlike CBTA program graduates who accumulate credits through meeting assessment requirements stated in the modules – passing module level exams and tests);

- Both Zugdidi University and Gantiadi college have limited capacity for dual education programs, meaning that only a few of the programs offered by them are dual;
- They have limited capacity for development and implementation of training and retraining programs. There is only one training program offered by Zugdidi university, while Gantiadi college offers none. This means that their programs would not be appealing for adults, who would be scared not only by length of long-term programs offered by institutions, but also discouraged by enrolment rules to long-term programs which, as noted above, clearly make adult applicants disadvantaged;
- VET tuition fees for long term programs, and most of the formal training and retraining programs at each level is fully covered by the state, which means that any student getting a placement in Zugdidi University and Gantiadi college programs will study free of charge. This said, it should be noted that the government mostly does not provide additional support to cover accommodation, transport and opportunity costs of the students, which might disadvantage some groups of students; Besides, the voucher for dual education only covers the college part, however, does not cover additional costs of the employers and students arising from participation in training.

### **Human, social and financial capacity of the VET colleges**

- The resources of the VET institutions should meet the VET program authorization standards, which covers programs, human, ICT and material resources, teacher qualifications, and student services. The education standards that are basis for each of the education program can be found at <https://vet.ge/ge/resources/educational-standards>. Each standard provides not only almost 80% of curriculum for each education program, but also descriptions of requirements to infrastructure and equipment to be available for students of the programs. Having programs authorized means, that colleges have that equipment in place in adequate number for the student places assigned during authorization;
- Both Zugdidi University and Gantiadi college have staff assigned for career guidance of students and employer communications, as required by state regulations;
- Interviews showed, however, that capacity building of the personnel in charge for professional orientation, career guidance, cooperation with private sector and outreach to potential students is necessary;
- The research also identified quite limited capacity of the colleges with implementation of dual education programs and short-term training programs.

### **Opportunities to increase access to markets for VET participants through more effective SME linkages**

- Although participation of the industry in the occupational standard and education standard development as well as training delivery through WBL and dual education in particular is recognized by all the actors to eliminate skills mismatch on the labour market and increase employment opportunities, engagement of the private sector seems to be challenging for the VET colleges;
- A research by EU TA program shows that in both Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti and Shida Kartli regions demand for VET graduates outnumber the supply, so there is much opportunities for VET graduates;
- The specific fields where supply of skills lags behind the demand are: tourism (including food and beverage field), engineering sectors for Shida Kartli region and agriculture, construction, engineering for Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti region.

## **Opportunities to enhance beside professional technical qualifications at VET level the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills**

- Entrepreneurship skills development is a mandatory part of every VET program and is taught within each of the CBTA and dual education programs;
- The entrepreneurship module is a 2 credit (approximately 8 weeks) practice-oriented program similar to “start your own business” programs;
- Despite the program being quite relevant to skills needs for starting own business, it seems insufficient for the VET graduates to start a business independently and additional training is required. It could be assigned to weak teaching skills of the teachers, as well as weak knowledge of business environment in Georgia; Development of teaching materials can further enhance entrepreneurship teaching;
- The ministry has developed an alternative program of entrepreneurship skills to be taught throughout education system (at general, vocational and higher education levels). The new module mostly focuses on entrepreneurship competencies (a combination of skills to take risks, mobilize resources, plan and execute plans, etc) described by an EU tool ENTRECOMP<sup>1</sup> and may substitute current module, while the latter can be offered as an optional program. However, when this is going to happen is still unclear.

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1. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1317&langId=en>

2.

## **INTRODUCTION**





The present research has been undertaken by DEPA Consulting for the Danish Refugee Council to facilitate its future planning and expansion of the current activities to the most effective way.

DRC has been working in the area of skills development and empowering youth to get better access to employment for the last few years. It further foresees to enhance lifelong learning opportunities of IDP youth and invest in creating relevant systems and favourable environment. This includes building capacities of selected VET colleges in the areas of identified gaps and needs.

The present consultancy is initiated from this perspective to provide an overview of the challenges, gaps and opportunities, detect possible partnerships with the business sector, and promote new collaborations that can help secure dual VET approaches in the current system with a special focus on 2 targeted colleges as pilot locations.

The overall Objective is to review the effectiveness, efficiency and impact as well as detect opportunities for expansion of dual VET in selected professional directions, based on a review of systems in place and good practices.

Specific Objectives are as follows:

- 1) Analyze the regulatory framework and current teaching approaches (curricula) along the 4 dual VET courses delivered by two state VET colleges Gantiadi in Gori and Shota Meskhia State University in Zugdidi;
- 2) Analyze the human, social and financial capacity of the VET college Gantiadi in Gori and Shota Meskhia State University in Zugdidi along the 4 dual VET courses delivered by colleges and linkages to the business sector;
- 3) Analyze the attractiveness of VET colleges in terms of VET enrolment and effective outreach at schools (connection to early career guidance if any) and towards NEETs;
- 4) Detect opportunities to increase access to markets for VET participants through more effective SME linkages (good practices, challenges);
- 5) Analyze opportunities to enhance beside professional technical qualifications at VET level the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills.

The paper consists of 4 main chapters. Following the introduction, is the Chapter on Background identifying current context with regards to labour market and socio-economic situation as well as system of the vocational education in Georgia. Chapter 2 will focus then on research methodology. Chapter 3 presents data analysis and major findings of the study and finally, chapter 4 elaborates on recommendations at the level of systems and institutions for effective, efficiency and impactful DRC interventions in the area of dual education for the two selected VET colleges.

### 3. **BACKGROUND**



## **Labor Market, Skills and Youth Transition to work in Georgia**

Georgia enjoyed a 4.7% average annual rate of gross domestic product (GDP) growth (before 2020 COVID 19 pandemic), it also halved its poverty rate from 38.8% in 2007 to 20.1% in 2018 and decreased the unemployment rate considerably – from 17.2% in 2012 to 11.6% in 2019 (Geostat, 2021). However, social-economic situation is still quite low, especially for the vulnerable groups and women. The population has declined considerably since 1990 because of low birth rates, but also continued net emigration, the latter because of a lack of well-paying jobs in the country.

Currently, the majority of Georgia's labor force is employed in lower productivity sectors, with the agriculture sector accounting for 49% of employment and only 9% of GDP. Most labor resources are locked in low productivity jobs that require low-level skills. And while the overall unemployment rate has fallen considerably, youth unemployment is at 30.4%, and the share of 15–29-year-olds who are not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) is 30.6%. Young women are more likely to be in this group than young men (Geostat. 2021).

Outside of the agriculture sector (49% of employment), over half of the jobs added to the economy are from the private sector (26%), a third by the state (17%) and the remainder through self-employment (8%). Furthermore, the self-employment rate in agriculture itself is very high – 47.7%<sup>2</sup>.

The Government of Georgia has placed a high priority on Vocational Education and Training in order to develop the skilled labor force the country needs, to diversify its economic base and promote inclusive growth. Promoting VET-Industry partnerships around worked-based learning (WBL) is an essential element of updating VET programs to attract more students and meet the demands of the labor market.

The Government of Georgia has placed a high priority on Vocational Education and Training in order to develop the skilled labor force the country needs, to diversify its economic base and promote inclusive growth. Promoting VET-Industry partnerships around worked-based learning (WBL) is an essential element of updating VET programs to attract more students and meet the demands of the labor market.

