

# VET in Europe: Cyprus 2014



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# Cyprus

## VET in Europe – Country report

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2014

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*This country report is part of a series of reports on vocational education and training produced for each EU Member State plus Norway and Iceland by members of ReferNet, a network established by Cedefop (European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training).*

*The opinions expressed in this report are not necessarily those of Cedefop.*

*Please note that ReferNet reports are based on a common structure and are available at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/vet-in-europe-country-reports>*

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# Foreword

This report was initiated by Cedefop, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, and has been prepared by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus, HRDA, which is the nominated National Coordinator of the European network ReferNet in Cyprus.

Cedefop established ReferNet as the European network of reference and expertise in vocational education and training. The aim of this network is to meet the growing demand for information on policies and developments in the area of vocational education and training in the European Union.

The report has been prepared as part of a series of reports on vocational education and training in European Union countries, Iceland and Norway. The reports follow a common structure, which has been provided in the form of guidelines by Cedefop. The reports are updated annually and reports from past years are available to the public through Cedefop's VET-Bib. They aim to provide stakeholders in Europe with a description of the national VET systems in Europe to feed into research work, policy initiatives, peer reviews, best practices and projects at national and European levels.

This report provides the readers with a concise, basic insight into the state of the vocational education and training system of Cyprus. It situates the Cyprus education and training system within a broad political, social, economic, and labour market framework.

ReferNet comprises 30 members, known as ReferNet national partners, from EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. ReferNet national partners are key organisations involved in VET in the country they represent. The HRDA, as the National Coordinator of ReferNet in Cyprus, wishes to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of the other members of the Cyprus consortium in the preparation of this report.



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# Cyprus



Capital: Nicosia

Government: Presidential Republic

Geographical position: North-eastern Mediterranean Sea

Area: 9 251 Km<sup>2</sup>

Population estimate: 858 000 in 2013

GDP per capita: EUR 20 378 in 2013

**Main dates:**

1960: Gained independence from the United Kingdom

1974: Turkey invaded the island occupying until today 37% of its territory

2004: Joined the EU

2008: Adopted the Euro

# 1. EXTERNAL FACTORS INFLUENCING VET

## 1.1 Political and socioeconomic background

Cyprus became an independent sovereign republic in 1960 with a presidential system of government. The 1960 constitution institutionalised communal dualism between the Greek and Turkish communities on the island in all spheres of government activity. Turkey occupied the northern part of the island in 1974<sup>1</sup>.

Executive power is vested in the President of the Republic. The President exercises executive power through a Council of Ministers (Υπουργικό Συμβούλιο) appointed by him. The House of Representatives (Βουλή των Αντιπροσώπων) exercises legislative authority. Cyprus is divided into six administrative districts. Each district has a district officer, who is the local representative of the central government.

The Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development (Γενική Διεύθυνση Ευρωπαϊκών Προγραμμάτων Συντονισμού και Ανάπτυξης), is responsible for handling issues related to European Funds and Programmes, coordination of government work as well as development and horizontal issues such as research, technological development and innovation, lifelong learning and the "Europe 2020" Strategy.

The Ministry of Education and Culture, MoEC (Υπουργείο Παιδείας και Πολιτισμού) has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of educational policy, while the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, MLWSI (Υπουργείο Εργασίας, Πρόνοιας και Κοινωνικών Ασφαλίσεων) has overall responsibility for labour and social policy.

The Human Resource Development Authority, HRDA (Αρχή Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού) plays an important role in vocational training. The HRDA is a semi-government organisation whose mission is to create the necessary prerequisites for the planned and systematic training and development of the human resources of Cyprus.

The Cyprus economy is open, free-market, flexible and predominantly service-based. Since gaining independence from the United Kingdom in 1960, Cyprus has experienced strong economic growth, full employment conditions with high employment and relatively low unemployment.

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<sup>1</sup>All the information and data contained in the report refer to the government-controlled area.

The Cypriot economy was adversely affected by the world economic crisis and contracted by 1,9% in 2009, mainly due to the poor performance of the tourism, construction and manufacturing sectors. The persistent economic downturn continued in the period 2010-11, with moderate growth rates and in the period 2012-13 with contractions of 2,4% and 5,4% respectively. This resulted in further deterioration in the labour market, adversely affecting employment growth and increasing unemployment to exceptionally high levels. It is noted that in April 2013, the Government of Cyprus signed an Economic Adjustment Programme with the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The objective of the programme is to address the financial, fiscal and structural challenges and return the economy to sustainable growth. The reviews of the programme state that it remains on track.

## 1.2 Population

Cyprus is an island located in the Eastern Mediterranean, covering a total area of 9 251 square kilometres. According to the Statistical Service of Cyprus (Στατιστική Υπηρεσία Κύπρου), the population of the area not occupied by Turkey (the government-controlled area) was 858 000 (end-2013) and it has decreased by around 0,9% from the previous year. The Turkish-Cypriot population in the occupied area was estimated by the Statistical Service of Cyprus to be 90 600 (end-2012), representing 9,5% of the total population in 2012.

The low fertility rate (1,30 in 2013) increases the old-age dependency ratio and leads to the ageing of the population. The population over 60 years of age, as shown in Table 1, is forecast to reach 24,0% in 2025 compared with 19,3% in 2013.

**Table 1: Age-specific demographic trends (end of year population estimates)**

Age group	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2025
0-24	38,1	35,3	32,8	32,1	31,4	30,5	27,7
25-59	46,5	47,9	49,2	49,7	50,0	50,2	48,3
60+	15,4	16,7	18,0	18,2	18,7	19,3	24,0
<b>Total (000s)</b>	697,5	744,0	839,8	862,0	865,9	858,0	933,0

Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, Eurostat

Table 2 presents the old-age dependency ratio projections (number of persons aged 65 and over expressed as a percentage of the number of persons aged between 15 and 64). This ratio is expected to increase from 18,8% in 2013 to 42,5% in 2080, which is still lower than the average EU ratio which is projected to be 51,0%.

**Table 2: Projected old-age dependency ratio**

	2013	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080
<b>EU28</b>	27,5	31,8	39,1	45,9	49,4	50,2	49,4	51,0
<b>Cyprus</b>	18,8	24,0	31,8	36,5	42,3	46,6	43,1	42,5

Source: Eurostat

The number of migrants (EU nationals and third country nationals), as shown in Table 3, has more than doubled since 2000, due to the policy to employ foreigners in sectors facing labour shortages and the influx of EU nationals after Cyprus joined the EU in 2004. However, as a consequence of the economic crisis the percentage of migrants in the population decreased from 18,2% in 2011 to 17,8% in 2013. According to Labour Force Survey, LFS (Έρευνα Εργατικού Δυναμικού) data, in 2013 foreign workers, including EU nationals, represented 21,1% of total employment. The government has implemented an immigration strategy, which aims to integrate legal immigrants into the society (see section 2.2.3.5).

**Table 3: Migrants (EU nationals, third countries' nationals)**

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
<b>EU nationals</b>	54 786	62 485	70 973	85 269	94 250	103 990	94 571
<b>Third country nationals</b>	38 578	45 007	46 605	52 613	54 907	51 517	52 461
<b>Total Migrants</b>	93 364	107 492	117 578	137 882	149 157	155 507	147 032
<b>% of Population</b>	12,4	14,2	15,2	17,3	18,2	18,7	17,8

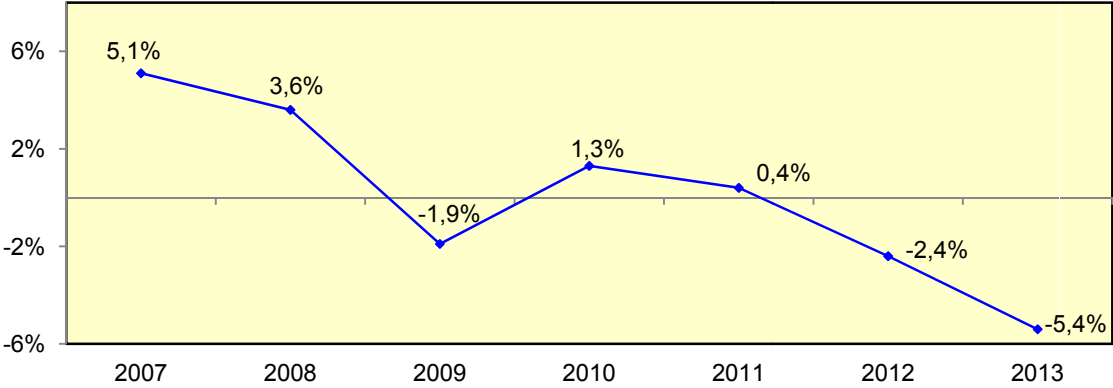
Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS

## 1.3 Economy

The Cypriot economy grew by an average of 3,8% a year during the period 2000-08, prior to the outbreak of the world economic crisis. However, as shown in Figure 1, during the period

2009-13 the Cypriot economy experienced the negative effects of the economic crisis. Particularly, during the last two years the economy contracted significantly (2,4% in 2012 and 5,4% in 2013).

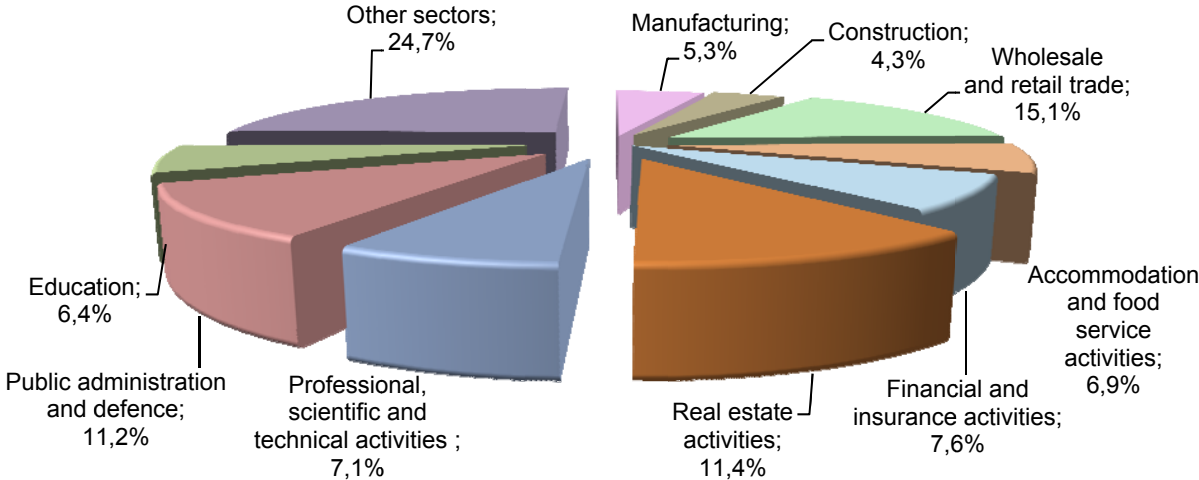
**Figure 1: GDP growth**



Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus

Figure 2 presents the distribution of GDP by sector in 2013. The Cypriot economy is mainly service-based and the tertiary sector amounts to about 86% of GDP, while the secondary sector amounts to about 12% of GDP. More specifically, the five largest sectors in 2013 were the wholesale and retail trade (15,1% of GDP), real estate activities (11,4% of GDP), public administration and defence (11,2% of GDP), financial and insurance activities (7,6% of GDP) and professional, scientific and technical activities (7,1% of GDP).

