

Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
and the Council of Europe in the field of Youth



CONTRIBUTION OF PARTNER COUNTRIES TO EU YOUTH WIKI CHAPTER III: UKRAINE EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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3.1. General context

On 24 February 2022, the Russian aggression against Ukraine began and is still ongoing at the time of finalising this report. This aggression has had a significant impact on the situation of young people and government procedures in the youth sector in Ukraine. This youth wiki chapter was developed by considering existing regulations and opportunities before the start of the aggression, while also paying attention to the latest developments and challenges that have arisen as a result of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

These developments and challenges naturally or forcefully limit young people's participation in labour market and related procedures. It should be noted that, due to the current situation, and in search of ways to cope with them, there are plans for a range of reforms and adjustments to be implemented for at least the next five years.

However, the results of these actions cannot be fully foreseen or assessed at this early stage and hence cannot be fully mirrored in this report.

Labour market situation in the country

Ukraine is currently navigating significant challenges due to the effects of the global Covid-19 pandemic and the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine. Since becoming independent in 1991, Ukraine's labour market has evolved towards a more market-oriented approach, yet formal employment remains low. Recent years have seen employment rates decline and unemployment increase due to economic instability, the global financial crisis, political tensions and Russia's ongoing aggression since 2014. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2022 have exacerbated the economic crisis and restricted labour market access. With substantial parts of the country still [occupied](#) as of May 2023, the challenges are severe.

Youth data and statistics

The [Law on the protection of the interests of reporting entities and other documents during the period of Martial Law or State of War](#) does not require availability of official statistics for the years 2022-23, as a measure related to the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine. Exceptions to this include the Consumer Price Index, specific information for 2021 and prior periods, as well as for January and February 2022.

According to data from the [State Statistics Service of Ukraine](#), as of 1 January 2022, the total permanent population of Ukraine was 40 997 698 people. As of 1 January 2022, there were 9 969 315 [young people aged between 14 and 35](#) living in Ukraine, which accounted for 24.3% of the total permanent population of Ukraine. Compared with 2021, the youth population in Ukraine decreased by 293 600 individuals, a decrease of 2.9%. Young men constituted 51.3% (5 112 300 individuals) and young women made up 48.7% (4 857 000 individuals). The activity rate, or labour force participation, for the general population as of 2022 is 51.9%. Among young people, the activity rate is 12.5% for those aged 15-19, 51.2% for those aged 20-24 and 67.8% for those aged 25-29.

Youth employment in Ukraine

Ukrainian youth face high unemployment and underemployment due to a challenging job market, limited formal opportunities and fierce competition. Economic downturns and job shortages have exacerbated the issue, driving many to informal or unstable work. Official [data](#) from 1 January 2023 show 186 500 unemployed with only 21 200 vacancies, a figure skewed by unregistered unemployed, migrants and those in the Armed Forces. The actual unemployment is [estimated](#) between 2.6 million and 4.2-4.8 million ([National Bank of Ukraine](#)). The impact of the Russian aggression against Ukraine is evident in the rise of active young job seekers from 7% to 12% in 2022. The shadow economy, with 3 million unofficially employed including 1.7 million unregistered entrepreneurs, obscures the true unemployment scale, and likely expanded due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Youth unemployment is particularly severe, with this group constituting 23% of the registered unemployed.

Regular national and international surveys on young people's participation in the labour market

The annual report on the state of youth in Ukraine (including examination of the economic part), established under the [Law on the basic principles of youth policy](#) and supported by the [State Targeted Social Programme “Youth of Ukraine”](#) for the period 2021-25, plays a crucial role in shaping state youth policy. It consistently examines the pressing issue of youth employment, with the 2019 edition solely focusing on the conditions of young people in the labour market to highlight the importance of addressing this challenge.

While there is no regular international survey on youth economic participation, various organisations and development projects, such as the [International Labour Organization](#) (ILO) and the [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP), conduct surveys to monitor youth employment trends, providing valuable insights to inform policy decisions, especially during the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Main concepts

Ukraine's labour market is characterised by a diverse workforce, with a [well-educated population](#) and a significant presence in sectors such as agriculture, industry, manufacturing, services and IT. However, wages tend to be lower compared to Western countries, and the informal economy plays a substantial role.

Before the Russian aggression against Ukraine as of end February 2022, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ukraine [contributed](#) 15% of gross domestic product (GDP) and 16% of exports, while providing 79% of jobs. Despite challenges induced by the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Ukrainian “Total early-stage Entrepreneurial Activity” (TEA) market has shown [resilience](#), with a pre-aggression annual sales growth of 5-10% and a relatively limited post-aggression demand drop of 25-30%, mitigated in part by army-related purchases and inflation-induced price increases.

Addressing unemployment, which stood at approximately 9.6% in Q2 2021, and gender disparities, with [women's labour force participation](#) at 47% compared to [men's](#) 63%, are key parts of [Ukraine's Recovery Plan](#). Central to these efforts are retraining and upskilling programmes, particularly in digital skills, and gender-inclusive policies supporting women in entrepreneurship.

The current reform package also includes provisions to simplify the system for launching businesses, reform the regulatory environment, provide easy access to finance and offer business development services. Economists illustrate that in the context of [green](#) and [social businesses](#), which are currently at a rudimentary level of implementation, strategies like fostering innovation through grants and competitions, advocating for sustainable practices and providing support to social enterprises have proven to be beneficial. This approach aligns with global trends and Ukraine's commitments under international agreements, like the [Paris Agreement on climate change](#).

In Ukraine, there is no clear legislative definition of “youth entrepreneurship” and “youth employment”, which leads to an inability to segregate these subjects for counting and analysis purposes, thereby hindering the objective evaluation of the effectiveness of legislative and executive measures.

As per Ukrainian law, “[employment](#)” is defined as citizens' activity related to meeting personal and social needs, typically yielding income. The [Economic Code of Ukraine](#) defines “entrepreneurship” as economic activity pursued for economic and social results, and potentially for profit.

Despite significant challenges, Ukraine's SMEs, entrepreneurial sector and recovery strategies [demonstrate resilience and efforts](#) towards retraining, upskilling, gender inclusivity and simplification of business establishment processes, coupled with specific focus on green and social businesses, are integral to the country's progress and alignment with global commitments.

Impact on the labour market of the Russian aggression against Ukraine

Since the full-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine, the country has witnessed substantial transformations

in its labour law landscape, with significant revisions, overhauls and new legislation introduced in 2022. [These laws](#) include provisions for labour relations during martial law and amendments aimed at optimising labour relations and employment laws, reflecting Ukraine's efforts to adapt to its current situation. According to the UNDP, post-invasion, Ukraine's job market suffered severely, with mass displacement of people seeking safety in the EU, [straining labour and social systems](#). Many left their jobs to join the defence forces, exacerbating the employment crisis. Addressing the issues arising from the Russian aggression against Ukraine will require substantial effort and resources.

Labour restrictions during the state of emergency

[Amendments to labour legislation](#) during martial law in Ukraine have specific implications for different workers. Restrictions on terminating employment contracts without notice, exemption from heavy or hazardous work for pregnant women and those with young children, and the ability of employers to deny leave to workers on critical infrastructure projects are some key changes. It is crucial for employers to ensure timely wage payment even during combat, and women's rights are protected. These changes aim to balance national security and worker rights, particularly for young people, women and those involved in critical infrastructure projects. Compliance and a fair working environment are important for both employers and employees.

Prospects for economic recovery and labour market stabilisation

[Ukraine being granted candidate status for EU membership](#) brings hope for its economic growth, including the job market. The EU's support and financial assistance show their commitment to helping Ukraine recover from the Russian aggression and meet EU standards. Access to EU funding will possibly revive the job market, creating more jobs, improving skills and increasing employment opportunities. Aligning Ukrainian labour laws with EU standards promises to attract foreign investment and promote sustainable economic growth. The integration with the EU may bear a brighter future for Ukraine, with a stronger job market and better prospects for its people. The international [Ukraine Recovery Conference](#) held in Lugano, Switzerland, focused on accelerating economic growth through initiatives like training programmes for returned migrants, internally displaced persons (IDPs), the unemployed, prioritising science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and entrepreneurship in the education system, and support for youth entrepreneurship.

