

Azerbaijan

National Statement of Commitment

The COVID-19 pandemic has made it necessary to revise the socio-economic priorities all over the world, and each country has determined new strategies to cope with the situation.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, education systems have confronted with a number of significant challenges. Implementation of more flexible and optimal content and teaching strategies in the education system, expansion of initiatives related to promotion of online platforms have become more significant. Azerbaijan has successfully implemented a strategy to tackle the negative impact of the pandemic on education: more than 8,000 tele-lessons were recorded and Virtual School Project was set up on the Microsoft Teams platform to ensure the continuity of education and minimize educational losses.

Identifying key strategic transformations to reshape education for the 21st century and accelerate progress towards common educational goals

As stated in the "Socio-economic Development Strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2022-2026," approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan on July 22, 2022, the provision of fair, quality and inclusive education as well as support for lifelong learning opportunities for all is the critical element of transformation.

Focus on instilling digital competencies from school age, providing learners with new skills, teaching of innovative content in educational institutions are, among others, cornerstones of this transformation.

Ensuring strengthened and more sustainable public funding of education

In recent years, allocation for education has significantly increased, and in 2021 only, spending on education accounted for 3.3% of GDP.

By 2030, it is envisaged to:

- gradually increase the ratio of education financing expenses to the gross domestic product and the expenses per learner;
- establish multi-source funding mechanisms;
- apply per capita financing models at all levels of education;
- implement the system of competitive and targeted funding of scientific research;
- develop a competency and result-based wage and incentive system for teachers.

Raising ambitions for national education goals and benchmarks

Effective measures have been taken to increase the coverage of **preschool education** in the country. School preparation groups were created for 5-year-old children to facilitate the transition to primary education. In addition, within the "Development of community-based preschool education" project, 500 community-based preschool education groups operate. While the coverage of the preschool education program in 2013 constituted 24% of all 5-year-old kids, currently this indicator is almost 90% across the country.

By 2030, the indicators of preschool education will be improved across the country, the content of preschool education will be updated, the professionalism of the pedagogical staff and management staff will be increased, and a quality assurance system for preschool education will be created.

By 2030, the scope of STEAM-based education will be expanded, 10,000 classes with 280,000 students will be covered by STEAM-based education.

During the last years, Azerbaijan has achieved progress in international education assessments. It is planned to achieve 422 points of the average PISA score for 2028.

In the field of **vocational education and training** cooperation with several international donor organizations is underway with the aim of developing a system that prepares qualified professionals based on educational programs in accordance with the requirements of the labor market. By 2030, the number of students enrolled in vocational education institutions will be increased by 11,000 people.

In the field of **higher education**, a number of state programs are implemented to meet the need for high qualified professionals and increase the opportunities for Azerbaijani youth to study abroad. In addition, in order to ensure access to education for students from low-income groups, the "Student Loan Fund" was established in 2021. In 2021-2022 academic year, 7000 students received education loans.

By 2030, it is planned to:

- reflect the requirements of the labor market in the content of higher education;
- increase the quality and international competitiveness of higher education;
- increase the number of articles published in international impact factor journals by 40%;
- ensure 3 higher education institutions of Azerbaijan being represented in the top 800 in the world university rankings.

As a result, the number of students enrolled in higher education will increase by 20,000 people.

Educational infrastructure in the liberated territories

As a result of Armenia's aggression against Azerbaijan, 20 percent of the territory was occupied and more than 1 million people were forced to flee from their homes and became internally displaced persons. All infrastructure in the occupied territories, including 288 pre-school educational institutions, 799 secondary schools, 11 vocational educational institutions, 9 colleges, 1 higher education institution and branches of 2 higher education institutions were completely destroyed, and the right to education was violated.

After the liberation of the occupied territories by Azerbaijan in 2020, school construction is under way in Shusha, Aghdam, Fizuli and Jabrayil. A new school was built and will be in operation on September 15, 2022 in Aghali village of Zangilan district as to the "Smart village" concept. It is planned to construct vocational, secondary and higher education institutions in the liberated territories.