**Figure 2: GDP by sector in 2013**



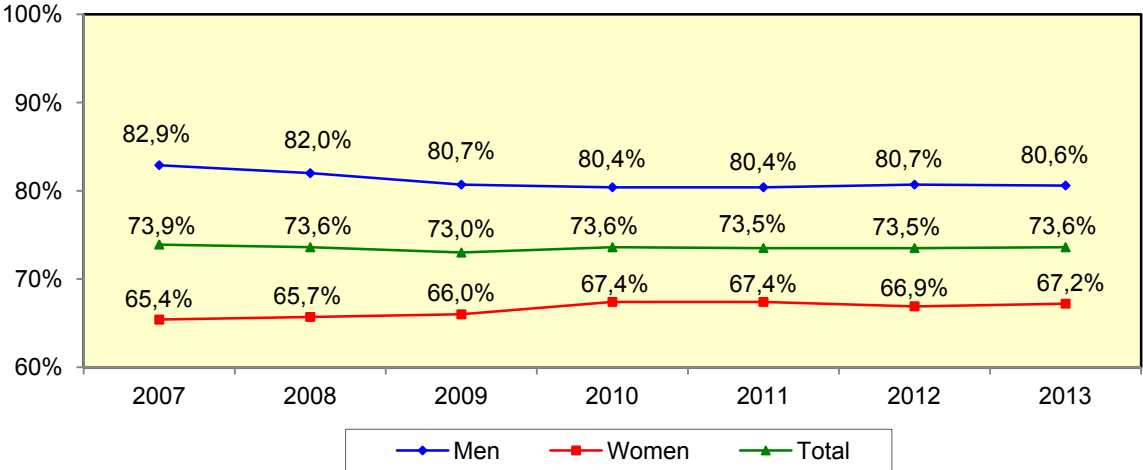
Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus

Most enterprises are very small. According to social insurance data for 2013, 93,8% of enterprises employed 1-9 persons, while 5,2% employed 10-49 persons. Only 1,0% employed over 50 persons.

### 1.4 Labour market

Increasing labour market participation is a central challenge for Cyprus, given the ageing population. This is being addressed mainly by increasing women’s participation, since men’s participation is already quite high. The activity rate for the population 15-64 years increased during the period 2000-10, mainly driven by an increase in the activity rate of women as a result of the introduction of specific policy measures while, as presented in Figure 3, it has remained rather stable thereafter (73,6% in 2013).

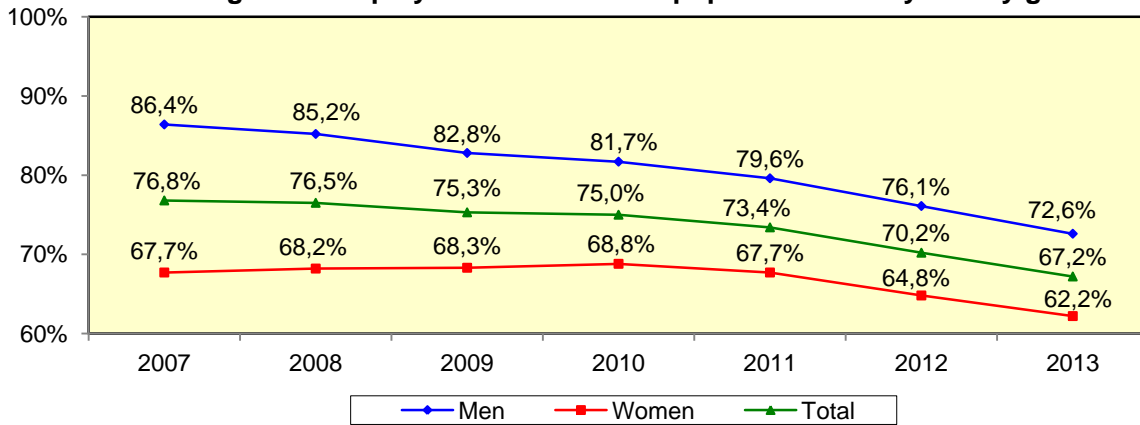
**Figure 3: Activity rates for the population 15-64 years by gender**



Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS

The employment rate of the population 20-64 years has also shown a stable increase during the period 2000-10, again as a result of the increase of the employment rate of females, while it has decreased considerably during the years 2010-13 as a consequence of the economic crisis. As presented in Figure 4, the employment rate fell from 70,2% in 2012 to 67,2% in 2013, deviating considerably from the national target of 75%-77%. Furthermore, for the first time, the employment rate is lower than the EU average (68,4% in 2013).

**Figure 4: Employment rates for the population 20-64 years by gender**



Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS

Tables 4 and 5 show employment rates by age group and by highest level of education attained respectively. The tables show that employment rates in Cyprus are highest for the age group 25-49 (76,6% in 2013) and increase with educational attainment.

**Table 4: Employment rates by age group**

(%)

Age group	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
15-24	37,4	38,0	34,8	33,8	30,1	28,1	23,5
25-49	84,8	84,6	83,2	83,3	82,1	79,0	76,6
50-64	64,1	63,7	63,7	63,8	62,9	59,6	56,9

**Table 5: Employment rates for the population 20-64 years by educational attainment**

(%)

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
ISCED 0-2	66,4	64,1	64,9	66,8	65,1	57,8	54,9
ISCED 3-4	75,8	76,1	74,3	73,2	71,0	68,7	64,6
ISCED 5-6	86,5	86,5	84,5	82,7	81,2	78,8	76,3
Total	76,8	76,5	75,3	75,0	73,4	70,2	67,2

ISCED 0-2: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education

ISCED 3-4: Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

ISCED 5-6: Tertiary education

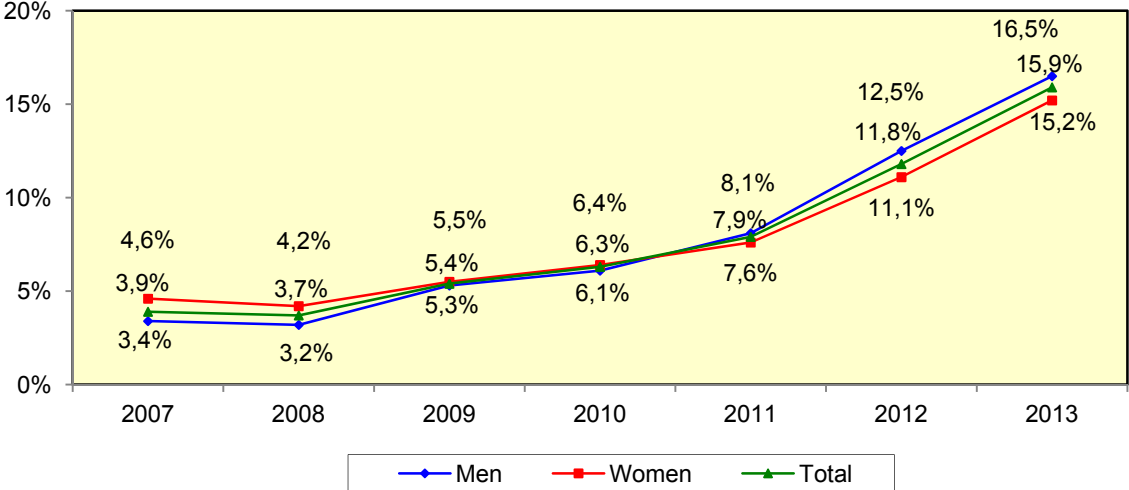
Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS



The unemployment rate increased to unprecedented levels, reaching 15,9% in 2013, from 3,7% in 2008 and it is higher than the EU average (10,8% in 2013). Over the recent years, training provision for the unemployed has become vitally important for combating the effects of the economic crisis and resources have been redirected towards the prevention and reduction of unemployment (see section 2.2.2).

The unemployment rate in Cyprus had been higher for women than for men. However, during the last few years, the trend has reversed and the unemployment rate for men (16,5% in 2013) is higher than the rate for women (15,9% in 2013), as shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5: Unemployment rates for the population 15+ by gender**



Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS

From Table 6, which presents unemployment rates by age group, it can be seen that the unemployment rate for young people under 25 increased from 10,2% in 2007 to 38,9% in 2013, higher than the EU average which was 23,5% in 2013. As a result, increased emphasis has been placed in introducing measures combating youth unemployment, most of which are included under the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan. Targeted training provision is offered to the unemployed (see 2.3.2) and incentives to increase their participation in VET have been increased.

**Table 6: Unemployment rates by age group***(%)*

Age group	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
15-24	10,2	9,0	13,8	16,6	22,4	27,7	38,9
25-54	3,4	3,2	4,6	5,4	6,8	10,5	13,9
55-64	3,1	3,2	4,3	4,7	4,9	9,7	12,4
65+	0,0	0,0	0,6	0,2	0,6	1,1	5,4
15+	3,9	3,7	5,4	6,3	7,9	11,8	15,9

Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS

From Table 7, which shows unemployment rates by highest level of education attained, it can be seen that unemployment rates usually decrease with higher educational attainment. Unemployment rates for 2013 range between 13,2% for persons with tertiary education to 19,2% for persons with pre-primary, primary or lower secondary education.

**Table 7: Unemployment rates for the population 15+ by educational attainment***(%)*

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
ISCED 0-2	4,7	4,8	6,0	7,0	7,4	13,2	19,2
ISCED 3-4	3,9	3,6	5,7	6,4	8,8	12,7	17,2
ISCED 5-6	3,4	3,0	4,6	5,7	7,2	10,2	13,2
Total	3,9	3,7	5,4	6,3	7,9	11,8	15,9

ISCED 0-2: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education

ISCED 3-4: Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

ISCED 5-6: Tertiary education

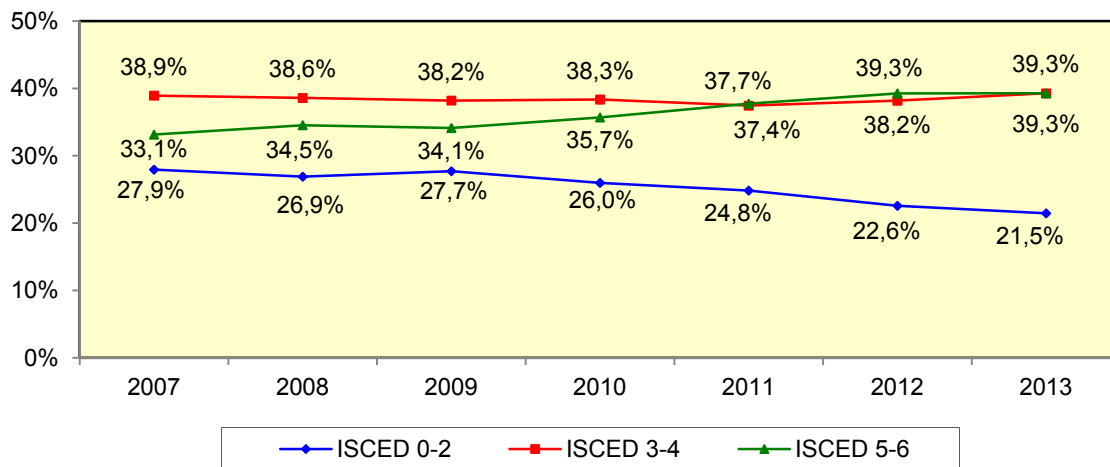
Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS

## 1.5 Educational attainment

Human resources in Cyprus are characterised by a high level of educational attainment. As shown in Figure 6, the percentage of population 25-64 years with tertiary education was 39,3% in 2013, significantly above the corresponding EU average (28,5% in 2013).

