

Skills Mapping and Needs Assessment of Key Competences for Youth Development in Georgia



UNICEF/Geo-2025/Tsetskhladze

Acknowledgments

Sincere appreciation is extended to the Child Rights Centers, academic personnel, and university administrations whose invaluable support made this study possible. The contributions and cooperation of the following institutions are gratefully acknowledged:

- Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University
- Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University
- Akaki Tsereteli State University
- Samtskhe-Javakheti State University
- Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University
- Sokhumi State University
- Shota Meskhia Zugdidi State University
- Gori State University
- Caucasus University

Gratitude is also extended to all the young respondents whose participation and perspectives significantly contributed to the study.

Author: Tamar Kitiashvili

© UNICEF Georgia, 2025

The study was conducted by UNICEF with the financial support of the Government of France and in partnership with the Child Rights Centers established at nine state universities. The views and opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of UNICEF or the Government of France.

Contents

Acronyms	4
Executive Summary	5
Goal and Objectives of the Study	11
Context	11
Study Framework and Methodology	13
Phase I: Preparation, Design and Administration	13
1. Research Design	13
2. Sample Selection Criteria	13
3. Research Components	15
4. Research Methods	15
Phase II: Analysis and Report Preparation	16
Phase III: Presentation	16
Key Findings and Recommendations	17
1. Literacy	19
2. Multilingualism, Cultural Awareness and Expression	25
3. STEM Competence	28
4. Digital Competence	31
5. Personal, Social, Learning-to-Learn Competence	34
6. Citizenship and Green Competence	40
7. Entrepreneurship	45
8. Mental Health	47
Summary of Recommendations	53
Bibliography	54

Acronyms

EU	European Union
MoESY	Ministry of Education, Science and Youth
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
VET	Vocational Education and Training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Context and Methodology

The study aims to map skills and assess the key competences essential for youth development and successful transitions in education and society in Georgia. It focuses on evaluating students' awareness and proficiency in competences such as literacy, STEM, social, personal and learning-to-learn, digital literacy, critical thinking, communication, entrepreneurial, civic, and green skills across various regions, including urban and rural areas. The goal is to provide recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to improve youth development and educational practices.

The context follows: Georgia's education system has undergone significant reforms since the early 2000s, transitioning from a Soviet-era structure to one that aligns with international standards. Despite progress, challenges remain in improving the quality of education, particularly in developing essential competences for societal participation. The Unified Strategy of Education and Science for 2022-2030 of the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia (MoESY) emphasizes lifelong learning and workforce development with a focus on transversal skills. However, gaps remain in foundational competences as evidenced by international comparisons, such as the World Bank's education indicators and PISA¹ results, which show high rates of low-achieving students.

The study is structured into three phases:

Phase I - Preparation/Design and Administration: The research strategy is a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data to explore key competences across seven regions of Georgia. Participants, aged 18-20, were selected from diverse backgrounds- ensuring a diverse sample that included students from rural and urban areas, various academic levels, and ethnic groups. A total of 155 students were involved in focus group discussions and case analyses with activities designed to assess their competences and perceptions.

Phase II – Analysis and Report Preparation: Data was collected using online tools such as Mentimeter, alongside observation notes on discussions, case studies and interactive exercises, video, and photo materials. The data was analyzed according to the study framework focusing on key competences and addressing the primary research questions.

Phase III – Presentation: The findings will be presented to educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to facilitate informed discussions and guide the development of practical solutions. The study's outcomes will contribute to enhancing youth support systems and promoting effective policies to improve education and youth development in Georgia.

¹ PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics, and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

Key Findings and Recommendations

1. Literacy

The study revealed that many young people in Georgia face significant challenges with literacy particularly in formulating and expressing their thoughts clearly. One-quarter of participants struggled to articulate their ideas coherently, often using simple and poor vocabulary or failing to express their thoughts fully, which sometimes led to frustration and nervousness. Writing skills were a particular concern especially among language minorities whose proficiency in the official language was insufficient for academic tasks. Additionally, a third of the participants had difficulty providing strong, reasoned arguments showing a lack of experience in critical thinking and debate. Though most could follow content and engage in discussions, a significant number struggled with fluency, made grammatical errors, and used slang. These issues highlighted the need for improved literacy development, particularly in oral and written communication skills, to better prepare youth for academic and professional challenges.

Recommendations:

- Enhance Formal Education - Provide teachers with regular professional development in interactive and engaging teaching methodology, including project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and gamification. Foster an enhanced interactive learning environment across all educational stages to support critical thinking, reasoning, and communication skills. Improve the implementation of the national curriculum to create more opportunities for group reasoning, debates, and critical discussions in classrooms. Develop a practical guide for teachers to implement inquiry-based learning with real-world case studies, structured lesson plans, and project-based activities.
- Support Non-Formal Learning Opportunities - Conduct a mapping of non-formal education providers to identify challenges and barriers especially for youth in underserved areas. Advocate for increased financial support and resources to improve access to non-formal learning. Pair literacy and competency improvement initiatives with mental health education to address emotional challenges that affect students' confidence and motivation.
- Develop Hybrid Literacy and Communication Courses - Design non-formal training courses combining in-person and online learning to improve both oral and written communication skills through problem-solving activities, debates, writing exercises, and public speaking.
- Promote Literature and the Arts - Support the establishment of youth-led literature and arts clubs in local communities and provide small grants to foster discussions around literature and arts which can enhance literacy, critical thinking, and leadership skills.

2. Multilingualism, Cultural Awareness, and Expression

The study found that young people in Georgia generally recognize the importance of multilingualism and cultural awareness with 92% of participants reporting English language skills and a significant portion expressing interest in learning additional languages. The study reveals that ethnic minorities in Georgia face challenges with Georgian language proficiency which hinders their participation in academic settings. Additionally, while many viewed Georgia as a tolerant nation, there were mixed attitudes towards the extent of cultural tolerance in society.

Recommendations:

- Develop a comprehensive training course to promote cultural diversity focusing on the varied and multifaceted nature of European and other diverse cultures to counteract monolithic cultural narratives.
- Foster awareness of Georgia's multicultural heritage and the value of cultural exchange, encouraging students from diverse backgrounds to share experiences and build mutual respect.
- Support language minorities by improving access to Georgian language resources, expanding digital learning tools, and enhancing institutional diversity in language education.
- Encourage interactive, community-based language learning initiatives that allow students to practice Georgian in their local environments, fostering social cohesion and empowering students.

3. STEM Competence

The study indicates that while participants recognize the importance of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), their understanding remains limited, especially regarding the practical applications of science in real-world settings. Many students do not connect scientific knowledge with career prospects in industries such as agriculture, energy, or chemical production. The majority believe in the value of mathematics and financial literacy, but some struggle to apply these skills in practical situations. Financial literacy, though recognized as essential, is often seen as irrelevant by younger students and is not sufficiently emphasized in educational settings. Participants also show strong awareness of environmental issues and the interconnection between humans and nature, yet many still view science as primarily an academic pursuit. This suggests a need for more engaging, practical, and career-oriented STEM-based education.

Recommendations

- Develop career-oriented science education modules for secondary school students that demonstrate real-world applications of science in industries like agriculture, energy, and manufacturing.
- Equip science teachers with training to provide career guidance to help students connect their academic learning to potential STEM career paths.
- Implement non-formal, project-based training to enhance financial literacy, combined with entrepreneurship and citizenship education.
- Create digital learning platforms and online courses to support financial literacy, utilizing simulations and gamification to encourage practical financial decision-making skills.

4. Digital Competence

The study highlights that while participants possess good digital skills and familiarity with technology, they still face challenges particularly with cybersecurity, social media literacy, and understanding digital threats. A significant portion of participants expressed confidence in their ability to navigate the digital world, use AI tools, and engage in digital economy skills. However, many also reported struggles with social media, including distinguishing true from false information, and felt insecure about protecting their personal data. There is a notable fear that the advancement of technology may lead to job losses, the

erosion of traditions, and diminished human connection. Despite these anxieties, most participants recognize the potential benefits of digital technology for global development.

Recommendations:

- Develop a self-administered online course on cybersecurity and digital hygiene to teach youth how to protect their devices, recognize online threats, and safeguard personal information.
- Create a digital, self-paced course on social media operations for students focusing on creating content, managing online identity, and navigating platforms safely while addressing the risks of cyberbullying and misinformation.
- Introduce and strengthen media-literacy teaching and learning at all levels of education.

5. Personal, Social, Learning-to-Learn Competence

The study highlights the strong connection between personal, social, and learning-to-learn competences and the mental health and resilience of youth. Participants expressed challenges with self-reflection, career guidance, and personal growth, often feeling demotivated by societal and educational structures. While many exhibit optimism about the future, anxiety about uncertainty and the climate crisis remains prevalent. Family support was identified as crucial for success, alongside self-reliance, and a focus on education. Participants also showed an interest in developing skills related to time management, self-reflection, teamwork, and empathy, but faced barriers due to a lack of structured support and guidance. Overall, the lack of personal development planning and access to non-formal learning was identified as a significant gap.

Recommendations:

- Develop a specialized course on self-study and self-reflection to guide students in personal growth, motivation, and time management, with a hybrid format combining online modules and group sessions.
- Propose a course on teamwork, empathetic communication, and inclusivity focusing on cooperation, cultural sensitivity, and conflict resolution, offered in both online and in-person formats.
- Utilize Child Rights Centers as hubs for permanent student clubs or working groups where students can collaborate on projects, develop leadership skills, and engage in activities fostering personal and collective development.

6. Citizenship and Green Competence

The study highlights the interconnectedness between active citizenship and environmental responsibility. Most participants demonstrated a strong understanding of their role as citizens and their responsibilities in tackling societal issues including local environmental problems. Participants showed a deep awareness of climate change, but many felt a lack of confidence in their ability to influence change or fully grasp sustainable development concepts. Despite being knowledgeable about democratic values, many participants' understandings of global issues and the functions of democracy were limited. Additionally, while many expressed a desire for more knowledge on sustainability, they were empowered by the opportunity to engage in local problem-solving projects. Overall, the participants reflected on their growing sense of responsibility and agency, particularly in terms of social and environmental challenges.

Recommendations:

- Design a comprehensive blended learning course on democratic education, focusing on the history and functions of democratic systems, with an emphasis on Georgia's historical context and European integration.
- Strengthen the concept of sustainability, covering economic, social, and environmental aspects in the curricula of all levels to deepen participants' understanding of sustainable development.
- Create platforms for open discussions and debates on global and local issues, especially in rural areas where opportunities are limited, to encourage critical thinking and engagement.
- Support youth engagement through clubs and hubs focused on debating and societal action, fostering self-regulated initiatives that empower young people.
- Organize workshops for educational institutions to build capacity in facilitating interactive, youth-led processes, drawing on European experiences.
- Encourage open and constructive dialogue on controversial topics such as geopolitics and democratic values to create a space where young people can engage in meaningful and informed debates.

7. Entrepreneurial Competence

The study reveals a gap in creative thinking, self-expression, and entrepreneurial skills among participants with many expressing a desire to improve in these areas. A significant number of participants struggled to transform societal problems into entrepreneurial opportunities and found it challenging to express and present their ideas creatively. While many students preferred social entrepreneurship projects, few had prior involvement in entrepreneurial initiatives, and their understanding of entrepreneurial thinking and innovation was limited. Moreover, a large portion of participants showed interest in learning new crafts, either for income generation or personal well-being. This indicates a need for greater exposure to entrepreneurship concepts and hands-on experience. The study underscores the importance of addressing these gaps by enhancing educational support for entrepreneurial competence.

Recommendations:

- Design an online course for teachers to improve their understanding of entrepreneurial competence and demonstrate its application across all subjects, not limited to business education.
- Offer opportunities for students to develop social and entrepreneurial ideas through project-based learning and micro-funding, empowering them to solve local issues and gain practical experience.
- Introduce a comprehensive career education course to raise awareness of diverse career paths, including self-employment and vocational education, and equip students with decision-making skills for their future careers.
- Encourage the integration and strengthening of entrepreneurial skills into the general education curriculum to foster a broader understanding of opportunities beyond commercial business.
- Provide students with platforms to engage in local community-driven solutions, nurturing a mindset of innovation, leadership, and social impact.
- Support awareness raising on vocational education and training (VET) and skill-building, focusing on practical career options outside traditional academic routes.

8. Mental Health

The research reveals that mental health is a critical concern for young people in Georgia, with many participants acknowledging the impact of mental disorders, but showing limited understanding of the issue. While emotional disorders, such as mood swings and anxiety, were widely recognized, participants were less familiar with disorders like psychosis or suicidal tendencies. A large portion of the youth expressed concerns about the lack of accessible mental health services, citing affordability and stigma as significant barriers. Many students reported low trust in school or university-based mental health services, and there was a clear preference for external psychological support. Participants also emphasized the need for more mental health education, especially at the school level, to help individuals recognize symptoms and seek help. The discussions highlighted bullying and family issues as widespread contributors to mental health struggles.

Recommendations:

- Conduct a comprehensive study to assess the availability and accessibility of mental health services for children and youth, identifying barriers such as financial affordability, stigma, and lack of trust.
- Introduce an applied psychology course for teenagers, focusing on understanding mental health, emotional well-being, and coping strategies, with the potential for broader integration into secondary education.
- Launch a nationwide awareness campaign to reduce stigma surrounding mental health, targeting schools, universities, and families, to foster a supportive environment for the youth.
- Partner with adult education centers to offer courses on mental health and family relationships, to raise awareness and promote understanding among parents and other adults, especially in regional areas.

Summary of Recommendations

The key insights from the recommendations highlight a comprehensive approach to adolescent and youth development that focus on both cognitive and emotional growth. The recommendations advocate for the **integration** of new knowledge and skills into existing systems, like education, communities, or social structures, to ensure that young people have access to both learning and support. Accessibility and affordability are major themes that ensure opportunities for growth are within reach for all adolescents and youth. Another important focus is on **empowerment**, with many recommendations urging youth to take initiative in areas such as entrepreneurship, self-awareness regarding mental health, and active participation in their communities. Lastly, there is a strong call for **collaboration** across various sectors, like schools, families, communities, and professionals, creating a united support system for adolescents and young people. These insights reveal that the overall goal is to equip adolescents and youth with the competences needed to thrive in their personal and professional lives while addressing pressing challenges like mental health, career development, and other such areas in a holistic and integrated manner.

Goal and Objectives of the Study

The primary goal of this study was to assess the key competences required for successful transitions in education and social development among adolescents and youth in Georgia. The research explores how the key competences as well as mental well-being are perceived by students, and how they influence their engagement and adaptability in contemporary societal and educational contexts.

