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**Monitoring report
Higher education and non-formal,
informal education**

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Abbreviations

AFI - Academic Freedom Index

CEPA - Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement

EHEA - European Higher Education Area

EU - European Union

HEI - Higher Education Institutions

KPI - Key Performance Indicators

MESCS - Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports

NQF - National Qualification Report

UMIC - Upper-middle-income countries

HE – Higher Education

STEM- Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics



INTRODUCTION

Armenia’s education system stands at a critical juncture, balancing aspirations for global integration with persistent systemic challenges. This report evaluates the implementation of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and its roadmap, focusing on Articles 93 and 94, which address higher education (HE) and non-formal/informal education (NFE/IFE). Aligned with Armenia’s *State Program for Education Development until 2030* and informed by national statistics, international indices, and stakeholder interviews, the analysis highlights progress and gaps in aligning Armenia’s education system with European Higher Education Area (EHEA) standards and lifelong learning frameworks.

Higher education faces acute underfunding, legislative delays, and declining academic freedom, while non-formal education struggles with fragmented policies and slow implementation. Demographic shifts, emigration, and mismatches between education outcomes and labor market needs further complicate reforms. This report underscores the urgency of addressing these challenges to enhance Armenia’s global competitiveness, social equity, and economic resilience.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Armenia’s education reforms, guided by CEPA and the *State Program for Education Development until 2030*, reveal mixed progress. While structural initiatives like the Academic City and sectoral qualifications frameworks signal forward momentum, systemic barriers threaten long-term success.

Key Findings in Higher Education:

1. **Chronic Underfunding:** Armenia ranks 100th globally in HE funding, with 83.8% of students paying tuition. HE receives just 7–8% of the education budget, stifling quality and accessibility.
2. **Legislative Delays:** The stalled *Law on Higher Education and Science* impedes governance reforms and EHEA integration. Postponed self-certification of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) until 2030 risks Armenia’s exclusion from EU educational initiatives.
3. **Eroding Academic Freedom:** The Academic Freedom Index fell from 0.84 (2019) to 0.64 (2024), driven by politicized university boards and restricted institutional autonomy.
4. **Skills Mismatch:** Despite 30% enrollment in STEM fields, graduates lack industry-relevant skills, with Armenia ranking 129th globally in graduate skillsets.
5. **Social Inclusion Gaps:** Only 17.2% of Armenia’s poor access HE. While support for national minorities and students with disabilities is growing, inclusion targets remain modest.



Non-Formal and Informal Education Challenges:

1. **Policy Fragmentation:** Terminological inconsistencies (e.g., conflating “non-formal” with “extracurricular” education) and misaligned timelines across programs hinder progress.
2. **Implementation Delays:** Critical tools like the national learning registry and recognition mechanisms remain unrealized, with key initiatives postponed to 2026–2028.
3. **Low Global Standing:** Armenia ranks 98th in lifelong learning, reflecting weak infrastructure for adult education and skills recognition.

Recommendations:

- **Higher Education:** Fast-track the HE law; boost funding to 15% of the education budget by 2026; establish teaching excellence centers; safeguard academic freedom through legislation.
- **Non-Formal Education:** Harmonize terminology with international standards; launch the national learning registry by 2026; incentivize lifelong learning via public campaigns.
- **Systemic Alignment:** Synchronize CEPA, State Program, and government timelines; integrate EHEA principles like public responsibility into policies.

Conclusion:

Armenia’s education system requires urgent, coordinated action to address funding deficits, legislative inertia, and social inequities. Prioritizing reforms in governance, teaching quality, and lifelong learning will strengthen Armenia’s human capital and alignment with global education agendas.

Methodology

This report examines the implementation of CEPA and the roadmap adopted in 2021 specifically focusing on Articles 93 and 94. These initiatives will be analyzed in the context of the **State Program for Education Development until 2030**, its corresponding action plan, and the draft version of the updated action plan. In Appendix 1 of this report, the objectives, measures, timelines, expected outcomes, and implementation progress are presented for all actions.

Data from the annual **Social Situation of the Republic of Armenia** reports, published by the Statistical Committee, also inform this review. These reports offer critical insights into the number of students, faculty members, and foreign students in Armenia, providing a statistical foundation for understanding trends and changes in Higher education.

Key areas of focus include:



1. National Qualifications Framework

- The framework, initially adopted in 2011 and revised in 2016, plays a pivotal role in aligning educational outcomes with labor market demands. The report will also review the **sectoral qualifications** adopted during 2022–2023, which reflect recent advancements in the Higher education system.

2. International Reports

- A selection of internationally recognized indices and datasets that shed light on the current state of Higher education in Armenia will be analyzed. These include:
 - The **Global Talent Competitiveness Index**, which evaluates Armenia’s ability to grow, gain, and attract talent.
 - The **Legatum Prosperity Index**, which provides a broader perspective on Armenia’s educational and socio-economic landscape.
 - The **V-DEM Dataset**, offering detailed insights into educational indicators on Academic Freedom.

Additionally, the "**Armenia Public Finance Review**" report, presented by the World Bank Armenia Office in December 2024, is considered.

As part of the research, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with officials, university representatives, and experts. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 2.