There is a strong cultural trend among the Cypriot population in favour of general secondary education followed by higher education. In 2011/12, nearly 76% of the students that completed upper secondary education sought places in higher education institutions. Family plays a significant role in encouraging and supporting young people to continue to higher education. Despite the economic crisis, the tendency of Cypriots to continue their studies in tertiary education remains high. However, there are indications that due to the crisis less people choose tertiary level studies, which, with the exception of public universities, is costly. The number of places in Cyprus is rather limited as there are only three public and five private universities, so a large proportion of young people continuing to higher education enrol in education institutions abroad (39% in 2012).

**Figure 6: Educational attainment of the population 25-64 years**



ISCED 0-2: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education

ISCED 3-4: Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education

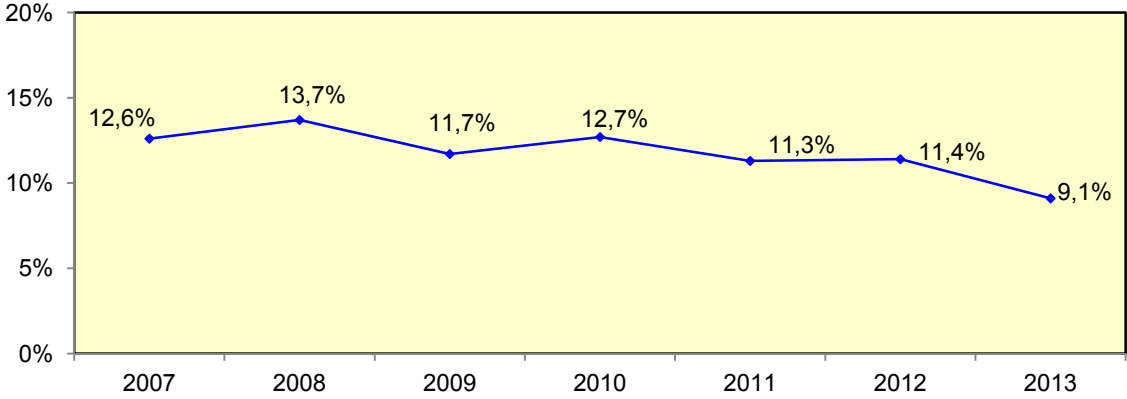
ISCED 5-6: Tertiary education

*Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS*

The percentage of early school leavers has decreased from 12,6% in 2007 to 9,1% in 2013, as shown in Figure 7, satisfying the national target of 10% and being lower than the EU average of 12,0% in 2013. This has mainly been the result of measures focusing on restructuring the education system and modernising the curricula, upgrading vocational

education and adopting measures for facilitating the integration of students at risk, especially migrants in the school system. However, Cypriot students abroad and soldiers 18-20 years are not included in the LFS sample, while temporary foreign workers usually of low educational attainment are included. If students abroad, soldiers and foreign workers are all taken into account this percentage would be even lower.

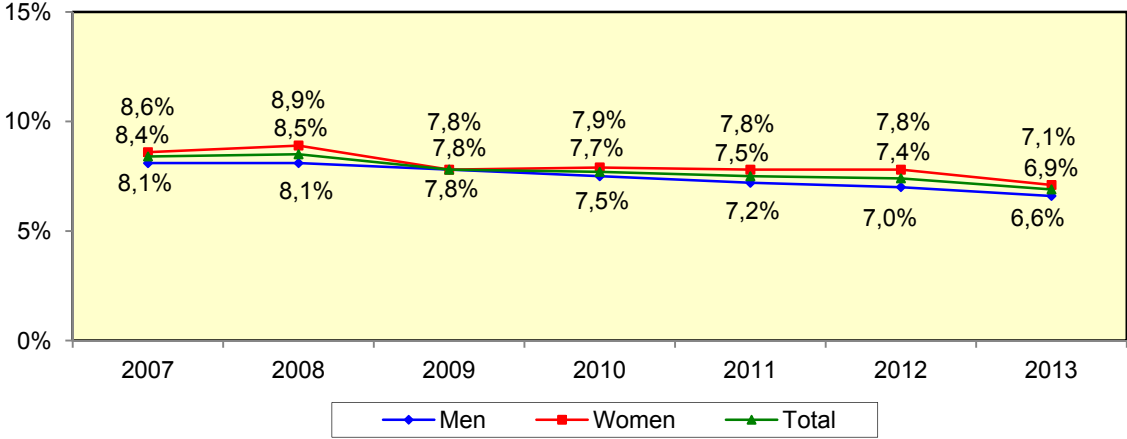
**Figure 7: Percentage of the population 18-24 years with at most lower secondary education and not in education or training**



Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS

According to the LFS, the percentage of the population 25-64 years participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey was 6,9% in 2013, which is lower than the EU average which was 10,5% in 2013 and the national target for 2020 which is 12%. The participation of women, as shown in Figure 8, was generally higher than that of men (exception in 2009).

**Figure 8: Lifelong Learning - adult participation in education and training (population 25-64 years) by gender**



Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus, LFS

## 2. PROVIDING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN A LIFELONG LEARNING PERSPECTIVE

Education developed significantly after 1960, when Cyprus gained its independence and the Cyprus economy posted spectacular growth. The need for an adequately trained workforce in all sectors of the economy led educational institutions at all levels to increase in number and scope. Adult education was also promoted through various initiatives and institutional arrangements, and the establishment and operation of the HRDA provided significant impetus to the training of the employed and the unemployed.

Education in Cyprus is available from the pre-primary to the postgraduate levels. It is compulsory at the pre-primary, primary (grades one to six), and lower secondary (grades seven to nine) levels, until the student reaches the age of 15.

In upper secondary education, which lasts for three years (grades 10 to 12) there are two types of schools: the unified lyceum (ενιαίο λύκειο) and technical schools (τεχνικές σχολές). Post-secondary VET is provided, as of the academic year 2012-13, at the post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training (Μεταλυκειακά ινστιτούτα επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης). Tertiary education, including postgraduate courses, is provided at three public and five private universities, and several private colleges and institutions provide courses at the post-secondary non-university level.

Public expenditure on education increased during the period 2000-2005, but, as a result of the economic crisis, during the last four years it decreased from 8,0% of the GDP in 2009 to 7,1% in 2012, as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8: Expenditure on education**

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012*
<b>Public expenditure on education (% on GDP)</b>	7,1	7,1	7,5	8,0	8,0	7,9	7,1
<b>Total expenditure on education (% on GDP)</b>	9,2	9,3	9,6	10,5	10,6	10,6	9,7

\* Provisional. Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus

The earliest level at which Vocational Education and Training (VET) is available, is the upper secondary level at the technical schools, including the evening technical schools (εσπερινές τεχνικές σχολές). VET is also available through the apprenticeship system (σύστημα μαθητείας), which accepts students who leave formal education between grades eight and ten.

Post-secondary VET is provided, as of the academic year 2012-13, at the post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training.

VET at tertiary level is provided at four public institutes/colleges, which come under the jurisdiction of various ministries and at several private colleges.

Furthermore, in Cyprus vocational training is extensively available for the employed, the unemployed, other groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market and adults in general through a mixture of public and private provision such as colleges, training institutions, consultancy firms and enterprises.

VET is an important and prominent part of the Cyprus lifelong learning strategy, CyLLS (Εθνική στρατηγική δια βίου μάθησης) for 2014-20. The main actions designed to achieve the objectives of the strategy include, amongst others, the development of the National Qualifications Framework and the promotion of the System of Vocational Qualifications, the enhancement of lifelong guidance and counselling services, the improvement of the attractiveness of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and the modernisation of curricula. Furthermore, the Strategy includes actions for training the unemployed in order to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes in sectors with a potential for development, job placements of the unemployed to acquire work experience in enterprises / organisations and enhancement of the New Modern Apprenticeship.

## **2.1. Chart of the national education and training system**

The chart in Figure 9 presents diagrammatically the education and training system of Cyprus with a particular focus in VET.



## **2.2. Government-regulated VET provision**

Government-regulated VET provision refers to defined VET qualifications, such as diplomas, degrees, certificates, and to the public or private training pathways leading to them within the education and training system. All activities relating to the provision of VET are legitimised by decisions of the Council of Ministers and/or Acts passed by the House of Representatives.

### **2.2.1 Apprenticeship**

The apprenticeship system has been a two-year initial VET programme providing practical and theoretical training to young people who had not successfully completed their secondary compulsory education and wished to be trained and employed in technical occupations. This was terminated with the graduation of the last intake of students in June 2013 and was replaced by the new modern apprenticeship, NMA (νέα σύγχρονη μαθητεία) which started its operation in the school year 2012-2013.

In 2007, the Council of Ministers approved the proposal for the establishment of the NMA, which provides an alternative pathway for education, training and development for young people who withdraw from the formal education system and is geared towards meeting the needs of the labour market. The NMA embraces young people between 14 and 21 years of age at two apprenticeship levels (preparatory and core). Participation to the NMA is not part of compulsory education and it is free of charge.

The NMA is designed to target two distinct groups of students:

- (a) students who have not completed compulsory education (third grade of gymnasium) can enroll at the preparatory apprenticeship level. The preparatory apprenticeship has been introduced in order to provide support to early school leavers between the ages of 14 and 16, by gradually introducing them to the labour market, giving them a taste of VET, and helping them choose a specialisation when they proceed to the core level of apprenticeship;
- (b) students who have either successfully completed compulsory education or successfully completed preparatory apprenticeship can enroll at the core apprenticeship level.



Preparatory apprenticeship does not involve employment but constitutes an alternative form of education and training for students between the ages of 14 and 16 who have the opportunity through this one-year programme to develop their numeracy and literacy skills, to become acquainted with the world of work, to explore their talents and abilities through creative arts, and to participate in workshops related to technical occupations. Such workshops include carpentry, plumbing, mechanics and the curricula is developed by the trainers. Participation to these workshops is part of the programme and does not lead to individual qualifications. Students also receive individual counseling from psychologists according to their needs. Students who complete preparatory apprenticeship (EQF level 2) may proceed to the core apprenticeship level or, if they wish and provided they succeed in a special set of exams, they may re-enter the formal education system.

Core apprenticeship lasts three years and involves both training at school and practical training in enterprises. Apprentices sign a contract with their employer which mainly regulates their terms of employment. During the first two years, apprentices follow practical training in enterprises for three days per week where they are remunerated for their work, and they receive theoretical training for two days a week where they attend classes at technical schools. In their third and final year they only attend school one day week and work the remaining four days.

