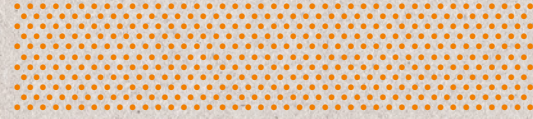




**STEP** Statistics  
Through  
Eastern  
Partnership



REGIONAL PUBLICATION  
ON SDG 8

PROGRESS TOWARDS  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
GOALS 8 (SDG8) FOR ECONOMIC  
GROWTH AND DECENT WORK:  
WHAT DO THE STATISTICS TELL US?



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## SDG 8

Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editors of this publication would like to thank colleagues in Eurostat, Unit B3 – Enlargement, Neighbourhood and Development Cooperation and expert advisors from the national statistical Institutes of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine who were closely involved in its preparation.

## Statistics Through Eastern Partnership (STEP)

**PROJECT DURATION: 2019-2022**

**BUDGET: €4.7 million**

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION AND COUNTRIES COVERED

Statistics Through Eastern Partnership (STEP) is the first regional statistics programme in the Eastern Partnership region. The Eastern Partnership (EaP) is a policy initiative between the European Union, its Member States and the six Eastern neighbour countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus<sup>1</sup>, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The EaP aims to deepen and strengthen the relations between the EU, its Member States and their EaP partner countries. The STEP programme is financed by the European Union. STEP is managed by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, with a mission to provide high quality statistics and data on Europe. It is implemented by a project consortium led by Expertise France. The programme addresses both subject matter statistics such as labour market, time-use, national accounts, business registers, energy and transport as well as cross-cutting issues like inclusion of user needs, increased use of administrative data, quality in statistics, gender issues and sustainable development goals.

### OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of STEP is to produce more and better statistics for evidence-based decision-making. The primary partners are the national statistical institutes of the EaP countries but other institutions in their national statistical systems are also included in the activities if deemed beneficial. The availability of reliable and comparable statistics is essential for informed policymaking at European, regional and country level. For this, statistics need to be produced in line with European and international norms and standards, including the European Statistics Code of Practice.

### ACTIONS IN BRIEF

This will be achieved through four complementary actions:

1. improve the production and dissemination of good quality statistics in the partner countries;
2. increase the level of harmonisation of methodologies both between the countries and with the EU;
3. strengthen the institutional capacity of the NSIs of the region along the principles set out in the European Statistics Code of Practice;
4. support evidence-based policymaking, ensuring that statistical evidence substantiates policy choices, through improved cooperation and coordination between the national statistical institutes, policymakers and line institutions.

### MORE INFORMATION AT:

[www.eu-step.eu](http://www.eu-step.eu)

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-neighbourhood-policy/enp-east/step>

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>

Twitter: @EU\_STEP

(1) Belarus suspended its participation in STEP programme from 10 January 2022

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# List of acronyms

<b>ATM</b>	Automated teller machine
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus disease
<b>EaP</b>	Eastern Partnership
<b>ENP</b>	European Neighbourhood Policy
<b>ESA</b>	European System of National and Regional Accounts
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>Eurostat</b>	Statistical office of the European Union
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organisation
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GIS</b>	Geographical Information System
<b>IEA</b>	International Energy Agency
<b>ICLS</b>	International Conference on Labour Statistics
<b>ILOSTAT</b>	International Labour Organization Statistics
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>LFS</b>	Labour Force Survey
<b>NEET</b>	Neither in Employment, Education, or Training
<b>NSIs</b>	National Statistical Institutes
<b>NSSs</b>	National Statistical Systems
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and Development
<b>SEEA</b>	Systems of Environmental and Economic Accounts
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SNA</b>	System of National Accounts
<b>STEP</b>	Statistics Through Eastern Partnership
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNEP</b>	United Nations Environment Programme
<b>UNEP-WCMC</b>	UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

# 01

## Introduction

### *About the STEP Programme and the preparation of regional publications*

The availability and the quality of statistics are essential for improved policy-making at regional and country level. Statistics Through Eastern Partnership (STEP) is the first regional statistics programme of the European Union in the Eastern Partnership (EaP) consisting of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus,<sup>2</sup> Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. It aims to help make more and better statistics for evidence based decision making in both the public and private sector. European and international norms and standards, including the European Statistics Code of practice, will guide the work.

The programme is financed by the European Union, managed by Eurostat and implemented by a consortium led by Expertise France. It began on 1 January 2019 and runs until 31 July 2022. National statistical institutes of the six countries are the main partners in the programme.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are one of the 16 projects under the programme with a range of activities that aim to improve the availability and accessibility of gender-related and sex-disaggregated data.

(2) Belarus suspended its participation in STEP programme from 10 January 2022

## 1.1 Objectives of this publication

The STEP programme addresses both subject matter statistics such as labour market, time-use, national accounts, business register, energy, and transport as well as cross-cutting issues like inclusion of user needs, increased use of administrative data, quality in statistics, gender issues and sustainable development goals. Four publications are planned to be published in the framework of STEP. This is the second publication following the first publication on Gender Indicators.<sup>3</sup>

Partner countries adopted a national indicator framework considering the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and some of them developed a dedicated web platform to monitor and evaluate national SDG indicators. EU SDGs have been considered by the three partner countries who have signed an Association Agreement (Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine). This publication on SDG8 – Economic Growth and Decent Work for all – is the first regional publication on SDG Indicators under the Programme. NSIs around the world all face similar challenges in monitoring the SDG Indicators with limited resources and dealing with a lack of (high-quality) data or harmonised methodologies between countries.

## 1.2 SDG8 statistics in the Eastern Partnership

### SDG8 has many components to monitor

The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 for 2030 is to **promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all**.

The EaP countries and the European Union share similar policy priorities related to achieving SDG8, including recognising that inclusive green economic growth and decent employment are of key importance for the development and prosperity of countries and for the well-being and personal fulfilment of individuals. For economic growth to be truly sustainable, it needs to be accompanied by eco-efficiency improvements, climate action and resilience measures, alongside active labour market and social inclusion policies, generating employment opportunities for all and improving working conditions for those already in employment and supporting citizens in their labour market transitions.<sup>4</sup>

Within SDG8, 12 global sub-goals were developed by the United Nations (UN) to guide decision making in specific policy areas. These relate to the categories of Sustained Growth, Environmental Integrity, Social Inclusion and Decent Work, while a cross-cutting feature of the SDGs is the 'Leaving No One Behind' agenda, which places equality and non-discrimination at the heart of sustainable development. Official Statisticians have developed indicators, via the UN and organisations like the International Labour Organisation (ILO), to help policymakers in monitoring progress in all these areas for SDG8 and they have since been adapted to the policy priorities of the European Union. Forty such internationally comparable indicators that can help were identified in the drafting of this publication (see Annex 1). Many of these also need disaggregated data for monitoring relevant progress on the Leaving No One Behind agenda.

### Low data availability for monitoring SDG8

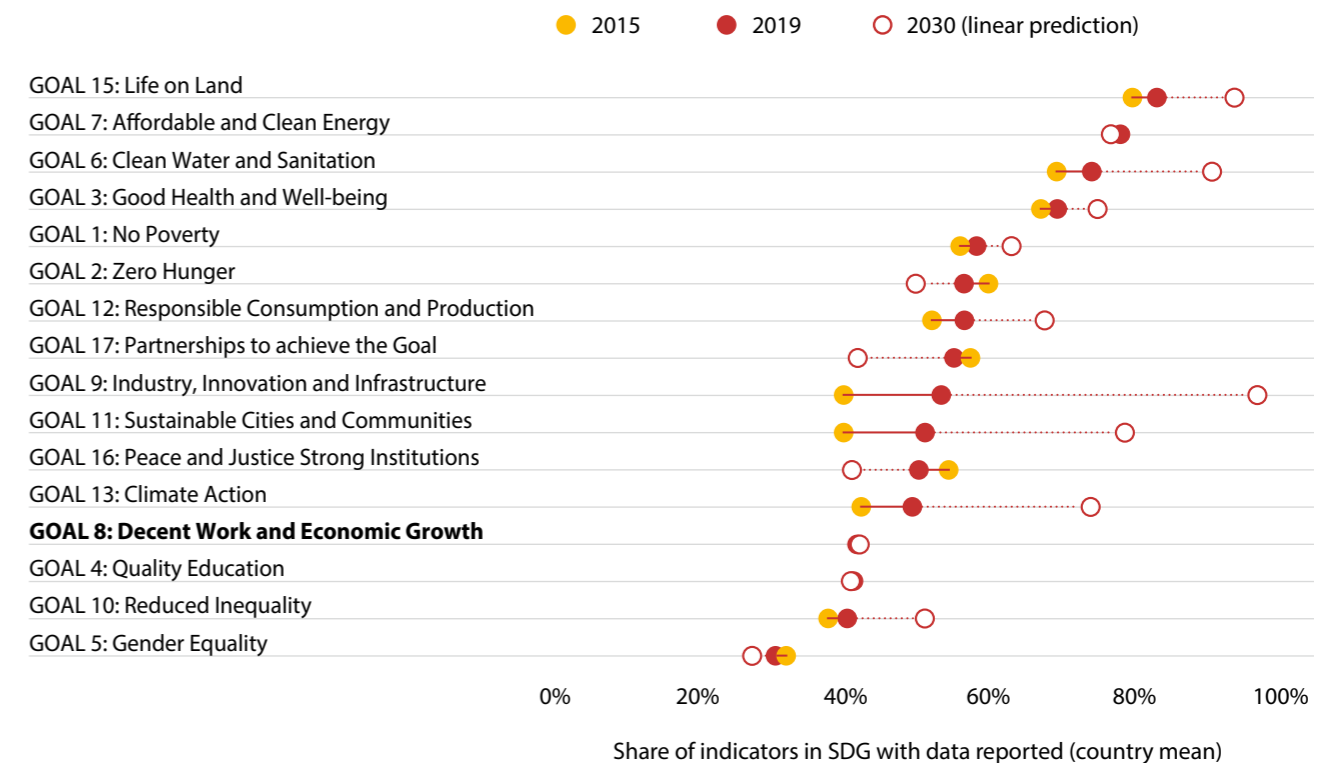
National Statistical Systems (NSSs) and the international statistical community have made good progress in developing methodologies and international standards relevant to measuring SDG Indicators, including for SDG8. But a global challenge persists due to a lack of sufficiently available quality data to enable reporting.

SDG8, while being a high priority for many governments, is a particularly challenging SDG to monitor across all its many components. The World Bank ranked SDG8 13th out of 16 of the 17 SDG Indicators in terms of amount of data reported (see Figure 1). The low position of SDG5 and SDG10 (related inequality) in the ranking also reflects a global lack of data related to monitoring the Leaving No One Behind agenda. The number of indicators reported on in this publication is therefore limited.

(3) <https://eu-step.eu/publications/step-brochure-gender-eq/>

(4) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=SDG\\_8\\_-\\_Decent\\_work\\_and\\_economic\\_growth#Decent\\_work\\_and\\_economic\\_growth\\_in\\_the\\_EU\\_overview\\_and\\_key\\_trends](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=SDG_8_-_Decent_work_and_economic_growth#Decent_work_and_economic_growth_in_the_EU_overview_and_key_trends)

FIGURE 1: PROGRESS ON SDG REPORTING 2015-2019 (WORLD BANK)<sup>5</sup>



### Eurostat and National Statistical Institutes are rising to the challenge

The EaP NSIs have been collaborating with Eurostat (the statistical office of the European Union) via the Statistics Through Eastern Partnership (STEP) to develop their capability to optimise the availability of internationally comparable data across the SDGs. The exchange of experiences in SDG data production, in the development of methodologies, and in building and sustaining SDG monitoring and evaluation systems have added invaluable inputs towards making SDG data available and improvements in their dissemination. Section 4 reviews the feasible work that can be done to improve reporting on SDG8 in the EaP countries in the coming years, including steps to harmonise approaches between Eurostat and the EaP countries.

## 1.3 Methodology and selection of Indicators

This publication was prepared by Matthew Shearing, an expert in official statistics, under the guidance and leadership of the STEP Programme team. International cooperation focal points from each of the National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) were involved throughout, alongside NSI subject matter experts in National Accounts and Labour Market Statistics, in guiding and checking the structure, content, and Indicators and data included.

(5) <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/are-we-there-yet-many-countries-dont-report-progress-all-sdgs-according-world-banks-new>

## Using official statistics for decision making on SDG8

The presentation of the official statistics featured in this publication aims to optimise their value to different types of users by:

- The use of non-technical language and avoidance of in-depth explanations
- A short background on each indicator to describe what is being measured and why it may be important for policymaking
- Use of both infographics and short descriptions of the type of patterns in the data that may be relevant for decision making
- Presenting regional-level analysis for ready international comparisons
- A focus on describing trends rather than on understanding specific figures

By their nature, official statistics should be produced in accordance with international standards. But in analysing SDG progress, a focus on trends is advised. This is because, despite high standards, there are always limitations in the accuracy of any statistics and there may be variations between countries in methodology and data sources. On the other hand, some of the indicators featured in this publication use data for a country whose source or methodology have changed over time. In this case, it is necessary to understand when this change happened and to focus separately on the direction of trend before and after the change.

## Understanding indicators and data featured in this publication

### Which Indicators are featured?

The indicators selected for analysis in this publication<sup>6</sup> were chosen from all the indicators related to SDG8 of the EU, UN, and ILO. Included are those which:

- reflect policy priorities in all the countries featured in this publication
- have comparable official statistics available across the countries over a period of at least 5 years<sup>7</sup>
- do not also form part of the analysis in the STEP publication on gender statistics.

Given that gender statistics are covered in detail elsewhere and the lack of available data on other social groups (such as disabled people, migrants, and ethnic groups), the focus of the Social Inclusion sections of this publication is therefore on young people, as age disaggregated data is widely available via normal data sources.

### Data sources and methodologies

Many of the indicators are comparable across the countries featured in this publication because data is available from sources with broadly similar bases in all countries, such as the National Accounts (multiple sources but compiled to a common international framework), similar household or establishment surveys (businesses and other types of institutions), and/or from the Census or government administrative records. Data are processed according to international standard methodologies.

The statistics presented in the main report are based on data that has also been made available through Eurostat, mainly via its [ENP Database](#). This has been supplemented with data provided by NSIs for the years that are not yet available in the ENP Database and for additional indicators identified as useful for the analysis of progress towards SDG8. The data sources and methodologies are summarised in table 1 in Annex 2.

NSIs around the world have faced a major challenge in adapting, improving, or expanding data processes to cover SDG Indicators with limited resources. Switching data sources from surveys to administrative records can often lead to better quality statistics on SDG8 at lower cost but requires cross-government action and may require legislation. While surveys require statistical methodologies to scale up from samples to national figures, household surveys give a good opportunity to get in-depth and tailored data, such as for monitoring the Leaving No One Behind Agenda.

(6) More details on the process are provided in Annex 3 and a summary of data available for Indicators that are a policy priority for EaP countries, but for which official statistics are not available, is provided in Annex 1, based on estimates from international organisations.

(7) An exception was made for Young People Neither in Employment, Education, or Training, which is currently not measured in Azerbaijan. Where data is available consistently since 2010 this is provided, but limitations on availability mean that in general the last 5 years is the focus. UNESCO estimates have been used to supplement some national data presented for R&D Expenditure and the Participation Rate in Organised Learning.

### Data for understanding key components of the economy

Data for indicators related to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are produced according to the UN System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008 and the European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA) 2010. National Accounts have received separate support under the STEP programme. This involves a variety of multiple sources in different countries including establishment surveys and government administration/financial records. Data on expenditure on Research and Development are from establishment surveys.

### Data for understanding the labour market and other components of SDG8

Labour market statistics (e.g. those related to work, employment, unemployment, labour underutilisation etc.) are from a large-scale household survey – commonly called the Labour Force Survey. A survey is used, as government administrative records do not adequately record all types of work. For Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova there are some important breaks in the time series presented in this publication, as they have adopted a newer version of methodology recommended for labour market statistics by the 19th International Conference on Labour Statistics (ICLS). For other indicators, different countries may be using data from either surveys or administrative records.

Work is ongoing between the countries featured in this publication and Eurostat to further harmonise methodologies to optimise indicator comparability and to improve the range of data available (see Section 4 for more details). Azerbaijan has already piloted the new methodology for labour market statistics in 2021 and Ukraine has been doing so incrementally.

### Geographical coverage of data for understanding the labour market and other components of SDG8

Georgia: Abkhazian Autonomous Republic and Tskhinvali Region not covered

Moldova: Information is presented without the data on districts from the left side of the river Nistru and municipality Bender.

Ukraine: Data from 2014 are given without taking into account the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, from 2015 also without part of the temporarily occupied territories in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

*Data shown for Georgia exclude the regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia over which Georgia does not exercise control and the data managed by the National Bureau of Statistics of the Republic of Moldova does not include data from Transnistria over which the government of the Republic of Moldova does not exercise control. Since 2014, data for Ukraine generally exclude the illegally annexed Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol and the territories which are not under control of the Ukrainian government.*

# 02

## Progress towards SDG8 in the region

### 2.1 Overview

#### *Signs of good progress before COVID-19*

Indicators included in this publication show there has been an overall positive trend in progress towards SDG8 across Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine (hereafter termed 'the region') up until around 2020. Despite some ups and downs in the past decade or so, the countries all seemed to have performed well overall in improving social inclusion for both young people and women, achieving high economic growth rates in many years, and had some success in tackling unemployment. Progress then suffered significant setbacks from the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. But the impact so far has been different across the region in timing and scale.

#### *Sustainability needs to be monitored carefully*

Investment in Research and Development, which supports more economically sustainable long-term growth, has been consistently declining. There are also potential concerns about environmental sustainability according to non-official statistics in terms of the material footprint of economic growth. But other estimates from non-official statistics show there may have been successes in levelling off or decreasing CO2 emissions from manufacturing and in expanding forest areas and protecting ecospheres (see Annex 1).

### 2.2 Progress towards Sustained Growth

'Sustained economic growth' means a rate of economic progress that is continuous and can be maintained without creating other significant economic, social, or environmental problems which may also undermine economic success in the future. This section sets out the main indicators available across the region that measure overall economic growth, labour market conditions, and statistics required to understand sustainability.

#### *Mixed record on GDP growth and labour productivity*

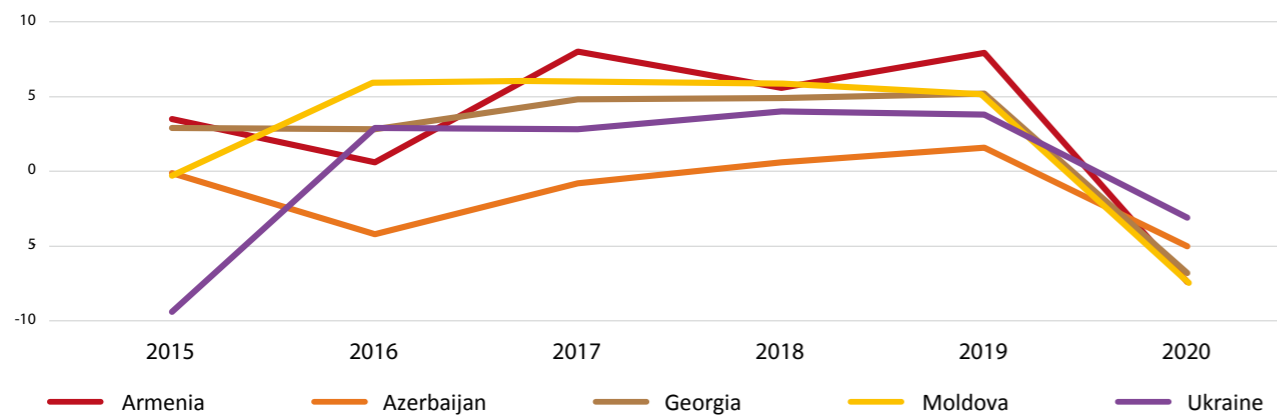
**Annual Growth Rate of Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita** measures changes in the total economic output of a country divided by the total population and adjusted for inflation. It is often used to understand changing standards of living in general, particularly as rising GDP is likely to mean more jobs are created and workers more likely to get pay rises. But it should not be considered alone as a marker of human development, especially given the need to also understand environmental and social developments.

The region saw an overall rise in growth rates of real GDP per capita between 2015 and 2019, following negative growth rates for some in 2015. Despite some years where some countries experienced a fall in growth rates, all countries had higher growth rates in 2019 than in 2015. But data available for 2020 shows negative growth rates in all countries, in line with the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, after several years of continuous growth, the EU economy also contracted in 2020 (by 6.2%).<sup>(8)</sup>

(8) Sustainable development in the European Union Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context 2021 edition.