A 2015 Analysis of the STEP survey found that a majority of employers considered the quality of workforce education a key obstacle to their growth. As well as not having required occupation-specific skills, employer find that applicants or new hires lack technical competences and problem-solving skills, as well as a lack of English and leadership, creative- and critical-thinking skills. The unavailability of skilled workers hinders the private sector from investing in activities that would create high skilled jobs. As a result, the vast majority of jobs created in 2015 were for unskilled or low skilled jobs.<sup>3</sup> The lack of required qualification (28.7% of answers) and lack of experience (18.6%) are named as main difficulties by enterprises to fill the vacancies announced by them according to the survey of Business Demand on Skills of 2020<sup>4</sup>.

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2. Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development Georgia. 2017. Labor Force Survey. Tbilisi.

3. Jan Rutkowski. 2015. Workforce Skills in the Eyes of the Employers: Results of the Georgia Employer Skills Survey. Washington: World Bank.

4. <http://www.lmis.gov.ge/Lmis/Lmis.Portal.Web/Handlers/GetFile.ashx?Type=Content& ID=cfaa802f-c54e-4607-9875-69abaa284777>

In parallel, the education system is producing graduates at high skills levels, in particular with university diploma that cannot find jobs. Low employment rates among recent graduates causes youth to give up on looking for work and discourages them from continuing education to upgrade their skills.<sup>5</sup> Approximately 30% of Georgia's youth are not involved in education, employment or training (NEET). An analysis of youth to work transitions, found that students with upper secondary education and secondary VET have the highest probability of being NEET. Young women (36%) are more likely to be NEETs than young men (25%). Ethnic minority groups are also more likely to be NEETs<sup>6</sup>.

### 3.1 Georgian VET system and work-based learning

#### **VET qualifications and programs, CBTA methodology:**

VET in Georgia comprises basic, secondary, and higher vocational education; associate degree programs; so-called formal long-term training designed for new entrants to VET system, youth (without prior non-general education/specialised training), and short-term training and retraining courses (formal short-term training normally targeting adults and meant to give basic employment skills or help them requalify or achieve further professional development levels)<sup>7</sup>. The latter is quite new to Georgian VET system, only introduced since 2019 after VET law of 2018 gave legal basis for adult training and NCEQE developed a system for quality assure the programs and referenced them to National Qualification Framework<sup>8</sup>.

Since 2015 most of the VET programs are based on Competency-Based Training and Assessment (CBTA) methodology. CBTA is a structured training and assessment system that allows individuals to acquire skills and knowledge in order to perform work activities to a specified standard. Here both trainings and assessments are centered on competencies required at the workplace or in life situations, rather than arranged in fields of study (like biology, physics, chemistry). CBTA helps students integrate skills and knowledge to be able to perform real life tasks with independence and autonomy and, therefore, CBTA system is viewed to produce graduates that have competencies that could be applied to real work and life situations without additional training, so called "job ready skills." There are few disciplines or subject-based (knowledge oriented) programs that are phasing out currently in the system. No students are enrolled at such programs since 2020 January, which means that all students enrolled after 2020 January would pursue CBTA programs in all colleges in Georgia.

At secondary education level VET programs are offered as a simple of integrated secondary education programs. Integrated secondary education programs are targeting 9th grade graduates and have secondary general education integrated and last minimum 3 years. The secondary vocational education diploma from both types of programs is considered by Georgian legislation as an equivalent to secondary general education certificate, granting graduates an access to higher education programs.

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5. 45.1% of VET graduates (4496 graduates of 2019 according to the LELP Education Management Information System data) of 2019 are unemployed ([https://mes.gov.ge/uploads/files/322323\)\\_8765.pdf](https://mes.gov.ge/uploads/files/322323)_8765.pdf))
  6. Ana Diakonidze and Ummuhan Bardak. 2018. Youth Transition to Work in Georgia. Turin: ETF.
  7. Please check the diagram of Georgian Education System at <https://eqe.ge/en/page/parent/7/ganatilebis-sistema>
  8. National Qualifications Framework is a tool to systematize all nationally recognized qualification at general, vocational and higher education levels and help all stakeholders to understand interrelationships between the qualifications, reference them to international qualifications and in this way make Georgian education system more permeable internally (allowing smooth pathways between general, vocational and higher education with a possibility to collect and transfer credits from one degree into the other) and well adjusted and recognizable internationally. NQF consists of qualification levels descriptors and typical qualifications in Georgian education system allowing each program and qualification to reference to each and translates learning outcomes achieved in each qualification to all stakeholders.

### VET institutions, VET enrolment trends and employment of graduates:

Students generally enter VET after grade 9 or grade 12. Most are enrolled in formal, institute-based VET programs at lower levels of the national qualifications framework (NQF). In 2019, some 90 VET institutes delivered formal programs to more than 11,850 enrollees (EMIS 2021. VET enrollments have fallen by 27.0% since 2017, because of the introduction of longer-term CBTA (Competency-based Training and Assessment) programs. Private VET institutes play an important role in Georgia, representing almost 60.0% of all VET providers, although only 33.9% of total VET enrollments. Until 2019, they had been largely funded by tuition fees and are concentrated in Tbilisi and other urban centers where people can afford to pay the tuition fees. Since 2019, however, they have been receiving government funding for students enrolled in programs covering priority fields.

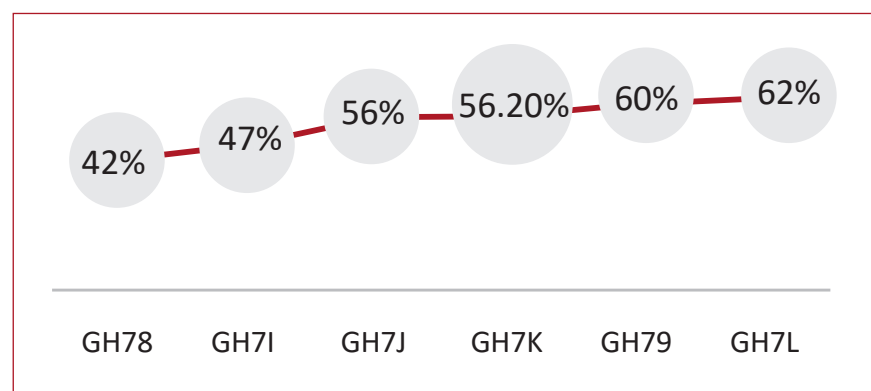
Table 1: Vocational Education Institutions (2020)<sup>9</sup>

		Public <sup>10</sup>	Private	Total:
Institutions	School	1	7	8
	Vocational College	25	40	65
	University	12	5	17
	Total:	38	52	90
Students	Enrollment	5554	3845	9399

Source: Geostat and EMIS, 2021

In public VET institutes, almost one-third of students are enrolled in engineering (36%), followed by business administration (14%), services (13%), and information and communication technology (10%). In private VET institutes, 39% are enrolled in health - related programs (including pharmaceuticals), followed by business administration (17%) and engineering (11%). The gender distribution of enrollments reflects the program offerings of public and private VET institutes. In 2019, 62% of private enrollees were women, while only 41% of public enrollees were women. The employment rate of recent graduates from VET institutions has been slightly improving (from 42% in 2013 to 62% in 2018, though is still very low compared to OECD average (80%)<sup>11</sup>). The pandemic had adverse affect on VET decreasing both enrolments and employment rate.

Table 2: Employment of recent VET graduates:



Source: Tracer Studies administered by the MoES

9. Information is given as of June 2020

10. These include the colleges that were founded based on public-private partnerships

11. OECD.2020 <https://doi.org/10.1787/1686c758-en>

**Funding of VET:**

VET is largely publicly funded. During 2017–2020, state spending on VET increased from GEL37.8 million to GEL66.5 million (State Budget, 2017–2020). VET spending increased across all categories: voucher programs, institutional and targeted programs, training and retraining programs, and capital investment. State spending on VET represents 4.9% of the government’s education budget, 25 less than half the share of the higher education sector. VET applicants who meet the entrance requirements get their full tuition covered at public VET institutes, and in priority study fields at private institutions.