New curricula have been developed for car mechanics, plumbing/central heating, welding/metal constructions, bakery/confectionery, carpentry/furniture making, electrical installations, and home appliances technicians by trainers chosen through a competitive process. The curricula have been developed for the theoretical subjects of the core apprenticeship, such as Greek, Maths, Physics, English, Information Technology, and technical specialisations. The curricula of technical specialisations incorporate the standards of vocational qualifications developed by the HRDA. The content of training in enterprises is based on a training plan developed by the school trainer and the enterprise trainer working together and agreed by the employer. The enterprise training of the apprentice is monitored by regular visits of the school trainer to the enterprise and a monthly report prepared and submitted to the Apprenticeship Officer, a staff member of the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC).

Upon successful completion of the core apprenticeship, graduates may enroll, through a process to be specified, at the post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training operated by the MoEC.

Assessment of apprentices for the theoretical training they receive in technical schools follows the rules of the education system with regular tests and final examinations. During the practical training, apprentices are assessed by their supervisors and their grades appear on the apprenticeship certificate (ISCED 2, EQF level 3) issued by the CPC to apprentices who successfully complete the course. Assessment of preparatory apprenticeship students is a combination of their attendance and conduct record throughout the year, their individual project work throughout the year and their performance at final exams in Greek language and mathematics.

The NMA project is co-funded by the ESF and the government of Cyprus and it will become fully operational by 2015. It is being implemented by the CPC in cooperation with the MoEC. The CPC also implements (with ESF co-funding) a subsidy scheme for employers who recruit apprentices, which subsidises them with a percentage (10%) of the salary of the in-company trainer in charge of the apprentice, and also compensates employers for wages paid to apprentices while attending classes at technical schools. The scheme also covers social insurance contributions of the employer for the apprentice.

In the school year 2012-2013, 87 students enrolled at the preparatory level of the NMA. Of those enrolled, 46 successfully graduated from the programme and were entitled to enroll at the core apprenticeship level or take the special examinations for re-entry to the formal education system. There is no real progression route for students that fail, but in exceptional cases they may be allowed to repeat the year. In the school year 2013-2014, 60 students enrolled in preparatory apprenticeship and 35 students enrolled in the first year of the apprenticeship, all following the specialisation of car mechanics. From the group of 13 students that enrolled in year 2012-2013, 9 are now in their second year. Table 9 shows the number of students enrolled in Apprenticeship, by year.

**Table 9: Number of students enrolled in Apprenticeship by year**

	2012-2013	2013-2014
<b>Preparatory</b>	87	60
<b>Core 1<sup>st</sup> Year</b>	13	35
<b>Core 2<sup>nd</sup> Year</b>	-	9

*Source: Cyprus Productivity Centre*

The apprenticeship certificate allows access to several regulated occupations (e.g. building contractor and electrician), provided that all other requirements of the relevant legislation are observed.

The Apprenticeship Board (Συμβούλιο Μαθητείας), which supervises the operation of the apprenticeship system, has a tripartite character whereas the design of the NMA is the outcome of long and detailed deliberations with the social partners.

## **2.2.2 VET at upper secondary level**

VET at upper secondary level is provided at technical schools for students aged 15-18 and evening technical schools, as well as in the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools for adults (απογευματινά και βραδινά τμήματα των τεχνικών σχολών). Secondary technical and vocational education, STVE (Μέση τεχνική και επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση) provides a broad range of initial training programmes to gymnasium leavers and adults.

### *2.2.2.1. Formal mainstream upper secondary initial technical and vocational education*

Formal upper secondary technical and vocational education programmes are offered free of charge in both the theoretical direction (θεωρητική κατεύθυνση) and the practical direction (πρακτική κατεύθυνση). The duration of studies is three years for both directions. The first year of studies is common for all branches in both directions and students select a specialisation offered in the branch of their choice in the second and third year of their studies.

The theoretical direction and the first and second years of the practical direction are completely school-based and combine general education subjects with technological and workshop subjects. The third year of studies in the practical direction combines a school-based environment with a real workplace, with final-year students placed in enterprises for one day a week, where they follow a practical training programme.

The programmes provided include various branches in both the theoretical and practical directions. Examples include mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, civil engineering and architecture, hotel and catering, woodcraft and furniture making, clothing and applied arts.

The criteria used to assess students include class participation, workshop and laboratory work, written assignments, projects, tests and a final examination.

School leaving certificates (απολυτήρια) are awarded upon successful completion of either direction and are equivalent to those of secondary general education schools. Therefore, STVE school leavers are eligible for admission to universities and other tertiary education institutions in Cyprus and abroad. Qualifications (ISCED 35, EQF level 4) provide access to regulated occupations, provided that all other requirements of the relevant legislation are met.

Teachers must hold an appropriate diploma in their subject area or a degree relevant to the subject they will teach. Pre-service training is an obligatory requirement for all new appointments to the Educational Service. In-service continuing training consists of compulsory training programmes which are conducted twice a year and cover all eleven fields of study offered at Technical Schools and voluntary training programmes which are conducted in the afternoon.

Curriculum development is a collective effort involving qualified STVE staff, experts from other training institutions, STVE advisory committee members, trade unions and employers' representatives. The STVE curriculum is subject to approval by the Council of Ministers before being implemented.

The restructuring of STVE is underway within the context of the education reform with the direct involvement and cooperation of VET stakeholders. The quality and efficiency of VET has been improved through the further development of the infrastructure of technical schools and the introduction of modern technology in VET curricula.

The new curricula, which are expected to be developed by 2015, will enhance the attractiveness of VET and match specialisations offered with the current labour market needs, thus providing students with an opportunity to acquire the key competences they need to make them more competitive in the labour market. Related to this is the inclusion of entrepreneurship components in the curricula. The reformed curricula will be oriented towards learning outcomes and will be based on Learning Modules and ECVET units.

The 2012/13 enrolments in STVE include students in the theoretical and practical directions as well as evening classes. As shown in Table 10, 13,6%, were students in technical schools, as most students prefer to follow general education due to the prejudice against technical occupations. This is one of the lowest percentages among European countries. However, the economic crisis that Cyprus has been facing, together with the efforts to increase VET

attractiveness, have contributed to a significant increase in the number of students who opt to enroll in Technical Schools and the percentage of students attending Technical Schools is estimated to have increased to 15,1% in 2013/14. In addition, there have been important improvements regarding the performance of students enrolling in Technical Schools. Due to the significant increase in the number of students who opt to attend Technical Schools and the limited places which are currently available, a student evaluation system was introduced for the enrolments of the 2014-2015 school year.

**Table 10: Students in upper secondary education by programme orientation (general/vocational)**

(%)

	2006 / 2007	2007 / 2008	2008 / 2009	2009 / 2010	2010 / 2011	2011 / 2012	2012 / 2013	2013 / 2014*
<b>Upper secondary education pre-vocational and vocational programmes</b>	13,0	12,6	12,8	13,2	12,7	13,2	13,6	15,1
<b>Upper secondary education general programmes</b>	87,0	87,4	87,2	86,8	87,3	86,8	86,4	84,9

\* Estimate. Source: Statistical Service of Cyprus

The total public expenditure for STVE was estimated to be EUR 59,4 million in 2012 (Statistical Service of Cyprus). The share of secondary technical and vocational public expenditure was estimated to be 4,7% of total public expenditure on education in 2012.

#### 2.2.2.2. Second chance formal initial vocational education

##### **Evening technical schools**

The MoEC also offers formal education programmes through the two evening technical schools, one in Nicosia and another in Limassol, to further promote participation in STVE and support the integration of school dropouts in the workplace and in society in general. The programmes are equivalent to the STVE programmes (ISCED 35, EQF level 4) that are offered in mainstream technical schools. The evening technical schools offer courses in the

fields of mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, civil engineering/architecture and hotel and catering. However, they have the capacity to offer courses covering all the fields of study that are offered by mainstream Technical Schools, provided that at least eight students are interested.

The duration of studies varies from one to four years, depending on the educational background of the students. Attendance is free of charge and leads to the acquisition of a leaving certificate (απολυτήριο), which has the same legal status as the one awarded by the unified lyceum (ενιαίο λύκειο) and mainstream technical schools. Adult graduates then have the opportunity to compete for a place in higher education in Cyprus or abroad or enter the labour market.

In 2012, expenditure for the evening secondary general and the evening technical schools amounted to EUR 8,8 million (Statistical Service of Cyprus), including teacher salaries.

### **Three-year programmes of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools**

The three-year programmes are provided in the context of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools, which are administered by the Department of STVE (Διεύθυνση μέσης τεχνικής και επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης) of the MoEC. They offer a variety of theoretical and practical courses such as plumbing, electric installations, engineering, computers, car mechanics, cooking and graphic design. The objective of these programmes is to offer, at limited fees, formal initial education and training to employed or unemployed adults, to respond more efficiently to the contemporary demands of the labour market and achieve re-integration in the labour market in areas where there is shortage of skilled workers. Successful completion of the three-year programmes leads to the acquisition of a leaving certificate equivalent to that awarded to graduates of upper secondary general or technical and vocational education, as far as the technical component is concerned. This means that individuals who already hold an upper secondary education leaving certificate are given an opportunity to obtain a second leaving certificate in their chosen field of study.

In 2012, expenditure for the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools amounted to EUR 548 134 (Statistical Service of Cyprus), including teacher salaries.

### **2.2.3 VET at post-secondary level**

Before 2012, VET at post-secondary level had not been available in Cyprus. The MoEC in cooperation with the MLWSI and other stakeholders has established, within the context of the education reform, post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training, co-financed by the ESF, which offer further technical specialisation and started their operation in the academic year 2012-13.

Students who attend these Institutes, especially those who wish to enter the labour market directly, have the opportunity to acquire or complete their technical and vocational education (ISCED 45, EQF level 5). These Institutes provide opportunities to Cypriot citizens, especially young people, to acquire, improve, or upgrade their qualifications and skills so that they are better prepared for the labour market.

Post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training operate at existing technical schools, as public education institutions, within the remit and under the supervision of the MoEC. The duration of the programmes offered is two years, on a 5-day basis. Attendance is free of charge and it includes workplace learning, which is a compulsory component of the curricula and lasts for six weeks per academic year. Suitable enterprises and industrial units are selected on the basis that they have the capacity to implement the learners' work plan, providing them with the necessary skills and competences required for their chosen programme of study. During workplace learning, the VET trainer who is responsible for each programme of study, monitors the learners' progress. Learners are not remunerated for their work. In addition, practical training is provided in workshops on the premises of the technical schools.

The programmes offered have been defined following consultation with the stakeholders participating in the Advisory Body, based on their experience and knowledge of labour market needs. Maintaining the curricula's flexibility and relevance to the labour market is an ongoing process, since they are systematically evaluated, revised and updated on an annual basis, taking into account the views and suggestions of all the relevant social partners and stakeholders, as well as current labour market needs determined after research regarding employment prospects in Cyprus.

The programmes currently offered are the following:

- (a) Management of Natural Gas Industrial and Residential Installations;
- (b) Gas Handling Pipes Welding and Industrial Structures;
- (c) Specialist Baker and Confectioner;
- (d) Computer Networks and Communications;
- (e) Electrical and Industrial Refrigeration Installations;
- (f) Installation and Maintenance of Photovoltaic Systems and Wind Turbines;
- (g) Industrial and Residential Automation;
- (h) Organic Vegetable Production.
- (i) Maintenance and Energy Efficiency Upgrading of Buildings.
- (j) Marine Purchasing and Supply Management.