3.2. Administration and governance

Governance

Ukraine's [Constitution](#) safeguards the right to work, with the [Law on employment](#) governing the employment sector and state-guaranteed social protections. The state promotes job creation and entrepreneurial development, and Ukrainian legislation provides protections for its employable population. Special provisions and assistance are offered to vulnerable groups and those registered as unemployed. The [State Employment Service of Ukraine \(SES\)](#) grants unemployed status after an eight-day registration period, providing free services like professional guidance and training. The state, through this service, organises professional training and compensation mechanisms, aiming for effective employment and unemployment prevention.

Regulations

Ukraine is implementing substantial measures to promote young entrepreneurship and ease the transition from school to work, driving societal and economic progress. These initiatives include investments in entrepreneurial education, improved funding accessibility, tech innovation promotion and provision of mentorship. Efforts are also in place to improve career guidance, establish stronger educational-job market ties and equip young people with skills relevant to the evolving economy. The [Ministry of Economy of Ukraine \(MoE\)](#) and the SES are orchestrating these initiatives, part of a broader framework covering citizens aged 18-65. The 2021 regulation positions the MoE as the key shaper of national employment policies, and the SES, offering a range of services from job assistance to training programmes, works under its co-ordination. Despite the recent decrease in registration rates at employment centres due to legislative changes, the prevalence of informal employment, including unregistered entrepreneurship, remains significant.

Since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the field of labour law in Ukraine has undergone significant [transformations](#). The Ukrainian Parliament has amended the labour legislation and reformed key aspects of labour relations. Changes to the Ukrainian [Labour Code](#) have been introduced, and new laws have been enacted in 2022, particularly the [Law on organising labour relations in conditions of martial law](#), [Law on amendments to certain legislative acts of Ukraine regarding labour relations optimisation](#), amending certain provisions of the aforementioned law and the Ukrainian Labour Code. Furthermore, amendments were made to the Law on employment. These legislative changes reflect ongoing efforts to optimise labour relations and adapt to the current circumstances in Ukraine.

Role of the SES

The SES was established in December 1990 with the mission to comprehensively address matters related to employment regulation, vocational guidance, job placement and social support for temporarily unemployed citizens. The primary legislative act governing the SES is the Law on employment, which guarantees the state's role in employment rights for citizens. From 1 January 2001, with the introduction of the [Law on compulsory state social insurance in case of unemployment](#)", the SES also took on executive duties for the newly created [Compulsory state social insurance fund for unemployment](#). The fund is managed on a parity basis by representatives of the government, insured individuals and employers.

The SES oversees various aspects of employment and labour policies, including job placement, labour migration and social unemployment protection. The SES [analyses the labour market](#), assists job seekers, offers selection services to employers and facilitates temporary work and entrepreneurial initiatives. Additionally, it mitigates mass layoffs, boosts labour mobility and improves job opportunities. The SES organises training and skill enhancement for the unemployed, provides career guidance and offers additional support for those facing employment challenges.

Three ministerial bodies in Ukraine predominantly preside over the formulation of policies pertaining to youth entrepreneurship and employment.

Role of other governmental bodies

The [Ministry of Youth and Sports](#) (MoYS) advocates youth employment, entrepreneurship and sports, striving to foster entrepreneurial skills, job opportunities and sports participation among young people. The ministry deploys programmes, training and mentorship, and aids in obtaining resources and funding for budding entrepreneurs.

The [Ministry of Education and Science](#) (MES) manages education policies, including vocational and entrepreneurial education. It nurtures an entrepreneurial spirit among students and promotes entrepreneurship as a potential career. It engages with educational institutions and industry partners to develop curriculums and programmes that bolster entrepreneurial proficiency. Further, it provides career guidance to help young people navigate their educational and professional paths, aiming to equip them with the resources to excel as entrepreneurs.

The [Ministry of Digital Transformation](#) (MoDT) oversees the formation and execution of state policy concerning digitalisation, open data and electronic resources. The MoDT heavily focuses on initiating online programmes to nurture entrepreneurial skills among the young people and advocates for the digital transformation of the business support system and entrepreneurship. Key initiatives include the “[Дія.Підприємництво](#)” (English – Diia.Entrepreneurship) platform, a comprehensive national project initiated in 2020 to promote entrepreneurship and export, and the “[Дія.Освіта](#)” (English – Diia.Education) platform, a free online resource for self-education, skills development and professional advancement.

The [Ministry for Veterans Affairs](#) (MVA) develops and executes policies for the social welfare of war veterans, including young veterans. Although not directly concerned with youth employment and entrepreneurship, it indirectly influences these areas for young veterans. Its focus lies in social support, healthcare, housing and employment. It collaborates with other agencies to facilitate the transition of veterans to civilian life, potentially providing entrepreneurship and employment support. The MVA is committed to aiding veterans in their post-military lives.

Cross-sectoral co-operation

Cross-sectoral co-operation takes place at the governmental level, where different ministries collaborate to discuss and co-ordinate policies and programmes.

Co-ordination system

In line with the Paris Declaration’s objectives for improving the efficiency of foreign aid, which [Ukraine joined in 2007](#), the partner country commits to taking a leading role in co-ordinating foreign aid and other development resources at all levels during dialogue with donor countries. In 2020, at the initiative of the Ukrainian Government, the [Directorate for International Technical Assistance Coordination](#) was established at the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, opening opportunities for more co-ordinated interaction between the Ukrainian Government and development partners. As a result of consultations between government representatives and development partners, a decision was made to improve the existing international technical assistance co-ordination system for identifying and implementing key development priorities in Ukraine.

The co-ordination system comprises three interdependent levels:

- [Development Partnership Forum](#) (high-level political dialogue on strategic issues of national reform implementation);
- [Strategic Platform](#) (co-ordination of international technical assistance with national reform priorities, taking into account the Sustainable Development Goals and the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU);

- **Sectoral Working Groups** (SWGs), established for conducting regular dialogue and co-ordination between central executive authorities and development partners in line with state policy directions and sectoral reforms).

SWGs and economic participation of young people

SWGs are critical to Ukraine's co-ordination system aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of development partnerships. Their objectives include reviewing progress on the government's action programme, co-ordinating with development partners on mutual co-operation and integrating cross-cutting themes such as employment, gender equality, digitisation and anti-corruption into sectoral activities. The co-chairs of SWGs are heads or deputy heads of central executive authorities of Ukraine and representatives of development partners, and thematic subgroups may be established for specific areas.

Currently, there are 24 SWGs on various topics, including development of SMEs, digital transformation, education and science, recovery and reintegration, youth and sports, and social protection of veterans. Although there is not a dedicated SWG or subgroup for youth entrepreneurship, the economic participation of young people is a prioritised aspect across all levels.

Council on Youth Affairs

In 2022, a new **Council on Youth Affairs** was established in Ukraine, serving as an advisory body to the president. The council's main tasks include developing and proposing improvements to youth engagement mechanisms, facilitating co-ordination between government and youth entities, and assisting in improving youth-related issues. The council also contributes to the preparation of the president's messages to the nation and the parliament and supports informational events for young people on state-building and government activities.

To fulfil its tasks, the council has the authority to create working and expert groups, define its work procedures, involve experts, request necessary information and documents, participate in legislative drafting and initiate public discussions on relevant issues. Issues of youth employment, entrepreneurship and economic participation are also considered as needed.

3.3. Skills forecasting

Forecasting system(s)

In Ukraine, the SES plays a central role in [labour market and skills forecasting](#). The SES is responsible for monitoring labour market trends, identifying emerging demands and predicting future skills requirements. It conducts regular research and analysis to gather data on employment trends, occupational demand and skills gaps.

The SES collects information from employers, job seekers, educational institutions and other stakeholders through surveys and questionnaires. Based on their findings, they prepare reports and recommendations on labour market trends and occupational forecasts, highlighting sectors and occupations with high future demand. These reports also provide insights into the skills needed by job seekers to meet market demands.

The SES disseminates its research through its website, making reports accessible to the public. It collaborates with other public authorities and engages with employers' associations, trade unions and trade organisations to gather perspectives and insights. Cross-sectoral co-operation ensures that education and training programmes align with labour market needs.

Regular consultations, meetings and workshops involving stakeholders from the public and private sectors are organised to discuss labour market trends. These efforts encourage collaboration in addressing youth unemployment and ensure diverse perspectives are considered in labour market forecasting.

Skills development

In Ukraine, comprehensive efforts are underway to support skills acquisition among young people through various channels. These include formal education institutions, non-formal learning and awareness-raising initiatives organised by top-level public authorities.

