

### **Agenda Item 3. Implementation of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development**

#### **(a) Progress in implementing the Strategy: Update on the most recent developments (policies, actions, programmes, initiatives) at the national level**

The Ministry of Education, Science and Youth and the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture are official national institutions responsible for the implementation of the ESD strategy in Georgia.

#### **Recent developments in relation to the ESD Strategy from the side of the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth (MoESY):**

According to the Authorization standards, it is mandatory for all – from Early to Higher education institutions to ensure sustainable development both at institutional and program levels. As part of the quality assurance reforms, the revised version of the "State Standards of Early and Preschool Care and Education" is approved. Since the end of 2023 all kindergartens conducted self-assessment in accordance with the new authorization standards. The authorization process for kindergartens will start from 2025. At the General Education level, 2023 marked the implementation of the new authorization standards and updated procedures for public schools.

National Curriculum defines crosscutting skills that all subjects should be focused, among other aspects, on critical and creative thinking. The document identifies a number of priority directions, including environmental protection, healthy lifestyle, human rights, etc. Sustainable development is a crosscutting topic in Social Science and Natural Science subject groups at all levels of general education. Entrepreneurship component is included in the subjects as cross-cutting competence from the elementary level, and at upper secondary level in the form of an elective subject.

MoESY supports continuous professional development and career growth of teachers and educators. Trainings are offered on professional development of educators, sustainable development, citizenship education, human and children's rights, democratic culture, ESD and environmental education, etc.

Development of entrepreneurial ecosystems is ongoing. The module and learning outcomes, focusing on the development of entrepreneurial competencies, has been integrated into all VET programs as a mandatory component. A new module of entrepreneurship, which is fully corresponding to Entrepreneurship Competence Framework (EntreComp<sup>1</sup>), was approved and supplementary teacher and

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<sup>1</sup> EntreComp: The Entrepreneurship Competence Framework - describes entrepreneurship as a lifelong competence, identifies what are the elements that make someone entrepreneurial and describes them to establish a common reference for initiatives dealing with entrepreneurial learning.

student guidebooks were developed. Skills Agency<sup>2</sup> adapted internationally well-approved “Shuttle” methodology which focuses on developing transversal skills through empowering entrepreneurship competencies.

One of the primary objectives of the VET system is to foster the development of a flexible VET services by strengthening the public-private partnership to enhance the quality, address labor market needs and establish effective channels of communication.

To increase accessibility to VET education, and to support e-learning process an open-source Learning Management System (LMS) platform was initiated, which offers over 50 courses in self-paced and blended learning formats.

**Digital** skills are taught to VET students as a stand-alone module or partially incorporated in different modules. Digital Literacy VET module is incorporated in all training and retraining programs as a mandatory component. Also, the concept of technology enriched and blended learning in VET was elaborated, which serves as a basis for developing non-formal course that is fully harmonized with European DigComp<sup>3</sup> framework and aims to develop basic digital skills and further proceeds to intermediate and upper-intermediate levels for more advanced learners.

In order to accelerate digital transformation in higher education, the package of legislative amendments to the three national laws<sup>4</sup> were prepared and have already submitted to the Parliament of Georgia. The package aims to regulate the issues related to implementation of distance education and e-learning in higher and vocational education. It envisages permission for partial or full online learning.

Under Competitive Innovation Fund (CIF) - a Competitive Grant Mechanism coordinated by MoESY, which aims to ensure the modernization of higher education and strengthening of the labor market linkages, including through stimulating entrepreneurship education, 13 project proposals were funded in 2023 and 14 proposals will be funded in 2024.

Citizens of Georgia have the opportunity to improve their knowledge by benefiting from scholarship programs abroad through the International Education Center (IEC), operating under MoESY. In response to international trends in education and relevant to sustainable development goals, the Green and Digital Education and STEM directions are one of the priority academic fields for all IEC scholarship programs.

### **Recent developments in relation to the ESD Strategy from the side of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Agriculture (MoEPA):**

Environmental Information and Education Centre (EIEC) is operating under the MoEPA and implementing different kind of programmes and initiatives, aiming at support implementation of ESD strategy and ensure life-long learning process. EIEC updated the program of Preschool Environmental Education, where the new topic of climate change and the eco-package were added (green calendar and

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<sup>2</sup> The Agency under MoESY, founded by MoESY and Georgian Chamber of Commerce.

<sup>3</sup> The Digital Competence Framework for Citizens.

<sup>4</sup> Laws „On Higher education”, “On Vocational Education” and “On Education Quality Enhancement”.

the game for kids). In 2023 EIEC started introducing the updated program countrywide, except for the occupied territories of Georgia, and at this stage, more than 3100 kindergarten practitioners are trained.

Implementation of the "Environmental and Agricultural Education in School" program for primary school teachers is actively continuing across the country. The program consists of 8 books, from which 6 refers to main environmental topics and 1 - sustainable development. The programme intends to improve teachers' knowledge and skills to ensure the knowledge transfer teaching of the mentioned 8 topics. 20-hour trainings are ongoing and more than 6300 elementary school teachers have been already retrained.

EIEC works in direction of promoting deficient professions in environmental and agricultural sectors. Jointly with together partner organizations, EIEC established Green and Agro Scholarships (Green Scholarship programme in 2022, Agro Scholarship program in 2023). Programmes aim encourage students of vocational, bachelor's and master's levels with high academic performance in these fields. 64 scholarships<sup>5</sup> are awarded annually. Also, in order to promote these professions from school age, EIEC implements youth programs, such as: School of Ecoleaders, Agroschool, Forestry School, Green Camp – Climate Ambassadors, and Young Volunteers.

An important role in the activity of EIEC is digital education. Digital tools are actively used in various programs and forms. EIEC has elaborated online learning courses to ensure increased flexibility in ways of obtaining knowledge and information. Three digital asynchronous courses are available online for the relevant target groups – Environmental and Agricultural Education in School, Circular Economy, and Environmental Democracy. EIEC elaborated also the Knowledge Management and Training Platform where the placement of different kind of courses for online use will be available soon.

In order to improve the coordination of environmental education events across the country, EIEC established Environmental Education Coordination Council. The function of the multistakeholder council is to promote coordinated implementation of initiatives, more structure and systematize environmental awareness campaigns tailoring to target groups, continuity, increase of coverage area, analysis of results, improved cooperation, etc., one of the main targets of which is contribution to the Education for Sustainable Development.

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<sup>5</sup> in the amount of 500 to 1500 GEL.