During the academic year 2012-2013, 196 students attended the programmes offered. During the academic year 2013-2014, the total number of students attending the first and second year of the programmes reached 400. A student placement system with selection criteria (favouring in particular young unemployed individuals) is applied, since the demand is very high and the number of applicants exceeds the number of the available places.

In 2013, expenditure for the post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training amounted to EUR 139 599 (Statistical Service of Cyprus), including teacher salaries.

#### **2.2.4 VET at tertiary level**

VET at tertiary level is provided by four public institutions of tertiary education, which come under the jurisdiction of various ministries and by 40 private institutions of tertiary education.

According to Table 10, less than one-third of the persons in higher education (26,6%) participate in tertiary education programmes that are practically oriented and occupation-specific, while most participate in programmes that are largely theory based. However, large numbers of Cypriot students are enrolled in educational institutions abroad.

During 2012/13, the total number of tertiary education students in Cyprus was 31 965, while 23 597 of them were Cypriot students and 8 368 were foreign students.



**Table 11: Participation rates in higher education by programme orientation – 2012/2013**

	<b>Total ISCED 5-8</b>	<b>ISCED 5</b>		<b>ISCED 6</b>		<b>ISCED 7</b>		<b>ISCED 8</b>	
	Number	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Cyprus</b>	31 965	3 250	10,2	19 990	62,5	7 896	24,7	829	2,6

*ISCED-2011: International Standard Classification of Education, UNESCO*

Programmes at ISCED 5 (EQF 5): Short-cycle tertiary education programmes (2 to 3 years duration) that are often designed to provide participants with professional knowledge, skills and competencies. They are practically-based, occupationally-specific and prepare students to enter the labour market. They may also provide a pathway to other tertiary education programmes.

Programmes at ISCED 6 (EQF 6): Bachelor's or equivalent education programmes that are often designed to provide participants with intermediate academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a first degree. They are typically theoretically-oriented.

Programmes at ISCED 7 (EQF 7): Master's or equivalent educational programmes (Long First Degrees) that are often designed to provide participants with advanced academic and/or professional knowledge, skills and competencies, leading to a second degree or equivalent qualification. They are typically theoretically-oriented.

Programmes at ISCED 8 (EQF 8): Doctoral educational programmes, leading to an advanced research qualification.

*Source: Eurostat, Statistical Service of Cyprus*

#### 2.2.4.1. *Public institutions of tertiary education*

There are four public institutions of tertiary education (non-university level) offering programmes in forestry, culinary arts and other vocations. These institutions operate under a relevant ministry or organisation as follows:

- (a) the Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus (Ανώτερο Ξενοδοχειακό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου) operates under the aegis of the MLWSI;
- (b) the Forestry College (Δασικό Κολέγιο) operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment (Υπουργείο Γεωργίας, Φυσικών Πόρων και Περιβάλλοντος);
- (c) the Tourist Guides School (operates whenever there is a need) operates under the aegis of the Cyprus Tourist Organisation (Κυπριακός Οργανισμός Τουρισμού);
- (d) the Cyprus Police Academy (Αστυνομική Υπηρεσία Κύπρου) operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, MJPO (Υπουργείο Δικαιοσύνης και Δημόσιας Τάξης).

The basic admission requirement for public tertiary education institutions is completion of 12 years of primary and secondary education, as certificated by the leaving certificate issued by the lyceum or technical school. The selection of candidates is based on the applicants' success in the common final examinations and in some cases an oral interview is also required.

Cypriot and EU students studying in public institutions of tertiary education pay no fees. In some institutions, all students receive free accommodation and board. International students are required to pay fees to attend these institutions. The student tuition fees range from about EUR 3 700 to EUR 4 500 per year. All fees are usually paid directly to the institution.

Studies are organised in diploma programmes, which include different specialisations. The competent ministry of each institution has to approve each programme but to a large extent the institutions themselves design the curricula. The diploma programmes consist of basic professional studies and practical training.

Students are assessed on the basis of semester, and often mid-term examinations. Workshop and laboratory assignments, project work and industrial training are also assessed and taken

into consideration when assigning final marks. In addition to the course modules, participants may be expected to prepare and submit a final project.

Successful completion of the programme, which lasts one to three years, leads to a diploma or higher diploma awarded by the institution (EQF level 5).

Depending on the job specifications, teachers must hold an appropriate diploma in their subject area or a degree relevant to the subject they will teach; work experience in their area of specialisation is also required. Pre-service training is usually not a requirement. In-service, continuing training of VET teachers in public institutions is common practice but on a voluntary basis.

#### *2.2.4.2. Private institutions of tertiary education*

Private institutions of tertiary education offer a wide range of academic as well as vocational programmes of studies at various levels (one- or two- year diploma, three-year higher diploma, four-year bachelor degree and one- or two-year master's degree) in secretarial studies, aesthetics, food preparation, music, arts and drama, graphic design, hotel and tourism management, computer science, social sciences, education, business studies and engineering. The language of instruction is English for most programmes of studies offered, which attracts scholars and students from other countries. Over and above these programmes, more than 10 private institutions of tertiary education offer academic programmes of studies based on validation or franchising agreements with more than 10 European universities and following the provisions of the competent Law of the Republic of Cyprus.

The Law which was enacted in 1996 regulates the establishment and operation of all private institutions of tertiary education which must be registered with the MoEC. Each institution sets its own internal regulations, student entry requirements and evaluation, qualifications awarded, tuition fees and teachers' qualifications, which are published in an annual prospectus. According to the Law, both internal regulations and prospectus of the institutions must be approved by the MoEC.

Teachers in private institutions of tertiary education usually hold the qualification of the level of the subjects they are teaching or higher. Previous work and teaching experience and pre-service training are not usually required although institutions of tertiary education will consider

experience and training as an advantage when hiring teachers. In-service, continuing training of teachers in private colleges is voluntary, but in some of the institutions, there are funds available for supporting the upgrading of teachers' knowledge and skills.

## **2.3. Other forms of training**

Other forms of training refer to VET programmes which do not lead to a formal qualification but to professional development and updating of specific skills and competences and which are addressed to adults, the employed, the unemployed and other groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market.

### **2.3.1. Training for the employed**

The main bodies promoting training provision for the employed are the HRDA, the MoEC, the MLWSI and other ministries and public institutions. Moreover, private institutions such as colleges, training institutions, consultancy firms and enterprises offer a variety of courses for adults, including many that are not subsidised by the HRDA.

#### *2.3.1.1. Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus*

The provision of training programmes addressed to employed persons has been encouraged and strengthened primarily through the approval and subsequent subsidisation of training activities by the HRDA, a semi-government organisation whose source of income comes from the Human Resource Development levy paid by all companies. Civil servants and the self-employed are excluded from the HRDA's sphere of competence. The HRDA is governed by a 13-strong Board of Governors, comprising representatives of government, employers and trade unions.

As far as the training provision is concerned, the HRDA subsidises a variety of training activities, implemented by public and private institutions and enterprises, which are addressed mainly to the employed:

- (a) Single-company initial and continuing training programmes in Cyprus provide in-company training to employees, implemented by internal or external trainers, to allow them to meet

the specific needs of the enterprise for the effective utilisation of its personnel. During 2013, 3 129 programmes were subsidised with 32 424 participants and total expenditure of EUR 4 688 023;

- (b) Single-company continuing training programmes abroad train and develop employees of an enterprise, in order to transfer from abroad specialised knowledge and skills in areas related to the introduction of innovation, new technology and technical know-how. During 2013, 180 programmes were subsidised with 180 participants and total expenditure of EUR 352 310;
- (c) Standard multi-company continuing training programmes provide continuing training for meeting the training needs of employees through their participation in training programmes implemented by public or private training institutions and organisations. During 2013, 795 programmes were subsidised with 9 267 participants and total expenditure of EUR 2 547 294;
- (d) High-priority multi-company continuing training programmes provide continuing training to meet the training needs of the employees through participation in training programmes implemented by public or private training institutions and organisations in specific high-priority issues. During 2013, 43 programmes were subsidised with 878 participants and total expenditure of EUR 1 371 885.

#### *2.3.1.2. Ministry of Education and Culture*

The MoEC offers continuing education and training to the employed through the one-year programmes of afternoon and evening classes of technical schools and it is responsible for the training of secondary education teachers.

In the context of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools, the Department of STVE of the MoEC offers, at limited fees, one-year programmes which lead to the award of a certificate. A variety of courses are offered such as plumbing, electric installations, engineering, computers, car mechanics, cooking and graphic design. These programmes are designed to offer continuing education and training to the employed, enrich their knowledge and skills and thus place them in a position to respond more efficiently to the contemporary demands of the labour market. No qualifications are required to attend these programmes and the teaching methods used vary, depending on the programme.

#### *2.3.1.3. Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance*

The MLWSI is responsible for the CPC, which offers short modular programmes for employees in technical occupations and management and the Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus, which offers upgrading courses for employees in the hotel and restaurant sector.

#### *2.3.1.4. Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment*

Training farmers, foresters and forestry graduates is a competency of the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment (MANRE). Whilst the training of foresters and forestry graduates is a responsibility of the Department of Forests, the training of farmers falls mostly into the responsibilities of the Department of Agriculture. The majority of the training courses are provided by the Agricultural Educational Centres (KEGE) of the Department of Agriculture. During 2013, 1 246 farmers participated in 52 training courses of total duration of 99 days. Furthermore, 49 female farmers participated in three courses on home economics also organised by KEGE and were taught about basket making, embroidery, weaving etc. These three courses had a total duration of 15 days.

Additionally, in 2013 the Department of Agriculture organised a training course of 40 hours in order to provide information and guidance to registered unemployed persons, interested to become farmers. This course, in which 586 persons attended, was part of the Government's measures to restart and boost the economy.

#### *2.3.1.5. Cyprus Academy of Public Administration*

The Cyprus Academy of Public Administration, CAPA (Κυπριακή Ακαδημία Δημόσιας Διοίκησης), whose budget was EUR 1 445 194 for 2013, is the learning and development centre of the Cyprus civil service. It was established in 1991 on the basis of Council of Ministers Decision no. 35.582, with the mission to contribute to the efficiency, effectiveness and continuous improvement of the Public Service for the benefit of the individual citizens and society at large, mainly through the formulation and implementation of a comprehensive learning policy for the Public Service, at individual, group and organisational levels. CAPA's vision is to make a significant contribution to the creation of a modern, citizen centered Public Service.

CAPA's streams of activities serving the achievement of its strategic goals, mission and vision include (a) the design and organisation of training programmes and other types of learning activities both in the class and at the work place, (b) the development of strategic initiatives, (c) the provision of consultancy services and (d) the conduct of applied research.

In particular, the main activities concern: development of learning capacity, induction of newcomers in the public service, European Union issues, management development, organisational development, development of personal and interpersonal skills, utilisation of information technology, training on specialised issues, training for public officers from foreign countries and research projects.

#### *2.3.1.6. Ministry of Health*

The Ministry of Health, MoH (Υπουργείο Υγείας) is responsible for the training of public sector nurses provided by the School of Nursing (Νοσηλευτική Σχολή).

#### *2.3.1.7. Ministry of Justice and Public Order*

The Ministry of Justice and Public Order promotes the training of police officers and sergeants provided by the Cyprus Police Academy. The Police Academy also offers part-time training in the use of computers for police members. The lessons are taught by qualified teachers appointed by the MoEC and they take place at the computer lab of the Police Academy. The courses run from autumn until summer of next year.