**Quality assurance of VET institutes and programs:**

All state and public VET institutes are covered by special quality assurance mechanism – authorization. Authorization is a process of obtaining the status of a VET institution as well as the right to implement respective educational programs (Georgian Law on Education Quality Enhancement of 2010, Authorization Charter of 2010, amendments of 2021). Authorization checks compliance of VET institutions’ resources, procedures and programs with respective national standards and a prerequisite for issuing of education confirming document recognized by the state. Authorization is carried out by the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, according to the rules defined by the Authorization Charter and the time period takes up to 6 months<sup>12</sup>. The specific standards to be met by authorization relate to the following areas: institution mission and strategic development; education programs; student rights and student services; human resources; information, technical, financial resources. The standards related to educational programs and technical resources are spelled out in so called Education Standards which sets the requirements to the learning outcomes to be achieved and conducive teaching and assessment methodologies to be applied, as well as respective requirements to the technical and material infrastructure to be accessible to the students during trainings. The existing approved education standards are published at the official Ministry website: <https://vet.ge/ge/resources/educational-standards>.

**Teaching of entrepreneurship:**

Entrepreneurship is a compulsory course in each of the education standard. It gives the students basic skills for planning and registering a business, operating a business, marketing and selling products and implementing basic budgeting and financial reporting operations. The module is very application oriented which means that during the studies students are required to start/or change a small business and demonstrate all learning outcomes for a specific business<sup>13</sup>. Despite the fact that entrepreneurship teachers from all colleagues have undergone trainings and mentorship from NCEQE and different development partners, probably the weakest point of entrepreneurship teaching is human resources and teaching methods. Currently, with the help of several international development partners (GIZ, USAID, ETF) the ministry has developed a new module on entrepreneurship skills which sees entrepreneurship as a basic skill involving capacity to plan, take risks, mobilize resources and execute plans (unlike the current course, which is more a “start your own business” type of course) and will be taught across all education sectors: general, vocational and higher. The module<sup>14</sup> may substitute the current entrepreneurship module, while the latter can be taught as an optional module. The new module is based on EU tool ENTRECOMP. The exact dates when the potential change will happen is not clear.

**Dual education and other forms of Work-based learning:**

There are several forms of work-based learning used in Georgian VET system, described in the Georgian

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12. LEPL National Center for Education Quality Enhancement

13. A program of the entrepreneurship course is available within education standards packages, within modules of general skills on the following link: <https://vet.ge/ge/resources/educational-standards>

14. <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1317&langId=en>

legislation as “the form of implementing a vocational education program which envisages the achievement of some of the learning outcomes in a simulated and/or a real work environment (including by dual education)” (Law on VET, Article 3, X; Article 11).

Currently work-based-learning approach is mainly used as a component of Competency-based Training and Assessment (CBTA) programs. All CBTA programs, enforced since 2015, contain WBL component as a compulsory part of the programs. As regulated by education standards, at least 20% of the programs (compulsory modules, such as: introductory practice, company-based practice and/or practical project) have to be implemented in real or imitated work environments. The quality of programs, including WBL components is checked through VET authorization which requires that VET providers evidence on the implementation of WBL component with MoUs or contracts with companies, outlining duration, contents and implementation arrangements for training and student assessment in real work settings.

Since 2015, some pilot forms of dual education-like VET programs are being introduced with the help of international development partners. UNDP supported a “dual-like WBL” in agriculture and food production, while GIZ is piloting dual education in 6 sectors: wine-making, tourism, construction, transport&logistics and IT. Based on the Law on VET of 2018, the Government of Georgia is working on a WBL regulation, that will introduce two new forms of WBL – dual education and cooperative education [Author: later in this report will be called as dual education for ease of reference]. The minimum requirement for these forms of WBL is the achievement of more than 50% of learning outcomes in real work situations. The difference between the two – dual and cooperative education – relates to the status of the students in the education – whether they are an employee or a student, on paid or student contracts.

After adoption of the new law of Georgia on the Vocational Education and Training, the Government was instructed to draft a decree regulating work-based learning, to develop the rules and conditions for obtaining the status of an educational enterprise, with the aim to institutionalize the WBL process and ensure its sustainability. The draft decree currently under discussion with the stakeholders is expected to be adopted by the end of 2021 to create a strong legislative basis for private sector engagement in a form of skills associations and take over the WBL processes presently organized with the support of donor organizations only<sup>15</sup>.

Work-based learning has multiple benefits for students/graduates, employers, education institutions and society as a whole. WBL enhances skills and builds human capital. Male and female students from diverse backgrounds and abilities gain new competences, knowledge of the work place, and valuable work experience to help in their eventual job search. WBL introduces employers to potential employees and provides them with input into their development. VET institutions acquire new partnerships with industry that can enhance their reputation and relevance to both employers and students.

WBL programs offer students, such as people with disabilities or NEETs from disadvantaged communities to acquire work experience during their education, a step that can be pivotal in increasing their job search success after graduation. With the right accommodations, people with disabilities enhance their confidence about entry to the workplace in the structure of a WBL program. Work-based learning is often a preferred re-entry to skills development for NEETs who may prefer it as a more appealing alternative to academic programs.

Despite increased public funding and all the reforms in VET that the GoG has been undertaking since 2007

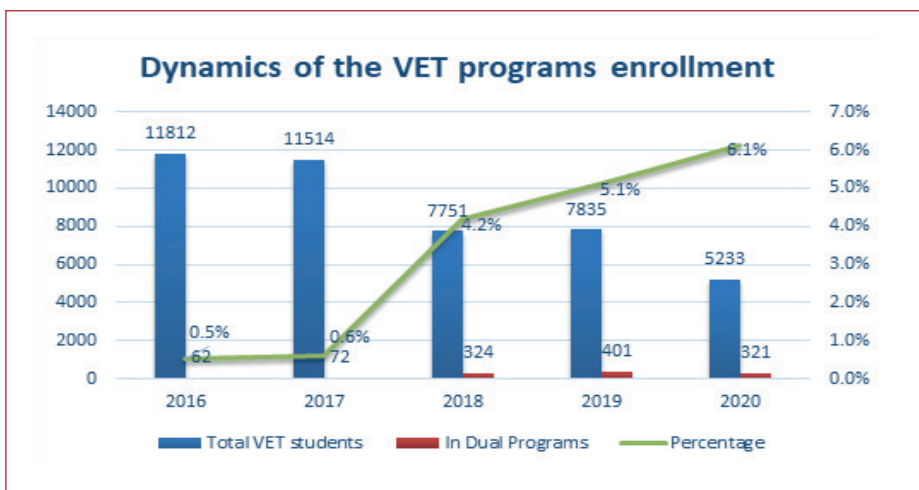
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15. KII with the Acting Head of VET Development Department of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, 2021.

(including increased focus on employer involvement and introduction of dual education), Business Demand on Skills 2020 survey analysis showed that only 15% of enterprises have people employed with vocational education and only 2% of the surveyed enterprises cooperate with vocational education institutions. As indicated by the survey results, the most utilized form of cooperation with vocational schools is offering internships to students (47%) followed by, participation in the development of vocational standards (25%) and participation in work-based learning (23%)<sup>16</sup>.

The number of dual/cooperative education programs and students within is also quite modest. Altogether 58 programmes are being implemented as dual programmes in Tbilisi and other cities of Georgia<sup>17</sup> – Batumi, Kutaisi, Zugdidi, as well as Poti, Akhaltsikhe, Mestia<sup>18</sup>, that have enrolled up to the 401 VET students.

