
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

CYPRUS



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CHAPTER 1.

External factors influencing VET

1.1. Political and socioeconomic background

The Republic of Cyprus, hereafter referred to as 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 ⁽¹⁾.

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) exercise 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 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 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 Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) (Αρχή Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού Κύπρου) has 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.

⁽¹⁾ All information and data contained in the report refer to government-controlled area.

The Cypriot economy is emerging from a deep economic crisis which resulted in deterioration of the labour market, adversely affecting employment and increasing unemployment to exceptionally high levels. In March 2016 Cyprus exited the Economic Adjustment Programme, which was signed in April 2013 by the Government of Cyprus with the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund, accomplishing, as acknowledged by the EU Institutions, important achievements. The signs of economic recovery are evident, as positive GDP growth has been recorded for a fourth consecutive year, reaching 4.2% for 2017

1.2. Population

Cyprus is an island located in the Eastern Mediterranean, covering a total area of 9 253 square kilometres. According to the Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT) (*Στατιστική Υπηρεσία Κύπρου*), the population of the area not occupied by Turkey (the government-controlled area) was 854 800 (end-2016) and it has increased by around 0.8% from the previous year. The Turkish-Cypriot population in the occupied area was estimated by the CYSTAT to be 92 200 (end-2016), representing 9.8% of the total population in 2016.

The low fertility rate (1.37 in 2016) increases the old-age dependency ratio and leads to the ageing of the population. The population aged 60 years and over, as shown in Table 1, is forecast to reach 24.3% in 2025 compared with 21.0% in 2016.

Table 1. Age-specific demographic trends (end of year population estimates) (%)

Age Group	2000	2005	2010	2014	2015	2016	2025
0-24	38.1	35.3	32.8	30.5	30.3	30.0	24.7
25-59	46.5	47.9	49.2	49.4	49.2	49.1	51.0
60+	15.4	16.7	18.0	20.1	20.5	21.0	24.3
Total (000s)	697.5	744.0	839.8	847.0	848.3	854.8	896.4

Source: CYSTAT (2018a); Eurostat (*proj_15nprms*) date of extraction 18.10.2018.

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 21.2% in 2015 to 62.5% in 2080, which is much higher than the average EU ratio which is projected to be 52.3%.

Table 2. Projected old-age dependency ratio (%)

	2015	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060	2070	2080
EU 28	28.8	31.7	39.1	46.4	50.3	51.6	51.2	52.3
Cyprus	21.2	24.3	30.6	34.8	42.1	55.2	60.9	62.5

Source: Eurostat (tps00200) date of extraction 27.09.2018

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, because of the economic crisis the percentage of migrants in the population decreased from 18.7% in 2012 to 16.1% in 2015. In the past two years, as a consequence of the economic recovery, a slight increase was observed and in 2017 17.6% of the population were migrants. According to Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, in 2017 foreign workers, including EU nationals, represented 19.7% of total employment. The government has implemented an immigration strategy, which aims to integrate legal immigrants into the society (see section 2.3.3.4).

Table 3. Migrants (EU nationals, third-countries' nationals)

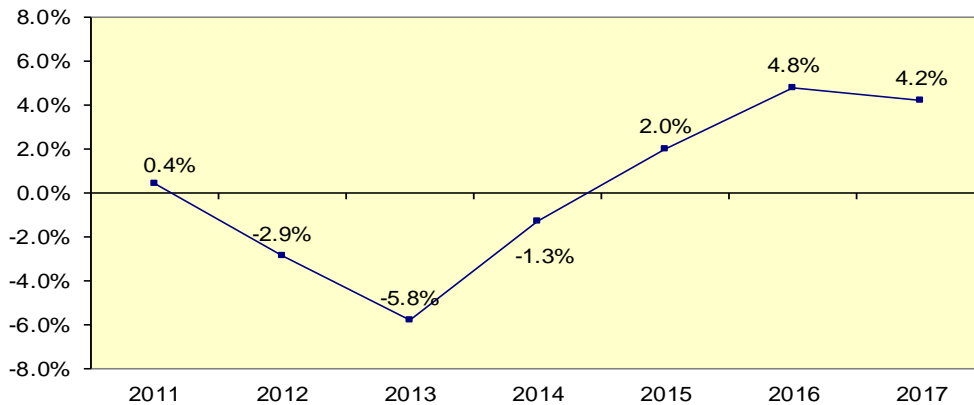
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
EU nationals	94 250	103 990	94 571	79 894	85 068	90 809	93 958
Third country nationals	54 907	51 517	52 461	47 285	46 474	47 890	52 823
Total Migrants	149 157	155 507	147 031	127 179	131 542	138 700	146 781
% of Population	18.2	18.7	17.8	15.5	16.1	16.9	17.6

Source: CYSTAT (2018c).

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. During the period 2009-14 the Cypriot economy experienced the negative effects of the economic crisis, with GDP reaching in 2013 its lowest negative change by 5.8%. Since 2015, as a consequence of the economic recovery, GDP returned to positive growth and for 2017 it was estimated to have reached 4.2% (Figure 1).

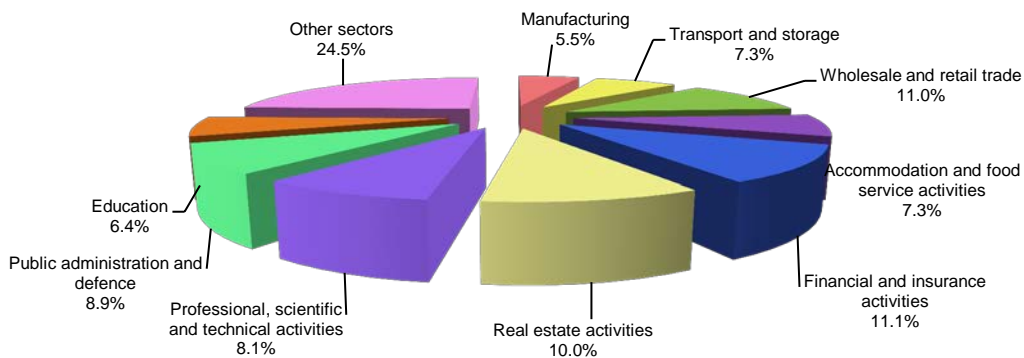
Figure 1. GDP growth



NB: 2017 is provisional
Source: CYSTAT (2018a).

Figure 2 presents the distribution of GDP by sector in 2017. The Cypriot economy is mainly service-based and the tertiary sector amounts to about 84.7% of GDP, while the secondary sector amounts to 13.0% of GDP. More specifically, the five largest sectors in 2017 were the financial and insurance activities (11.1% of GDP), wholesale and retail trade; (11.0% of GDP), real estate activities (10.0% of GDP), public administration and defence (8.9% of GDP) and professional, scientific and technical activities (8.1% of GDP).