#### *2.3.1.8. Foundation for the Management of the European Lifelong Learning Programmes*

The Foundation for the Management of the European Lifelong Learning Programmes is the body which manages the European education programmes and promotes the goals and the EU education and training policies in Cyprus. The Foundation uses funds obtained from the European Union to subsidise educational institutions and organisations active in this field, as well as teachers, students, educators, trainers and trainees.

According to the Foundation, in 2013, the amount of EUR 1 151 380 was approved for funding activities within the Leonardo da Vinci Mobility programme. This amount funded the mobility

and training of 359 learners/trainees in VET (compared to 272 in 2012). The numbers of training mobility depend on the country of destination and the duration of training. Furthermore, 17 teachers and trainers (compared to 47 in 2012) and 27 enterprises/organisations (compared to 36 in 2012) participated in VET mobility schemes. Due to the high unemployment rate in 2013, priority was given to the mobility of learners/trainees rather than the teachers and trainers.

### **2.3.2. Training for the unemployed**

Over the recent years, training provision for the unemployed has become vitally important for combating the effects of the economic crisis. Resources have been re-directed towards the prevention and reduction of unemployment. The main bodies promoting training provision for the unemployed are the HRDA in cooperation with the MLWSI and the MoEC.

#### *2.3.2.1. Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus*

The HRDA offers the following training activities:

- (a) a scheme for the improvement of the employability of the unemployed. It is co-financed by the ESF in the programming period 2007-13. It aims at improving the employability of the unemployed by offering opportunities for participation in training programmes on information technology, English language and secretarial skills, as well as work experience programmes in enterprises. The programmes are offered free of charge and participants receive an allowance. During 2013, the HRDA subsidised the participation of 768 unemployed persons in training programmes and work experience programmes. Total expenditure was EUR 1 619 873;
- (b) training programmes for upgrading the skills of unemployed persons. They cover important horizontal as well as job-specific skills, including green skills, which will help people to return to productive employment. The programmes are offered free of charge to unemployed persons, with priority given to the long-term unemployed. For the duration of these programmes participants are also entitled to training allowances from the HRDA. During 2013, the HRDA subsidised the training of 2 077 unemployed and total expenditure was EUR 1 256 255;



- (c) the accelerated initial training scheme. It is a training scheme operated by the HRDA aimed at remedying labour shortages by providing theoretical and practical training in occupations that are currently in demand. The HRDA covers all the costs for the institutional training. In addition, trainees receive a weekly allowance. During 2013, training programmes were organised for High Pressure Industrial Pipe Fitters, 72 persons benefited from the scheme and total expenditure was EUR 162 051;
- (d) the training programmes for newly employed tertiary education graduates. They aim at strengthening the management capacity of enterprises and organisations through the employment and training of young university and other tertiary education graduates. The HRDA provides subsidies to employers for the delivery of in-house training programmes of six months duration. These programmes are supplemented by participation in other training courses. During 2013, 716 participants were subsidised and total expenditure was EUR 5 612 108;
- (e) job placement and training of unemployed Cypriots and other EU nationals to fill vacancies and/or replace labour from third countries. This scheme provides a subsidy and guidance to employers as incentives to encourage them to employ and provide individualised training for unemployed. As of 1 March 2012, the scheme is directed exclusively at the long-term unemployed. During 2013, 146 participants were subsidised and total expenditure was EUR 561 223.
- (f) job placement of unemployed young tertiary education graduates for the acquisition of work experience in enterprises / organisations. The Scheme is co-financed by the ESF in the programming period 2007-2013. It commenced in April 2013 and offers job placements in enterprises / organisations to young unemployed tertiary education graduates less than 35 years old with limited work experience. The duration of the job placements is 6 months and a training allowance is provided. The Scheme aims to provide opportunities for the acquisition of work experience to young unemployed tertiary education graduates in order to improve their employability, while at the same time enabling enterprises to utilise qualified persons. During 2013, 1 593 participants were subsidised and total expenditure was EUR 1 748 013.

#### 2.3.2.2. *Ministry of Education and Culture*

In the context of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools, the Department of STVE of the MoEC offers one-year programmes leading to the award of a certificate.

One of the objectives of these programmes is to offer continuing education and training to the unemployed, aiming at their re-integration into the labour market, in areas where there is shortage of skilled workers. A variety of courses are offered such as plumbing, electric installations, engineering, computers, car mechanics, cooking and graphic design. Therefore, these programmes help to meet the workforce needs of the economy, both in terms of quality and quantity. No qualifications are required for attending these programmes and the teaching methods used vary, depending on the programme.

### **2.3.3. Training for other groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market**

The training programmes for groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market, such as inactive women, public assistance recipients, single parents, drop-outs, persons with disabilities and asylum seekers are provided mainly by the MLWSI, the MoEC, the HRDA and other ministries.

#### *2.3.3.1. Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance*

The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities subsidises the operation of Supported Employment Programmes which include on-the-job training of persons with disabilities by job coaches in the open labour market. During 2013, 230 persons participated in 22 programmes with a cost of EUR 290 000 for the subsidisation of the job coach salaries. In addition, the Department promotes a scheme for vocational training of persons with disabilities to expand the employment opportunities by improving working skills, mostly in IT. The scheme covers the training costs at an appropriate training institution or company for any course of up to six months and to a maximum amount of EUR 1 700. During 2013, training opportunities were provided to 6 persons with a budget of EUR 10 000.

The Social Welfare Services, SWS (Υπηρεσίες Κοινωνικής Ευημερίας) is implementing the project named “Work and Social Activation of People in Vulnerable Groups through the Development of Social Skills and Other Actions” co-financed by the ESF in the programming period of 2007-13. The aim of this project is to provide training in social skills to vulnerable groups (such as people aged 15-24 or over 50 years of age, single parents, public assistance recipients, ex-prisoners, people with disabilities) and to reintegrate them in the labour market. It is expected that 1 300 persons will participate in the scheme and the total budget for the period 2011-15 is EUR 2 385 979. The training in social skills addressed to people who belong

to vulnerable groups began in February 2013, and so far about 979 people have successfully completed the seminars. The people who completed the training received the amount of EUR 200 each, totaling to EUR 195 800. The cost of the training amounted to EUR 446 800.

#### *2.3.3.2. Ministry of Education and Culture*

In the context of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools, the Department of STVE of the MoEC offers one-year programmes which lead to the award of a certificate. One of the objectives of these programmes is to offer continuing education and training to specific groups of people at risk of exclusion from the labour market. As a result, special programmes addressing prisoners, aiming at their re-integration into the labour market, are offered at the central prisons in Nicosia. These programmes include classes in cooking, graphic design, woodcraft and furniture making, and AUTOCAD design.

#### *2.3.3.3. Human Resource Development Authority*

The HRDA is implementing a scheme co-financed by the ESF in the programming period 2007-13 which aims at the improvement of the employability of the inactive women by providing opportunities for them to participate in training programmes on information technology, English language and secretarial skills, as well as work experience programmes in enterprises. The programmes are offered free of charge and participants receive an allowance. During 2013, the HRDA subsidised the participation of 466 women in training programmes and work experience programmes. Total expenditure was EUR 750 531.

#### *2.3.3.4. Ministry of Justice and Public Order*

The Ministry of Justice and Public Order in cooperation with the MoEC and the private sector offers classes and other professional training programmes to the prisoners, on a voluntary basis.

#### *2.3.3.5. Ministry of Interior*

Based on the national employment strategy and the labour market needs in general, the immigration strategy aims to integrate legal immigrants into the society under conditions of increased social cohesion. The action plan for the integration of third country nationals

includes actions in a number of sectors such as education, vocational training, and learning of the Greek language, health, information and more.

#### **2.3.4. Training for adults in general**

The adult education centres (επιμορφωτικά κέντρα) of the MoEC offer a wide range of courses aimed at the holistic development of each adult's personality and the social, financial and cultural development of citizens and society.

The adult education centres operate both in the urban and rural areas of the government-controlled area of Cyprus, run by the Department of Primary Education (Διεύθυνση Δημοτικής Εκπαίδευσης) of the MoEC. They offer a variety of interdisciplinary courses which focus mainly on the teaching of foreign languages, arts and crafts, cultural programmes, health and other issues of general interest, as well as on teaching professional and vocational skills.

Classes take place from November to the end of May on the premises of public schools. No entry qualifications are required and anyone over the age of 15 can attend the courses. Lessons are held once a week and last for 90 minutes. Those who attend the courses pay a small fee and at the end of the year they receive a certificate of attendance.

More than 31 000 citizens (73% of which were female and over 8% were over 65 years of age) attended the Adult Education Centres during the school year 2012-2013 and 30% attended courses in rural areas. In 2011, expenditure was EUR 2 303 342, including teacher salaries.

The adult education centres also organise about 50 special classes each year, free of charge, for various disadvantaged groups of people such as illiterate people, prisoners, senior citizens and people with disabilities.

Furthermore, the adult education centres are implementing a project teaching Greek language to foreigners, immigrants and other residents of Cyprus aged 15 and over, co-financed by the ESF during the period 2010-15. The programme consists of fifty, 90-minutes teaching sessions, twice a week for each teaching group and attendance is free.

### **3. SHAPING VET QUALIFICATIONS**

The Department of STVE (MoEC) is responsible for the introduction or update of branches and specialisations in IVET and the design of curricula. The restructuring of STVE is underway within the context of the education reform with the direct involvement and cooperation of VET stakeholders. The new curricula, which are expected to be developed by 2015, will match specialisations offered with the current needs of the labour market, will provide students with an opportunity to acquire the key competences they need to make them more competitive in the labour market, will be oriented towards learning outcomes and will be based on Learning Modules and ECVET units (see 2.2.2.1).

The programmes offered at post-secondary level have been defined following consultation with the stakeholders participating in the Advisory Body, and are systematically evaluated, revised and updated on an annual basis, taking into account the views and suggestions of all the relevant social partners and stakeholders, as well as current labour market needs determined after research (see 2.2.3).

Stakeholders are consulted during the design of CVET Schemes offered by the HRDA.

Results of forecasting and identification of skills gaps in the labour market are also used in designing programmes of study at secondary (technical schools) and post-secondary level (VET Institutes), approving training programmes in CVET (offered by HRDA) and shaping the Standards for Vocational Qualifications. The introduction of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF), the competence-based system of vocational qualifications and new VET curricula is underway and quality assessment mechanisms support this process.

#### **3.1 Anticipation of labour market needs**

Cyprus has a long experience in providing skills needs forecasts. Employment forecasts in economic sectors and occupations are provided at a detailed level of analysis, including both expansion and replacement demand.

The main formal mechanism in place for the assessment of skill needs is operated by the HRDA. The Ministry of Finance provides projections for the growth of the economy. The MoEC is responsible for the identification of educational and special skill needs.

### **3.1.1 Human Resource Development Authority**

For the systematic employment forecasting and the identification of skills gaps, the HRDA conducts the following research studies:

(a) long term employment trends and forecasting in Cyprus.