Skills development in formal institutions

Formal education institutions, such as schools, higher education establishments and vocational schools, play a crucial role in skills development. The government strives to align their curriculums with the evolving needs of the labour market, an effort overseen by the Ministry of Education and Science. Quality assurance procedures, including accreditation and external evaluations, ensure the effectiveness and relevance of education. The [Law on higher education](#) underscores the importance of acquiring not only professional knowledge but also broader qualities such as world-view, civic qualities and moral-ethical values.

Second-chance education programmes and adult education opportunities provide access to education for those who did not complete formal education or who seek additional qualifications. Non-formal education, delivered through vocational training centres, NGOs and community-based organisations, also plays a significant role in skills development by offering flexible learning opportunities tailored to specific skills or industries.

Financial literacy

The financial literacy level in Ukraine, particularly among young people, is [significantly low](#). This inadequacy not only impedes the ability of young people to make informed financial decisions, such as starting businesses or investing, but it also prevents the establishment of a robust savings culture. To address this issue, various initiatives have been launched with the support of international institutions including the [World Bank](#), [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#), [US Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#) and the German Government.

The MoDT, alongside the National Bank of Ukraine and the [First Ukrainian International Bank \(PUMB\)](#), have introduced a new educational series, "[Financial Sensei](#)". The series, freely available on the [Дія.Освіта](#) (English

– Diia.Education), explores crucial financial topics such as budgeting, saving, credit management and online banking. With an appealing youth-oriented format that combines education and entertainment, the programme aims to enhance the financial literacy level of young people in Ukraine, as it remains the lowest in Europe. Future plans include the incorporation of financial literacy courses in schools and the creation of a Financial Literacy Strategy by 2025.

The other initiative is [Global Money Week](#), an international educational campaign targeted at young people. The event, co-ordinated in Ukraine by the National Bank of Ukraine, aims to broaden the financial knowledge of young people, preparing them for a secure financial future.

Furthermore, the National Bank of Ukraine, in partnership with USAID and the MES, has implemented an educational and interactive programme to improve the financial literacy of young people in Ukraine. This includes cash flow games and open-day events at banks.

[Sparkassenstiftung for International Cooperation](#), funded by [Germany's Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development \(BMZ\)](#), has launched projects in Ukraine to promote responsible financing through financial education, consumer protection and the provision of responsible financial services.

The [USAID-funded Financial Sector Transformation](#) project has been introduced, a US\$26 million initiative providing financial literacy courses, free online loan comparison tools and promoting consumer rights protection services. A notable feature is the “[Beat the Scammer!](#)” online simulator to increase awareness about the safety issues linked to cashless payments.

Lastly, the [International Finance Corporation \(IFC\)](#) has partnered with the National Bank of Ukraine to create a [National Strategy for Financial Inclusion](#). This strategy aims to improve access for young people to digital financial services, stimulate economic growth and generate jobs. The IFC's “[Financial Access for Growth](#)” programme, in collaboration with the [Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs](#) and the UK Government, will assist in creating a national road map for financial accessibility and expand the responsible use of financial services.

Other private and development co-operation initiatives

The “[Educational Centre of the City of Kyiv](#)” is a social innovation project, part of Kyiv's education agency, aiming to provide lifelong learning opportunities, particularly in soft skills. Participants can earn a certificate validating their acquired skills for employment, career advancement, business set-up and personal growth. The project has multiple partners, including the [Association of Innovative and Digital Education](#) and the foreign language learning project “[Lingva.Skills](#)”, among others.

Similarly, the [Association of Private Employers](#) works with several non-governmental organisations across various cities in Ukraine to broaden job prospects, especially focusing on the development of entrepreneurial and soft skills among Ukrainians through the [educational platform Gravitation](#).

[Junior Achievement Ukraine](#) is a non-profit public organisation and a member of the global Junior Achievement Worldwide network. It offers free educational programmes in entrepreneurship and economics to young people. These programmes provide both informational and practical tasks designed to instil financial literacy, ready you for entrepreneurial endeavours and assist in determining your future profession.

The EU places a strong emphasis on its collaboration with the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, particularly regarding young people. The EU's objective is to enhance skillsets and job prospects, and to boost education and VET opportunities for the younger generation. Furthermore, the EU encourages youth economic participation notably through its [EU4Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship](#) initiative.

3.4. Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling services

Establishment and structure of the state system for career guidance

After gaining independence, Ukraine established two frameworks of the state system for career guidance for its citizens (in 1994 and 2008) and introduced the [Regulations on Career Guidance for Studying Youth](#). An [action plan](#) came into effect in 2018 to enact the concept of the state system of career guidance, encompassing all demographics, including the young.

Career guidance, as stipulated in the regulatory acts, represents a well-founded system that integrates various forms, methods and tools. Its purpose is to support individuals in actively and consciously making professional decisions and evolving in their careers.

VET institutions are under the governance of the MES. The educational process within the VET sector has been significantly influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, these institutions demonstrated prompt adaptation, leveraging existing resources to facilitate distance learning. Recently, these institutions have initiated [Career Development Centres](#), which are instrumental in bridging the gap between the young workforce, VET institutions and employers. These centres play a crucial role, assisting students in securing internships and job opportunities.

Ongoing reforms

In November 2019 and again in March 2020, successive governments have given momentum to education reforms, striving for a decentralised, competency-based approach. They have set [ambitious objectives](#), aiming to boost vocational education participation to 45% by 2024, and streamline the job search process for vocational graduates.

As part of a ministerial reshuffle, the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture has taken on significant new duties, incorporating the SES and championing lifelong learning as a cornerstone of the updated VET system. Similarly, the MoE is navigating its own transition within the context of wider Ukrainian reform efforts.

The establishment of the [National Agency for Qualifications](#) (NAK) and the ongoing decentralisation process necessitate that the MES co-ordinate with a diverse set of contributors.

The Cabinet of Ministers ratified the [Concept of implementing state policy in the field of VET education “Modern VET Education” for the period up to 2027](#). The primary tasks involve decentralisation, transferring administrative and financial powers to a regional level, establishing regional demand indicators through labour market analysis and assuring quality via a competence-based curriculum and improved teacher training. Further, the concept promotes public-private partnerships, integrating VET with labour market needs, endorsing VET education for all age groups, and particularly focusing on young people.

The reform aims to shape a new image for graduates of VET education: well-rounded individuals capable of lifelong learning, professional career development, entrepreneurship and self-employment, competitive and mobile in the labour market, and aligned with the needs of the national economy and society. Currently the reform is being aided by the [EU4Skills – Better Skills for Modern Ukraine](#) project (2020-23).

Collaboration and stakeholders in career guidance

The foundation of professional self-determination lies in understanding oneself and objectively assessing one's individual characteristics. It involves juxtaposing one's professionally important qualities and capabilities with the demands necessary for specific professions and the condition of the job market. The Ukrainian career guidance system comprises elements such as career information, career consultation, career selection, career

screening and career adaptation.

The Law on employment also incorporates crucial elements of career guidance and counselling services. The state controls the system of career guidance at the national level, carried out by relevant authorities according to their jurisdiction.

The state system of career guidance is managed at the territorial level by local authorities. An advisory [Council for Career Guidance](#), established by the Cabinet of Ministers, co-ordinates this work. Basic level career guidance is offered by a range of institutions, including education and healthcare, and is provided by all kinds of enterprises, regardless of ownership or activity type.

Dialogue around career guidance involves national employers' organisations, trade unions and public organisations. Research support in this field comes from various national academies and other scientific institutions. The [State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting](#) helps disseminate career-related information.

Career guidance services and reform in school education

Career guidance and counselling services in Ukraine are available through various channels, including educational institutions, non-formal education providers and employment services. These services are provided by public organisations and involve partnerships with different entities. Within formal education, career guidance services are offered in schools, higher education institutions (HEI), adult education centres and second-chance education programmes. Non-formal education providers, such as youth work organisations, also play a role in delivering guidance and counselling services. Employment services and other organisations contribute to career guidance initiatives as well.

The reform of school education in Ukraine has established a solid legal foundation for the implementation of career guidance, as evidenced by three laws. The Law [on basic secondary education](#) introduces a new school structure and curriculum that facilitates students' understanding of the professional world and highlights the role of schools in fostering students' comprehensive development, lifelong learning and social responsibility. The Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on [state standards of basic secondary education](#) includes competencies like innovation and lifelong learning, underscoring the need for career guidance to support holistic development. The autonomy provided by the legislation empowers schools to integrate career guidance into their educational programmes.

The SES provides valuable assistance to individuals through tests, consultations and career advice, as well as job search training. The SES specifically supports young job seekers by organising meetings with professionals and employers. Additionally, individuals have the option to undergo professional diagnostics to gain better insights into their abilities and interests.