The Main Objectives:

- To evaluate the level of **awareness and proficiency** in key competences (such as digital competence, critical thinking, communication, social skills, and other related areas) among students in Georgia's diverse regions, including Tbilisi and other urban and rural areas, with the engagement and support of Child Right Centers of universities supported by UNICEF.
- To **examine the impact of educational transitions** (from secondary education to higher education and vocational training) on the development of essential skills, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities faced by adolescents and youth in different social, academic, and regional contexts.
- To analyze **the role of mental health and well-being** as key components of personal, social, and learning-to-learn competences, and to assess how these factors influence educational outcomes and youth development.
- To **explore the relationship** between students' academic achievement, social environment, and competences, with a special focus on students from socially vulnerable backgrounds and ethnic and language minority groups.
- To **assess perceptions** of technology's role in educational and social development, including the influence of digital tools, social media, technological advancements on communication, relationships, and overall youth empowerment.
- To provide **recommendations for stakeholders**, including educators, policymakers, and Child Rights Centers, on how to enhance youth development, to ensure inclusive access to programmes for skills and personal development, and to address the challenges identified during the study. To engage stakeholders in informed discussions and actions, ensuring that the study's findings lead to actionable insights for improving educational practices, policies, and support systems for adolescents and youths in Georgia.

Context

At the start of the 21st century, Georgia, recovering from civil war and economic crises, initiated significant reforms in its education system. The 2002 Order of the Minister of Education, Science and Youth revised the state educational objectives, signaling a shift from the Soviet-era system. This reform gained momentum after the 2003 Rose Revolution with the introduction of the National Curriculum in 2005 and increased autonomy for schools, alongside reforms in Vocational Education and Training (VET) and higher education supported by the EU and other international partners.

Georgia's Strategy of Education and Science 2022-2030 focuses on developing life-long learning opportunities, including transversal skills across all levels of education. Highlighted as one of the priorities, the workforce development aims to meet labor market needs, by improving both general and vocational education, aligning with international efforts to promote lifelong learning. The European Reference Framework of Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (2006, 2018, 2023) guides countries like Georgia in fostering key competences essential for societal participation, including literacy, multilingualism, STEM, digital, personal, and social competences.

Georgia has made notable progress, particularly in integrating VET with general education and curriculum reforms. However, significant challenges remain, with many students failing to develop foundational skills, as the quality of education is a prominent problem, as reflected in international rankings of competence development. Generally, two key indicators are used in international comparisons of competency development²: (1) the results-normed school education duration and (2) the share of low-achieving students.

Results-Normed School Education Duration – This World Bank indicator³ compares school achievement across countries by translating student performance into equivalent years of schooling. Georgia's normed school education duration is 8 years, indicating that the number of years students spend in school does not translate directly into learning outcomes. This duration is 4 years below expected levels, similar to countries like Armenia and Bosnia. This gap reflects a loss in human capital as students are not acquiring the necessary competences, negatively impacting their future quality of life. A significant gender gap is shown in terms of normed school education duration. Boys' school effectiveness is lower than girls', a key consideration for further education. While gender mainstreaming typically focuses on female students, attention to the challenges faced by male students is also critical for competency development.⁴

Low-Achieving Students – Another key indicator is the share of low-achieving students, based on PISA results. PISA⁵ assesses students in reading, mathematics, and science, focusing on skills and competences and readiness for adult life rather than just academic knowledge. Students below the basic level (Level 2) in PISA are considered lacking essential competences for informed, critical citizenship. In Georgia, 64% of students are below Level 2 in reading, 61% in mathematics, and 64% in science. These figures are significantly higher than the EU average (23%), indicating a critical challenge for both formal and non-formal education systems in Georgia.

In conclusion, Georgia faces significant challenges in enhancing educational outcomes, especially for low-achieving students and addressing gender disparities. The current education system is not sufficiently equipping students with the necessary competences for active participation in society and the workforce. One of the key challenges lies in the transitions between education levels, which should serve as the foundation for realizing the principle of lifelong learning. Central to this is the development of key competences, or transversal skills, which are embedded across the national curriculum, VET mandatory modules, and university courses. Despite these efforts, these competences are still not fully enabling the country to meet the desired benchmarks for educational progress.

² ETF, Key Indicators on Education, Skills and Employment, 2020

³ World Bank, The World Bank Report, 2020

⁴ Skills Agency Georgia, Key indicators of VET System Development, 2023

⁵ PISA 2022 Results

Study Framework and Methodology

The process of skills mapping and needs assessment was structured into three distinct phases. Each phase involved different types of tasks and activities, carefully aligned with the objectives of the research.

Phase I: Preparation, Design and Administration

The first stage primarily focused on defining the research design and methodology, tailoring them to the specific context of the study, the research questions, and the priorities of the stakeholders. Given the limitations on sample representativeness within the target audience, it was essential to ensure that the study methodology would provide deep insights into the research constructs. This would allow for accurate description, characterization, comparison, and evaluation of the key constructs despite the sample's constraints.

One of the critical aspects of the preparation phase was designing a study that would allow for a comprehensive exploration of the constructs under investigation. The research was designed as a mixed-methods intervention, combining a non-standard approach that closely aligns with the training and evaluation models used in educational contexts. This combined approach not only increased the benefits of the intervention but also ensured the precision of the evaluations and the overall success of the research project.

1. Research Design

The study was conducted in partnership with Child Rights Centers of universities in seven regions of Georgia: Tbilisi, Kakheti, Shida Kartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Imereti, Samegrelo, and Adjara. It was carried out across 10 locations, encompassing nine higher education institutions where *Child Rights Centers* are operational⁶. The study was administered through 10 structured sessions, one at each location, using a pre-designed analytical framework for data collection.

The selected methods were designed to allow further progress into research constructs. This approach combined both qualitative and quantitative elements, ensuring comprehensive data collection and supporting the study's mixed-design methodology. This structure not only enhanced the intervention's effectiveness but also facilitated a more accurate and valid assessment.

2. Sample Selection Criteria

For the purposes of this study, each session involved approximately 15 participants. For the selection of participants, the criteria were predefined to be determined by the partner Child Rights Centers. It was crucial that the selection process took into account various factors, including social background, academic profile, and ethnic and linguistic diversity. The partner Child Rights Centers were provided with specific guidelines for participant selection, and the selection was conducted by the Child Rights Centers according to recommendations, focusing on the following key criteria:

⁶ Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Caucasus University, Akaki Tsereteli State University, Shota Meskhia Zugdidi State University, Samtskhe-Javakheti State University (Akhaltzikhe and Akhalkalaki Campuses), Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University, Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University, Sokhumi State University, and Gori State University.

Age and Education

The study aimed to assess both university students, high school, and VET school seniors. Therefore, the age and education level were critical criteria for participant selection. While the UN defines youth as individuals aged 15-24⁷, for the purposes of this research, the age range was narrowed to 18-20 years. This age group aligns with both the educational level (high school seniors, VET students, and first- to second-year university students) and the specific focus of the research on **transitions** from one education stage to another. This narrower range was also important to mitigate potential barriers related to generational gaps, which could arise from wider age differences in communication and experiences. It was essential to ensure that the selected age group would be able to engage comfortably in the evaluation process.

Almost every group the age cohort was selected precisely, representing the young participants between 18-20. The few cases can be considered an exception. The same should be mentioned when it comes to education level. The majority of participants were active students in university. Only two VET students out of 155 participants and 23 secondary school pupils were engaged alongside 131 university students⁸, which provided an opportunity to describe and analyze key competence gaps in transitional process mostly relying on bachelor-student response.

Academic Achievement

To achieve a heterogeneous sample, it was recommended to choose participants with diverse academic profiles. Research focusing on key competences often relies on participants with varied academic performances, as the study is centered on assessing competences rather than the institutions themselves. It was deemed important to include students with varying levels of academic achievement, such as those with high, medium, and low performance, in order to obtain a more representative and balanced dataset. Recommendation was given to select approximately 20% of participants from the highest and lowest academic achievers, with the remaining 60% representing those in the middle range. In the case of first-year students, their academic ranking should be based on their national exam results.

The Child Rights Centers reported that they have based the student selection on the provided criteria.

Social Environment

In line with the principle of heterogeneity, it was crucial to select participants from diverse social backgrounds. This criterion took into account factors such as urban versus rural residence, and social and economic status. Special attention was given to including participants from socially vulnerable backgrounds, including those from low-income families, foster care, or displaced families. While it was difficult to predict exact proportions, it was recommended that at least 30% of participants come from socially vulnerable backgrounds to ensure the inclusivity of the research sample.

The Child Rights Centers reported that they have based the student selection on the provided criteria.

⁷ Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981

⁸ Unique number of participants was 155, while some of them allocated themselves to 2 categories, as both VET and Higher Education student status at once.

Ethnic and Linguistic Profile

In Georgia's multilingual regions, it was mandatory to consider the linguistic and ethnic backgrounds of participants. In these regions, the study aimed to ensure that approximately 50-60% of the group was composed of individuals whose mother tongue was not Georgian. In areas with fewer non-Georgian speakers, this ratio was adjusted accordingly to ensure the representation of ethnic minority languages. This was particularly important for ensuring the inclusivity of different ethnic groups in the research process.

25 out of 155 participants declared themselves as language minorities.

3. Research Components

The conceptual framework for the study was based on the European Commission's recommendations for the development of key competences, as outlined in the 2023 European Key Competences Framework⁹.

In addition to the eight core competences defined by the European Commission, 1) literacy, 2) multilingualism, 3) STEM competence, 4) digital competence, 5) personal, social, and learning-to-learn competence, 6) citizenship, 7) entrepreneurship, and 8) cultural awareness and expression, the study incorporated a ninth competence: 9) *green competence*. This new competence focuses on sustainability, environmental awareness, and citizenship, blending multiple aspects related to environmental protection and sustainable development. For the purpose of this study, *green competence* was treated as a separate construct.

Furthermore, the study included a tenth construct focusing on mental health and well-being. Although, this area is not explicitly mentioned in the broader competence framework, its inclusion was deemed essential due to its significant impact on educational processes and the development of key competences, especially personal, social, and learning-to-learn competences. The study aimed to assess participants' perceptions and attitudes toward mental health, as well as their awareness of related risks and coping strategies.

In total, the study focused on evaluating 10 key components. It is important to note that the evaluation was aimed at assessing these constructs rather than the individual participants themselves. The constructs were assessed through the perspectives and self-reports of the participants, as well as observation on interactive exercises and case studies, allowing for a more holistic and generalized understanding of the target competences.

4. Research Methods

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, predominantly using qualitative methods to explore the key constructs, supplemented by quantitative data where appropriate. The research was structured around two main method blocks:

Focus Group Interviews and Discussions – A carefully designed set of questions was prepared for each key construct, incorporating both direct and indirect, as well as control questions. The questions were

⁹ European Commission – Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning 2018, Update 2023

predominantly open-ended or multiple choice, with some closed and scale-based questions to allow for a comprehensive assessment of participants' views and experiences.

Case Analysis and Discussions – The case analysis component was more complex and required a combination of facilitation, observation, and documentation. Participants were asked to engage in tasks based on case analysis principles, which included expressing their opinions through open or closed-ended responses (via digital tools such as Mentimeter), or engaging in role-playing activities. These tasks allowed for the assessment of both perceptions and competences, providing insights into participants' skills and abilities.

To ensure an effective and engaging research process, the components were mixed and included energizing and ice-breaker activities, enhancing participants' focus and maintaining their concentration throughout the sessions.

Phase II: Analysis and Report Preparation

The data for this study was collected using a combination of online tools, including Mentimeter, along with observation sheets and notes from the observer. Additionally, video and photo materials were gathered to complement the data. Mentimeter generated an Excel report, which was used for further analysis and to quantify the results. This report helped in outlining and illustrating the key findings of the study. The analysis was conducted according to the study's design framework with findings organized by key constructs. The focus was on addressing the study objectives and answering the primary questions of the assessment.

Phase III: Presentation

The study report serves as a crucial tool for fostering informed discussions among educators, policymakers, and other key stakeholders in the field. By involving stakeholders in the conversation, the report can help align diverse perspectives and create a shared understanding of the findings. This collaborative approach is essential for addressing the challenges identified in the study and developing effective solutions. Engaging stakeholders ensures that the recommendations and strategies presented in the report are practical, relevant, and actionable within the specific contexts of various organizations and communities.

Presenting the findings to a broad audience of stakeholders, particularly to educational decision-makers, institutions, and Child Rights Centers of Universities, is a key step in promoting meaningful change. By focusing on the study's key findings, recommendations, and proposed responses to the challenges, stakeholders will be equipped with the necessary information to take informed action. Their involvement is vital not only to ensure the accuracy and applicability of the report's conclusions, but also to create a sense of ownership and responsibility towards implementing the proposed changes. Ultimately, this inclusive approach supports the development of policies and practices that are both effective and sustainable in addressing the needs of children and vulnerable groups in society. It is especially important for UNICEF to plan further steps to strengthen the adolescent and youth support ecosystem and enhance youth skills development initiatives.

Key Findings and Recommendations

This chapter seeks to describe and provide a comprehensive synthesis of the study's findings, focusing on the key competences required for youth in Georgia and the challenges they face in navigating most important life transitions, including entering new education levels and the workforce. The study has gathered both quantitative and qualitative data, offering valuable insights into the skills and competences young people perceive as crucial, as well as the difficulties they encounter during these critical transitions, capturing a picture of the issues affecting young people's personal development in Tbilisi and the regions of Georgia.

The analysis not only highlights the key challenges identified by the youth themselves but also enables the formulation of practical recommendations. These recommendations stem from two main sources: those directly suggested by the youth participants, and those generated through a careful examination of the data and findings gathered through observations and direct and indirect inquiries.

Descriptive Information

The study was conducted across 7 regions of Georgia, including Tbilisi. Participants were asked to indicate the region based on their sense of belonging, which led many university students from Tbilisi to mention their place of origin, where their families reside.

The distribution by settlement type provides the following share of participants: 53% youth from cities and 47% of settlers of villages (predominantly) and small towns, out of which only 8% come from towns.

Not all findings are differentiated by region, as the study did not include a detailed analysis that breaks down responses by region. As a result, it is not always possible to present the findings according to regional data. In cases where deviations from the national sample were observed in specific regions, these are noted within the relevant sections of the findings. However, no significant regional differences were identified overall.

The vast majority of participants were presented from the university student group (84%), combined with secondary school students (16%), and with 2 VET students considered as part of the latter group. Most participants come from families with at least 2 children (69%), more than one-third of participants come from families with at least three children.

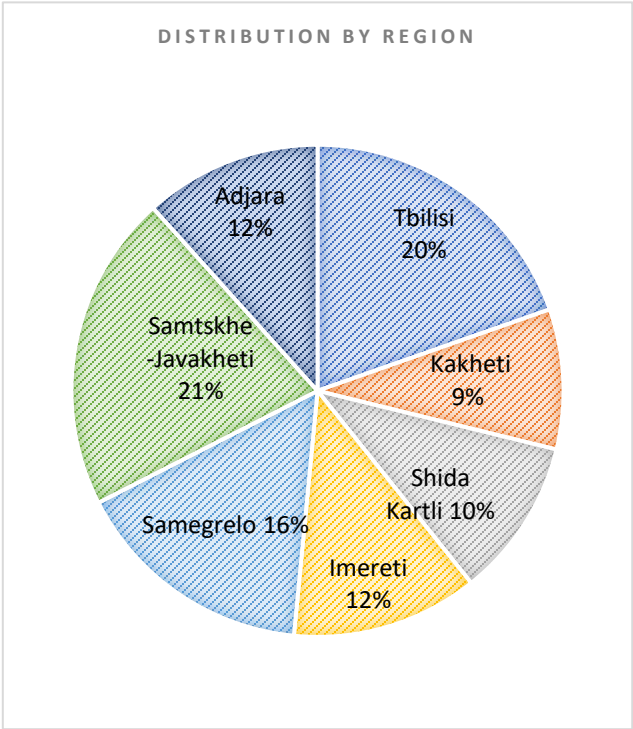


Figure 1 - Distribution by Region

The participation in the study was voluntary for the students. The gender distribution of participants in the sample was notably uneven, with male participants constituting no more than 20% of the total respondent pool. Due to this imbalance in gender representation a gender-disaggregated analysis of the findings was not conducted.