The HRDA provides 10-year employment forecasts on a regular basis every two to three years. The latest set of employment forecasts for Cyprus were completed in 2014, cover the period 2014-24 and provide forecasts of employment, expansion and replacement demand for 52 sectors of economic activity and for around 300 occupations, which cover the whole spectrum of the Cyprus labour market. Furthermore, the HRDA participates actively in initiatives and actions that are promoted at European level in the framework of the European network Skillsnet for skill needs forecasting;

(b) annual investigations for the identification of skill needs with the involvement of the social partners.

This study provides annual estimates for the number of persons required for specific occupations by district. On the basis of these estimates, suggestions are put forward for the implementation of initial training programmes. In the study, the views of employers' organisations, trade unions, district labour offices of the MLWSI and the Cyprus Tourism Organisation are collected and analysed through a specially designed questionnaire;

(c) study on the anticipation of green skill needs.

The study entitled "*Identification of Green Skill Needs in the Cyprus Economy 2010-13*" outlines the green economy of Cyprus, provides employment needs forecasts for sectors of economic activity and occupations of the green economy and identifies green skill needs for the period 2010-13. A special action plan for promoting green skills in the Cyprus economy has been put forward as a result of the study, which includes a variety of targeted measures that are directed towards enterprises, persons employed and the unemployed;

(d) study on the identification of employment and training needs for the effective utilisation of natural gas in Cyprus.

The existence of natural gas in the exclusive economic zone of Cyprus and the emerging growth prospects of the Cyprus economy due to its future exploitation, has led the HRDA to conduct a research study entitled “*Early Identification of Employment and Training Needs for the Effective Utilisation of Natural Gas in Cyprus*”. The study identifies the needs for human resources, in sectors and occupations that are directly or indirectly related to the utilisation of natural gas. Based on the findings of the study, which was finalised in November 2012 and which includes a road map for promoting skills for the utilisation of natural gas, the HRDA promotes the acquisition of such skills through its training activities. Furthermore, a National Strategy for Education and Training in the Sector of Hydrocarbons was formulated by a committee comprising the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism, the MoEC, the MLWSI and the HRDA and was approved by the Council of Ministers in July 2014.

The results of the HRDA’s studies on anticipation of skill needs are utilised by policy makers for the development of strategies and policies in education, training and lifelong learning. Furthermore, they are utilised at operational level for the development of programmes of study in education, including the programmes of study of Technical Schools and the Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training of the Ministry of Education and Culture. They are also utilised by people involved in counselling such as secondary education vocational guidance teachers and employment counsellors and by the general public. For this purpose, all research studies, upon completion are disseminated to a wide audience of prominent stakeholders. Special presentations are organised for secondary school guidance counsellors and employment counsellors, students and parents.

The HRDA studies on employment forecasts are an important tool for planning HRDA activities. On the basis of these research studies and following consultations with stakeholders, the HRDA every year prepares documents that contain the themes for the continuing training programmes it subsidises. The HRDA then examines, approves or rejects the submitted programmes, which need to be in accordance with the policy priorities and criteria. The findings of the research studies are also taken into account by the HRDA in selecting the Standards of Vocational Qualifications that are being developed.

### **3.1.2 Ministry of Finance**

The MoF provides projections for the growth of the economy, which include forecasts of value added, productivity and employment, and submits proposals for the required policy changes.

### **3.1.3 Ministry of Education and Culture**

The MoEC and more specifically the Department of STVE is responsible for the introduction, with the participation of the social partners, of new branches and specialisations, the design of curricula and the identification of special skills needed.

To carry out these tasks, while taking into account the developmental needs of the Cyprus economy and the latest scientific and technological advances, the Department of STVE has developed close cooperation with all major stakeholders such as Ministries and the Department General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development, the social partners (employers' and employees' organisations), teachers and their associations, the University of Cyprus, UCY (Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου), the Pedagogical Institute, PI (Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο) and the HRDA. The findings of the research studies of the HRDA are also taken into account for the design of curricula.

In addition, the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE) of the MoEC participates in the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), a survey recognised by OECD and delivered by ETS. PIAAC assesses the level and distribution of adult skills in a coherent and consistent way across countries. It focuses on the key cognitive and workplace skills that are required for successful participation in the economy and society of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## **3.2 Qualifications systems and frameworks**

In Cyprus until recently there has been relatively limited implementation of frameworks and mechanisms regarding the transparency of qualifications and systems for the recognition of competences and qualifications. However, Cyprus is committed to introducing the relevant EU tools. A description of progress in implementing qualifications systems and frameworks is provided below. This process is directly linked to how programmes and qualifications are shaped.



### **3.2.1 Implementation of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF)**

The development of a NQF to promote recognition of academic and vocational qualifications acquired in Cyprus is a government priority. To facilitate the process, the Council of Ministers appointed a high-level national committee comprising the Directors-General of MoEC, the MLWSI and the HRDA.

The National Coordination Point (NCP) was established in October 2012, comprising representatives from the MoEC, the MLWSI and the HRDA. Four international and one Cypriot expert have been appointed in order to assist the NCP in the development of the referencing report.

The final draft of the Referencing Report was presented and submitted for approval to the EQF Advisory Group in June 2014, in Brussels. The final version of the Report is being prepared taking into account the comments of the EQF Advisory Group and will be presented and submitted again to the Group in February 2015.

At the same time, a number of meetings with all the stakeholders involved (students' and parents' organisations, education providers, VET providers, employers' and employees' organisations, teachers' organisations, the HRDA, the CPC) have taken place, as the first step of the implementation plan. The period between September 2015 and May 2016 will be the testing period of the implementation of the NQF, the results of which will be evaluated.

Regarding the regulated professions, Cyprus has fully transposed the new Directive 2005/36/EC into national law by adopting eight different laws, one for the general recognition of regulated professions and seven others for the seven sectoral professions (nurse responsible for general care, dental practitioner, veterinary surgeon, midwife, architect, pharmacist and doctor).

### **3.2.2 Development of a system of vocational qualifications**

The development of a competence-based system of vocational qualifications, which will constitute an integral part of a future NQF, is a high priority for Cyprus. The vocational qualifications system is designed for the assessment and certification of the competence of a person to carry out a specific job in real or/and simulated working conditions. The standards of vocational qualifications define the framework for the training and development of a person,

providing him or her, the opportunity to reach the appropriate competence level. Opportunity for access is provided to persons regardless of the way they have acquired the knowledge, skills and competence. The main actions of the System are described below:

(a) Development of Standards of Vocational Qualifications

The HRDA is establishing and implementing the system. During the first phase in the period 2006-09, five standards of vocational qualifications at level 2 have been developed in the three economic sectors of hotel and restaurants, construction and retail trade for the occupations of waiter, cook, receptionist, construction mason and sales person.

During the second phase, which covers the period 2007–15 and is co-financed by the ESF, 80 new standards are expected to be developed (67 of which have already been developed) and opportunities for access are provided to the employed, unemployed and economically inactive persons. The standards cover a broad range of occupations in the sectors of hotels and restaurants, retail and wholesale trade, construction, manufacturing, repairs of motor vehicles, systems and networks of communication and computers and hairdressing as well as the occupation of trainer of vocational training. It is expected that during the second phase, 5 500 persons will be given the opportunity to get their qualifications recognised.

The System is also included in the projects submitted by the HRDA for co-financing by the ESF during the programming period 2014-2020. It is foreseen that 80 new Standards will be developed and around 10 000 persons will be assessed in order to get their qualifications recognised.

The standards that are developed, are discussed by the sectoral technical committees of vocational qualifications and approved by the Board of Directors of the HRDA.

(b) Assessment and Certification of Vocational Qualifications

This process includes the three following stages:

- Diagnosis of knowledge and competences

The diagnosis is conducted by an internal assessor and takes place through an interview with the individual. The internal assessor uses a template to identify whether the applicant fulfils the requirements for the whole or part of the qualification.

- Assessment

The assessment of candidates is conducted by an assessment committee, which includes internal and external assessors that have been approved by the HRDA. Assessment takes place in a series of meetings in Assessment Centres that have been approved by the HRDA. The assessment methods and processes are verified by an external verifier.

- Certification

Assessment results are submitted to the HRDA, which decides whether the candidate is to be fully certified and therefore be awarded the qualification or to be partially certified and receive a certificate for specific units.

### **3.2.3 Implementing a unit-based credit system**

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) is part of the overall project to develop European cooperation in VET and constitutes one of its operational tools. A working committee on the development and implementation of ECVET in Cyprus was set up in September 2011. This committee comprises stakeholders from the public and the private sector, such as the MoEC, the MLWSI, the Directorate General for European Programmes Coordination and Development, the HRDA, the CPC, the Foundation for the Management of the European Lifelong Learning Programmes in Cyprus and private providers of VET. Furthermore, several pilot projects on implementing ECVET prepared by the ECVET European expert groups are under consideration as part of the ongoing reform of STVE curricula.

### **3.2.4 Supporting recognition of qualifications abroad and mobility**

The Europass diploma describes knowledge and skills acquired by learners and in this way it supports the mobility of learners, transparency and recognition of qualifications. The CPC, an institution of the MLWSI, was appointed as the Cyprus National Europass Centre and is thus responsible for the coordination, management and promotion of all the activities related to Europass documents as well as for the provision of information regarding the documents and for cooperation with other organisations in the field of mobility and qualification transparency.

In 2013, the Cyprus NEC managed to contact almost all interested organisations both private and public to promote the Europass documents and make them accessible to all citizens. Around 80% of the higher educational institutes automatically issue the Europass diploma supplement to their graduates, and the number of Europass diploma supplements issued in 2013 reached 5 000. Furthermore, 1 300 Europass certificate supplements have been issued to the 2013 technical schools' graduates and the graduates of the CPC accelerated training programmes.

Additionally, the Cyprus NEC in cooperation with the Foundation for the Management of the European Lifelong Learning Programmes in Cyprus is encouraging all organisations participating in mobility programmes to issue the Europass mobility document and during 2013, 119 documents were issued and 297 were given a number and are pending.

In 2013, the Cyprus NEC organised 60 workshops with 758 participants. During the workshops, the participants created their own Europass CV and were advised on how to write a cover letter and on how to perform well in an interview.

### **3.3 Quality assurance, accreditation and recognition**

Quality assurance accreditation and recognition practices, for secondary technical and vocational education, tertiary education and vocational training are in place to support the process of developing VET programmes and qualifications.

#### Secondary Technical and Vocational Education

The respective Inspector of each branch is responsible for the proper implementation of the IVET curricula, therefore each Inspector supervises the work of educators and ensures that the teaching material is adequately covered, through the use of effective teaching methods. Constant assessment of the progress of learners, in the form of written assignments, projects, tests and a final examination is instrumental in order for Inspectors to evaluate the outcome of the educators' work.

#### Tertiary education

There are two bodies responsible for quality assurance, accreditation and recognition of tertiary education institutions in Cyprus:

- (a) the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (Κυπριακό Συμβούλιο Αναγνώρισης Τίτλων Σπουδών), an independent body, is the competent authority responsible for the recognition of diplomas awarded by institutions of higher education;
- (b) the Council for Educational Assessment and Accreditation (Συμβούλιο Εκπαιδευτικής Αξιολόγησης και Πιστοποίησης) is an independent body that advises the Minister of Education and Culture on issues concerning the establishment, control and operation of tertiary education institutions in Cyprus.