Testing can be carried out using the free online platform "[Career Guidance and Career Development](#)" provided by the SES, including its mobile version. This platform allows individuals, especially young people, to undergo psychological testing remotely, without the need to visit an employment centre, thus enabling personalised career guidance. The platform offers a comprehensive career guidance test and 10 tests specifically designed to assess "soft skills".

The results of the tests conducted on the platform are stored in the individual's "[Personal Cabinet](#)" on the SES's web portal. Based on these results, individuals can receive career guidance consultations at any employment centre. Appointments for professional orientation consultations, including testing, can be scheduled through the individual's "Personal Cabinet" on the web portal.

Career Hub: public-private initiative

The [Career Hub](#), managed by the Career Development Centre, is a pivotal resource for career development in Ukraine, connecting young people, employers, government bodies and educational institutions to foster

successful career trajectories. Offering services like career guidance and counselling, it assists users in informed decision making and future planning. Emphasising the importance of quality education, it offers resources for professional and soft skills development, preparing individuals for future occupations. By linking young individuals to significant opportunities, it promotes informed career choices and goal attainment. The platform encourages collaboration among career development stakeholders, contributing to workforce advancement.

Funding

During times of martial law, the SES in Ukraine takes on a significant role in ensuring the continued professional development and employability of its citizens, including young people. The SES makes payments and provides funding from the Compulsory State Social Insurance Fund for Unemployment, the [state budget](#) and other unprohibited sources for the following:

- career guidance, training, retraining, reskilling and upskilling at VET institutions, particularly in education institutions of the SES, enterprises, institutions and organisations;
- career guidance (exclusively for unemployed people and those seeking employment);
- [provision of vouchers](#) to maintain the competitiveness of certain categories of citizens by retraining, specialisation and upgrading qualifications for professions and specialties in priority types of economic activity, according to [Article 30](#) of the Law on employment.

This support extends to cover health checks required for such training and logistical aspects such as accommodation and travel. This demonstrates a comprehensive strategy to maintain economic stability and personal development during challenging periods, helping citizens stay competitive in the job market and contributing to the resilience of the national economy.

Quality assurance

Career guidance in Ukraine follows the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on [concept of the state system of career guidance for the population](#) and the [Regulation on career guidance for studying youth](#). Ukrainian legislation has established a robust quality assurance system for strategies and state targeted programmes, with clearly defined results, quality indicators, evaluation metrics for economic and social aspects, and alignment with set goals and objectives. This system utilises credible sources like reports, official statistics and research data for evidence and calculates both task-specific and overall indices. This system ensures that these programmes adhere to preset standards and targets, and its detailed evaluation methods provide a comprehensive quality and impact assessment of the programmes.

Career guidance efforts are analysed based on indicators like career guidance event numbers and effectiveness, services provided and individual coverage considering gender. However, a collaboration system involving educational institutions, parents, enterprises and career guidance departments to evaluate graduate employment effectiveness is yet to be established.

3.5. Traineeships and apprenticeships

Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

Traineeships and apprenticeships in Ukraine offer valuable opportunities for young individuals to gain practical experience, enhance their professional skills and acquire additional competencies. The government has implemented regulations to govern both processes, recognising its significance in boosting the competitiveness of the country's young people.

Opportunities through traineeships and apprenticeships

Article 29 of the Law on employment specifically addresses apprenticeships for young individuals, while a Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution approves the [standard form of the apprenticeships agreement and associated procedures](#).

According to Ukrainian legislation, apprenticeships differ from traineeship apprenticeships as for the latter students are directly placed in enterprises for traineeships based on agreements between educational institutions and the participating enterprises. Students have the freedom to choose their traineeship placements and enter into individual agreements accordingly.

The primary purpose of apprenticeships, as outlined in the Law on employment, is to provide individuals with the opportunity to gain practical experience, improve their professional knowledge, skills and abilities, learn new technologies and techniques, and acquire additional competencies.

Regulations and procedures

Apprenticeships can take place in enterprises, institutions and organisations of any ownership form and activity type. They are conducted during the individuals' free time from their studies in the relevant profession or specialty, with specific conditions determined by the agreement between the student and the enterprise.

Upon submission of the required documents, the apprenticeships agreement is prepared following the model provided in the Resolution of the Cabinet of Minister of Ukraine [on the procedure for entering into apprenticeships agreements for students of higher education institutions and students of VET institutions at enterprises, institutions and organisations](#).

The process begins with the approval of an individual apprenticeships programme by the enterprise's manager, along with the issuance of an order to commence the apprenticeships. This step sets the foundation for defining the duration, location, specialisation, or qualification level of the apprentice, as well as the schedule that includes work and rest periods. Adhering to the agreed-upon apprenticeship duration, which should not exceed six months, and complying with legally established working hour limits are essential.

Upon completion of the apprenticeships, an evaluation report is prepared, assessing the apprentice's performance, professional competence, personal qualities and skills. This comprehensive assessment provides valuable feedback and contributes to the apprentice's personal and professional development.

Recording the apprenticeships period in the apprentice's employment record book is a vital step to maintain accurate employment records and ensure compliance with legal requirements. It demonstrates a commitment to transparency and accountability in the apprenticeships process.

Moreover, the requirement for an employment contract, issued through an order or directive from the employer, emphasises the importance of formalising the working relationship. This safeguards the rights and responsibilities of both parties involved in the apprenticeships, creating a fair and equitable working environment.

Ukraine aims to foster a conducive environment for skill development, professionalism and career advancement. Compliance with the regulations ensures fair treatment of apprentices, upholds labour standards and contributes

to the overall growth and success of the workforce.

Addressing challenges and fostering partnerships

Despite recent reforms, the formal education system in Ukraine still relies on [outdated teaching resources and methods](#), and it offers limited opportunities for students to gain practical experience through traineeships and apprenticeships. Some employers provide unpaid or low-paid internships for young individuals with limited experience. However, the bank sector has traditionally been recognised as supportive towards students, graduates and other young people. Many banks have established training centres that offer traineeships and apprenticeships, while key players in the sector have developed strong partnerships with colleges and universities, playing a crucial role in expanding the further employment prospects of young people.

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

The [Ukrainian Youth Pact](#) has become the largest public-private partnership initiative since 2016, bringing together over 140 employers who collectively created over 45 000 job opportunities for young people.

The initiative has been recognised by the [European Business Network for Corporate Sustainability and Responsibility](#) as one of the best practices for young people in Europe, and the global United Nations initiative, Decent Jobs for Youth, has named the pact as one of the world's best examples of implementing Sustainable Development Goal 8.

Over the course of five years, 45 000 apprenticeships and entry-level job positions have been established for young individuals, with 4 700 young people receiving mentoring support from companies.

Recognition of learning outcomes

In Ukraine, the skills and competences acquired by young people through traineeships and apprenticeships can be formally recognised, allowing them to validate their knowledge and potentially obtain a partial or full qualification within the formal education system. The recognition process involves various mechanisms and tools, including portfolios, record books and competence folders. [Ukraine uses the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System](#) (ECTS), therefore one academic year of full-time studies is equivalent to 60 ECTS credits.

Ukrainian Law [on higher education](#) outlines that an educational-professional programme comprises various components targeting predetermined learning outcomes, leading to specific qualifications. The institutions are tasked with developing a curriculum based on this programme, specifying educational components, organising the learning process, scheduling and implementing ongoing and summative assessments to ensure learning outcomes. Individual study plans are crafted for each applicant based on the curriculum, an example being the revised “Entrepreneurship” educational-professional programme aligned with the first-level higher education standard for speciality 076 – Entrepreneurship, Trade and Exchange activities.

In Ukraine, recognition for young people partaking in traineeships and apprenticeships is facilitated through various mechanisms and tools, providing valuable evidence for further education or employment. Portfolios, allowing the compilation and presentation of skills and achievements, record books tracking progress and competence folders containing evidence of abilities, are all common tools. The country has implemented a national credit system that enables young participants to accumulate credits based on their acquired competencies, which can be recognised and transferred within the national formal education system.

Funding

During apprenticeships and traineeships under Ukrainian Law on education and Law on VET, individuals in education are provided safe workplaces and their work aligns with educational programmes and agreements with institutions or companies. They are not included in the staff lists but have similar regulations, safety requirements and rights to regular employees, including similar social and other insurances.

The Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on [procedure for providing workplaces for VET education students and listeners for vocational training and industrial practice](#)” ensures that apprentices and trainees are paid for their work during their training periods. The compensation is either directly given to them or transferred to the VET institution. This pay can be partially used for institutional activities and for rewarding educators. The process for establishing contracts for these apprenticeships and traineeships is also regulated under this procedure. Furthermore, any professional work completed during the apprenticeships is compensated, and these payments contribute to a collective fund managed by the enterprise.

Quality assurance

The methodological guidelines for traineeships and apprenticeships have been developed in accordance with the Law on higher education”, the MES’s regulation [on conducting of student internships at HEIs](#), the regulation on organising the educational process in each specific HEI and the HEI’s Standard for the respective speciality, as respectively approved by the Order of the MES.

The quality assurance standards for traineeships are determined by the “[Criteria for Evaluation of Industrial Practice](#)” of a first-level (bachelor’s) higher education student.

3.6. Integration of young people in the labour market

Youth employment measures

The Law on employment and associated regulations [seek to foster an inclusive and supportive employment environment](#), particularly for young citizens and those requiring social protection. It also encourages employers to create new jobs and offers a host of benefits to ease the transition of young individuals into the workforce.

The Law on employment promotes employment among young citizens. The law ensures first-time employment for individuals who have completed their education or compulsory military service. Businesses employing over 20 people are mandated to reserve a 5% employment quota for young people, with special provisions for those with disabilities.

Article 26 of the Law offers financial compensation to employers for hiring young professionals who are unemployed, promoting job creation. This compensation correlates with the unified contribution for mandatory state social insurance for the hired individual, varying from 36.3% to 49.7% based on the job's professional risk class.

The Law also provides state support for young specialists working in rural areas, including housing and financial aid. Additionally, it fosters competitiveness in the labour market by offering internships to students in higher education and vocational institutions.

The legislation guarantees young people equal employment opportunities and ensures a two-year first job period after education completion or military service. This period includes any time worked before compulsory military service.

The employment sector continues to adapt to emerging challenges by enhancing the effectiveness of active programmes and improving the accessibility of provided services. A pivotal move in this journey was the adoption of the Ukrainian Law [on amendments to some legislative acts of Ukraine regarding the reform of employment service, social insurance in case of unemployment, promotion of productive employment of the population, including young people, and the introduction of new active programmes in the labour market](#). This Law substantially revises the contents of the Law on compulsory state social insurance in case of unemployment and the Law on employment.

An employer, directed by the employment centre to employ a registered unemployed individual from among the following:

- those under the age of 25 with a cumulative insurance tenure of no more than 12 months;
- those under the age of 35 embarking on their first job;
- those discharged from fixed-term military or alternative (non-military) service, taking up their first job post such discharge;

will be reimbursed 50% of the minimum wage for the corresponding person on a monthly basis.

The overall duration of compensation payment does not exceed six months, assuming that the employment guarantees for the individual are preserved for a period twice the duration of the payouts. These novel stipulations are outlined in Article 29 of the Law on employment.

The Ukrainian Government also has provisions for reserving job positions for citizens needing social protection. Local SES offices develop these reservation quotas based on a range of factors, including statistical data, labour market analysis and the economic condition of the enterprises.

Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

The [Ukrainian legislation system](#) facilitates flexible forms of employment (FFE), tailored to various working scenarios and personnel.

This system allows employees the liberty to choose between their free and working hours, both in terms of duration and utilisation mode. However, this can only be implemented in enterprises with a suitable organisational-technological process and an appropriate state of production relations.

These flexible forms of employment are categorised into different types. The FFEs related to non-standard working schedules can help to reduce unemployment among those less able to compete on an equal footing in the labour market, such as people with disabilities, young first-time job seekers, women with young children and individuals nearing retirement. Non-standard working regimes include part-time work, reduced working weeks, job sharing between two workers, alternating work weeks for two employees and compressed work weeks.

Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

Policies and measures for balancing private and working lives during the Russian aggression against Ukraine

The current situation in Ukraine has resulted in a significant number of Ukrainians, particularly young people, being compelled to leave their places of residence, leading to forced displacement and limited job opportunities. As a consequence, employment contracts are often suspended due to absences caused by these circumstances. Simultaneously, workers who remain committed to their duties despite challenging conditions face reassignments and increased workloads as they are required to cover the work of their absent colleagues. Employers are witnessing changes in their workforce, including the expansion of job functions for certain employees based on work type, profession, or position.

In response to workplace challenges, [non-standard forms of work organisation](#) like flexible hours, teleworking and remote work have been introduced according to labour legislation, aiming to balance employer control with employee privacy and data protection. Crucial control mechanisms analyse performance indicators, facilitating informed staffing decisions, even in the context of recent changes introduced during martial law. However, unresolved issues remain concerning remote work and teleworking, including adequate working conditions, timekeeping, task assignment and performance monitoring.

Removing practical barriers to access to employment and promoting gender equality in the labour market

In Ukraine, there is a [significant gender pay gap](#), with women experiencing higher unemployment levels, more marginal employment and more dependence on social assistance. Women also have less access to credit and generally receive lower pensions due to often working in unskilled jobs, taking more leave for child and disability care and being underrepresented in high-paying roles.

Gender-based discrimination in labour relations takes [several forms](#), including unequal access to professional training, unjustified wage inequality, differing work conditions and unequal access to compensation and aid. Consequences of gender-based discrimination include professional gender segregation, prohibition from professional training or education based on sex, a gender pay gap and restrictions on women's labour rights. Notably, workers with family obligations often face job limitations and inadequate consideration for their needs regarding employment conditions and social security.

Legislation on gender equality in the labour market

Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women is globally recognised as a critical factor in achieving sustainable development and is a condition for building a lawful and democratic state, where human rights and freedoms are guaranteed and upheld. Annually, since the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration](#) at the Fourth

World Conference on Women's Status, and the approval of the UN General Assembly's resolution titled [Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) outlining the agenda for sustainable development up to 2030, the United Nations evaluates the progress of its member states towards gender equality and expanding the rights and opportunities of women in all areas of societal life. Every four years, Ukraine submits a report on the implementation of the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), ratified in 1980.

The approval of the [National Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030](#) is driven by the need to implement a unified state policy aimed at achieving equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all areas of societal activity, including labour law. Legislation concerning equal rights of men and women in labour relations is a focal point.

Ukraine's commitment to gender equality, particularly in labour rights, is embedded in a range of legislation and strategic documents that span from national to international level. The [Constitution of Ukraine](#) acts as a cornerstone, proclaiming equality of rights and freedoms irrespective of gender. The Labour Code further delineates the specific rights of men and women in the workplace, prohibiting discrimination and promoting equality.

A [collection](#) of presidential decrees, Cabinet of Ministers orders, EU directives, as well as the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union, serve to strengthen this commitment. Notably, various national strategies and action plans, such as the [National Human Rights Strategy](#), [Human Development Strategy](#) and the [State Strategy for Regional Development for 2021-2027](#), incorporate components related to gender equality in labour rights. Furthermore, specific strategies around prevention of domestic and gender-based violence, and the implementation of the [UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security](#), have significant implications for gender equality in labour rights.

Ukraine's participation in the international initiative "[Partnership of Biarritz](#)" for the affirmation of gender equality and its commitment to the [Open Government Partnership](#) ensure that gender-disaggregated data are made openly available, assisting in the tracking and monitoring of gender equality in labour rights. Finally, the National Strategy for the [Creation of Barrier-Free Space in Ukraine until 2030](#) and the [Strategy to Promote the Realisation of Rights and Opportunities of People Belonging to the Roma National Minority until 2030](#), underscore Ukraine's commitment to equality and inclusivity in the labour market.

As part of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the EU, Ukraine is [actively reforming its social legislation](#) in the direction of European integration, implementing EU directives in the social sphere and adhering to the provisions of Section 21, "Cooperation on employment, social policy and equal opportunities".

The comparison between EU and Ukrainian legislation highlights areas where Ukrainian labour laws can be improved to align with EU directives and promote gender equality in labour rights. The amendments should encompass provisions for the protection of pregnant workers during medical examinations, the requirement for written reasons for dismissals, equal treatment in pension insurance requirements and the inclusion of additional discriminatory characteristics in anti-discrimination laws. By incorporating these changes, Ukraine can enhance its labour laws to provide better safeguards and equal opportunities for all workers, regardless of gender.

Employment assistance for individuals affected by the Russian aggression against Ukraine

In response to the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine, the authorities, along with civil society organisations and international partners, have taken [significant steps](#) to address various issues, including employment assistance for individuals affected by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the promotion of gender equality in the labour market.