Although the study was conducted during the active examination period in universities, almost every participant reported the positive attitude and expectation towards the study, at the beginning of the meeting. The dominant expressions were: *interested, positive, tired, energized, motivated, good, nice, and other similar terms.*

Structure

The EU Recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning identifies eight essential competences needed by citizens for personal fulfillment, a healthy lifestyle, employability, active citizenship, and social inclusion. It serves as a reference for education and training stakeholders, establishing a common understanding of the competences required today and in the future. The framework outlines effective ways to promote competence development, including innovative learning approaches, assessment methods, and support for educators.

The Recommendations emphasize that all learners should be given the opportunity to reach their full potential. To address diverse needs, it encourages member states to focus on providing quality early childhood education, improving school education, ensuring excellent teaching, advancing vocational education and training, and modernizing higher education.

Key competences are developed throughout life across formal, non-formal, and informal learning settings, including family, educational institutions, workplace, and community environments. These competences are interrelated, with essential skills in areas such as critical thinking, problem solving, teamwork, communication, creativity, negotiation, and intercultural understanding supporting the development of other competences. Therefore, the assessment of the components within the study process was highly integrated, with all elements interconnected through diverse exercises and discussions.

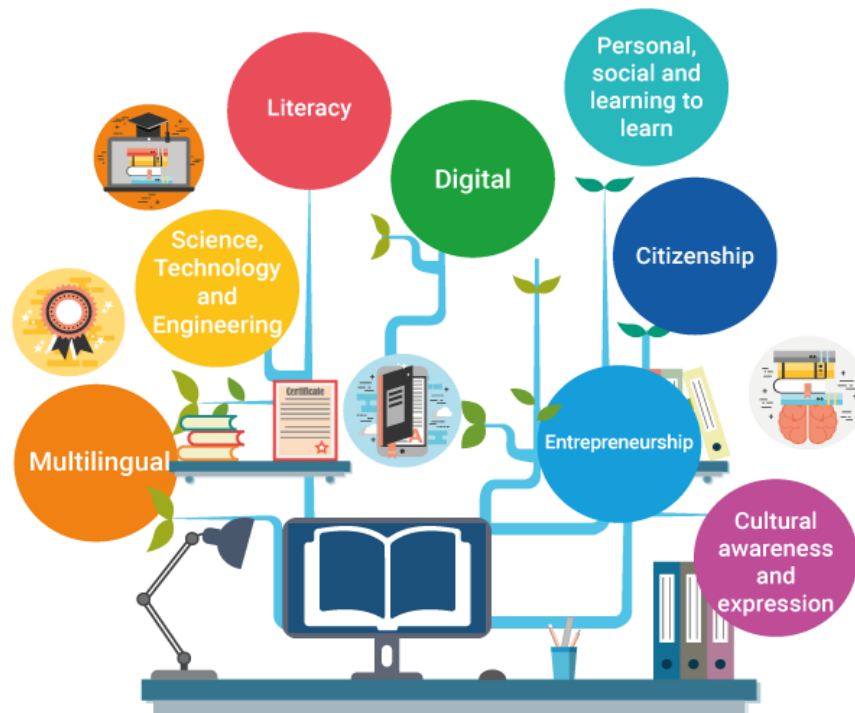


Figure 2 - Key Competences Framework

1. Literacy

Description

Although all key competences are considered equally important for the development of individual, literacy might be seen as a fundamental competence, being interlinked with human rights and creating the bases for self-development, resulting in a decent and higher quality life of an individual.

Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, express, create and interpret concepts, feelings, facts, and opinions in both oral and written forms, using visual, sound/audio and digital materials across disciplines and contexts. It implies the ability to communicate and connect effectively with others, in an appropriate and creative way.

Development of literacy forms the basis for further learning and linguistic interaction. Depending on the context, literacy competence can be developed in the mother tongue, the language of schooling and/or the official language in a country or region.

For the purposes of our study, the following constructs under literacy component were selected:

- Identifying, formulating, describing, and interpreting concepts and ideas
- Expressing and describing emotions, distinguishing between thoughts
- Orally conveying arguments and reasoning

- Creatively communicating thoughts and emotions through written, audio/visual, and digital means
- Establishing clear and effective connections with others
- Understanding content during changes in context
- Using language appropriately in terms of vocabulary, grammar, and functionality
- Searching for information and critically reflecting on it
- Interest in interaction, respect for the speaker, and appropriate forms of communication

The main tools used for assessment were the observation on discussions and presentations, as well as open questions on Mentimeter.

Results

Approximately one-quarter of the participants struggle with formulating their thoughts, describing *them clearly*, and *conveying them in a coherent manner*. Discussions have demonstrated that *poor lexica* and lack of ability to *think sequentially*, as well as *express their thoughts consecutively* is challenging for participants. The expressions used are often *simple and poor* and are not satisfactory and they struggle to find better versions which makes them nervous. In some cases, they just limit their words, making the thoughts *short and dry*.

The majority of the group could present their thoughts with emotional self-control, but a small portion of the participants also found it challenging to differentiate between their emotions and thoughts. In discussions, they tend to express their feelings as though they are the same as their ideas. They also have difficulty controlling and expressing their emotions, which often manifests in tension and withdrawal. *Emotional assertiveness* can be seen as a challenge for young participants, especially in the regions where people are more expressive in their communication.

About one-third of the students face difficulties when it comes to providing adequate *arguments during reasoning*. They struggle to formulate and defend their points of view, often reasoning in a hesitant and uncertain manner. This demonstrated a lack of experience in such kind of communication. Some of the students reflected that they are not used to such discussions and they would be happy to experience this more often. Many of the participants with such struggles frequently appear insecure, hesitating or retracting when questioned, and some remain silent altogether. Writing skills are problematic for a significant portion of the participants, particularly for language minorities. A major challenge for this group is their low proficiency in the official language¹⁰, which is *insufficient for academic purposes*.

Overall, with the exception of a few isolated cases, most participants are capable of processing and applying information according to the changes in context. They follow the content, ask questions, and respond to questions. The vast majority of all groups were fully engaged and followed the process.

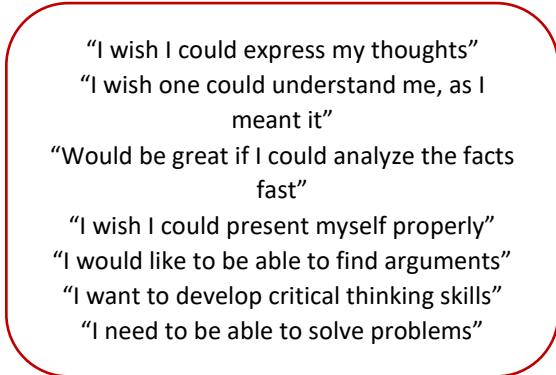
About one-third of participants struggle to speak fluently, often making *noticeable grammatical errors* and using *barbarisms or slang*. There were challenges related to *deep understanding*. It was particularly evident that they tended to ignore the instructions, forgetting them quickly, and failing to assign proper

¹⁰ Academic programmes at Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education are provided officially in the Georgian language.

meaning. As a result, it became difficult for them to *effectively search for, comprehend, and structure the information*.

With a few exceptions, it can be said that the dynamics within the groups were not hindered. Group members interacted with each other and demonstrated friendliness. Listening to one another and allowing others to speak was also a challenge in many cases, especially in western Georgia. Everyone tended to speak at once, struggling to practice self-regulation within the group.

In the self-assessment part of the survey, where participants were asked to emphasize the skills, they would be eager to acquire or deepen, they could select the listed options or add the missing competences to the list with their own words. Notably, one of the most frequently mentioned competence was critical thinking and reasoning, nominated by 76% of participants and followed by effective communication (73%) and using language appropriately in terms of vocabulary and grammar both in written form and orally (72%). Almost two thirds of participants (69%) think that they need to develop their creative thinking and expression skills, while 67% of youths see the need for self-presentation and expression competence enhancement. The expressions participants provided additionally demonstrated their realistic self-assessment and willingness to receive support and improve their abilities (see quotes in figure 3).



“I wish I could express my thoughts”
“I wish one could understand me, as I meant it”
“Would be great if I could analyze the facts fast”
“I wish I could present myself properly”
“I would like to be able to find arguments”
“I want to develop critical thinking skills”
“I need to be able to solve problems”

Figure 3 – Quotes of participants

Recommendations

As previously mentioned, literacy is a fundamental competence that forms the foundation for the development of other competences through lifelong learning. For the analytical purposes of this study, recommendations are framed around primary factors that influence the success of literacy improvement across all age groups and developmental stages:

The Formal Learning Environment – In the context of formal education in Georgia, there are no significant constraints in the regulatory framework that would hinder the development of literacy and other key competences. National laws governing general education, Vocational Education and Training (VET), and higher education emphasize the concept of lifelong learning and an inclusive education-for-all approach. This philosophy is further reflected in the national curriculum, VET standards, and sector-specific benchmarks for higher education.

Literacy, as a key component, is integrated across all educational levels as a continuous competence. However, the most challenging stages for literacy development are in preschool and general education. While the documentation of learning concepts and plans adheres to high standards, Georgian children continue to lag behind international averages in literacy outcomes, as evidenced by various studies. This suggests that the most critical factor in improving literacy lies in the actual implementation of the national curriculum.

This issue was corroborated by the findings of this study where the majority of beneficiaries from all regions demonstrated a lack of experience in engaging in interactive learning sessions. Many participants

reported limited opportunities for regular critical thinking, group reasoning, debating, discussions, and argument formation. This deficit manifests itself in areas such as vocabulary, self-esteem, dialogue culture, and consecutive speaking skills. These gaps highlight the need for a more effective application of the national curriculum to foster a richer, more interactive learning environment that supports the development of literacy at all stages of education.

Recommendations:

1. To strengthen the capacities of teachers and educators in modern methodologies of interactive and engaging learning; it is essential to recognize the critical role educators play in shaping students' learning experiences. Teachers who are well-versed in innovative pedagogical approaches can significantly influence students' acquisition of key skills, including literacy, critical thinking, reasoning, and effective communication. By fostering interactive and entertaining learning environments, educators can engage students more effectively, enabling them to acquire and strengthen these skills from an early age. Such efforts will not only enhance students' academic success but also equip them with the skills necessary for navigating an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

To achieve this, teachers need regular professional development in modern, interactive teaching methods. This includes training in project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and gamification that can foster creativity, critical thinking, and engagement. They need more support in implementing projects that require participants to work collaboratively across different subjects. This approach strengthens literacy skills through both written reports and oral presentations, encouraging teamwork, and knowledge application.

Additionally, teachers should integrate technology and multimedia tools, such as interactive platforms and educational apps, to make learning more dynamic. Encouraging active participation through methods like the Socratic method, debates, and peer learning can help students develop reasoning and public speaking skills. Creating an inclusive and supportive environment, promoting a growth mindset, and encouraging lifelong learning are also essential for ensuring that all students can thrive and continue developing these competences throughout their education.

2. To develop a practical guide for teachers to encourage inquiry-based learning. It is crucial to integrate real-life cases, detailed instructions, and lesson scenarios that empower teachers to facilitate critical thinking and reasoning skills. The guide should begin by providing step-by-step instructions for creating inquiry-based lesson plans, including how to choose relevant, real-world issues that will engage students. The guide should outline how to structure lessons where students explore multiple perspectives, gather evidence, and critically evaluate sources. Detailed instructions should explain how to guide students through research processes, including how to identify reliable sources, formulate hypotheses, and synthesize findings into well-supported arguments. The guide can also offer specific project examples, templates for project-based activities, ensuring clear roles for students, structured timelines, and guidance on assessment. By including real-life cases and clear instructional frameworks in the guide, educators, school leaders and administrators will be equipped to create an interactive learning environment where students can build reasoning and analytical skills while engaging with practical and meaningful problems.

Non-Formal Learning Opportunities –The challenge lies in both the accessibility and quality of these opportunities, with limited resources and funding often resulting in quality constraints. There is a significant scarcity of platforms for young people to engage in non-formal training, join clubs, and participate in arts and sports activities. Opportunities for involvement in non-formal academic or entrepreneurial projects are equally limited. In many cases, these opportunities are either too scarce or not available to all young people, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds or rural areas. Additionally, even when such programmes are available, financial barriers make them inaccessible for many, particularly for the youth living in regional or underserved areas. The lack of equitable access and the poor quality of available programmes, often due to inadequate funding and resources, significantly limits the personal and professional growth of young people, especially those who could benefit the most.

Recommendations:

1. There is a significant need to conduct a comprehensive mapping of non-formal learning providers across different regions. This mapping should not only identify the institutions offering non-formal education, but also examine the challenges faced by these organizations in serving youth, as well as the barriers that students encounter when trying to access non-formal learning opportunities. Such a study will provide valuable insights into the specific difficulties faced by both the institutions and the young people they aim to serve, enabling stakeholders to develop a more nuanced understanding of the landscape of non-formal education.

By identifying these challenges, the mapping process can help inform strategies to strengthen the capacities of non-formal learning institutions. Many of these organizations operate primarily out of social responsibility rather than commercial motives, meaning they often face resource constraints and struggle to expand or improve their offerings. The findings of the mapping can advocate for the diversification of services provided to young people, ensuring that these services are more aligned with the needs and interests of young people. Additionally, by identifying funding gaps and areas for improvement, the mapping can serve as a basis for advocating for increased financial support, which is critical for enhancing both the quality and accessibility of non-formal learning opportunities. Ultimately, such efforts will help create a more robust and sustainable system of non-formal education, empowering youth to gain valuable skills and knowledge.

2. According to the findings of the study, there is a clear need to offer non-formal training courses designed to enhance the literacy and communication skills of participants. These courses should be delivered in a hybrid format, combining both in-person and online components to ensure flexibility and accessibility. The programme should address the development of both oral and writing skills through engaging and interactive methods. The following methodological components are recommended to be included in the training (listed methodological components are also recommended to be included in formal education):
 - **Problem-Solving Activities:** Incorporate case studies, simulations, and debates to encourage participants to apply reasoning to real-world scenarios. These activities foster critical thinking and improve both oral and written communication skills.
 - **Debates and Dialogue:** Organize structured debates where participants research and prepare arguments on various issues. This practice strengthens their ability to construct well-reasoned arguments and enhances skills in both speaking and writing. “Socratic Seminars” provide an

opportunity to implement open-ended discussions that encourage participants to explore different perspectives. This approach develops logical reasoning and helps participants articulate and defend their positions, improving their oral communication and critical thinking abilities.