Table 1. Dynamics of dual VET program enrolments:



Source: The Ministry of Education and Science, 2021

Dual education programs are funded within voucher system. Only the part implemented in the college is funded, whereas company-based education, including increased costs of the students in terms of accommodation and transportation, is mainly<sup>19</sup> left at the mercy of employers.

The low level of employer engagement and limited scope of dual education is often assigned to the weak participation of employers in VET governance and absence of a coordinating body for dual education. In April, 2021 the MoES and Chamber of Commerce of Georgia has co-established a Skills Agency, which among other things is supposed to take over functions related to public-private partnership for skills development (development of occupational standards) and coordination of dual education.

16. <http://www.lmis.gov.ge/Lmis/Lmis.Portal.Web/Handlers/GetFile.ashx?Type=Content&ID=cfaa802f-c54e-4607-9875-69abaa284777>.

17. According to the Farmers' association of Georgia indicated, WBL was also implemented in Dusheti, Ambrolauri, Dedoplistskharo, Alvani, Kachreti, Gori.

18. The Education and Science Committee of the Parliament of Georgia (2020), "Access to Quality Vocational Education Tailored to the Needs of the Region: Thematic Inquiry Report", drafted by Tea Siprashvili, with the support from the EU and the UNDP and in cooperation with the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD).

19. In a few cases, the MoES has financed these costs for students on individual basis through program funding.



4.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**



The specific objectives of the research are:

- Analysis of the regulatory framework and current teaching approaches in two state VET colleges Gantiadi in Gori and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi;
- Analysis of the human, social and financial capacity of VET college Gantiadi in Gori and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi and linkages to the business sector;
- Analysis of the attractiveness of VET colleges in terms of VET enrolment and effective outreach at schools (connection to early career guidance if any) and towards NEETs;
- Identification of opportunities to increase access to markets for VET participants through more effective SME linkages (good practices, challenges);
- Analysis of opportunities to enhance beside professional technical qualifications at VET level the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills.

5.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**



The baseline research was based on qualitative approach, the following research methods were used in order to achieve above given objectives: desk research, key informant interviews and focus group discussions.

## **5.1 Desk Research**

The desk research was conducted at the starting phase of the research and the information was used as a benchmark during further research process.

According to the study needs, two types of desk research were used - internal and external. In frame of Internal Desk Research, a similar programmes documents implemented by DRC were analysed:

- Programmes design document
- Progress reports
- Market needs analysis
- Other related documents

External Desk Research was done outside the organizational boundaries and encompassed relevant government strategies that are in line with the research objectives, including:

- Law of Georgia “On Vocational Education and Training”;
- The 2013-2020 VET Development Strategy of Georgia;
- Unified Strategy for Education and Science 2017-2021 Strategy for the Development of High Mountain Regions in Georgia (2017–2021);
- Report on the Implementation of Vocational Education Action Plan 2019 for the Unified Strategy on Education and Science (2017-2021);
- Report on Vocational Education Reform 2020;
- SME Development Strategy of Georgia 2016-2020;
- Regional statistical data from GEOSTAT.

Desk research results contributed to elaboration of the guides for Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group Discussions.

## **5.2 Qualitative Study**

### **Key Informant Interviews**

At the initial phase, the information was obtained using the Key Informants Interviews (KII) from the Ministry of Education and Science Georgia, local government representatives in Gori and Zugdidi, representatives of target VET institutions and private sector. The KII respondents were selected from above-mentioned key actors and institutions. Particular respondents were identified together with the DRC team.

18 KIIs were conducted in total. The total number of KIIs with each target group is shown in the table below:

1 KII	DRC Project
1 KII	Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia
2 KIIs	Representatives of target VET institutions
2 KIIs	City Hall of Zugdidi and Gori Municipalities
10 KIIs	Business Sector Representatives in Zugdidi and Gori Municipalities
2 KIIs	Representatives of Municipal Department of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs of Zugdidi and Gori Municipalities
1 KII	Representatives of Educational Resource Centers of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia

### Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted with VET students and NEETs in target municipalities. Recruitment of the focus group participants was based on certain criteria, like: age, sex, activity sector and curriculum type, in case of VET students.

Sampling of FGD participants:

The following sampling strategy of focus-group participants were used:

1 FGD	VET students from college “Gantiadi” in Gori Municipality
1 FGD	VET students from Shota Meskhia State University in Zugdidi Municipality
1 FGD	NEETs in Gori Municipality
1 FGD	NEETs in Zugdidi Municipality

Guiding questions elaborated based on the desk research were used for the focus group discussions and key informant interviews.

### 5.3 Research Limitations

The research has some limitations, including but not limited to the following:

- Since the research is based on purely qualitative methods, and interviews conducted with employers cannot be representative of the group, the information obtained from the interviews with the business sector cannot be generalizable;
- Same issue of representativeness applies to the group of NEETs;
- VET students that were interviewed using the focus group discussions, might be little informed about the dual system, therefore, have very limited expectations and opinions on the latter.

# 6.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**



Gantiadi college and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi are public institutions offering VET programs. As such, they are eligible for voucher, program and targeted program funding. Program funding will be negotiated for Gantiadi College and will be 50% of voucher funding for Zugdidi colleges (in accordance with the VET Financing Decree #244). Both colleges are authorized<sup>20</sup> and provide both modular and dual programs. None of the colleges provide short-term training and retraining programs, which is a new opportunity to state funding for skills acquisition and employment in a relatively short time.

Below are the findings for the two institutions under question.

### General Profile:

LEPL Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi (VET colleges in two locations Zugdidi and Senaki)

Authorization dates	from 06.11.18 till 06.11.24
Number of available study places	1276
Number of authorized programs (among them dual)	37 (among them dual - 2, 17 - phasing out) Fos specific information on programs see programs section of this report also check the program catalogue at: <a href="http://www.zssu.ge/zssu2/node/1554">http://www.zssu.ge/zssu2/node/1554</a> For more specifics about each of the programs check next subchapter
Number of active students	325

LEPL Gantiadi college

Authorization dates	from 15.08.19 till 29.08.25
Number of available study places	461
Number of authorized programs (among them dual)	11 (among them dual – 3, 1 - phasing out) Fos specific information on programs see programs section of this report
Number of active students	88

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20. Authorization means a process of assessment and decision that colleges meet state standards for providing vocational education, including compliance with state approved education standards (and infrastructure normatives for the programs). Each program to be implemented by VET college needs approval from authorization board. Each college is given a right and assigned student places per program.

## 6.1 Regulatory framework and current teaching approaches at VET colleges Gantiadi in Gori and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi

In planning and implementing vocational education programs, including formally recognized short-term trainings, both colleges abide with the national legislation briefly outlined in the chapter on Georgian VET system. The specific institution level regulations can be found at respective websites of the colleges (<http://www.zssu.ge/zssu2/node/1555> for Zugdidi Teaching University and <http://gantiadi.ge/samartlebrivi-aqtebi/> for Gantiadi college. This includes at the minimum the following:

### **Approval of new programs, including dual education programs:**

VET institutes can implement non-formal short-term vocational education programs with funding from any private source, including students themselves, however, they would need prior approval of the programs for all formal (programs issuing state recognized diplomas and certificate) short-term and long-term programs such as NQF level 3 basic vocational education, NQF level 4 secondary vocational education, and NQF level 5 higher vocational education and associate degree programs, as well as short term training and retraining programs at NQF levels 2-5. The advantage of state recognized programs is the availability of state finances for the programs (such long-term programs are free for students, most of the short term programs are also fully financed by the state); besides, credits obtained from these programs are transferable to other programs and qualifications (diplomas and certificates) obtained through these programs are internationally recognizable as part of official VET system in Georgia.