Initiatives such as the "[Hold on, Sisters](#)" and "[Women for The Future](#)" projects provide psychological support and employment opportunities for women affected by the Russian aggression against Ukraine. These comprehensive actions reflect Ukraine's dedication to building a responsive system and promoting equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the face of challenging circumstances.

Funding of schemes/initiatives

Funding for employment support programmes, including initiatives for young people such as job creation, placement and retraining, primarily relies on budgetary funds. However, alternative financing sources may be utilised in specific cases. This delegation of responsibility allows the state to maintain oversight while involving other stakeholders in the implementation of social programmes.

[Funding for employment measures](#) is carried out through the state and local budgets, the [Fund for Social Protection of Persons with Disabilities](#), the Compulsory State Social Insurance Fund for Unemployment and other sources in accordance with the legislation.

Regional employment programmes receive funding from various sources, including local budgets, national and regional target funds (such as the entrepreneurship support fund), loans from financial institutions, proceeds from privatisation, foreign investments, contributions from community organisations, voluntary contributions from individuals and businesses, and other interested organisations.

[For 2023](#) the Cabinet of Ministers in Ukraine has approved a budget of nearly 17 billion Ukrainian hryvnia (UAH) for the Compulsory State Social Insurance Fund for Unemployment. This budget encompasses various purposes, such as unemployment benefits, compensation to employers for job placements, partial unemployment compensation and microgrants for small entrepreneurs.

The fund's revenues for 2023, including the starting balance, amount to UAH 18.26 billion. Insurance contributions make up UAH 16.06 billion, with a starting balance of UAH 2.09 billion.

The budget for 2023 allocates UAH 16.98 billion for expenditures, covering unemployment benefits, social services, employment promotion measures and microgrants under the “[єРобота](#)” (English – “There is a job”) programme.

Quality assurance

The implementation of measures aimed at formalising employment relations is an important aspect of quality assurance in the field of employment. By involving various central executive authorities such as the [State Labour Service](#), the [State Tax Service](#), the [Pension Fund of Ukraine](#) and other relevant bodies, the government ensures a comprehensive approach to monitor compliance with labour legislation, especially regarding young people.

These measures not only focus on formalising employment and income for all individuals, including young people, but they also contribute to enhancing the quality of employment practices. By establishing clear criteria and legislative definitions of labour relations, as outlined in the [Law on amendments to certain legislative acts of Ukraine to enhance the protection of workers' rights and counteract the use of undeclared labour](#) the government promotes transparency and fairness in employment arrangements.

The principle of presumption of the existence of labour relations, incorporated within the legal framework, serves as an important quality assurance mechanism. It ensures that employers cannot evade their responsibilities by disguising employment relationships as something else. This principle allows for the protection of workers' rights and helps prevent the exploitation of labour.

In summary, the implementation of employment measures, supported by the principle of presumption of labour relations, forms a vital part of quality assurance efforts in safeguarding workers' rights and promoting fair and formal employment practices.

3.7. Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

Top-level programmes and schemes

The Ukrainian Government, through its various sectoral ministries, actively participates in multiple international co-operation agreements at a central level. A notable focus is the development of the younger generation, specifically promoting skills related to entrepreneurship and business. The Ministry of Youth and Sport is a key player in this, currently upholding numerous international youth co-operation agreements with various European Union countries.

[Several projects and initiatives](#), as featured on the ministry's website, reinforce this commitment. These include youth exchange programmes with Lithuania and Poland, the popularisation of traditional crafts among young people and the initiation of various projects aimed at entrepreneurship development and social activism among young people.

Overall, these endeavours align with State Targeted Social Programme “Youth of Ukraine” for the period 2021-25, which prioritises entrepreneurial skills within its framework of fostering youth skills development. This highlights the government's strategic approach to empowering its youth and investing in the future of the country.

Academic mobility

Youth academic mobility is a key focus for the Ukrainian Government and the MES. They have established provisions for all participants of the educational process to take part in academic mobility programmes. Key aspects of this include clear definitions of types and forms of academic mobility, the principle of credit transfer based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), especially through curriculum content comparison, and the safeguarding of study places and scholarships for students, as well as job positions for higher education institution staff involved in these programmes.

Recognising the autonomy of HEIs in Ukraine, each independently establishes and ratifies agreements that facilitate internships, traineeships and apprenticeships for the youth. The provisions governing academic mobility and the mechanisms for credit transfers based on the ECTS are chiefly determined by the following key documents:

- the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine [on approval of the regulations on the procedure for implementing the right to academic mobility](#);
- the regulation on the procedure for implementing the right to academic mobility in each HEI;
- the regulation on the procedure for crediting study results in each HEI.

These legal guidelines underscore the essential process for enabling academic mobility for all participants in the educational process, marking a significant step in implementing Ukraine's Law on higher education and creating a robust toolkit for the internationalisation of Ukrainian HEIs. The system of academic mobility is [presented](#) on the MoES's website.

Through international co-operation, numerous institutions participate in exchange programmes like [Erasmus+](#), [Mevlana](#) and others, stimulating the development of international academic mobility programmes. These programmes offer students, postgraduates and teachers' opportunities to improve their learning process, gain new knowledge and professional experience, receive study abroad grants, experience studying in European universities, enhance employability and competitiveness, and develop career prospects. Annually, approximately 30-50 students from each HEI in Ukraine participate in academic exchange programmes. This provides them with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the educational process in European countries and develop

their soft skills, highly demanded in the modern labour market.

NGO initiatives

The enhancement of entrepreneurial skills and the promotion of cross-border mobility are increasingly prioritised by NGOs and the private sector in Ukraine. Organisations like the [AIESEC](#) are leading the way, providing young people with the opportunity to gain valuable international experience, develop their professional skills and advance their careers through programmes like [Global Talent](#). This initiative illustrates the essential role of such organisations in facilitating cross-border mobility in employment and entrepreneurship. This emphasis on international exposure and skill development stands to significantly contribute to the personal and professional growth of Ukraine's young people, equipping them with the tools necessary to succeed in an increasingly globalised marketplace.

The Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme

The [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme](#) offers a valuable opportunity for new and aspiring entrepreneurs in Ukraine to learn from experienced entrepreneurs in other countries. The call for proposals to select Intermediary Organisations responsible for implementing the programme closed in May 2023. While the programme has not started yet, it holds the promise of [enhancing youth entrepreneurship, fostering networking and facilitating market access for Ukrainian entrepreneurs](#). As the programme progresses, it is expected to contribute to the support of Ukrainian entrepreneurs and aid in the country's reconstruction phase after Russia's military aggression.

Legal framework

Ukraine has established several policy measures and legal frameworks to address the mobility of young workers, trainees, apprentices and professionals.

Ukraine's approach to regulating the legal status of foreigners is [based](#) on reciprocity and guided by Ukrainian laws, international rules and agreements. Several legal documents govern the rights and obligations of foreigners, including labour laws, employment laws, instructions on conducting business and bilateral treaties on employment and social protection. These laws and agreements cover various aspects, such as work permits, employment contracts, entry and exit of foreign workers and their families, social security provisions, tax regulations and rules for sending earned income back to the home country. Also, recommendations from international organisations and multilateral conventions contribute to this framework.

Ukraine's social security system covers areas such as sickness and maternity benefits, unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, disability and survivor benefits. In the context of cross-border mobility, the transferability of certain benefits depends on bilateral or multilateral agreements between Ukraine and other countries. Such agreements often address the co-ordination of social security systems to protect the rights of mobile workers.

Young foreign professionals seeking to work in Ukraine must typically obtain a work permit, which is [issued](#) by the SES. They also need a long-term visa (type D) to enter the country, which may later be converted into a temporary residence permit. As for EU nationals, Ukraine's visa-free regime with the EU allows them to stay in the country for up to 90 days within any 180-day period without a visa. However, for longer stays or for work, they would need to follow the standard procedures for obtaining a work permit and residence permit.

In terms of taxation, residents in Ukraine (those who stay in the country for more than 183 days in a 12-month period) are subject to taxation on their worldwide income, whereas non-residents are taxed only on their income derived from Ukrainian sources. The tax rate for personal income, as of 2021, is generally 18%. An additional military tax of 1.5% applies to all taxable income. Double taxation treaties exist between Ukraine and many countries, including EU member states, to prevent double taxation for individuals working abroad.