- **Regular Writing Exercises:** Assign a variety of writing tasks such as essays, reports, and opinion pieces. These exercises help participants organize their ideas coherently and develop persuasive writing skills. Formative assessments of writing tasks, presentations, and debates are important. Encourage reflective exercises, like journaling, to help participants identify areas for improvement and develop greater self-awareness of their literacy progress. Facilitate peer review sessions where participants evaluate each other's writing. This constructive feedback improves writing style, clarity of thought, and the ability to communicate effectively.
- **Public Speaking Opportunities:** Offer opportunities for participants to engage in public speaking through presentations, storytelling, or speeches. These activities build confidence and improve organization and articulation of ideas.
- **Role-Playing and Simulations:** Use role-playing exercises to practice speaking in different contexts, from formal discussions to persuasive arguments. This fosters confidence and the ability to communicate logically and persuasively. Theater plays and creative exercises are also very efficient to improve communication and self-expression skills.
- **Digital Tools and Interactive Media:** Integrate digital platforms, such as discussion forums, blogs, and video presentations, to promote collaborative learning. Multimedia resources, like podcasts and webinars, expose participants to diverse communication styles and enhance listening and speaking skills.

3. The study demonstrated that the reading of books and literature, as well as its visualization through mediums like cinema and theater, remains an area of emerging interest among students. These cultural and artistic domains have the potential to spark significant engagement and foster intellectual growth. Supporting initiatives that encourage students to actively promote the culture of reading and facilitate debates around literature, and the arts could have a transformative effect on their personal and academic development.

One way to amplify this impact is by offering small grant competitions for young people, providing them with the resources to establish literature clubs in their local communities, including towns and villages. Such initiatives would not only allow students to explore and share their passion for literature and the arts but also help them feel a sense of responsibility toward their peers. By mentoring younger students, they would be able to guide others in developing their literacy skills while simultaneously enhancing their own competences. These activities would foster a collaborative environment where young people could improve their critical thinking, communication, and leadership abilities, contributing to the broader development of literacy and other essential skills.

Moreover, these literature clubs could serve as hubs for cross-generational dialogue, enabling students to share their knowledge, engage in discussions, and promote reading as a vital cultural practice. By creating spaces where youth take ownership of their learning and serve as role models for others, such initiatives could have a lasting and positive impact, enriching both the individual participants and their communities. For piloting this idea, the facilities of Child Right Centers at the University premises could be used.

The state of readiness of the beneficiary is a key factor in overcoming barriers to literacy development, with mental health and motivation playing pivotal roles. The emotional impact for students who, during adolescence, realize that they are falling behind their peers in literacy can be profound. These students often retreat into silence, which exacerbates their lack of confidence, fosters feelings of self-doubt or self-hate, and leads to a loss of motivation to study or develop further.

Recommendations:

1. The initiatives aimed at improving key competences should be paired with mental health education and strategies for self-reflection. This should include elements of art therapy and other active and integrated methods to foster both emotional and intellectual growth.
2. It is essential for all educators, at both school and university levels, to receive training not only in educational psychology and pedagogical methods, but also in mental health awareness. Teachers should be equipped to recognize the signs of mental health challenges and respond appropriately, always acting in the best interest of their students.

2. Multilingualism, Cultural Awareness and Expression

Description

Findings of two key competences, multilingualism, and cultural awareness and expression are combined in this section of the report, as the interrelation between them provides opportunity to analyze the constructs in a more complex and integrated way.

Multilingualism defines the ability to use different languages appropriately and effectively for communication. It broadly shares the main skill dimensions of literacy: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts according to one's desires or needs. Languages competences integrate a historical dimension and intercultural competences.

Competence in cultural awareness and expression involves having an understanding of and respect for how ideas and meaning are creatively expressed and communicated in different cultures and through a range of arts and other cultural forms. It involves being engaged in understanding, developing and expressing one's own ideas and sense of place or role in society in a variety of ways and contexts.

Considering the context in Georgia and primary relevance, the following constructs were prioritized for the purpose of this study:

- The attitudes towards foreign languages
- Attitudes towards minority languages
- Attitudes of minorities towards official language
- Self-assessment and reflection on language skills
- Intercultural competence, respect to other cultures including minorities

All constructs were measured through questionnaire, discussions, case analysis, and observation.

Results

92% of participants reported possessing English language skills, the majority of which consider themselves as fluent in English. 13% of participants are willing to acquire or improve their English language skills. Almost half, 47% of participants reported Russian language skills, the majority of which are captured from the Armenian language groups. When it comes to the willingness to acquire or improve their Russian language, only 6% of participants responded positively. Other language skills are reported by 8% of participants. As for their plans and desires, 70% of participants reported plans to acquire European language skills (other than English), while about 30% desire to start learning eastern languages (Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Turkish, Arabic).

The strong desire to upskill themselves in languages was reflected in the self-assessment part of the survey, where many participants added languages as priorities manually, thus highlighting the wish to acquire language competences easily. In discussion, participants have critically assessed their knowledge, wishing more time designation and higher quality language learning at universities and schools.

The importance of foreign languages is reflected in the statements from the questionnaire, where participants were asked to agree or disagree. The vast majority concur with the Georgian proverb, "The more languages you speak, the more you are a human being." 84% of participants believe that there are no professions that do not require foreign language skills, and that every individual, regardless of their profession, should acquire language proficiency. 84% of participants agree with the statement that at least 2 foreign language skills are needed to achieve success professionally. The majority (61%) of them believe that English language skills alone are not enough to succeed in the modern world, while 80% think that knowledge of only the Russian language is insufficient for success. 38% of youngsters see financial barriers as obstacles to start learning new languages. Some participants believe (29%) that not only they have to struggle to learn foreign languages, but foreigners should also learn Georgian.

The attitudes towards foreign culture and language representatives were measured through several questions. 45% of participants believe Georgians are a tolerant nation and they respect other cultures, while 53% would like to see Georgian society with a more positive attitude towards other cultures. 24% of youngsters think that society is too tolerant towards other cultures.

15% of participants reported that they are Armenian language minorities, 15 % of the general group are speaking additional languages from the Georgian language family. It is significant that 70% of Armenian speaking participants reported Armenian language as the only mother tongue, the rest indicated Armenian first, followed by the Georgian language as a mother tongue.

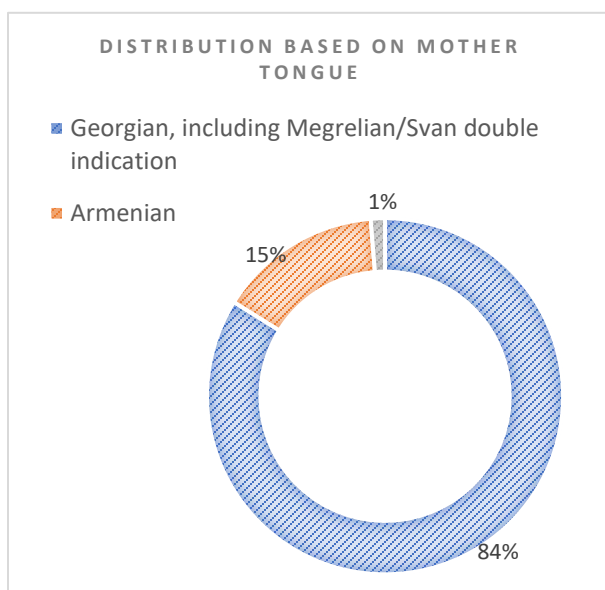


Figure 4 - Distribution by Mother Tongue

The Georgian language competences of minorities were weak. They struggled to understand and respectfully express themselves. It was obvious that the level of Georgian language skills among most of the ethnic minority participants was not sufficient for successful academic engagement.

Recommendations

Reflecting the most significant findings towards multilingualism, which were cultural awareness and state language knowledge issues, it is important to plan the activities where the students can better realize the concept of cultural diversity and its interconnection with the value of equality.

Recommendations:

1. To foster a deeper understanding of cultural diversity, it is essential to design and offer a comprehensive training course that highlights the unique and versatile nature of every culture, with a focus on European countries. The course should emphasize the significance of cultural diversity in global development, highlighting how the exchange of ideas, traditions, and values enriches societies and promotes collective progress.

Additionally, it is crucial to help students recognize Georgia's rich multicultural heritage as the country has always been a place of convergence for different cultures, languages, and religions. By fostering an understanding of Georgia's multicultural identity, the course can instill respect for diversity and the potential of harmony within it. This is especially important as Georgia continues to navigate the complexities of integration into a broader European context.

Furthermore, this course should provide an opportunity for students from various ethnic and linguistic minority backgrounds in Georgia to engage in cultural exchange and collaborative teamwork. The aim would be to create a platform where students can interact, share experiences, and learn from each other, thereby enhancing mutual respect and understanding. Such cultural exchanges would not only encourage respect for other cultures but also reinforce the understanding that a state's responsibilities and the rights of its citizens must be inclusive of all cultural and traditional beliefs. Every individual's interest and value should be considered in the societal framework, ensuring equality and fostering social cohesion.

2. A critical aspect of fostering inclusion and participation in Georgian society is supporting language minorities in enhancing their skills in the state language. Currently, the ecosystem for learning the Georgian language is underdeveloped with significant gaps in access to resources, qualified educators, and institutional diversity. To address this, there is an urgent need to expand digital resources that can supplement traditional language learning methods and increase the accessibility of Georgian language education for minority groups. Additionally, a more diverse institutional framework for language learning should be established to accommodate the various needs of learners from different linguistic backgrounds.

Moreover, one of the most effective ways to improve language skills and increase motivation among students is through creative, interactive activities that blend language learning with community engagement. Encouraging students to participate in community work, where they can practice Georgian by teaching others in their own villages or towns, can be a highly motivating experience. This approach not only strengthens their language proficiency but also fosters a sense of empowerment and pride in their contributions to communities. By actively engaging in the process of

teaching and learning within their own environments, students will develop both linguistic and social skills, making them more confident in their ability to integrate into Georgian society while preserving their cultural identities.

3. Strengthening the ongoing bilingual education programme provided by the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth is crucial. Since the programme is implemented for early childhood and general education levels, the competences of educators, the clear instructions and diverse educational resources will influence the quality of the programme. The bilingual education programme should practice a whole school approach, whereas all stakeholders are engaged and influence the improved outcomes of children.

3. STEM Competence

Description

Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics component unites very complex constructs, focusing on skills, knowledge, application and interconnection, which was not the subject of measurement under the study.

Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking and insight in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. Building on a sound mastery of numeracy, the emphasis is on process and activity, as well as knowledge. Mathematical competence involves, to different degrees, the ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought and presentation (formulas, models, constructs, graphs, charts).

Competence in science refers to the ability and willingness to explain the natural world by making use of the body of knowledge and methodology employed, including observation and experimentation, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions. Competences in technology and engineering are applications of that knowledge and methodology in response to perceived human wants or needs. Competence in science, technology and engineering involves an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen.

Focus was made on attitudes and general understanding of purpose, as well as its practical value in everyday life:

- Applying mathematical models
- Understanding and attitude towards financial literacy
- Attitude towards the necessity of learning mathematics and science
- Respect for truth, inquiry, and investigation of causes
- Understanding the relationship between humans and nature, and individual responsibility
- Understanding of technology

All constructs were measured through questionnaire and discussions.

Results

The instructions for the practical exercise involved simple data gathering and its application in a presentation and reasoning. Only a few students noticed the requirement and were able to use the data in the form of numbers or infographics. When asked why they did not utilize it, the majority responded that they either did not notice the requirement or did not think it was important, which highlights issues related to focused and meaningful reading and comprehension. About one-fourth admitted that they did not know how to use the data. However, it is likely that the actual number of students lacking the skills to apply data is higher, especially considering the reactions and uncertainty observed in their responses.

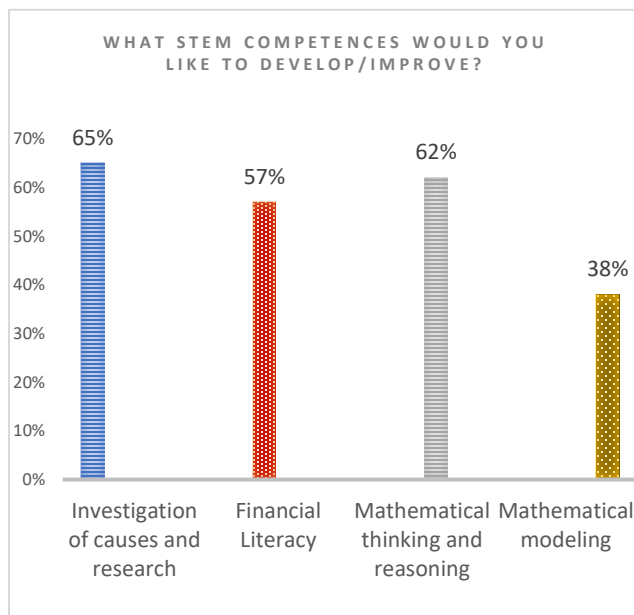


Figure 5 - Desired STEM Competences

The majority of participants believe they have a good understanding of financial literacy and feel well-prepared to manage everyday challenges related to household management, saving money, relationships with banks, and other situations. However, some participants, particularly secondary school students, feel this issue is not yet relevant to them, as they have not given it much thought. They rely on their parents for financial matters and believe financial literacy will become important only once they achieve financial independence.

Nevertheless, 26% of university students report struggling to manage their finances and understand banking products, including calculating rates. Only 15% of university students say they have a good understanding of bank products and services. Although nearly half of the participants (47%) live in small towns or villages. The majority of those expressing concerns about financial literacy are from larger cities. Interestingly, participants from smaller towns do not report the same level of challenges with financial literacy.

The majority of participants (64%) believe that knowledge of mathematics is a crucial life skill, while 54% think that a fundamental understanding of science is important for everyone. However, 20% of participants feel that mathematics is not necessary for everyone, and 8% stated that they do not need math in their profession. Additionally, 11% of participants believe that science should be removed from the school curriculum for those who are not interested. Notably, nearly all participants who questioned the importance of math and science are from regional areas. However, in the self-assessment part of the questionnaire where participants would highlight the competence areas where they seek improvement, the majority of them (65%) mentioned investigation of causes and research as a required skill, as well as financial literacy (57%) and mathematical thinking and operation with concepts (62%). Notably, mathematic modeling was mentioned by the least number of participants (38%), still demonstrating significant interest towards STEM areas.

Science is understood as a research and academic activity by most participants. They do not realize how science can be applied for the development of sectors of economy or for commercial purposes.

Almost every participant believes that nature is an important component of their lives and sees and realizes the interrelation of nature and human beings, as well as individual and societal responsibility for nature and their role as citizens for climate responsive action as well as the impact of the environment on people's life. Notably, this was the discussion theme where the consensus among participants was obvious. A more detailed description of the sustainability concept and attitudes towards greening is provided in the chapter on green competences.

Recommendations

The most challenging components from the STEM section of the study are the understanding of the role of *applied science*, including the career prospective and *financial literacy*. The understanding of *science* is very narrow, according to what the youth feedback demonstrated. It is mainly linked with academia and research conducted at universities.