CHAPTER 1. HIGHER EDUCATION

Higher Education Statistics of Armenia

In the 2023-2024 academic year, Armenia had 53 Higher education institutions (HEIs) and 13 branches. Among these, 23 are public universities and 30 are private. Only 8 private universities have been accredited. For public universities, accreditation is mandatory. Of the 13 branches, 12 belonged to public universities. The total number of students was 72,058, with 59,586 (82.7%) enrolled in public universities.

A particularly concerning issue is the financing of higher education in Armenia. According to the 2023 Global Talent Competitiveness Index, Armenia ranked 100th out of 134 countries in terms of higher education funding. Armenian universities are heavily dependent on student tuition fees, which account for 80-95% of their total revenues.

In the 2023-2024 academic year, only 16.2% of students in state HEIs received government scholarships, while 83.8% had to pay tuition fees¹. Higher education received only 7-8% of the total state education budget, significantly less than general education (66%).

¹ Social Situation in Armenia in 2023,



Capital expenditures for higher education have historically been low but have recently increased due to government initiatives like Education Strategy 2030, which includes plans for an academic city with campus clusters for universities and research institutions.

Between 2012 and 2022, per-student expenditure on higher education increased by 48%, mainly due to a decline in student numbers and a rise in government spending. However, compared to general education, higher education spending remains 30% lower, making Armenia’s HE expenditure relatively low compared to the EU and upper-middle-income countries (UMICs).

Per-Student Expenditure by Level of Education (Relative to General Education) (2022)²

Country	Ratio (Higher Ed to General Education)
Armenia	0.70
Albania	0.76
Moldova	0.84
Georgia	0.58
Estonia	1.81
UMIC	1.51
EU	1.36

The Armenian government is considering performance-based funding mechanisms to improve efficiency in higher education. However, the number of HE students has been declining due to demographic changes, high emigration, and stricter accreditation requirements. Between 2009 and 2018, the student population in HE dropped by 31%³, leading to the closure of 16 universities that failed accreditation requirements.

Despite Armenia’s progress in human capital development over the past 25 years, there remains a significant gap in achieving its full potential. According to the 2020 Human Capital Index (HCI)⁴, a child born in Armenia today will be only 58% as productive as they could be if they had access to complete

² Armenia Public Finance Review, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, p. 62, 2024

³ Social Situation in Armenia in 2009, 2018

⁴ Human Capital Index 2020 <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/456901600111156873/pdf/The-Human-Capital-Index-2020-Update-Human-Capital-in-the-Time-of-COVID-19.pdf>



education and full health⁵. This performance is lower than the EU average (73%), the UMIC average (62%), and Armenia’s regional peers (61%)⁶.

Higher Education Performance in Global Rankings

The British Legatum Institute publishes an annual Prosperity Index⁷, which includes Armenia. According to the 2023 Index, all indicators related to Armenian higher education have declined. In 2013, Armenian higher education ranked 51st globally, but by 2023, it had fallen to 64th place.

The HE enrollment rate has also decreased. Although the graduation rate has remained stable, other countries have improved, causing Armenia to drop from 19th to 28th place in this metric. However, Armenia still holds a relatively high position in this regard.

In 2022, the gross HE enrollment rate was 53.4%, below the 60% average of its peer countries. The net HE enrollment rate was only 32%, partly due to outdated curricula, inadequate infrastructure, demotivating environments, and low-quality faculty⁸.

Furthermore, around two-thirds of students believe that higher education in Armenia does not adequately prepare them with the practical skills needed for employment. While 30% of new HEI students enroll in STEM fields, higher education in Armenia fails to provide modern skills required by emerging industries, leading to a mismatch between educational specializations and labor market demands.⁹

The average quality of higher education remains low, as no Armenian universities are ranked among the world’s top universities.

Finally, the most concerning issue is the skillset of Armenian university graduates. Armenia ranks 129th in the world in this indicator, placing it among the lowest globally.

The 2023 Legatum Prosperity Index¹⁰

⁵ **The Human Capital Index (HCI)**, developed by the World Bank, measures a country’s potential economic productivity by evaluating health and education outcomes, such as child survival rates, expected years of schooling, and learning-adjusted education quality. It quantifies the future earnings potential of a child born today, helping policymakers prioritize investments in human development to bridge gaps in workforce readiness and long-term growth.

⁶ Armenia Public Finance Review, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, p. 62, 2024

⁷ **The Legatum Prosperity Index** evaluates national performance across economic, social, and governance dimensions, including education, health, and institutional quality. It provides a holistic benchmark for countries to assess progress and identify areas for improvement in fostering inclusive prosperity.

⁸ Armenia 2041 foundation, 2021.

⁹ Armenia Public Finance Review, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, p. 66, 2024

¹⁰ The Legatum Prosperity Index https://docs.prosperity.com/9616/7689/4371/Armenia_2023_Picountryprofile.pdf



	Source	Unit	Weight	Value			Global Rank	
				2013	10-yr trend	2023	2013	2023
Tertiary Education (64th)			20%	41.0		41.7	51	64
Tertiary enrolment	UNESCO	percentage	1.0	53.0		50.8	48	68
Tertiary completion	UNESCO	percentage	1.0	46.4		46.8	19	28
Average quality of higher education institutions	QS, TES	score, 0-8	0.5	0.000		0.000	77	92
Skillset of university graduates	WEF	expert survey, 1-7	1.0	3.84		3.86	127	129

The development of higher education in Armenia is significantly hindered by the adoption of the new Law on Higher Education and Science. The drafting of this law began as early as 2016, with several versions being presented, one of which was adopted by the National Assembly in 2021. However, the law was deemed unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court of Armenia and was returned to the MESCS. The rejection was based on a provision in the law stating that the government would have one more vote in the board of trustees of universities than the faculty and students combined.