3.8. Development of entrepreneurship competence

Policy framework

The advancement of entrepreneurship stands as a paramount priority within governmental policy, particularly when combatting the imminent threats of deepening economic depression. The Ukrainian Government has actively endorsed and enacted [Law on the development and state support of small and medium-sized enterprises in Ukraine](#) and [Law on the national programme to promote the development of small businesses in Ukraine](#). Other vital legislative pieces include the [Law on state registration of legal entities and individuals - entrepreneurs for the simplification of tax payers' registration](#) and a multitude of decrees by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

However, currently in Ukraine, there is a conspicuous absence of a holistic, state-level strategy focusing on the cultivation of entrepreneurial skills and proficiencies among young people. Despite this, certain facets of such a system do exist within various sectoral strategies and action plans, prominently illustrated by the State Targeted Social Programme “Youth of Ukraine” for the period 2021-25.

Formal learning

Schools

The [New Ukrainian School's concept](#) and Ukraine's Law on education aim to create well-rounded individuals capable of societal integration, interaction with nature, self-improvement, lifelong learning and civic engagement. This is achieved through the cultivation of key competencies, including proficiency in languages, mathematical skills, scientific and technological understanding, innovation, environmental consciousness, information literacy and cultural competence.

A particular emphasis is placed on entrepreneurship and financial literacy, which are viewed as critical skills in our globalised and competitive economy. The development of entrepreneurial competencies serves as a pathway for individual prosperity and a mechanism for national economic growth, making it an integral part of comprehensive educational strategies.

The [“Institute of Modernisation of Educational Content”](#) in Ukraine serves as an experimental pedagogy hub, fostering innovation in Ukrainian education in close collaboration with various educational institutions and the Ministry of Education and Science. One of the institute's primary tasks is to develop and implement entrepreneurship-focused programmes for secondary schools. A key initiative is the project [“The Development of Business Education in Ukraine”](#), which aligns with the strategic goals set out in the European document “Europe-2020”. Evidence suggests business education thrives in a competitive environment, motivating the younger generation towards productivity. Innovative projects include a business simulation computer programme, ViAL+, designed for 7-10 grades. Alongside this, various training sessions were conducted, educating educational leaders and teachers on innovative educational technologies and the formation of entrepreneurship competencies. The institute also organises annual nationwide vernissage workshops on entrepreneurship and career guidance, engaging over 1 410 participants from across Ukraine in 2017-21.

Higher education institutions

Almost every HEI offers a course entitled [“Entrepreneurship Development”](#). This course aims to equip higher education students with an understanding of the theoretical approaches and practical skills required to examine the specifics of the state's policy on entrepreneurship development in Ukraine. It also evaluates the influence of both exogenous and endogenous factors on this development, familiarises students with the main forms and methods of its implementation, identifies pressing issues related to the execution of economic policy in Ukraine and suggests potential solutions.

The primary aim of this discipline is to research modern entrepreneurship development theories in Ukraine, promote an optimal model aligning with European standards amidst globalisation and develop competencies in using mechanisms regulating state entrepreneurship policy. Furthermore, it encourages choosing fitting tools for state regulation of entrepreneurship and the regulatory impact on various governance levels, alongside methodologies for analysing economic policies, reform principles for state administration and local self-governance and directions for entrepreneurial sector management improvement.

Private initiatives are also launching professional development programmes in Ukraine for educators, entitled “[Formation of Entrepreneurial Competence in Educational Institutions](#)”. This course is for teachers who are implementing the principles of the New Ukrainian School in the educational process, forming and developing key competences in students.

Non-formal and informal learning

Numerous initiatives are in place across Ukraine to foster entrepreneurship, particularly targeting young people and those affected by the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

[UPSHIFT Ukraine](#) is a comprehensive solution to many challenges threatening the future of young people in Ukraine. It is the United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) global innovation programme, first launched in Kosovo* in 2014 and now implemented in 23 countries, aimed at fostering entrepreneurship skills in adolescents and young people and expanding their opportunities for social entrepreneurship. It was adapted for Ukraine in 2018 with the support of the EU, with a local partner, the [Kharkiv Professional Development Foundation \(new name “Ukrainian Professional Development”\)](#), launching the programme in Kharkiv. As of now, it operates across Ukraine and continues to expand.

The UNDP, backed by the European Union, offers entrepreneurship and business skills training for those affected by the Russian aggression in Ukraine. The educational programme targets people in various regions of Ukraine, particularly displaced persons, individuals who lost their jobs due to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and entrepreneurs aiming to restore or expand their businesses.

Various other programmes and courses, such as the “[Okay, Google: How to Become an Entrepreneur?](#)” course for teenagers and the [National Online School for Entrepreneurs](#), provide opportunities to gain business knowledge. [Oshchadbank's “Build Your Own”](#) platform offers online courses to help individuals assess their business understanding and improve their skills.

Educators’ support in entrepreneurship education

In line with the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers’ resolution on [certain issues of professional development of pedagogical and scientific-pedagogical personnel](#), it is mandatory for teaching staff of preschool, extracurricular and VET institutions to undergo professional development every five years. This regulation also extends to teachers and scientific-pedagogical staff in general secondary and vocational pre-higher education, requiring annual professional development in accordance with Ukrainian Law on education, Law on general secondary education and Law [on Vocational pre-higher education](#).

Such professional development not only supports the constant advancement of the educators’ skills but also contributes to their certification, a key requirement by the legislation. A prominent aspect of this professional development is the enhancement of professional competencies, including the knowledge of the subject matter,

* All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

teaching methods, technologies and, notably, entrepreneurship.

3.9. Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

Access to information

Providing comprehensive and accessible information to young people is essential for fostering a supportive entrepreneurial ecosystem and encouraging youth participation in the start-up ecosystem of Ukraine.

It is crucial for policymakers to establish effective mechanisms for disseminating information regarding these aspects to young individuals. This is implemented through [central information portals](#), sector-specific government websites, local government platforms and dedicated websites managed by relevant authorities.

Furthermore, collaboration between the MoYS, the [National Youth Organisations Council of Ukraine](#) and the [All-Ukrainian Youth Centre](#) should be emphasised, as they play key roles in consolidating and disseminating information on opportunities exclusively available to young entrepreneurs.

At the central level, there is also an informational portal called “[Дія](#)” (English – Diia) supported by the MoDT. Diia includes relevant sections providing information on available resources for the development of entrepreneurial initiatives, skills and competencies, including those aimed at young people.

The “[Дія.Освіта](#)” (English – Diia.Education) section contains information on educational opportunities, including entrepreneurial education, which helps young individuals acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for a successful entrepreneurial path.

The “[Дія.Підприємництво](#)” (English – Diia.Entrepreneurship) section provides information on entrepreneurial opportunities and resources available to young entrepreneurs. This section includes information on funding, support, consultations and other services that assist young entrepreneurs in realising their ideas and developing their businesses.

Additionally, the MoDT in co-operation with [Garage48](#) and the start-up incubator YEP! are organising the online hackathon called “[Garage48 Empowering Youth!](#)” The event aims to generate innovative solutions that enhance our daily lives and address the impact-economic challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic in Ukraine.

The hackathon invites students, professionals, visionaries and enthusiasts to participate in various fields, including software development, design, marketing, business development and project management. Additionally, specialists and students in sectors like transportation, healthcare, social well-being, tourism and more are encouraged to join if they have a drive to create new solutions, products and services.

The hackathon offers an opportunity to turn ideas into reality, and the best teams will have the chance to receive monetary grants and a mentorship package from the YEP start-up incubator and to participate in the [European acceleration programme Garage365](#).

Access to capital

According to the [data](#) provided by the SES, in 2022 Ukraine is barely coping with the current influx of people who have lost their jobs. In 11 months, state employment centres managed to find jobs for 289 000 Ukrainians. In addition, the government has launched a series of programmes aimed at stimulating business development. Among them are microgrants of up to UAH 250 000 for starting one’s own business or business expansion, grants for the development of horticulture, berry farming and viticulture (state funding up to 70% of investments), grants for the establishment of greenhouse farms (state funding of 50-70%, up to UAH 7 million). The state also provides funding for processing industries (up to 70% of the project) and invests in IT start-ups (grants and loans ranging from UAH 750 000 to UAH 8 million).

So far, these programmes have not had a significant impact on the government’s expectations regarding the unemployment rate. Moreover, it is unlikely that there will be a large number of willing individuals to take the

risk of starting their own business in the current conditions of uncertainty and significant security risks. The situation may improve once these risks become smaller.