Recommendations:

1. To develop a career education training module for secondary school students that broadens their understanding of science through practical examples of real-world applications. It is essential to demonstrate how science plays a crucial role in various industries such as agriculture, forestry, energy, metallurgy, chemical production, and other sectors. This module will provide students with tangible and relatable examples of how scientific principles are applied in everyday industrial practices, thereby helping them recognize the diverse career opportunities available in these fields. By showcasing the direct impact of science on these industries, students will gain a deeper appreciation for its relevance and importance, moving beyond the common perception that science is confined solely to academic work in university laboratories. This approach will not only enhance students' understanding of science as dynamic and practical discipline but also improve their attitudes towards pursuing science-related careers. It will help them see science not as an abstract subject, but as a key driver of innovation and progress in a variety of sectors that are vital to societal development. Furthermore, the module could include case studies, field visits, and interactive sessions with professionals from these industries, offering students the opportunity to connect with real-world applications of scientific knowledge.
2. To effectively support career guidance in science education, it is essential to equip science teachers with the necessary skills, resources, and opportunities to help students connect their academic learning to potential career pathways. Career guidance in science can be instrumental in encouraging students to pursue STEM-related professions and can foster a deeper understanding of the practical applications of science in various industries. Science teachers can benefit from specialized training in career guidance that focuses on helping students explore various career paths related to science. This could include understanding labor market trends, job opportunities in STEM fields, and how to help students assess their interests, skills, and career aspirations. Teachers should be trained to recognize the diversity of career paths in science, including both traditional roles (research and teaching) and emerging fields (data science, renewable energy, and biotechnology).

Financial Literacy: The development of financial literacy is most effective when both formal and non-formal learning are used in tandem. Formal education lays the foundational knowledge, while non-formal learning allows for practical application, real-world understanding, and continuous learning. The basic concepts of financial literacy became part of the national curriculum, however the challenge lies with

practical implementation of the curriculum, as these concepts need to be introduced through an integrated approach across many subject areas.

Recommendations:

1. To plan a non-formal and project-based training to enhance financial literacy among youth. It is important to mention that financial literacy is strongly interconnected with two other key competences, citizenship and entrepreneurship, as the understanding of principles of economy and financial resourcing is an important precondition to realize the concept of taxation and financial responsibility, as well as the mobilization of resources and household management. Therefore, it is crucial to link financial literacy-related learning outcomes with entrepreneurial and citizenship education based on projects.
2. To create digital learning opportunities through platforms and online courses, which are a growing tool for non-formal financial education. Free or affordable resources can be provided to improve financial knowledge of youth at their own pace. Resources can be translated or created considering Georgian context. Simulations and gamification could be efficient learning opportunities as well to enhance financial literacy. Games and apps that simulate real-world financial decision-making; tools such as simple budgeting apps, household simulations, and financial planning games can engage individuals and help them practice financial decision-making in a low-risk environment, developing skills that are transferable to real life.

4. Digital Competence

Description

Although the digital competence framework is one of the most complex components, interlinked with the rest of the key competences, the study focused on some of the most critical aspects, including practical skills application and especially highlighting attitudes reflecting personal life habits, beliefs and expectations towards the future.

Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society. It includes information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation (including programming), safety (including digital well-being and competences related to cybersecurity), intellectual property related questions, problem solving and critical thinking.

Constructs selected for analysis:

- Use of digital tools and technology
- Social media literacy and awareness
- Attitudes towards digitalization and digital transformation
- Attitudes towards technology

Entire study was conducted based on a technological tool, which provided opportunity to observe the practical application skills of beneficiaries. Self-assessment and discussion results demonstrated significant input to the key finding.

Results

All participants were expected to engage with their personal devices. About 10% of participants required support in finding the link and scanning the QR code, and understanding the detailed instructions, which were both displayed on the screen and explained clearly by the facilitator, as well as by other participants. The remaining participants adapted quickly and efficiently to the tool, even though 92% of them had never used Mentimeter before. Additionally, there was poor internet connectivity in some instances, but students were able to share their private internet connections with one another.

The topic of digital economy skills was also discussed. 82% of participants feel very confident in the digital world, easily searching for information and making use of it. They also feel quite familiar with AI, with 66% reporting that they use ChatGPT and other AI tools regularly.

While 75% of participants believe there is a specific skill set required to succeed in the digital economy,

69% think that anyone who wants to get involved can do so. Additionally, 79% feel confident due to their well-developed digital skills. However, 30% of participants reported a lack of confidence and lower digital skills, with the majority of these participants coming from regional areas, particularly Samtskhe-Javakheti, Samegrelo, and Imereti, and most of them are university students. Some further development desires were reflected in the self-assessment part of the questionnaire, where the majority of participants (54%) expressed a willingness to learn coding languages and AI (52%). 45% and 46% of participants expressed desire to acquire digital content development and social media operating skills respectively.

Social media is another concern raised by participants during the discussion. 74% struggle to distinguish between true and false information on social media, and 73% fear that it would be possible for someone to manipulate people's minds through social media today. The majority (57%) feel insecure in the digital world, especially on social media. During the discussion, participants mentioned their lack of skills in protecting their personal information and often feeling vulnerable to aggressive communication and abuse on social networks.

Overall, there is a strong understanding of the digital world and a positive attitude toward technology, but there is also some anxiety and fear about the uncertain future. 89% of participants agree that digital technology supports global development. However, 44% believe that robots will take human jobs, leaving people unemployed, while 62% think the digital world will create new jobs for humans. 40% of participants find the digital world to be blurry and uncertain in their understanding. Furthermore, 72% of young people fear that as technology takes over more human roles, people might lose the ability to think. The majority (60%) believe that technology conflicts with human nature. While fears and anxieties about technology

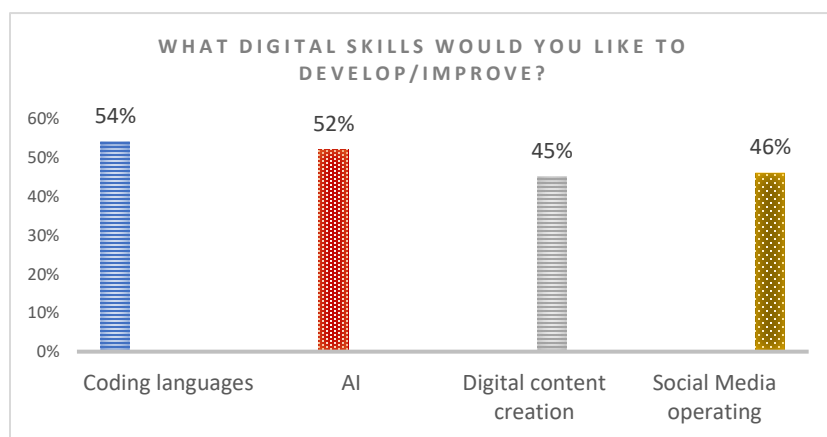


Figure 6 - Desired Digi-Skills

were discussed and participants were encouraged to share their thoughts, many struggled to provide specific arguments beyond general conspiracy theories or fictional movie scenarios.

During the discussion about the potential conflict between technology and traditional lifestyles, several ideas were shared, reflecting deep concerns about the possible disappearance of traditions. Participants expressed a variety of fears regarding how the rapid advancement of technology could erode cultural practices, personal connections, and the authentic human experience. A common concern was that the increasing reliance on digital tools and artificial intelligence might lead to the erosion of traditional forms of communication, such as face-to-face interaction, traditional family gatherings, neighborhood relationships, visiting relatives, children game plays in yards, “drinking, eating, and partying”, leaving people feeling isolated and disconnected. As more communication shifts to virtual spaces, there is a fear that the genuine, human-centered aspects of relationships could become obsolete.

Additionally, participants voiced worries about the loss of meaningful social rituals and the intimate, human-centered values that have been central to societies for generations. There was a concern that reading books in physical format, handwritten letters, and traditional forms of education might fade into the background. The result, they feared, would be a deterioration in the quality of personal relationships, as well as decrease in development of transversal skills, such as communication, critical thinking and reasoning ability, creativity and imagination, motivation and desire for self-development, and other similar skills.

The discussion also touched on the potential threat to craftsmanship and artisanal traditions, as automation and mass production increasingly overshadow hand-made arts and crafts, leading to a loss of cultural heritage and traditional knowledge. In this context, participants worried that technologies could reduce number of traditional professions as well.

Notably, some of the participants (about 20%) were very confident that digitalization of the world cannot have significant influence on our humanity and it will only substitute some rituals and not the traditions.

Recommendations

The least problematic area of competences appeared to be digital skills. However, cyber security, operating on social media, and use of digital data are still considered as competences, which are important to gain the sense of protection and security in the digital world, and respectively students would like to improve these skills.

Recommendations:

1. To design and propose a digital and self-administered course on cybersecurity and hygiene, targeted at youth and students. It is important in today’s digital age, where young people are often the most vulnerable to cyber threats. The study revealed the anxiety youth experience is related to an unpredicted digitalization process. This course would teach students how to secure their devices, use strong passwords, and recognize online threats like phishing or malware, and to feel protected. It would also cover best practices for safeguarding their personal information and maintaining privacy on social media and other online platforms. By fostering awareness and responsibility, such a course empowers students to protect themselves online and make informed decisions about their digital lives.

2. Proposing a digital self-paced course on social media operations for youth and students is essential, as social media is a significant part of their daily lives, influencing communication, personal branding, and even career opportunities. This course would teach students how to navigate social platforms responsibly, focusing on creating engaging content, understanding algorithms, and managing their online identity. It would also emphasize the importance of privacy settings, how to interact safely with others, and how to avoid potential risks like cyberbullying or misinformation. Additionally, the course could explore the role of social media in career building, such as using LinkedIn for networking or Instagram for showcasing creativity. Students would also learn how to evaluate the effectiveness of their posts through basic analytics and how to handle negative interactions online. By equipping the youth with these skills, the course will help them use social media not only as a communication tool, but also as a platform for personal growth, responsible self-expression, and professional development.

5. Personal, Social, Learning-to-Learn Competence

Description

This is the component which could be almost fully covered by the assessment as it has strong connection with mental health and also with resilience and incremental personal growth of young individuals.

Personal, social and learning to learn competence is the ability to reflect upon oneself, effectively manage time and information, work with others in a constructive way, remain resilient and manage one's own learning and career. It includes the ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity, learn to learn, support one's physical and emotional well-being, to maintain physical and mental health, and to be able to lead a health-conscious, future-oriented life, empathize and manage conflict in an inclusive and supportive context.

Constructs selected for analysis:

- Time and information management
- Teamwork
- Participation in civic life
- Critical thinking
- Personal development
- Empathy
- Perception of future and ability to cope with uncertainty and complexity

The major methods used for data collection were the questionnaire and discussions, as well as teamwork exercises and the self-reflection sessions.

Results

As this component is closely linked to mental health and plays a crucial role in fostering self-reflection among young people, the study placed significant emphasis on students' concerns and life expectations. The facilitator shared the recent World Economic Forum study on the main challenges young people face in modern European life.

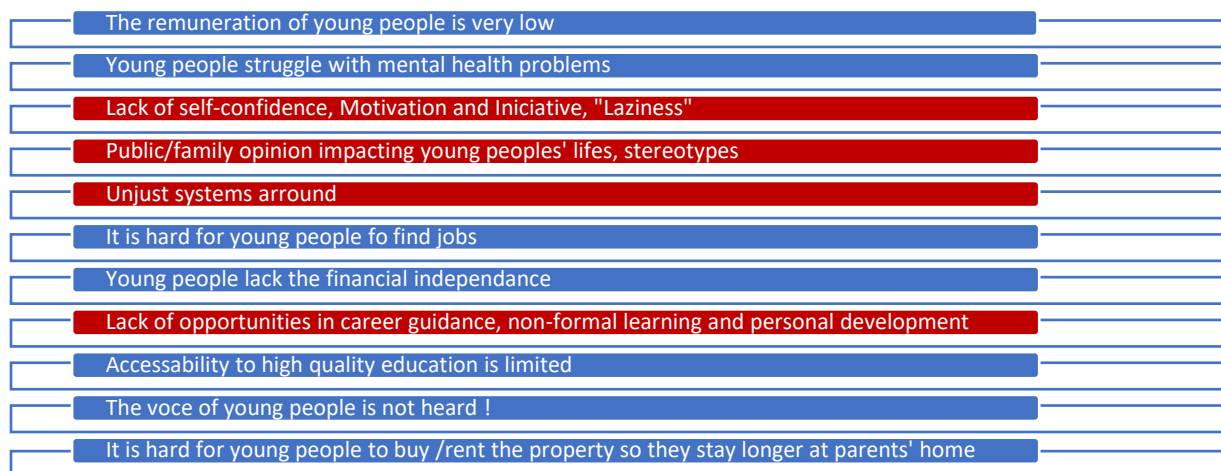


Figure 7 - Challenges of European Youth (blue) Supplemented by Challenges Faced by Georgian Youth (red)

Notably, all the issues identified in the European study were confirmed as relevant by the Georgian participants, with one exception: the inability to leave their parents' home due to financial insecurity.

This was considered a less significant issue for Georgian youth compared to their European peers, as it received the lowest score, though it was still acknowledged as a challenge, ranking last. Besides validation of these problems, young people were asked to add and discuss the problems relevant to Georgian youth. The problems were ranked as follows, validated problems from European study indicated in blue and the specific challenges of Georgian youth in red color.

During the discussion the most emotional topic for young people was the environment around them. They reported they feel unjust approach from the elder generations, trying to influence their thinking and behavior. "What will people say?", this is how they described the motivation of family and relatives thinking, "they know best what modern youth needs". This statement was shared by every single participant, regardless of place of origin or education status. Participants referred to the education system, complaining it is unjust as well, trying to push them through instead of trying to free their minds. "There is no development opportunity in regions", participants revealed the challenges related to the low quality of education and lack of non-formal learning opportunities. The career guidance related challenges were mentioned as well, complicating decision making of youth, often resulting with lost interest and demotivation due to uninformed career choices. An unjust social environment was mentioned as well, where they see how educated people live in poverty and face financial struggle, how the best students cannot find decent jobs, the work conditions are often unfair. "The unjust social environment is very demotivating and is making me nervous"- expressed one of the participants, believing that this is the main reason for young people leaving the country, not the poverty itself. After the discussion, many participants reflected that they had never considered the factors hindering their success in such depth before.