FIGURE 2: ANNUAL GROWTH RATES OF REAL GDP PER CAPITA (%), 2015-2020

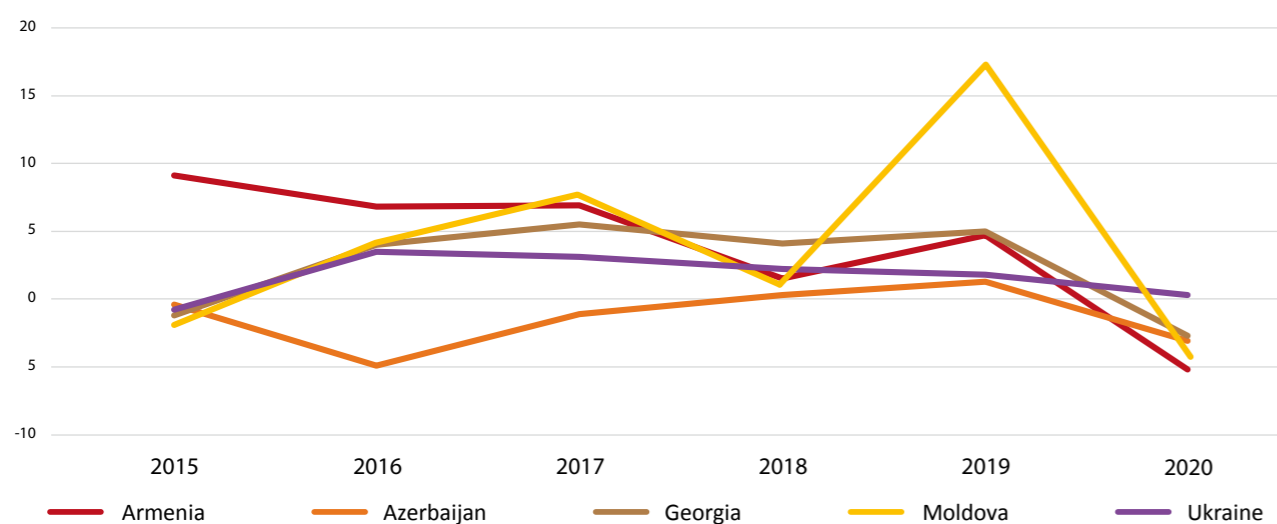


Source: National Statistical Institutes (NSIs).

The Annual Growth Rate of Real GDP per employed person provides a measurement of the total economic output of a country (in a monetary value) divided by the number of employed people and adjusted for inflation. It provides a measurement of labour productivity as the rate of output of the economy per unit of labour input. It is often used to guide policy interventions for improving human capital and investment in technology and other innovations to support the overall growth of GDP.

The region has seen varying degrees of annual progress in labour productivity since 2015. In some countries growth rates were broadly in line with the general direction of growth in real GDP per capita. But there were some divergences, indicating rigidities in the labour market. In 2020 there was a significant drop in labour productivity, with all countries for which data is available having zero or negative growth, no doubt exacerbated by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

FIGURE 3: ANNUAL GROWTH RATES OF REAL GDP PER EMPLOYED PERSON (%), 2015-2020



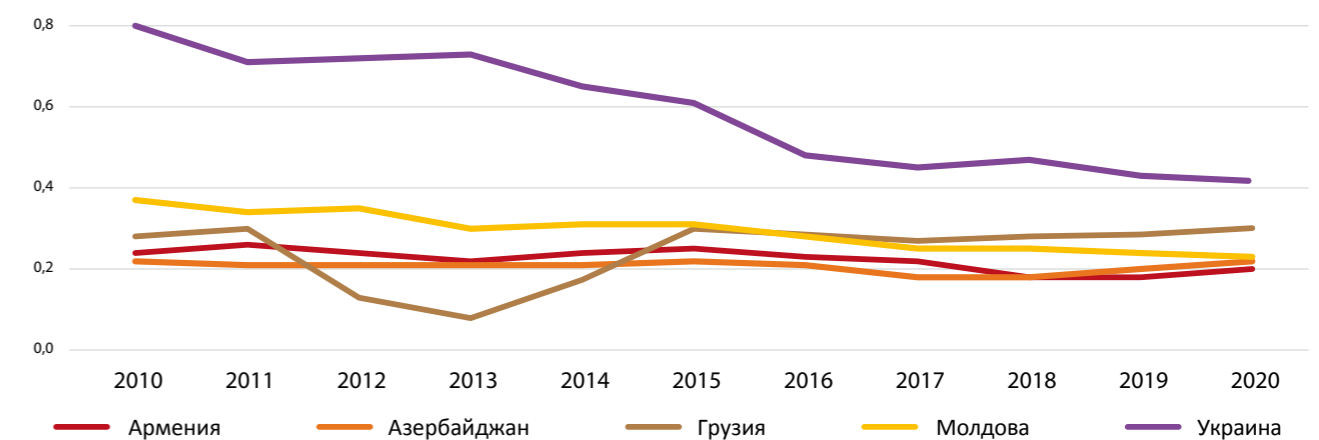
Source: Data provided directly by NSIs. Due to the adoption of new methodologies in labour market statistics, trends should be considered separately in Armenia and Moldova starting in 2018, and Georgia in 2020.

### Expenditure on R&D has been static or falling across the region

Research and Development (R&D) expenditure as a percentage of GDP measures the gross domestic expenditure of companies, other institutions, and Government on scientific research and experimental development. It is an important partner as SDG8 targets achieving higher levels of economic productivity through diversification and technological upgrading and innovation, including through a focus on high value-added and labour-intensive sectors by 2030.

Levels of investment in R&D in the region since 2010 have been broadly steady in some countries and gradually decreasing in others. As such, this represents a possible brake on the rates of labour productivity (see Figure 3 above). However, there were some increases in the rate across at least three countries between 2018 and 2020.

FIGURE 4: EXPENDITURE ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&amp;D) AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP, 2010-2020



Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and data provided directly by NSIs. Data for Georgia from 2015 to 2018 are UNESCO estimates.

### Employment rates have remained steady

The employment rate (20–64-year-olds) is the percentage of people available to work who are working. Changes in the rate can have a broad range of social and economic impacts. But it should be used in conjunction with other Indicators such as those that consider 'under-employment,' wage rates, social inclusion, and the quality of jobs in which people are employed.

Data for the working age population (defined as 20-64 years old) shows that employment rates vary significantly across the region. But while some countries' rate increased and some decreased slightly since 2014, they were broadly steady until 2019.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, data for 2020 shows that Armenia's employment rate managed to stay the same while Azerbaijan, Moldova and Ukraine saw a small decrease. A change in statistical methodology in Georgia in 2020 means that observing what happens into 2021 will be more meaningful for understanding the impact of COVID-19. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU employment rate exhibited an upward trend, reaching a record high of 73.1% in 2019, but it decreased in 2020.<sup>9</sup>

(9) Sustainable development in the European Union Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context 2021 edition.

TABLE 1: EMPLOYMENT RATES (20-64-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN 2019 AND 2020

	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine
2019	54.9	74.3	65.1	50.2	66.9
2020	54.9	73.2	51.1*	49.1	65.2

Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and data provided directly by NSIs. \*Georgia changed statistical methodology in 2020 (trends before and after this date to be considered separately).

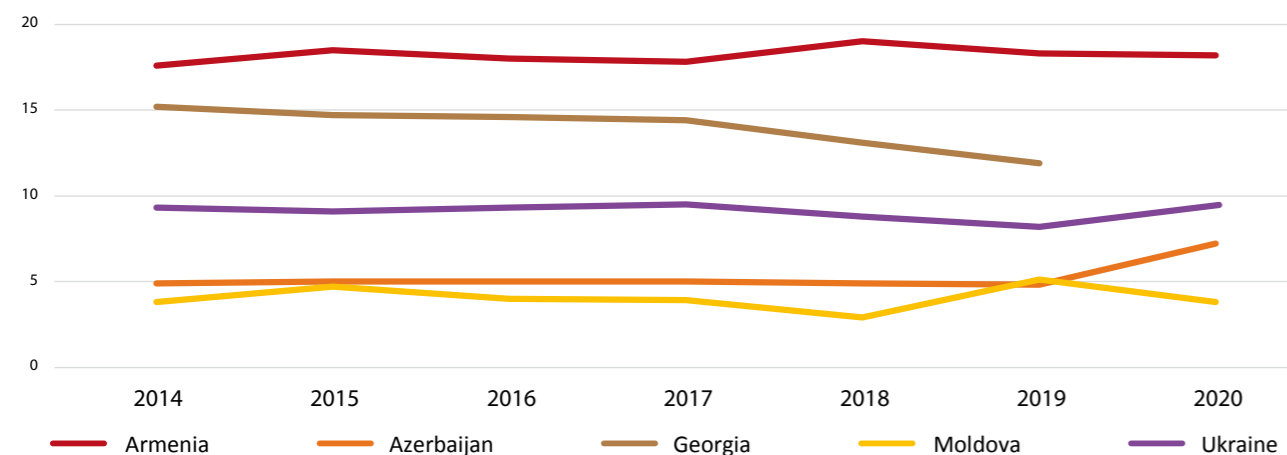
### Unemployment has proved difficult to tackle

The **unemployment rate** is the percentage of people (15-74 years-old) that is jobless but actively seeking work. While there may be some delay, the rate generally rises and falls according to wider economic conditions such as levels of economic growth. It is important for understanding the quality of economic growth and its sustainability, as unemployment is known to have severe negative social impacts.

Data from the region shows a wide range of unemployment levels. But there is no discernible overall pattern in terms of increases or decreases since 2014. Unemployment seems to be structural, at least in Armenia and Georgia where unemployment remains high despite high GDP growth rates. There was a declining trend in unemployment rates in Georgia and Ukraine between 2014 and 2019, with particularly good progress from 2017, and in Moldova from 2015 to 2018 at least. Armenia and Azerbaijan had steady or increasing rates for most of the period since 2014. By contrast, between 2014 and 2019, the EU's unemployment rate decreased by 4.1 percentage points, reaching 6.7% in 2019.<sup>10</sup>

Following the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, available data for 2020 indicates that unemployment rates rose quite sharply in Azerbaijan and Ukraine. The rate remained relatively stable in Armenia, as per the yearly pattern before methodological changes in 2018. The rate decreased in Moldova in 2020, reflecting a return to the longer-term decreasing trend between 2015 and 2018, before the change in statistical methodology. Methodological changes in Georgia in 2020 mean that trends need to be analysed separately before and after that year, so 2021 data is needed to better understand the impact of COVID-19. The reported rate in Georgia in 2020 was 18.7%.

FIGURE 5: UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (15-74-YEAR-OLDS)(%), 2014-2020



Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and data provided by NSIs. Trends in data for Armenia and Moldova before and after 2018, and for Georgia before and after 2020, should be considered separately due to a change in methodology.

(10) Sustainable development in the European Union Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context 2021 edition.

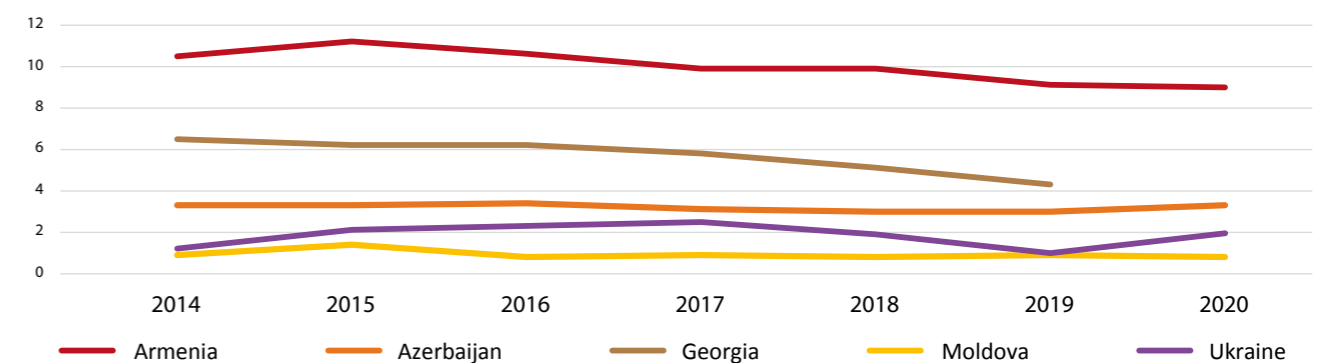
### Some success in tackling long-term unemployment

The **long-term unemployment rate** measures the percentage of people of working age who want to work but have been unemployed for more than 12 months. It usually responds more slowly to changes in economic growth rates than the overall unemployment rate. It is important for understanding the quality of economic growth, and it may require policy interventions that are more focused on skills than on labour demand.

The region has had success in decreasing long-term unemployment between 2014 and 2019. This includes significant reductions in Armenia and Georgia, despite their high overall, and possibly structural, unemployment rates in that period. On the other hand, growth rates in nominal wages (see below) across the region do not indicate high structural unemployment. In Moldova, Azerbaijan, and Ukraine, on the other hand, the unemployment rate was relatively stable but with a small decrease.

Data for 2020 indicates that the impact of COVID-19 may have caused a small rise in Azerbaijan and notable rise in Ukraine. In other countries the impact is less discernible so far, with Moldova and Armenia managing to maintain the longer-term decreasing trend into 2020. Methodological changes in Georgia in 2020 mean that trends need to be analysed separately before and after that year, so 2021 data is needed to better understand the impact of COVID-19. Georgia's reported rate in 2020 was 5.8%. In 2020, the EU's long-term unemployment rate continued to decline and was at 2.5%, which is three percentage points less than the rate in 2014.<sup>11</sup>

FIGURE 6: LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT RATES (15-74-YEAR-OLDS)(%), 2014-2020



Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and data provided directly by NSIs. Trends in data for Armenia and Moldova before and after 2018, and for Georgia before and after 2020, should be considered separately due to a change in methodology.

### Development of better official statistics on sustainability is needed

This publication features SDG8 indicators for which official statistics are available with enough coverage to assess regional progress. Among the important other indicators for monitoring progress towards sustained growth are those that consider labour underutilisation.<sup>12</sup> These include indicators such as the **Combined rate of time-related underemployment and unemployment**. This combines the percentage of unemployed people with the percentage of people who are employed but are willing and able to work more. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) produces estimates for the STEP partner countries and some data are available at the national level. But the two datasets show inconsistencies. Data availability and these inconsistencies need to be addressed.

Other indicators include the EU SDG indicator **Investment share of GDP by institutional sectors**, which importantly measures how much gross fixed capital is being created in different sectors of the economy that will enable their growth to be sustainable. However, comparative data is not yet available across the countries featured in this publication and some work is needed to harmonise methodologies.

(11) Sustainable development in the European Union Monitoring report on progress towards the SDGs in an EU context 2021 edition.

(12) Annex 3 gives the full details of other Indicators that are useful for measuring progress towards sustained growth.

**Environmental Integrity** is a key component of understanding the sustainability of economic growth. However, comparable data for the most relevant Indicators is not available consistently across all countries. Investment and developments in national level data production are needed to enhance the availability and quality of data for these indicators, not least via the development of Systems of Environmental and Economic Accounts (SEEA), and a range of internationally comparable data on **Resource Use, Carbon Dioxide emissions, and Land Use**. International estimates for these indicators are summarised in Annex 1. These show mixed patterns across the region in terms of resource use, including some significant rises in material footprints per capita. But they also indicate possible recent improvements in CO2 emissions and in the protection of natural areas.

## 2.3 Progress towards Social Inclusion and Decent Work

A broad range of indicators are required to understand how economic growth can be socially inclusive and if people's working lives are not detrimental to their well-being. Globally, the lack of disaggregated data to support the Leaving No One Behind agenda means many indicators for measuring social inclusion remain un-monitored. However, National Statistical Systems often do have good data to at least understand the position of young people and women, while information about people with disabilities, ethnic groups etc. is generally lacking.

The STEP publication on gender statistics pointed out that gender inequality is a consistent characteristic of all parts of the labour market in all EU Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, all EU countries, and in every region across the globe. However, that publication along with indicators presented here related to young people in the labour market and elements of decent work, show progress from 2014 until 2019. But data for 2020 is a cause for concern, particularly for young people, due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Indicators related to gender aspects of SDG8 that were not discussed in the gender publication are presented here.

### Fatal accidents at work are a persistent challenge

Indicators of Decent Work include **the number of people killed in accidents at work** which measures fatal accidents that occur during work and lead to the death of the victim within one year of the accident. Comparable data is available across most countries in the region only between 2016 and 2020, and in Georgia from 2018. Given the nature of accidents at work, longer time series are beneficial as specific incidents or projects in certain sectors may result in figures rising or falling sharply in certain years.

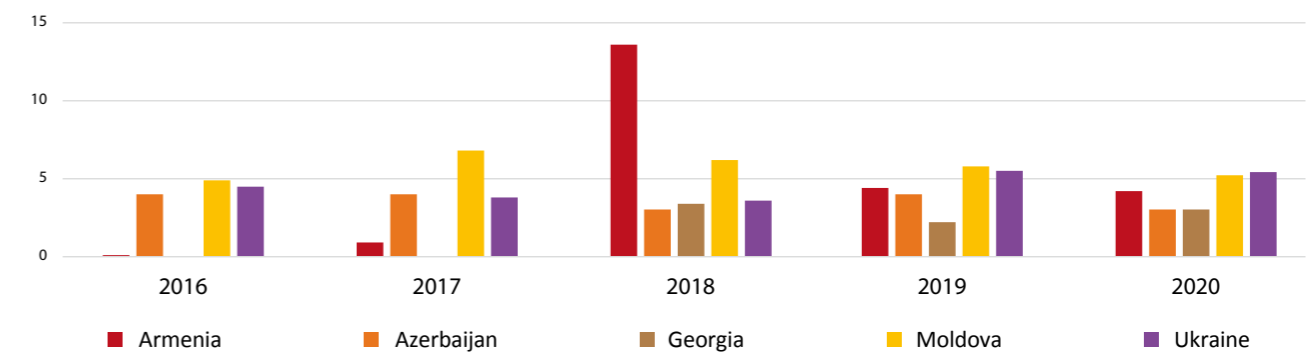
The rates fluctuated in all countries between 2016 and 2019, with no discernible overall progress. All rates were over nearly twice as high than the EU rate in 2018, where the rate was 1.74.<sup>13</sup> As the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the number of working hours, overall employment, and working patterns in 2020, this may have contributed to the small decrease in fatal accidents at work in most countries in that year. But there was a rise in the rate in Georgia in 2020.

### Men are far more at danger

A related indicator, **the difference in males and females killed in accidents at work**, highlights inequalities in the working conditions for men and women and the dangers they face. Data that is available shows consistently far higher numbers of men are killed at work than women in the region. The rate is often at least twice as high and in some cases by more than a factor of ten. This is similar to the EU, where the rates for men in 2018 was 3.14 and for women 0.2.

(13) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg\\_08\\_60/default/table](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_08_60/default/table)

FIGURE 7: NUMBER OF PEOPLE KILLED IN ACCIDENTS AT WORK (PER 100,000 EMPLOYEES), 2016-2020



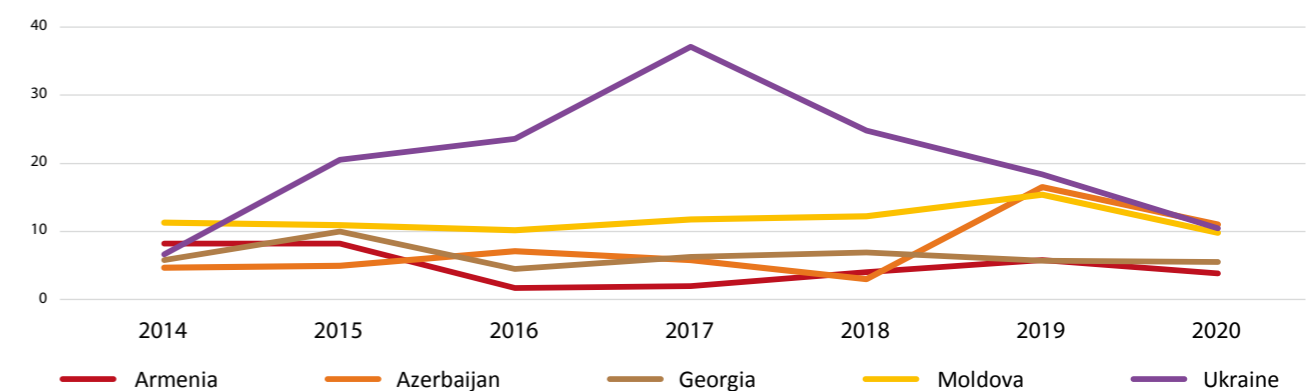
Source: data provided directly by NSIs. Data only available for Georgia from 2018

### Nominal wages continue to grow

**The growth rate of average nominal monthly wages (local currency)** measures wage changes. It is not, however, adjusted to take into account changing prices and living costs. Comparable data on such 'real' wages are not yet available but would be a more valuable tool in understanding whether jobs in the economy are of a high quality in terms of their ability to boost living standards. Nominal wages are still important as citizens may expect wages to rise in nominal terms over time. They are therefore linked at least to perceptions of well-being and job satisfaction.

Since 2014, there has been significant growth in wages in some countries, particularly in Ukraine between 2014 and 2017, more stability in others, and some periods of declining or negative growth rates elsewhere. But there seems to be some convergence in 2019/20 towards a regional average growth rate of between 5-15% per year. There was a negative impact on growth rates during of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 in all the countries.

