



Legal Market Study in Georgia

Final Report

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საქართველოში (PROLoG)

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Introduction

The following document represents a report of a legal market study conducted by order of the East-West Management Institute (EWMI). This document is a report of the qualitative study results and aims to determine the demands of the legal market in Georgia, as well as how well the current level of knowledge of lawyers satisfies the above demands. The qualitative study results will not be generalized, but reflect the main explanations and interpretations of the study participants and the general tendencies from their conversation.

An analysis of information received from various target groups of the study is presented in the main part of this report. A general observation of the market, study goals and objectives, study design, key findings, and recommendations processed by a legal expert are also presented.

The following report was prepared by the Research and Consulting Company "ACT," which was responsible for developing study instruments, conducting fieldwork, and preparing the report.

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Main Findings

Considering the fact that large state universities have produced a disproportionately high share of the total number of lawyers, the given conclusions apply mostly to graduates of these universities. From 2016-2021, the highest share of graduates of the bachelor's program in law studied at Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University (28.4%), followed by Ilia State University, according to the number of graduates of the first step program (13.8%). At the same time, it should be considered that the development of practical skills in many law programs is not supported or is only slightly supported by clinical and legal practice. This problem is more acute for university law program graduates, which represent a majority.

i. Requirements of the Labor Market for Entry-level Lawyers

- The main qualification requirements of employers for entry-level lawyers both in the public and private sectors are related to higher education. A bachelor's degree is mostly sufficient for employment. At the same time, knowledge of Georgian legislation is required.
- Employers *in the private sector* also pay particular attention to analytical thinking skills, adequate knowledge of the English language, and experience participating in various professional activities, which in most cases facilitates the development of practical and professional skills.
- For employers *in the public sector*, the candidate's knowledge of legislation governing the respective public sector and motivation are important. Moreover, the candidate should have relevant digital competencies and analytical thinking skills. As for the English language, some employers name it as a significant requirement and others name it as a less significant requirement, based on the specific nature of their activities.
- Work experience as a necessary criterion for the employment of entry-level lawyers, with few exceptions, is named as desirable but not necessary by employers in both the private and public sectors. According to *representatives of universities, students, graduates and experts*, the main requirement of employers for entry-level lawyers is work experience, which experts claim is unfair.
- The activities carried out by entry-level lawyers are diverse and imply drafting various legal documents, attending trials, and performing various administrative tasks. Moreover, for private companies, the duties of entry-level lawyers often include translating various materials, managing relations with administrative bodies, and researching judiciary practice.

ii. Readiness of Entry-level Lawyers for the Labor Market

- Study participants from all target groups believe that graduates satisfy labor market requirements only partially. While theoretical knowledge is less challenging for entry-level lawyers, there are serious deficiencies in terms of possessing practical and professional skills.
- Employers identified problems related to knowledge and skills, such as critical and analytical thinking; practical realization of theoretical knowledge; academic and legal writing; English language; communication; and other soft skills. At the same time, while employers from the *private sector*

particularly emphasized inadequate knowledge of the English language, employers from the *public sector* considered challenges related to academic and legal writing as particularly acute.

- In addition to the above challenges, experts emphasized problems related to legal document drafting skills, research skills, time management and professional ethics, as well as an inadequate level of verbal communication skills. Experts also mention that many law programs do not provide students with relevant knowledge of judiciary practice, and that teaching judiciary practice is less integrated into theoretical curricula.
- *Students and graduates* believe that they are less prepared for labor market requirements. This is primarily related to serious deficiencies in terms of practical and professional skills. It appears that the learning components oriented at the development of practical and professional skills are not sufficiently integrated into curricula. Thus, graduates do not have the necessary skills to draft legal documents. The latter was also emphasized by *representatives of universities*. The representatives also mentioned challenges related to academic and legal writing. According to *representatives of universities*, the updated curricula were modified in this direction and more focus is now made on the writing component. However, due to serious deficiencies in school education, which together with critical thinking implies the inadequate development of good writing skills, the attitude towards the elimination of this challenge within the framework of university education is skeptical.
- Most often, mechanisms of eliminating the skills mismatch include mentorship, thematic trainings and sharing experience within the organization both in the private and public sectors. In this regard, it is interesting that the majority of employers do not consider training programs for special professions (advocates, prosecutors, judges) to eliminate the lack of qualifications, and that employers are skeptical about the effectiveness of these measures.
- According to the study results, in order to meet the legal market requirements, it is necessary to develop the following skills of entry-level lawyers:
 - Writing skills (both academic and legal);
 - Analytical thinking;
 - Skills of presenting arguments;
 - Communication;
 - Ability to work under tight deadlines;
 - Ability to work independently and as a part of a team; and
 - Research skills.

Together with the above-mentioned skills, it is important to improve the knowledge of *professional English language*. In this regard, it is important to improve curricula, particularly in regional universities.

iii. Bachelor's Program vs. Master's Program

- Though *employers* do not mention that holding a Master's degree is a significant precondition for employment and represents a necessary qualification requirement, they agree that M.A. degree holders have better developed analytical and research skills. This may be explained by the fact that M.A. degree holders who work simultaneously with their studies can elaborate and develop practical and professional skills at the workplace. The latter is named as the most severe challenge for both B.A. and M.A. programs by experts, as well as by students and employers.

- In the opinion of *students and graduates*, holding a Master's degree on a mandatory basis is related to the stereotype that the knowledge or practical and professional skills of M.A. degree holders significantly differ from the knowledge and skills of B.A. degree holders. In reality, according to their assessments, the second level of studies rarely provides a drastically different level of knowledge or skills. However, as the Master's degree represents one of the criteria for the selection of applicants among employers in a labor market full of lawyers, students and graduates consider completing a Master's program as a precondition of better employment.
- Both discourses were identified by *representatives of universities*, and they found it difficult to talk about the dominance of any vision. According to one discourse, a bachelor's degree is enough for employers, while according to the second discourse, employers give advantage to entry-level lawyers holding a master's degree, since it implies better practical and professional skills in addition to thorough theoretical knowledge.
- The study did not reveal whether the employers give advantage to graduates of private or state universities. Such differentiation was less specified in other target groups of the study too, however, employers from the *private sector* mentioned a relatively higher level of theoretical knowledge among graduates of Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University, as well as from Free University of Tbilisi and Caucasus University. Employers from the *public sector* mentioned a relatively higher level of theoretical knowledge among graduates of Tbilisi State University. It should be considered that according to employers from the public sector, students of state universities participate in internship programs available in the public sector.

iv. Employment Opportunities

- The likelihood of employment for graduates of private universities is higher in the private sector, while graduates of state universities are mostly employed in the public sector. One of the reasons for this is that completing an internship is a precondition of employment for entry-level lawyers, and such opportunities are provided more often in the public sector. At the same time, according to employers from the *public sector*, an internship is often not compensated, which is less attractive for students of private universities and mostly completed by students from state universities.
- Remuneration when making a decision regarding employment was one of the most significant criteria mentioned by all groups participating in the study. It was emphasized that in terms of remuneration, the public sector cannot compete with the private sector and therefore, the outflow of human resources is one of the challenges for the public sector. However, it is less problematic in terms of attracting or employing entry-level lawyers. At the initial stage, working in the public sector may be considered a priority for gathering work experience and developing the relevant skills. The outflow of human resources applies mainly to relatively experienced lawyers.
- Career support provided universities is mainly expressed by informing students about respective vacancies and providing a relevant recommendation.
- In terms of providing information, *students and graduates* mentioned that career support services provide/provided them with information about vacancies, however, a challenge was also identified in this regard. Specifically, universities do not filter information and share news about all vacancies that

can also be found on employment portals independently. Instead, according to the study participants, it is important that career support services provide information about vacancies tailored to students (and not about vacancies which, for example, require several years of work experience) to the target audience. It was also noted that representatives of universities maintaining personal contact with employers is significant for the employment of students.

v. General Assessment of the Legal Educational Environment

- Study participants from all target groups named theoretical learning as the strongest aspect, and the development of practical and professional skills as the weakest aspect of university education.
- According to *representatives of universities*, although practice is a mandatory component for the second level of studies, some universities offer it to students at the bachelor's level as an elective course. It was also mentioned that practical components are integrated into various theoretical courses. However, despite this, the study participants admit that the practical and professional skills of graduates of bachelor's programs do not meet labor market demands at a sufficient level.
- The existence of a legal clinic at universities where students acquire practical and professional skills under the direct supervision of lecturers within the university is considered particularly positive. However, the legal clinic is not available for everybody and programs with a large number of students face significant challenges.
- *Overcrowded auditoriums and a large number of students* were identified as challenges in Tbilisi, and for this reason, according to respondents, it is impossible to develop important skills such as communication and maintaining one's position verbally, in a well-argued manner.
- The following was considered significant for improving the legal educational environment:
 - *Conducting professional trainings at universities for academic team members to improve the effectiveness of various teaching methods;*
 - *Professional development of lecturers and/or attracting more qualified staff at several regional universities;*
 - *Introduction of a real system of assessing lecturers and monitoring the activities of lecturers with relatively poor assessment for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching;*
 - *Drafting exams to focus on assessing students' analytical skills;*
 - *Providing more academic freedom, which implies the opportunity for universities to more freely select a list of subjects or separate issues envisaged by the curriculum;*
 - *Making a change to the accreditation standard that should ensure less demand on the engagement of persons holding PhDs and on the contrary, allow for the engagement of more practical lecturers for delivering various courses;*
 - *Enhancement of the practical component by providing legal clinics, memoranda signed with employers, as well as by integrating more practical issues in addition to theoretical courses.*

vi. Internship

- An internship is important for the development of practical and professional skills. Students have internship opportunities on the basis of the state internship program, signing memoranda, special internships, or practice programs of various agencies in the *public sector*.
- The duration of internships, number of interns and remuneration differs by agencies and organizations. Internships are announced by public agencies several times a year within the framework of various programs. At the same time, internships mainly last from 3 to 6 months and are unpaid.
- Collaboration of the *private sector* with universities is based on personal relations rather than signed memoranda or other formalized relations.
- *Private companies* do not have standardized procedures and mechanisms for internships or hiring entry-level lawyers, unlike the *public sector*.
- The study results show that sometimes, employers from the *private sector* employ entry-level lawyers as assistants, rather than offering them an internship. According to the main argument, due to confidentiality and corresponding risks, they prefer to bind an entry-level lawyer with contractual obligations rather than spend resources on an internship. However, if universities are more proactive, the private sector does not exclude shifting to a more active format of cooperation.
- *Students and graduates* accentuated the unpaid nature of internships rather than the lack of internship opportunities as a challenge. At the same time, they named the formal nature of internships as another challenge. In some cases, this implies the performance of minor assignments by interns rather than the development of skills.
- The challenge emphasized by employers *from the public sector* is related to non-recognition of internships as work experience. In some cases, after the internship, an entry-level lawyer is employed in the same agency/organization, however, this is not always possible. In case qualification requirements defined by the law envisage the minimum work experience, lawyers who have already undergone an internship in the public agency have to gather work experience in another place and are employed only afterwards (for example, in the judiciary system), despite the fact that the knowledge and practical experience gained by them within the framework of the internship are absolutely enough to perform their respective assignments as employees.

vii. Assessment of the Role of Professional Associations and the State

- The role of the Georgian Bar Association and other professional associations in preparing entry-level lawyers for entering their profession is emphasized by study participants, and attitudes towards it are different. While in one case, the role of associations is assessed positively and is considered significant, in another case, the assessment can be considered as more neutral or negative. According to supporters of this assessment, the role of associations should imply the creation of standards (for example, for the operation of law firms) and not the preparation of training modules. According to some study participants, the work of associations on improving teaching or practice components

indicates that university education does not adequately meet the requirements and is oriented at compensating for the mismatch associated with university education.

- *Experts and employers from the private sector* consider that undergoing the preparatory program for entering the profession should not be mandatory and should be considered an additional benefit for employers.
- *Employers, particularly from the private sector, consider that the state should not interfere in the relations of universities and legal market employers. Instead, it should focus on education policy and the implementation of respective changes to the policy. In particular, study participants consider that the following is significant:*
 - *Implementation of fundamental changes to school education that will be oriented at the development of critical thinking skills and are essential not only for the field of law, but also for the development of all fields in general;*
 - *Offering career support services for identifying professional orientation in schools, so that young people know about the peculiarities of various professions and activities, as well as market requirements from school age;*
 - *Increasing the standard and grade thresholds of university entrance exams so that applicants with minimal knowledge and skills cannot pass the threshold level;*
 - *Increasing funding for state universities or increasing tuition fees so that universities can focus more on quality rather than quantity;*
 - *Creation of various grant or funding schemes for the translation, creation and publication of modern literary sources; and*
 - *Creation of relevant literature for the improvement of legal writing skills.*

Recommendations

- To reduce the mismatch between the skills of bachelor's programs in law graduates and labor market requirements, it is desirable to dedicate more attention to courses and learning components oriented at the development of practical and professional skills in law programs. Such courses may be legal clinics and internship programs.
- At universities with a lot of students, it is also desirable that students have an opportunity to actively use theoretical knowledge during the learning process in any form, by means of a legal clinic or an internship program, and not only by the integration of practical components in theoretical subjects.
- For the purpose of avoiding the formal nature of internship programs, it is desirable to have a person in the law program who will supervise the activities of students participating in the internship program, will regularly communicate with the respective mentor at the place of internship, as well as with the student participating in the internship, and will facilitate the student's and the employer's interests during the internship. This person will also assist students in adapting to their new work environment and better protect their interests within the framework of the internship program.
- For the development of practical and professional skills, it is desirable to develop legal writing skills during legal writing courses where students will learn how to structure written legal analysis on the basis of real cases, as well as by integrating writing components into theoretical courses. During these writing components, students will be able to apply relevant knowledge in the process of drafting legal conclusions and documents.
- It is desirable to facilitate the development of practical and professional skills by integrating practical components into theoretical subjects at the basic stage of studies. For this purpose, it is desirable to include more real cases in theoretical subjects and students should have to search for, read and analyze the respective court practice, and write a legal analysis in accordance with the structure used in the basic course. This process will facilitate strengthening legal writing and analysis skills, as well as developing legal document drafting or court practice search and analysis skills.
- For the purpose of facilitating professional activities in the private sector, it is desirable to dedicate more attention to the study of professional English language in bachelor's law programs. In addition, for the purpose of expanding the knowledge of professional English language, it is desirable to promote reading professional English literature in the final years of study, which will contribute to learning professional terms and strengthening professional knowledge of the respective subject.
- It is desirable to develop research and analytical skills not only in a separate course, but also during theoretical courses. Students should have to perform minor research assignments, search for decisions of the Georgian courts in a special search system, while in the final years of study, they should have to search for and read respective professional English literature in professional English search systems.
- It is desirable to encourage students in the bachelor's program in law to participate in professional contests and competitions, particularly in international mock trial competitions where they can simultaneously develop analytical, research, professional English, writing and verbal skills, as well as teamwork skills. It is desirable to recognize the work done by participants of such competitions and grant them credits based on the respective workload and content.