Figure 2. GDP by sector in 2017



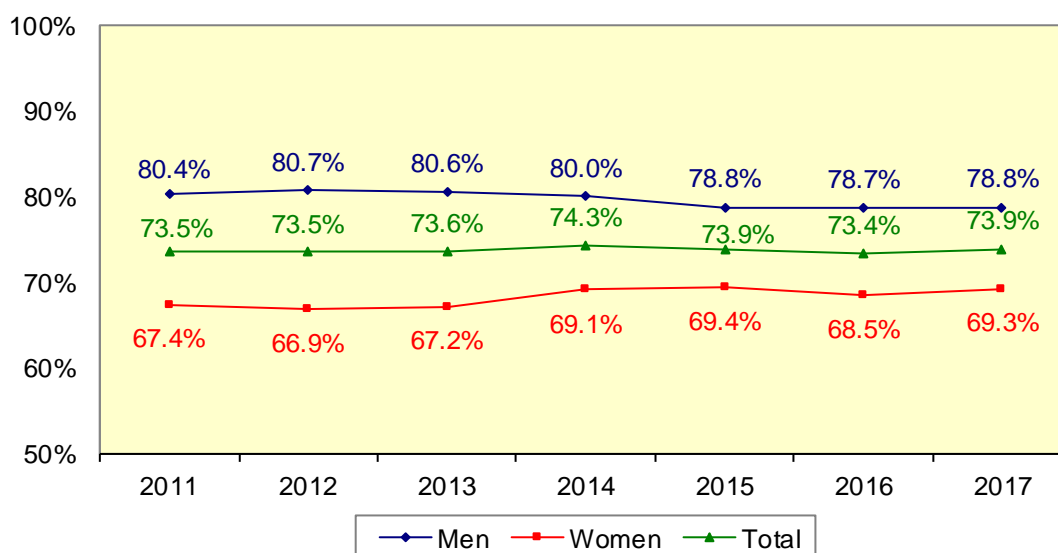
NB: Data is Provisional
Source: CYSTAT, 2018a

Most enterprises are very small. According to social insurance data for 2017, 92.6% of enterprises employed 1-9 persons, while 6.2% employed 10-49 persons. Only 1.1% 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, despite its decrease, remains quite high. The activity rate for the population 15-64 years has been rather stable in 2011-17. However, as presented in Figure 3, there was a slight decrease in the activity rate for men (from 80.4% in 2011 to 78.8% in 2017), while the activity rate for women has increased (from 67.4% in 2011 to 69.3% in 2017), as a result of targeted specific policy measures.

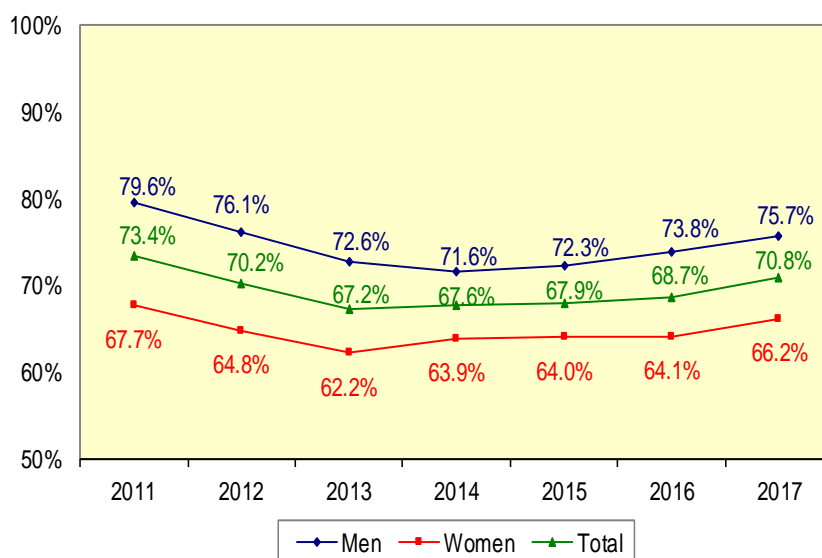
Figure 3. Activity rates for the population 15-64 years by gender



Source: CYSTAT (2018c).

The employment rate of the population 20-64 years was continuously decreasing because of the economic crisis, reaching its lowest level 67.2% in 2013. As presented in Figure 4, there was an increase since then reaching 70.8% in 2017, remaining however below the national target of 75.0%. It is also lower than the respective EU average for the same year which was 72.2%.

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



Source: Eurostat (*tesem010*) date of extraction 25.09.2018

Table 4 and Table 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 (79.1% in 2017) and increase with educational attainment.

Table 4. Employment rates by age group (%)

Age group	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
15-24	30.1	28.1	23.5	25.8	25.5	26.4	27.6
25-49	82.1	79.0	76.6	77.3	77.2	77.6	79.1
50-64	62.9	59.6	56.9	55.4	57.0	59.1	61.9

Source: Eurostat (*ifsa_ergan*) date of extraction 25.09.2018.

Table 5. Employment rates for the population 20-64 years by educational attainment (%)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
ISCED 0-2	65.1	57.8	54.9	54.6	55.1	56.8	57.0
ISCED 3-4	71.0	68.7	64.6	64.6	64.2	64.8	68.5
ISCED 5-8	81.2	78.8	76.3	77.3	78.3	78.3	79.1
Total	73.4	70.2	67.2	67.6	67.9	68.7	70.8

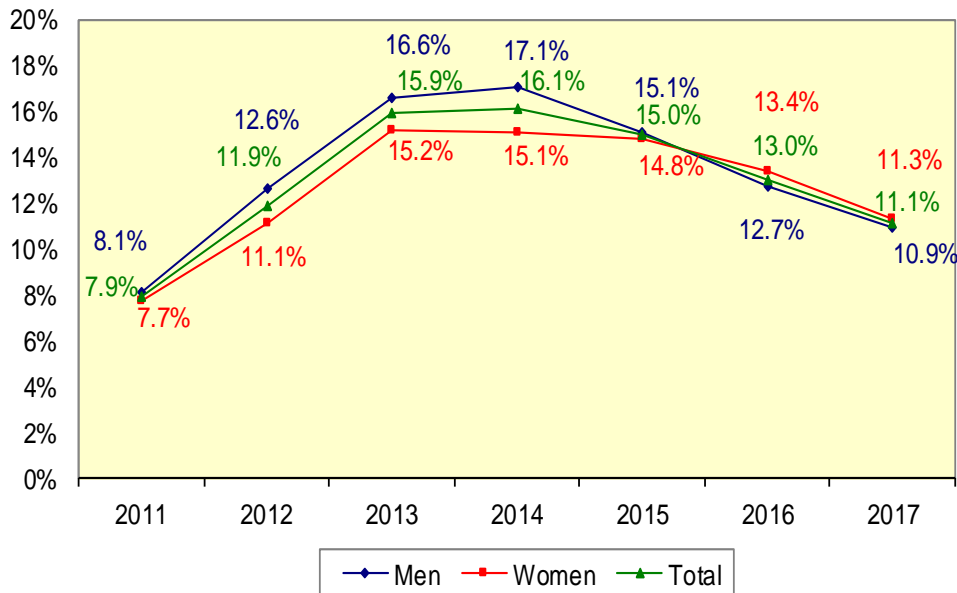
NB. ISCED 0-2: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education
 ISCED 3-4: Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education
 ISCED 5-8: Tertiary education
 Break In time series for the 2014 values