In 2024, a new draft law was introduced, which is currently under discussion. One of the reasons for the delay in adopting the law is the government’s plan to merge most of the institutes of the National Academy of Sciences with universities and establish an "Academic City," where all state universities of Armenia will operate. The plan includes the creation of six university clusters: classical, technological, educational, military, arts, and medical. All state universities in Armenia are expected to be integrated into these six clusters and, starting from 2030, gradually relocated to the Academic City, which will be built in one of the suburban areas of Yerevan.

Governance of Higher Education

One of the significant changes in recent years was the creation of the Higher Education and Science Committee by the order of the MESCS on July 12, 2023. This was the result of merging the Higher Education Department of the Ministry, the State Science Committee, and the Higher Qualification Committee. The committee’s objectives include:

- Ensuring the comparability of higher and postgraduate professional education qualifications of the Republic of Armenia with those of European and other foreign countries, as well as the recognition of diplomas and their supplements.
- Promoting international student mobility.
- Encouraging and developing academic freedom and institutional autonomy in higher education institutions.

The committee’s functions include:



- Monitoring, reviewing, and ensuring the compatibility of Armenia’s National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (NQF) with the overarching framework of the European Higher Education Area, as well as defining and integrating new qualifications into the NQF.
- Coordinating the self-certification process of the NQF.

These functions align with the actions outlined in the CEPA and its roadmap. However, while the committee’s charter states that it should promote and develop academic freedom and institutional autonomy, neither CEPA, the roadmap, nor the action plan specify any concrete measures or expected outcomes in this regard.

The CEPA roadmap emphasizes the improvement of the governance system of higher education. The document highlights the importance of establishing a balanced system of university autonomy and accountability, along with the development of performance-based key performance indicators (KPIs). On November 23, 2022, by the order of the Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports, the KPIs for universities were approved. However, in the new draft Law on Higher Education and Science, the approval of KPIs is listed among the powers of both the Government and the authorized body. In addition, within the framework of the ERASMUS+ program, the **KPI4HE** project is being implemented, which involves the development of KPIs. The CEPA roadmap envisions that by 2025, university autonomy should be expanded, and mechanisms for accountability and KPIs should be introduced¹¹. However, it remains unclear what has been done in terms of expanding university autonomy and introducing accountability mechanisms.

The V-DEM (Varieties of Democracy) project, coordinated by the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. The institute conducts extensive research on academic freedom. The AFI currently covers 179 countries and territories, providing the most comprehensive dataset on academic freedom. It is based on assessments by 2,329 country experts worldwide, standardized questionnaires, and a well-established statistical model implemented and adapted by the V-Dem project.

Academic Freedom Index

The **Academic Freedom Index (AFI)** assesses de facto levels of academic freedom worldwide based on five indicators:

1. Freedom to research and teach
2. Freedom of academic exchange and dissemination
3. Institutional autonomy
4. Campus integrity
5. Freedom of academic and cultural expression

In 2017, Armenia's Academic Freedom Index was 0.67 (with a maximum possible score of 1). In 2019, it increased to 0.84. However, since 2020, Armenia’s academic freedom index has declined, reaching

¹¹ CEPA Roadmap, p.32



0.64 in 2024. In 2024, Armenia recorded the following results for the components of the Academic Freedom Index (maximum score of 4):

Armenia’s Academic Freedom Index (0,64 out of 1) by components, 2024



As shown in the data, Armenia’s **Campus integrity**¹² and **Institutional autonomy scores** are the lowest among the five indicators, **2.35** and **2.45 out of 4 respectively**. However, Armenia has made progress in the field of Institutional autonomy. Specifically, in 2017, the institutional autonomy score was **2.15**, increasing to **2.62** in 2019. This improvement was linked to the **greater autonomy granted to universities after the 2018 revolution**, as university boards of trustees had fewer high-ranking government officials, and non-politically active individuals were elected as board chairs in several universities.