The next important discussion topic was purpose, the meaning of life, which proved to be more challenging for participants. Most of them reflected that they had never before been asked to answer such a question in a similar setting. They provided responses anonymously. Most of the statements are related to personal fulfillment and growth, as happiness, health and vitality, with a strong focus on mental health and inner harmony, personal growth and transformation, love and connection and acceptance, as well as creativity and self-expression. The second-ranked group of statements relates with social impact, justice and compassion focusing on social justice equality, compassion and empathy, peace and harmony, global well-being and sustainability. This group of participants thinks that serving the well-being of the community and the connection with it is the main meaning of life. While the other group prefers to focus on spirituality, perceiving connection to the divine as the major orientation of human beings, finding inner peace and clarity, focusing on growing wisdom and knowledge, experiencing adventure and world exploration. Finally, the fourth group of participants prioritizes accumulation of wealth, property and legacy, focusing on personal success and achievements, which they believe will bring them abundance and prosperity as well as strong impact on others and independence. Here are some examples of statements provided by students:

“To be happy with my beloved people.”	“To develop ourselves, leave our name behind us and fight for freedom and wellbeing of ourselves and others as well.”	“The purpose of the life is in looking for the purpose of life, In asking questions and looking for answers.”	“Every human being has a purpose and the lifetime should not be wasted. The aim has to be set, fighting for it and then enjoying results.”	“Every human being came to this life to do what makes them happy, to love people, share love and remember, that we will always move forward if we stay human!”	“I am at the stage of self-observation and discovery. This is the topic I have always made thoughts about and will do it so in the future over and over again.”
ვიყო ბედნიერი ჩემს საყვარელ ადამიანებთან ერთად	ჩვენი თავი განვსვითაროთ, დავტოვოს სახელი სასახელი და იბრძოდეს, როგორც საკუთარი ასევე სხვების თანხმდობისა და კეთილდღეობაზე	ცხოვრების აზრი, სწორედ ცხოვრების აზრის ძიებაში დევს. შეკითხვების დასმვაში და პასუხების ძიებაში	ყველა ადამიანს თავის დუნეცია აქვს და მან საკუთარი სიცოცხლის წლები უნდა დედად გაფლანგოს უნდა დაისახოს მიზანი და ამისთვის უნდა იბრძოდეს უნდა დატკბეს საკუთარი შრომით მიღებული შედეგით	თითოეული ადამიანი მოველია იმით რომ ვიყო ის ვინც ვართ და ვაკეთოთ ის რაც გვბედნიერებს გვიყვარდეს ხალხი გავცეთ სიყვარული და გვასოფდეს რომ ყოველთვის წინ წავალთ თუ კიძნებით ადამიანები!	ჯერ კიდევ თვითდაკვირვებისა და აღმოჩენის პროცესში ვარ. მიფიქრია და მომავალშიც ბევრჯერ დავფიქრებ.

Figure 8 - Statements of Participants on the Meaning of Life

As for the perception of the future, while there was a demonstrated sense of high anxiety regarding uncertainty, the vast majority of the group (75%) exhibited a predominantly optimistic outlook. In the future scenario ranking exercise, the positive version was chosen as the top option out of many suggested scenarios. However, the next three positions were shared by apocalyptic scenarios, reflecting concerns over climate change, wars, and the dominance of AI.

“I wish I could learn easier and not for the one day only.”

“I wish I was not lazy and had an interest to something.”

“I would like to find something which gives me reason to be on a good mood and interested for.”

“I wish I was ignoring what other people think of

Figure 9 - Quotes of participants

The majority of applicants (79%), when asked about the most important personal success factors they rely on, named family. Under the family support participants meant both financial and non-financial support, including emotional underpinning and support with advice during hard times.

Notably, there were other options related to family as well, namely the network of parents, selected by 11% of participants and marriage, with 15% of votes. The majority of those who selected marriage as a personal success factor, come from rural settlements, predominantly from the Samtskhe-Javakheti region.

67% of participants' personal success relates to reading and books, which makes this option second-important, which is followed by hard work and accumulation of resources, mentioned by 57% of participants. 3rd and 4th places are shared by friends (54%) and other relations (52%), which still underlines the perception about the importance of networking among the youth generation, but presents significantly lower numbers than hard work, which could be seen as a sign of independence. Many participants mentioned that they rely on themselves only, taking over responsibility on their lives and future.

Exactly half of the participants view studying abroad as a key factor for future success, while only 24% consider working abroad a priority. Their judgment is based on the perceived effectiveness of each option. They believe that working abroad serves primarily financial purposes, as they feel that low-skilled jobs offer limit professional development. Therefore, studying abroad is seen as a more positive influence on their career. In general, the majority of participants do not express a desire to immigrate for an extended period and plan to return and live in Georgia.

Considering the responses from participants in other parts of the study regarding non-formal learning and various clubs, including sports and arts, the results of this question appear somewhat contradictory. Only 26% believe that non-formal learning can be a factor for their success. The explanation reveals that most participants did not mention this factor due to its current absence or low quality. Therefore, their judgment was based on personal experience rather than general expectations. Only 14% of young people rely on Artificial Intelligence among other factors.

Self-confidence and perception were measured through several questions and discussion topics. 73% of participants report that they always raise their voice when they feel they are right. Only 20% agree that one regular individual cannot do much and has no power, notably, the vast majority of those voters are coming from regions. However, 77% of youth believe that even the weakest person can make a change.

A major challenge identified during the discussion is the lack of ability to reflect and plan personal development effectively. Support opportunities, especially in regional areas, are limited. Students report that they have never been taught how to organize the process of self-development, learning, and self-assessment. This gap leads to a lack of self-confidence and demotivation, often labeled as laziness. The reflections shared by participants highlight the struggles of young people, even those already in university, who still lack basic competences.

When asked about the competences they would like to develop, 81% of participants mentioned time and information management, a skill that underpins the "learning-to-learn" competence. 69% highlighted the importance of self-reflection and self-assessment for personal growth. 40% of participants felt they needed strengthen emphatic communication skills. 57% of respondents expressed a need to develop

cooperation and teamwork competences; notably, a free expressed approach towards each other, including those they didn't know, was observed during the sessions. Participants provided technical support to those with less digital skills and communicated in a friendly manner. However, teamwork competences cannot be marked as high, and the same applies to group communication and discussion skills and culture.

Recommendations

This competence has a strong linkage with mental health and according to study findings, it is important to interlink all interventions recommended in this chapter with the steps to be taken under the mental health development initiatives.

Recommendations:

1. To design a specialized course for young people on self-study and self-reflection, which would incorporate key psychological theories on self-assessment, motivation, and personal growth, presented in a simplified and accessible manner. This course aims to guide students in practicing regular self-reflection to enhance their personal and academic development. It would cover core concepts from psychology, such as the theory of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the growth mindset, and the importance of self-awareness in personal improvement.

The course could be delivered in a hybrid format, combining self-paced online modules with either face-to-face or virtual group sessions for in-person guidance and discussion. This flexibility would accommodate different learning preferences, allowing students to progress at their own pace while also receiving support and feedback from instructors or peers. In addition to focusing on self-assessment, the course would provide practical tools for self-development and learning strategies. These would include techniques for improving attention and concentration, effective time and task management, and strategies to combat procrastination. By incorporating evidence-based methods, students would gain practical skills they can apply to their academic and personal lives, ultimately helping them become more focused, self-motivated, and effective in their learning. Furthermore, the course could include regular exercises for students to assess their progress, set achievable goals, and reflect on their learning journey. These reflective activities would promote continuous improvement and help students develop a habit of self-evaluation, crucial for both their current studies and future personal and professional success. By fostering an environment where young people are encouraged to take ownership of their learning and well-being, this course would not only improve academic outcomes but also contribute to their long-term personal growth.

2. To design and propose a course on teamwork, empathetic communication, and inclusive approach for students, aimed at equipping them with essential skills for effective collaboration in diverse environments. This course would focus on fostering understanding, cooperation, and respect among peers from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, making it particularly valuable in multicultural academic settings and workplaces. Key concepts such as tolerance, inclusivity, gender equality, and cultural sensitivity would be emphasized, helping students navigate and thrive in multi-ethnic and multi-cultural teams.

The course would cover essential aspects of teamwork, including how to collaborate effectively, leverage individual strengths, and build trust within a group. It would also address empathetic communication, teaching students to listen actively, express themselves clearly, and understand the perspectives of others. Conflict management would be another core component, with students learning strategies to resolve disputes constructively, manage disagreements, and promote a positive team dynamic. By exploring real-life examples and case studies, students would gain practical skills to handle cultural misunderstandings and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics in academic or professional settings.

The course could be offered in a blended format, combining online learning with a face-to-face component. The in-person element would provide opportunities for interactive group activities, role-playing exercises, and guided discussions, enabling students to apply what they've learned in a supportive and hands-on environment. This blend of online and in-person learning ensures flexibility while also fostering meaningful engagement and practice in the development of these critical skills.

3. To support teamwork and self-development, Child Rights Centers could be utilized as hubs for permanent student clubs or working groups, where students could collaborate on various projects, engage in training activities, and choose priority areas for their personal and collective development. These clubs would offer students a platform to take initiative, develop leadership skills, and work together towards common goals while fostering a sense of community and responsibility. These student-run clubs could serve as dynamic learning environments where students take ownership of their learning experience while practicing collaboration, communication, and project management. They could also work on creating workshops, seminars, or online content to update and enlighten the broader student body on their chosen areas of focus.

In this way, Child Rights Centers would become vibrant spaces for peer-to-peer learning, where students are empowered to explore their interests, contribute to the development of others, and develop critical life skills that extend beyond the classroom. These hubs would not only support academic growth but also nurture the personal development of students, encouraging them to become active participants in their learning communities and leaders in the pursuit of knowledge and social change.

6. Citizenship and Green Competence

Description

Citizenship and green competence should be discussed in a combined and integrated way because both are essential for fostering a responsible, engaged, and sustainable society. The interconnected nature of environmental issues and societal challenges calls for individuals who are not only aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens but also understand their role in protecting the environment and promoting sustainability. Green competence by its nature is not separate competence, but rather the compilation of different skills, knowledge, and attitudes essential for the modern individual. The decision on GreenComp (GreenComp: the European sustainability competence framework) being a separate document issued by EU was initiated based on political reasons, highlighting importance of climate action.

Citizenship competence is the ability to act as responsible citizens and to fully participate in civic and social life, based on understanding of social, economic, legal and political concepts and structures, as well as global developments and sustainability.

Green competence refers to the ability to understand and engage with sustainability and environmental issues in ways that support sustainable development, climate action, and the responsible use of natural resources. It involves knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable individuals to contribute to environmental preservation, mitigate climate change, and foster a sustainable future.

The constructs selected for the study are complex and focused on following aspects:

- Taking responsibility and problem solving
- Collaboration towards a common goal
- Understanding of social and economic concepts
- Understanding and attitude towards EU and EU-integration of Georgia
- Understanding of global developments
- Understanding the concepts of sustainability and climate change

Method of data collection for this section is mainly the questionnaires (Mentimeter) and discussions, as well as teamwork exercises, the self-reflection sessions.

Results

To assess the individual responsibility of participants as well as attitudes towards their role in society and concept of citizenship, cases for discussion were presented for group discussion.

The vast majority of participants responded adequately to the questions, demonstrating a deep understanding and internalization of human responsibilities as citizens. They emotionally engaged in discussions related to various social aspects of societal life. These sensitive issues varied from group to group. For instance, littering in rivers and throwing garbage in the streets was particularly sensitive for youth from Kakheti and Shida Kartli, while animal homelessness was more problematic for participants from Samegrelo and Tbilisi. Overcrowded cars and traffic jams were major concerns for those from Akhaltsikhe, while wild animals posed societal problems for participants in mountainous Adjara. Regardless of the specific problems faced by society, the students engaged in discussions, identifying

responsibilities, roles, and finding their place in the problem-solving process. Most participants were sensitive to the issues, reasoning through potential solutions, weighing different options, and considering their advantages and disadvantages. Only a small minority, about 10-15% in each group, remained silent or passive during the discussions. Ultimately, participants analyzed the process and presented conclusions about the concept of citizenship. Some examples of their responses are as follows:

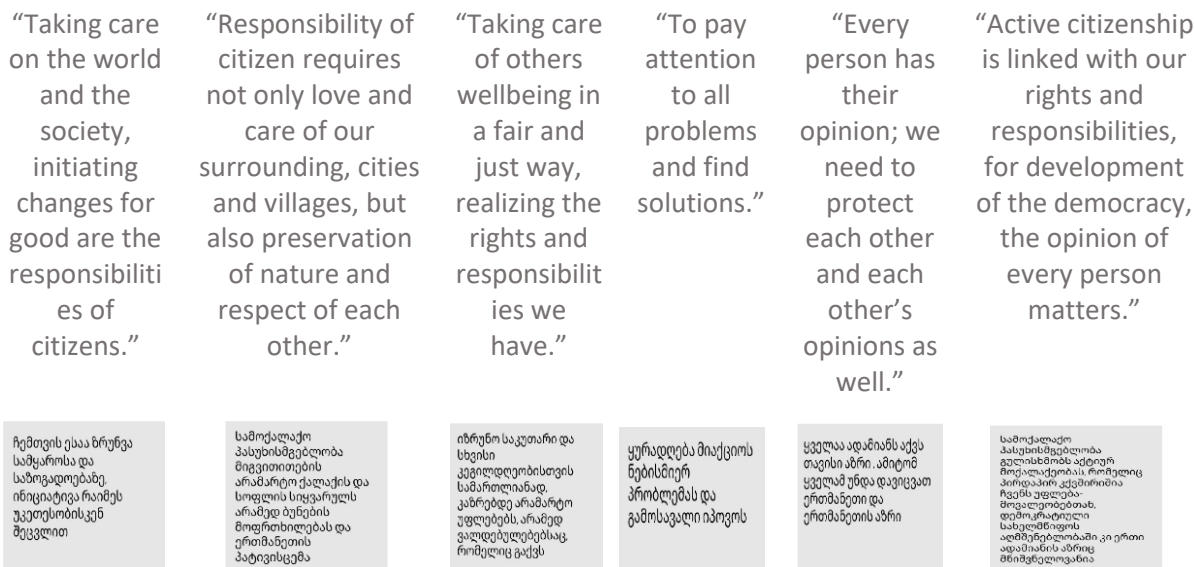


Figure 10 – Participants’ Statements on Citizenship

Students are well informed about climate change and all the ecological problems and their negative impact on the environment. 27% of participants believe that humans are doing their best and they cannot do more when it comes to the power of nature, while only 22 % think that humans are not doing their best to prevent dangerous results. 23% of voters are convinced that the catastrophes that happened in recent years in Georgia could have been prevented.

55% of participants believe they have to strengthen their partnership and cooperation skills, while 40% of young people think they do not have sufficient understanding of green and sustainability concepts and have a desire to upskill themselves in this thematic area. 48% of participants did not feel confident in their understanding of citizenship and desire to deepen their understanding of civic responsibility and engagement, while 43% feel they need to better internalize how democracy works and the main mechanisms of democratic governance. 13% of participants think that human beings cannot avoid the unavoidable, and only 4% believe that science can improve the situation. The fears related to climate change results were voiced and expressed widely in the discussion, which was followed by a short graphic video describing sustainable development. Participants were split into small groups and received instructions for the next exercise; they had to discuss very specific challenges which their communities face, think about solutions, and come up with an action idea which addresses social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainable development. Almost all projects presented by the teams demonstrated a good understanding of the philosophy of sustainable development, focusing on local problems and realistic solutions. Almost every team provided following reflection:

- They feel themselves empowered, as the ideas they had can be easily introduced by initiative groups and also to be continued.
 - ✓ “We can do it by ourselves, no need to wait for the government and others.”
 - ✓ “If everyone is focused on problem solving, we can make all our problems disappear.”
 - ✓ “The teamwork incentivized me, most crucial is - acting!”
 - ✓ “I thought all these problems are far from me and they have to be solved by authorities, now it does not seem impossible for me to solve any more.”
- Most of the participants came up with social projects, although they were not limited and could generate commercial ideas as well; they reported that social projects can be more satisfying.
 - ✓ “I realized how massive and versatile the problems are in society, many of which had been overshadowed for me. We discussed so many that it was difficult to prioritize.”
 - ✓ “We cannot afford to be inactive.”
- Almost half of the participants declared that before this exercise they had a more superficial understanding about the sustainability concept, relating this with environmental protection only.
 - ✓ “I have realized how important it is to focus on sustainable development goals; it can move us forward.”
 - ✓ “It is strange, leaving in this community, I have never occupied myself with thinking about its problems.”
- They experienced role play during the teamwork, where they had to distribute the roles of different society members (private sector, parent, elderly, child, government, and others in relation to the theme) and defend their positions with arguments. The same approach was expected during the presentation. Participants emphasized that they have realized the importance of analyzing the problem from different angles and looking at it through the eyes of others.
 - ✓ “Participation of all is crucial, everyone has to be listened to.”
 - ✓ “I was happy to see that other young people were thinking like me, facing the same problems, it is a good feeling.”
 - ✓ “We need to learn teamwork, it was hard at the beginning, but we have turned into a team in half-hour.”