- It is desirable to make respective changes to the Law on Public Service, which will make it possible to recognize internships as work experience, and will facilitate the employment of students in the respective public agencies.
- It is desirable to distinguish more clearly between the standards established for master's and bachelor's programs in law and increase the focus on developing skills for specialization in master's programs.
- For the purpose of compliance with the labor market requirements, it is desirable to improve bachelor's programs in law and to integrate the respective theoretical courses, rather than having professional associations create mandatory courses for the development of theoretical and practical skills.
- Courses created by professional associations should only be mandatory for lawyers who received legal education a long time ago and could not gain theoretical and practical knowledge in their respective law program, but who now seek to enter the profession. In such cases, it may be justified if a professional association requests entry-level advocates to take additional courses in theoretical or professional skills. However, it is desirable that such courses are not offered exclusively by the professional association. The professional association should develop an accreditation system that will allow those who are trying to enter the profession to gain the respective theoretical knowledge and practical skills on the basis of these courses at universities. On one hand, this will contribute to the further development of such courses at universities, and on the other hand, students who have gained similar knowledge at the university will not have to study these subjects again in a mandatory program offered by the professional association. Therefore, it is desirable that professional association courses are not mandatory for all entry-level lawyers and that the professional association cooperates with universities in terms of creating a system of recognition for knowledge and skills.

Methodology

Goal and objectives

The **goal** of the study is to analyze the requirements of the legal market in Georgia, as well as the extent to which the current level of professionalism of lawyers meets these requirements.

The following objectives were identified for achievement of this goal:

- Determine the requirements of the legal market and the requirements in the private and public sectors;
- Evaluate the level of readiness of entry-level lawyers to meet the requirements of the legal market;
- Identify which requirements are the most problematic to meet;
- Define the education environment and which requirements are met/cannot be met by university education;
- Assess readiness for the labor market by entry-level lawyers; and
- Establish what is necessary to change/improve for the improvement of the legal labor market.

Study method

To respond to the study goals and objectives, it was determined to use the qualitative research method, which included *in-depth interview and focus discussion* techniques.

At the same time, a desk study was also conducted within the framework of the study that envisages an analysis of statistical data relevant to recent studies and study objectives.

Target segment

The following actors were identified as the target segment of the study:

1. Employers;
2. Experts (legal experts, representatives of NGOs, international organizations and professional associations);
3. Universities; and
4. Students and graduates.

Employers were divided into groups of private and public sector representatives. From the private sector, law and audit firms as well as large banking-finance, insurance, retail and wholesale trade companies were selected as employers. Employers from the public sector were represented from various agencies, as well as from local self-governing bodies, courts of all instances, and the Public Defender's Office.

The target group of experts included legal experts, as well as representatives of various professional associations and non-governmental and international organizations, who, inter alia, shared their views as employers.

Universities participating in the study were represented by deans or heads of programs, as well as by representatives of the Quality Service Department at law schools of state and private universities. Universities participating in the interviews were represented not only from Tbilisi but also from all regions where universities offer students at least bachelor's programs in law. In particular, universities from Telavi, Akhaltsikhe, Gori, Kutaisi, Batumi, and Zugdidi participated in the study. In regions, state universities participated in the study, and in Tbilisi, the study was conducted with representatives of both state and private

universities. In addition to this criterion, universities were selected based on the number of graduates. Therefore, state universities with the highest number of graduates from law programs were selected. For private universities, in addition to the number of graduates, the existence of proper legal clinics and their prestige were also considered, which was emphasized during interviews, focus group discussions, and expert opinions.

In Tbilisi, discussions were held with students and graduates of private and state universities. In regions, both students and graduates of state universities participated in discussions. When selecting study participants, experience participating in internship programs and work experience were considered. Therefore, respondents with and without such experience were invited to participate in the discussions.

Focus group discussions were held with students and graduates, and in-depth interviews were conducted with all other target groups. In total, 8 focus group discussions and 46 in-depth interviews were conducted within the framework of the study.

As it was mentioned, in Tbilisi, discussions were held with students and graduates both from private and state universities. Thus, the number of discussions was two in Tbilisi. One discussion was held in all other cities, and discussion participants were students and/or graduates of local state universities.

Table # 1. Distribution of focus group discussions

Location	Number
Tbilisi	2
Telavi	1
Akhaltikhe	1
Gori	1
Batumi	1
Kutaisi	1
Zugdidi	1
Total	8

As for in-depth interviews, as mentioned above, a total of 46 in-depth interviews were conducted within the framework of the study, and respondents were representatives of various organizations or experts having the power and competence to share information about issues relevant to the study.

Table # 2. Distribution of in-depth interviews

Universities	Number of interviews
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University	1
Georgian Technical University	1
Ilia State University	1
Free University	1
University of Georgia	1
Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University	1
Kutaisi Akaki Tsereteli State University	1
Samtskhe-Javakheti State University	1
Shota Meskhia State Teaching University of Zugdidi	1
Gori State Teaching University	1
Telavi State University	1
Employers	
Private Sector	

Law Firms	
BLC	1
MG Law	1
BGI	1
VBAT	1
Other Employers	
Imedi L	1
Liberty	1
GPI	1
Tegeta Motors	1
JSC Gepha	1
Audit Company - EY Georgia	1
Public Sector	
Ministry of Justice of Georgia	1
Prosecution Office of Georgia	1
Supreme Court of Georgia	1
Tbilisi City Court	1
Constitutional Court	1
Kutaisi Court of Appeals	1
Tbilisi City Hall	1
Telavi City Hall	1
Kutaisi City Hall	1
Batumi City Hall	1
Zugdidi City Hall	1
Akhaltikhe City Hall	1
Gori City Hall	1
Notary Chamber of Georgia	1
Civil Service Bureau	1
Public Defender of Georgia	1
State Inspector's Service	1
Experts (including professional associations, NGOs and international organizations)	
Georgian Young Lawyers' Association	1
Social Justice Center	1
Center for Human Rights	1
Council of Europe Office in Georgia	1
Georgian Bar Association	1
Association of Law Firms of Georgia (ALFG)	1
Legal Expert	2
Total	46

The study results are analyzed cumulatively, and the opinions of all target segments are presented in thematic sub-chapters.

1. Desk Research

300 Education and Skills

Georgia is a developing country where the unemployment level reached 18.5% by the end of 2020 and 22.1% in the second Quarter of 2021¹. In the fourth Quarter of the same year, this indicator equals 20.4%. By the end of 2020, 1241.8 thousand people were employed in Georgia. In the second Quarter of 2021 this indicator reduced slightly (1241.6 thousand people), which is not unexpected under the conditions of the global crisis caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

In scientific literature, education is considered as one of the factors defining employment and unemployment. Access to education is high in Georgia, which means that obtaining various levels of education is not related to particular barriers to employment. If we consider the data of the world development indicators in 2015, about 35% of the Georgian population of the 25-64 age group have a higher education, but simultaneously, 40% of the unemployed Georgian population are people with a higher education.² According to research, employers name barriers related to skills as the most significant challenge, and among them, challenges related to soft skills (communication, teamwork, problem solving, etc.) are essential.³

According to research published in Georgia in 2017, employers negatively assess the transferable skills of university graduates. According to them, institutions of higher education should work harder to develop graduates' skills, such as analytical thinking, writing and communication skills, as well as providing adequate knowledge of the English language to prepare them for labor market.⁴ According to one more report ("Assessment of Bologna Process in Georgia: Main Achievements and Challenges"), where students and graduates assessed the quality of the university education, the use of practical components during the learning process was identified as a serious challenge.⁵

It should also be considered that there is mismatch between the demand and supply of human resources with higher education in Georgia. If we consider the industrial structure of the country, there is less demand on higher education than supply. Results of research of the Center for Social Sciences are noteworthy, according to which a person's formal education does not define his/her employment in a position with high or low qualification requirements. Moreover, according to the same report, obtaining a master's degree does not imply employment in a highly paid position or in a particular profession, but in general, a higher likelihood of employment.⁶ This was mentioned by our research participants, too.

Thus, a mismatch between the demand for and supply of skills is a significant issue when analyzing the labor market. According to the International Labor Organization (ILO), this implies a mismatch between the skills employers look for and the skills applicants actually possess.⁷ A vertical mismatch implies that the level of available education and/or skills do not correspond to the required education and/or skills. A horizontal mismatch implies the case in which the general education level corresponds to the profession but there is mismatch between the specific sphere of education and the profession.⁸

According to research conducted by the World Bank in 2013, though the number of people with higher education is high in Georgia, it is hard for them to meet the labor market requirements for specific skills. As

¹ Source: GEOSTAT

² Georgia: From Reformer to Performer. Systematic Country Diagnostic. 2018. World Bank Group

³ Georgia: From Reformer to Performer. Systematic Country Diagnostic. 2018. World Bank Group

⁴ Lezhava D., Amashukeli M., Gugushvili N. 2017. Education Return, Labour Market and Job Satisfaction in Georgia. Center for Social Sciences, with support of Open Society-Georgia Foundation

⁵ The same source

⁶ The same source

⁷ International Labour Organization (ILO), 2020.

⁸ Skills Mismatch Measurement in Georgia. 2019. European Training Foundation.

already mentioned, these requirements are mostly related to analytical, writing or communication skills.⁹ It can be said that this is evidenced by the results of our research, too.

If we consider the results of the Enterprise Skills Survey conducted in 2020, employers give the lowest assessment to employees' skills, such as the ability to understand, analyze and communicate information.¹⁰

The above issues are essential for the legal labor market. Considering the fact that in general, the number of people with higher education exceeds the number of vacancies in the country, the expectation that a significant number of graduates will be employed in their profession is unrealistic. At the same time, if we consider that a university education cannot ensure the development of practical or professional skills demanded by employers, naturally, we should assume that for a significant part of people holding qualifications in law, a higher education diploma will also be a precondition for employment in general and not necessarily by profession. This assumption is supported by the results of this research, where challenges in terms of the possession of practical and professional skills by entry-level lawyers are clearly identified.

The Law of Georgia on Higher Education defines law as a regulated educational program,¹¹ which means that the National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement establishes a sector benchmark for the educational program in law. State accreditation is also mandatory for regulated educational programs, and the precondition of continuing studies at the master's level is a bachelor's degree in law.

Therefore, unlike non-regulated educational programs, the Georgian legislation on higher education necessarily requires the development of a sector benchmark for a regulated program, which implies an academic education standard that defines the minimum requirements of study results for bachelor's and master's programs in law, approaches to learning and teaching, as well as the assessment necessary for conferring the qualification.

The first sector benchmark for law was adopted in 2011, and initial accreditation for law programs was carried out within the framework of this process. This sector benchmark was in force until April 2020, and afterwards the sector benchmark was revised. As mentioned in the "Introduction of a New Sector Benchmark for Law in Educational Programs Accreditation Process" conducted in 2021, the change in the sector benchmark adopted in 2011 was caused by several circumstances, one of which was the adoption of a new national qualification framework and the approval of specifications/categories of areas of study.¹²

According to the new sectoral benchmark, educational programs in law were assessed by LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement from June 1, 2020. Within the framework of the research, the accreditation process was assessed for 28 master's and bachelor's programs at 17 institutions of higher education.¹³ As a result of the study of these programs, it was found that while a majority of institutions managed to consider the requirements of the sector benchmark,¹⁴ deficiencies related to the programs were specified. As it is mentioned in the research document, practical teaching at the bachelor's level is conducted mainly through practical courses. Practical components are less integrated into theoretical courses, where less attention is dedicated to the development of practical skills.¹⁵ At the same time, it should be mentioned that the sector benchmark envisages the development of the following skills in bachelor's programs in law:

- Analysis of legal norms;
- Justification of the position in a litigation;

9 Skills Mismatch Measurement in Georgia. 2019. European Training Foundation;

10 Enterprise Skills Survey, 2020. Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia;

11 Law of Georgia on Higher Education. Article 75

13 The same source

14 The same source

15 The same source

- Drafting legal documents;
- Verbal judgment; and
- Searching for information.

These skills should be developed according to the sector benchmark within the framework of the bachelor's program. However, according to the research, in the process of accreditation, the development of practical skills was identified as one of the problems.¹⁶

On the basis of the research, it was also revealed that legal practice, as a rule, is carried out on the basis of the memorandums of mutual cooperation. Due to their formal nature, however, it is difficult to assess how many students gain practical experience and to what extent this program brings results as defined by the sector benchmark.¹⁷

According to the results of this research it is recommended to determine the number of students who will undergo practical training in a specific organization in advance. If we consider the results of the research "Legal Practice Programs in Georgia - Assessment and Recommendations" conducted in 2019,¹⁸ where employers avoid undertaking such responsibility for various reasons, especially in the private sector, it should not be difficult to satisfy this demand, especially now, as the opportunities for practical training of students have declined in the public sector due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Additionally, the state internship program was suspended in the public sector and legal practice and internship programs were suspended in other public agencies. Therefore, it will be difficult for universities to conclude agreements with public and private organizations that will bind a respective organization with the obligation to organize practical training for a large number of students.¹⁹

It is not necessary to hold a master's degree to enter the law profession, which is possible on the basis of the bachelor's academic degree. Only the profession of a judge is an exception, therefore, it is important that alumni of a bachelor's program in law possess the respective practical skills. Moreover, the new sector benchmark of bachelor's programs in law defines the development of practical skills as mandatory. Universities can choose the form in which they will ensure the development of practical skills by students, however, it is recommended to develop practical skills through separate courses, as well as practical elements integrated into theoretical courses. It is recommended to offer practice in the bachelor's program in law as an independent practical course that should be taught at the final stage.

Despite the fact that according to the new sector benchmark, bachelor's programs should ensure the development of practical skills, the research conducted in 2019 describes a lack of skills necessary for entering the profession as evident, which significantly complicates the opportunity of achieving success in the profession for people holding a bachelor's degree.²⁰

At the same time, it is also impossible to definitively say that teaching at the master's level will provide alumni with the necessary skills. The grounds for reaching such a conclusion is one of the findings of the research conducted in 2021, according to which in several of the 28 programs of 17 universities, the repetition of subjects at the master's level is observed. The course titles, content of subjects, topics, and literature are reiterated.²¹ In addition, in the same research it is also mentioned that the sector benchmark has led to the problem of coincidence between the levels. It is not clear how the master's level should differ from the bachelor's program. Only separation of competences is not enough.

¹⁶ Law of Georgia on Higher Education. Article 75

¹⁷ Introduction of a New Sector Benchmark for Law in Educational Programs Accreditation Process, 2021. USAID/EWMI

¹⁸ Khantadze N., 2019. Legal Practice Programs in Georgia - Assessment and Recommendations. USAID/EWMI

¹⁹ Khantadze N., 2021. Assessment of Opportunities of Legal Practice of Students during COVID-19 Pandemic - Main Challenges and Recommendations. Georgian Law Institute / USAID / EWMI. page 14

²⁰ Khantadze N., 2019. Legal Practice Programs in Georgia - Assessment and Recommendations. USAID/EWMI

²¹ Introduction of a New Sector Benchmark for Law in Educational Programs Accreditation Process, 2021. USAID/EWMI

As mentioned above, according to the requirements set for the law profession in Georgia, the profession of an advocate, prosecutor or notary can be entered by a graduate of a bachelor's program. At the same time, if the master's programs do not essentially differ from bachelor's programs, a question arises – How do master's programs differ from bachelor's programs? This question is even more relevant if we consider one of the findings of the research conducted in 2021, according to which there are problems with the process of implementing the practical component at the master's level. As mentioned in the report, practical training is conducted on the basis of memorandums, however, they have a formal nature. It is difficult to establish how the practical training is really conducted.²²

Thus, if a bachelor's degree is sufficient for entering the profession, with some exceptions, this level of studies is acceptable for employers. At the same time, some master's programs do not essentially differ from bachelor's programs, and the practice component is not properly provided everywhere. The opinion expressed within the framework of our research was that holding a master's degree is related to a more stereotypical attitude regarding a higher level of knowledge. It is a mechanism to simplify the lawyer selection process at the stage of resume screening rather than providing lawyers with a higher level of knowledge and competencies. The fact that master's degree holders have better practical or professional skills is not necessarily associated with their level of education, but rather it is related to individual approaches, independent participation in various internship programs, undergoing training courses, or gathering certain practical experience. Naturally, master's level students have more time for all of the above activities than students in a bachelor's program.