The MoEC is working towards the adoption of new legislation, to establish the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education (CyQAAE). The CyQAAE, which will be responsible for the external evaluation of all tertiary education institutions, will replace the existing separate evaluation and accreditation bodies and will simplify all evaluation and accreditation procedures and the quality assurance system.

#### Vocational Training

The training programmes are implemented by public and private institutions and enterprises. To be approved they need to adhere to the criteria laid down by the HRDA. The HRDA ensures the quality of the programmes it subsidises by undertaking controls in the programme approval stage, the programme implementation stage and the payment of subsidy stage.

An important development with regard to trainers is the introduction of a system for the assessment and certification of training providers. Through this system, which will be fully implemented by 1 January 2015, vocational training centres, vocational training facilities and trainers are assessed against specific criteria to ensure that they are eligible for certification. For trainers, the criteria are based on their competence as well as their academic qualifications and their professional experience as trainers.

The HRDA also carries out evaluation studies on the effectiveness and impact of its activities. To this end, a comprehensive system evaluating the impact of HRDA on the economy of Cyprus has been set up. Within this system, evaluation studies, which include field and desk research, are conducted by either independent consultants or the HRDA.

## **4. PROMOTING PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **4.1. Incentives for participation in vocational education and training**

Incentives for promoting participation in VET are aimed at individuals and enterprises, the main ones being the free provision of a variety of VET programmes, the subsidies granted for participation in training programmes and tax incentives for enterprises.

#### **4.1.1 Incentives for individuals**

The main incentive for participation of individuals in vocational education is the fact that the provision of secondary technical vocational education including evening technical education, the apprenticeship system and public tertiary vocational education are free of charge, while various lifelong learning programmes are offered for a small fee. Public funds administered mainly by the MoEC are the primary source for financing VET.

Furthermore, a government grant is paid to parents with a child in tertiary education based on specific income and property criteria.

In the case of unemployed and economically inactive persons, the HRDA provides a major incentive to participate in vocational training: the programmes, which are implemented by public and private institutions, are provided free of charge and participants receive training allowances.

The financing provided by the ESF has played an important role in the promotion of participation due to the increased level of funds available which led to the introduction of new training programmes. Many training programmes that are co-financed by the ESF are addressed to the unemployed and groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market.

Educational leave schemes, which are applied in the public sector in Cyprus, provide public-sector employees with the opportunity to take educational leave for studies which are relevant to their job. The State pays up to 100% of the training and travel costs of civil servants

awarded a scholarship from, through or with the approval of the government or any other authority approved by the Council of Ministers.

In some sectors, leave of absence for education and training purposes is included in the collective agreements, thereby ensuring a certain level of education and training. Such sectors are the hotel industry, banking sector, cabinet making and carpentry industry and private clinics.

#### **4.1.2 Incentives for enterprises**

The funding provided by the HRDA has effectively motivated enterprises and their employees to participate in training and development activities. The funds of the HRDA come from the human resource development levy of 0,5% on the payroll of employers excluding the government. Enterprises are directly involved in training activities and prepare and submit training programmes to the HRDA on a continuous basis. In general, the subsidisation covers 80% of the eligible total costs. The HRDA provides subsidies to the employers. In the case of single-company initial and continuing programmes, eligible costs include the cost of trainers, the personnel cost for trainees, administrative expenses and cost of training materials. As regards the multi-company continuing training programmes, the HRDA provides the subsidies directly to the training providers and the employer covers the remaining cost. Participation and expenditure in programmes subsidised by the HRDA is presented in section 2.3.1.

The HRDA subsidies have also proved to be an important incentive for the development of efficient training institutions and providers, which prepare and submit for approval, every six months, continuing training programmes, in accordance with the thematic priorities that are communicated to them by the HRDA.

In terms of tax incentives to enterprises, all expenditure on human resource development is tax deductible in the same way that other production expenses are treated. It is therefore estimated that about 20-25% of total human resources development expenditure is borne by the State and the rest by private funds.

## **4.2. Guidance and counselling**

Enhancing the provision of guidance and counselling services to all population groups is a policy priority for Cyprus. The main bodies delivering guidance and counselling in Cyprus are

the Counselling and career education service, CCES (Υπηρεσία συμβουλευτικής και επαγγελματικής αγωγής) of the MoEC, the Public employment services, PES (Δημόσια υπηρεσία απασχόλησης) and the Euroguidance centre Cyprus of the MLWSI, the HRDA, the Youth Board of Cyprus and certain private organisations. Guidance is provided to students in secondary and tertiary education, to both the unemployed and employed as well as to the economically inactive.

An important development with regard to guidance was the establishment in March 2012 of the National Forum on Lifelong Guidance, which was a basic step in the upgrading of all guidance and counselling services in Cyprus. Its mission is to act as an advisory body to the government policy makers in the field of lifelong guidance. All major stakeholders, such as the MoEC, the MLWSI, the HRDA, the Youth Board of Cyprus and the social partners are represented in the Forum.

#### **4.2.1 Students and young persons**

Guidance and counselling for students is provided mainly by the MoEC, the Euroguidance centre in Cyprus of the MLWSI, the HRDA and the Youth Board of Cyprus.

##### *4.2.1.1 Ministry of Education and Culture*

The Counselling and career education service of the MoEC provides counselling to students which aims at the development of their personal awareness related to their needs, interests, abilities, and skills. In this way they can take informed decisions about their personal lives, education and careers.

The whole process of achieving personal awareness is facilitated through educational and vocational guidance / counseling throughout upper secondary education. In addition, in order to become acquainted with the world of work, the students have the opportunity to attend presentations from professionals in different fields and visit workplaces. Personal and group counseling, administration and analysis of psychometric tests along with the Careers Education course offered at the third grade of lower secondary level, are provided to students by qualified guidance school counselors.



The counselors have undergone post-graduate education in counseling and / or career education / guidance. They are placed in schools of secondary education as well as at the central and regional offices of the Counselling and Careers Education Service offices of the MoEC. The counselors at the central offices support the school counselors and they are also responsible for numerous publications that address the needs of the Counselling and Career Education service.

In order to raise public awareness and increase initial VET attractiveness, the Open School Day has been established, organised by the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education. During the Open School Day, students of the third year of lower secondary education and their parents are given the opportunity to visit a technical school of their choice and be guided by teachers and students to the various facilities of the school. Moreover, an exhibition of the students' achievements is organised at each technical school, in order to further promote awareness of the career possibilities provided by initial VET programmes. As of the school year 2012-2013, the Open School Day has been expanded to cover not only one day but the whole period between January and March of each year.

Additionally, students attending technical schools receive traineeships in the specialisation of their choice as part of their curriculum. Furthermore, the third year of studies in the practical direction of technical schools combines a school-based environment with a real workplace as final-year students are placed in industry for one day per week, where they follow a practical training programme.

Each year, the MoEC organises the International Education Fair where the students and other interested parties receive educational information about universities' study programmes, entrance requirements, fees and scholarships. Over 200 higher education institutions and universities from 35 countries, as well as the national universities and colleges usually attend the fair.

The Guidance and Counsellors Association (part of the Association of Secondary School Teachers of Cyprus) also organises an Annual Careers Fair. More than 150 organised professional bodies and organisations take part.

The British Council and the Fulbright Commission with the participation of different universities and colleges from the UK and the US respectively, also organise education fairs, in order to provide information to prospective students for further studies in these countries.

#### *4.2.1.2 Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance - The Euroguidance centre Cyprus*

A website has been set up by the Euroguidance centre Cyprus ([www.nrcg.dl.mlsi.gov.cy](http://www.nrcg.dl.mlsi.gov.cy)), in accordance with the Euroguidance initiative. The Euroguidance network is the European network of the National Resource Centres for Vocational Guidance and currently includes 65 centres that are co-financed by the European Commission and the relevant national authorities.

The website provides among other things information on (a) education and training opportunities in Cyprus (private and public); (b) living and studying in Cyprus; and (c) the Cyprus education system, for the benefit of interested people in the EU countries, including expatriate Cypriots as well as local people (early school leavers, workers, unemployed and adult learners).

The target groups of the Euroguidance centre Cyprus are individuals and organisations in need of counselling and guidance, especially students and parents seeking information on tertiary education.

#### *4.2.1.3 Human Resource Development Authority*

The findings of the HRDA research studies on the anticipation of skill needs are a significant tool for guidance. The HRDA presents the findings of its research studies to secondary school guidance counsellors in collaboration with the MoEC, employment counsellors in collaboration with the MLWSI, as well as parents and students in secondary schools in all districts.

Additionally, the HRDA maintains a web page with information and advice on approved training opportunities. The HRDA also displays its research studies in a downloadable form. A special section in the web page contains occupational employment forecasts in all the occupations of the labour market in Cyprus. Another section contains the latest available trends of human resources indicators for the labour market and education and training in Cyprus.

#### 4.2.1.4 *The Youth Board of Cyprus*

The Youth Board of Cyprus is a semi-government organisation which promotes progress and prosperity for all young people of Cyprus, regardless of religion, ethnic or racial origin. It also promotes young people's active participation in the social, economic and cultural development of Cyprus. The Youth Board of Cyprus operates the youth information centres, which are based on European standards and provide young people with general information and counselling services.

#### 4.2.2 **Adults - employed, unemployed and inactive**

Guidance for adults is provided mainly by the MLWSI through the PES and certain private organisations. Furthermore, the CCES of the MoEC is planning to extend access to guidance for other groups of people besides students/young people and thus promote the goal of lifelong guidance.

##### 4.2.2.1 *Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance - Public Employment Services*

The vocational guidance service of the PES provides information to adults and secondary-school graduates on employment prospects and opportunities or on skills-training possibilities. These services also cater for school dropouts, who may be interested in joining the apprenticeship system.

Furthermore, the PES provide assistance to employers, jobseekers and those in employment who wish to change jobs, by providing registration and placement services, information on training opportunities and job vacancies. Since 2006 the PES have offered individualised guidance counselling at the district and local labour offices. The economic crisis has increased the number of unemployed people, economically inactive women and young secondary education graduates, thus the role of the PES has been enhanced.

##### 4.2.2.2 *Private employment services*

Private employment services and consultancy organisations in Cyprus have expanded in recent years, particularly in the recruitment of managerial or highly qualified specialised staff

and in the recruitment of foreign workers. Private employment services act as human resource advisers to firms that do not have their own human resource department.

#### 4.2.2.3 *Ministry of Education and Culture*

The counsellors appointed at the CCES at the MoEC, in addition to seeing and serving students, they offer their services to all citizens.

## Acronyms and Abbreviations

CAF	Common assessment framework
CAPA	Cyprus Academy of Public Administration
CCES	Counselling and career education service
CPC	Cyprus Productivity Centre
CTO	Cyprus Tourism Organisation
CyQAAE	Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education
ESF	European Social Fund
GDP	Gross domestic product
HRDA	Human Resource Development Authority
ISCED	International standard classification of education
KEGE	Agricultural Educational Centres
LFS	Labour force survey
MANRE	Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment
MoEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MJPO	Ministry of Justice and Public Order
MLWSI	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
NEC	National Europass Centre
NMA	New modern apprenticeship
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PI	Pedagogical Institute
PES	Public employment services
PIAAC	International Assessment of Adult Competencies
STVE	Secondary technical and vocational education
SWS	Social welfare services
UCY	University of Cyprus
VET	Vocational education and training

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