

Profile on economic inclusion for people with disabilities and older workers: Georgia

Purpose and scope: This profile responds to the three pillars of the EBRD's *Economic Inclusion Strategy* (access to employment and skills, finance and entrepreneurship, and services) and aims to provide targeted support to the efforts of the EBRD and its partners to better understand the needs of people with disabilities (PWD) and older workers. It is not intended to be an exhaustive overview of all issues affecting people with disabilities and older workers in this country. It was prepared for the EBRD using publicly available sources.

<p>Country context</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population: As of 2019, Georgia had a population of 3.7 million (GEOSTAT, 2020). According to the latest population census in 2014, the main ethnic minorities in the country included Azeris, Armenians, Russians and Ossetians (GEOSTAT, 2014). • Economy: Georgia is considered an upper-middle-income country with a GNI per capita of GEL 12,907 (approximately US\$ 4,740). The country has a total labour force of 1.9 million, with an estimated unemployment rate of 11.6 per cent in 2019. Key sectors include trade (15.3 per cent of GDP in 2016), manufacturing (10 per cent) and agriculture (9 per cent). Other important sectors include construction, transportation, and finance (ETF, 2019). More than 40 per cent of total employment is concentrated in agriculture and the labour market remains characterised by high levels of underemployment, informality, and low levels of productivity (World Bank, 2018). By July 2020, over 30 per cent of employed people were unable to work due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, while an estimated 8 per cent of all jobs had been lost due to the economic impacts of the pandemic (World Bank, 2020). • Prevalence/responses to Covid-19: As of October 2020, there had been 15,327 confirmed cases of Covid-19 and 124 confirmed deaths (Agenda.ge, 2020). The government has introduced various measures to provide financial support to employers and workers affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic, including extraordinary social protection measures aimed at the most vulnerable groups (Stop Covid-19, 2020). The country was under a temporary state of emergency between March-May 2020 (World Bank, 2020).
<p>People with disabilities (PWD)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of 2017, there were 125,104 people with disabilities registered in Georgia to receive social assistance, amounting to 3.3 per cent of the population (IDFI, 2018). According to the 2014 census, 34.4 per cent (33,027 persons) of economically active people with disabilities (age 15 and older) were employed (IDFI, 2018). • Employment and skills: The newly adopted Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires the government to promote the equitable participation of people with disabilities in society and expressly adopts the principle of 'reasonable accommodation' across social and economic domains (including education and employment). The Labour Code prohibits employment discrimination on the basis of disability and requires employers to take appropriate measures to protect the employment rights of people with disabilities – including with respect to access to employment, career advancement, and training – while the Law on Employment Promotion provides for wage subsidies up to 50 per cent for a period of 3 months for employers of disabled workers. • In practice, people with disabilities continue to face barriers to employment, including physical access barriers to workplaces and transport, as well as stigma and discrimination in education and among employers. According to the 2014 census, just 34 per cent of people with disabilities were employed, with even lower rates among those with more severe disabilities (IDFI, 2018). Employers are often reluctant to make reasonable workplace adjustments to accommodate disabled employees, and national legal provisions are reportedly insufficient to enforce employer action (PDO, 2017). Physical access barriers to public transport, inflexible social benefit schemes (benefit entitlements cancelled on commencement of employment), and a lack of awareness about existing support measures are further impediments to employment for people with disabilities (PDO, 2017; US DoS, 2020). • Finance and entrepreneurship: The new Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires the government to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship among people with disabilities. However, there are no specific measures to promote and/or ensure access to finance or banking services for people with disabilities, and the National Ombudsperson has called for greater policy attention to support disabled entrepreneurship (PDO, 2017). There is

	<p>limited information on which to assess people with disabilities' access to finance and entrepreneurship in practice, although the lack of targeted policy initiatives and wider physical and informational access barriers are likely to pose overarching challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services: The Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities tasks the government with ensuring equal access to all physical environments (including transport, workplaces, health facilities, and other services), while several ongoing donor-funded infrastructure projects include accessibility components. However, in practice there remain significant challenges both in terms of access to physical infrastructure (especially public buildings and transport) and information (government services, road and transportation signage/information) that impede access to services for people with disabilities (PDO, 2017, 2020). • COVID-19: People with disabilities have access to broader extraordinary social protection measures introduced by the government, which are focused on laid-off workers, the self-employed and other vulnerable groups not covered under pre-existing schemes (Stop Covid-19, 2020).
<p>Older workers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older workers (50-64) account for approximately 25 per cent (766,500 people) of the working-age population (over 15 years), with a labour force participation rate of 82 per cent and reported unemployment of 14 per cent (based on ILO data from 2016). National statistical data indicate a significant proportion (61 per cent) of older workers are self-employed (GEOSTAT, 2020a). • Employment and skills: The Labour Code expressly prohibits discrimination in employment on the grounds of age. Workers over the statutory retirement age are excluded from government employment promotion programmes and cannot register or receive support as “unemployed persons” (Law on Employment Promotion). Government employment policies rarely target older workers specifically, with most efforts focused on youth. A National Action Plan to implement the State Policy on Population Ageing (which aims to strengthen protections for the rights of older people in general) expired in 2018. It is not clear whether any new policy initiatives are envisaged in this domain (PDO, 2020). • There is limited information on older workers' access to employment and skills opportunities in practice, although headline employment and labour force participation rates compare favourably to other demographic groups (see above). There are some reported cases of workers being dismissed on reaching a certain age, mostly related to the public sector (PDO, 2020). • Finance and entrepreneurship: There are no targeted policy or other initiatives to promote entrepreneurship among older workers. However, the lack of targeted support does not appear to impede entrepreneurship among older workers overall, with older workers over-represented among the self-employed (based on ILO data from 2016). Wider accessibility barriers may impede access to financial and banking services for some older workers (see under “Disability”). • Services: There is no information to indicate that older workers face specific barriers in accessing services that enhance economic participation (such as transport, ICT, and key public infrastructure). However, wider physical and informational accessibility barriers may be relevant to some older workers that experience reduced mobility and other forms of disability (see under “Disability”). • Covid-19: Although no specific measures have been created to provide direct assistance to older workers, the government has made financial assistance available to workers who are more likely to be economically affected, such as workers who are not receiving salaries or have been laid off, as well as self-employed workers (Stop Covid-19, 2020).

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