Practical and professional skills necessary for the profession can be developed by various methods. In addition to the fact that universities offer legal practice courses to students, practical and professional skills are also developed by means of internships, practical assignments integrated into specific courses, law clinics, or other practical activities. Practical training is mandatory only at the second level of studies, while during the bachelor's program it can be offered to students as an elective. As a rule, legal practice courses are offered by universities at the master's level, while at the bachelor's level, legal practice courses exist as an exception.²³ According to the same research, in the reviewed curricula of bachelor's programs, students rarely have the opportunity to take other courses oriented at the development of practical and professional skills, except for legal practice. Therefore, the research results certify that some educational programs cannot consistently provide for the development of and professional skills students need for legal practice and further employment.

As noted in the same research conducted in 2019,²⁴ legal practice courses are sometimes mentioned in law programs with the name of study practice or law clinic. Students can undergo legal practice or an internship program in the following state organizations: judiciary system (in the Constitutional Court of Georgia, as well as in the court of Appeals or common courts); Ministry of Justice of Georgia; Prosecution Office of Georgia; Georgian Bar Association; as well as within the framework of the state internship program. The rules for completing an internship in each of these agencies, duration of the internship, and remuneration are governed by respective normative acts and are different across agencies.²⁵

In the private sector, practical trainings and internships are regulated by the sector. The same research showed that when private organizations accept beginner lawyers for internships, they intend to continue their career there. Therefore, internships are announced only when such a need is put on the agenda and there is not a formalized internship program in the private sector. According to representatives of the private sector, the direct attraction of students from universities is less effective. The universities should be interested in

²² Introduction of a New Sector Benchmark for Law in Educational Programs Accreditation Process, 2021. USAID/EWMI

²³ Khantadze N., 2019. Legal Practice Programs in Georgia - Assessment and Recommendations. USAID/EWMI

²⁴ The same source

²⁵ The same source

implementing internship programs and should adapt themselves to the peculiarities of the private sector, which first of all implies the absence of bureaucratic obligations.²⁶ Considering the results of our research, it was shown that that in some cases, the private sector prefers to hire an entry-level lawyer as an assistant and an employee rather than announce an internship. The main argument was that legal activities imply a high level of confidentiality, and in this regard the employee's responsibility, obligations undertaken by him/her are related to fewer risks than in case of an intern. At the same time, private sector representatives also mentioned that working with interns and their mentoring require substantial financial and intellectual resources. Accordingly, if specialized companies (law firms) are more or less ready to spend these resources, non-specialized companies give advantage to mobilizing these resources in another direction, including focusing on accepting lawyers not as interns but in a specialized direction (for example, pharmaceutical businesses prioritize accepting interns with the respective narrow specialization).

Not all students and moreover, not all university students have the opportunity to begin legal practice in the public sector, and moreover, in the private sector. In terms of internships, the reality may be assessed more optimistically, as in the state internship program, as well as opportunities for interns in various agencies beyond this program, may be available for a significant part of students. However, the state internship program was temporarily suspended on the basis of a Government Resolution during the Covid-19 pandemic, and opportunities for internships in organizations were also significantly reduced.²⁷ The new reality of the Covid-19 pandemic created difficulties for legal practices and law clinic courses, too. This is evidenced by the statistics of internships announced within the framework of the state internship program. At the same time, these difficulties are discussed in recent research, where opportunities for students to undertake legal practice during the Covid-19 pandemic were assessed.²⁸ According to several key findings of the research, during the pandemic, students of all universities, in the best case, had to take the legal practice course in a hybrid form - in a good case, they took the course fully remotely, and in the worst case, the students did not manage to take a legal practice course. Under such conditions, the development of practical skills envisaged by legal practice courses is significantly complicated.

Considering that some master's students are already employed, they had the opportunity to obtain credit based on their activities. Unlike master's level students, the reality has become significantly complicated for students of the bachelor's program, most of whom do not work, as a rule. Therefore, they are deprived of the opportunity of recognition of their activities as practice. At the same time, due to the pandemic, as already mentioned, internship programs were suspended in an absolute majority of organizations in 2020. In addition, the same research revealed several other challenges of implementation of legal practice both in the public and in the private sector, for law clinics or for students from regions.

If we consider that the post-pandemic reality is ongoing and that time is required to return to the pre-pandemic reality, we should assume that undergoing an internship or practice in the nearest future will be also associated with difficulties directly related to the pandemic. At the same time, if we take into account the difficulties that accompany the practice and internship process for the university programs, we may assume that drastic changes in terms of the improvement of practical and professional skills of entry-level lawyers are less expected over the next several years.

²⁶ Khantadze N., 2019. Legal Practice Programs in Georgia - Assessment and Recommendations. USAID/EWMI

²⁷ Khantadze N., 2021. Assessment of Opportunities of Legal Practice of Students during COVID-19 Pandemic - Main Challenges and Recommendations. Georgian Law Institute / USAID / EWMI. page 14

²⁸ The same source

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3.0 Assessment of Educational and Employment Environment

In total, 29 universities offer a law program to students. Out of these, 10 are state universities and the remainder are private universities. An absolute majority of universities (25 universities in total) have a second level of studies (master's program). The third level of studies (Doctoral Program) is offered to lawyers by 11 institutions of higher education.

Table # 3. Institutions of higher education implementing a law program

Institutions of higher education implementing a law program		II Level (Master's Program)	III Level (Doctoral Program)
1	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity - New Vision University	X	X
2	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity - The Saint Andrew the First-Called Georgian University of the Patriarchate of Georgia	X	X
3	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity – GIPA – Georgian Institute of Public Affairs	X	
4	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity – St. Tbel Abuseridze Teaching University of the Patriarchate of Georgia		
5	LEPL – Akaki Tsereteli State University	X	
6	LEPL – Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University	X	
7	LEPL – Gori State Teaching University	X	
8	LEPL – Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University		
9	LEPL – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University	X	X
10	LEPL – Ilia State University	X	
11	LEPL – Samtskhe-Javakheti State University	X	
12	LEPL – Georgian Technical University	X	X
13	LEPL – Sukhumi State University	X	
14	LEPL – Shota Meskhia Zugdidi State University		
15	Guram Tavartkiladze Tbilisi Teaching University LLC	X	
16	Grigol Robakidze University LLC	X	X
17	European University LLC	X	
18	Free University of Tbilisi LLC	X	
19	Tbilisi Open Teaching University LLC	X	
20	Tbilisi Humanitarian Teaching University LLC		
21	Caucasus International University LLC	X	X
22	Caucasus University LLC	X	X
23	University of Georgia LLC	X	X
24	Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Teaching University LLC	X	
25	Georgian-American University LLC	X	X
26	International Black Sea University LLC	X	
27	East European University LLC	X	X
28	David Aghmashenebeli University of Georgia LLC	X	X
29	Georgian National University LLC (SEU)	X	

In the academic year 2020-2021, the total number of bachelor's program (law) students in Georgian universities was equal to 14 653, and the total number of master's program (law) students was equal to 3 138.²⁹ Between the academic years 2016 and 2021, the total number of bachelor's program (law) graduates

²⁹ Source: GEOSTAT

was equal to 12 868, with the highest share (28.4%) graduating from Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) (3 650 graduates in total). It is followed by Ilia State University, with 1 776 graduates over six years, which is 13.8% of the total number.³⁰

Table # 4. Number of bachelor's program (law) graduates in 2016-2021

NUMBER OF BACHELOR'S PROGRAM (LAW) GRADUATES							
#	Institution of higher education	Degree awarded in					
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity - New Vision University			7	6	2	
2	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity - The Saint Andrew the First-Called Georgian University of the Patriarchate of Georgia			11	5	47	32
3	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity – GIPA – Georgian Institute of Public Affairs		27	28	39	35	23
4	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity – St. Tbel Abuseridze Teaching University of the Patriarchate of Georgia		54	31	27	17	
5	LEPL – Akaki Tsereteli State University	67	106	76	90	82	96
6	LEPL – Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University	86	83	63	82	78	62
7	LEPL – Gori State Teaching University	14	51	62	53	59	8
8	LEPL – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University	486	626	608	646	683	601
9	LEPL – Ilia State University	201	300	295	341	313	326
10	LEPL – Samtskhe-Javakheti State University	17	45	31	32	41	33
11	LEPL – Georgian Technical University	81	146	216	199	110	66
12	LEPL – Sukhumi State University	52	77	74	63	72	70
13	LEPL – Shota Meskhia Zugdidi State University			2	1	5	11
14	Guram Tavartkiladze Tbilisi Teaching University LLC	33	91	74	96	83	40
15	Grigol Robakidze University LLC	22	47	66	39	55	52
16	European University LLC	1	9	21	30	42	28
17	Free University of Tbilisi LLC	20	26	38	33	28	4
18	Tbilisi Open Teaching University LLC	25	47	26	35	27	17
19	Tbilisi Humanitarian Teaching University LLC	15	18	21	10	8	14
20	Caucasus International University LLC	86	135	111	99	110	75
21	Caucasus University LLC	41	30	25	52	60	49
22	University of Georgia LLC	76	70	172	206	212	184
23	Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Teaching University LLC	17	63	52	86	60	59
24	Georgian-American University LLC	47	42	23	25	36	21
25	International Black Sea University LLC	39	38	36	39	35	5
26	East European University LLC	16	39	49	28	26	21
27	David Aghmashenebeli University of Georgia LLC	21	29	9	13	10	8
28	Georgian National University LLC (SEU)		14	28	51	90	102
29	Higher Education Institute Millennium LLC ³¹		2	2	60	1	
30	LEPL – Iakob Gogebashvili Telavi State University						13
Total		1463	2215	2257	2486	2427	2020

If we look at the number of graduates by year, no essential changes are observed, except a negative trend in 2021, which can be explained by the Pandemic and the financial crisis. The total number of graduates of the

³⁰ Source: LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement;

³¹ Note: According to information provided by LEPL National Center for Educational Quality Enhancement, this university is not included in the list of institutions implementing Law Programs, however, its alumni are also included in the alumni statistics.

second level of studies equaled to 5 017 M.A. degree holders from 2016-2021. It should also be mentioned that their number does not change from year to year and at the same time, the highest share of M.A. graduates are from Tbilisi State University (25.1% of the total number – 1259 M.A. degree holders in total during 6 years). The second university with the highest total number of graduates from 2016-2021 when compared to other universities is Georgian Technical University. The total number of master’s program graduates during this period equaled 534, which is 11.0% of the total number. As for Ilia State University, where the number of bachelor’s program graduates is lower than the number of graduates of Tbilisi State University, the number of M.A. degree holders equaled 489 over 6 years (9.7%), slightly exceeding the number of master’s program graduates at Guram Tavartkiladze Tbilisi Teaching University in the same period (387 M.A. degree holders in total – 7.7%). It should also be mentioned that for Tbilisi State University and Georgian Technical University, as well as Guram Tavartkiladze Tbilisi Teaching University, the number of master’s program graduates shows a negative trend during the last two years, for Ilia State University, the trend is positive (82 graduates in 2020, 116 graduates in 2021). Out of the above, reduction trend observed at Guram Tavartkiladze Tbilisi Teaching University on an annual basis is particularly noteworthy. For example, while in 2016 the number of master’s program graduates at this university equaled to 120, in 2021 their number was 30. Reduction trend observed at the Georgian Technical University is particularly noteworthy (117 graduates in 2020, 35 graduates in 2021), which can also be related to the crisis caused by the Pandemic.

Table# 5. Number of master’s program graduates in 2016-2021

NUMBER OF MASTER’S PROGRAM (LAW) GRADUATES							
#	Institution of higher education	Degree awarded in					
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity - New Vision University	10	9	16	17	26	
2	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity - The Saint Andrew the First-Called Georgian University of the Patriarchate of Georgia				6	4	5
3	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity – GIPA – Georgian Institute of Public Affairs	18	12	9	12	14	7
4	LEPL – Akaki Tsereteli State University	40	25	28	24	24	4
5	LEPL – Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University	23	24	33	25	24	31
6	LEPL – Gori State Teaching University	21	7	7	25	13	11
7	LEPL – Ivane Javakhsishvili Tbilisi State University	191	208	161	230	270	199
8	LEPL – Ilia State University	60	63	66	102	82	116
9	LEPL – Samtskhe-Javakheti State University	12	15	8	8	6	10
10	LEPL – Georgian Technical University	50	107	139	96	107	35
11	LEPL – Sukhumi State University	31	29	17	27	25	
12	Guram Tavartkiladze Tbilisi Teaching University LLC	120	74	77	41	45	30
13	Grigol Robakidze University LLC	37	41	29	29	38	27
14	European University LLC		1		2	2	
15	Free University of Tbilisi LLC			1	12	8	
16	Tbilisi Open Teaching University LLC	14	19	8	10	21	12
17	Caucasus International University LLC	18	16	31	35	20	39
18	Caucasus University LLC	47	31	22	23	20	28
19	University of Georgia LLC	46	52	42	23	31	52
20	Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani Teaching University LLC	34	17	23	22	23	33
21	Georgian-American University LLC	36	32	27	17	12	13
22	International Black Sea University LLC		3	8	3		

23	East European University LLC	40	42	34	26	27	32
24	David Aghmashenebeli University of Georgia LLC	33	48	28	30	6	11
25	Georgian National University LLC (SEU)			11	27	14	7
Total		881	875	825	872	862	702

As for doctoral programs, during the last six years, a PhD in law was awarded to 102 lawyers in total. Most are graduates of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (69 PhDs in total - 67.6%).

Table# 6. Number of doctoral program graduates in 2016-2021

NUMBER OF DOCTORAL PROGRAM (LAW) GRADUATES							
#	Institution of higher education	Degree awarded in					
		2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
1	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity - New Vision University				1		
2	Non-entrepreneurial (Non-commercial) Legal Entity - The Saint Andrew the First-Called Georgian University of the Patriarchate of Georgia	3					
3	LEPL – Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University	13	15	12	8	10	11
4	LEPL – Georgian Technical University	4					
5	Grigol Robakidze University LLC	3	1				
6	Caucasus International University LLC			1	2	2	
7	Caucasus University LLC			2			
8	University of Georgia LLC	1		1		1	
9	Georgian-American University LLC	1	2	1	1	1	1
10	East European University LLC				2		1
11	David Aghmashenebeli University of Georgia LLC		1				
Total		25	19	17	14	14	13

If we look at the data of internships announced by the state internship program from 2016 through June 2021, internships were announced cumulatively for 10 129 positions in the country during this period.³² Out of these, the greatest number of lawyers had an opportunity to complete an internship in 2016 (1 947 positions), and the lowest number – in 2020, which can be explained by the Pandemic. We should also consider that the data of 2021 show results for only six months. Considering the Covid-19 Pandemic, there is a high probability that the number of internships in 2021 will not significantly differ from the year 2020.

If we look at the data by regions, 41.4% of internships were announced in the capital city (4 193 in total). According to the total number of internships announced by the state internship program from 2016, Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti region ranks second, where 8.7% of the total number internships were announced (882 in total). This region is followed by Kvemo Kartli (802 in total - 7.9%) and Adjara (796 in total - 7.9%). The lowest opportunity to complete an internship within the framework of the state program was in Guria, where only 173 internships were announced from 2016.