Governmental initiatives

The [Ukrainian Startup Fund](#) (officially known as the Innovation Development Fund) was registered in December 2018 based on the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine [on the establishment of the Innovation Development Fund](#). Its primary goal is to stimulate the establishment and growth of technological start-ups at early stages (pre-seed and seed), thus boosting their competitiveness on a global scale. The allocation of funds to start-ups is determined through a competitive process, during which businesses are evaluated and selected by a panel of independent investment specialists. The fund invests in start-ups at the beginning of their journey, providing US\$25 000 at the pre-seed stage and US\$50 000 at the seed stage. Consequently, an emerging start-up could amass a total of up to US\$75 000.

The Ukrainian Startup Fund also offers burgeoning start-ups the chance to secure grants of up to US\$10 000 to participate in educational programmes delivered by esteemed Ukrainian and international accelerators. The purpose of the fund's grant acceleration programme is to escalate the number of prosperous start-ups, enhance their qualifications and foster the advancement of business-related skills and proficiency.

The “[еРобота](#)” (English – “There is a job”) programme is a government-led programme that provides grants for Ukrainians to start businesses, boost entrepreneurship and support education. The goal is to promote business activities and create jobs. The programme has six different grant schemes:

- small grants for starting a business;
- funding for growing processing businesses;
- public funds for setting up gardens;
- funds for enhancing greenhouse farming;
- grants for launching start-ups, including in the IT field;
- financial support for education in IT specialties.

Both newcomers to entrepreneurship and those with previous business experience can apply for these grants.

The SES has its own start-up programme called “[Власна Справа](#)” (English – “Own Business”) for Ukrainian citizens aged 18-65. The programme aims to support individuals by providing them with grants to launch their businesses and offering mentorship.

Grant for entrepreneurs from small towns and villages

“[Роби своє](#)” (English – “Make Yours”) is a business idea support programme by the charitable fund “[MHP-Hromadi](#)” for entrepreneurs from small towns and villages in Ukraine. The fund plans to support up to 50 business ideas. Participants can be entrepreneurs from the following regions: Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, Vinnytsia, Cherkasy, Lviv, Sumy, Ivano-Frankivsk, Khmelnytskyi, Ternopil, Chernihiv and Volyn.

Grants ranging from UAH 50 000 to UAH 100 000 are aimed at supporting both aspiring entrepreneurs and those who are already in business (up to four years) and wish to expand or improve their business.

Grants for veterans

A microfinancing programme for veterans'-led business was established by the [Ukrainian Veterans Fund](#). Participants can be veterans and their family members who have been IDPs since 24 February 2022 and have confirmation of this status. They can receive monetary compensation of up to UAH 20 000 to purchase goods necessary for their own business.

The number of successful Ukrainian start-ups making their way onto the global stage is increasing and continually inspiring new entrepreneurs. The abundant pool of skilled talents, coupled with the availability of first-hand experience, is a key factor stimulating the growth of [Ukrainian IT start-ups](#), and the number of Ukrainian success stories is impressive and growing.

The other government-driven initiative is supported by the SES [microgrant for veterans, people affected by the Russian aggression against Ukraine and their family members](#).

3.10. Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

Special events and activities

Despite the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the country remains committed to fostering entrepreneurship among its young people through various programmes and initiatives, including business fairs which offer young entrepreneurs a platform to display their innovations and interact with professionals, investors and peers for mutual learning and growth.

One such noteworthy event is the [JUNIOR EXPO 2023](#), a youth entrepreneurship fair. The event saw the participation of 40 student mini-companies from professional and technical institutions and colleges of Lviv and Chernivtsi regions, where they presented an array of products ranging from food and beverages, accessories, souvenirs, household goods, metalwork, to water analysis services.

In parallel, the country is also actively leveraging the power of public relations campaigns to introduce the concept of entrepreneurship to young individuals. These campaigns seek to familiarise young people with the world of entrepreneurship, elucidate the benefits and challenges associated with it, and encourage them to consider it as a viable career option.

A case in point is the [Career Day – Job Fair](#), scheduled on 26 May 2023, at the Student Centre of the State University of Telecommunications. The event is set to host an array of renowned companies, including Huawei, Vodafone, Lifecell, SoftServe, Sigma Software and IBM, among others, offering students an opportunity to explore vacancies, determine their preferred employment sector and potentially secure a job or an internship.

Ukraine promotes youth entrepreneurship in social sectors, acknowledging entrepreneurship's power to drive social change. The [Social Impact Award](#) programme supports young social entrepreneurs globally since 2009, giving them credibility, seed funding and access to an international summit. Despite challenges, Ukraine's determination in fostering entrepreneurial culture reflects resilience, indicating a future enriched with innovative, socially aware young entrepreneurs.

Networks and partnerships

Ukraine boasts a thriving entrepreneurship ecosystem supported by an extensive network of incubators, accelerators and science parks. These initiatives have had a significant impact on the local entrepreneurship scene by providing valuable resources such as mentorship, funding opportunities and access to orders.

One notable project is [Unit City](#), which has become a hub for innovative ideas, community engagement and the growth of promising companies across various sectors including [FinTech](#), [AgriTech](#), blockchain, manufacturing, Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality (VR/AR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI).

Unit City currently hosts over 100 resident companies and facilitates collaborations at the intersection of cutting-edge technologies. In addition to Unit City, cities like Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odessa and Lviv have established their own business incubators and co-working spaces, creating fertile ground for start-ups to thrive (e.g. [Eō business-incubator](#), [YEP!](#), [Startup Grind](#), [Impact Hub Odesa](#), [Innovation Kitchen](#), [Hub Lab](#)). These initiatives attract a diverse range of entrepreneurs and offer tailored support programmes, including training sessions conducted by Silicon Valley experts and opportunities to connect with international investors from Europe and the United States.

Ukraine's incubators, accelerators, entrepreneurial events and tech communities highlight its dedication to a vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem, stimulating business growth, innovation and opportunities for global entrepreneurs. This landscape underscores the value of investing in young businesses and technology, positioning Ukraine as a dynamic actor in the global entrepreneurship stage.

3.11. Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

As of May 2023, there have been [changes in legislation](#) pertaining to employment and the labour market, including matters concerning young people. The changes have just come into effect and are summarised below.

VET Voucher System: a new initiative was introduced through Order No. 2040, issued on 11 April 2023. This order approved a list of professions and specialities eligible for vocational training vouchers. The new regulation targets the enhancement of skill acquisition in vital professions and specialities, fostering employability, particularly among young people seeking to enter the job market or switch careers. The scheme came into effect on 25 May 2023, providing financial aid to individuals keen on acquiring new skills.

Amendments to labour checks: modifications were made to labour checks to accommodate the dynamic nature of the labour market, especially during the Russian aggression against Ukraine. These changes, made through Order No. 1243 issued on 9 March 2023, updated the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine's Order No. 2161 of 27 October 2020. The new order approves forms for an "employer order cancellation or labour law violation removal" (form 16) and a "warning" (form 17). It also includes changes to other document forms used in state supervision and control measures by the State Labour Service. These measures aim to enhance labour law enforcement, ensuring protection and fair treatment for all workers, including young entrants to the workforce. This order became effective on 23 May 2023.

These changes demonstrate the Ukrainian authorities' efforts in fostering a labour market that encourages vocational training and protects workers' rights. These updates in legislation are particularly beneficial for young people, who often face challenges entering the labour market due to a lack of skills and experience, and could potentially contribute to economic resilience and growth in the future.

Ongoing debates

As of 29 May 2023 there were 15 draft laws [under review by the Ukrainian Parliament](#) primarily focusing on the development, support and growth of SMEs. They cover a range of issues including taxation, job creation, industrial production and state support for various sectors, including culture, creative industries, tourism and services for citizens.

Support for SMEs: the majority of the drafts focus on the development and state support of SMEs. Drafts 1256, 1142, 7206, 5762, 3812 and 2149 all seek to implement changes that benefit SMEs, ranging from simplifying production conditions to ensuring state support.

Taxation and support for the self-employed: another main focus is the revision of the Tax Code of Ukraine, aiming to improve conditions for self-employed individuals. Drafts 2150, 2200, 2200-1, 4423-2 and 2149 propose amendments to provide tax relief, address rights violations and offer state support for self-employed individuals, especially those in the service sector.

Youth employment and support for students, workers and combat participants: drafts 1160 and 2301 focus on supporting young people in employment and education and providing assistance to combat participants.

However, all drafts currently lack sufficient votes, which highlights a need for clearer articulation of their intended benefits and strategic negotiations among lawmakers.

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