FIGURE 8: GROWTH RATE OF AVERAGE NOMINAL MONTHLY WAGES (%), 2014-2020



Source: Calculated from data in the Eurostat ENP East Database and data provided directly by NSIs.

### Before 2020, young people were increasingly in employment, education, or training

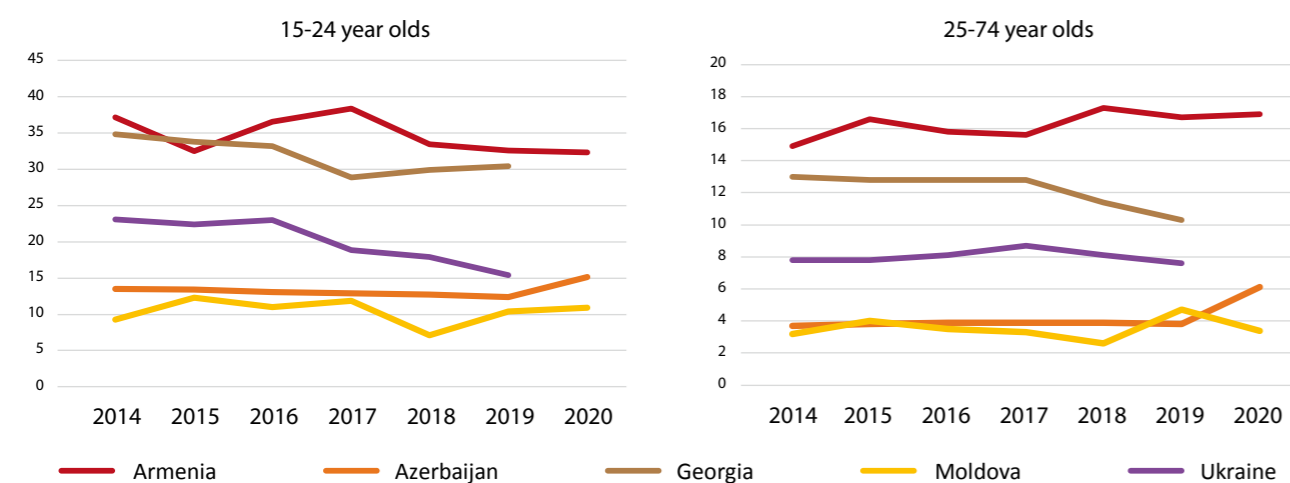
The **youth unemployment rate** is the percentage of people aged 15-24 that is jobless but actively seeking work. Globally, youth are approximately three times more likely to be unemployed than adults according to the ILO.<sup>14</sup> In December 2021, the youth unemployment rate was 14.9 % in both the EU and the euro area.<sup>15</sup>

Data for the region indicates that youth unemployment has consistently been at least around 50% higher than overall unemployment. But there were decreases in most countries by varying amounts from one to eight percentage points between 2014 and 2019. In Ukraine, the rate of decrease has outpaced that of the fall in growth rates of overall unemployment.

In 2020 youth unemployment in Armenia continued to decline despite the COVID-19 pandemic. But increases in youth unemployment were witnessed elsewhere. Moldova was the only country to have seen a slightly rising trend in youth unemployment before 2020 and this trend continued into 2020, even when the overall unemployment rate declined. Methodological changes in Georgia in 2020 mean that trends need to be analysed separately before and after that year, so 2021 data is needed to better understand the impact of COVID-19.

In 2019, youth unemployment for females in the region was approximately at least twice as high as that for males.<sup>16</sup>

FIGURE 9: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (%) OF YOUTH AND OLDER ADULTS, 2014-2020



Source: Eurostat ENP East Database with data provided directly by NSIs. Data not yet available for Ukraine for 2020. Trends in data for Armenia and Moldova before and after 2018, and for Georgia before and after 2020,<sup>17</sup> should be considered separately due to a change in methodology.

The indicator **young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET)** measures the share of people aged 15-24 who are in this category and are therefore at high risk of being or becoming socially and economically excluded. According to the ILO, globally in 2020, 22.4% of young people aged 15-24 is NEET, of which 67.5% are young women.<sup>18</sup>

Before 2019 the NEET rate for 15 to 29-year-olds in the EU had been steadily progressing and reached 12.6% but increased again to 13.7% in 2020. The countries in the region for which data is available also all achieved decreases between 2015 and 2019, although for Georgia the decrease was small. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, Armenia and Moldova saw declining rates.

(14) [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_175421.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_175421.pdf)

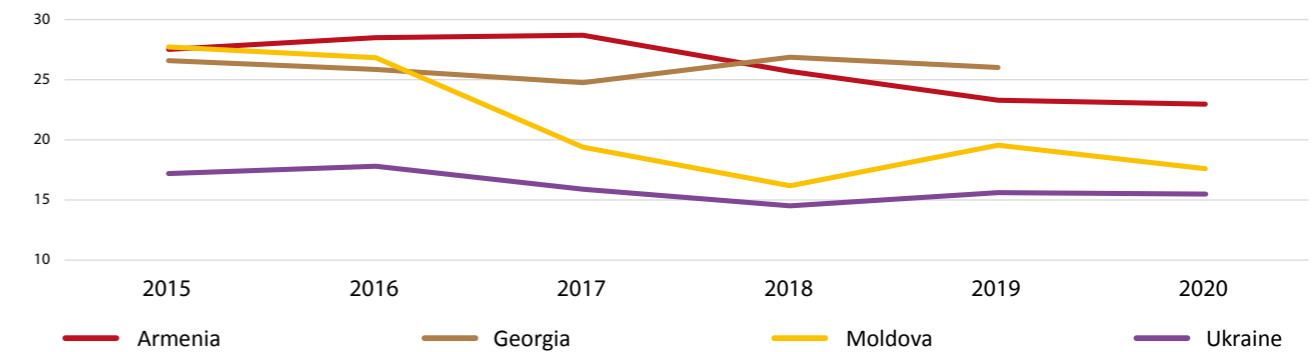
(15) Unemployment statistics - Statistics Explained (europa.eu)

(16) STEP Brochure GENDER EQ - Eastern Partnership regional programme for statistics (eu-step.eu)

(17) Data for Georgia in 2020 are 15-24 year-olds 39.4% and 25-74 year-olds 16.6%

(18) [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26634NEET\\_Sida\\_brief.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26634NEET_Sida_brief.pdf)

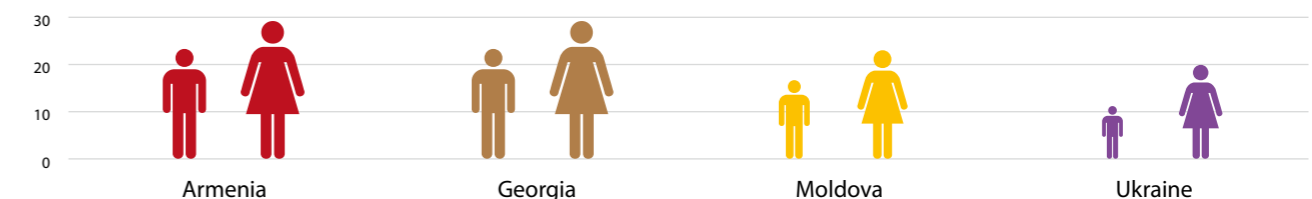
FIGURE 10: PERCENTAGE OF YOUNG PEOPLE NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, OR TRAINING (NEET) (15-24-YEAR-OLDS), 2015-2020



Source: Eurostat and data provided by NSIs. Azerbaijan does not produce statistics on NEET. Trends in data for Armenia and Moldova before and after 2018, and for Georgia before and after 2020,<sup>19</sup> should be considered separately due to a change in methodology.

In terms of gender equality, available data for 2019 shows that Moldova, Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia had significantly higher amounts of women in the NEET category compared with males.

FIGURE 11: YOUNG PEOPLE NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, OR TRAINING (NEET) BY SEX (%) IN 2019



Source: Eurostat and data provided by NSIs. Azerbaijan does not produce statistics on NEET. Data not yet available for Ukraine for 2020. Data for Georgia is according to a methodology that is different to that adopted in 2020.

### Evidence of good progress on organised learning for young children

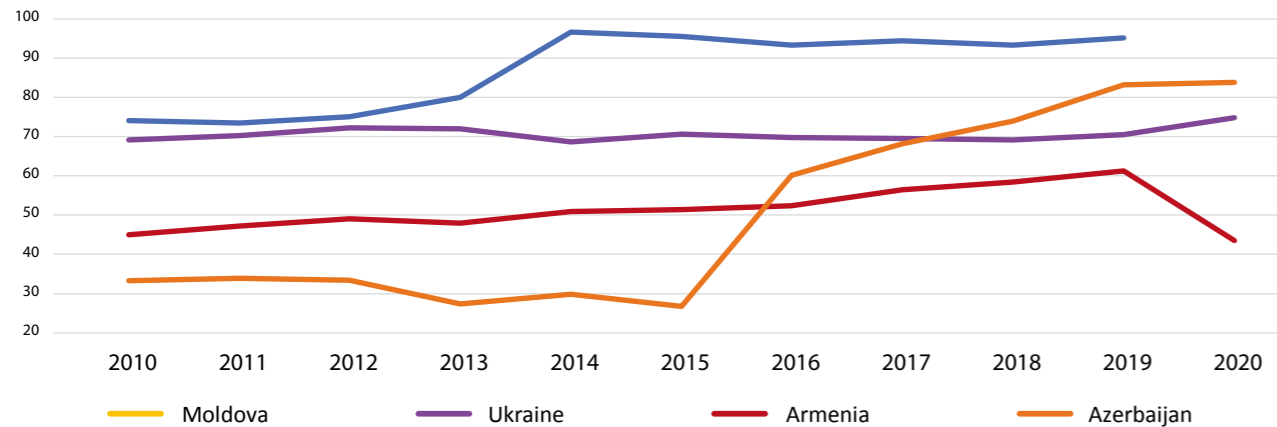
Among other important indicators for monitoring progress towards social inclusion is the **Participation Rate in Organised Learning (one year before the official primary entry age)**.<sup>20</sup> Early childhood education is typically designed with a holistic approach to support children's early cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development and to introduce young children to organised instruction outside the family context.<sup>21</sup> This indicator is therefore important for measuring the potential for young people to optimise their future employment prospects. It also indicates the availability of childcare options that allow parents, particularly women, to seek employment.

(19) The figure for 2020 in Georgia was 28.5%

(20) Annex 3 gives the full details of other Indicators that are useful for measuring progress towards sustained growth.

(21) <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/participation-rate-organized-learning-one-year-official-primary-entry-age-sex>

FIGURE 12: PARTICIPATION RATE (%) OF CHILDREN IN ORGANISED LEARNING 1 YEAR BEFORE THE OFFICIAL PRIMARY ENTRY AGE, 2010-2020



Source: Data provided by NSIs. Data for Georgia is only available for 2018 (90%). Data for 2014 to 2019 for Moldova are UNESCO estimates.

## 2.4 The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

### COVID-19 has held back progress – data for 2021 is needed to better understand its impact

The indicators highlighted in this publication show a range of significant negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on progress towards SDG8. But the effects and their level of severity have varied across the countries. Complete data for 2020 and 2021 will also be essential in understanding the full impact, especially as many of the Indicators for SDG8 can be expected to respond over a longer period, such as that for long-term unemployment. It will also be important to observe if purely economic effects will translate into short or long-term effects on decent work, social inclusion, and environmental integrity.

Notwithstanding underlying economic and other trends, key observations from official statistics in 2020 about how the COVID-19 pandemic has likely impacted progress towards SDG8 are:

- The region and the EU saw decreasing and negative growth rates in real GDP, increases in youth unemployment, and decreases in the employment rate. However, Armenia and Moldova maintained a longer-term trend of decreasing rates of young people neither in employment, education, or training.
- The impact so far on overall unemployment rates has been as expected in many countries, with Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan witnessing increases in 2020. Moldova, on the other hand, experienced a decrease.
- Long term unemployment rates had already increased in Georgia and Azerbaijan between 2019 and 2020. But they were broadly steady in Moldova and decreased slightly in Armenia.
- Nominal average monthly wages continued to grow across the region but more slowly than before.
- Most countries saw a reduction in the number of fatal accidents at work.

ILO estimates of the loss of working hours due to COVID-19 in the region and the EU (see Annex 1) also point to a decrease in the total weekly hours worked in 2020, between 3% and 15% less than in 2019. But total hours worked then increased in 2021, between 0.4% and 13%.

# Country-by-country progress towards SDG8

## 3.1 Armenia

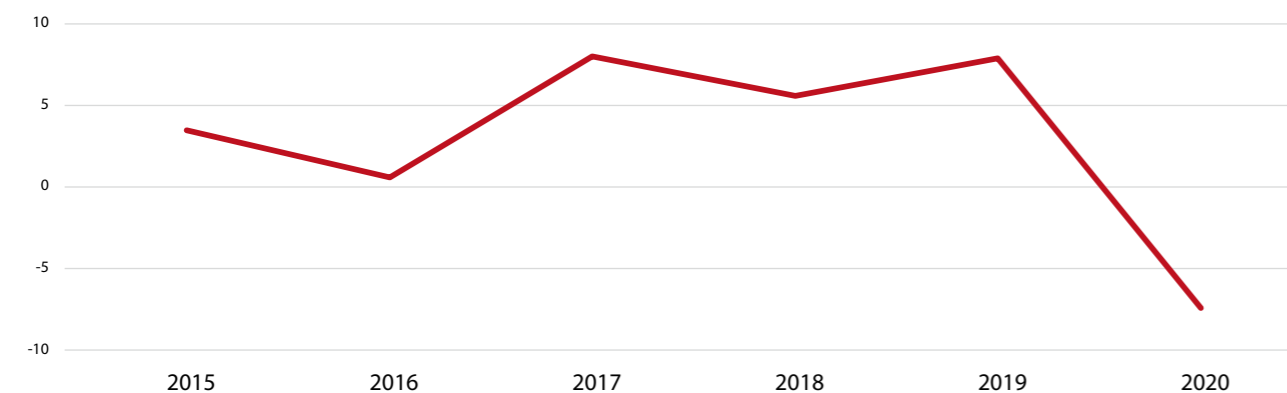
### a. National context for measuring progress towards SDG8

Alongside its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals, Armenia's Transformation Strategy 2050 sets out national priorities related to SDG8. It looks towards building an Armenia that will have an export-oriented manufacturing base, a clean and green environment, have sustainable regional development, healthy and safe citizens, and that is attractive for industry. The strategy looks to tackle poverty through job creation, raising real wages for the working poor, and investing into a knowledge-based innovative economy which prioritises market-oriented education reform. The "Armenia Transformation Strategy 2050" includes 16 mega goals with their own targets, indicators, tasks, and solutions. The Strategy is considered as a framework of implementation of the SDGs and the mega goals mainly correspond with them.<sup>22</sup>

### b. Progress towards Sustained Growth

There was an overall increasing trend for annual **growth rates of Real GDP per capita** in Armenia between 2015 and 2019, with the rate in 2019 being 4.3 percentage points higher than in 2015. The highest rate of growth in this period was in 2017 at 8%, slighter higher than the rate in 2019 of 8.0%. 2016 saw a significant low point when the growth rate decreased to 0.6% down from 3.5% in 2015. But growth recovered quickly thereafter in 2017. Following the COVID-19 pandemic the growth rate dropped dramatically from 8.0% in 2019 to -7.1% in 2020.

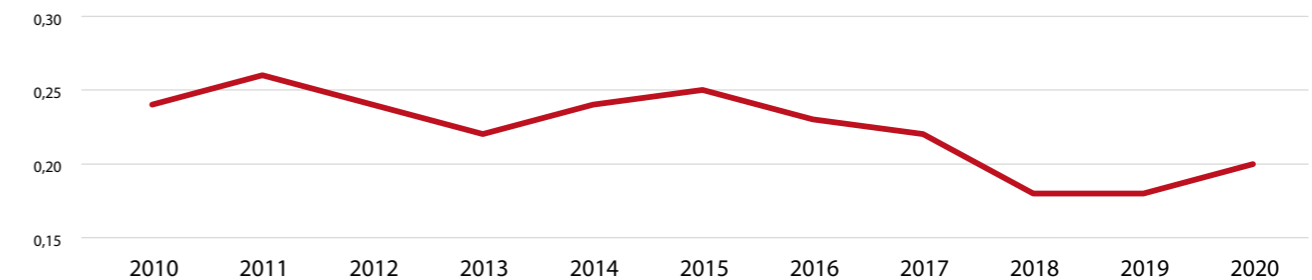
FIGURE 13: GROWTH RATE OF REAL GDP PER CAPITA (%) IN ARMENIA, 2015-2020



Source: Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia

Despite some years of increases between 2010 and 2020, **R&D expenditure** has tended to decline, being 0.24% of GDP in 2010 and 0.18% in 2018 and 2019. But despite the COVID-19 pandemic, it increased in 2020 to 0.20%.

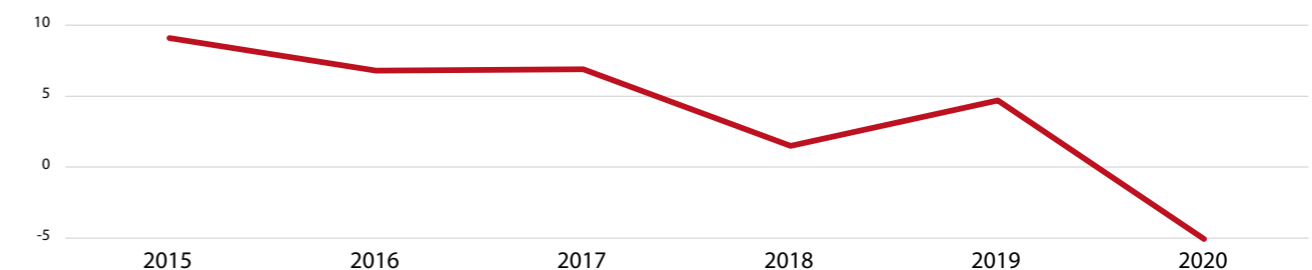
FIGURE 14: EXPENDITURE ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN ARMENIA AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP, 2010-2020



Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and data provided by Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia

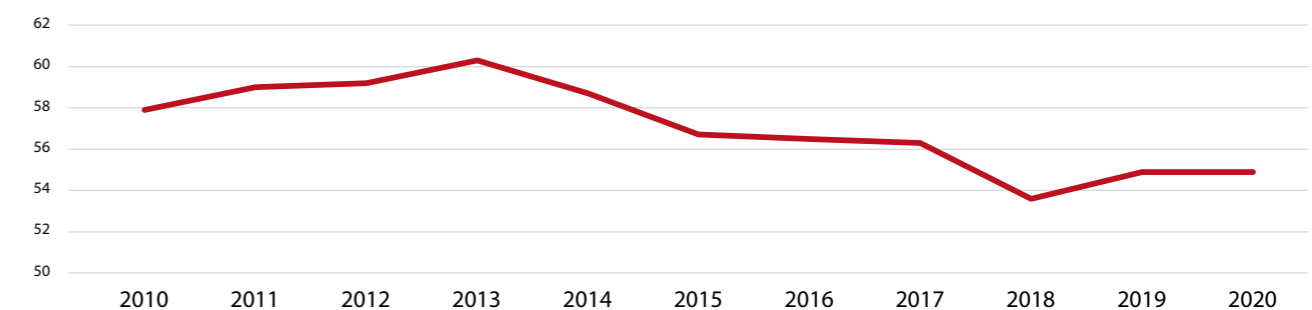
Between 2015 and 2017 rates of labour productivity in Armenia tended to decline, as measured by annual **growth rates of Real GDP per employed person**, falling from 9.1% to 6.9%. After a change in methodology for calculating the rate in 2018, despite a large increase in the rate in 2019 corresponding with the increase in GDP per capita, the trend into 2020 was for continued decline. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, productivity growth fell rapidly in 2020 to -5.0%. During 2015-2019, the overall **employment rate** also fell and rose around the same times. But it remained stable in 2020.

FIGURE 15: GROWTH RATE OF REAL GDP PER EMPLOYED PERSON (%) IN ARMENIA, 2015-2020



Source: Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia. Trends before and after 2018 should be considered separately due to a change in statistical methodology for employment statistics.