³² Source: Civil Service Bureau

Table # 6. Internships announced by the state internship program by regions and years

Year	Adjara	Guria	Tbilisi	Imereti	Kakheti	Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Racha-Lechkhmi and Kvemo Svaneti	Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti	Samtskhe-Javakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Shida Kartli	Total
2016	137	41	787	225	126	57	40	183	96	169	86	1947
2017	113	35	585	205	104	68	39	132	84	159	85	1609
2018	151	24	561	225	104	68	42	156	84	154	68	1637
2019	109	21	442	205	67	54	36	114	70	100	53	1271
2020	70	7	257	95	41	20	15	65	44	63	33	710
2021	29	3	49	44	23	7	7	41	25	33	10	271
Total	796	173	4193	1226	600	328	215	882	490	802	424	10129

If we compare the number of internships announced by the state program and the number of bachelor's program graduates, assuming that a large number of students may be doing an internship in their final year of studies, a growing trend in the number of graduates is observed simultaneously with a reduction in the number of internships announced by the state program.³³ Certainly, the pandemic reality made it impossible to announce a large part of internships, and this fact should be taken into account for the year 2020.

Table # 7. Number of bachelor's program graduates and internships announced by the state internship program from 2016-2020

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Bachelor's Program Graduates				
1463	2215	2257	2486	2427
Number of internships announced by the state internship program				
1947	1609	1637	1271	710

It should be mentioned that the data allows us to conclude that internships were available for a large part of graduates. At the same time, though statistical data about internships announced in the private sector in the same period are not available, assuming that a certain number of internships was also available in private companies and international or non-governmental organizations, it should follow that the number of internships annually is actually higher than the amount offered by the state program to students and graduates.

The reality allows for a more optimistic conclusion in terms of regions. In particular, if we consider the number of bachelor's program graduates, as well as the number of internships announced by the state program in regions where the state university is located in the regional center, the number of internships announced everywhere should exceed the number of graduates. Certainly, a significant factor here is that internships cover the entire region and not only the regional center. At the same time, it is noteworthy that students not only from the regional center but also from municipalities of a specific region and even from other regions study in regional universities.

Table # 8. Number of bachelor's program graduates and number of internships announced by the state program in 2016-2020 by state universities in regions which implement a law program

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Number of Bachelor's Program Graduates					
LEPL – Akaki Tsereteli State University	67	106	76	90	82
LEPL – Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University	86	83	63	82	78
LEPL – Gori State Teaching University	14	51	62	53	59
LEPL – Samtskhe-Javakheti State University	17	45	31	32	41

³³ Source: Civil Service Bureau

LEPL – Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University			2	1	5
Number of internships announced by the state internship program					
Imereti	225	205	225	205	95
Adjara	137	113	151	109	70
Shida Kartli	86	85	68	53	33
Samtskhe-Javakheti	96	84	84	70	44
Samegrelo-Zemo Svaneti	183	132	156	114	65

As for the agencies/organizations where the greatest number of internships were announced, Departments of Common Courts under the Supreme Council of the Ministry of Justice are the leaders. The total number of internships announced by the state program from 2016 until July 2021 equals 1 357, making 13.4% of the internships announced by the state program during this time. LEPL Public Service Hall ranks second, with 818 announced internships. The third place by the number of announced internships is held by LEPL Revenue Service (538 internships in total).

It should also be mentioned that by region, the greatest number of internships is announced almost everywhere by Civil or District Departments of Common Courts under the Supreme Council of the Ministry of Justice. In Tbilisi, LEPL Revenue Service ranks second (326 internships in total), followed by LEPL Public Service Hall (218 internships in total).

Table # 9. Agencies/organizations where the highest number of internships were announced by the state program in the period from 2016 through June 2021

Agency/organization	Adjara	Guria	Tbilisi	Imereti	Kakheti	Mtskheta-Mtianeti	Racha-Lechkhmi and Kvemo Svaneti	Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti	Samtskhe-Javakheti	Kvemo Kartli	Shida Kartli	Total
LEPL Department of Common Courts (civil/district) under the Supreme Council of the Ministry of Justice	33	21	443	215	72	64	35	144	86	181	63	1357
LEPL "Public Service Hall"	85	21	218	76	78	38	15	99	52	102	34	818
LEPL "Revenue Service"	73		326	9	9	1		84	12	13	11	538
LEPL "Social Service Agency"	19	12	98	35	30	19	16	27	19	35	20	330
LEPL "Public Services Development Agency"	16	10	105	40	22	12	10	32	13	28	8	296

The data available to us does not provide accurate information about the index of employment for graduates of universities from 2016-2021. Moreover, it is difficult to discuss employment by profession. In addition to the fact that this information is not public in most cases, information received from universities does not allow us to conclude that career support services possess regular and organized information about the employment status of graduates. The fact that information about the employment of graduates is mostly inconsistent in the target universities selected within the framework of the research is evidenced by interviews. For state universities with several hundred graduates, maintaining such statistics is assessed as a separate challenge. However, this is not the case for all universities. For example, according to information shared by Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University, the statistics for students/graduates (2016-2021) is as follows: the employment index is 73% among bachelor's program graduates, 87% among master's program graduates, and 96% among doctoral program graduates. A majority of bachelor's (62%) and master's (79%) degree holders are employed in their profession. A total of 73% of bachelor's and 54% of master's degree holders are

employed in the public sector. An absolute majority of graduates from a doctoral program are employed in their profession (98%), and a vast majority are employed in public institutions (89%).³⁴

Vacancies announced for the position of a lawyer in public agencies and published on the website of the Civil Service Bureau - www.hr.gov.ge, totaled 534 in 2016, and increased in the period leading up to 2020. The number of vacancies announced last year equaled 529, and up to July 2021, it equaled 346. The reality caused by the Pandemic and the fact that only six months of data is shown for the current year should be considered.

A vast majority of these vacancies are announced in Tbilisi, and most vacancies were announced at Tbilisi City Court. The number of vacancies announced at this court from 2016 to July 2021 equaled 901, which is 18.8% of the total number of announced vacancies.

Table # 10. Number of vacancies announced at public agencies in 2016-2021 (January-June)

2016	
2016	534
2017	1194
2018	1178
2019	1019
2020	529
2021 (January-June)	346
Total	4800

The number of vacancies announced by the private sector for lawyers in the same period is not available. However, if we look at the results of the "Enterprise Skills Survey" conducted in 2020, a majority of vacancies published by the private employment agency HR.GE in 2019 are announced for persons employed in the field of service and sales (25%).³⁵ There is also high demand for technicians (22%), specialists (17%), and office assistant personnel (16%). According to the research, for the group of specialists, specialists of law, the social and cultural sphere, and lawyers are the most in-demand category. A total of 307 vacancies were announced for lawyers in 2019. However, additional information about the share of vacancies announced for entry-level lawyers is not available.

The "Research of Legal Market in Georgia" conducted in 2016 specified that the number of vacancies announced for the position of a lawyer by the employment portal www.jobs.ge in 2015 equaled 620, and in 2014 the total was 500.³⁶ It is also mentioned in the research that the respective information on www.hr.com.ge (currently, HR.GE) is scarce. Despite the fact that it is impossible to compare the 2020 research results with the same or another employment portal, one thing is clear: the portal that was less popular in 2016 is a private employment agency today and there is a high probability that private organizations use its services to disseminate information about vacancies.

If we look at the vacancies announced by employers such as the Prosecution Office of Georgia, it should be mentioned that according to data from the National Bureau of Public Service, the Office announced 182 vacancies in total from 2016 to July 2021. No vacancy was announced either in 2016 or in 2020.³⁷ At the same time, it should be mentioned that the data does not provide information about the number of vacancies for entry-level lawyers. A total of 161 lawyers completed an internship at the Prosecution Office of Georgia from 2016-2021, and 92 of them were appointed to a vacant position.³⁸

³⁴ Source: Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University

³⁵ Enterprise Skills Survey, 2020. Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia

³⁶ Research of Legal Market in Georgia. 2016. USAID and Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia Activity (EWMI-PROLoG)

³⁷ Source: Civil Service Bureau

³⁸ Source: Prosecution Office of Georgia

Table # 11. Number of interns and interns appointed to vacant positions at the Prosecution Office of Georgia from 2016-2020

	Internship completed	Appointed to a vacant position
2016	62	32
2017-2018	62	31
2019-2020	37	29
Total	161	92

Interestingly, according to the results of the research conducted in 2016 ("Research of Legal Market in Georgia"), in terms of the remuneration of entry-level lawyers, it was noted that there was a difference not between the public and the private sectors in general, but in the private sector, by the specific type of organization. For example, while the minimum average monthly salary of an entry-level lawyer in a state agency was 755 GEL and the maximum average monthly salary was 911, in the private sector the highest minimum average monthly salary was observed in financial institutions and was slightly lower than the remuneration at state agencies. According to the research conducted in 2016, the minimum average monthly salary in financial institutions equaled 703 GEL, and the maximum average monthly salary equaled 873 GEL. At the same time, the minimum average monthly salary at law firms was significantly lower than the minimum average monthly salary at state agencies (461 GEL and 755 GEL, respectively).³⁹

Though recent data about vacancies and/or employment of lawyers in the private sector is not available, based on the results of our research we can assume that the private sector is rather attractive for lawyers, due to a relatively higher remuneration compared to the public sector. Exact data about the remuneration of lawyers is not available, however, if we consider the data of the National Statistics Office of Georgia (2019) about the average monthly nominal salary of persons employed in the public and non-public sectors, the reality is in favor of the non-public sector, which also applies to lawyers. In particular, according to the 2019 data, the average monthly salary of persons employed in the public sector equaled 973.7 GEL and in the non-public sector it equaled 1211.1 GEL.⁴⁰

The available data does not allow us to compare or analyze remuneration for lawyers in general, or for entry-level lawyers in the private or public sectors. According to one of the discourses of this research, the main appeal of the private sector is associated with higher remuneration. At the same time, the index of passing the Bar Exam may indirectly serve as proof that employment in the private sector is attractive for lawyers.

The fact that readiness for Bar Exams is increasing annually is evidenced by the number of lawyers registered for the Bar Exam between 2016 to July, 2021. The total number of lawyers registered for Bar Exams in the specified period equaled 6 155.⁴¹ In total, 43.4% passed the exam (2 672 in total). If we compare this data to the data prior to the year 2016, the assumption is that demand for lawyers will become stronger. For example, while Bar Exams were passed by 93 lawyers in 2013, in 2014 this number reached 213, and in 2015 it equaled 290.⁴² This trend is increasing more and more each year.

Table # 12. Number of lawyers registered for the Bar Exam and the number of lawyers who passed the exam from 2016-2021 (January –June)

	Registered	Exams passed by
2016	752	354
2017	930	453
2018	1077	481
2019	997	557
2020	1368	661

³⁹ Research of Legal Market in Georgia. 2016. USAID and Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia Activity (EWMI-PROLoG)

⁴⁰ Source: GEOSTAT

⁴¹ Source: Georgian Bar Association

⁴² Research of Legal Market in Georgia. 2016. USAID and Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia Activity (EWMI-PROLoG)

2021 (January-June)	1031	166
Total	6155	2672

It should be mentioned that the data for the year 2021 only covers the period through July, therefore, it only reflects data for one cohort, and does not allow us to say that the index of taking the exam has decreased. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the trend of registering and taking the exam confirms the fact that more and more people are taking the Bar Exam. As for universities, graduates of both Georgian and foreign universities are among those who pass the Bar Exam successfully, however, the highest share is from Tbilisi State University. This can be explained by the largest number of graduates from this university.

It should be considered that those who take the Bar Exam or complete an internship at the Prosecution Office of Georgia includes those who were awarded the qualification of a lawyer not only several years ago, but a long time ago. Thus, it is difficult to talk about a direct link between an institution of higher education and completing an internship successfully or passing the Bar Exam. At the same time, if we rely on the results of the above research on compliance with the achieved level of education and skills, as well as compliance with employer qualifications, we should take into account that direct links between the achieved level of education and employment should not be sought.

2. Research Results

4.3.0 Labor Market Requirements for Entry-level Lawyers

As research of the legal market primarily aims to identify the difference between employer demands and the knowledge and qualification of lawyers, the main issue is the requirements that are set by the legal labor market. It is also important to find out how these requirements are assessed by employers, as well as entry-level lawyers and institutions of higher education.

According to the research results, private employers hiring entry-level lawyers mainly for employment is a common practice. The private companies participating in the research cooperate with entry-level lawyers in various forms at least once a year, and name this practice as one of the effective ways for mitigating the problem of finding new human resources and the frequent outflow of human resources. Despite this practice, *no private company participating in the research has standardized processes and mechanisms for internships or hiring entry-level lawyers.* Companies mostly rely on resume screening, interviews and testing. It should be mentioned that an interview is a necessary, though insufficient component for employers when recruiting an intern or a lawyer.

Entry-level lawyers, based on their experience and knowledge, perform assisting activities in companies under the direct supervision of managers and mentors. The list of activities designed for entry-level lawyers are mostly similar across all private companies participating in the research, and mainly implies the following activities: judiciary practice studies, administrative activities, technical activities, notary relations, document notarization, and relations with state authorities during the registration of documents in the Register.

It should be emphasized that the main qualification requirements of private employers for the selection of entry-level lawyers are similar and include the several directions listed below:

- Higher education (mostly bachelor's degree);
- Knowledge of Georgian legislation;
- Knowledge of English language;
- Practical experience;

- Participation in various professional activities (for example, mock trials);
- Communication, writing and analytical thinking skills.

Out of the above knowledge and skills, mostly *thorough knowledge of law principles* and a *bachelor's diploma*, as well as *having practical experience* and in some cases, *knowledge of English language* are identified as decisive factors. Naturally, the latter is particularly important for companies with activities not solely limited to Georgia and/or Georgian clients.

Employment in private companies allows entry-level lawyers to obtain various benefits. Professional (for example, on human rights) and general trainings (for example, on leadership and communication), opportunities for gathering and sharing knowledge, as well as gaining and extending practical experience are among the benefits that represent a precondition of launching a successful career for entry-level lawyers. Interestingly, in addition to the above benefits, a major part of private companies participating in the research offer additional symbolic remuneration to interns.

As for the **public sector**, several main qualification requirements named by employers were identified:

- Higher education (bachelor's degree);
- Knowledge of legislation governing the respective public sector;
- Soft skills, such as communication skills, teamwork, detail-oriented, problem-solving skills;
- Motivation; and
- Digital competencies.

It should be mentioned that these requirements are set for both entry-level lawyers and interns (except for those holding a bachelor's degree, as internships are done mainly by students). Employers from the public sector paid particular attention to the importance to *knowledge of legislation governing the respective public sector* by candidates, as well as to the level of motivation of young people. In connection with knowledge of legislation governing the respective public sector, it should be mentioned that it was the main qualification requirement named by majority of employers within the framework of the research of the legal labor market in 2016. According to 80% of the interviewed organizations, it was the most important criteria used for the selection of an entry-level lawyer for a vacancy.⁴³

Digital skills are assessed as significant for performing simple, but important tasks for legal proceedings (for example, use of public service programs, searching for excerpts from the Public Register, identifying persons, etc.), but having the above competency is not named among the determining qualification requirements. If we look at the data of the research conducted in 2016, 69% of organizations named possession of the above competency (knowledge of office computer programs) as the second most important criterion for the selection of a candidate. In addition, no difference was observed between employers of the public and private sector, as seven out of ten organizations emphasized the significance of this criterion everywhere.⁴⁴ Certainly, there is no opportunity to compare quantitative data now, but considering the fact that this competency was named as an important, though not a determinant criterion by employers in the public sector, while it was not mentioned in the private sector at all, we can assume that applicants more or less possess competencies in this regard, and there are no particular challenges in terms of the improvement of digital competencies.