The approval process for long-term programs is called authorization and is done by an authorization board under NCEQE. The process takes between 3-6 months. The fees for authorization are approved within the Authorization charter<sup>21</sup>. The approval of short-term training and retraining programs is called Program Approval and is also done by a special service – under NCEQE. The rule for training and retraining program approval is approved by the MOES decree 59n (of 26 March of 2019)<sup>22</sup>. The procedure is simpler than authorization. For programs, that are based on existing long-term programs (are part of the authorized programs) the approval is granted automatically, while other programs have to meet a standard set by NCEQE requesting information on labour market demand, the program that would have logical structure (learning outcomes, implementing methods) and evidences for possessing the implementation resources (including human and material resources) that would facilitate achievement of the targeted learning outcomes. The fees for getting approval is approved by the MoES decree N67n to be found at the following link <https://eqe.ge/res/images/images/NewFolder/N676%20ბრძანებდა.pdf>.

The processes described above are in more detailed explained within the college regulations that can be obtained here: <https://bit.ly/3d7iRVP>

### **Enrolment of students:**

The students at formal long-term programs are enrolled once a year by the education institution itself pursuant to the new enrolment rule (MoES Decree N42n of 2 July, 2021). The rule requires education institution to register its vacant study places at official ministry website managed by LEPL EMIS.ge, applicants can access the same system and register their applications online through <https://vet.emis.ge/#/registration> or with the help of education institutions. The enrolment requirements as well as the assessment methods is defined for each program by the education institution (please check the enrolment regulation by Zugdidi university here: <https://bit.ly/3FY59ko> and for Gantiadi college – here: <https://bit.ly/3o8qvWn>).

21. For more specific information check the authorization charter here: <https://eqe.ge/res/NewFolder%205/NewFolder/996%20%281%29.pdf>

22. The trainig and retraining program approval rule can be obtained here: <https://eqe.ge/res/NewFolder%205/NewFolder/996%20%281%29.pdf>



The real persons within the TSA database have privilege in enrolments. The enrolments for 9th grade and 12th graduates are done separately, to ensure 9th graders are not discriminated within enrolment rules (they would not compete in merit-based assessments with 12th year graders). The study places are assigned to successful applicants based on their rankings of the results of the assessments staged by education institutions during the enrolments. The applicants for dual education programs have separate enrolment rules (for Zugdidi University the rule can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3D5UjY1> and for Gantiadi College - here: <https://bit.ly/3o8qvWn> and envisage participation of employers in student selection processes. The applicants to higher education programs apart from assessment procedures within education institutions, have to pass compulsory professional testing (either in literacy or numeracy or sciences as defined by the relevant education programs) organized by National Assessment and Evaluation Center (NAEC).

Enrolments for short-term training and retraining programs are also done through [www.EMIS.ge](http://www.EMIS.ge) webportal. The programs may have open or closed competitions, can be open to wide public or be restricted to only specific groups of applicants. The enrolment rules in training and retraining programs are defined by the MoES Decree 71n<sup>23</sup> and internal regulations of the colleges (Zugdidi university: <https://bit.ly/3o98UgN> and Gantiadi college – here: <https://bit.ly/3o8qvWn>).

#### **Financing available for VET programs:**

Formal long-term VET, including dual education programs is free of charge for all students, while most of the formal VET training and retraining programs, especially those implemented through dual education approaches, are also financed by the state. The information on available state financing of formal VET training and retraining programs is available together with the enrolment procedures and program information at [VET.ge](http://VET.ge) <https://bit.ly/3la3k5P> or websites of the program providers (websites of Gantiadi and Zugdidi University VET colleges).

#### **Student assessment and awarding qualifications:**

Student assessment and certification is done in accordance with the education standards, education programs and internal regulations of the colleges to be obtained here: for Zugdidi university: <https://bit.ly/3FY59ko> and for Gantiadi college – here: <https://bit.ly/3o8qvWn>.

In general, students of dual education programs have to pass obligatory qualification examination organized by the education institutions together with employers, while students of modular programs accumulate credits through meeting requirements set by education programs/modules. Certification peculiarities of short-term training and retraining programs are also defined within the programs themselves.

## **6.2 Programs at VET College Gantiadi and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi**

The full catalogue of the programs provided by education institutions could be found at [www.vet.ge](http://www.vet.ge) which provides options to search programs by field of study or education institution, as well as respective websites of the colleges. The program catalogue, including for dual education programs for Zugdidi university can be obtained here:

<http://www.zssu.ge/zssu2/node/1554> and for Gantiadi College – here: <http://gantiadi.ge/programebi/>.

The tables below give specifics like field of study, type of the program, minimum entry requirements, length or volume in credits, number of available places and location of the programs (in case the institution has several branches) of each of the program by college. The dual education programs are highlighted in grey.

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23. <https://bit.ly/3ocw4Dk>

**Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi (VET colleges in two locations Zugdidi and Senaki)**

Sector	Program/ specialization	NQF level	Type of program	Minimum prior education	Credits (60=1 year)	Number of available places	Location
Agriculture	Beekeeping <sup>24</sup>	NQF level 3	Dual	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	60	10	Senaki Branch
	Veterinary	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	120	30	Senaki Branch
	Decorative Gardening	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	85	30	Senaki Branch
	Decorative Gardening	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	140	15	Senaki Branch
	Farmer	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	90	30	Senaki Branch
	Vegetable growing	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	60	20	Senaki Branch
	Beekeeping	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	60	10	Senaki Branch
	Financial Services	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	55	40	Zugdidi Branch
	Financial Services	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	55	40	Senaki Branch
Social Sciences	Librarian	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	90	24	Senaki Branch
	Librarian	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA/ integrated	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	143	12	Senaki Branch
	Librarian	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	90	50	Zugdidi Branch
	Librarian	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	143	30	Zugdidi Branch
	Preschool teacher	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	120	60	Senaki Branch
	Preschool teacher	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	120	60	Zugdidi Branch
	Reporter	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	128	30	Zugdidi Branch
Medicine and Pharmacy	Pharmacy	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	123	60	Senaki Branch
	Pharmacy	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	123	60	Zugdidi Branch
	Nursing	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	180	40	Zugdidi Branch
	Nursing	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	180	40	Senaki Branch
	Mouth Hygiene (dental work)	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	102	40	Zugdidi Branch
	Mouth Hygiene (dental work)	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	155	20	Zugdidi Branch
ICT	IT networks and systems	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	90	80	Zugdidi Branch

24 Please, note that Zugdidi University has dual decoirative gardening (20 month, level 4) program and Friut-growing programs, as well, which are phasing out, since they are subject based, and are not included in the table above.

	IT networks and systems	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA/integrated	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	148	40	Zugdidi Branch
	IT networks and systems	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	90	40	Senaki Branch
	IT networks and systems	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA/integrated	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	148	20	Senaki Branch
	IT network administrator	NQF level 5	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 12 <sup>th</sup> grade	115	45	Zugdidi Branch
	IT Support	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA/integrated	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	60	20	Zugdidi Branch
	IT Support	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA/integrated	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	60	20	Senaki Branch

Source, NCEQE, VET Authorization Department, 2021 (The reported data reflects the programs until June, 2021)

### List of authorized programs – VET College Gantiadi:

Sector	Program/specialization	NQF level	Type of program	Minimum prior education	Credits (60=1 year)	Number of available places
Agriculture	Fruit growing	NQF level 3	dual	enrolling from 11 <sup>th</sup> grade	90	36
	Vegetable growing	NQF level 3	dual	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	60	36
	Bee keeping	NQF level 3	dual	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	60	12
Construction	Painting	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	58	24
	Dry wall construction	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	66	24
	Tiling	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	82	48
Production/industry	Woodworking	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	89	24
	Welding	NQF level 3=4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	79	48
	Welding	NQF level 4	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 11 <sup>th</sup> grade	137	36
Energy	Electricity	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	52	48
Light industry	Sewing	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	99	45
Services	Hair stylist	NQF level 3	modular/CBTA	enrolling from 9 <sup>th</sup> grade	57	56

Source, NCEQE, VET Authorization Department, 2021 (The reported data reflects the programs until June, 2021)

In general, it can be concluded that 100% of students participate in company-based practice as part of the programs within CBTA programs; however, dual and cooperative education is of small scale so far;

- Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi implements 37 authorized programs in the directions of Agriculture, Sciences; Business, Administration and Law; Education; Engineering; Engineering, Production and Construction; Information and Communication Technologies; Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery, Veterinary; Social Sciences, and Healthcare (for specific list of the programs see above);

Dual VET program delivered by the institution is bee-keeping –a 17-month program, and fruit-growing a 22-month program. Additionally, they have implemented decorative gardening program (20-month, 4th level);

- VET College Gantiadi currently has 11 authorized programs in the direction Engineering, Production and Construction;
- Dual VET programs offered by the college are: beekeeping, fruit growing and vegetable growing.