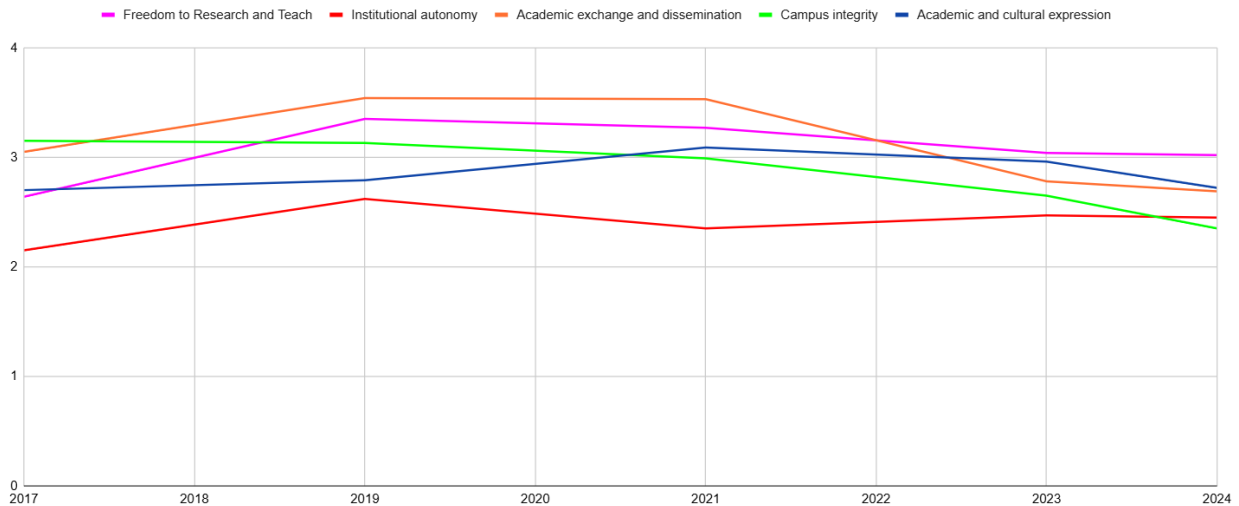
However, since 2020, the **institutional autonomy indicator for Armenian universities has declined again**. This is due to an increase in the number of high-ranking officials in university boards of trustees following the 2020 war. Currently, most university board chairs in Armenia are high-ranking government officials from the ruling party.

Moreover, according to the new draft Law on Higher Education and Science, which was introduced for public discussion in 2024, high-ranking officials **can once again be included in university boards of trustees**. This is concerning, as it does not contribute to the improvement of university autonomy as outlined in CEPA. Additionally, neither the **State Program for Education Development** nor the **2021-2026 Government Program** include any measures aimed at strengthening university autonomy.

¹² by Campus integrity V-Dem report means the absence of a deliberately, externally induced climate of insecurity or intimidation on campus



Components of Academic Freedom Index, Armenia, 2017-2024



Source: <https://academic-freedom-index.net/>

The chart shows that the components of the Academic Freedom Index mainly improved between 2018 and 2021 compared to 2017. However, after 2021, almost all components recorded a decline. Armenia's lowest scores were in institutional autonomy, while the highest scores were in the freedom of teaching and research.

In 2024, Armenia was mentioned in the “Free to Think 2024” Academic Freedom Monitoring Report of the Scholars at Risk Network. “On September 26, 2023, Armenian “red berets” (special forces) detained eight American University of Armenia (AUA) students who were staging an on-campus protest in support of Artsakh Armenians.”¹³

Learning and Teaching in Higher Education

The significance of learning and teaching in Bologna ministerial summits was first highlighted in the 2015 Yerevan Communiqué. The communiqué states: "Enhancing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching is the main mission of the EHEA."¹⁴ At the European policy level, the Bologna Process has strongly emphasized learning and teaching since the 2018 Paris Communiqué, with a commitment to developing new and inclusive approaches for the continuous enhancement of learning and teaching across the EHEA. The communiqué further states:

“Now it is time to add cooperation in innovative learning and teaching practices as another hallmark of

¹³ <https://www.scholarsatrisk.org/download-the-free-to-think-2024-pdf/#fastaction-signup-hustle>, p.24

¹⁴ https://ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2015_Yerevan/70/7/YerevanCommuniquéFinal_613707.pdf



the EHEA. We therefore commit to developing new and inclusive approaches for continuous enhancement of learning and teaching across the EHEA and can succeed only if we do so in close collaboration with the European higher education community, in full respect of academic freedom and institutional autonomy.”¹⁵

Following the Paris Communiqué, several countries have taken steps in this direction. Specifically:

- Germany: In 2020, the federal government and the states (Länder) established the Foundation for Innovation in Higher Education.
- Ireland: In 2022, the National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education was re-established.
- Sweden: The Swedish Council for Higher Education undertakes various activities, including coordinating two recent national initiatives aimed at boosting higher education pedagogy and distance education.

Learning and teaching are also emphasized in the CEPA roadmap. The document outlines the following action:

“Modernization of teaching and learning methodologies, incorporating information technologies, as well as increasing independent research and creative work at all levels.”

The expected outcome of this action is:
“Developing students’ creative thinking, critical thinking, analytical approach, intellectual flexibility, problem-solving abilities, and skills for quickly acquiring knowledge in new and interdisciplinary fields.”

The Ministry has also highlighted learning and teaching as a priority in the draft Law on Higher Education and Science of Armenia, listing the following among university functions:
“Continuous improvement of higher education quality, introduction of modern teaching and learning methods, and ensuring their diversity.”¹⁶

In recent years, Armenian universities have placed increasing importance on students’ research work and the spread of interactive teaching methods. However, there are no comprehensive studies to assess the extent to which teaching and learning methods have been modernized and what results they have yielded.

In 2023, the Erasmus+ Higher Education Reform Experts in Armenia conducted a small-scale study titled *“Assessment of the Capacity Development Needs of Armenian Universities.”* A questionnaire was sent to Armenian universities, with 19 institutions responding. Of the respondents, 47.4% rated the level of implementation of interactive teaching methods as moderate, while 36.8% rated it as high.