Unlike the private sector, employers in the public sector consider *knowledge of English language* as a less significant qualification requirement, except for cases in which specific activities imply familiarization with international practices, research or other materials, or relations with foreign citizens. It should be mentioned that according to research of the legal labor market conducted in 2016, knowledge of English language as a

⁴³ Research of Legal Market in Georgia. 2016. USAID and Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia Activity (EWMI-PROLoG)

⁴⁴ The same source

criterion for the selection of an entry-level lawyer for a vacancy was more important for the private sector (for example, law firm – 56%) than for public agencies (42%).

Work experience is not named as a determining factor, but as a desirable requirement by employers from the private sector. For the public sector, work experience is mostly named as a desirable qualification requirement. According to research participants, particularly from the judiciary system, as employment in the public service is governed by law and it is necessary to pass certain levels for various positions, lawyers with work experience rarely apply for the position of an entry-level lawyer. Entry-level lawyers are mostly interested in internships. In addition to internships, for a higher rank position a candidate must meet the main qualification requirements that are defined by a public officer's position rank and category and are governed by the respective normative acts. Thus, the criteria that should be met by candidates is established for officers of a respective rank from a legal point of view. No essential differences are observed across agencies.

According to the Research of Legal Market in Georgia conducted in 2016, work experience was named as a significant criterion for employment of entry-level lawyers by 45% of organizations. It is noteworthy that while 51% of public institutions named work experience, only 29% of law firms mentioned this criterion.⁴⁵

Employers from the public sector participating in the research mention that the qualification requirements set for entry-level lawyers imply basic knowledge that can be obtained by candidates at a university (for example: legal proceedings, Constitution of Georgia, criminal proceedings, civil and general administrative proceedings, etc.). Though participation in professional activities such as mock trials, experience drafting legal documents, and participation in conferences and workshops were positively assessed by employers from the public sector, the research did not show that these activities are essential when selecting entry-level lawyers.

Unlike employers, research participants from the target group of *experts*, as well as from *institutions of higher education, students, and graduates* emphasized particular demands of employers for *work experience*. Moreover, if we consider expert opinions, in most cases, the requirements set by the labor market for entry-level lawyers are unfair and illogical. First of all, this refers to requiring work experience from graduates. It was mentioned that in some cases, employers give advantage not having work experience, but participation in conferences or other educational activities, as this develops significant skills such as analytical thinking and teamwork. However, requiring work experience by employers is the most widespread practice, especially in the public sector.

"In the public sector, there are particularly high requirements regarding experience working in a specific position, which in my opinion, is not correct and we must give graduates an opportunity to gain practical experience".

Expert

Thus, if we summarize the opinions of research participants, we can conclude that the opinions of employers and experts, as well as students and graduates in connection with qualification requirements are slightly different. While according to employers, the main qualification requirements that must be met by entry-level lawyers and interns are related to knowledge of Georgian legislation or the possession of various soft skills, according to students/graduates, the main qualification requirement of employers is work experience. At the same time, it should be mentioned that the research participants who represent the NGO sector give priority to knowledge of foreign languages (primarily English), the possession of academic and legal writing skills, as well as research skills.

⁴⁵ Research of Legal Market in Georgia. 2016. USAID and Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia Activity (EWMI-PROLoG)

2.1.1. Readiness of Entry-level Lawyers for the Labor Market

As a rule, entry-level lawyers have to perform a lot of duties at the workplace. Most frequently, their responsibilities include working on agreements and other legal documents, drafting legal letters, participating in trials, translating documents, etc. The research results show that entry-level lawyers are only partially ready to perform the above duties.

If we take the results of the Legal Market Research (2016) into consideration, the level of qualification of entry-level lawyers was assessed as average (59%).⁴⁶

It appeared easy for **private employers** participating in the research to name the requirements that candidates have the most difficulty meeting during the selection process. The main requirements are listed below:

- Analytical thinking - candidates mostly do not have a global vision or the ability to perceive the big picture, which points to challenges related to analytical thinking;
- Knowledge of English language is one of the main challenges. The tests used in the selection process identify the severity of the problem in this direction; and
- Practical skills and the ability to transfer theoretical knowledge into practice.

"Entry-level lawyers lack practical skills. The country finds it difficult to transition to a new system and teaching methods that will be less dependent on memorization and will be more dependent on thinking. Of course, we can't even compare the present situation with the situation 20 years ago, but this is not enough. More focus should be made on practical and pragmatic thinking and less on memorization". **Employer, representative of a law firm, private sector**

In the opinion of employers from the **public sector**, entry-level lawyers are rather well prepared in terms of theoretical knowledge, however, similar to the private sector, it was emphasized that the *transition of theoretical knowledge into practice* is a challenge. It is also the most difficult requirement for entry-level lawyers to meet. At the same time, employers note that *communication skills, critical thinking, analytical vision*, as well as *legal writing and academic writing in general* are the skills that are least possessed by entry-level lawyers.

The **experts** participating in the research focused on challenges related to skills such as *legal writing*. According to them, graduates may have fewer problems with academic writing, but they may have no skills for drafting meeting minutes or other legal documents. At the same time, experts accentuated challenges related to the possession of skills such as *time management, search skills and professional ethics*, which, as already mentioned, is a problem of the Georgian education system, as foreign universities facilitate not only teaching professional ethics but also the development of various skills. At the same time, experts named *inadequate speaking skills* as a serious challenge. They also mentioned challenges related to transferring theoretical knowledge into practice.

⁴⁶ Research of Legal Market in Georgia. 2016. USAID and Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia Activity (EWMI-PROLoG)

"Still writing. They cannot draft procedural documents properly. When they start carrying out their activities, they may even find it difficult to fill in a template, from writing an application to applying to court." **Expert**

"A significant criterion that is not taught and to which a lot of attention should be paid is speaking. It is very important for a lawyer, i.e. there are no subjects that allow students to develop speaking skills, which are necessary for a lawyer speaking before the court."

Expert

According to [students and graduates](#), the challenges are connected mainly to two issues that partially overlap. These issues are a *lack of work experience* and *insufficient possession of practical skills*. The level of readiness of Law program graduates for labor market requirements is assessed negatively. In the opinion of students and graduates, a university gives sufficient theoretical knowledge to students and they have fewer challenges in this regard. However, there are serious deficiencies in terms of practical and professional skills. Students note that they studied subjects theoretically but did not have to draft respective legal documents, which points to the circumstance that teaching components oriented at the development of practical skills are not sufficiently integrated into theoretical courses.

In addition, the main requirement that graduates have trouble meeting is connected to work experience. Both in Tbilisi and in regions it was mentioned that employment without work experience is absolutely unrealistic both in the private and public sector.

"Everywhere we want to get employed in our profession, the interview questions are consistent with our theory. Questions are asked from the code of the local municipality, and since the university teaches us rather well, we have a successful interview... But when we start working and have to draft documents, we have never had done this". **Woman, Master's degree, State University, Gori**

"There are fewer vacancies for the position of a lawyer in the private sector, and as for vacancies announced in the public sector, 1 year of work experience is required and we do not meet the requirements". **Man, Master's degree, State University, Kutaisi**

Another additional barrier to employment in the public sector is *nepotism*, and it was accentuated by discussion participants in regions. In addition to nepotism ("*Unfortunately, the reality is that nepotism takes place when people are employed and this is a serious problem*"), students and graduates also noted a certain difference between employers in the private and public sector, however, this opinion was not dominant. In particular, according to research participants, while in the private sector attention is paid to the possession of various soft skills (for example, teamwork), in the public sector, the focus is on "*how obedient of a person you are*".

According to the [representatives of universities](#) participating in the research, the main requirement of employers is connected to *practical and professional skills*. Representatives of universities say that graduates do not meet these requirements adequately. In particular, students are unable to draft agreements and various documents, draft a suit, submit a case to the court, etc. It was also mentioned that *academic and legal writing* is important, and deficiencies were emphasized in this regard. According to some research participants, curricula were refined in this direction, which implies adding respective courses, however, it was noted that this challenge is also connected to education. In particular, critical thinking and correct writing represent significant preconditions for academic writing, but school education does not help students properly develop these skills. Thus, according to the argument, considering the fact that less prepared students are enrolled in bachelor's programs, the university finds it difficult to eliminate deficiencies considering the limited amount of time and large list of sectoral subjects.

"Practical skills are always requested. They have no ability to draft a document and more importantly, the judge told me that they cannot even draft protocol for an administrative offense, a protocol for inspection, etc. The judge asked me to teach students how to draft documents and work with them ... Now, the situation has improved. Before 2012 we did not include these courses in the program". **Representative of state university, region**

In terms of legal writing, one opinion expressed in connection with literature is noteworthy. In addition to deficiencies related to the way of teaching legal writing in institutions of higher education, there are challenges in terms of available literature in the Georgian language. According to one opinion, the literature used by universities is just translated and neither the cultural context nor social factors are envisaged in it. Therefore, it is important to work in this direction.

"The problem with legal writing is that the literature, save for a couple of exceptions, is poorly translated from English. When a text is translated, it should be brought into compliance with cultural and social factors, and this seems to be lacking". **Representative of private university, Tbilisi**

"Academic writing, for example, letters, is very difficult for students. We had the subject of academic writing, but it was optional and we made it mandatory for everybody. Also, more importantly, drafting legal documents was included in the program as a separate subject, based on employer requirements". **Representative of state university, Tbilisi**

Another challenge that should be eliminated by institutions of higher education is connected to the *English language*. Though a major part of employers from the public sector assesses challenges related to a foreign language less severely, due to the fact that work performed by entry-level lawyers does not require this competency, but where this knowledge and skills are necessary, the challenge is severe. Inadequate knowledge of a foreign language was accentuated by all groups participating in the research. Experts, including those from the NGO sector, noted that knowledge of the English language is not mandatory for all students. This does not apply to employers or specific duties that envisage working with international organizations and where knowledge of the English language is necessary. Therefore, it is important to eliminate challenges in this regard. This was particularly emphasized by students and graduates, especially in regions. Discussion participants from regions noted that foreign language courses offered by universities do not meet the labor market requirements, and it is desirable to enhance programs in this direction. Here, the circumstance that students with different levels of English language attend the same course was identified as a particular challenge, since it causes a significant imbalance and does not facilitate the expansion of knowledge.

"If a person is not a specialist of international law, we do not request knowledge of a foreign language. It is desirable to know, but not mandatory ... Also, it is very important to write correctly in Georgian. Despite the fact that documents are edited, this is important and more work is required in this direction". **Expert**

"There is a very mixed level of knowledge in the group and so it is very difficult. Maybe someone can't read and you may know better and it is physically impossible in one group". **Woman, Bachelor's degree, Student, State University, Telavi**

According to an assessment of representatives of [universities](#) who expressly accentuate the importance of relevant knowledge of the English language, it is a challenge that when students enroll in the bachelor's program, they do not have sufficient knowledge of the English language. Improving knowledge of a foreign language simultaneously with studying subjects of law requires additional resources from students, which is often problematic. Though in some cases, the universities participating in the research have already added a

professional English teaching component to the curriculum, this was not the case in all universities. Therefore, it is important to strengthen bachelor's programs in Law in this direction.

"University is not the place where a language should be taught together with the profession, in my opinion. So, we teach six levels of English, but this is not enough, students should know it before".

Representative of private university, Tbilisi

Experts participating in the research also noted that entry-level lawyers are less prepared for professional activities, which is primarily explained by a lack of the respective *practical and professional skills*. Inadequate preparation of students by the higher education system is named as the main precondition. Though according to experts, this is not true of all universities, but it is a challenge for the practical component of the Law program in a major part of universities. Moreover, it was noted that study programs are irrelevant in respect to actual labor market requirements. The fact that the introduction of Supreme or Constitutional Court decisions to students is not envisaged by the curricula was provided as the argument in support of the above statement. Therefore, it was considered significant to integrate them into courses.

At the same time, according to one assessment, it is important to make certain changes to the national standards of legal education. For example, it is desirable to deliver a significant course at the first level of study, such as professional ethics. There should also be more focus on a legal writing component.

"It differs by universities. In some universities, the practical component is very weak. I don't know whether professional ethics is taught everywhere, but it is unimaginable to start working and have no basic knowledge of professional regulation, professional ethics..." **Expert**

Thus, the research clearly shows that there are serious challenges in terms of the possession of practical skills. Therefore, improvement of this component in university programs is critical. At the same time, specific challenges were identified that show a difference between the qualification of graduates and market requirements, and it is significant to overcome them. Deficiencies exist in terms of the transition of theoretical knowledge into practice, academic writing, legal writing, knowledge of professional English, and the possession of various soft skills were emphasized as a particularly severe problem by research participants in all target groups. The main differences between market requirements and the qualifications of graduates are related to these deficiencies.

2.1.1.1. Bachelor's Program vs Master's Program

As for the achieved level of higher education that is preferred by employers when employing entry-level lawyers, it should be mentioned that in case of both the **private** and the **public sectors**, it was observed that a bachelor's degree is absolutely enough for employment (except for specific cases when a qualification confirming the second level is defined for the position by law). At the same time, it was mentioned that the difference between lawyers holding a master's and bachelor's degree is evident. First of all, this is expressed by better practical training. According to representatives of the private sector, *M.A. degree holders are better prepared for the labor market*, as they possess more sophisticated practical and analytical skills. Also, in most cases, they have several years of work experience. Representatives of the public sector also focused on more *analytical and practical skills*. They emphasized that lawyers holding a master's degree *understand their own*

strengths and weaknesses, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of their profession, and they can focus on the elimination of deficiencies more efficiently.

If we consider the results of the legal market research conducted in 2016, for the employment of entry-level lawyers, in most cases (60%) it is necessary to have a Georgian bachelor's diploma. The necessity of having a Georgian master's diploma was noted by 36% of research participants. It is also noteworthy that the research did not show an essential difference between the private and public sector in this regard. For example, while 58% of state organizations requested a bachelor's diploma and 38% requested a master's diploma, the reality is similar in businesses (bachelor's degree - 57%, master's degree - 38%). The reality is slightly different in financial institutions (bachelor's degree - 70%, master's degree - 30%) and law firms (bachelor's degree - 68%, master's degree - 32%), where holding a bachelor's degree was sufficient for seven out of ten organizations.⁴⁷

For **representatives of universities** participating in the research, whether there is a demand for lawyers holding a bachelor's or master's degree, two main discourses were outlined. According to one discourse, *employers do not attach particular importance to whether a university graduate holds a bachelor's or master's degree, except for positions in which holding a master's degree is defined by law.* According to supporters of this opinion, the main thing is that the graduate should possess the respective knowledge and skills, which implies the performance of legal duties in a quality manner and the possession of the respective practical and professional skills. In addition, it was mentioned during the interviews that for the purpose of saving financial resources, an employer may give advantage to applicants holding a bachelor's degree. According to supporters of this opinion, since remuneration for employees holding a master's degree is higher, an employer chooses a bachelor's degree holder, as in most cases the priority is to save financial resources.

Contrary to this opinion, according to the second discourse, *employers give a certain advantage to a master's degree holder, as an M.A. is associated with more thorough knowledge and practical experience.* At the same time, according to one opinion, an M.A. is associated with the possession of analytical thinking and research skills, which can be a priority for some employers considering the field of activities.