All the VET programs of VET College Gantiadi and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi, including dual VET programs, which are indicated in the table above, have undergone the authorization process implying the VET institutions have met the authorization standards prescribed for the following areas:

- **Educational Programmes of a Vocational Education Institution;**
- **Material and Financial Resources of a Vocational Education Institution;**
- **Human Resources of a General Education Institution.**

The dual VET programs delivered by the VET College Gantiadi and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi offer 40% of theoretical training to 60% of practical training in a working environment on average. The number of students admissible in each of the program is defined by authorization and is indicated in the tables above.

The students interviewed in the framework of the focus group discussions underline the importance of practical training and state the quality of lectures is satisfactory, meeting the expectations of the students. While the field of study analyzed (agriculture) often implies engagement of students in VET with prior experience of gardening or fruit and vegetable processing, the focus group discussion participants still mention they learned much more through the VET program despite of their many years of working in the field.

***“We all knew more or less at our age, we all own land and fruit trees, but the knowledge received here is more applicable.”***

***Student from the VET College Gantiadi***

The issue outlined by the student in terms of teaching approach is a unified program for every potential learner offering same theoretical and practical training to persons with different professional background and experience. During the key informant interview the representative of the Ministry of Education and Science highlighted that the legislative amendments to be implemented in the field of vocational education and training will, among others, create possibility for selecting and attending the specific modules rather than mandatory modules for every student expected to increase interest in VET.

While the students underline the high quality of teaching, the attitude of the NEETs is different, as they believe that the quality of study is low at VET schools, the teachers are not strict enough and students choose VET institutions as a secondary choice to get a state diploma which will not change their life and will not increase employment opportunities.

### 6.3 Dual Education Programs

As seen from previous chapter, both Shota Meskhia Zugdidi Teaching University and College Gantiadi have experience with implementing dual education programs in the agriculture<sup>25</sup> sector in the following directions:

- Bee-keeping (both colleges)
- Fruit-growing (both colleges)
- Vegetable growing (both colleges)
- Decorative gardening (only Zugdidi)

Up to today, the enrolments and graduation in dual education programs in Zugdidi and Gantiadi VET colleges are as follows:

The enrolments and graduation until 2021, July

Programs/institutions		Enrolled	Already graduated
Decorative gardening	Zugdidi	18	-
Fruit-growing	Zugdidi	40	24
	Gantiadi	10	
Vegetable growing	Gantiadi	12	
Bee-keeping	Zugdidi	-	
	Gantiadi	12	5

Source: GFA, 2021; GFA, Tracer Study, 2020 <sup>26</sup>

The employers with whom the programs are offered are given in the table below:

Partners for dual education

Programs/institutions		Partner companies
Decorative gardening	Zugdidi	Zugdidi Botanical Gardens Management Center
Fruit-growing	Zugdidi	LTD Kartlisi Agrosystems LTD AgroHouse LTD Keskia LTD Gemuani
	Gantiadi	LTD AgroKartli LTD Agrocom I.E. Sophio Imerlishvili I.E. Gogita Shermadini I.E. Gela Mindiashvili
Vegetable growing	Gantiadi	LTD AgroKartli LTD Agrocom
Bee-keeping	Zugdidi	
	Gantiadi	Gaioz Khachiuri

Source: GFA, 2021

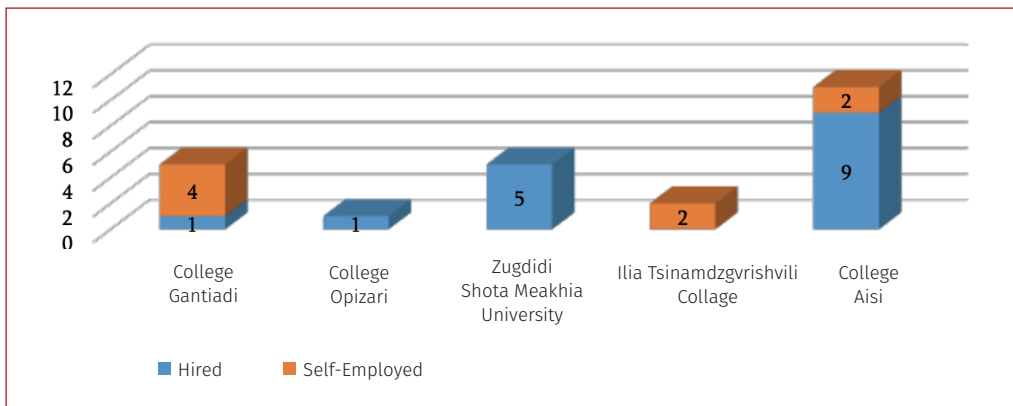
<sup>25</sup> Please, note that Zugdidi university implements agriculture programs in Senaki branch, the exception is decorative gardening, which is implemented in Zigdidi branch.

<sup>26</sup> <https://bit.ly/3nBO0XY>

All the programs are so far driven by international donor organization, meaning that the colleges had international development partners supporting development and implementation of the dual education programs. The partners include UNDP, VET program implemented with the financial support from Swiss Development Agency and Georgian Partners association and EU within Skills4Jobs program implemented by the Institute for Change and Innovations, Georgian Farmers' Association and Foundation Atinati.

According to the tracer study implemented by GFA for the graduates of the dual education programs from their partner 5 colleges across Georgia, including Shota Meskhia Zugdidi Teaching University and Gantiadi College, the employment rate of the dual education program graduates from these partner colleges for 2019 (59%) was lower than Georgian average employment rate from the same year (62%), and the unemployment rate of the graduates was as high as 25%, however, in 2020 the employment rate of GFA dual education programs has improved (87%), while Georgian average employment rate has dropped considerably (42%). For Georgia the drop is explained by the COVID 19 pandemic, however, no clear answer is given to the increase in the dual education graduates from 5 partner colleges in agriculture sector, though possible arguments can be bigger maturity of the project, more experience of the colleges, or even the Covid 19 itself, which resulted in disappearance of jobs in other sectors, but increased employment in retail, food processing/catering, transport and logistics and agriculture.

Below is the number employed by type of employment for Zugdidi and Gantiadi colleges for the year 2020<sup>27</sup> (the employment figures for other colleges that implement dual education programs in the same sector is also given for comparison):



Source: GFA. Tracer study 2020

In general, graduates think that the program contributed to their employment and majority are employed in the occupations relevant to the program. In terms, where they see further improvements is more help with employment and better career guidance, better program content and implementation (GFA, Tracer study 2019<sup>28</sup>). On the other hand, instructors from company understand the importance of dual education and are convinced of the benefits. However, they also indicate to increase workload, no clear source of reimbursing the increased workload (GFA, Instructor satisfaction survey<sup>29</sup>).