The 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report states that learning and teaching in universities are often undervalued:

¹⁵ https://ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/77/1/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf

¹⁶ Draft Law on Higher Education and Science. <https://www.e-draft.am/projects/7684/about>



“Teaching quality is often undervalued in academic career progression compared to research.”¹⁷

Similarly, in Armenia, greater emphasis has been placed on promoting research activities rather than teaching. Although some steps have been taken to improve teaching methods in universities, they are neither systematic nor consistent. Armenia lacks a dedicated strategy for improving teaching quality. This issue is also highlighted in the 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report, which states: *“Only half of EHEA countries have strategies to enhance teaching quality. Student-centered learning is emphasized but not always well-defined in national policies.”¹⁸*

Aligning Higher Education Reforms with the European Higher Education Area

One of the key objectives of CEPA and its roadmap is to align Armenia’s higher education reforms with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). However, challenges remain in Armenia’s higher education sector, mainly due to the adoption of the Law on Higher Education and Science.

Several measures are already included in the Government’s 2021-2026 Action Plan and the State Program for Education Development, but their implementation has been delayed.

For instance, the CEPA roadmap outlined that in 2023, higher education should transition to new organizational formats, including full-time and part-time study loads. However, this action has not been carried out, although it is included in the draft of Armenia’s new Law on Higher Education and Science.

The action to ensure the comparability and recognition of Armenian qualifications with those of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been only partially implemented. While 29 sectoral qualifications frameworks have been developed, the process has been delayed. According to the revised State Program for Education Development, an additional 10 frameworks will be developed by 2028, 25 by 2029, and the process will be completed by 2030.

The Self-certification report of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), according to the CEPA roadmap, was scheduled to be ready in 2025. However, according to the State Program for Education Development, it was supposed to be adopted in 2023. Instead, the Ministry now plans to prepare the self-certification report only by 2030. This delay contradicts the justification provided in the Action Plan, which

states:

“The ongoing higher education reforms and Armenia’s international commitments under the Bologna Process make the self-certification of the NQF a pressing necessity.”¹⁹

¹⁷ The European Higher Education Area in 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report.

¹⁸ The European Higher Education Area in 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report.

¹⁹ https://www.arlis.am/Annexes/6/2023_N351hav.2.pdf



The self-certification report of Armenia’s National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is critical to ensuring alignment with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), enabling cross-border recognition of qualifications and enhancing the mobility of students, academics, and professionals. “If the Self-certification process of NQF is not carried out, the Republic of Armenia will not be able to fully participate in the EU educational initiative and integration processes”.²⁰

By the decree of the MESCS of the Republic of Armenia dated February 19, 2025, the **Program for Organizing the Self-Certification Process of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education of the Republic of Armenia** was approved. The program defines the importance of the Self-Certification Process of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education, the expected outcomes, and the timeline.

In some sections of the CEPA roadmap’s education component, the healthcare sector is disproportionately emphasized for unclear reasons. For instance, Clause 52 of the roadmap mentions the promotion of higher education alignment and coordinated reforms, with the expected outcome stated as:

“The existence of a comprehensive registry of human resources in the healthcare sector and the alignment of the residency education process with international approaches.”

It is unclear why this action is exclusively focused on the healthcare sector.

The CEPA roadmap and the State Program for Education Development also need to integrate two key priorities from the 2024 Bologna Ministerial Conference in Tirana, which have been overlooked in Armenian policy documents. These priorities are:

1. Universities’ public responsibility
2. Society’s responsibility for higher education

“Public responsibility for higher education denotes a set of duties that public authorities must fulfill as part of their overall responsibility for the education sector and society as a whole... Public responsibility of higher education denotes the obligations of the higher education community to the broader society of which the higher education community is a part.”²¹

There is a need to incorporate these values into Armenia’s education system.

In 2023, the descriptors and indicators of the social dimension of higher education were approved. Among these, the inclusiveness of higher education is of particular importance. The document defines the social dimension as follows:

“Social dimension in higher education is a process containing specific and transversal policies aimed at creating an inclusive environment in higher education in which the

²⁰ Decree of the MoESCS of the Republic of Armenia on Approval of the Program for Organizing the Self-Certification Process of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education of the Republic of Armenia

²¹ <https://ehea2024tirane.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/ANNEX-1-EHEA-STATEMENTS-ON-FUNDAMENTAL-VALUES.pdf>



composition of the student body entering, participating in, and completing higher education at all levels corresponds to the heterogeneous social profile of society at large in the EHEA countries.”²²

The actions outlined in the State Program for Education Development emphasize the need for reasonable adaptations of the minimum necessary physical environment for students with special educational needs (such as ramps, restrooms, elevators, literature for students with visual impairments, etc.). According to these actions, the proportion of universities with reasonable adaptations should be at least 20% in 2023, at least 25% in 2024, at least 30% in 2026, and at least 50% in 2030. These targets suggest a rather slow pace of development.

Regarding the social dimension, another important indicator set in the State Program for Education Development concerns national minorities:

“At least seven targeted spots are allocated annually for national minorities in the higher education system.”

There is a need to strengthen the social dimension in both the CEPA roadmap and the actions of the State Program for Education Development.