Source: CYSTAT, 2016; Eurostat ([tepsr_wc120](#)) date of extraction 25.09.2018

Despite the increase in unemployment rate to unprecedented levels during the period 2011-2014, there is a decreasing trend since 2015, recording a new low level in 2017 to 11.1%. Over the recent years, training provision for the unemployed has become vitally important and resources have been redirected towards the prevention and reduction of unemployment (see section 2.3.2).

During the period 2011-2014 the unemployment rate was higher for men than for women. In 2015 both rates were around 15% with the trend being reversed during 2016-2017 and the unemployment rate for women being higher than men.

Figure 5. Unemployment rates for the population 15+ by gender



Source: Eurostat ([ifsa_urgan](#)) date of extraction 25.09.2018.

From Table 6, which presents unemployment rates by age group, it can be seen that the unemployment rate for young people under 25 has been decreasing since 2015 but still remained at a high level, 24.7% for 2017, much higher than the EU average which was 16.8% in 2017. 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	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
15-24	22.4	27.7	38.9	36.0	32.8	29.1	24.7
25-54	6.8	10.5	13.9	13.9	13.1	11.7	10.4
55-64	4.9	9.7	12.4	16.3	15.6	11.5	7.8
65+	0.6	1.1	5.4	1.8	1.2	2.3	1.3
15+	7.9	11.9	15.9	16.1	15.0	13.0	11.1

Source: CYPSTAT (2018c); Eurostat (*ifsa_urgan*) date of extraction 25.09.2018

From Table 7, which shows unemployment rates by highest level of education attained, it is evident that unemployment rates usually decrease with higher educational attainment. Unemployment rates for 2017 range between 9.8% for persons with tertiary education to 14.1% for persons with pre-primary, primary or lower secondary education.

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

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
ISCED 0-2	7.5	13.4	19.3	19.4	18.5	15.6	14.1
ISCED 3-4	8.8	12.8	17.2	18.2	16.6	14.3	11.4
ISCED 5-8	7.2	10.2	13.2	12.9	12.1	10.9	9.8
Total	7.9	11.9	15.9	16.1	15.0	13.0	11.1

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

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

ISCED 5-8: Tertiary education

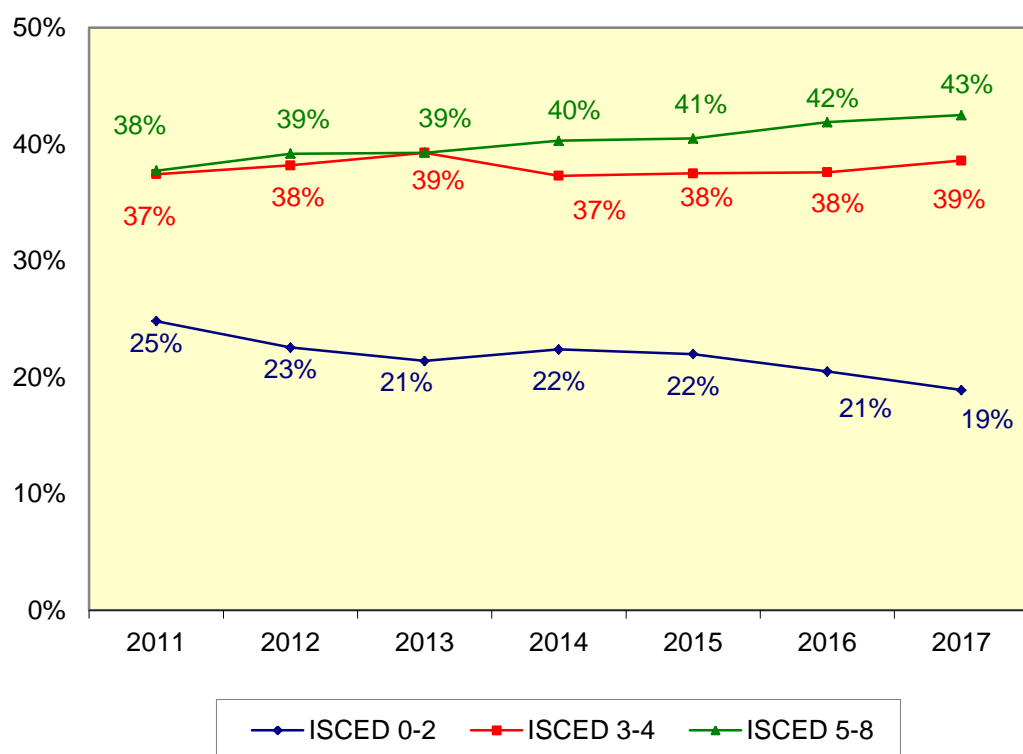
Source: CYPSTAT (2018b); CYPSTAT (2018c)

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 42.5% in 2017, significantly higher than the corresponding EU average (31.4 % in 2017).

There is a strong cultural trend among the Cypriot population in favour of general secondary education followed by higher education. Family plays a significant role in encouraging and supporting young people to continue to higher education. The number of higher education 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 educational institutions abroad.

Figure 6. Educational attainment of the population 25-64 years

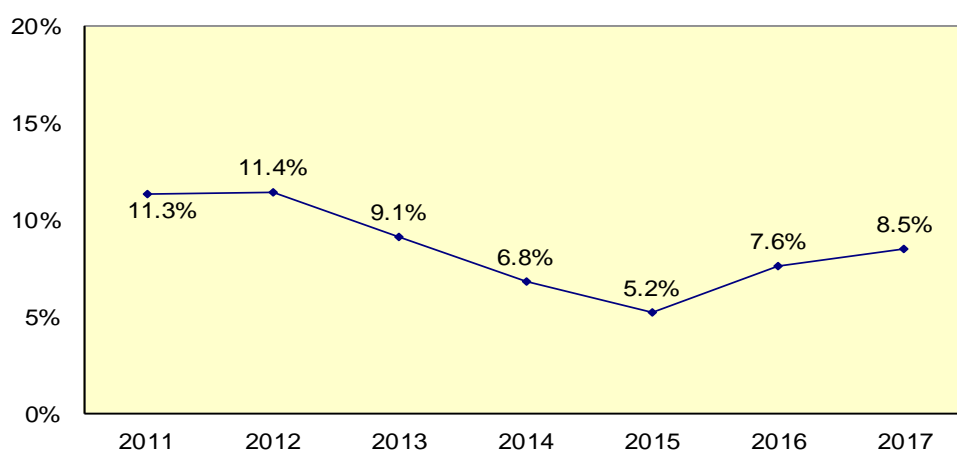


NB. *ISCED 0-2: Pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education*
ISCED 3-4: Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education
ISCED 5-8: Tertiary education
 Source: CYSTAT (2018b); CYSTAT (2018c).

