**The EU launches €50 million programme in Georgia**

**The focus of the 5-year scheme is to improve skills matching with labour market demand - particularly in the regions, says EU Ambassador to Georgia**

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The European Training Foundation's director, Cesare Onestini, has welcomed the launch of the Phase 2 of the [EU Skills4Jobs](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia_en/69572/%20EU%20and%20Government%20of%20Georgia%20launch%20new%20150%20M%20GEL%20programme%20supporting%20vocational%20education%20and%20labour%20market%20development) programme in Georgia.

Speaking at a launch event Tuesday (October 29) at a vocational education and training centre in Gldani, a suburb of the capital, Tbilisi, Mr Onestini noted that the ETF had been working to support [VET reform in Georgia](https://mes.gov.ge/uploads/VET%20Reform%20Progress%20Report%202014-2016%20EN.pdf) for 20 years - though "the priorities back then were very different from today."

Developing [human capital](https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/regions-and-countries/countries/georgia) had become a key priority for the Georgian government, he said, adding that: "The new targets we have under the Skills4Jobs scheme are realistic. The question of quality of training is not something for the distant future; we want to see quality having an impact on young people and the choices they make today."

**Regions and diversity**

[Carl Hartzell](https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/georgia_en/50373/Carl%20Hartzell%20appointed%20Ambassador%20of%20EU%20to%20Georgia), the EU Ambassador to Georgia, said that increased funding for Phase 2 of the Skills4Jobs programme - nearly doubled to EUR48.85 million - underlined the commitment to improving vocational education and labour market skills demonstrated by the Georgian government.

Speaking to an audience of ministry officials, employer representatives and stakeholders in VET from the public and private sectors, Mr Hartzell said that improving the quality of skills across the country was a vital factor in improving its economy and increasing incomes.

"When Georgians are asked in surveys to identify what they see as the biggest risk [to their wellbeing] jobs and job creation frequently come up. This is hardly surprising in a country where official unemployment remains high - among in particular - and there are discrepancies and disadvantages between urban and rural areas."

He added: "Tackling this issue is key to unlocking Georgian economic potential and wider social progress. One focus is investment in Georgian human capital and we stand fully behind the government in its ambitions to push forward educational reforms and move towards and an inclusive modern society with upper middle incomes and beyond."

**Solid foundations**

Phase One of the programme - which closed last year - had resulted in the training of more than 750 vocational teachers, the development of 100 new courses and successful job placements for 30,000 people thanks to the programme, he added.

The new benchmarks the programme aims to achieve by 2023 includes helping at least 105,000 people into new jobs, with a focus on helping women, youth and the disadvantaged and an increase of 20 percent in the number of adult learners undertaking training or re-skilling, Mr Hartzell said.

[Mikheil Batiashvili](https://mes.gov.ge/content.php?id=8&lang=eng), Georgia's Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, said that education was one of the top priorities in the country.

"We are in a process of rapid development in Georgia and VET plays a major role. It should produce graduates that meet the demands of the labour market," the minister said.

"The first waves of reform have been implemented, but there are many more steps to take to improve the education sector in Georgia."

Schemes to support the Phase 2 include donor programmes focusing on improving labour market matching of skills training, strengthening quality assurance and qualifications governance, and improving health and safety at work.