One of the shortcomings of Armenia’s higher education system is its inaccessibility for socially disadvantaged groups. The limited number of tuition-free places, high tuition fees, and high living expenses negatively affect both accessibility and the learning process. According to the World Bank’s 2024 report:

“Among the poor population, only 17.2 percent have access to higher education.”²³

Another serious issue is absenteeism among senior-year students. A large number of students work, leading to frequent absences from classes. This issue has not been adequately researched, yet it has a significant negative impact on the quality of higher education and the skill set of graduates, the true extent of which requires further study.

Conclusions

1. Underfunding and Declining Investment:

Armenia’s higher education system faces severe underinvestment, ranking 100th globally in funding. Only 16.2% of students receive state scholarships, reflecting limited financial support that restricts system competitiveness and quality.

2. Legislative and Structural Delays:

The delayed adoption of the *Law on Higher Education and Science* has hindered Armenia’s ability to align with global academic standards.

²² https://ehea.info/Upload/BFUG_SE_BA_84_WG_SD_Principles_and_Guidelines.pdf

²³ https://ehea.info/Upload/BFUG_SE_BA_84_WG_SD_Principles_and_Guidelines.pdf



3. **Neglect of Teaching/Learning Quality:**
Despite growing emphasis on research and international publications, teaching quality remains deprioritized. The lack of institutional focus on pedagogical improvement has resulted in insufficient attention to academic excellence at both national and university levels.
4. **Decline of Academic Freedom Index:**
Armenia’s academic freedom index has declined sharply, from 0.84 in 2019 to 0.64, signaling deteriorating conditions for intellectual autonomy and institutional independence.
5. **Lack of data collection on Academic Integrity.** Although trainings on academic integrity are conducted, data related to academic integrity is not collected
6. **Delayed Integration into the European Higher Education Area (EHEA):**
Postponement of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) self-certification report—now delayed until 2030—impedes Armenia’s integration into the EHEA, limiting cross-border academic collaboration and recognition.
7. **Partial Progress in Social Inclusion:**
While universities have improved inclusiveness (e.g., support for national minorities and reasonable adaptations), gaps persist in formalizing societal and public responsibilities for higher education, as emphasized in international frameworks like the Tirana Ministerial Communique.

CHAPTER 2. NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

Non-formal and informal education is one of the most overlooked sectors of Armenia’s education system. Notably, this sector was not included at all in the Armenian State Program for Education Development for 2001-2005.

Nevertheless, some progress has been made in this direction. In 2010, the Ministry of Education and Science established the Department of Continuing and Lifelong Learning, which was reorganized in 2020 into the Department of Youth Policy, Supplementary, and Continuing Education (YPCE). Currently, the Ministry has a Department of Supplementary and Continuing Education. In 2012, by ministerial decree, Armenia’s Strategy for Supplementary and Continuing Education for 2013-2017 and its action plan were approved. During the implementation of this strategy, the government adopted in 2015 regulations on the organization and implementation of supplementary education programs, as well as the procedures for assessing and recognizing the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. However, these regulations were not enforced due to the absence of appropriate implementation procedures.

Between 2017 and 2021, no steps were taken in the field of non-formal and informal education. This sector was mentioned again in the Armenian Government’s 2021-2026 Program and its list of activities.



However, the term "informal education" is not used in the government program. Meanwhile, the phrase "non-formal and informal education" appears in the roadmap of the Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA) adopted in the same year.

In 2022, amendments were made to Armenia's "Law on Education," which formally incorporated details on the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal education outcomes. As a tool for implementing this system, the establishment of a national learning registry was deemed necessary.

A more systemic approach to non-formal and informal education is presented in the State Program for Education Development until 2030 (adopted in 2022) and its action plan (adopted in 2023). The rationale for the action plan states that "a major issue for supplementary and continuing education is the lack of a mechanism for recognizing the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning. To address this, it is necessary first to develop evaluation criteria for specialists in each qualification based on elements of professional competence and workplace roles, as well as to define the approaches and mechanisms for recognizing the outcomes of formal and informal learning."

One of the main challenges in the field of non-formal and informal education is terminological confusion. Terms used during the Soviet era and those currently in use are often applied interchangeably. This confusion is also reflected in the actions outlined in the State Program for Education Development. For instance, in section 1.1.3 of the action plan's non-formal education chapter, extracurricular education has been categorized as part of non-formal education. The term "adult education," which is now of significant importance, is rarely used. To address this, the action plan proposed aligning the terminology of non-formal education in Armenia's key education laws and regulatory acts (including terms such as supplementary and continuing education, lifelong learning, etc.) with internationally recognized definitions and standards, but this has not yet been implemented.

There are inconsistencies in the timelines set by the Government's 2021-2026 Program, the Education Development Program's action plan, and the CEPA roadmap. For example, according to the CEPA roadmap, the regulatory acts for assessing and recognizing the outcomes of non-formal and informal education were to be developed in 2024, whereas the Education Development Program's action plan scheduled them for 2023. By the end of 2024, these regulatory acts are still not ready. Another example: the government program planned to establish a legal basis for collecting statistical data on non-formal education by 2026²⁴, while the Education Development Program aimed to achieve this by 2023²⁵. The new draft of the action plan suggests postponing this measure to 2026. Additionally, the government program planned to conduct five public campaigns on non-formal education by 2025. However, the Education Development Program's action plan set different targets: two campaigns in 2023, three in 2024, and five in 2026.

The roadmap also envisioned pilot programs for 2024, which have not yet been implemented. The national learning registry was supposed to be established in 2016. The Education Development Program scheduled it for 2023, but the new draft action plan postpones its creation to 2028.