The percentage of early school leavers has increased from 5.2% in 2015 to 8.5% in 2017, as shown in Figure 7, still within the national target of 10% and

lower than the EU average of 10.6% in 2017. 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 temporary foreign workers are all taken into account this percentage would be lower.

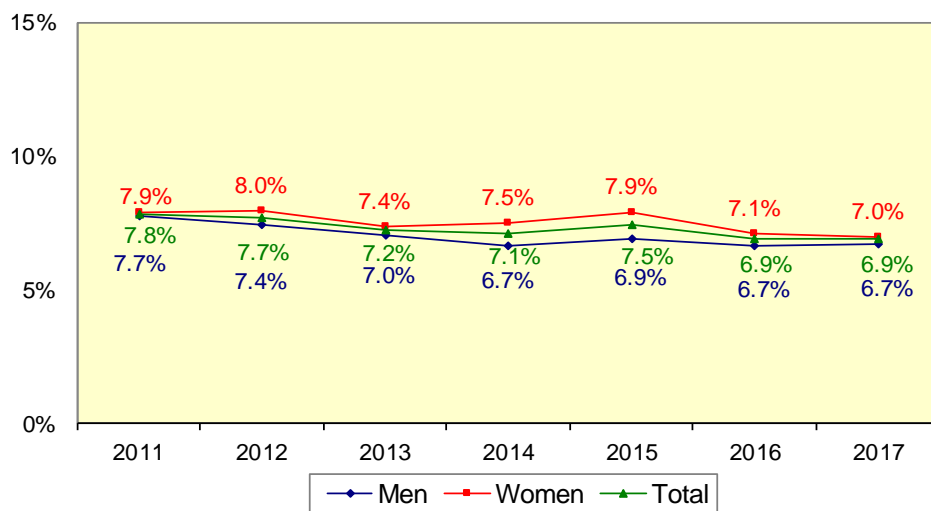
Figure 7. Percentage of the population 18-24 years with at most lower secondary education and not in education and training



Source: CYSTAT (2018b); CYSTAT (2018c).

According to Eurostat (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 2017, which is lower than the EU average which was 10.9% in 2017 and the national target for 2020 which is 12%. The participation of women, as shown in Figure 8, was higher than that of men.

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



Source: Eurostat ([trng_lfse_01](#)) date of extraction 25.09.2018

CHAPTER 2. Provision of VET

2.1. Introduction

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, including other flexible forms of education, such as open and distance learning, were 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). Tertiary education including postgraduate courses, is provided at three public and five private universities, and several private colleges and institutions provide courses, general and VET, at tertiary non-university level.

Public expenditure on education, decreased from 7.2% in 2011 to 6.4% in 2012 and remained relatively steady during the period 2013-16. In 2016 it is counted to 6.5% of GDP, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8. Expenditure on education (% on GDP)

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016*
Public expenditure on education	7.2	6.4	6.6	6.5	6.5	6.5
Total expenditure on education	9.4	8.7	8.8	8.8	8.8	n.a

NB. *: provisional

n.a. : Not Available

Source: CYSTAT (2018a).

The earliest level at which 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.

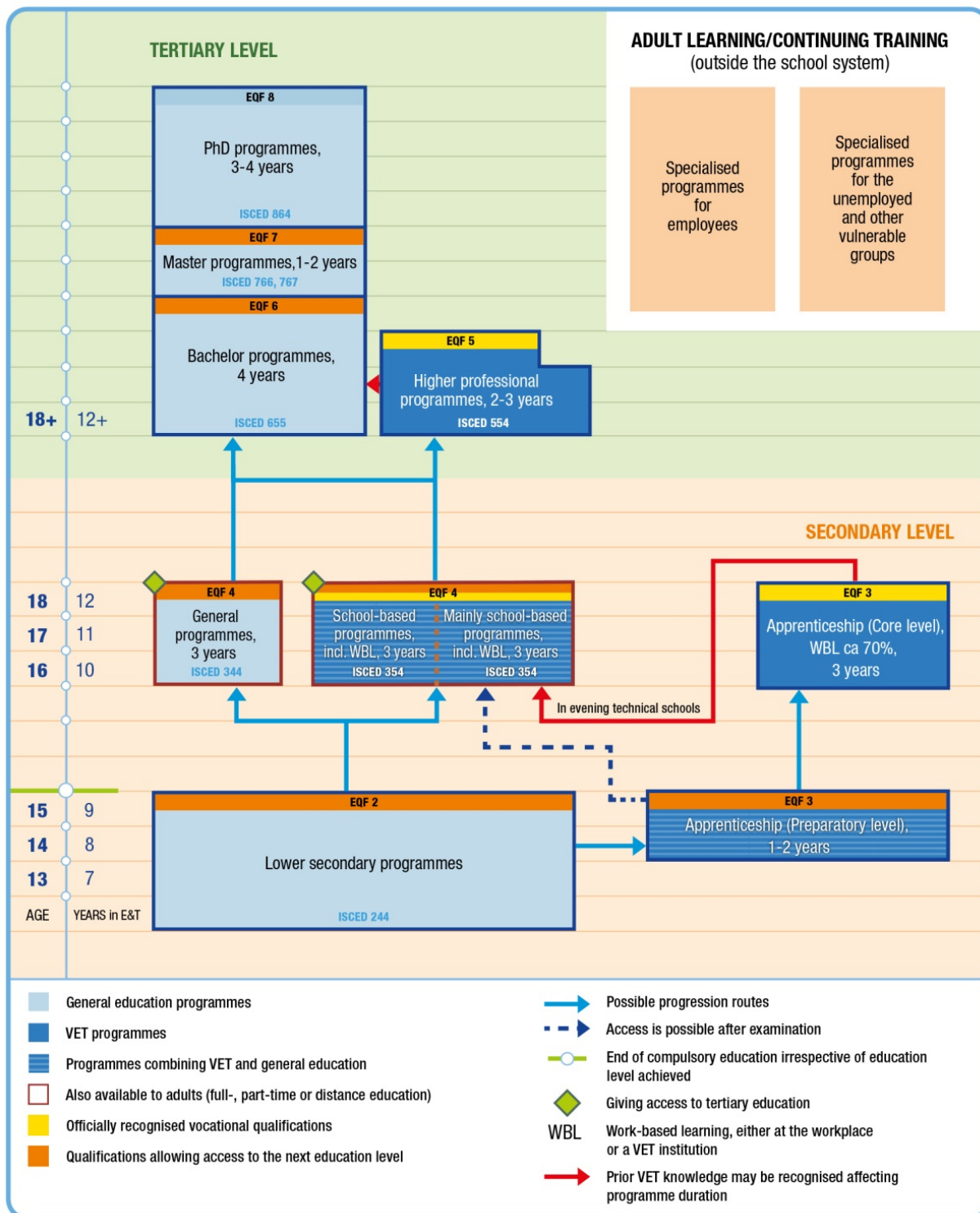
VET at tertiary level is provided at four public institutes/colleges, which come under the jurisdiction of various ministries and at several private colleges. The formerly known as post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training (*MIEEK*) are now tertiary non-university, public institutions after their accreditation by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) (*Φορέας Διασφάλισης και Πιστοποίησης της Ποιότητας της Ανώτερης Εκπαίδευσης*) in 2017.