27. <https://bit.ly/3nBO0XY>

28. <https://bit.ly/2Xrsx9w>

29. <https://bit.ly/2Xrsx9w>

## **6.4 Human, social and financial capacity of VET College Gantiadi and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi and linkages to the business sector**

As mentioned above, the eligibility of an educational institution to deliver a specific VET course is monitored in accordance to the VET program authorization standard by the LEPL National Center for Education Quality Enhancement, implying that the VET College Gantiadi and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi have proven human, social and financial capacity to deliver trainings. The quality of programs, including WBL components - checked through VET authorization, requires that VET providers evidence the implementation of WBL component with MoUs or contracts with companies, outlining duration, contents and implementation arrangements for training and student assessment in real work settings. The authorization standards for each program is based on education standard which not only is a curriculum for the training, but contains requirements as to the human and material resources of the college. E.g. to be authorized to deliver a program in woodworking College Gantiadi should have complied with the infrastructure requirements for woodworking labs.

During the key informant interviews highlighted the challenges the VET institutions are facing in terms linkage with the business sector for the implementation of dual VET. In the example of VET College Gantiadi the professional orientation manager is a designated person for the business sector engagement and networking, however the representative of the VET institution stated that the college acquired a partner organization for dual VET with the assistance of a professional association (Farmers' Association).

The educational institutions look up to the central bodies for assistance (Ministry of Education and Science) in terms of creating the network for cooperation with the private sector representatives, while the Ministry itself expects the public educational institutions to be independent in the process and is ready to ensure capacity building of designated personnel when/if necessary.

## **6.5 Attractivity of VET colleges in terms of VET enrolment and effective outreach at schools (connection to early career guidance if any) and towards NEETs**

The analysis of the data regarding the attractivity of the VET and the outreach activities and its results gives the most biased answers from the different target groups studied.

The representatives of the VET colleges mention during the KII they plan different campaigns and regularly arrange activities to attract students. At the same time, the FDG participant students enrolled in the VET institutions name during the focus group discussions different types of outreach campaigns organized by the VET institution for the reach out, however none of them mentioned during the interview that the source for their information (and based on which they made a decision to continue their education at a VET institution) was the advertising campaign arranged by the VET colleges or the Ministry of Education and Science. The current students state that they found out about the VET colleges from persons affiliated with the school (neighbours/relatives teaching/working at VET, etc.).

This clarifies the result of the focus group discussion with the NEETs stating they have no information about the VET college in their municipality. However, some of them have heard about Meskhia University, although the reason for this can be the status of the institution (Meskhia University is a higher educational institution offering courses in VET while Gantiadi is a Vocational Education and Training College, focused on the lower qualification levels). At the same time, the activities organized by the VET schools are mainly targeted to general education institutions and persons beyond schools remain with no information. NEETs underline

that more static approach in advertising is necessary, because they might scroll up the advertisement on social media, while seeing a banner in the streets can be more efficient.

On the other hand, representatives of both institutions mentioned that even without targeted advertising campaign, the competition on the courses delivered by the VET institution is extremely high (for example the VET college Gantiadi received 26 applications for the course 12 places and 26 candidates). The VET institutions also mention that one post on social media was enough to fill up the groups for different courses. The need for better communication strategies is underlined by the representatives of the Municipal Department of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs. During the KII the interviewees note that although they do know there are VET colleges in the municipalities, they do not have information about specific training courses offered by the educational institutions. They believe dissemination of information should increase and the VET colleges should also be reaching the municipal departments.

The departments are open for cooperation and outline that if the information needs to be spread to the NEETs, the representatives of the VET colleges should be addressing the target groups on the spot – visiting the villages, organizing meetings with communities and offering more information about the services provided by the educational institutions.

The engagement of the educational resource centres is limited to the assistance in registration of interested persons on the VET course of their choice. The centres do not offer the information to the interested persons on the possibilities of involving in the VET.

## 6.6 Opportunities to increase access to markets for VET participants through more effective SME linkages (good practices, challenges)

The directions with the higher labor market demand on skills development are different for different regions, although the main areas include tourism, agriculture, construction. The skills development demand for the target region are presented below<sup>30</sup>:

Demand on Skills Development	
Shida Kartli Region	Tourism, agriculture, engineering/construction, IT specialists
Samegrelo–Zemo Svaneti Region	Agriculture, tourism and construction-engineering specialists

The average employment rate of VET graduates in 2017-2019 was 54% in the country <sup>31</sup>.

VET Graduate Employment Rate %				
	2017	2018	2019	Average 2017-2019
Sida	9.9	5.9	5.8	7.2
Samegrelo- Zemo	7.0	4.5	8.1	6.5

30. Accessibility to Vocational Education and Training Network in Georgia and Compliance of the VET Qualification Demand and Supply in Georgia, Skills4Jobs TA Project, December 2020

31. Tracer Study, MoES



The areas where the supply of the VET qualifications is lower than the demand in the Shida Kartli and Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Regions are the following:<sup>32</sup>

Sida Kartli Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Tourism</li> <li>● Engineering</li> <li>● Railway specialist</li> <li>● Culinary</li> <li>● Confectionary</li> <li>● Stone processing</li> </ul>
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Agriculture specialist</li> <li>● Crane driver</li> <li>● Vet</li> <li>● Home appliance specialist</li> <li>● Engineer</li> <li>● Construction worker</li> <li>● Processing industry worker</li> </ul>

While the decentralization of the processes in the VET field is one of the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia, linkage with SME and cooperation with private sector remains a major challenge for the VET institutions. Each institution provided the list of the most prominent companies that cooperate with (see table below). The very first impression is that Zugdidi university partners are more big or medium companies, while college Gantiadi partners more with small and micro businesses, which could be reflective of the business environment in the two regions. Also, when comparing with the demanded professions in the two respective regions, once could conclude there is still a space for improving the matching with skills demands and social partnerships for both colleges, because none of the colleges seem to be provided the professions that seem to be in demand in. their respective regions.

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32. Accessibility to Vocational Education and Training Network in Georgia and Compliance of the VET Qualification Demand and Supply in Georgia, Skills4Jobs TA Project, December 2020

Current social partners for Zugdidi University and Gantiadi college:

VET colleges	List of prominent social partners <sup>33</sup>
Zugdidi University	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Non-profit Zugdidi Municipality Botanical Garden Management center, Zugdidi</li> <li>2. LTD Kartli Agrosystems, Zugdidi</li> <li>3. Evex Hospitals -Zugdidi Referral Hospital, Zugdidi</li> <li>4. Pharmacy Aversi, Zugdidi</li> <li>5. LTD Skytel, Zugdidi</li> <li>6. LTD OrduNET, Zigdidi</li> <li>7. LTD Akhali Kselebi, Zugdidi</li> <li>8. LTD Zugdidi Auto Construction Company Zugdidi</li> <li>9. LTD Margi Design, Zugdidi ,</li> <li>10. Veterinary Association Clinic, Zugdidi</li> <li>11. Food safety Agency, Zugdidi Branch, Zugdidi</li> <li>12. Bee-keepers association, Zugdidi</li> <li>13. Non- profit Preschool Management Center, Zugdidi</li> <li>14. TV and radio company Odishi, Zugdidi</li> <li>15. Publishing House for the Newspaper Zugdidelebi Zugdidi</li> <li>16. Dental Clinic Nano-Center, Zugdidi</li> <li>17. Dental Clinic Happy Smile Zugdidi</li> <li>18. LTD AgroHouse, Zugdidi</li> <li>19. Non-profit Library Management Center, Zugdidi</li> <li>20. Public Shools.</li> <li>21. Preschools in Zugdidi</li> </ol>
Gantiadi College	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Individual entrepreneur (IE) Gogita Shermadini, Fruitgrower, Kareli</li> <li>2. IE Sophio Imerlishvili, Vegetable and fruitgrower, Kareli</li> <li>3. LTD Agrokartli, Gori</li> <li>4. LTD Agro-Komi, Gori</li> <li>5. LTD Samkervalo Lideri, Gori</li> <li>6. LTD Samkervalo Gviristi, Gori</li> <li>7. IE Tea Gviniashvili, Beuty Salon, Gori</li> <li>8. LTD Beauty Saloon Dea, Gori</li> <li>9. Non- Profit Gori Waters and Systems Service, Village Berbuki</li> <li>10. LTD Build Together, Sewage Systems service, Vilage Zemo Kviti</li> <li>11. IE Kakha datashvili, sewage systems service, Gori</li> <li>12. Real Person Gela Mindiashvili, fruit grower Vilage Ditsi</li> <li>13. Real Person Gaioz Khachiauri, Beekeeper, Vilage Tiniskhidi</li> <li>14. Real Person Pavle Kurtanidze, Beekeeper, Vilage Rieti</li> </ol>