FIGURE 16: EMPLOYMENT RATE (%) IN ARMENIA (20-64-YEAR-OLDS), 2010-2020

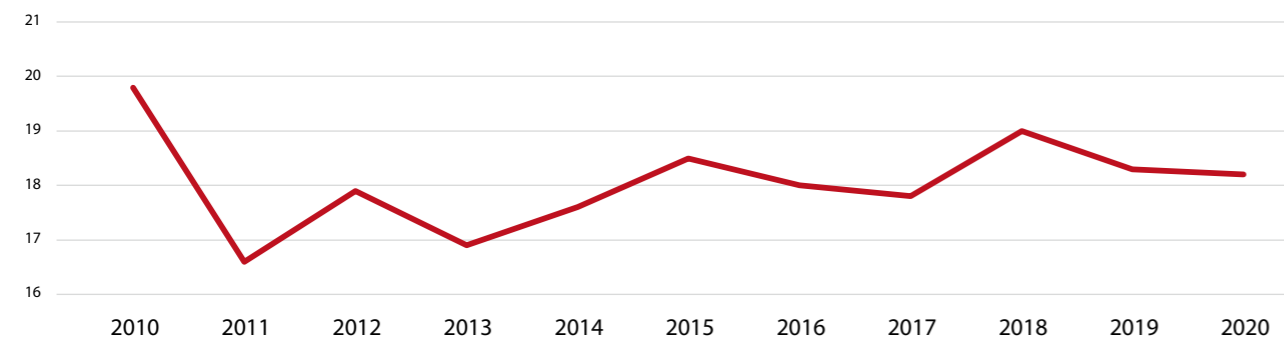


Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia. Trends before and after 2018 should be considered separately due to a change in statistical methodology.

(22) <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/armenia>

Despite a steep drop in 2011 to 16.6%, the **unemployment rate** in Armenia tended to increase until 2017. Changes in statistical methodology in 2018 mean trends thereafter should be considered separately as the figures are not directly comparable. However, the new reported rate of 19% in 2018 then tended to decline even during in 2020 during the COVID19 pandemic.

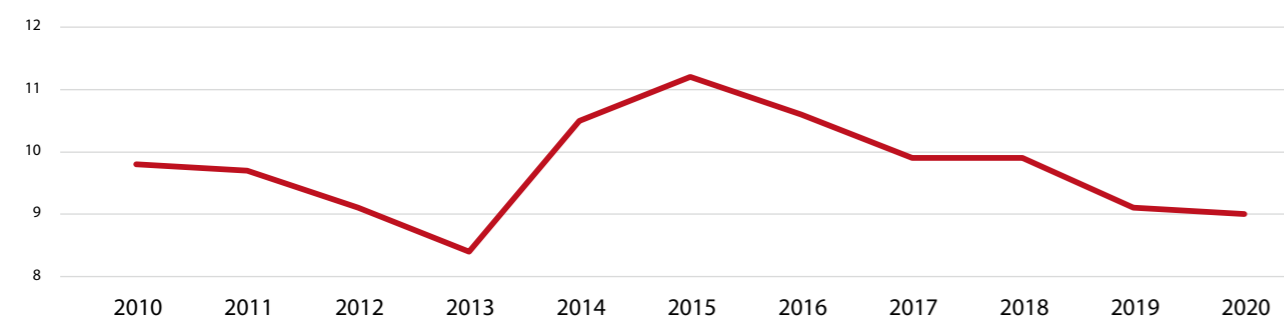
**FIGURE 17: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (15-74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN ARMENIA, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia. Trends before and after 2018 should be considered separately due to a change in statistical methodology. Trends before and after 2018 should be considered separately due to a change in statistical methodology.

The **long-term unemployment rate** had been declining up until 2013 when it was at its lowest rate at any time between 2010 and 2020, at 8.4%. Interestingly, the rate then rose in advance of the economic downturn in 2016, reaching a 10 year high of 11.2% in 2015. But then the rate steadily declined during and after the downturn. Following the new methodology for labour market statistics in 2018, the rate continued to decline and reached 9.0% in 2020.

**FIGURE 18: LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT (15-74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN ARMENIA, 2010-2020**

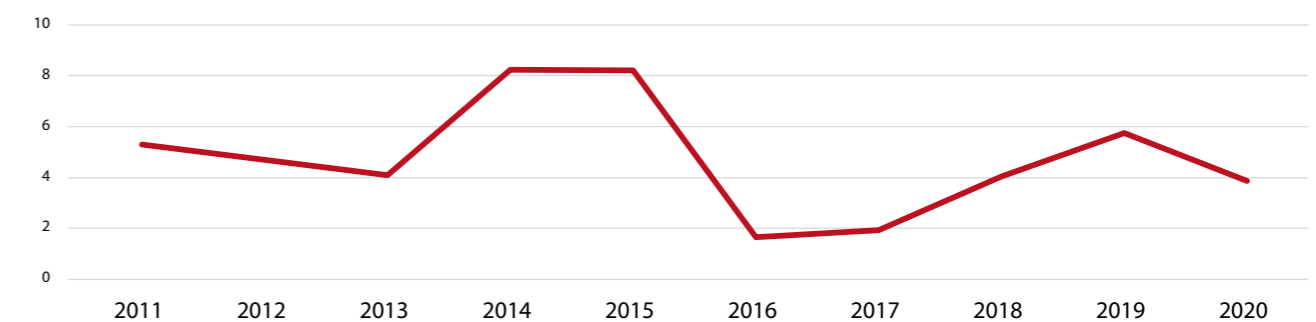


Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia.

### c. Progress towards Social Inclusion and Decent Work

**Growth rates of average nominal monthly wages** of around 4-8% were normal between 2011 and 2020, despite decreasing temporarily to around 1-2% in 2016 and 2017. 2020 saw a decrease from 2019 of around 2% but the annual rate was still typical for the longer period at around 4%. The source of the data changed in 2018, so trends before and after 2018 year should be considered separately.

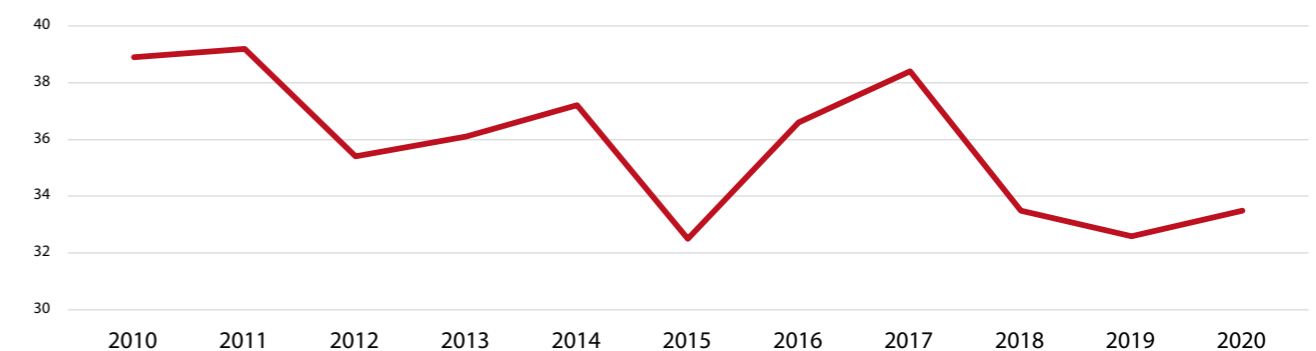
**FIGURE 19: GROWTH RATE OF NOMINAL MONTHLY WAGES (LOCAL CURRENCY) (%) IN ARMENIA, 2011-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia.

Between 2010 and 2015 there had been some significant improvements in **youth unemployment** with the rate falling from 38.9% to 32.5% in this period. However, the rate then rose to 38.4% by 2017. The implementation of new standards in labour statistics' methodology in 2018 meant that trends before and after that year should be considered separately. However, the rate was reported to be decreasing from 2018 to as low as 32.6% in 2019, but then it rose slightly in 2020 to 33.5%.

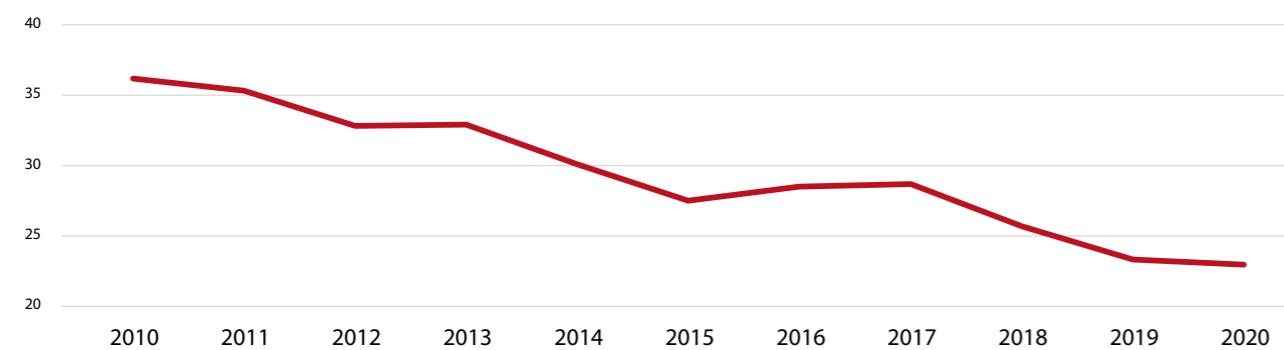
**FIGURE 20: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT (15-24-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN ARMENIA, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP East Database and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia. Trends before and after 2018 should be considered separately due to a change in statistical methodology.

From 2010 to 2017, the **proportion of young people neither in employment, education, or training (NEET)** also declined overall, from 36.2% in 2010 to 28.7% in 2017. This trend also continued after 2018 and it reached 23% in 2020. In 2020, the **percentage of males that were NEET** was 17.5% whereas the **percentage of females that were NEET** was a lot higher at 28.8%. However, the gap had decreased significantly since 2018 with the female rate decreasing by 5.3% in this period but male rates increasing by 0.7%.

**FIGURE 21: YOUNG PERSONS (15-24-YEAR-OLDS) NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, OR TRAINING (NEET) (%) IN ARMENIA, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat and Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia. Trends before and after 2018 should be considered separately due to a change in statistical methodology.

## 3.2 Azerbaijan

### a. National context for measuring progress towards SDG8

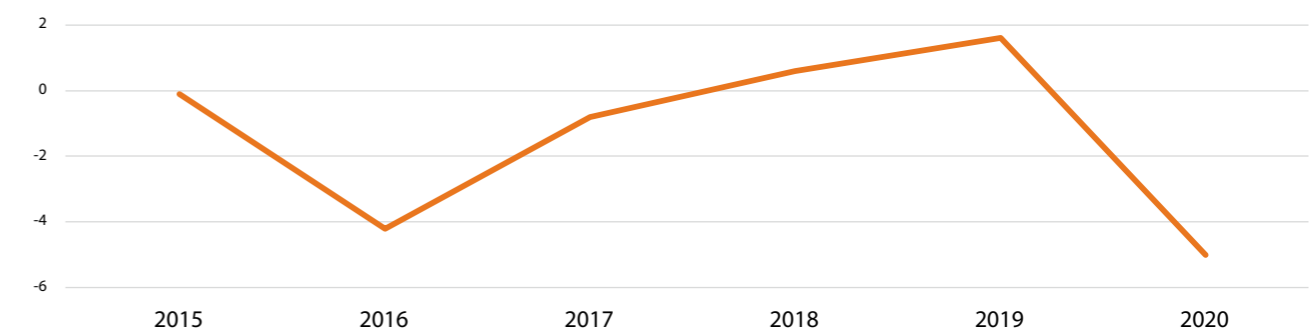
Alongside its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, Azerbaijan has set out its national priorities for socio-economic development until 2030. These include the acceleration of economic growth, based on high, sustainable, inclusive, and private sector initiatives, and ensuring a constant increase in the level of national social welfare.<sup>23</sup> Priorities specifically relating to SDG8 include a steadily growing, competitive economy, a dynamic, inclusive society based on social justice, areas of modern innovations and competitive human capital, and a clean environment and country of "green growth".

### b. Progress towards Sustained Growth

**Annual growth rates of Real GDP per capita** in Azerbaijan between 2015 and 2020 show that positive growth was only achieved in 2018 and 2019, following a downturn that saw negative growth of -4.2% in 2016. The recovery to 1.6% growth in 2019 was then set back significantly in the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic. Annual growth in 2020 once again became negative at -4.9%. Despite these downturns, **R&D expenditure** as a proportion of GDP was the same in 2020 (0.22%) as it was in 2010, dropping in 2017 and 2018 (to 0.18%) but bouncing back thereafter.

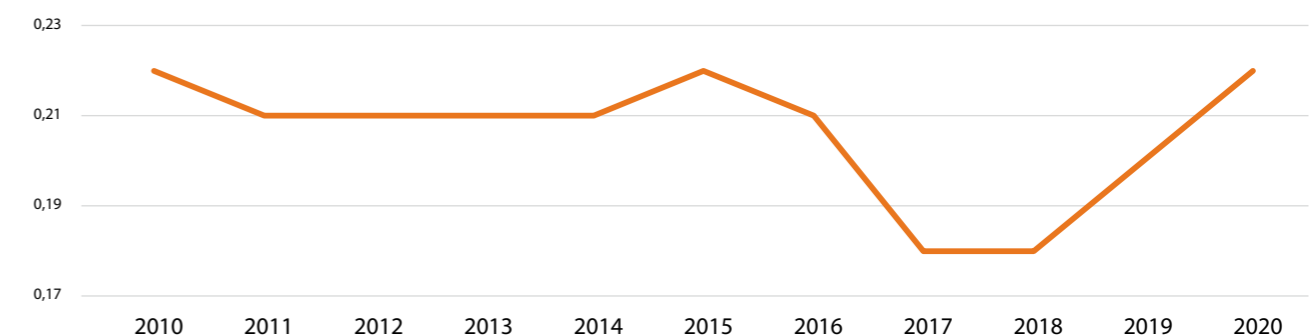
(23) [https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Order\\_of\\_the\\_President\\_of\\_the\\_Republic\\_of\\_Azerbaijan\\_on\\_approval\\_of\\_Azerbaijan\\_2030\\_National\\_Priorities\\_for\\_Socio\\_Economic\\_Development-1724707](https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Order_of_the_President_of_the_Republic_of_Azerbaijan_on_approval_of_Azerbaijan_2030_National_Priorities_for_Socio_Economic_Development-1724707)

**FIGURE 22: GROWTH RATE OF REAL GDP PER CAPITA (%) IN AZERBAIJAN, 2015-2020**



Source: State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

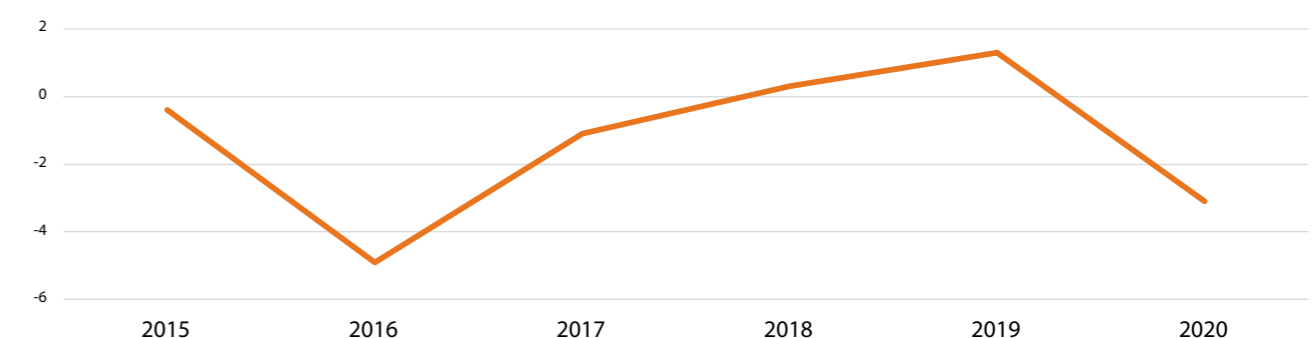
**FIGURE 23: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP IN AZERBAIJAN, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Labour productivity, as measured by the **growth in Real GDP per employed person** has largely followed trends in overall economic growth in Azerbaijan since 2015, with the highest rate being witnessed in 2019 (at 1.3%), and then dropping significantly in 2020 to -3.0%.

**FIGURE 24: GROWTH RATE OF REAL GDP PER EMPLOYED PERSON (%) IN AZERBAIJAN, 2015-2020**

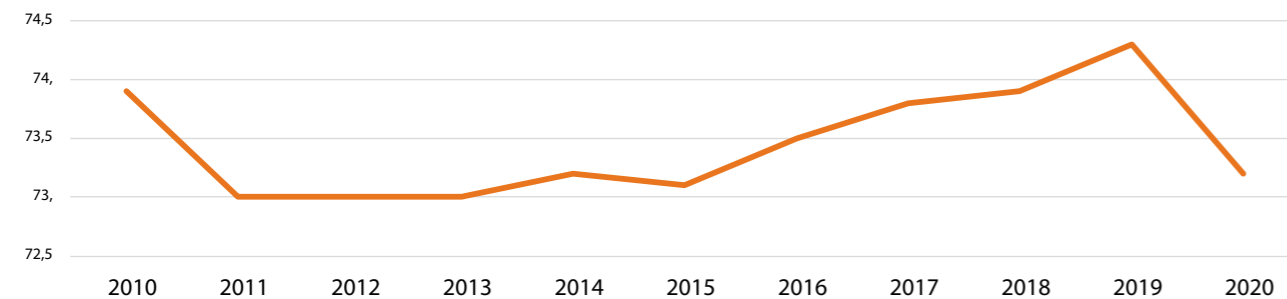


Source: State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.



The **employment rate** in Azerbaijan has been relatively stable in the past 10 years. It reached 76.9% in 2005, then it was a little lower but stable for several years from 2011 to 2015 at around 73%. Then it rose each year to reach 74.3% in 2019. But these gains were mostly lost in 2020 when it dropped back down to 73.2%.

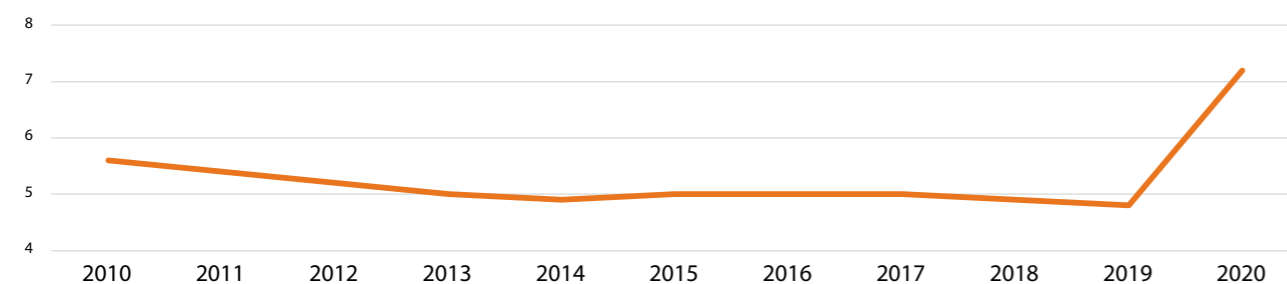
**FIGURE 25: EMPLOYMENT RATE (20–64-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN AZERBAIJAN, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

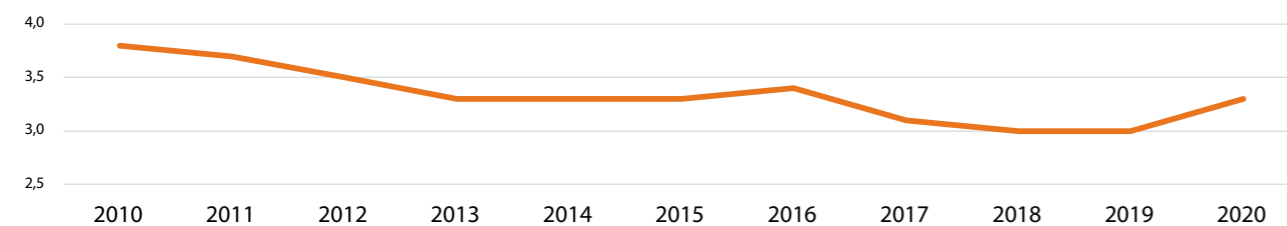
The **unemployment rate** had been improving steadily from 2010 to 2019 in Azerbaijan, falling from 5.6% to 4.8% with the economic downturn in 2016 not seeming to have had a significant effect. But these gains were lost in 2020 and the rate shot up rapidly to 7.2%. Similarly, the **long-term unemployment rate** experienced steady decreases between 2010 and 2019 (decreasing from 3.8% to 3.0%) but these gains could not survive into 2020 and the rate rose to 3.3% in that year.

**FIGURE 26: UNEMPLOYMENT RATE (15–74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN AZERBAIJAN, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

**FIGURE 27: LONG TERM UNEMPLOYMENT (15-74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN AZERBAIJAN, 2010-2020**

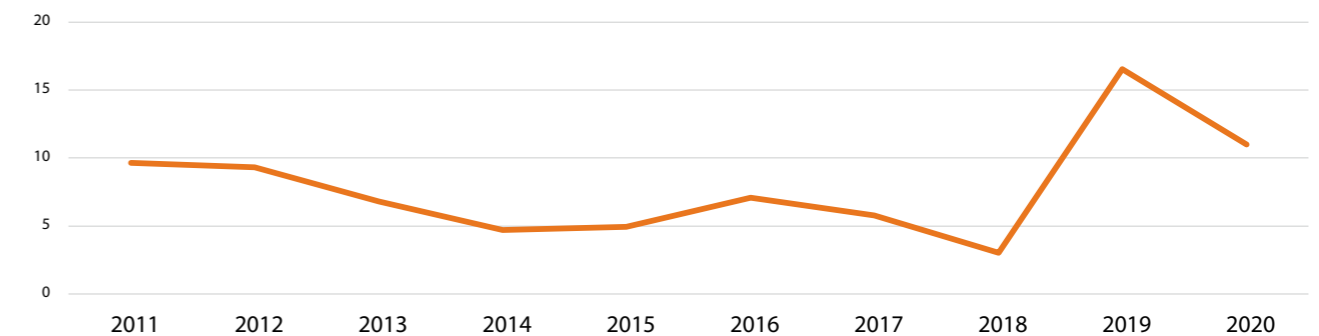


Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

### c. Progress towards Social Inclusion and Decent Work

The **growth rate of average nominal monthly wages** in Azerbaijan was 10% in 2011. But then it decreased to an average rate of about 7% over 2013 to 2017. By 2018 the rate had reduced further to 3%. But in 2019 the rate increased dramatically to 17% but fell back to 11% in 2020.