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 (*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 Cyprus Qualifications Framework (CyQF) 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 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.

Figure 9 presents the education and training system of Cyprus with a particular focus on VET.

Figure 9. VET in Cyprus' education and training system



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Cyprus.

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 was 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 apprentices in June 2013 and was replaced by the new modern apprenticeship (NMA) which started its operation in the school year 2012/13.

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. In 2015, the Council of Ministers, assigned full responsibility for the operation of the NMA to the Department of secondary technical and vocational education and training (STVET) (*Διεύθυνση μέσης τεχνικής και επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης*) of the MoEC, as of September 2015. The improvement of the quality of the NMA and the enhancement of its relevance to labour market needs is implemented as approved by the Council of Ministers in August 2015.

The NMA, which is co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the government of Cyprus, is directed towards young people between 14 and 21 years of age at two apprenticeship levels (preparatory and core). Participation in the NMA is not part of compulsory education and is free of charge. The NMA targets two distinct groups of students:

- (a) Students who have not completed compulsory education lower secondary programmes (third grade of gymnasium) can enrol at the preparatory apprenticeship level. The preparatory apprenticeship has been introduced 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 to choose a specialisation when they proceed to the core level of apprenticeship; and
- (b) students who have either successfully completed compulsory education or successfully completed preparatory apprenticeship can enrol at the core apprenticeship level.

Preparatory apprenticeship does not involve employment but constitutes an alternative form of education and training for students between 14 and 16 years of age who have the opportunity through this 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 take part in workshops related to technical occupations. Such workshops include carpentry, plumbing and mechanics. The curricula are developed by the trainers. Participation in these workshops is part of the programme and does not lead to individual qualifications. Students also receive individual counselling from psychologists according to their needs. Students who complete preparatory apprenticeship (ISCED 2, 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. Apprentices follow practical training in enterprises for three days per week where they are remunerated for their work and receive theoretical training for two days a week by attending classes at technical schools.

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 (section 3.2.2). 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.

Teachers of the theoretical training that takes place at school are teachers of secondary technical and vocational education, STVE (*μέση τεχνική και επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση*) and receive the same training as that described in section 2.2.2. Following the development of new curricula, a training of trainers programme has been implemented for preparatory apprenticeship trainers. Trainers of the apprentices in enterprises do not usually receive any training. However, upgrading the NMA includes measures for providing suitable training to all trainers, teachers and counsellors of the apprentices.

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 2A, EQF level 3) issued 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 apprenticeship certificate allows access to several regulated occupations (e.g. building contractor and electrician), provided that all other requirements of the relevant legislation are met.

In 2017/18, 77 students enrolled at the preparatory level of the NMA and 239 apprentices enrolled in core apprenticeship, in the specialisations of car mechanics, electrical installations, hairdressing, carpentry/furniture making and bakery-confectionery. Table 9 shows the number of students enrolled in Apprenticeship, by year.

Table 9. Number of students enrolled in apprenticeship per year

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Preparatory	91	86	73	77
Core 1 st year	71	85	71	79
Core 2 nd year	20	55	57	47
Core 3 rd year	7	16	37	36

Source: Cyprus Productivity Centre and Ministry of Education and Culture.

The apprenticeship board, which supervises the operation of the apprenticeship system, has a tripartite character while the design of the NMA is the outcome of long and detailed deliberations with the social partners.

In April 2017 the Cypriot Government started a joint project with Cedefop. The objective is to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the national apprenticeship system. Interviews with apprentices and the companies involved were conducted and exchange forums were held. This joint project intends to help national stakeholders plan further development of the national apprenticeship scheme. The project is scheduled to end in December 2018.

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*). The Department of STVET provides a broad range of initial training programmes to leavers from lower secondary programmes (gymnasium) 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. Students select their specialisation in the first year of their studies.

The two directions combine general education subjects with technological and workshop subjects. As of the school year 2016/17, the practical training of students in enterprises has increased. At the end of their first and second year of studies, between June and August, the students of the practical direction are placed in enterprises for four weeks per year. The students of the theoretical direction are also placed in enterprises at the end of their first and second years of study, for two weeks per year.

The programmes provided include various fields of study in both the theoretical and the practical directions. Examples include mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, civil engineering and architecture, hotel and catering, furniture making, industrial design, agriculture, 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 354, 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 fields of study offered at technical schools, and voluntary training programmes which are conducted in the afternoon and are open and free for all teachers. Within the framework for teachers' professional learning, approved by the Council of Ministers in August 2015, each teacher is

obliged to complete 50 hours of professional learning, which include attending seminars, conferences and other activities, within a period of two years.

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 (MoEC, 2004) 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 'Strategic plan for the system of technical and vocational education and training 2015-20' (MoEC, 2015), approved by the Council of Ministers in April 2015 and the 'Proposal for the upgrading of secondary technical and vocational education', approved in December 2015, include measures aiming at further improvement of the quality of STVE and the acquisition by students of the skills and competences needed by the labour market.

The new curricula, which are being implemented since 2016/17, are expected to increase 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 development of closer ties and further enhancement of the cooperation between STVE and industry and the reform and upgrading of the programme of industrial placements. The reformed curricula are oriented towards learning outcomes and based on learning modules and units based on the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

The 2017/18 enrolments in STVE include 4 635 students in the theoretical and practical directions as well as evening technical schools. As shown in Table 10, 16.7% of students in upper secondary education were students in technical schools, as most students prefer to follow general education. This is one of the lowest percentages among European countries and much lower than the EU average which was 48.1% in 2014/15. The recent economic crisis that Cyprus has faced, together with the efforts to increase VET attractiveness, have contributed to a significant increase in the number of students who opt to enrol in technical schools. 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 as from 2014/15.