²⁴ RA Government Program For 2021-2026 <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=158031>

²⁵ Action Plan For State Education Development Program Until 2030
<https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?DocID=175541>



Notably, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports’ 2024 report on the implementation of the government program does not mention non-formal and informal education at all. It can be concluded that initiatives in this sector are progressing slowly and are regularly postponed, as evidenced by the fact that the main actions related to this sector in the new draft action plan have been pushed back to 2026-2027.

A positive step was the 2022 amendments to Armenia’s “Law on Education” regarding non-formal and informal education. However, without clear procedures, the law’s provisions cannot be effectively implemented.

According to the Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2023, Armenia ranks 98th out of 134 countries in the Lifelong Learning indicator.

Conclusions

1. **Slow and Fragmented Progress:** Armenia’s non-formal and informal education sector has seen intermittent progress, marked by structural reforms (e.g., departmental reorganizations) and legislative amendments. However, implementation remains inconsistent, with critical initiatives like regulatory frameworks, a national learning registry, and recognition mechanisms repeatedly delayed or deprioritized.
2. **Policy Incoherence:** Terminological inconsistencies (e.g., conflating “non-formal education” with “extracurricular” or “supplementary education”) and misaligned timelines across government programs (e.g., CEPA roadmap vs. Education Development Program) undermine systemic development. This confusion reflects a lack of clarity in aligning Armenia’s policies with international standards.
3. **Weak Enforcement:** Despite legal advancements, such as the 2022 amendments to the *Law on Education*, the absence of clear implementation procedures and accountability mechanisms has rendered these changes largely ineffective.
4. **Low Global Competitiveness:** Armenia’s 98th ranking in lifelong learning (Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2023) underscores systemic gaps in fostering accessible, recognized pathways for non-formal and informal learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports

1. Legislative & Policy Actions
 - Accelerate adoption of the Law on Higher Education and Science to align with global standards.
 - Amend legislation to strengthen academic freedom, integrity, and institutional autonomy.



- Integrate the Tirana Ministerial Communique principles into national policies, mandating universities to report on societal contributions.
- 2. Funding & Partnerships
 - Increase state funding for higher education to improve global rankings.
 - Encourage public-private partnerships (PPPs) for infrastructure, research, and scholarships.
- 3. Standards & Alignment
 - Allocate resources to complete the NQF self-certification by 2027 and align with EHEA.
 - Establish a task force to harmonize Armenia’s non-formal and informal education terminology with UNESCO/OECD frameworks.
 - Ensure alignment between the CEPA Roadmap, Education Development Program, and Government Program.
- 4. Oversight & Infrastructure
 - Prioritize the national learning registry by 2026 and enforce recognition of non-formal/informal learning.
- 5. Inclusion & Awareness
 - Allocate funding for inclusive education programs (e.g., for minorities, students with disabilities).
 - Launch nationwide campaigns to promote lifelong learning and non-formal education.

Universities

- 1. Quality & Innovation
 - Establish Centers for Teaching and Learning Excellence to oversee curriculum development and faculty training.
 - Compete for teaching innovation grants/awards and implement best practices.
- 2. Governance & Reporting
 - Publish annual reports on contributions to social equity, inclusion, and public engagement.
 - Adopt reasonable accommodations for underrepresented groups (e.g., disabilities).
- 3. Collaboration
 - Partner with industries and donors under PPPs for research and infrastructure.
 - Align institutional practices with the NQF and international standards.

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

- 1. Advocacy & Monitoring
 - Advocate for legal protections of academic freedom and integrity.
 - Monitor implementation of the independent oversight body and academic reforms.



2. Support & Accountability
 - Assist in data collection and analysis for annual progress reports (NQF, funding, academic freedom).
 - Support underrepresented groups through inclusive education initiatives.
3. Public Engagement
 - Promote awareness of lifelong learning and non-formal education via community programs.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions highlight critical systemic challenges facing higher education and non-formal/informal education in Armenia.

Higher Education

1. Chronic Underfunding
 - Ranks 100th globally in funding; only 16.2% of students receive state scholarships.
 - Limits competitiveness and quality.
2. Legislative & Structural Delays
 - Delayed Higher Education Law adoption and postponed National Qualifications Framework self-certification (to 2030).
 - Hinders alignment with global standards and EHEA integration.
3. Neglected Teaching Quality
 - Teaching excellence is deprioritized.
 - Insufficient institutional support for pedagogy.
4. Eroding Academic Freedom
 - Academic freedom index dropped sharply (0.84 → 0.64, 2019–present).
 - Threatens institutional autonomy.
5. Data Gaps & Implementation Failures
 - No systematic data on academic integrity.
6. Incomplete Social Inclusion
 - Progress in inclusivity (e.g., support for minorities), but gaps in formalizing public responsibility for HE.

Non-Formal/Informal Education

1. Slow, Fragmented Progress
 - Reforms (e.g., departmental restructuring) lack consistency; key initiatives (regulatory frameworks, learning registry) delayed.
2. Policy Incoherence
 - Terminology confusion (e.g., "non-formal" vs. "supplementary" education).
 - Misaligned timelines across government programs (e.g., CEPA vs. Education)



Development Program).