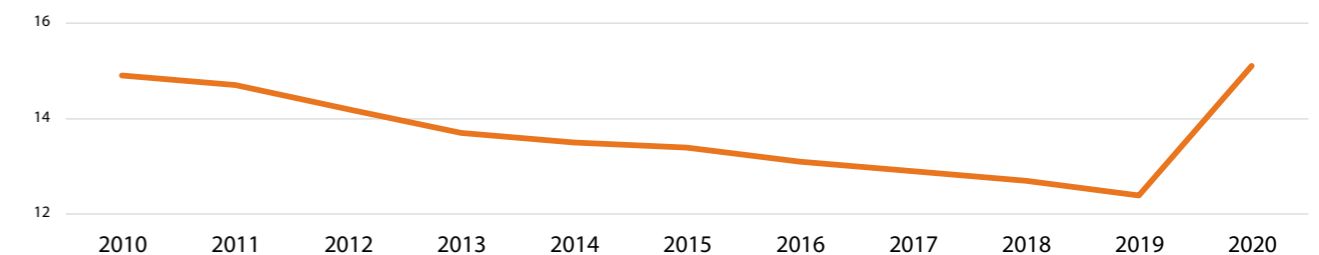
**FIGURE 28: GROWTH RATE OF NOMINAL MONTHLY WAGES (LOCAL CURRENCY) (%) IN AZERBAIJAN, 2011-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan does not currently collect data on young people Neither in Employment, Education, or Training. In terms of the **youth unemployment rate**, this followed the pattern of overall unemployment in Azerbaijan in steady improvements before the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, falling from 14.9% to 12.4% between 2010 and 2019. During 2020 it rose to 15.1%, the highest rate for over 10 years. Youth unemployment has been consistently more than double the rate of overall unemployment.

**FIGURE 29: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT (15-24-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN AZERBAIJAN, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

## 3.3 Georgia

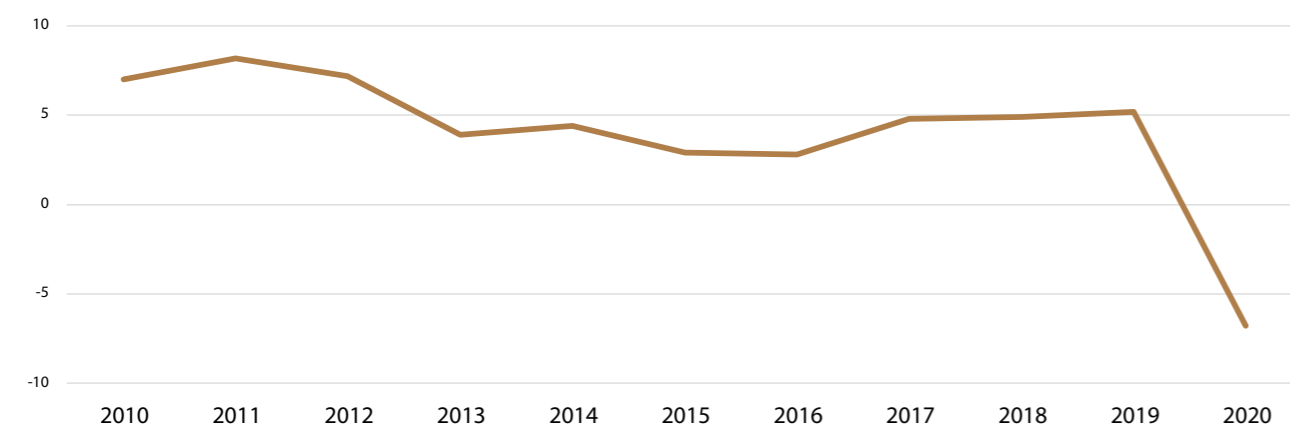
### a. National context for measuring progress towards SDG8

Alongside its commitment to the SDGs, Georgia has developed national policy priorities relevant to SDG8. Inclusive growth remains a major challenge for the Georgian economy. The Government has prioritised knowledge-based and innovation-driven economic development and supports increases in the innovative activities of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), including start-ups. Over the past five years Georgia has also been taking steps towards responsible production and consumption and reforming environmental sector policies.<sup>24</sup>

### b. Progress towards Sustained Growth

**Annual growth rates of Real GDP per capita** in Georgia tended to decrease between 2010 and 2019 but hovered around 3-5% each year between 2013 and 2019. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 brought a negative growth rate of -6.8%.

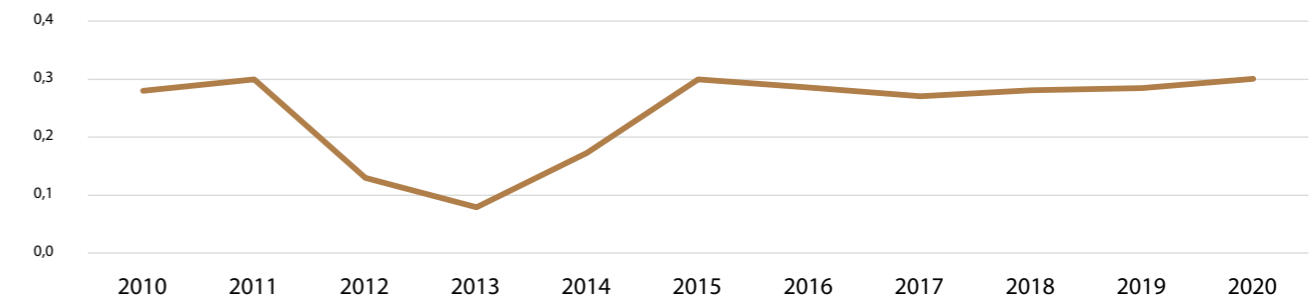
FIGURE 30: ANNUAL GROWTH RATE OF REAL GDP PER CAPITA (%) IN GEORGIA 2010-2020



Source: National Statistical Office of Georgia.

**R&D expenditure** as a proportion of GDP in Georgia was 0.30% in 2011. This more than halved in one year to 0.13% in 2012 and continued to decrease to only 0.8% in 2013. From 2015, to 2018 official statistics on R&D expenditure are not available but estimates from UNESCO indicate R&D expenditure at a much higher rate from 2015 onwards and official statistics from 2019 confirmed a trend for the rate to be increasing even into 2020.

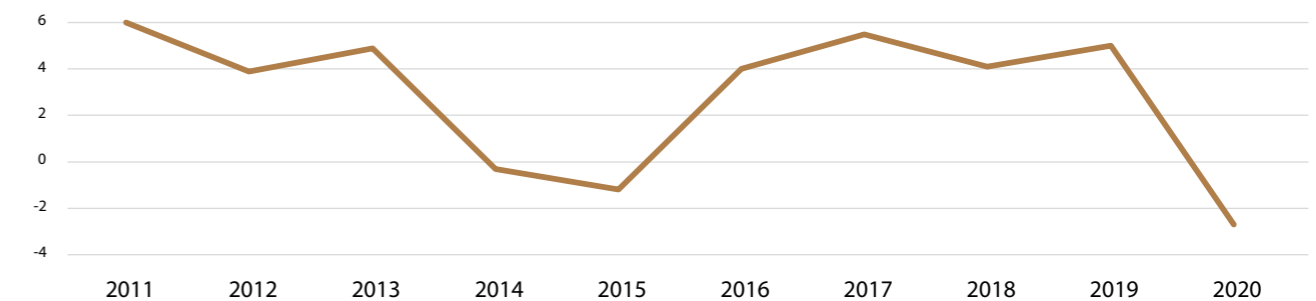
FIGURE 31: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP IN GEORGIA 2010-2020



Source: National Statistical Office of Georgia 2010-14 and 2019-20; UNESCO 2015-18.

Between 2012 and 2016 labour productivity in Georgia, as **measured by Real GDP per employed person**, tended to significantly diverge from the trend in Real GDP per capita, including periods of negative growth in GDP per employed person in 2014 and 2015 when GDP per capita was positive and relatively stable. After that, GDP per employed person and GDP per capita were more aligned until 2020. But in 2020 GDP per employed person did not decrease as much as GDP per capita (-2.7% compared to -6.8%).

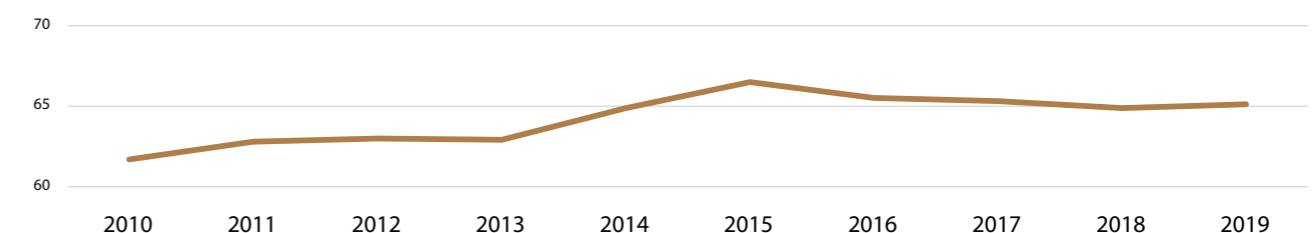
FIGURE 32: GROWTH RATE OF REAL GDP PER EMPLOYED PERSON (%) IN GEORGIA 2011-2020



Source: National Statistical Office of Georgia. Data in 2020 may be affected by a change in the methodology for employment statistics.

The **employment rate** in Georgia rose steadily between 2010 and 2019 (from 61.7% to 65.1%). The figure based on new methodology in 2020 was 51.1% but this needs to be considered separately and data for 2021 will be important to better understand current trends and the impact of COVID-19.

FIGURE 33: EMPLOYMENT RATE (20-64-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN GEORGIA, 2010-2020

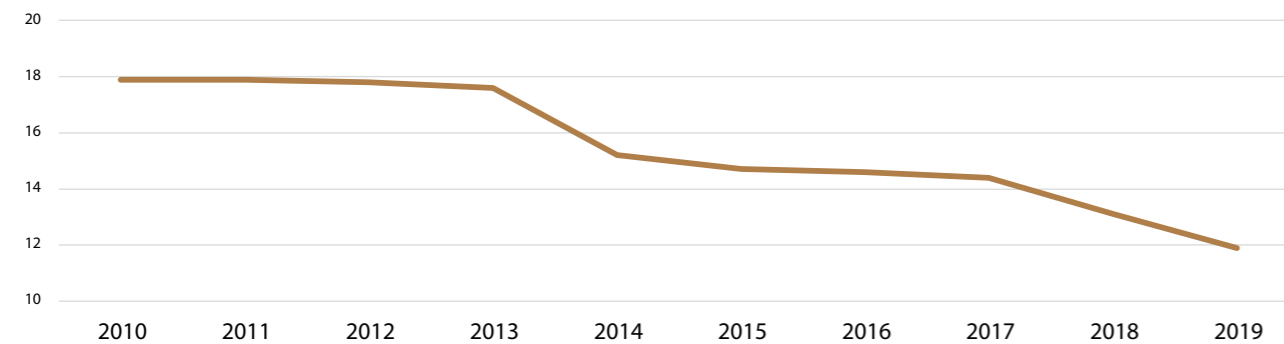


Source: Eurostat ENP database and National Statistical Office of Georgia. Trends before and after 2020 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

(24) <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/georgia>

The **unemployment rate** followed a similar pattern to the employment rate from 2010 to 2019, achieved good improvement from 17.9% in 2010 to 11.9% in 2019. The figure based on new methodology in 2020 was 18.7% but this needs to be considered separately and data for 2021 will be important to better understand current trends and the impact of COVID-19.

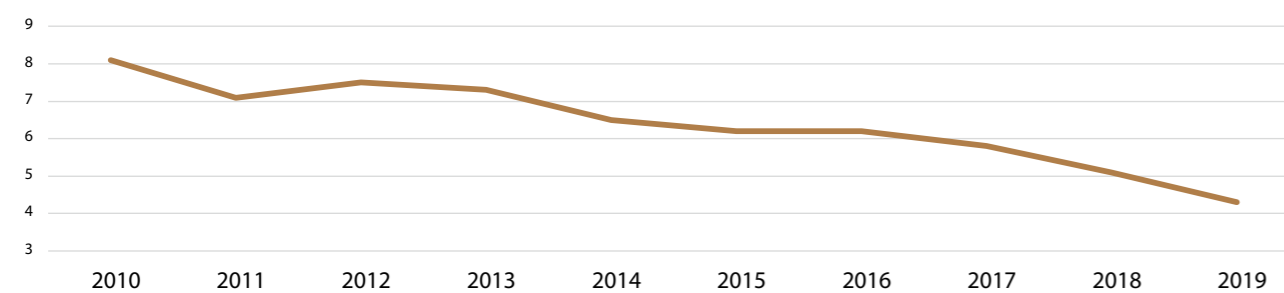
**FIGURE 34: UNEMPLOYMENT (15-74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN GEORGIA, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and National Statistical Office of Georgia. Trends before and after 2020 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

Similarly, **long term unemployment rates** in Georgia tended to decrease from 2010 to 2019, and almost halved from 8.1% to 4.3% between those years. Changes in methodology in 2020 means that trends cannot be compared. The reported rate in that year was 5.8%. Data for 2021 will be important to understand the impact of COVID-19.

**FIGURE 35: LONG TERM UNEMPLOYMENT (15-74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN GEORGIA, 2010-2020**

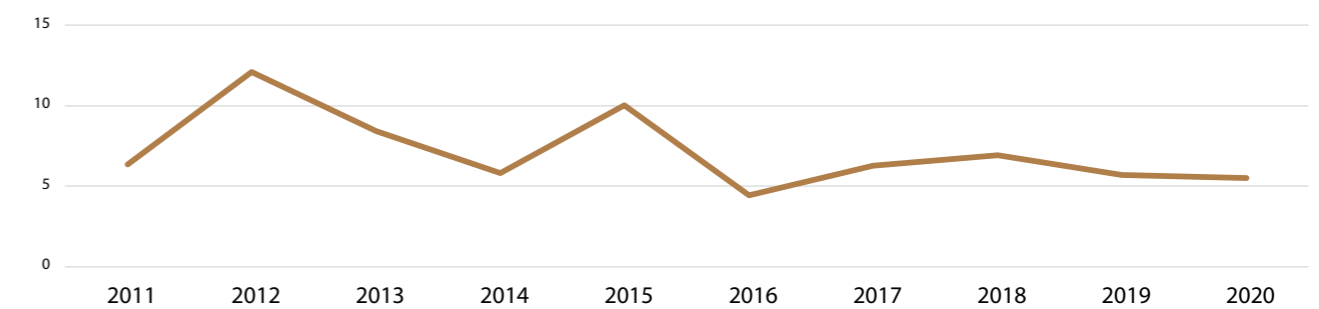


Source: Eurostat ENP database and National Statistical Office of Georgia. Trends before and after 2020 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

### c. Progress towards Social Inclusion and Decent Work

**Growth rates of average nominal monthly wages** in Georgia have fluctuated significantly between 2011 and 2020, but they have been positive, at between 4 and 12% in each year. Rates have been more stable since 2016 at around 5-7% in each year.

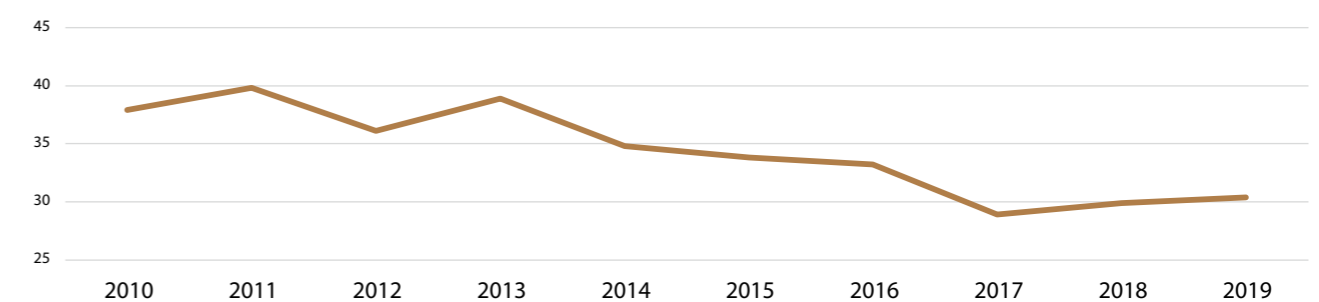
**FIGURE 36: GROWTH RATE OF AVERAGE NOMINAL MONTHLY WAGES (LOCAL CURRENCY) (%) IN GEORGIA, 2011-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and National Statistical Office of Georgia.

The **youth unemployment rate** in Georgia tended to decrease between since 2010 and 2017, falling from 37.9% to 28.9% in that period. It then began to climb a little and reached 30.4% in 2019. Changes in methodology in 2020 means that trends cannot be compared. The reported rate in that year was 39.4%. Data for 2021 will be important to understand the impact of COVID-19.

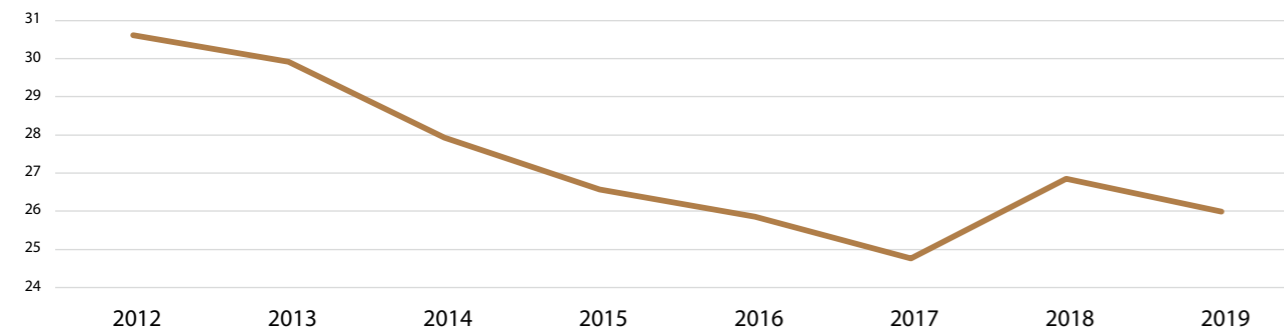
**FIGURE 37: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT (15-24-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN GEORGIA, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and National Statistical Office of Georgia. Trends before and after 2020 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

Similarly, from 2012 to 2017 the proportion of **young people neither in employment, education, or training (NEET)** in Georgia tended to decrease and improved overall from 30.6% to 24.8%. However, it then tended to increase towards 2019 (to 26%). The figure for 2020, based on new methodology and therefore not directly comparable, was 28.5%. Data for 2021 will indicate the trend since the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019 the percentage of males that were NEET was 23.3% while the percentage of females was 29.1%. But the rate for females has reduced significantly since 2012 when it was 37.4%. The 2020 female NEET rate, according to new methodology, was lower than that for males (at 28.3% compared to 28.7% for males).