"Bachelor's degree is mainly enough, because they have started requiring master's degrees for judges and at the prosecution office. Mainly the bachelor's level is required because the master's program is focused on research and pedagogical activities". **Representative of state university, region**

"Master's degree [is given priority by employer], as they need a lawyer with a more thorough knowledge of his profession. That's what they require. A person with very good knowledge is good for every employer". **Representative of state university, region**

According to **students and graduates**, *doing an internship and thus, developing practical skills at the bachelor's level is absolutely enough* to meet employer requirements. The necessity of having a master's degree is explained by stereotypes, and not by the higher qualifications of candidates. Moreover, studying for a master's degree does not necessarily lead to more knowledge or better practical or professional skills, but rather creates better opportunities for employment. This is explained by the fact that an employer assigns greater importance to a master's degree. Considering the fact that there is a large number of lawyers in the country and employers want to save time resources in the process of personnel recruitment, requiring a master's qualification is kind of a filter that significantly reduces the number of shortlisted candidates at the initial stage of selection. Thus, according to students and graduates, there is a higher demand for work experience or in separate cases, on specific qualification requirements (for example, proof of passing the Bar Exam) rather than on a candidate holding a master's degree. Thus, lawyers decide to continue their second level of studies for more concentration in a narrow specialization or for better employment opportunities.

⁴⁷ Research of Legal Market in Georgia. 2016. USAID and Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia Activity (EWMI-PROLoG)

"It [Master's Program] may give you knowledge, but this knowledge is not so broad to be worth studying for 2 years and paying an additional amount of money. It may be just for having better employment opportunities".

Woman, Bachelor's degree, State University, Tbilisi

"A master's degree is very seldom requested by any employer. Attention is paid mainly to work experience and the Bar Exam". **Woman, Bachelor's degree, State University, Telavi**

Students and graduates explained the advantages given to specific university graduates by employers with almost the same reason. In this context, it was also noted that there are several universities – both private and public - in the country and their law schools are assessed positively. Therefore, this is an indicator for an employer to filter candidates from the beginning and reduce the number of CVs to be considered. It should be emphasized that attention was paid to this in Tbilisi. In regions, it was noted that the qualifications of graduates rather than a specific university is essential.

"There is no difference between a private and a public university. There is a difference between universities, and I think that the Free University is the top university for employers". **Woman, Master's degree, State University, Tbilisi**

"Whenever I had an interview, I was never asked which university I graduated from. Only the submission of a diploma was required". **Woman, Master's degree, State University, Batumi**

The level of knowledge of graduates of the Faculty of Law is the main precondition for further employment. It should be emphasized that employers from the private sector participating in the research attach significant importance not to a bachelor's or master's degree, but to the alma mater of entry-level lawyers. Interestingly, private companies participating in the research unanimously agree on the high level of theoretical (general and specific) knowledge of entry-level lawyers. This is particularly clear for graduates of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. Free University of Tbilisi and Caucasus University are also included in this list. It should be mentioned that many representatives of private companies participating in the research are teachers at various universities and are in close contact with students. Therefore, the assessment of the level of their skills or theoretical knowledge is based on their experience.

Especially good theoretical knowledge among TSU graduates is noted by employers from the public sector. Though filtering candidates by specific universities is not discussed in the public sector, as knowledge of legislation is one of the main criterion, we can assume that theoretical knowledge is important. Therefore, there may be certain differences across universities that were not directly mentioned in the interviews by research participants, but emphasizing the fact that theoretical knowledge of TSU students or graduates is particularly evident may be indirectly suggesting it. It is noteworthy that positive attitudes toward the Faculty of Law of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University were evident in the research conducted in 2016, too.⁴⁸ We read in the report that in the opinion of the research participants, the Faculty of Law of TSU, unlike all private and public institutions of higher education, represents a foundation of legal education and is perceived as an institution of higher education providing thorough legal education for representatives of the field of education as well as employers until the present. At the same time, it is an institution of higher education that is attractive for highly qualified lecturers, which predetermines its prestige to a certain extent. It can be said that this reality has not changed.

⁴⁸ Research of Legal Market in Georgia. 2016. USAID and Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia Activity (EWMI-PROLoG)

2.1.1.2. Mechanisms for Eliminating Deficiencies Related to a Skills Mismatch at the Workplace

According to the research results, employers from the **private sector** try to eliminate challenges related to a skills mismatch using their own efforts. This is mostly done by means of *trainings, mentorship, teamwork, feedback and experience sharing*. Interestingly, a majority of employers do not consider training programs for special professions (advocates, prosecutors, judges) to compensate for a lack of qualifications and are skeptical of their effectiveness.

There is a similar reality in the **public sector**. Frequently, entry-level lawyers are offered *thematic trainings* for adaptation at the workplace, as according to the Law of Georgia on Public Service, it is necessary to engage new employees in professional development programs. In addition, as a rule, more experienced employees serve as *mentors* for new employees. At the same time, representatives of the public sector note that entry-level lawyers overcome difficulties revealed in their working process on the basis of *knowledge shared by experienced employees*.

According to the research participants, by trainings, experience sharing and the performance of practical assignments, entry-level lawyers manage to develop the skills required for the effective performance of work in a rather short time. This is also shown by the fact that frequently, candidates who have completed an internship in the public sector and who are familiar with the specific nature of activities as well as the work of a specific agency are employed. Therefore, adapting to the working environment as an employee happens relatively fast.

2.1.2. Employment Opportunities

The research showed that employers both in the **private** and **public sectors**, in most cases do not suffer from a lack of human resources, and when a competition is announced for a vacancy, activity is rather high. It is noteworthy that according to the results of the research conducted in 2016, many employers did not face any difficulties in the process of looking for an entry-level lawyer (42%).⁴⁹

It should be mentioned that the rather widespread practice of outflow of human resources in the public sector was noted within the framework of our research. Some employers from the public sector consider that the outflow of human resources does not present a problem, as there are a lot of lawyers on the legal market. It was noted that only a few public officers leave public service and transfer to the private sector (which is mainly caused by a higher salary) and they are replaced by new human resources quickly. At the same time, other employers in the public sector consider this as a challenge. According to their argument, the private sector is actively trying to attract qualified human resources, and low salaries in the public sector create a serious barrier to maintaining qualified human resources. Though according to supporters of this opinion, considering the large number of lawyers, it is possible to easily replace old human resources with new ones, this happens at the expense of insufficient qualifications. According to employers, in the private sector there is very high demand not only for lawyers with experience working in the public sector, but also for lawyers who have completed an internship in the public sector, especially in the judiciary system, as their qualification is also high.

The fact that remuneration is a significant factor, and in this regard, the public sector cannot compete with the private sector, was also accentuated by **experts** participating in the research. Though the workload may be larger in the private sector, where the workload is similar, remuneration is higher in the private sector. Therefore, competitive human resources choose the private sector.

⁴⁹ Research of Legal Market in Georgia. 2016. USAID and Promoting Rule of Law in Georgia Activity (EWMI-PROLoG)

In addition to remuneration, more opportunities for development in the private sector were accentuated by **students and graduates**. According to discussion participants, the public sector is less attractive from a financial point of view and at the same time, it does not offer the same opportunities for entry-level lawyers to develop as the private sector. An expert who also represents an employer from the NGO sector focused on development opportunities, and according to this expert, remuneration of an entry-level lawyer specifically in his/her organization "is not high and competitive", however, the main benefit obtained by entry-level lawyers is professional growth and development.

As for representatives of **universities** participating in the research, it was noted that graduates of private universities are mainly employed in the private sector, and for graduates of state universities, the main employer is the public sector. Several factors are named as the reason for this difference. According to one opinion, except for the interest of graduates in a specific area of law, higher remuneration and more opportunities for career planning and development in the public sector are significant factors causing graduates to prefer employment in this sector. On the other hand, it should also be considered that the public sector also gives advantages to graduates of state universities, and therefore, graduates of private universities are deprived of such opportunities to a certain extent. Another opinion is also noteworthy, according to which the public sector offers internships mostly to state universities, which in turn influences employment.

Generally, the index of employment by profession is higher for master's program graduates, and even higher for doctoral program graduates. As already mentioned, representatives of universities explain this by the fact that the knowledge and skills of M.A. degree holders are more in line with the employer's requirements.

Within the framework of the research, particular attention was not paid to whether local employers give certain advantages to graduates of universities located in the capital city compared to graduates of universities located in the regions. This was not defined as a dominant opinion by **students or graduates** from regions, but it was noted that the level of theoretical knowledge of graduates of universities located in the capital is higher. At the same time, it was expressly emphasized that in terms of the possession of practical and professional skills, which are essential for employers, a significant part of graduates face challenges. Therefore, the fact that it is not essentially important for employers whether the candidates graduated from universities in the capital city or from regional universities may be explained by this challenge.

"As I am graduating from Telavi University, I have a feeling of incompleteness. I think that it will be difficult for me to achieve a lot with this specific knowledge. Also, the Ethics Committee included other students, and I had the impression that I knew much less than students who were farther along in the university". **Man, Bachelor, Student State University, Telavi**

This may also be connected to the challenges associated with studies, such as a lack of optional subjects in regional universities. **Students and graduates** participating in the research explain this issue by a lack of human resources. Though the qualification of academic staff is identified as the least challenging in universities, the necessity of attracting more qualified staff was still noted in regions, and this is true both for local and invited academic staff (*"If a lecturer is invited from Tbilisi, one should bring a good lecturer instead of a bad one"*). At the same time, the development of competencies necessary for the preparation of presentation materials by students were also mentioned among the issues to be improved in the study process in regions.

Several issues were observed regarding facilitating the employment of students or graduates by universities. First of all, **universities ensure the provision of information about vacancies** to students. Also, *giving an individual recommendation* to students was assessed as significant. Personal contacts are also significant in this context, and based on them employers personally contact the university for finding a candidate for a specific vacancy. Additionally, inviting practicing lecturers to universities is assessed as significant. In addition

to the fact that they focus on practical examples in their courses, practicing lecturers also have the ability to evaluate the potential of students from an employer's position, which increases their likelihood of employment.

"A majority of good employers are our partners, and we always try to engage them in our study process, in auditoriums. They know everything, including changes to be made to the program, which does not require additional reminders".

Representative of private university, Tbilisi

"Perhaps there is less institutional cooperation. Personal relations are much more effective in Georgia. If you have good personal relations, institutional relations will also be good". **Representative of state university, Tbilisi**

In terms of facilitating employment, the existence of *career development services* is noteworthy, which is mentioned by representatives of all universities participating in the research (with the only difference being that the name of the service may be different). Activities of this service mainly imply providing information about vacancies and various internship opportunities to students. Cases in which trainings and public lectures were organized were also noted. The existence of such a practice is mentioned by universities both in the capital city and in regions. According to the general assessment of research participants, students as well as representatives of the faculty administration are mostly satisfied with the work of career support services and no need for improvement was identified in this regard. It was only mentioned that it is desirable that career support services ensure the collection of systematized information about the employment of graduates, which is not done in many universities.

"[Career Services] has been working very well for many years and one of the reasons for such high employment index is the result of the activities of the Career service". **Representative of private university, Tbilisi**

Students and graduates participating in the research made two assessments in connection with career support services. According to one assessment, the career support service or separate lecturers ensure that students are informed about internships or vacancies and give recommendations for students, which is assessed positively. In another case it was noted that career support services simply send information about vacancies, which cannot be considered a significant mechanism for supporting student employment. According to one argument, young people can find vacancies online on their own. Therefore, career support services should inform students about vacancies that are tailored to them and not to candidates with work experience.

"I can find a vacancy on my own. Internet is available for everybody today and we all know it well; we know where and what to look for. They will require work experience. The function of the Career Support Service is to offer vacancies tailored to students, instead of general vacancies that can be found on HR websites and are not useful". **Woman, Master's degree, private university, Tbilisi**

2.2. General Assessment of the Legal Education Environment

The fact that the legal education environment needs certain changes in general was emphasized by all target groups participating in the research. According to representatives of **universities** participating in the research, the development of the law program is a rather comprehensive process that implies the engagement of

various parties. First of all, it is natural that academic staff is actively engaged in the process. The engagement of students and graduates was also noted, which mainly refers to their participation in surveys, however a low response rate from the part of students and graduates is a challenge. At the same time, in some cases, the participation of external experts (both local and international) was noted at the stage of program development, which was assessed as significant.

It should be emphasized that employer engagement in the process of developing the law program for almost all universities participating in the research was noted. In this regard, it is noteworthy that in certain cases, employers are also *members of the academic staff*. Therefore, at the stage of program development, their opinions and recommendations as employers are taken into consideration. In addition, a *survey of employers* was named as a widespread practice. It should also be noted that in the opinion of some representatives of universities participating in the research, receiving feedback from employers is problematic and with a low response rate, it is challenging to generalize the data on employer needs. Despite this, surveys for the perception of general context are considered to be effective. In addition, universities obtain information about needs and requirements directly from employers. Therefore, high importance is attached to personal contacts and communication with employers.

"To tell you the truth, feedback is not good...Especially from public institutions, it takes months to receive a response. However, if a memorandum is signed, we have contact persons with such organizations and it is easy to communicate with them..." **Representative of state university, Tbilisi**

Along with difficulties receiving feedback from employers, according to the main discourse, employers who actively cooperate in the process of program development are rather proactive. In particular, research participants recalled a number of cases in which they developed/improved the law program and modified or added subjects as a result of the feedback received from employers both in Tbilisi and in regions. As it was mentioned, special focus is made on the practical and professional skills of students and graduates (*"All employers mentioned practice"*) and there are frequent attempts to strengthen the practical component, according to recommendations of employers. Adding various courses (for example, construction law, practical courses on private law, juvenile justice, the integration of practical components for drafting legal documents, etc.) to curricula was also noted.

When talking about the challenges related to the program development process, the issue of a *sector benchmark* was also identified. Though not dominant, according to one opinion, the existing sector benchmarks do not allow universities to develop the most efficient program considering that there are certain courses that must be included. It was mentioned that *academic freedom* is ensured, but it was highlighted that this mostly refers to the selection of literature and does not provide freedom in terms of program modification, which was assessed as critically important for the development of an efficient program. Another challenge is that according to current standards, the program must have a *specific number of lecturers holding a PhD on the academic team*, which makes it impossible to invite a desirable number of practicing lecturers and include them in the program. Thus, despite the fact that inviting practicing lecturers and therefore, offering courses oriented at practical cases is possible, this actually cannot be done due to the restrictions defined by the standards.

„As you are aware, the bachelor’s program was developed years ago. The sector benchmark has very high requirements, and fundamental changes cannot be made to it". **Representative of state university, Tbilisi**

In addition, the *practice of tailoring the program to the resources of the current academic team* and not vice versa – mobilizing the academic team based on program needs - was identified as another challenge of the

program (*"The program is tailored to lecturers and not vice versa"*). According to research participants, it is important that universities reject this practice and perform all commitments (*"When it is written in the university program that a practicing judge will deliver a course, this judge should deliver a course and no changes should be made..."*). Though research participants did not focus on the following, we can assume that if the academic team must be filled with lecturers holding PhDs, tailoring the program to existing resources may be caused by this factor, too.

Students and graduates participating in the research assesses the learning and the teaching process both in Tbilisi and in regions mostly positively. *Well-organized theoretical courses, highly qualified personnel and a well-organized learning process* were named as the main criteria for their assessment. Students and graduates assess the courses delivered by practicing lecturers most positively.

"I am satisfied that some of our lecturers were judges, advocates and they contributed to the lecture with their experience, (i.e. they provided specific cases...)"
Woman, Bachelor's degree, state university, Batumi

Despite the fact that claims regarding the qualification of university academic staff were expressed during the discussions least, it was noted that it is necessary to develop the qualifications of lecturers in some subjects. Lower qualification of the academic team was emphasized mostly by students and graduates from Batumi and Kutaisi. At the same time, the *existence of a real assessment system of lecturers and special monitoring of the courses of lecturers with low assessments* were considered significant for the improvement of the learning process. The necessity of revising the exam process was also noted. According to students and graduates, instead of focusing on *verbal* knowledge, it is necessary to focus on the development of analytical skills (*"the examination system is very bad. It checks ability to learn by heart and nothing else. For example, when preparing an issue, you just write, and nobody is interested in your opinion; it is copied from the book..."*). If we consider that employers name insufficient analytical skills of entry-level lawyers as a serious challenge, which was also identified as a challenge within the framework of the legal market research conducted in 2016, such changes to the exam format can be important for the development of the respective skills.