The next concept to be discussed was democracy, as an idea and a model of state functioning. The majority of participants demonstrated a good understanding of ideas, but still there were about 10% participants in total who could not express themselves, stayed silent, and later provided written answers that they do not understand this concept. Fundamental democratic values were listed and explained by participants, demonstrating good understanding.

When asked what Europe means to them, participants provided more than 200 expressions, but the most frequently mentioned words are: freedom, development, independence, education, opportunities, diversity, values, equality, and a better life.

Despite their honest reactions and the democratic values, they expressed, the participants' understanding of social problems beyond their own communities is very limited. The principles of democracy and the mechanisms through which it works are not yet internalized or deeply considered; they remain at surface-level knowledge.

Recommendations

As the study has revealed, the vast majority of participants have internalized democratic values. However, there are certain areas that require further strengthening and transformation into active societal behavior. Notably, students express a lack of platforms to discuss geopolitics, including both global and local developments. They often feel uncertain about engaging in these discussions, as universities do not actively encourage political education or debates among students. These topics are frequently regarded as inappropriate for students, with concerns about their ability to reason critically on such matters and the perceived impartiality of universities regarding political issues.

1. To enhance democratic education, particularly in rural areas where non-formal training opportunities are limited, it is essential to design a comprehensive blended learning course. This course should cover the fundamental principles of how governments function, the mechanisms of state governance, and global examples of both successful and failed democracies, with a focus on Georgian historical context. The course should trace the evolution of democratic systems, highlighting lessons learned throughout history, and providing a platform for discussions and critical thinking.

The curriculum should integrate components of literacy training, as previously described, to ensure students can engage with and analyze the content effectively. Special attention should be given to Europe, its historical development, and the formation of the European Union, not only explaining its structures and concepts but also delving into the lives, traditions, and cultures of its people.

Moreover, the course should address the core values of democracy, such as equality, by moving beyond theoretical descriptions and incorporating practical exercises, case studies, video materials, guides, and other interactive resources. This will enable students to not only understand democratic values in theory but also actively engage with them in real-world contexts, fostering critical thinking and active participation in democratic processes.

It is essential to cover the concept of sustainability, as the knowledge the participants could demonstrate was very superficial. Therefore, the component of sustainable development, incorporating all three pillars of economic, social, and environmental growth, should be covered.

2. To support the youth engagement in active societal life, in local community level engagement or participation in national democratic movement. Providing opportunity for debating around all problems, which is crucial for youth, without presenting any taboos is essential for flourishing critical thinking among young people. Clubs and Hubs for debating or acting for society is the most efficient mechanism to support students. Self-regulated initiatives of youth may lay the groundwork for the most sustainable schemes of youth engagement, therefore the environment and conditions for this process have to be open and appropriate. The special workshops can be organized to build the capacities of partner educational institutions in how to support interactive and youth-led processes within the institutions. European experience needs to be considered as well.

7. Entrepreneurship

Description

Entrepreneurship competence refers to the capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas, and to transform them into values for others. It is founded upon creativity, critical thinking and problem solving, taking initiative and perseverance and the ability to work collaboratively in order to plan and manage projects that are of cultural, social or financial value.

Considering the limited time of sessions, the key constructs from Entrepreneurship competence framework was selected:

- Creative thinking
- Self-expression
- Exploring opportunities and ideas
- Entrepreneurial thinking and innovativeness
- Craftsmanship

The selected components were assessed through an interactive teamwork exercise using role play and visual presentations.

Results

69% of participants reported a lack of creative thinking skills and a desire to develop them. 67% of the youth believe they need to strengthen their self-expression abilities, while only 45% think they need to work on their entrepreneurial thinking and innovation. The practice showed that although participants were able to analyze the problems surrounding them, they found it difficult to transform those problems into opportunities. In many cases, their presentations simply restated the problems in various forms. They also struggled to imagine potential solutions, even though they were given the freedom to be creative. In many instances, they were caught up in the complexity of the problem and could not envision a solution. The lack of positive thinking, coupled with an absence of skills and techniques for finding solutions, seems to have roots in their education.

The majority of students had never been involved in an entrepreneurial project. One of the reasons for the low percentage (number of votes) for entrepreneurial thinking and innovation is a lack of understanding of the concept itself. It is worth noting that majority university students were from faculties of law and social sciences, which could explain why most of the projects presented by the group were centered on social entrepreneurship, rather than commercial, although there was no limitation.

Many participants also struggled to express their ideas and present them creatively. Insecurity during presentations, along with a lack of imagination and the inability to use creative options, was observed.

Notably, 69% of all participants expressed a desire to learn new crafts or professions. Many of them linked this wish to potential income generation, while others believed that it would have a therapeutic effect on their mental health.

Recommendations

Entrepreneurial competence cannot be found in the national curriculum as a separate compulsory subject; however, some components are incorporated in civic education. Unfortunately, this competence

is often misunderstood and considered as a competence of business, narrowing down to commercial skills. The study revealed the limited understanding of this concept among participants as well.

1. To support general education teachers in understanding entrepreneurial competence, as outlined in the EU framework, it is important to approach this as a broad and integrative concept that encompasses a variety of key skills and mindsets. These include recognizing and seizing opportunities, conducting situation analysis, mobilizing resources, and applying problem-solving strategies. To achieve this, a course could be designed specifically for teachers aimed at enhancing their understanding of entrepreneurial competence and demonstrating how it can be applied in the classroom.

In addition to theoretical content, the course would be enriched with video materials that illustrate the process of project preparation and implementation, providing concrete examples of how entrepreneurial skills can be applied in practice. These videos would highlight real-world case studies and demonstrate how teachers can link entrepreneurial concepts to all school subjects, showing that entrepreneurial skills are not confined to business education but are transferable across disciplines.

The course should be self-paced, but it would be a significant advantage to offer additional support through distant guidance or face-to-face sessions. These could provide teachers with the opportunity to discuss ideas, share experiences, and receive feedback on how they can integrate entrepreneurial activities and mindsets into their teaching. Such interactive components would ensure that teachers feel confident and supported as they implement new strategies in their classrooms.

2. It is also important that higher education institutions offer “entrepreneurship” as an elective subject to students. Whereas possible, municipalities should also engage in non-formal education process and offer various courses to young people as extracurricular activities.
3. The study provided strong evidence that the majority of students expressed a preference for social entrepreneurship over commercial business ventures. This indicates a growing interest among youth in addressing societal issues and contributing positively to their communities. If students were given the opportunity to continue developing their social entrepreneurship ideas, it could have a profound impact on local communities while simultaneously providing invaluable experience to the students themselves. Through such projects, students would not only gain practical skills in project management, problem-solving, and teamwork, but also experience a boost in self-confidence as they see the tangible results of their efforts.

Moreover, engaging in social entrepreneurship could inspire students to become agents of change, motivating them to take initiative and encourage others to get involved in community-driven solutions. The sense of purpose and accomplishment that comes from addressing local challenges would empower students to believe in their ability to create meaningful change, fostering a mindset of leadership and innovation.

To further nurture this potential, it is recommended to offer calls for ideas specifically targeted at youth, focusing on solving narrow and localized problems within their communities. This could be coupled with micro-funding opportunities that would enable students to bring their ideas to life, providing them with the necessary resources to pilot and scale their projects. Even small amounts of funding could significantly enhance the development of innovative solutions, allowing students to experiment with real-world applications while building their entrepreneurial skills.

4. It is crucial to design and offer a comprehensive course on career education, equipping students with the essential skills for informed decision-making regarding their career paths, while also exploring various opportunities for economic activity. Many students in Georgia are unaware that self-employment or individual entrepreneurship is a viable career option. In fact, the vast majority of registered companies (95%) are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which, alongside corporate wage employment, offer valuable career prospects.

Additionally, students often lack awareness of Vocational Education and Training (VET) opportunities, despite their growing interest in acquiring new skills that can enhance their financial security. It is essential to integrate an awareness-raising component on VET and skills development within the career education programme, ensuring that students understand the diverse pathways available to them beyond traditional academic routes.

This course could be delivered in a blended format, combining video lessons, interactive simulations, and both in-person and digital meetings. This flexible approach would allow students to learn at their own pace while also benefiting from guided discussions, hands-on activities, and expert insights. By incorporating both career options and practical skill-building opportunities, the course would empower students to make informed decisions about their futures and take proactive steps towards achieving long-term financial security and personal fulfillment.

8. Mental Health

Description

The definition of mental health and well-being as a research component provided the opportunity to measure participants' perceptions and attitudes towards mental health through their self-assessments. Since mental health is a critical prerequisite for education, personal development, and the development of key competences, it is significantly essential to assess how young people perceive the importance of this issue, whether they are aware of potential risks, and what approaches they take when problems are identified. The research instrument is based on the World Health Organization (WHO)¹¹ principles of classifying mental disorders in young people, identifying six main areas. However, for the purposes of this study, behavioral and nutritional disorders were integrated, as well as the area of psychosis and suicidal tendencies.

A mental disorder is characterized by a clinically significant disturbance in an individual's cognition, emotional regulation, or behavior. It is usually associated with distress or impairment in important areas of functioning.

Mental health disorders:

Emotional disorders;

Behavioral disorders;

Eating disorders;

Psychosis;

Suicide and self-harm;

Risk-taking behaviors.

¹¹ International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) – 2019, World Health Organization (WHO) through World Health Assembly

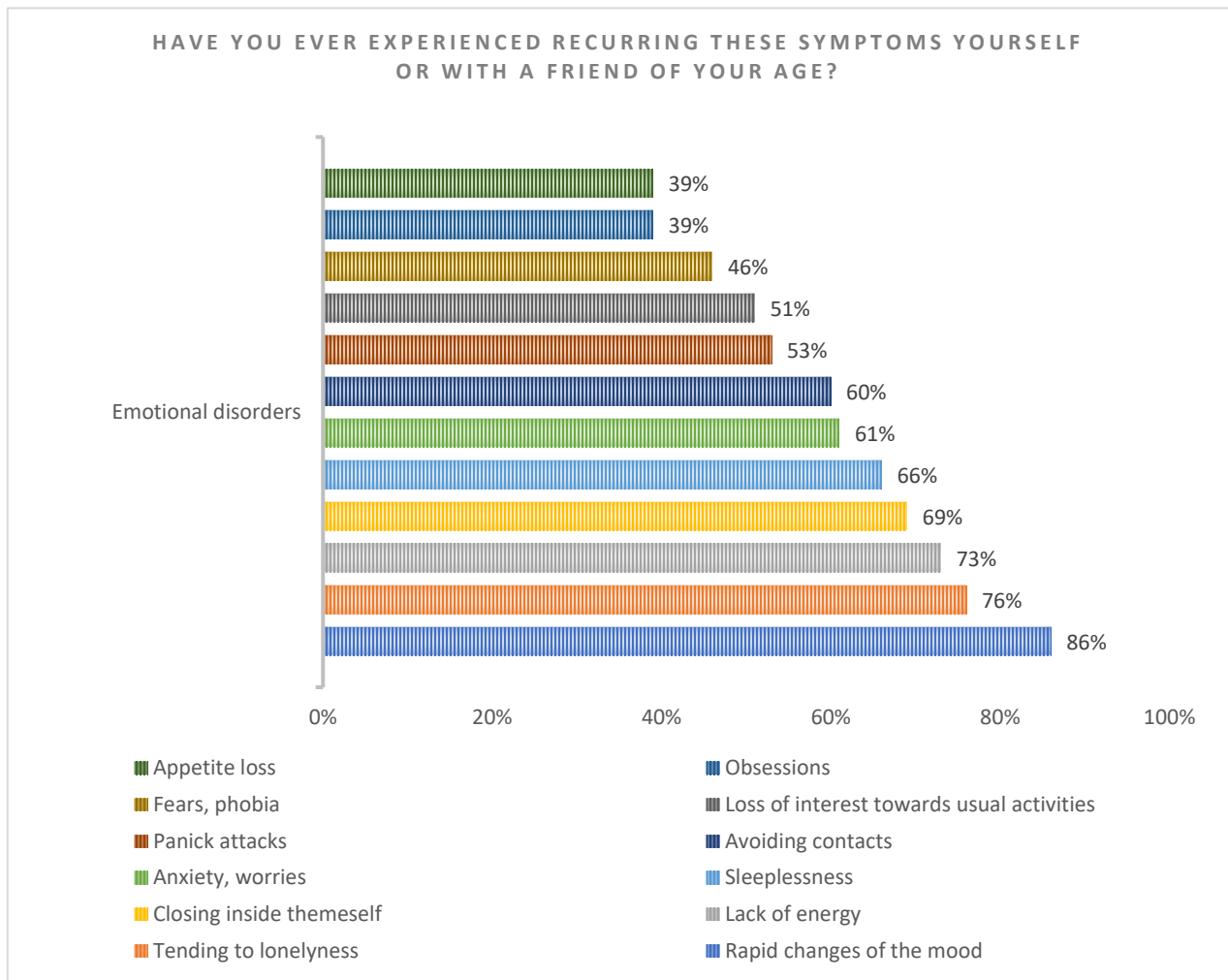


Figure 13 - Mental health, Emotional Disorders

In order to avoid overloading the young participants with too many questions, two questions on attitudes were used to concentrate many research topics in the form of statements:

- Awareness and affiliation to the issues
- Attitudes towards disorders
- Attitude towards support
- Trust in structures, roles, and services
- Perception of barriers (financial and geographical)
- Ability to perceive and understand problems

The questions were formulated using the detached third-party factor to encourage more openness in responses. The survey was conducted during a focus group discussion using Mentimeter.

Results

One of the most critical issues faced by youth in Georgia, according to participants, is mental health. However, the survey and discussions revealed that students had a limited understanding of mental health. They were surprised to learn about the variety of disorders, as they were familiar with the symptoms, but, as they reported, they would never have guessed these were mental health disorders.