**FIGURE 38: YOUNG PERSONS (15-24-YEAR-OLDS) NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, OR TRAINING (NEET) (%) IN GEORGIA, 2012-2020**



Source: Eurostat and National Statistical Office of Georgia. Trends before and after 2020 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

## 3.4 Moldova

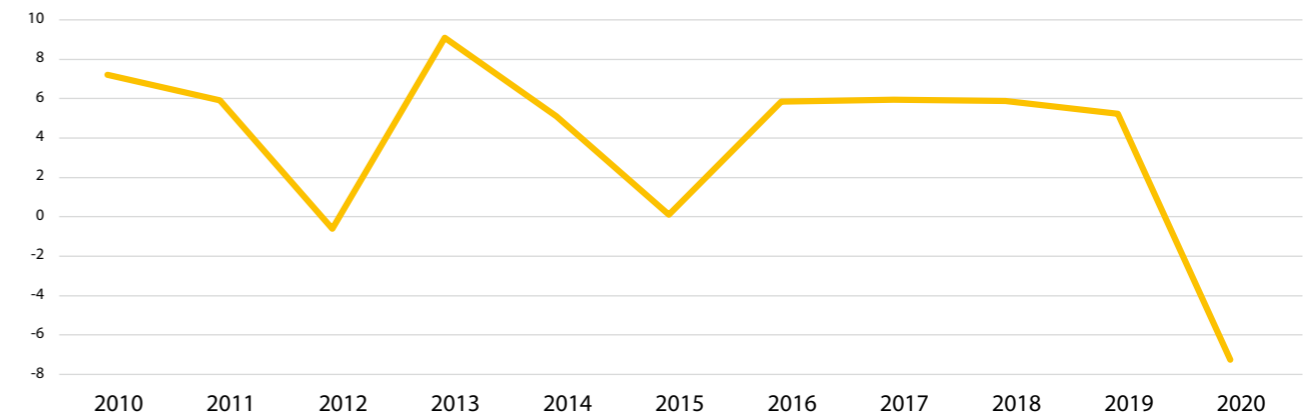
### a. National context for measuring progress towards SDG8

Alongside its commitments to the SDGs, Moldova's policy priorities related to SDG8 include improving its human resources, including redressing the emigration of skilled people in an already declining overall total population size. Measures are also planned to ensure inclusion of the most vulnerable in the economy and society and reduce income and non-income inequalities. The country's dependence on external energy sources point to the need of promoting energy efficiency and diversification (including industrially) as an essential condition for the economy's sustainable development. There is also an emphasis on the improved use of innovation and research in improving the competitiveness of the economy and the capacity of the state support sustainable development. Environment protection requires strengthened institutional capacities and more sufficient financing.<sup>25</sup>

### b. Progress towards Sustained Growth

**Annual growth rates of Real GDP per capita** in Moldova tended to decrease between 2010 and 2018 from 7.2% to 5.9%. This period also witnessed two significant economic downturns and sharp recoveries in a short period of time. In 2012, growth was negative at -0.6% but in 2013 it bounced back to 9.1% before becoming negative again in 2015 at 0.1%. Positive growth rates were then maintained at around 6% in each year from 2016 to 2018.

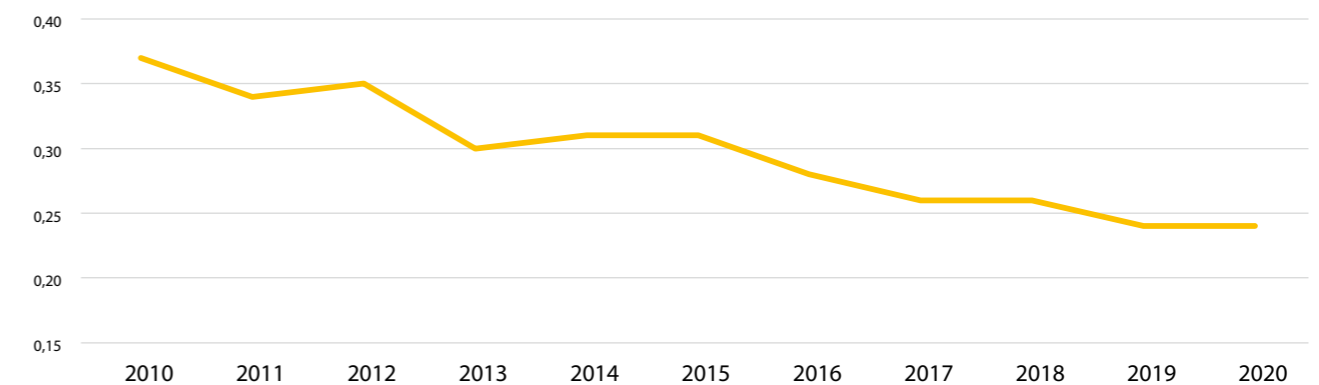
**FIGURE 39: GROWTH RATE OF REAL GDP PER CAPITA (%) IN MOLDOVA, 2010-2020**



Source: Statistics Moldova.

**R&D expenditure** has steadily declined over the past ten years from 0.37% of GDP in 2010 to 0.24% in 2020. However, even in years of negative economic growth (2012 and 2015) the figure either increased or remained stable.

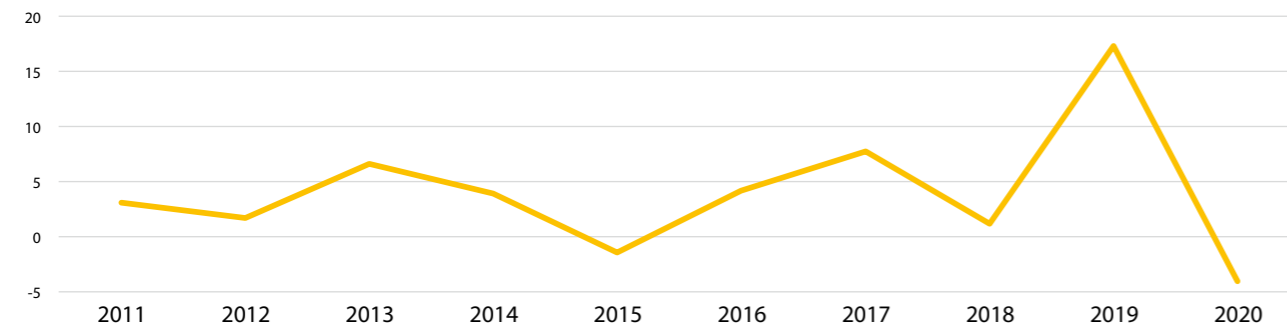
**FIGURE 40: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP IN MOLDOVA, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and Statistics Moldova.

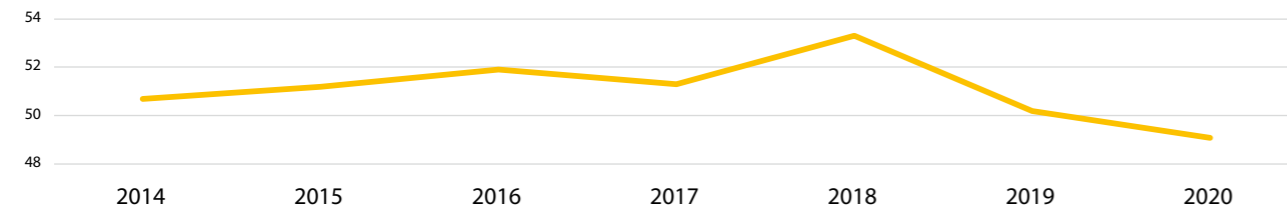
**Growth rates of GDP per employed person** largely followed trends in Real GDP per capita in Moldova until 2016. However, data available for 2017 and 2018 shows this measure of labour productivity behaving quite differently to overall GDP growth, as it increased sharply in 2017 but then fell sharply in 2018 when GDP growth was relatively stable. This may be due to changes in statistical methodology for calculating the number of employed persons in Moldova in 2018.

(25) From <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/memberstates/moldova>

**FIGURE 41: ANNUAL GROWTH RATE OF REAL GDP PER EMPLOYED PERSON (%) IN MOLDOVA, 2011-2020**

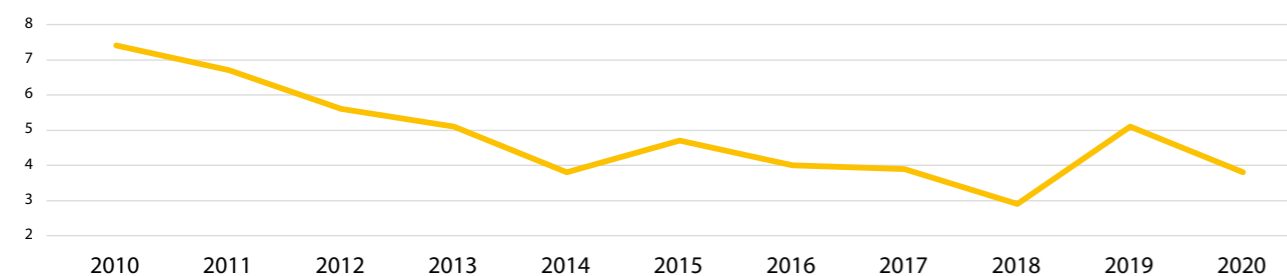
Source: Statistics Moldova. Data in 2018 may be affected by a change in the methodology for employment statistics.

The **employment rate** in Moldova has been relatively stable but shows some interesting movements in relation to economic growth. It tended to rise from 2014 until 2018, from 50.7% to 53.3%, but with a small decrease in 2017. Following a change in statistical methodology in 2018, the rate began to decline reaching 49.1% in 2020.

**FIGURE 42: EMPLOYMENT RATE (20–64-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN MOLDOVA 2014-2020**

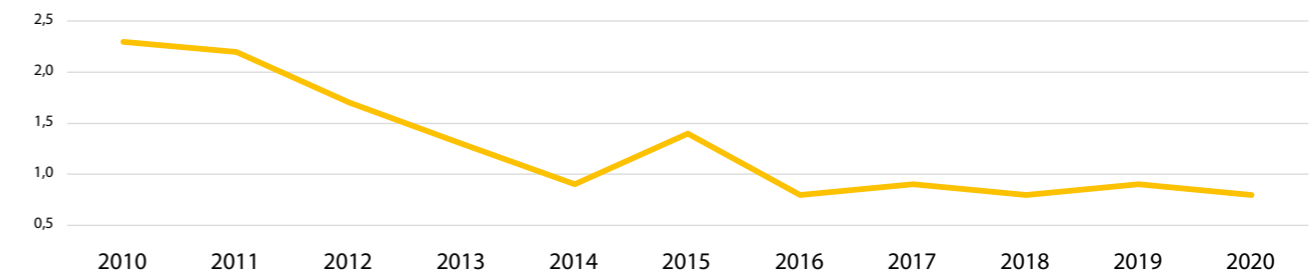
Source: Eurostat ENP database and Statistics Moldova. Trends before and after 2018 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

The **unemployment rate** in Moldova tended to decrease between 2010 and 2018, more than halving from 7.4% to 2.9%. The economic downturn in 2012 in Moldova did not seem to have a significant effect on the unemployment rate, possibly because of the speedy recovery of economic growth into 2013. However, the effects of the downturn in 2015 may have increased the rate by nearly one percentage point in that year. In 2019 the rate shot up to 5.1%, but then decreased to 3.8% in 2020, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in that year.

**FIGURE 43: UNEMPLOYMENT (15-74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN MOLDOVA, 2010-2020**

Source: Eurostat ENP database and Statistics Moldova. Trends before and after 2020 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

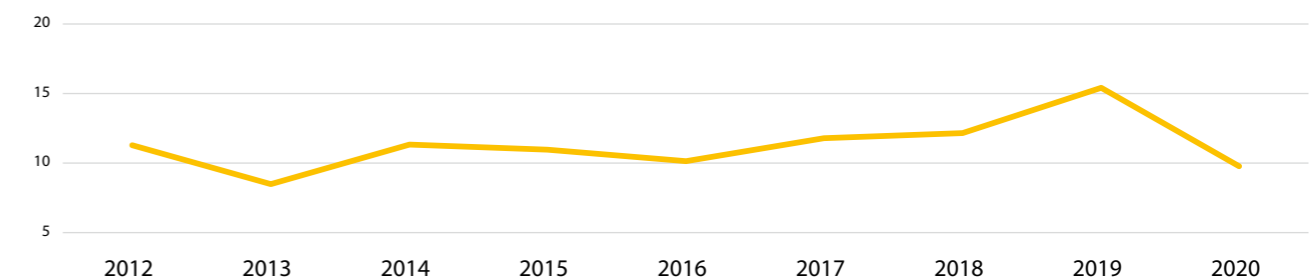
The overall trend in **long term unemployment** in Moldova was to decrease between 2010 and 2020, from 2.3% in 2010 to 0.8%, despite a large increase in 2015 alongside the rate for overall unemployment. But the rate decreased rapidly again in 2016 and has remained relatively stable since.

**FIGURE 44: LONG TERM UNEMPLOYMENT (15-74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN MOLDOVA, 2010-2020**

Source: Eurostat ENP database and Statistics Moldova. Trends before and after 2018 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

### c. Progress towards Social Inclusion and Decent Work

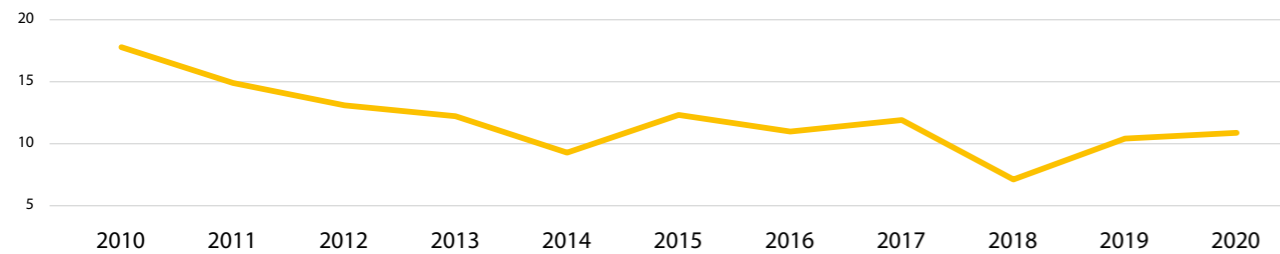
Moldova has seen steadily increasing growth rates of **average nominal monthly wages** of between around 10 and 15% in most years between 2012 and 2019. But a relatively sharp annual decrease of the rate was witnessed between 2019 and in 2020 (dropping five percentage points), possibly as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**FIGURE 45: GROWTH RATE OF AVERAGE NOMINAL MONTHLY WAGES (LOCAL CURRENCY) (%) IN MOLDOVA, 2011-2020**

Source: Eurostat ENP database and Statistics Moldova.

Moldova's **youth unemployment rate** tended to decline between 2010 and 2018, despite some increases in the years 2015 and 2017, falling from 17.8% in 2010 to 11.9% in 2017. However, after a change in statistical methodology in 2018 an increasing trend was then witnessed in 2019 and again in 2020 following the COVID-19 pandemic. The rise in 2019 was higher than that for overall unemployment, while in 2020 overall unemployment declined, so economic conditions in recent years seem to have negatively affected young people in the labour market more than the overall population.

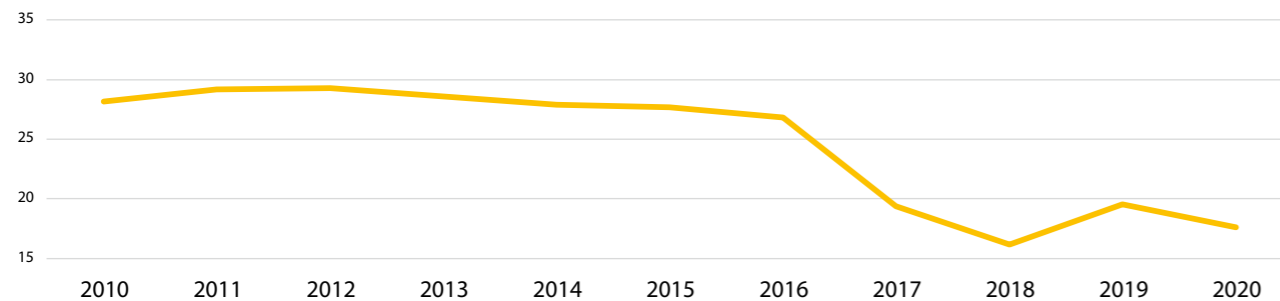
FIGURE 46: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT (15-24-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN MOLDOVA, 2010-2020



Source: Eurostat ENP database and Statistics Moldova. Trends before and after 2020 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

The proportion of young people neither in employment, education, or training (NEET) in Moldova improved from 28.2% in 2010 to 19.4% in 2017. But following a change in statistical methodology in 2018 the rate showed an overall increase to 2020, but despite the COVID-19 pandemic it decreased by almost 2 percentage points in 2020. In 2019, the percentage of males that were NEET was 16.5% compared to 22.8% of females. The rate for females has remained relatively static but has dropped a little from 24.4% in 2005.

FIGURE 47: YOUNG PERSONS (15-24-YEAR-OLDS) NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, OR TRAINING (NEET) (%) IN MOLDOVA, 2010-2020



Source: Eurostat and Statistics Moldova. Trends before and after 2018 should be considered separately due to changes in methodology.

## 3.5 Ukraine

### a. National context for measuring progress towards SDG8

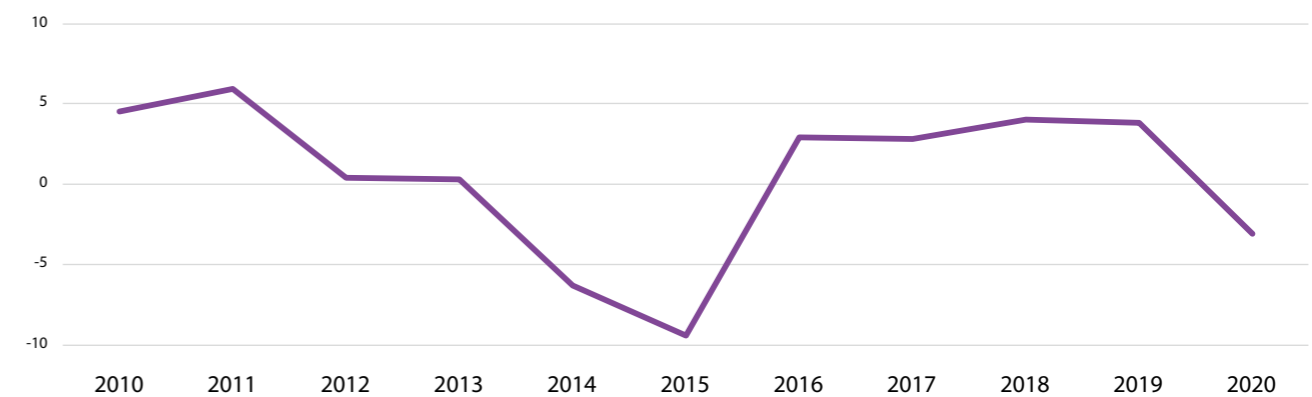
Alongside its commitments to the SDGs, Ukraine has a National Economic Strategy until 2030 (NES-2030) relating to SDG8 and focusses on ensuring economic growth and increasing the welfare of Ukrainians. This includes priorities such as sustainable public finances, a developed financial sector, automation of bureaucratic processes, the privatisation of large state-owned enterprises, the introduction of tax incentives for investment projects, and the use of a National Investment Fund, which will implement large-scale investment and socially significant projects.<sup>26</sup>

(26) <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/denis-shmigal-nacionalna-ekonomichna-strategiya-2030-vzhe-demonstruye-rezultati>

### b. Progress towards Sustained Growth

Annual growth rates of Real GDP per capita in Ukraine tended to decline between 2010 and 2020. Despite the growth rate increasing in 2011 to 5.9% from 4.5% in 2010, it declined annually from then until 2015. Negative growth rates were seen in both 2014 and 2015. However, 2016 saw a strong recovery when the growth rate increased to 2.9% from -9.4% in the year before. The rate was then relatively stable until the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, when growth again became negative at -3.1%.

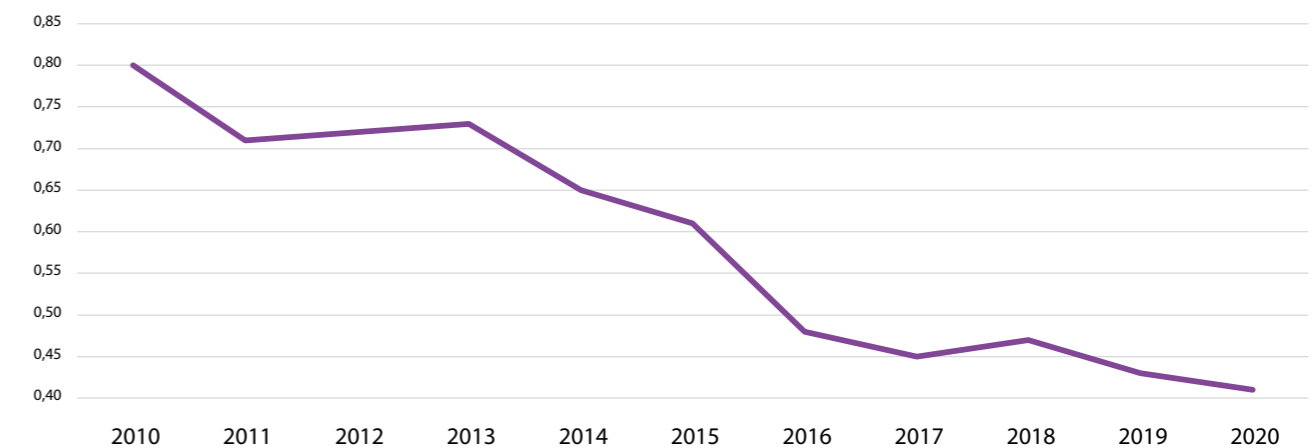
FIGURE 48: ANNUAL GROWTH OF REAL GDP PER CAPITA (%) IN UKRAINE, 2010-2020



Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

Ukraine's R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP nearly halved between 2010 and 2019 from 0.8% of GDP to 0.43%. But it fell most significantly during the economic downturn around 2013 to 2016 and was relatively stable thereafter.