Professional development of university staff was also emphasized by **employers** participating in the research, particularly *in the public sector*. According to them, *it is necessary that universities take care of the professional development of their academic staff*. Permanent exchange of opinions between employers and universities regarding the needs of employers was also considered significant.

All groups participating in the research named the *theoretical components as the strength of learning*. The challenges related to the transfer of theoretical knowledge are less acute at universities, unlike the practical component, which was already mentioned and identified as a challenge in Tbilisi as well as in the regions. At the same time, the research also revealed that the development of practical skills is less problematic for the students and graduates of private universities.

The fact that practical teaching is most important in addition to theoretical teaching was also accentuated by representatives of **universities** participating in the research. As for organizing practical teaching, in this regard it was identified that the *practical component is integrated directly into courses* at universities participating in the research, which implies the existence of special cases, mock trials or other practical assignments. In addition, some universities have a legal clinic or offer students to undergo practical training in various organizations to gain experience beyond the university. In the latter case, the possibility of less control from the part of the university and the complexity of assessing the process were identified as challenges. In particular, cases were noted in which students undergoing practical training did not perform duties that would contribute to their development. Therefore, dissatisfaction of students with the practical component is related

to this issue, which is particularly acute, considering the fact that less time is dedicated to analyzing court practice within the framework of university courses during the learning process.

From this point of view, it should be emphasized that according to representatives of universities participating in the research, certain steps have been taken and the practical component is improving more and more. The latter is mainly expressed by the fact that *more practical components are integrated into* subjects in the form of special cases, mock trials or other practical assignments. At the same time, *signing memorandums with employers* and the existence of external practice in a more systematized form are another example of the improvement of the practical component. Moreover, the *engagement of practicing lecturers in the teaching process* was also assessed as a step forward. In addition, in several universities participating in the research, the *practical component is presented as a mandatory subject at the Bachelor's level*, despite the fact that the sector benchmark does not impose such an obligation on the program. At the same time, the existence of legal clinics in universities where students are engaged in the process of solving real problems is assessed particularly positively for the practical component of teaching, and at the same time, the practical component is supervised and assessed by the university.

It should be mentioned that the existence of legal clinics is a challenge for universities in terms of resources. One challenge is that not all law programs have a clinic. According to one opinion, the second challenge is related to the fact that in some cases, a legal clinic may not be able to accept all students willing to participate. For this reason, in one case a university has to select students for the clinic on the basis of an exam.

As already mentioned, the practical component is ensured by memorandums signed by the employer (both in the private and public sectors). The number of students to be accepted by the organization for practice during a semester or a year is preliminarily specified in the memorandum. According to one opinion, this is a kind of a guarantee that the student will be able to undertake the practice component. On the contrary, the above was negatively assessed within the framework of the research. According to the presented argument, it is difficult for an employer, especially from the private sector, to determine the number of students it will be able to accept in advance. Thus, provided that such a barrier exists, an employer, primarily from the private sector, may abstain from cooperation. All of this presents additional difficulty for the implementation of the practical component by law programs.

"The problem in connection with the practical component is that today the standard obliges us that when we will have a partner[organization], where students can go and undertake the practical component, it should be written in the signed memorandum how many students the partner organization will take annually. This is absolutely unimaginable. Imagine you have a law firm. How can you know in advance how many interns you will be able to accept each year? This may depend on many things. You actually oblige them to determine some fixed number, and they prefer not to sign an agreement with you at all". **Representative of private university, Tbilisi**

No particular difference was observed between Tbilisi and the regions in this regard within the framework of the research. The existence of a legal clinic is named by universities in both Tbilisi and regions in certain cases. However, it is evident that the clinic is not available in case of all surveyed universities, and it was mentioned, that resources will be increased in this direction. Despite the lack of significant differences, we can talk about slight differences between private and public universities in terms of the practical component. According to the general assessment, undergoing practical training depends on the interest in a specific field of studies selected by the student. In most cases, this is ensured by respective memorandums too, however, the following tendency is still observed: according to the general assessment, representatives of private universities cooperate mostly with the private sector and accordingly, their students undergo practical training in private companies. At the same time, in the regions, students undergo practical training and complete an

internship mostly in the public sector, not only because students of state universities are generally engaged in the state internship program, but also because the private sector is less represented in the regions.

"The Municipality City Hall and the Assembly assist us a lot in this direction [practice and internship]. They accept lawyers and we also send the public governance students there for practice". **Representative of state university, region**

As already mentioned, organizing the practice component whether in clinics or outside the university, is problematic in case there is a large number of students. This challenge was also highlighted by [students and graduates](#) participating in the research. In particular, *overcrowded auditoriums and a large number of students* were identified as challenges for the process of teaching in Tbilisi. For these reasons, according to the discussion participants, it is not possible to develop skills such as communication and maintaining one's position verbally, in a well-argued manner.

As already mentioned, according to the sector benchmark, the practice component is not mandatory for the bachelor's level of studies. Despite this, research participants mentioned cases in which universities made practice mandatory at the first level of studies by their own decision. The above issue and the fact that according to the new sector benchmark, it became necessary to focus more on practical teaching are positively assessed by [experts](#) participating in the research. However, they expressly emphasize that the connection of practice and theory remains a serious challenge. Working on the practical component takes place mostly in the final year of the bachelor's program, instead of allowing students to gain both theoretical and practical knowledge and skills simultaneously.

"It should be taught from the first year how to put knowledge into practice and how it should be used, and not just to have this [theoretical] knowledge. Our universities, especially state universities, grow scientists rather than practical specialists, (i.e. students know the subject, for example, they know the government law, but cannot draft an agreement)". **Expert**

2.3. Assessment of the Role of Professional Associations

Research participants note and recognize the role of the Georgian Bar Association and other professional associations in training entry-level lawyers for entering the profession. It was emphasized by all target groups that the existence of training programs for entering the profession is good, provided that these programs compensate for the deficiencies in university teaching.

It is also noteworthy that when talking about the role of professional associations, [employers](#) focused on the benefit of programs, while [experts](#) noted that the existence of training programs necessary for entering professions once again highlights deficiencies in university education and the poor readiness of graduates for the labor market. Employers from the public sector did not concentrate on this issue, while experts and employers from the private sector expressly noted that training courses should not be mandatory and should be considered an additional benefit for employers.

Experts emphasized that in the current situation, since membership in the Georgian Bar Association is a mandatory component for carrying out the activities of a lawyer, this is very important for presenting a candidate for the position of a lawyer.

"If I were an employer, this would be a kind of benefit to be a member of the Georgian bar Association and have the right to carry out the activities of a lawyer, but of course, this is not the main thing, this is one of the constituents". Expert

Unlike experts, employers from the [public sector](#) emphasized the importance of the programs of various professional associations. In connection with professional associations, experts focused on the Adaptation Program of the Georgian Bar Association, which includes a 3-month theoretical and a 9-month practical course. Offering theoretical modules that are not covered by university education (for example: client communication, organizing a bureau, communication/oratory art) was positively assessed. At the same time, the practical component of the program was mentioned which implies participation in significant activities together with mentor lawyers, such as attending trials, drafting contracts and other legal documents, etc. However, an absolutely different opinion was also expressed within the framework of the research, and the latter is more dominant. In particular, according to the assessment, the Adaptation Program is formal and does not contribute to personal growth. While the theoretical course often reiterates the knowledge obtained in university, the practical part is deficient and depends on the qualification and motivation of mentor lawyers as opposed to a systemic approach. In this context, it should be highlighted that according to research participants, it is necessary that the Georgian Bar Association ensures the process is monitored so that program participants can really gain knowledge and experience, and the program does not only have a formal nature.

"The Georgian Bar Association should activate control over the implementation of the internship program, where clear deficiencies are identified. It should not send interns to a specific lawyer or the law firm in the future". Expert

According to representatives of [universities](#), cooperation with various professional associations is important. However, for compensating the shortage related to the mismatch between market requirements and qualifications of graduates, the assessments of training programs for the profession are not homogenous. In the opinion of one part of the research participants, the existence of such a program represents a *formal barrier*. In particular, in the opinion of one research participant, we can consider that the state does not recognize a person's legal education and sees the need for additional training. At the same time, the theoretical and the practical components of the program were assessed as inefficient, considering the fact that graduates should already have received theoretical knowledge in university. Additionally, the practical components of the training program, considering the limited time and format, cannot provide for the development of relevant skills. On the contrary, the existence of such programs was assessed as positive for persons who *received legal education many years ago* and need to update their knowledge to a certain extent. It was also emphasized that undergoing a program for entering the profession should not be a mandatory precondition, and its necessity should be determined on the basis of respective tests.

According to another opinion, it is better to focus on improving the quality of teaching at universities, instead of spending additional time and financial resources on training programs. This opinion does not refer to all directions, though. For example, for notaries or judges, both the respective training and passing the exam were assessed as a mandatory precondition for entering the profession.

As for employers from the [private sector](#), it was highlighted that the main function of professional associations should imply the development of standards and not offering specific training modules for lawyers.

*"Why should there be special programs? I do not agree with this. If a student studies at a university for 4 years and pays a tuition fee, no matter whether it is paid by a student or by the state, it should be taught there". **Representative of state university, region***

*"All students should be thankful to the Bar Association, because they have an opportunity to obtain practical and other diverse knowledge in this association. Their qualifications and practical skills significantly differ from persons who have completed an internship in some associations". **Employer, representative of a private company, private sector***

*"It will be better if associations interfere less in specific issues. In my opinion, the function of the association should be the creation of standards and not the implementation of specific programs, etc. The association should create standards, and afterwards request that law firms develop their own implementation methods. I don't think that other activities will be efficient from their part". **Employer, representative of a law firm, private sector***

2.4. Internships

Cooperation of the **public sector** with universities is rather active and is expressed mainly in terms of internships. Courts and other public agencies have signed memorandums with universities. As it was outlined during the research, applications of state university graduates are dominant in the announced internship competitions. Based on this, employers from the public sector conclude that students of state universities are more motivated to complete an internship in public agencies than students of private universities.

Many employers from the **private sector** cooperate with institutions of higher education in various forms, including by means of memorandums, attending various events, participation in discussions, or other formats. However, a major part of representatives of the private sector cooperate with private or state universities mainly through invited practicing lecturers. In their case, relations with institutions of higher education develop due to the academic activities of company representatives and not due to the high interest and motivation of private companies. Moreover, it should be mentioned that for employers from the private sector, requests for internships are initiated by students and not by the companies. Private companies do not have standardized, formal internship programs, however, they are ready to recruit an entry-level lawyer at least once a year and make a contribution to his/her career advancement.

For both public and private organizations, interns mostly perform *assistance activities*. In private companies, interns perform activities under the supervision of direct managers and mentors. Frequently, interns are actively engaged in translation processes, too. Private companies do not have allocated technical resources and staff separately for interns. As already mentioned, one reason private companies abstain from recruiting interns and instead, prefer to hire entry-level lawyers as assistants, is because of confidentiality. As legal activities often require a high level of confidentiality, private companies see many risks when accepting interns. That's why they prefer to employ entry-level lawyers as assistants instead of recruiting interns.

*"Most of cases in the company are confidential and when a person is not an active lawyer and you recruit an intern, there are more risks and responsibility for the firm. Also, there may be no need to recruit an intern and we cannot recruit them for some "obligation". We always prefer to hire an assistant lawyer, which is the starting position in our firm and make him our full-fledged employee who will be requested to strictly maintain confidentiality. Then, responsibility issues will be realized more than in case of interns, i.e. if we need staff, we prefer to hire an employee rather than recruit an intern". **Employer, representative of a law firm, private sector***

Internship programs in the public sector are announced at least twice a year and their duration differs by agencies. Typically, internships last for at least 3 months and are not paid in most agencies. In the private sector, a majority of companies offer additional symbolic remuneration to interns. This was identified as one problematic issue in connection with internships during the discussions held with [students and graduates](#). Moreover, they noted that not the lack of internship opportunity, but its *unpaid nature* is the challenge. At the same time, another challenge is that young people have an impression that they are used as "assistants". There is also no employment guarantee, and the most problematic factor is that internship is not considered as work experience. Considering these factors, it turned out that many students and graduates abstain from completing an internship in agencies or companies where the internship is unpaid. Considering the limited number of paid internships, a large group of students and graduates remain without internship opportunities.

"A general approach is that they try to use students for assistance without remuneration. It is good for a student to expand his/her knowledge, but when a student applies his/her knowledge, he/she should receive remuneration". **Man, Master's degree, state university, Tbilisi**

Similar to students, representatives of *universities* also noted the unpaid nature of most of internships as a challenge. According to one assessment, symbolic remuneration would be an additional motivation for students, and at the same time would increase the number of human resources possessing relevant skills. A different opinion was expressed by employers from *the public sector*. They noted that the willingness and motivation of students to complete an internship is high, and the skills gained there are so important that less attention is paid to remuneration.

In addition to the challenge related to remuneration, the *formal nature* of internships and practical training was named as another complexity. Students and graduates expressly mentioned that internships are important and contribute to the development of skills that theoretical study do not sufficiently develop for an active lawyer. However, it was also emphasized that everything depends on which agency young people complete an internship with and who their mentor is. According to research participants, the plan and structure of the internship process – whether it will be oriented at the real application of knowledge in practice and the development of skills or will have only a formal nature - depends on the above. As it appeared, such practice is not rare. During the discussions, it was frequently noted that interns only "make copies" and in fact, the time allocated for the internship is spent in vain. This was more accentuated by discussion participants from regions than from Tbilisi.

"The point is that undergoing a practical training can be different ... I mean that when an organization offers us certain practical training, with a 2-month, 3-month or 6-month duration, it is very bad that an intern has to perform only absurd "unskilled" work during this internship (i.e. during the practice, participants do not have the resources to expand their knowledge, because they only perform unskilled work; to search through papers, find one specific paper and that's all...)" **Man, Bachelor's degree, state university, Akhaltsikhe**

During discussions of students and graduates, it was noted that internship opportunities mostly exist in the public sector. Moreover, it was mentioned that university career development services often send information about internships to students. Providing information about internships to students by specific lecturers and the inclusion of students in various internship programs not by the university in general but also *upon the recommendation of lecturers* is considered as a rather widespread practice. Despite receiving information from the university, during the discussions with the youth, it was noted that to complete an internship, it is important that a student is active and is not only focused on information shared by the university. Monitoring employment webpages and searching announcements were named as one of the most significant mechanisms for gathering information.

The fact that students are included in internship programs upon the recommendation of lecturers was noted by experts, too. Representatives of employers in the NGO sector noted that internship programs are mainly announced in organizations where the best candidates are selected out of a large group based on tests and interviews (*"last time we received more than 200 applications and it is a very difficult process. First, they take a writing test and then a personal interview is conducted. During the writing assignment, they are writing a special case and various tests"*). Moreover, they mentioned the practice of recruiting successful students as interns, as well as hiring them as employees (*"We've always been announcing internship competitions, and I had many students become employees"*).

According to representatives of **universities** participating in the research, student interest in internship programs is high. All students are not able to participate in programs. Thus, it is desirable to increase cooperation with organizations with the private sector in this regard. Representatives of **universities** also emphasized that offering the internship component is not an obligation for a university. Despite this, universities actively provide students with information about internship programs, as they consider it important to include students in the internship process.