All participants, except for about 2%, reported affiliation to the symptoms related to emotional disorders. A large majority, 86% of young people or their peers, experience rapid and unexpected mood changes, a key symptom of anxiety. Notably, at least 39% of participants have experienced, either personally or through a close friend, at least one symptom related to an emotional disorder, appetite loss or obsessions. The chart illustrates the feedback:

Attitudes towards behavioral and eating disorders were assessed through a single comprehensive question. Only 2% of respondents indicated that they could not relate to any of the answer options. The responses varied between 25% and 81%. The highest score was for attention deficit, while the lowest was

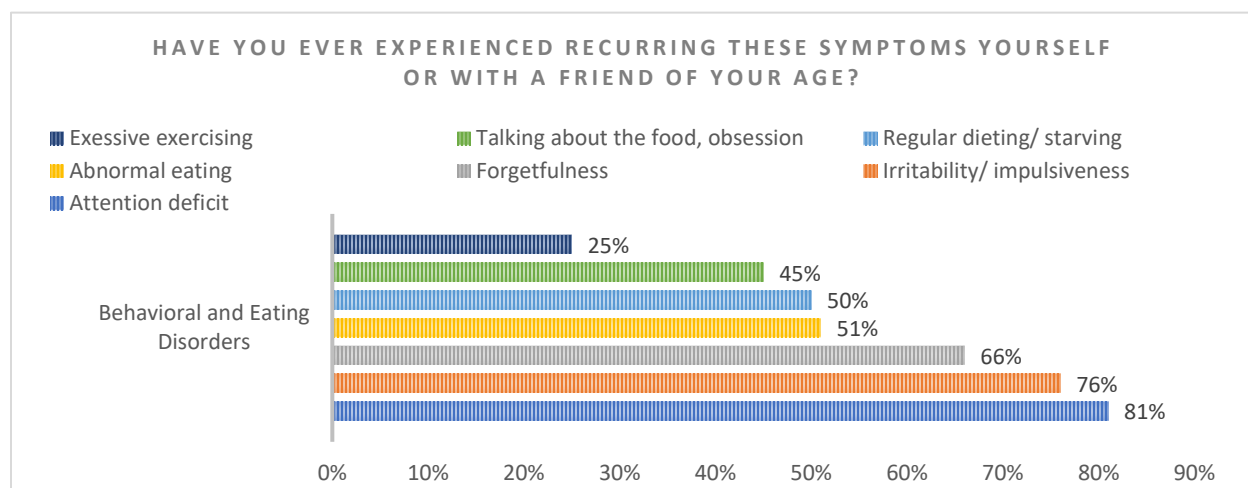


Figure 14 - Mental Health, Behavioral and Eating Disorders

for excessive physical exercise. In the final part of the questionnaire, where participants were asked to add their desires about what skill or ability they would like to improve, about 10% of participants mentioned wishes related to weight loss and other physical features; it was a subject of humoristic discussions but it was obvious that many of young people were worried because of their physical shape and were coming back to this topic quit often.

The statements related to psychosis and suicide had less responses than expressions about emotional and behavioral disorders; 10% of participants reported no relation to the question. Still, the options related to suicide and willingness to escape scored the highest, 64%. Participants engaged in discussion on suicide risks and were concerned about the number of young people surrounding them thinking and talking about death.

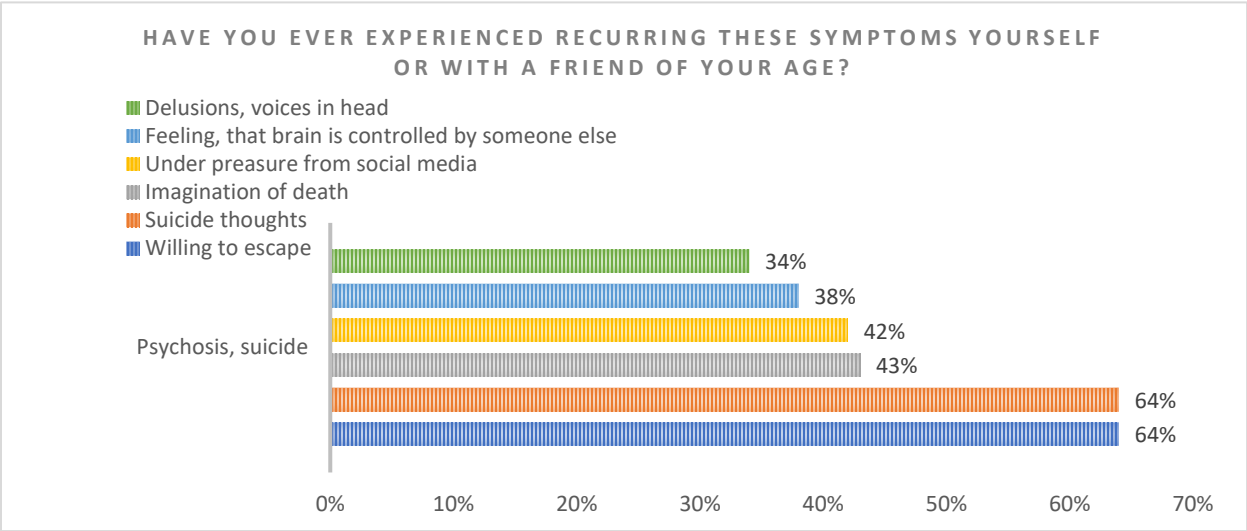


Figure 15 - Mental health, Psychosis, Suicide

The number of respondents who answered negatively to the last section of the questionnaire is the highest among all question blocks. 20% of participants, the majority of which came from Samtskhe Javakheti and Samegrelo regions, could not relate to either themselves or their close friends about symptoms of self-harm or addiction disorders.

To assess attitudes towards support, after discussing various disorders, participants were asked what advice they would give to a friend experiencing such symptoms and who they would recommend addressing. Among the options provided, the most selected (81%) was to approach a psychologist or psychiatrist directly. 78% of participants also chose the option, "I would advise approaching a psychologist or psychiatrist, if such services were available in our surroundings," and 61% mentioned they would advise it if the services were more affordable. This indicates that accessibility and affordability are seen as barriers to seeking help. However, 63% of participants would also be willing to reach out to a mental health hotline or chat service. Those who believe friends should be the ones to turn to make up 77% of the respondents, while 70% of young people would trust their parents in such situations, and only 49% would trust a teacher or lecturer.

Among the barriers to accessing psychological services, participants discussed stereotypes and negative attitudes towards psychologists from older generations, parents, and society, as well as the stigma individuals face when deciding to seek help. They fear being labeled as "crazy," which could lead to family embarrassment, causing them to hide their problems. This often deepens the issue, making the person more vulnerable and the disorder harder to treat. Another barrier is the low quality of services. According to the youth, psychologists in regional areas are limited, expensive, and often underqualified, which leads to a lack of trust in their effectiveness. This perception is sometimes fueled by parents who critically view the treatment, or by worsening conditions when rumors spread quickly in small towns or regional cities, damaging the reputations of professionals.

Only 17% of participants think that they should not approach the psychologist, as they have to adapt with themselves and live with this, while 23% believe they need to handle this problem by their own without any help. 21% of participants would not advise the service, because of financial affordability issues.

The absolute majority of participants believe that mental disorders will lead to the problematic functioning of the individual. They think (87%) the most damaged will have education alongside personal development, followed by physical health damages, issues with careers, and worsening of relationships with family and friends.

The discussion also touched on university support centers, which are often absent or underutilized, and in some cases, students were unaware of their existence. Many students were questioning the qualifications of school or university-based psychologists and expressing concerns about stigmatization. They fear that if they seek treatment, the entire institution will know about it. Participants expressed support for government provided services, which could be outsourced and funded through the state budget, similar to how physical health services are managed.

The survey questions led the majority of participants to reflect on their own mental health for the first time. All of them highlighted the importance of such reflections and expressed a desire to have more opportunities like this. The discussion about psychological education from the school, through introducing the subject of psychology and mental health, was very active. Students reflected that many of their peers are frequently perceiving themselves as bad and they think their bad-mood is a character of genetics which cannot be changed. Some of them do not know themselves and have no idea what could be done about these problems. One participant stated, "Mental health education should be introduced in schools from early grades, so that everyone can realize if something is wrong with them".

Bullying was identified as a key issue by the participants, which is happening everywhere, including educational institutions, because there are so many young people with disorders, without even knowing about that. The chain of aggression involves many young people. Problems related to parents, in-laws, and grandparents, as well as issues around marriage were also raised. There are often aggressive and toxic relationships within the family, because of the disorders of the family members. There is a widespread belief that one should not interfere in family conflicts. According to participants, many people think that problems should not be handled by calling the police, as the law does not seem to be effective, leading people to self-regulate. That leads to aggression and people, mostly women, living under pressure.

Recommendations

Mental health was considered as the most challenging and unknown field, which concerns every young individual one way or another, by the majority of the participants. Since the topic is very complex, incorporating a variety of factors, the recommendations are mainly focused on individual and group services for the youth.

1. To conduct a comprehensive study to observe and map all existing mental health services available to youth in the capital and the regions, with a particular focus on universities and schools. This study should examine the accessibility of these services, as well as identify any barriers preventing the youth from utilizing them. Despite the clear need for mental health support, many young people exhibit limited trust in available services and may be reluctant to seek help. It is crucial to better understand the underlying reasons for this reluctance in every particular case and region, whether they are related to financial affordability problems, social stigma, lack of awareness, or perceived inefficacy of the services. Some universities have psychological support centers, which should be examined as well in order to outline the development recommendations. By gathering in-depth data through surveys, interviews, and focus groups, the study can uncover the root causes of these

barriers and provide valuable insights into how to improve service delivery. The results of this research will inform the development of a more effective and accessible mental health service model tailored to the needs of young people. The study will contribute to elaboration of mechanisms of these services' provision and suggest solutions to make mental health support more accessible and trusted among young people.

2. To develop and introduce a course on applied psychology for teenagers, aimed at providing them with practical knowledge about their mental and emotional well-being. The course would focus on topics such as understanding personality types, the impact of hormonal changes on mood and behavior, and strategies for managing emotions. By equipping teenagers with this foundational knowledge, the course would help them navigate the challenges of adolescence in a healthier way. It would also serve as a pilot programme to measure the effectiveness of mental health education for young people, offering a starting point for future research and development. The insights gained from this pilot could pave the way for advocating the integration of such a course into general secondary or vocational education programmes as an elective module (at least). Providing students with the tools to understand and manage their mental health from a young age will empower them to make better decisions and develop coping strategies, contributing to their long-term well-being.
3. To enhance awareness of mental health in communities, as the study reveals that youth are often concerned about the barriers created by adults, whether intentional or not, that prevent them from maintaining their mental health or accessing mental health services. A nationwide campaign aimed at breaking the stigma surrounding mental health is essential. This campaign should be far-reaching, involving schools, universities, community centers, and families to ensure that the message is received broadly. By educating the wider community, particularly adults, on the importance of supporting youth mental health and addressing misconceptions, the campaign will help foster a more open and accepting environment for young people. Encouraging conversations about mental health within families and classrooms can create a culture of understanding and acceptance, reducing stigma and encouraging youth to seek the help they need. This holistic approach will not only improve awareness but also contribute to creating a more supportive society for young people to thrive in.
4. To cooperate with adult education centers (AEC) across the country on the provision of a short course on mental health and family relationships would also raise the level of education of adults on this matter. As the AECs are popular and trustworthy institutions in regions, they can serve as a good advocate of mental health education.

Summary of Recommendations

The recommendations across the various categories paint a comprehensive picture of youth development, emphasizing the importance of both cognitive and emotional growth. *Holistic development* emerges as a central theme, where the focus is not only on building practical skills like entrepreneurship and career planning but also addressing emotional and mental health needs. These dual aspects of development aim to create well-rounded individuals who are better equipped to face life's challenges. A strong emphasis on *integration* runs throughout the recommendations, for embedding new knowledge and skills into existing structures, such as educational systems, community organizations, and social support systems. This integration ensures that opportunities for learning and growth are more accessible and affordable to all young people, regardless of their background or location.

Another crucial theme is *empowerment*, with many recommendations encouraging youth to take initiative in areas such as self-awareness, mental health management, and entrepreneurial ventures. This empowerment not only helps young people gain confidence and autonomy but also fosters a proactive mindset in dealing with personal and societal challenges. Furthermore, there is a notable focus on *collaboration*, urging the involvement of schools, families, communities, and professional services to create a unified support network for young people. This collective approach is viewed as essential in helping the youth navigate the complexities of modern life.

The recommendations focus on creating a supportive and integrated framework to enhance youth development across multiple dimensions. *Formal education-related recommendations* advocate for embedding essential skills like entrepreneurship, career planning, and mental health awareness into school curricula. This approach ensures that young people gain the knowledge and competences they need for personal and professional growth. Meanwhile, *non-formal learning recommendations* emphasize providing experiential learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom, such as workshops, courses, and social entrepreneurship projects, which allow the youth to apply their skills in real-world settings.

Social and community learning recommendations highlight the importance of building supportive networks within communities, where young people can learn from each other, engage in peer support, and participate in social entrepreneurship initiatives. These recommendations encourage youth to take an active role in addressing local issues. On the other hand, “resource development recommendations” focus on enhancing the availability and accessibility of learning materials, mental health resources, and training tools, especially in underserved areas, to ensure that all young people can benefit from quality support and education.

Research and communication campaign recommendations aim to gather data to better understand the needs and gaps in services while also raising awareness to reduce stigma, particularly around mental health. Lastly, every recommendation touches on practical interventions and together these recommendations create a holistic approach focusing on both cognitive skills and emotional well-being to empower youth to navigate challenges and seize opportunities.

Bibliography

Education for Sustainable Development: A Roadmap -UNESCO, 2024 ISBN 978-92-3-100394-3

Engaged and Heard! -Guidelines on Adolescent Participation and Civic Engagement - Claire O’Kane, Jumana Haj-Ahmad, Fabio Friscia- Adolescent Development and Participation (ADAP) Section in UNICEF Headquarters, 2020. GUIDANCE/PD/2020/002

GreenComp-The European Sustainability Competence Framework- JRC science for policy report, 2022 Guia Bianchi, Ulrike Pisiotis, Marcelino Cabrera. EUR 30955 EN

Guidance on Child and Adolescent Participation as Part of Phase III of the Preparatory Action for a European Child Guarantee Version 1.0, UNICEF, 2021

Key Indicators of VET System Development, Skills Agency Georgia, 2023

Key Competences for Lifelong Learning - Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2019. ISBN 978-92-76-00476-9

Key Competence Development in Vocational Education- Developed for Skills Agency, 2022

Lifelong Learning for Health in Cities: A Guide - UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2023 ISBN 978-92-820-1257-4

Large-scale Assessment Data and Learning Outcomes- UNESCO Asia-Pacific Education Thematic Brief, 2017

Literacy and Life Skills Assessment of Syrian Youth – UNESCO, 2021

Measuring and Monitoring Learning Outcomes and Skills, Where We are and What is Missing in Terms Of SDG4 coverage? – UNESCO,2024

Policy Review on Key Competence Development in Georgia -EU Public Administration Reform Support Project, Natia Andguladze, 2020

Promoting Learner Happiness and Well-being – UNESCO Asia-Pacific Education Thematic Brief, 2017

Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe 2023 - Key competences at schools - Eurydice report, 2023

Youth Essential Skills Toolkit -IREX, 2023