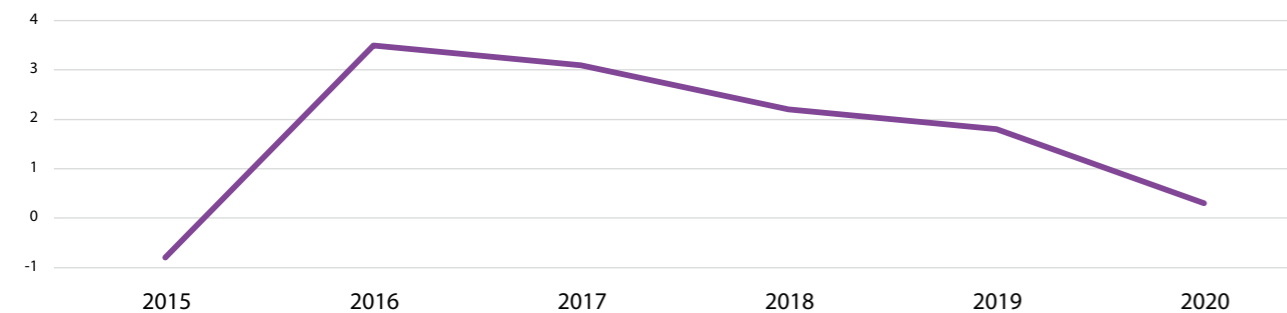
FIGURE 49: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE AS A PERCENTAGE OF GDP IN UKRAINE, 2010-2019



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

Labour productivity in Ukraine as measured by **GDP per employed person** has largely followed trends in GDP per capita since 2015. However, in 2015, while the growth rate of GDP per capita was -9.4%, growth of GDP per employed person was only -0.8%. From 2016, the two rates were more aligned in terms of scale, and both were 1.8% in 2019. They diverged in 2020; growth in GDP per capita was -3.1%, the rate per employed person was 0.3%.

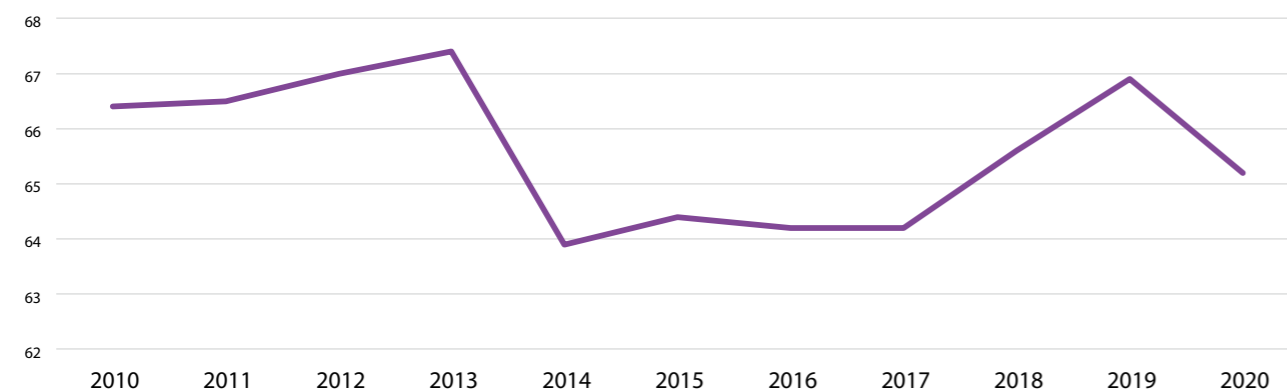
**FIGURE 50: ANNUAL GROWTH OF REAL GDP PER EMPLOYED PERSON (%) IN UKRAINE, 2015-2020**



Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

The **employment rate** in Ukraine tended to increase between 2010 and 2013, reaching 67.4% in 2013. The rate then dipped significantly with the start of the economic downturn in 2014, to 63.9%. But then it tended to increase again, and it reached 66.9% in 2019 and 65.2% in 2020.

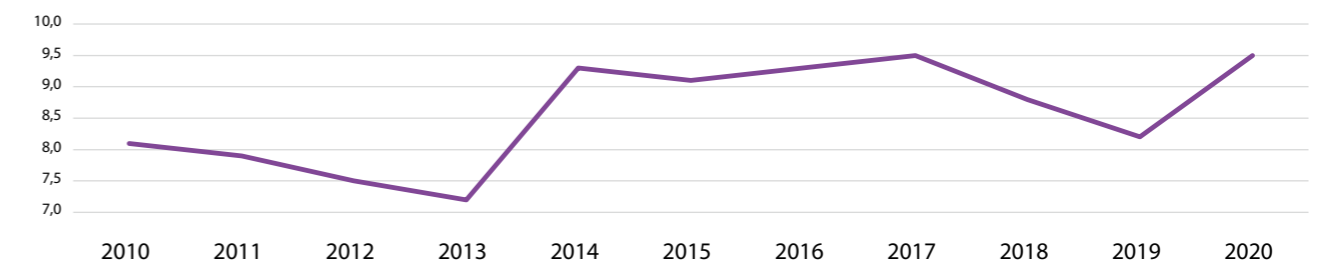
**FIGURE 51: EMPLOYMENT RATE (20-64-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN UKRAINE, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

Like the employment rate, the **unemployment rate** in Ukraine improved between 2010 and 2013, decreasing from 8.1% to 7.2%. It was then also adversely affected by the economic downturn in 2014, rising to 9.3% and remained between 9.1 and 9.5% until 2017. Like the employment rate, it then tended to improve, dropping to 8.2% by 2019. However, it rose again to 9.5% in 2020.

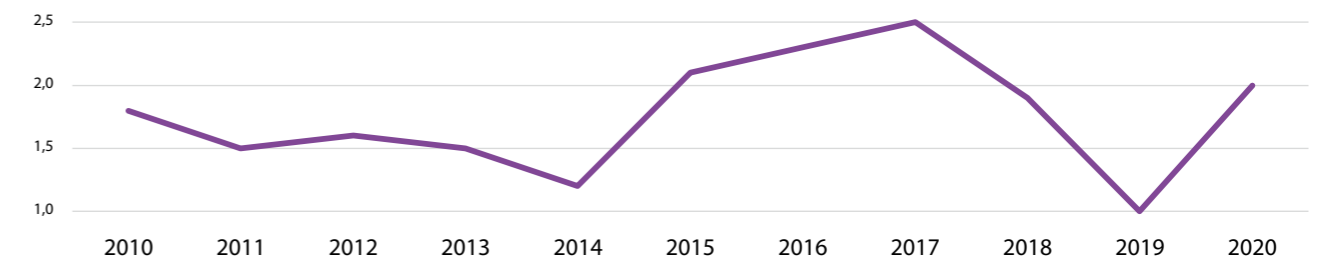
**FIGURE 52: UNEMPLOYMENT (15-74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN UKRAINE, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

Similarly, improvements in the **long-term unemployment rate** since 2010 were significantly impacted by the economic downturn around 2014-16. The rate was steadily decreasing beforehand from 1.5% in 2010 to 1.2% in 2014. But it more than doubled by 2017 to 2.5%. It then sharply recovered and dropped to 1% in 2019, the lowest rate in the previous ten years. However, it rose again to 2.0% in 2020.

**FIGURE 53: LONG TERM UNEMPLOYMENT (15-74-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN UKRAINE, 2010-2020**

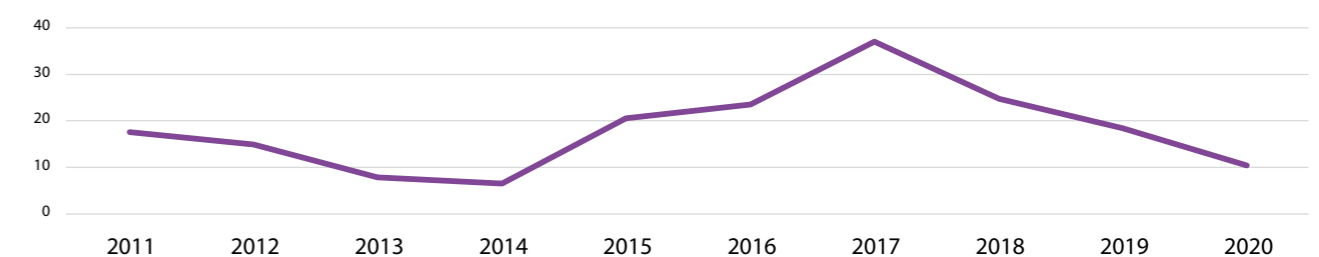


Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

### c. Progress towards Social Inclusion and Decent Work

**Growth rates of average nominal monthly wages** decreased in line with decreasing growth rates in Real GDP per capita from 2012 to 2014 (decreasing from 18% to 7%). But the rate increased in 2015 while Real GDP per capita was still increasingly negative. It continued rising significantly until 2017 when the rate reached 37%. Rates declined thereafter to 10% in 2020.

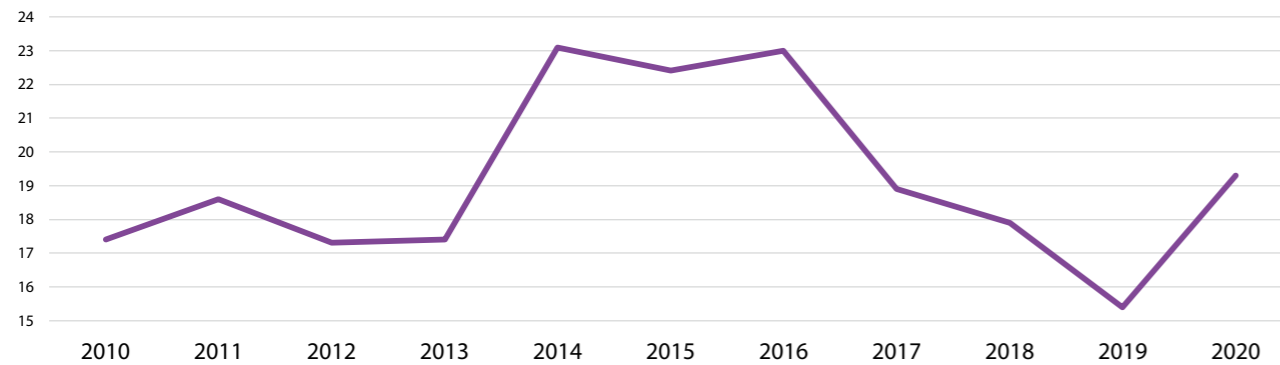
**FIGURE 54: GROWTH RATE OF AVERAGE NOMINAL MONTHLY WAGES (LOCAL CURRENCY) (%) IN UKRAINE, 2011-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

**Youth unemployment** has broadly followed the trend of overall unemployment in Ukraine but has generally been around more than double the rate for older adults. However, compared to overall unemployment rate, which has been relatively stable since 2014, youth unemployment has significantly improved, falling from 23.1% in 2014 to 15.4% in 2019. However, it rose again to 19.3% in 2020.

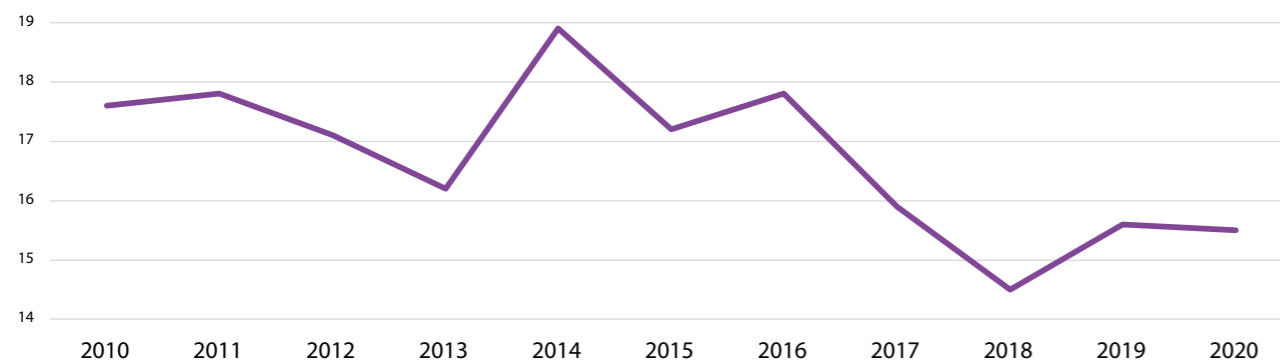
**FIGURE 55: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT (15-24-YEAR-OLDS) (%) IN UKRAINE, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat ENP database and State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

From 2010 to 2018, the trend in the proportion of **young people neither in employment, education, or training (NEET)** in Ukraine improved overall, decreasing from 17.6% to 14.5%. Progress has fluctuated, and there was for example a significant increase during the economic downturn in 2014 (reaching 18.9%). Interestingly, despite the overall progress, in 2019 the youth NEET rose by over 1%, in contrast to the youth unemployment rate which decreased by more than 2% in that year. In 2020, the percentage of males that were NEET was 12.7%, while the percentage of females was much higher at 18.4%. The female rate had been relatively stable since 2005, when it was 20%.

**FIGURE 56: : YOUNG PERSONS (15-24-YEAR-OLDS) NEITHER IN EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION, OR TRAINING (NEET) (%) IN UKRAINE, 2010-2020**



Source: Eurostat and State Statistics Service of Ukraine.

*Maintaining success in monitoring progress toward SDG8*



The National Statistical Institutes (NSIs) of the region have made great strides with limited resources in developing data sources, methodologies, and reporting platforms to meet the needs of users for internationally comparable official statistics on progress towards the SDGs.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, they have overcome the significant challenges of data collection and reporting during the COVID-19 pandemic and high-quality statistics have continued to be provided.

The preparation of this publication has highlighted the many remaining challenges and data gaps related to monitoring SDG8. This will require continued support from national governments and international cooperation.

Plans are already being developed by NSIs to fill some data gaps, such as the inclusion of questions related to labour under-utilisation in Labour Force Surveys. Recommended priorities for further investment and cooperation are:

- ▶ Improvements in the coverage of indicators related to:
  - Social Inclusion, particularly in the development of data sources that allow for greater disaggregation of data by disability, migrant status, and other social groups.
  - Where official statistics can replace estimates by international organisations to provide more reliable evidence for policymaking. This is particularly in relation to Environmental Integrity where minimal official statistics currently exist as traditional data sources are not well suited to monitoring it.
- ▶ Further harmonisation of data sources and methodologies to enhance international comparability particularly with the European Union, via reference to international standards established by Eurostat and other international statistical institutions.
- ▶ Investigation into alternative data sources that could provide for more efficient data production and wider data coverage. This may include expanding cooperation and investment across Governments on access to and improvements of the quality of administrative data. Developing less traditional data sources may also be a priority, for example the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for monitoring environmental integrity and digital data sources to monitor the evolution of the digital economy.

## International estimates of other SDG8 indicators

**Indicators related to environmental integrity, the impact of COVID-19 on working hours, and financial inclusion are important elements of measuring progress towards SDG8. Comparable data are not yet available consistently via official statistics. This annex highlights estimates by international organisations that can help to understand progress and possible needs for improvements in official statistics.**

### Environmental Integrity

#### Natural resource use

Natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable, and ecosystem services are the natural capital out of which other forms of capital are made. They contribute towards fiscal revenue, income, and poverty reduction. If used wisely, they can also benefit social inclusion, not least in rural communities.

The EU's most relevant indicator for monitoring the environmental integrity of SDG8 is **Resource Productivity** as it monitors the relationship between what an economy produces and the physical materials it uses. The EU has increased its resource productivity by 36.4% since 2004.<sup>28</sup> A relatively useful proxy, viewed in conjunction with GDP growth rates, is the World Bank's estimates of **National Resource Rents**.<sup>29</sup>

Estimates for National Resource Rents are available for the countries featured in this publication as the overall sum (in % of GDP) of the difference between the price of commodities and the average costs of producing them, including 'rents from oil, natural gas, coal, mineral, and forests. In the period 2010 to 2019, Resource Rents were estimated by the World Bank to have been stable in Moldova from a low base (0.1% to 0.2% of GDP), decreasing slightly in Armenia (from 2.7% to 2.1%), and decreasing significantly in Azerbaijan (32.2% to 25.5%), Ukraine (7.6% to 1.8%), and Georgia (1.4% to 0.1%).

The UN SDG Indicator of (8.4.1) **Material footprint per capita** estimates how much biomass, fossil fuels, metal ores and non-metal ores are extracted relative to the population size of the country. While estimates by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) are limited after 2015, they point to some significant increases in the region before then. Such footprints in Moldova are estimated at being ten times higher in 2015 than in 2005, while the other countries saw rises of around 50-100%. This contrasts with an estimated 8.5% reduction in the footprint among EU countries over the same period. This indicates a need for a focus on producing and understanding official statistics in this area, including better data for 2015 to 2020 to understand more recent trends.

(27) Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova.

(28) [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=SDG\\_8\\_-\\_Decent\\_work\\_and\\_economic\\_growth#Decent\\_work\\_and\\_economic\\_growth\\_in\\_the\\_EU:\\_overview\\_and\\_key\\_trends](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=SDG_8_-_Decent_work_and_economic_growth#Decent_work_and_economic_growth_in_the_EU:_overview_and_key_trends)

(29) UNEP estimates from Global Material Flows database, via the World Bank Data portal

## Carbon Dioxide emissions

The UN SDG Indicator (9.4.1) **CO2 emissions per unit of value added per unit of manufacturing value added** looks at the total emissions from fuel combustion produced by the economic activity most likely to rely on producing CO2. Increases of CO2 emissions from manufacturing may be expected to increase as economies grow, unless there are changes in the carbon intensity of the energy mix used, the structure of the manufacturing sector, the energy efficiency of production technologies, and/or in the economic value of outputs. Estimates by the International Energy Authority (IEA) indicate a variety of these factors are in play in the region, as there has been a variety of trends despite the overall increasing annual GDP growth rates. While Georgia's annual emissions are estimated to have nearly doubled between 2008 and 2018, Ukraine's emissions are estimated to have decreased by 62%. Armenia's annual emissions are estimated to have been broadly the same in 2018 and 2008, while Azerbaijan and Moldova's emissions grew by around 7.8%.<sup>30</sup>

But to understand trends in CO2 emissions in the manufacturing sector, better and more coordinated data collection and analysis may be required at the national level. While the IEA estimates are based on harmonised energy data collected at national level, CO2 emission data is not systematized in many countries and national methodologies may differ from internationally agreed methodologies.

## Land use

The UN SDG GOAL 15.1 seeks to ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains, and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements. There are two related indicators of particular interest in understanding progress towards SDG8.

Indicator 15.1.1 **Forest Area** as a proportion of total land area helps to monitor how economic growth may be affecting levels of deforestation or afforestation. Estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) suggest that while Armenia saw a slight decrease in forest areas by 1% between 2000 and 2020, in the same period other countries saw some increases, 2% in Georgia, 12% in Moldova, and 2% in Ukraine.<sup>31</sup> An increase of 0.3% is reported in Azerbaijan by its National Statistical Institute.<sup>32</sup>

Indicator 15.1.2 monitors **Protected Natural Areas** in terms of the proportion of important sites in any country for (a) terrestrial and (b) freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas. In the countries for which estimates are available<sup>33</sup> there were increases in both types of protected areas between 2005 and 2020. For terrestrial areas, by 50% in Armenia, 27% in Azerbaijan, 48% in Georgia, and 2% in Ukraine. For freshwater areas, by 22% in Armenia, 14% in Azerbaijan, 76% in Georgia, and 4% in Ukraine.

## The Impact of COVID-19 on working hours

In addition to the close monitoring of trends in data for other indicators for SDG8 in 2020 and beyond, the ILO recommends monitoring working hours lost due to the pandemic. Comparable data for a range of indicators that look at this issue are not yet available for the countries featured in this publication.

The ILO estimates that globally by 2021 the total number of working hours had decreased by 4.3% due to COVID-19.<sup>34</sup> It estimates that the region, like the EU, saw a decrease in the total weekly hours worked of employed persons in 2020 from 2019 of between 3% and 15%. Total hours worked then increased in 2021, as they did in the EU, from between 0.4% and 13%. But working hours in none of the countries or the EU were estimated to have recovered to 2019 levels by 2021.

(30) IEA (2020), CO2 Emissions from fuel combustion. <https://www.iea.org/statistics>

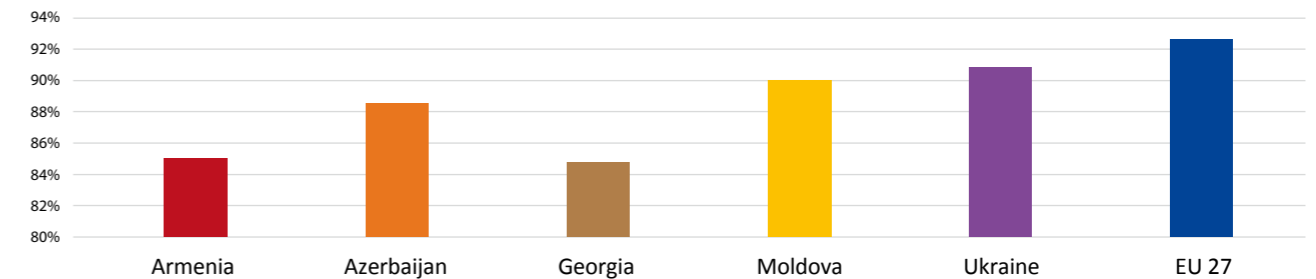
(31) FAO, Global Forest Resources Assessment and FAOSTAT. UN SDGs database.