Source: Zugdidi university and Gantiadi College, 2021

The interviews with the representatives of the VET College Gantiadi and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi showed that the educational institutions still look up to the coordinating body and search for assistance to create links with private sector in the municipalities.

According to the data collected through the qualitative study, the main areas of business offering higher employment opportunities are agriculture, food and beverage service and catering, iron processing, tourism, handicraft. Among them the agriculture and handicraft are named as areas with possibilities to implement dual VET. During interviews with Gantiadi college representative agriculture, construction as well as services (sewing, hair stylist) was mentioned as highly employable fields of study. On the other hand, Zugdidi university indicated that nursing and welding have the best employment rate (at 90%), followed by electricity and bee-keeping, while professions in finances get only 50-65% of graduates employed. The attitude in general is very positive and the employers show the willingness to cooperate with the VET institutions. The business representatives have information about the VET institutions in their municipalities and those with experience with cooperation, mention that the theoretical knowledge the students acquire at the VET college prior going to the worksite for practical training, is satisfactory.

Among the benefits of implementing dual VET with educational institutions named by the business sector representatives is a source of selecting and hiring personnel and a workforce with lower expenses during the high seasons (in case of agricultural fields).

The motivation is named as the major challenge by different target groups from different perspectives. The issue of the low motivation of the students during the practical training is the main issue underlined by the business sector representatives, while the lack of willingness to cooperate from the private sector side is mentioned by the VET college representatives – the VET institutions need to plan ahead to consider at least three options for the practical training partner organization in case one of them decides to terminate cooperation (including, but not limited to, economic situation).

The employers highlight the importance of awareness raising suggesting organizing field trips for career guidance, so that students know what to expect from the work. Different scales of businesses have a significant impact on the possibilities of dual VET implementation. While there are at least 15 students in group, small scale businesses cannot offer practical training on the site, as the interviews showed smaller enterprises can work with and train one or two students only (handicraft, wood processing).

With the creation of Qualifications Agency, the representative of the Ministry of Education and Science considers, the burden to enhance private-public partnership will be moved to the agency and associations. However, the representative of the Ministry also mentioned that this area needs to be addressed by the VET college itself.

Creation of incentives for the business representatives can increase the cooperation possibilities and willingness. For smaller companies, participation in dual VET is an increased burden and high responsibility - financial incentive (purchase of equipment for the small enterprise, financial incentive for the instructor) are named as solutions by the VET institutions.

During the interviews with the representatives of the VET institutions, the respondents noted that in response to the interest in training in woodwork and woodprocessing, the VET institutions are planning to elaborate respective VET programs and offer to potential students. In case of VET College Gantiadi, the program is already developed and the College is planning to enroll students, while in case of Shota Meskhia

State Teaching University of Zugdidi, the institution is in search for a respective specialist to deliver the training underlining the issue of lower remuneration as a challenge in the field.

## **6.7 Opportunities to enhance beside professional technical qualifications at VET level the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills**

The colleges offer a 2 credit (8+ weeks) module of entrepreneurship (please see the overall description of the program in Subchapter on VET system above).

While entrepreneurial skills development module is a mandatory part of every curriculum, every target group states that the module is not sufficient. The representatives of VET College Gantiadi and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi note that more teaching hours and practical training of business plan elaboration would significantly increase the entrepreneurial skills of the VET college graduates. This issue is familiar for the Ministry of Education and Science however, the expectation from their party is lower, considering it harder for the VET institution graduate to compete with well experienced business representatives in business plan elaboration or application for different state programs for business financing. Nevertheless, the students interviewed note they have knowledge on entrepreneurship, although they underline the necessity for a more comprehensive course for the entrepreneurship skills development. The students who mention to have a knowledge of writing projects mentioned they acquired it from previous experience or other training courses.



7.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**



Based on the outcomes of the research (desk research, key informant interviews and focus group discussions), the following recommendations were elaborated to increase the dual VET efficiency on the example of the VET College Gantiadi and Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi:

### **Legal framework and current teaching approaches:**

*At the policy level (target groups: Government of Georgia, other development partners)*

- Analyse and advocate at high policy level for creating incentives for the private sector to participate in dual VET – salary for the instructors, lower taxes, purchase of modern equipment; The latter concerns the woodwork and wood processing sector in particular considering the smaller scales of the enterprises in the area;
- Considering to revise the volume of the mandatory module on entrepreneurial skills development to ensure the students get enough time to master the competencies targeted within

### **Human, social and financial capacity of the VET colleges**

*At the VET programme implementation level (target groups: VET institutes, potential students, potential private sector partners)*

- Support colleges in developing/approving and implementation of short-term training and retraining programs (based on existing long-term training programs) targeting specific adult applicants; especially to appeal NEETs; This may include covering the program approval costs;
- Provide co-financing for dual education programs to cover new costs for both students and employers arising from dual education in a search to increase the volume of dual education in general and participation of certain vulnerable groups. This may include: provision of social packages to students to cover transport, accommodation, food, stipend during dual education studies and cost recovery for dual education programs for employers (salaries for teacher supervisors, health and life insurance of students, insurance of equipment) to increase their incentive to participate in pilot dual education programs;
- Development of support package envisaging NEETs needs to ensure their access to VET.

### **Attractivity of VET colleges in terms of VET enrolment and effective outreach**

*At the VET programme implementation level (target groups: VET institutes, potential students, employers, employment and youth services at regional and municipality level)*

- Development of a communication strategy to an increased outreach specifically for NEETs;
- Development of a communication strategy to an increased involvement of employers;

## **Opportunities to increase access to markets for VET participants through more effective SME linkages**

*At the VET programme implementation level (target groups: VET institute administration, potential private sector partners)*

- Development of an early career guidance system (career information development, guidance and counselling, profiling and employability skills development) for the potential students for specific target groups, especially general education students and NEETs. This, especially for younger age-groups, might including field trips to the worksites to inform potential students about occupation, the duties and general work conditions implied;
- Development of a training module and guidebooks on local labor market studies for the VET representatives and provide trainings in employer outreach and communication skills to increase networking capabilities of a VET institution;
- Support colleges in outreaching to potential dual education partner companies, this might include assigning experienced business strategist to study opportunities, lead negotiations with businesses, signing agreements on future dual education programs.

## **Opportunities to enhance beside professional technical qualifications at VET level the acquisition of entrepreneurship skills**

*At the VET programme implementation level (target groups: VET institute administration and teachers)*

- Train entrepreneurship teachers to improve their teaching skills and overall knowledge of business environment in Georgia.



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