The most widespread internship programs, according to a major part of the representatives of universities participating in the research, are announced and offered by the public sector. Unlike the public sector, almost nobody, especially representatives of state universities, recalled the existence of internship programs in the private sector. In this regard, the opinion of one research participant from a private university should be mentioned. According to his/her opinion, students of private universities are in a worse position, provided that internships are announced mostly in the public sector, and the sector also gives an advantage to students of state universities.

"There are more internship programs in the public sector, because first of all, there is a cheap labor component. The organization hires motivated young people and does not pay them. Young people are doing an internship, are very motivated, work a lot, and therefore they are used. The private sector is more careful when selecting staff and tries to have more experienced and good staff to trust them. As you are aware, business has a different vision. It prefers to pay more and receive quality and be insured. It may not rely on young personnel so much". **Representative of state university, Tbilisi**

Representatives of the public sector noted the low interest of private university students in public sector internships. Moreover, it was emphasized by employers that the state internship program does not allow employers to select a candidate for an internship. As the main requirement is the interest of the student in addition to good academic standing, we can assume that their lower engagement in the state internship program is related to low motivation of students or graduates of private universities, rather than giving advantages to students or graduates of any university by the public sector. In this context, the opinion expressed by an employer from the public sector is noteworthy, according to which only the good academic standing and desire of the student should not be enough for participation in the state internship program. The author of the opinion considers that it is important that the agency where the student will complete the internship has the opportunity to select a future intern on the basis of interview. According to the main argument, considering the fact that the public sector considers interns as future employees and spends resources, it is important that agencies have the opportunity to select candidates who meet the requirements necessary for specific activities.

Despite these challenges, research participants from all target groups agree that the existence of internship programs is important. *Private employers* emphasized the benefits of internships, such as the opportunity to undergo professional and general training, the opportunity to gather and share knowledge, as well as to expand practical experience. At the same time, the most important thing is the consideration of the internship

as a precondition for working in a private company. As for *public organizations*, though an internship is not always a precondition for employment in the same organization as it is not considered work experience, when hiring an employee, attention is paid to whether the candidates have done an internship with a specific agency. This is particularly important for courts. According to research participants, students who have completed an internship and practice in the court are actually ready for independent work.

It should be accentuated that employers from the public sector assess the non-recognition of internship as work experience as a serious challenge, since it is a significant barrier to the employment of trained human resources. According to them, in this regard, making changes at the legislative level will be significant. Instead of the need for trained human resources to gather work experience in various organizations, it is better to have a mechanism that recognizes internships as work experience and that will not create an additional barrier.

“The people trained by us find another job, may gain some experience there and then may want to return to court again. They participate in competitions, and if this is considered work experience, it will be very good, because they know what to do, as they have undergone an internship. It is good for them and for us too, because they are already familiar with the work and it is not a problem for us to employ these people”.

Employer, representative of judiciary system, public sector

2.5. Mechanisms to Better Train Entry-level Lawyers for the Legal Market

As it was seen as a result of the research, the mismatch between market requirements and the qualifications of graduates is related to their professional and soft skills. Here, employers and experts mention challenges in connection with skills such as:

- Writing skills (both academic and legal);
- Analytical thinking;
- Presentation skills;
- Communication;
- Ability to work under tight deadlines; and
- Ability to work independently and as a part of a team.

At the same time, challenges are observed in connection with *knowledge of the English language* and the necessity to improve curricula in this direction, especially in regional universities.

Experts also identified challenges existing in terms of *research skills*. It should be mentioned that experts who are employers from NGOs and international organizations particularly focus on deficiencies existing in terms of these skills. *A lack of motivation* and *less orientation at development* were named as main challenges.

For **universities**, as well as for students and graduates, special emphasis is made on the challenges of transitioning theoretical knowledge into practice. This implies the need for skills such as analytical thinking, communication or other soft skills. In this regard, the research identified issues related to school education. According to research participants, the challenges existing in the context of analytical thinking put the need for a unified and large-scale approach on the agenda, because this problem exists not only in legal education.

All target segments participating in the research agree that for better training of entry-level lawyers for the labor market and for the elimination of the problem of a skills mismatch, it is necessary to work in the following three directions that overlap:

- (1) Improvement of the practical component of law program curricula at universities;
- (2) Offering more internship programs to students; and
- (3) Engagement of employers.

To improve the practical component of the program curricula, research participants consider it important to *integrate a practical course into law programs*. Programs should also have activities such as workshops, presentations (recent, interesting practices; research results), meetings with various actors, mock trials, and contests.

According to **experts** participating in the research, the following is important for the above:

- Active cooperation with practicing lecturers;
- Development of academic writing, legal writing and research skills;
- Focusing on the discussion of practical cases;
- Increasing access to various resources, and the existence of libraries with permanently renewable literature; and
- Translation of learning materials or other literature into Georgian.

The views of experts are shared by representatives of **universities**, too. According to them, for better training of entry-level lawyers for the labor market, it is necessary to *concentrate on practice*, as well as offer more *exchange programs* to students and more importantly, *attract qualified and practicing academic staff* to universities. In addition, the need of *internationalization* was noted, especially in regions, which implies inviting foreign specialists or increasing the competencies of local staff in cooperation with foreign universities. As for students, their engagement in additional activities such as mock trials and various training courses was considered significant. The significance of familiarization with additional literature and the importance of continuously updating knowledge in general was noted (*"learning to the end of life is a very significant principle"*).

The fact that the existence of *more internship opportunities* is important was also noted within the framework of the research. However, here research participants talk about certain challenges, especially with respect to the private sector. Considering the fact that the majority of internship programs are in the public sector, according to the common discourse, it is important that the private sector is also actively engaged in this process. It was also emphasized that considering the peculiarities of the private sector and the fact that it does not have similar obligations, it is necessary to *create additional interest and increase motivation* to make the private sector interested in offering internship programs to students. According to one opinion, research participants from the academic community consider the imposition of tax benefits by the state as the most efficient mechanism for raising the interest of the private sector. However, it was also accentuated that this type of benefit will not be interesting for everybody, as working with interns requires significant intellectual, time and material resources (*"aside from time, there are also direct material expenses, a place, and equipment is needed"*). In addition, one more assessment is noteworthy, which similar to employers from the private sector, highlights the importance of confidentiality. Despite the fact that people work in companies as interns without remuneration, the benefit received by the private sector from recruiting interns can be assessed as lower than the resources spent during the internship process.

"Employers in the private sector are mainly oriented at benefits, i.e. profit, and if they cannot see these benefits in internship, they will avoid the extra burden and extra organizational problems ... Tax benefits are the best for them ..." **Representative of state university, region**

All target groups consider *employer engagement* in the process of training entry-level lawyers as the most significant. First of all, employers cooperate with universities by sharing experiences, encouraging students

and offering more internship opportunities. It is possible to encourage students, for example, by identifying winners in a mock trial and offering them the opportunity to undergo an internship in specific agencies or companies without competition. At the same time, it should be noted that offering more internship opportunities is accentuated by employers from the public sector. Employers from the private sector also consider that it is important to share experience. At the same time, they consider their engagement in academic activities to be significant. They also mention their own role in terms of setting correct priorities and creating a healthy, competitive environment.

"Employers should create a healthy environment and set the correct priorities. For example, if a candidate has received education abroad, this means nothing until he/she reveals and shows us his/her skills. In such case, knowledge of English may be an advantage, but he/she may not know the principles of local law". **Employer, representative of a private company, private sector**

In the context of cooperation with employers, *representatives of universities* emphasized that employer engagement should be expressed by participation in the process of drafting study programs as well as offering various trainings and sharing knowledge and experience. Organizing meetings with students and sharing practical cases are considered as one efficient mechanism. At the same time, as already mentioned, more engagement in the practice component or internship programs from the part of employers was assessed as particularly significant. In turn, employers emphasized that universities should be more active in increasing internship opportunities, as well as cooperate with employers in various formats (public lectures, meetings, trainings, etc.).

In addition to the above, for better training of entry-level lawyers for the labor market, it was considered significant for universities to train graduates of narrow specialization. This was particularly accentuated by public sector employers. According to them, the field of law is very broad, so it is necessary to concentrate on a specific specialization at the first level of studies in university.

Also, according to one opinion expressed during the research, it is important for lawyers to have general knowledge of related fields to be able to see the wider picture. However, in addition to the knowledge and skills offered to students by the university, the importance of independent work on self-improvement was emphasized by experts. According to experts, entry-level lawyers can independently work on improving their knowledge and skills; search for information, review literature or recent research, and contact network organizations to gain access to desirable literature. They can also enroll in various courses, participate in conferences and international competitions, participate in exchange programs, and join mock trial processes in university. Experts believe these mechanisms will assist entry-level lawyers in obtaining and improving their respective qualification.

2.6. Assessment of the Role of the State

To improve the legal market, research participants discussed the role of the state. According to employers from the **private sector**, the state should not interfere in terms of improving the efficiency of the legal market. According to the main discourse, the relations between the private sector and universities are to be decided by these two actors (private sector - university). The role of the state as seen by employers from the private sector refers to a much more global issue and implies improving the general education environment. By this, research participants imply fundamental changes in terms of *education policy*, which should be focused on training qualified human resources oriented at market needs. This is a comprehensive issue and does not imply only changing the environment for the legal market.

The vision of **experts** is nearly the same. According to them, engagement of the state in the process can be limited to making the existence of orientation for professional programs in schools' compulsory, which ensures preliminary knowledge and readiness for a certain profession. The rest, according to experts, depends on mutual cooperation between the employer and the educational institution.

"Education policy is in the hands of the state and therefore, we see the role of the state here. However, probably, the state should not interfere in the conditions to be offered to students by specific universities. This should be regulated by the market. If we look at the level of the state in Georgia, there are far more lawyers than people with other technical knowledge. Maybe the state should take care of that, so that not everybody is a lawyer in Georgia and we have some engineers, too". **Employer, representative of a law firm, private sector**

"A council of deans or something should be established. I don't know, maybe it exists but permanent contact should be maintained between employer and these educational institutions, and it should be measured often. Their opinions should be heard about the expectations of the employer, what they want, what is requested by the market and what is requested by the university". **Expert**

The fact that offering orientation for professional programs is important from school age was accentuated by **students and graduates** participating in the research. According to them, information about various professions, their peculiarities, as well as possible areas of employment and market requirements should be delivered to schoolchildren in a timely manner so that they can make an informed decision. Students associate the desire to change their profession in the final years of study to the choice made by a lack of such information. Though discussion participants consider staying in jurisprudence and continuing their activities with various specializations or directions, the intention to change professions was noted during the discussions. According to the main argument, in the final years of studies, students discovered that being a lawyer is not their passion and they prefer to do another job. It should also be emphasized that this challenge is not related directly to the university study program or the learning process. Offering career services to young people from school age is considered a significant mechanism of avoiding such challenges.

"In order not to choose the wrong profession, it is important to provide information about professions to all pupils at school, at least in their final classes, and tell them about areas of study, where they can work with these professions, what they can do ..." **Woman, Master's degree, state university, Akhaltsikhe**

"Before a 17-18-year old person becomes a student and goes to university, the state should do something and there should be awareness— you should know where you are going to study and you should have a general idea. We want one thing and then appear in an absolutely another reality and we don't know what we want ...", **Man, Bachelor's degree, state university, Kutaisi**

Representatives of **universities** focused on *education policy*. According to research participants, it is important to have more freedom in the process of drafting educational programs, and that's where they see the role of the state. Freedom when making a list of courses or issues is mainly implied here. According to research participants, it is important that the latter is defined by universities.

Though this was not accentuated in the context of academic freedom, when talking about challenges related to the process of program development, representatives of universities noted that the request of a fixed number of representatives of the academic team holding a PhD makes the process complicated. As already mentioned, according to representatives of universities, this hinders the invitation of practicing lecturers. Therefore, more orientation of courses on theory and less on practice are connected to this challenge. In terms of education policy, respective changes in this direction may be significant.

Moreover, the problem of funding was also noted when talking about the role of the state with representatives of universities. According to research participants, due to the challenges existing in this regard, they "have" to choose between quality and quantity ("*...there is a funding problem because it spoils everything. It costs 2250 GEL and kindergarten education costs 5000. Even if we write only this in the research, there will be the perfect conclusion that this is a huge problem and naturally, you are oriented at increasing the number, you will have more students, the quality will be worsened, and no time will be left for other things. When this is improved, you will be more oriented [on quality]*").

In the context of funding, it was also noted that engagement of the state may be increased by increasing the number of grant programs, which will be focused on funding the publication of textbooks oriented at the development of practical skills.

In addition, the responsibility of the state lies in improving *school education* in general, which is a global problem, rather than an issue relevant only to the law sector. It was emphasized that schools cannot train young people to think critically, and that the enrollment of students with relatively poor academic standing in the bachelor's program complicates the focus on a high level of study at the university, particularly provided that "*national exams become easier from year to year*". Therefore, according to representatives of universities participating in the research, the elimination of significant deficiencies in the education system in general, including school education, would also positively influence the quality of legal education.

*"As the time passes, the level of university entrants becomes worse. Some bachelors confuse letters and write LCL instead of LLC...
Aside from the principles of law, they have no basic knowledge and received a school diploma without knowledge" - Representative of a state university, region*

The fact that in order to improve the environment, it is necessary to take specific steps before beginning the learning process at university and setting a higher passing score for the entrance exams (so that "weak young people" cannot become students) was also emphasized by students and graduates participating in the research. According to them, a higher passing score for the entrance exams will serve as a filter to ensure the selection of future students in a manner that will lead to a much higher standard of teaching at universities.

Summary

According to the research results, the main demand on the legal labor market is for entry-level lawyers who possess practical and professional skills, various soft skills, and the ability to think critically. At the same time, knowledge of English language is less important for the public sector, but is important for the private sector. These are the main requirements that young lawyers have the most difficulty meeting, however, the main challenge is related to the transition of theoretical knowledge into practice. The research also showed that entry-level lawyers have fewer challenges in terms of theoretical knowledge, while in terms of practical and professional skills the challenges are serious both in Tbilisi and in the regions. The situation is relatively better for graduates of private universities, however, their share on the market is so low, that this fact does not change the general picture.

At the same time, the research also showed that a master's degree is not essential, however, according to representatives of universities, as well as students and graduates, this is a significant factor., not because M.A. degree holders possess different knowledge or skills. The point is that with a large number of lawyers, holding a master's degree may serve as a kind of a filter during the candidate selection process. M.A. degree holders also have more time to participate in internship programs or other activities, increasing the likelihood that they have developed practical and professional skills.

The opportunity to complete an internship is higher in the public sector, unlike the private sector where advantage is given to hiring lawyers as employees instead of as interns. This can be explained by several reasons. First, private companies focus on confidentiality and declare that risks related to maintaining confidentiality are lower for employees than interns. At the same time, considering that significant intellectual, time or material resources should be spent on an internship, non-specialized private employers (firms other than law firms) prefer to recruit specialists with qualifications in their area of activities as interns rather than as hired lawyers. Unlike the private sector, a number of internship programs are announced in the public sector, and the number of interns varies between agencies, however, work with several cohorts per year is implied. Research participants from all target segments agree that for better training of entry-level lawyers for the labor market and for the elimination of the problem of a skills mismatch, it is necessary to improve the practical component of law program curricula at universities, as well as offer more internship programs to students and in general, engage employers more actively. Employers also consider that their active participation in the development and improvement of university programs is important, and they expect more activity and cooperation from universities.

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