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

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17*
Upper secondary education pre-vocational and vocational programmes	12.7	13.2	13.6	15.1	15.6	16.7	16.7
Upper secondary education general programmes	87.3	86.8	86.4	84.9	84.4	83.3	83.3

NB. *: Estimate.
Source: CYSTAT (2018a)

The total public expenditure for STVE was estimated to be EUR 56.7 million in 2016 (CYSTAT). The share of secondary technical and vocational public expenditure was estimated to be 4.8% of total public expenditure on education in 2016.

2.2.2.2. Second chance formal initial vocational education

Evening technical schools

The MoEC also offers formal education programmes free of charge, in both the theoretical and practical directions, 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 354, 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 in attending them.

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, which has the same legal status as the one awarded by the upper secondary general education, unified lyceum, as well as mainstream technical schools. Graduates then have the opportunity to compete for a place in higher education in Cyprus or abroad or enter the labour market.

In 2016/17 and 2017/18, 211 and 249 students respectively attended the programmes at the evening technical schools. In 2016, expenditure for the evening secondary general and the evening technical schools amounted to EUR 6.2 million (CYSTAT), 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 STVET. They offer a variety of courses such as plumbing, electrical installations, engineering, computers, car mechanics, cooking and graphic design. The objective of these programmes is to offer, at limited fees, continuing 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 can obtain a second leaving certificate in their chosen field of study.

2.2.3. VET at Tertiary level

In 2012, the MoEC in cooperation with the MLWSI and other stakeholders established, within the context of the education reform, post-secondary institutes of VET ⁽²⁾, co-financed by the ESF, which offered further technical specialisation as of the academic year 2012/13. Amongst the top priorities of the Department of STVET (which is the supervising department of these institutes) regarding the operation of these institutes of VET was their accreditation as a public school of higher VET. This was achieved in April 2017, when the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) (*Φορέας Διασφάλισης και Πιστοποίησης της Ποιότητας της Ανώτερης Εκπαίδευσης*) granted them tertiary non-university level status.

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 454, EQF level 5). These Institutes provide opportunities to Cypriot citizens, especially young people, to acquire, improve, or

⁽²⁾<http://www.mieek.ac.cy/index.php/el/>

upgrade their qualifications and skills so that they are better prepared for the labour market.

The institutes 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 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 needed 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 Council (former 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, considering 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 offered during the school year 2018/19, which have all been accredited by the CYQAA, are the following:

- (a) bakery and confectionery;
- (b) computer and communication networks;
- (c) electromechanical and industrial refrigeration installations;
- (d) industrial and residential automation;
- (e) organic vegetable crops;
- (f) purchasing and supply management - shipping;
- (g) dairy science and technology – cheese making;
- (h) CNC technology – woodworking industry.

In 2016/17 and 2017/18, 246 and 303 students respectively attended the programmes offered. A student placement system with selection criteria (favouring young unemployed individuals in particular) is applied, since the number of applicants exceeds the number of the available places.

Another VET option at tertiary non-university level is provided by four public institutions of tertiary education, which come under the jurisdiction of various ministries and by 43 private institutions of tertiary education.

According to Table 11, during 2016/17, the total number of tertiary education students in Cyprus was 45 263, while 22 507 of them were Cypriot students and 22 756 were foreign students. It should be noted that a significant part of foreign students enrolls in distance-learning programmes, without having physical presence in Cyprus. It should also be noted that many Cypriot students are enrolled in educational institutions abroad.

Table 11. Participation rates in higher education by programme orientation – 2016/17

	Total ISCED 5-8	ISCED 5		ISCED 6		ISCED 7		ISCED 8	
	Number	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Cyprus	45 263	4 535	10.0	21 632	47.8	17 752	39.2	1 344	3.0

NB. *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: CYPSTAT, 2018a.

2.2.3.1. 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:

- the Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus (HHIC) (*Ανώτερο Ξενοδοχειακό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου*) operates under the aegis of the MLWSI;
- the Forestry College (*Δασικό Κολέγιο*) operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (MARDE) (*Υπουργείο Γεωργίας, Αγροτικής Ανάπτυξης και Περιβάλλοντος*), but its operations were temporarily suspended;
- the Tourist Guides School (operates whenever there is a need) operates under the aegis of the Cyprus Tourist Organisation (CTO) (*Κυπριακός Οργανισμός Τουρισμού*);
- 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 needed.

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, if any, are required to pay fees to attend these institutions, 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 programmes of study consist of 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 (ISCED level 554).

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 needed. Pre-service training is usually not a requirement. Only the Police Academy has pre-service training as a requirement. Continuing professional development of VET teachers in public institutions is common practice but on a voluntary basis.

2.2.3.2. *Private institutions of tertiary education*

Private institutions of tertiary education offer a wide range of academic as well as vocational programmes of study at various levels (one- or two-years diploma, three-years higher diploma, four-years bachelor degree and one- or two-years 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, management and engineering. English is the language of instruction for most programmes of studies offered, which attracts students from other countries. Furthermore, several private institutions of tertiary education offer academic programmes of study based on validation or franchised agreements with more than 10 European universities and following the provisions of the competent Law of the Republic of Cyprus.

Since 1996, the establishment and operation of all private institutions of tertiary education is regulated by law. 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.

Teachers in private institutions of tertiary education must have the appropriate qualifications to teach relevant courses. Experience and training is considered an advantage for teachers. Continuing professional development of teachers in private colleges is voluntary, but in some of the institutions, funds are available for supporting the upgrading of teachers' knowledge and skills.

The programmes of study of private institutions of tertiary education are evaluated and accredited by the CYQAA.

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 employers, excluding the government. 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 Directors, 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 training programmes in Cyprus provide incentives to employers to design and organise in-company training programmes, implemented by internal or external trainers, to meet the specific needs of the enterprise for the effective utilisation of its personnel. During 2017, 35 000 employees benefitted from the scheme, and total expenditure amounted to more than EUR 5.2 million;
- (b) single-company training programmes abroad provide incentives to employers to participate with their personnel in training programmes abroad to transfer specialised knowledge and skills in areas related to the introduction of innovation, new technology and technical know-how. During 2017, around 170 employees benefitted from the scheme, and total expenditure amounted to around EUR 350 000;
- (c) multi-company 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. They cover a broad range of issues in all operations of the enterprise and in all occupations. During 2017, more than 12 000 employees benefitted from the scheme, and total expenditure amounted to around EUR 3.3 million;
- (d) high-priority multi-company training programmes provide continuing training to meet the training needs of the employees through participation in training programmes in specific high-priority issues. During 2017, 1 300 employees benefitted from the scheme and total expenditure amounted to EUR 2 million.