3. Low Global Competitiveness

- Ranks 98th in lifelong learning (Global Talent Index 2023).
- Lacks accessible pathways for skills recognition.



LITERATURE

1. Action Plan For State Education Development Program Until 2030
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2. Armenia Public Finance Review, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank, 2024
3. CEPA Roadmap, 2021
4. Decree of the MoESCS of the Republic of Armenia on Approval of the Program for Organizing the Self-Certification Process of the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education of the Republic of Armenia Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2023
5. Indicators and Descriptors for the Principles of the Social Dimension in the European Higher Education Area
6. RA Government Program For 2021-2026
7. Social Situation in Armenia in 2023
8. The European Higher Education Area in 2024 Bologna Process Implementation Report.
9. Government Decree on National Qualifications Framework.
<https://www.irtek.am/views/act.aspx?aid=59279>
10. The Legatum Prosperity Index <https://index.prosperity.com/about-prosperity/prosperity-index> -



APPENDIX 1. Measures related to higher education and non-formal education under the CEPA Roadmap, Timeline, Expected outcomes, and their current status.

Connection with CEPA	Planned activities	Timeline	Expected outcome	Current status
ROADMAP CLAUSE 53-54	<p>Transition to new forms of organizing higher education – full-time and part-time formats.</p> <p>Development of flexible modular learning structures and a personalized model to ensure student progress.</p>	2023	Availability of flexible opportunities for students to receive education and work.	Not implemented. Included in the draft Law on Higher Education and Science, which is in the phase of public discussions.
ROADMAP CLAUSE 55	<p>Assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes – development of by-laws and implementation of pilot programs.</p>	2024	Adoption of by-laws for the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.	In the process. But by-laws are not yet approved
ROADMAP CLAUSE 62	<p>Review of the content and structure of higher education academic programs, with a focus on learning outcomes.</p>	2021-2024	Improvement and modernization of higher education programs and alignment with the evolving demands of the current labor market.	Assessment is challenging, as implementation varies across universities.
ROADMAP CLAUSE 63	Modernization of teaching and	2021-2024	Development of students'	Assessment is challenging, as implementation varies



	<p>learning methodologies with the integration of information technologies, as well as independent research and creative work at all levels.</p>		<p>creative thinking, critical thinking, analytical approach, intellectual flexibility, problem-solving skills, and the ability to quickly acquire new and cross-disciplinary competencies.</p>	<p>across universities.</p>
<p>ROADMAP CLAUSE 64</p> <p>Alignment and systematization in the field of higher education, Improvement of the management of the higher education system through:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establishment of a balanced system of university autonomy and accountability ; 2. Development of key performance indicators (KPI) for the activities of universities. 	<p>2025</p>	<p>Expansion of autonomy for higher education institutions, introduction of accountability mechanisms and performance indicators.</p>	<p>While performance indicators were approved in 2022, new ones are currently being developed under the ERASMUS+ KPI4HE program.</p> <p>Accountability mechanisms and key performance indicators (KPIs) have not yet been fully introduced.</p> <p>Institutional autonomy, which reached 2.64 (out of 4) in 2018–2019, has declined over the past 2–3 years, falling to 2.45 in 2024. Trends are the same for Academic Freedom index’s other components.</p>
<p>ROADMAP CLAUSE 67-68</p>	<p>Full implementation of the National Qualifications</p>	<p>2025</p>	<p>Ensuring the comparability and recognition of</p>	<p>Out of the planned 36 sectoral qualification frameworks, only 21</p>



<p>Development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in line with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), within the framework of the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC), aimed at improving the transparency and recognition of qualifications and specializations.</p>	<p>Framework (NQF):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implementation of the self-certification process of the NQF. 2. Development of sectoral qualifications frameworks in line with the NQF, to ensure that professional academic programs in higher education align with the national framework. 3. Establishment and implementation of the State Qualifications Register of the Republic of Armenia (electronic registry). 		<p>Armenian qualifications with those of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).</p>	<p>have been developed; it is proposed to postpone the rest until 2028–2029. The self-certification report of the National Qualifications Framework will be ready only by 2030. Electronic registry of the State Qualifications is not established.</p>
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Appendix 2. Questionnaire

The scope of questions will be adjusted to align with the respondent.

1. In general, how well are Armenian Higher education institutions aligned with the Bologna Process?
2. How would you evaluate the current state of university autonomy and accountability in Armenia? Are there performance-based indicators (KPIs) for university operations?
3. How do you assess the flexibility of learning in Armenian universities? To what extent are these programs tailored to students' needs?
4. What is the current status of evaluating and recognizing outcomes of non-formal and informal learning, including the development of subordinate legal acts? What experimental programs are being implemented?
5. What progress has been made in revising the content and structure of Higher education professional programs? How effective are the new programs?
6. What efforts have been undertaken to modernize teaching and learning methodologies, emphasize the role of information technologies, and increase independent research and creativity at all levels?
7. What educational programs in foreign languages are being implemented in universities?
8. When will the National Qualifications Framework be revised? How synchronized is it with the European Qualifications Framework?
9. Why has the development of sectoral qualifications frameworks remained incomplete?
10. What does the process of self-certification of the National Qualifications Framework entail, and what are the reasons for its delay?
11. When is the creation and implementation of the State Register of Qualifications of the Republic of Armenia (electronic registry) planned?