(32) Provided directly by State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan.

(33) BirdLife International, IUCN and UNEP-WCMC (2020). UN SDGs database.

(34) ILOSTAT database <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

FIGURE 57: ILO ESTIMATES OF THE PERCENTAGE OF WEEKLY WORKING HOURS IN 2020 COMPARED TO 2019



Source: ILO modelled estimates; ILOSTAT database.

## Financial inclusion

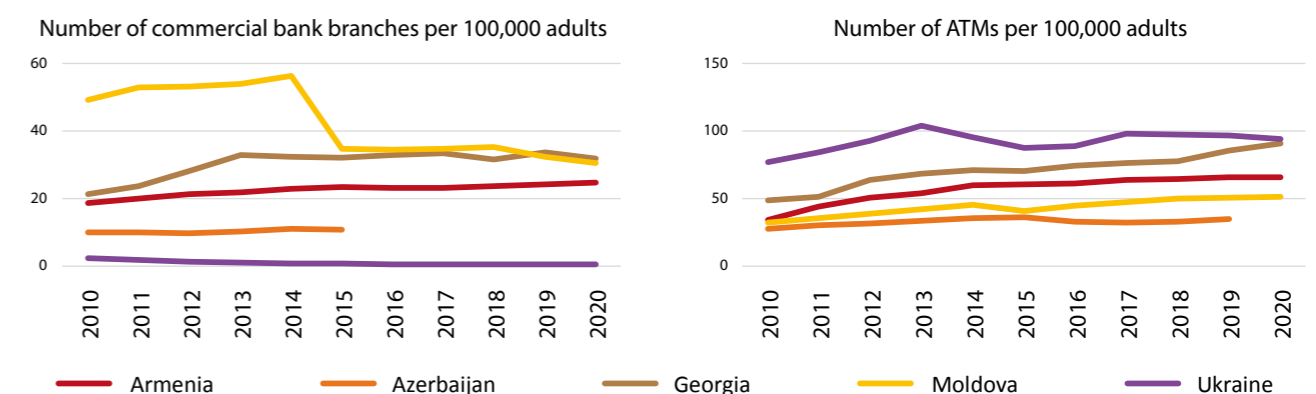
Financial inclusion is an important part of monitoring the Sustained Growth and Social Inclusion components of SDG8. It relates to the availability and equality of opportunities of businesses and individuals to access appropriate, affordable, and timely financial products and services.

Indicators related financial inclusion have been agreed by the UN but not all countries currently produce comparable data to monitor them. A key challenge also remains in understanding financial inclusion for marginalised groups. That would require data that is much more disaggregated according to different social groups (by sex, disability, geography, migrant status and so on).

UN Indicator 8.10.1 monitors **(a) the number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults and (b) the number of automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults**. Comparable data is available via the IMF's Financial Access Survey. But there are significant limitations on their relevance in terms of comparing progress, not least due to the significant variations in geographies (and financial sector set-up) and in their relevance to digitalising economies.

In some countries, for example, the number of commercial bank branches has been decreasing. But this is not necessarily a break on sustainable economic growth as customers switch to online banking. It may be relevant to understanding social inclusion issues if different types of disaggregated data were available, as it may be determined whether the reduction in access to physical banking infrastructure is disproportionately detrimental to certain social groups and/or those living in certain areas (e.g. rural vs. urban).

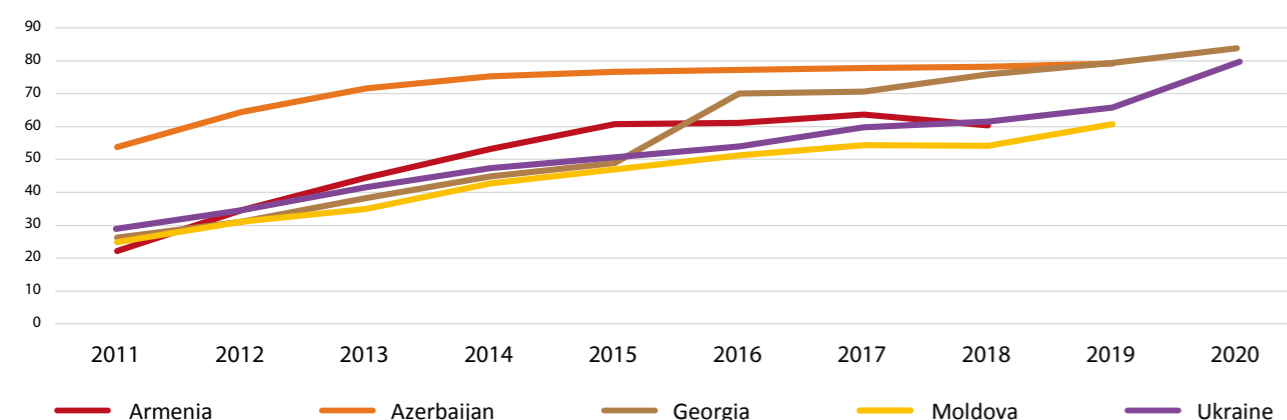
FIGURE 58: IMF ESTIMATES OF TWO FINANCIAL INCLUSION SDG INDICATORS 2010-2020



Source: ILO modelled estimates; ILOSTAT database.

In the digitising economy, measures of digital inclusion may be more relevant to understanding progress towards financial inclusion. NSIs in the region produce official statistics in this area including on **households having access to the internet**. This shows significant progress across all countries on digital inclusion as a good basis for sustained economic growth.

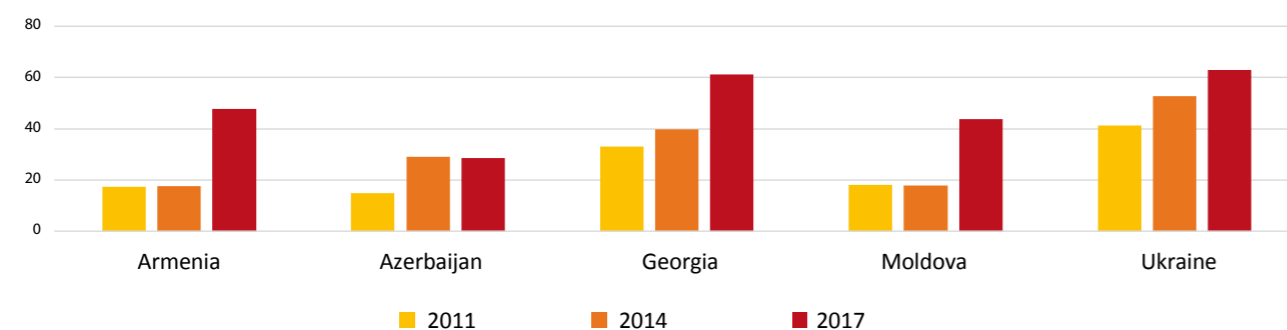
FIGURE 59: OFFICIAL STATISTICS ON HOUSEHOLDS WITH ACCESS TO THE INTERNET (%) 2011-2020



Source: Eurostat ENP database; data not available for all countries after 2018.

Another UN recommended indicator (8.10.2) is the **proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider**. This still has high relevance for sustained growth across all economies as they digitise. Estimates from the World Bank show a positive trend overall since 2011.

FIGURE 60: WORLD BANK ESTIMATES OF THE PERCENTAGE OF ADULTS WITH AN ACCOUNT WITH A FINANCIAL INSTITUTION OR A MOBILE MONEY SERVICE PROVIDER 2011-2017



Source: World Bank Data portal; Demirguc-Kunt et al., 2018, Global Financial Inclusion Database, World Bank.

## Summary of data sources and methodologies for Indicators in this publication

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGIES USED

Indicators featured in the STEP publication on SDG8	Important notes for users on data sources and methodologies
<b>SUSTAINED GROWTH</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Growth Rate of Real GDP per capita</b></li> </ul>	GDP statistics are produced according to the UN <b>System of National Accounts (SNA) 2008</b> and the European System of National and Regional Accounts (ESA) 2010. This involves a variety of multiple sources in different countries including establishment surveys and government administration/financial records.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Growth Rate of Real GDP per employed person</b></li> </ul>	GDP statistics are from the <b>National Accounts</b> according to the SNA 2008 and ESA 2010.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Research and Development Expenditure as a % of GDP</b></li> </ul>	Statistics are from <b>establishment surveys</b> Georgia used an establishment survey until 2014, which was then discontinued; <i>data for 2015 to 2018 used in this publication is from UNESCO estimates.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Employment Rate</b></li> <li><b>Unemployment Rate</b></li> <li><b>Long Term Unemployment Rate</b></li> </ul>	Statistics are from a large-scale household survey – commonly called the <b>Labour Force Survey</b> – as government administrative records do not adequately record all types of unemployment/employment. The methodology used is agreed by the 19th International Conference on Labour Statistics (ICLS). But countries have adapted the data collection and processing to updated versions, resulting in breaks in the time series which need to be considered when analysing the data. Most countries have or are in the process of adopting the methodology agreed at the 19 <sup>th</sup> ICLS. Armenia and Moldova adopted the latest standard from 2018 onwards and Georgia in 2020. Ukraine has partially adopted the new standards, with incremental implementation since 2016. Azerbaijan adopted the latest standard in 2021 in a pilot LFS, with the support of the STEP project.

Indicators featured in the STEP publication on SDG8	Important notes for users on data sources and methodologies
<b>SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DECENT WORK</b>	
• <b>People Killed in Accidents at Work*</b>	<b>Administrative data</b> from the Labour Inspectorate is used by Azerbaijan, Ukraine, and Georgia (under Ministry of Health). <b>Establishment surveys</b> have been used in Ukraine but since 2019 administrative data has been used from the Social Insurance Fund of Ukraine.
• <b>Growth Rate of Average Nominal Monthly Wages</b>	Countries use either an <b>establishment survey or government administrative records</b> . In 2018 the data source in Armenia changed from an establishment survey to administrative data (records from the government tax office).
• <b>Youth Unemployment Rate</b>	All countries use a <b>Labour Force Survey (LFS)</b> – restrictions on time series analysis need to be considered (see above).
• <b>Young People Neither in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET), and by sex</b>	All countries use a <b>Labour Force Survey (LFS)</b> – restrictions on time series analysis need to be considered (see above). <i>Azerbaijan's LFS does not include questions relevant to measuring this indicator; data is presented for four countries only.</i>
• <b>Participation Rate in Organised Learning (1 Year before official primary entry age)*</b>	Georgia uses data collected in a <b>household survey</b> in 2018 (the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey – MICS); the only year for which this data is available. Moldova – <i>data for 2014 to 2019 used in this publication is from UNESCO estimates.</i>

\* Limited regional analysis only is provided due to data availability.

## *Recommended indicators for measuring progress towards SDG8 and the selection process for this publication*

The starting point for the preparation of this publication was the identification of international standard Indicators for SDG8 via the EU's SDG Indicators for Goal 8, the UN's set of 17 Indicators for SDG8, and those used by the ILO in its assessments of progress towards Goal 8. This led to the identification of 40 distinct potential indicators that could be used to monitor SDG8 on an internationally comparable basis, including some looking directly at the impact of the COVID19 pandemic on SDG8. Many of these also include the need to monitor social inclusion issues as sub-components, focussing on age, sex, persons with disabilities, and migrant status. These are set out in Table 2 below.

The potential indicators were then allocated to the sub-categories of assessment proposed by the ILO:

- (i) Sustained Growth
- (ii) Social Inclusion and Decent Work
- (iii) Environmental Integrity\*, and
- (iv) COVID-19 Impact Analysis

\* *Environmental integrity has been considered as sub-component of Sustained Growth for the purposes of the analysis in this publication.*

Eleven core Indicators were then proposed based on an assessment of relevance and comparability of the indicators across the countries, in-depth analysis of data availability via the Eurostat ENP database, other international databases, and the latest data that could be made available by the NSIs. A core factor in selection was the need to highlight the progress made by the NSIs in providing relevant official statistics for SDG8 and to highlight the remaining gaps and challenges that require maintained progress, investment, and international cooperation.

In terms of the UN Indicators related to assessing SDG8, all of them have been assessed by the UN as Tier 1 or 2, and none at Tier 3, as per the definitions below.

- **Tier 1:** Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, and data are regularly produced by countries for at least 50 per cent of countries and of the population in every region where the indicator is relevant.
- **Tier 2:** Indicator is conceptually clear, has an internationally established methodology and standards are available, but data are not regularly produced by countries.
- **Tier 3:** No internationally established methodology or standards are yet available for the indicator, but methodology/ standards are being (or will be) developed or tested.

All Tier 1 level Indicators have high potential for data comparability across the countries in this publication. NSIs have also made progress in making data available for two of Tier 2 Indicators, at least in partially meeting the definition. Data for 5 of the EU's 9 Indicators for SDG8 were able to be at least partially provided.

TABLE 3: RECOMMENDED INTERNATIONAL INDICATORS FOR MONITORING SDG8 AND APPROACH TO INCLUSION IN THE STEP PUBLICATION ON SDG8

SDG8 Indicator	UN Tier	Proposed by	Reason for inclusion/exclusion in STEP SDG8 Indicators
<b>SUSTAINED GROWTH</b>			
SDG_08_10 (EU) Real GDP per capita 8.1.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per capita	1	EU/UN	<b>Included (as UN indicator with focus on growth rate)</b> Comparable official statistics available across all countries. Growth rates considered more relevant for this publication.
8.2.1 Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person	1	UN	<b>Included</b> Comparable official statistics available across all countries.
SDG_08_11 (EU) Investment share of GDP by institutional sectors	N/A	EU	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
SDG_08_30 (EU) Employment rate by sex and SDG_08_30a by citizenship	N/A	EU	<b>Included</b> Comparable official statistics available across all countries. <b>Sex disaggregated data is featured in the STEP publication on Gender Statistics.</b> <i>08_30a excluded as citizenship data not collected by EaP countries.</i>
SDG_08_40 (EU) Long-term unemployment rate by sex	N/A	EU	<b>Included</b> Comparable official statistics available across all countries. <b>Sex disaggregated data is featured in the STEP publication on Gender Statistics.</b>
8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities (LU1)	1	UN	<b>Partially included - data on disability is not available.</b> Comparable official statistics available across all countries. <b>Sex disaggregated data is featured in the STEP publication on Gender Statistics.</b>
8.5.2 Unemployment rate by age			<b>Youth Unemployment (15-24-year-olds) included</b> as a separate indicator under the Social Inclusion component of SDG8 in this publication.

SDG8 Indicator	UN Tier	Proposed by	Reason for inclusion/exclusion in STEP SDG8 Indicators
Labour Underutilisation LU2 - combined rate of time-related underemployment and unemployment	N/A	ILO	<b>Excluded</b>
Labour Underutilisation LU3 - combined rate of unemployment and the potential labour force	N/A	ILO	<b>Excluded</b>
Labour Underutilisation LU4 - composite rate of labour underutilisation	N/A	ILO	<b>Excluded</b>
8.9.1 Tourism direct GDP as a proportion of total GDP and in growth rate	2	UN	<b>Excluded</b>
8.10.1 (a) Number of commercial bank branches per 100,000 adults and (b) number of automated teller machines (ATMs) per 100,000 adults	1	UN	<b>Excluded</b>
8.10.2 Proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a bank or other financial institution or with a mobile-money-service provider	1	UN	<b>Excluded</b>
8.a.1 Aid for Trade commitments and disbursements	1	UN	<b>Excluded</b>
9.5.1 R&D expenditure as a percentage of GDP	1	UN/ILO	<b>Included</b> Comparable official statistics available across all countries.
7.1.1 Percentage of population with access to electricity	1	UN/ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries and not a shared policy priority.
8.3.1 Proportion of informal employment in total employment, by sector and sex	2	UN	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries and not a shared policy priority.

SDG8 Indicator	UN Tier	Proposed by	Reason for inclusion/exclusion in STEP SDG8 Indicators
<b>SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DECENT WORK</b>			
8.5 (proxy) Share of women among all employed persons	N/A	ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Sex disaggregated data is featured in the STEP publication on Gender Statistics.
8.5.1 Average hourly earnings of employees, by sex, age, occupation, and persons with disabilities	2	UN	<b>Partially included</b> Comparable official statistics available across all countries as <b>monthly</b> earnings, but not by sex, age, occupation, and disability.
08_20 (EU) Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex (NEET) and SDG_08_20a by citizenship (sdg_08_20a)	1	EU/UN	<b>Included</b> Comparable official statistics available across all countries. <i>08_20a excluded as citizenship data not collected by EaP countries.</i>
8.6.1 Proportion of youth (aged 15–24 years) not in education, employment, or training			
8.7.1 Proportion and number of children aged 5–17 years engaged in child labour, by sex and age	2	UN	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries and not a shared policy priority.
SDG_08_60 (EU) People killed in accidents at work, by sex	2	EU/UN	<b>Partially included (focus on fatal accidents as per EU indicator)</b> Comparable official statistics available across all countries, but not by disability (UN Indicator).
8.8.1 Fatal and non-fatal occupational injuries per 100,000 workers, by sex and migrant status			
8.8.2 Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining) based on International Labour Organization (ILO) textual sources and national legislation	2	UN	<b>Excluded</b> Non-statistical indicator and not a shared policy priority across all countries.
8.b.1 Existence of a developed and operationalized national strategy for youth employment, as a distinct strategy or as part of a national employment strategy	2	UN	<b>Excluded</b> Non-statistical indicator.

SDG8 Indicator	UN Tier	Proposed by	Reason for inclusion/exclusion in STEP SDG8 Indicators
10.4.1 Labour share of GDP	1	UN/ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
1.1.1 (a) Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)	1	UN/ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
(b) Working Poverty Rate (percentage of employed people living below USD1.90 PPP)			
SDG_01_41(EU) In work at-risk-of-poverty rate <sup>35</sup>	N/A	EU	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, new-borns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable	2	UN/ILO/WB	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
SDG_05_40 (EU) Inactive population due to caring responsibilities by sex	N/A	EU	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries and not a shared policy priority.
5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions	1	UN/ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Sex disaggregated data is featured in the STEP publication on Gender Statistics.
4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex	1	UN/ILO	<b>Partially included</b> Only some comparable official statistics are available. Some analysis provided in the regional section of the publication.

(35) Share of people with an equivalised disposable income (after social transfer) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, which is set at 60% of the national median equivalised disposable income after social transfers.

SDG8 Indicator	UN Tier	Proposed by	Reason for inclusion/exclusion in STEP SDG8 Indicators
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY</b>			
8.4.1 Material footprint, material footprint per capita, and material footprint per GDP	2	UN	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
SDG_12_20 (EU) Resource productivity and domestic material consumption (DMC)	1	EU/UN	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
8.4.2 Domestic material consumption, domestic material consumption per capita, and domestic material consumption per GDP			
9.4.1 CO2 emission per unit of value added (per unit of manufacturing value added)	1	EU/UN	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
15.1.1 Forest area as a proportion of total land area	1	UN/ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
15.1.2 Proportion of important sites for (a) terrestrial and (b) freshwater biodiversity that are covered by protected areas	1	UN/ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
National resource rent as a share of GDP	N/A	ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
Working hours lost due to the COVID-19 crisis (2020)	N/A	ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
Working hours lost due to the COVID-19 crisis expressed as number of FTE jobs (2020)	N/A	ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
Total weekly hours worked of employed persons - ILO modelled estimates (2010-2020)	N/A	ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.
Ratio of total weekly hours worked to population aged 15-64 - ILO modelled estimates	N/A	ILO	<b>Excluded</b> Comparable official statistics not available across all countries.

**“Progress towards SDG 8 for Economic Growth and Decent Work: what do the statistics tell us?”** is one of the flagship regional publications produced within the framework of the STEP programme. It allowed the national statistical institutes of the five partner countries to work together to improve data comparability, quality of data and metadata and presentation standards while contributing to facilitating the use of statistics in evidence-based decision-making. Each chapter of this publication presents statistical information in tables and figures, accompanied by a descriptive text highlighting the main findings. This publication is developed as part of the STEP programme which is funded by the EU, managed by Eurostat and implemented by Expertise France.

### More information on STEP

#### STEP pages on the Eurostat website:

<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/european-neighbourhood-policy/enp-east/step>

#### STEP website

<http://www.eu-step.eu/>

#### Twitter

[https://twitter.com/eu\\_step](https://twitter.com/eu_step)

### More information on statistics in the Eastern Partnership countries:

#### Armenia

<https://armstat.am/en/>

#### Azerbaijan

<https://www.stat.gov.az/>

#### Moldova

<https://statistica.gov.md/index.php?l=en>

#### Georgia

<https://www.geostat.ge/en>

#### Ukraine

<http://ukrstat.gov.ua/>

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