2.3.1.2. *Ministry of Education and Culture*

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

In the context of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools, the Department of STVET of the MoEC offers, at limited fees, one-year programmes which lead to the award of a certificate, and three-year programmes which lead to the award of a leaving certificate equivalent to that awarded by technical schools as far as the technical component is concerned. A variety of courses are offered such as plumbing, electrical 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 needed 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 Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC) (Κέντρο Παραγωγικότητας Κύπρου), which offers short modular programmes for employees in technical occupations and management and the HHIC, which offers upgrading courses for employees in the hotel and restaurant sector.

2.3.1.4. *Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment*

Training farmers, foresters and forestry graduates is a competency of the MARDE. While 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. Most of the training courses are provided by the agricultural educational centres of the Department of agriculture. From March 2017 until February 2018, 4 890 farmers took part in 213 training courses.

2.3.1.5. *Cyprus Academy of Public Administration*

The Cyprus Academy of Public Administration (CAPA) (Κυπριακή Ακαδημία Δημόσιας Διοίκησης), whose budget was EUR 1 259 172 for 2018, 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-centred Public Administration, by being a model learning and development public service organisation.

CAPA channels its resources towards the achievement of its strategic goals, mission and vision through (a) the design and organisation of training programmes and other types of learning activities both in the classroom and at the workplace, (b) the development of strategic initiatives (c) the provision of consultancy services and (d) the conduct of applied research.

2.3.1.6. *Ministry of Health*

The Ministry of Health (MoH) (Υπουργείο Υγείας) is responsible for the planning and coordination of continuing professional development of public sector nurses.

2.3.1.7. *Ministry of Justice and Public Order*

The MJPO 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 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 Cyprus National Agency (CY NA), which manages the sector of education and training of the European education programme Erasmus+. The CY NA promotes the aims and objectives of the EU education and training policies in Cyprus. The main activities of the Foundation include the management of funds, allocated to Cyprus by the European Commission, for the participation of Cyprus beneficiary schools/institutions/organisations and their participants (pupils/ students/learners/teachers/educators/other staff) in European education and training programmes/activities.

As far as the Erasmus+ mobility projects for VET (key action 1) are concerned, 31 out of the 36 applications which were received in 2018 were approved. In total 550 mobilities of learners and 57 mobilities of staff will be realised within the next 12 to 24 months (based on the duration of the project). The total budget granted to the approved projects was 1 569 616 EUR.

Compared to the 2017 call for proposals, an increase was observed in both the number of the received applications as well as in the number of the approved applications, mainly due to the significant increase in the available budget for VET. More specifically, 28 applications were received in 2017 out of which 26 were approved with a total budget of 1 351 333 EUR. The 26 approved projects corresponded to a total of 488 learner mobilities and 60 staff mobilities.

Since 2018, 4 organisations have been accredited in total as VET Charter holder organisations. VET Charter holders are selected through an application and evaluation procedure in addition to complying with eligibility criteria set by the European Commission. These organisations are certified organisations for implementing projects under KA1.

As far as strategic partnerships for VET (key action 2) are concerned, 3 out of the 16 applications received in 2018 were approved. The total budget for the approved projects was EUR 665 648. In 2017, 13 applications were received out of which 3 were approved with a total budget of EUR 550 881.

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) Training programmes for the unemployed aim at the participation of the unemployed who are registered with the Public employment services (PES) in training programmes for specific occupations/themes that the HRDA defines after consultation. Contractors (vocational training centres) are appointed by the HRDA to provide the training programmes, following a tendering procedure. Training programmes may include a practical on the job training part in an organisation/enterprise. During 2017, around 260 unemployed persons in total benefitted from the scheme and total expenditure amounted to around EUR 120 400. In 2017, 9 training programmes in the hotel and catering sector for Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) recipients were successfully completed; 6 more were completed in 2018. Six programmes for the provision of care services for persons with paraplegia and quadriplegia were also successfully completed during the 2017/18 period and six more are planned during the 2018/19 period. Nine training programmes for salespersons were also implemented in 2018, and five more are expected to be completed by the end of the year. Six more training programmes in the same sector are planned for 2019;
- (b) employment and training of tertiary education graduates aims at providing opportunities to tertiary education graduates less than 30 years old, to secure a suitable job and acquire work experience and specialised knowledge and skills, while at the same time strengthening enterprises and organisations through the employment and training of qualified persons. The HRDA provides subsidies to employers for the delivery of in-house training programmes of six months' duration. During 2017, more than 900

- unemployed graduates benefitted from the scheme and total expenditure amounted to EUR 5.5 million;
- (c) training of the long-term unemployed in enterprises/organisations offers opportunities to the long-term unemployed in order to enter/re-enter employment with the parallel acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills. The HRDA provides incentives to employers to design, organise and implement in-company training programmes to cover the training needs of newly-employed persons who were long-term unemployed. During 2017, 100 long-term unemployed persons benefitted from the scheme and total expenditure amounted to around EUR 370 000;
 - (d) multi-company training programmes - participation of the unemployed encourage and subsidise the participation of the unemployed who are registered with the PES. Each training institution may accept unemployed persons to take part in training programmes. As of 2016, the scheme has been modified to also include non-recipients of the Guaranteed Minimum Income. During 2017, around 260 unemployed persons benefitted from the scheme and total expenditure amounted to around EUR 45 000.

2.3.2.2. *Ministry of Education and Culture*

In the context of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools (see 2.2.2.2.), the Department of STVET of the MoEC offers one-year programmes leading to the award of a certificate and three-year programmes which lead to the award of a leaving certificate equivalent to that awarded by technical schools as far as the technical component is concerned.

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 needed 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, early school leavers, 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 a number of schemes which promote, both directly and indirectly, the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities.

In 2017 the following programmes were implemented by the department:

- (a) Supported employment programmes which include on-the-job training of persons with disabilities by job coaches in the open labour market. During 2017, 267 persons participated in 19 programmes with a cost of EUR 245 049 for the subsidisation of the job coach salaries.
- (b) Scheme for vocational training of persons with disabilities, which aims to expand the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities by improving their vocational skills. The scheme covers the training costs at an appropriate training institution or company for any course of brief duration, up to a maximum amount of EUR 1 700. During 2017, training opportunities were provided to 4 persons with a budget of EUR 5 760.
- (c) Two schemes for the subsidization of organisations for vocational training programmes that were introduced at the end of 2016; one directly for persons with disabilities, and one aimed at disability professionals. A total of EUR 2 618.40 was allocated by both schemes in 2017.
- (d) The scheme for the creation and operation of small units for self-employment purposes of persons with disabilities, which subsidizes individuals with disabilities with an amount of up to EUR 8 543. During 2017, 4 applications out of a total of 9 submitted met the scheme criteria and were subsidized with a total of EUR 35 428.

2.3.3.2. *Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus*

The HRDA in cooperation with the MLWSI offers the following training activities to Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) recipients:

- (a) job placement of GMI recipients for the acquisition of work experience in the public and broader public sector: The aim of the scheme is to provide work experience opportunities to GMI recipients capable to work, in order to improve their employability and help them re-enter the labour market. GMI recipients are placed in the public and broader public sector for 6 months while they receive their GMI benefit. The implementation period for the scheme is 2017-18, with a total budget of around EUR 1.4 million. During 2017, around 600 GMI recipients were placed and total expenditure amounted to around EUR 20 500
- (b) Scheme for the provision of incentives for hiring GMI recipients combined with a three-month training period: The scheme offers practical training and work experience opportunities to GMI recipients in order to improve their

employability and prepare their employment in a specific enterprise/organisation of the private sector. The target group for this programme is GMI recipients aiming for a 3 months training and 12 months employment. The HRDA scheme (from national funds) covers the part of the three months training with a budget of EUR 390 000 for 850 GMI recipients. During 2017, around 20 persons benefitted from the scheme and total expenditure amounted to EUR 2 000.

2.3.3.3. *Ministry of Education and Culture*

In the context of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools (see 2.2.2.2), the Department of STVET 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, specialised 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.

2.3.3.4. *Ministry of Justice and Public Order*

The MJPO 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 areas such as education, vocational training, and learning of the Greek language, health, information and more.

2.3.4. Training for adults in general

The main bodies promoting training in general for adults are the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.

2.3.4.1. *Ministry of Education and Culture*

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 mid-October to the end of May on the premises of public schools. No entry qualifications are needed and anyone over the age of 15 can attend the courses. Twenty-five 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 22 000 citizens attended the Adult Education Centres during the school year 2017/18.

The Adult Education Centres also organised 399 special classes during the year 2017/18, free of charge, for various disadvantaged groups of people such as illiterate people, prisoners, senior citizens and people with disabilities.

2.3.4.2. *Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance*

Since September 2017, the Cyprus Productivity Centre of the MLWSI, in cooperation with the Department of Electronic Communications of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works (MTCW) (*Υπουργείου Μεταφορών, Επικοινωνιών και Έργων*), offers for free to adults, workshops on e-government systems and training courses on basic digital skills, with emphasis on the use of internet and its basic applications. The objective is to offer at least 170 workshops on e-government systems and 90 training courses on digital competencies all over Cyprus until the end of 2018. In addition, consultancy services will be offered to approximately 100 municipalities, community councils and other bodies for the purpose of improving their e-business level.

CHAPTER 3.

Shaping VET qualifications

The Department of STVET (MoEC) is responsible for the introduction or update of fields of study 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 began to be implemented as of 2016/17 for the first year of studies, 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 tertiary non-university level (formerly post-secondary) have been defined following consultation with the stakeholders participating in the Council (former Advisory Body), and are systematically evaluated, revised and updated on an annual basis, considering 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 tertiary non-university level (VET Institutes), approving training programmes in CVET (offered by HRDA) and shaping the standards for vocational qualifications. The introduction of the CyQF, 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 (MoF) (*Υπουργείο Οικονομικών*) 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 of Cyprus

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

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 study of employment forecasts for Cyprus was completed in 2017, covers the period 2017-27 and provides forecasts for employment needs in all economic sectors (three broad sectors, 21 main sectors and 52 sectors) and in all occupations, 309 in total (173 high level occupations, 130 middle level occupations and 6 low level occupations), covering 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;

Annual investigations for the identification of employment and training needs with the involvement of the social partners.

This study provides annual estimates for the number of persons needed for specific occupations and the needs for specific skills. On the basis of these estimates, suggestions are put forward for the implementation of training programmes. In the study, the views of enterprises, social partners and other stakeholders are collected and analysed through specially designed questionnaires;

Studies on specific sectors:

Identification of blue skills in the Cyprus economy (HRDA, 2016).

This study examines and analyses the blue economy and blue occupations, maps out the blue economy of Cyprus and identifies blue skill needs in the Cyprus economy for the period 2016-26. It provides forecasts for employment demand in economic sectors and occupations which are part of the blue economy. The identification of skills focuses on maritime, shipping, fishing and maritime and coastal tourism occupations. The study leads to suggestions aiming for the timely and planned satisfaction of Cyprus's blue economy needs in the areas of employment and human resource development, education and training.

Identification of green skill needs in the Cyprus economy (HRDA, 2018a).

This study examines and analyses the green economy and green occupations, mapping out the green economy of Cyprus and identifying green skill needs in the Cyprus economy for the period 2017-27. The green economy in Cyprus consists of 30 economic sectors and 60 occupations from the whole spectrum of

the Cyprus labour market. The study leads to specific suggestions aiming for the timely and planned response to the future situation in the labour market resulting from the transition to a green economy. The suggestions concern employment and human resource development, education and training.

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 programmes at tertiary non-university level of the MoEC. They are also utilised by people involved in counselling such as secondary education vocational guidance teachers and employment counsellors and by the 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. Based on these research studies and following consultations with stakeholders, the HRDA prepares every two years 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 considered 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 STVET is responsible for the introduction, with the participation of the social partners, of new fields of study and specialisations, the design of curricula and the identification of special skills needed.

To carry out these tasks, while considering the developmental needs of the Cyprus economy and the latest scientific and technological advances, the Department of STVET has developed close cooperation with all major stakeholders such as Ministries and the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development, the social partners (employers' and employees' organisations), teachers and their associations, the University of

Cyprus (Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου), the Pedagogical Institute (Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο) and the HRDA. The findings of the research studies of the HRDA are also considered for the design of curricula.

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 to assist the NCP in the development of the referencing report.

The final version of the Cyprus referencing report was presented and submitted for approval to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Group in December 2016, in Brussels. During the meeting of the EQF Advisory Group in February 2017, the Cyprus delegation presented a detailed implementation roadmap of the CyQF. Through this detailed roadmap, Cyprus became the 31st country that was referenced to the EQF. Cyprus will present an update of the implementation of the roadmap in late 2018.

At the same time, several 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.

3.2.2. Development of a system of vocational qualifications

The further development of a competence-based system of vocational qualifications, which constitutes an integral part of the CyQF, is a high priority for Cyprus. The System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) 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 SVQ is based on

Vocational Qualifications Standards (VQS) developed by the HRDA. At the same time, the VQS define the framework for the training and development of the candidates to be prepared for a successful assessment, in order to obtain the certification of their vocational qualifications.

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:

3.2.2.1. *Development of Vocational Qualification Standards*

To date, seventy two vocational qualifications have been developed by the HRDA with the contribution of technical committees comprising representatives of industry, employers and workers and education and training institutions.

During the first phase of the SVQ in the period 2006-09, five standards of vocational qualifications were 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 of the SVQ, which covered the period 2007–2015 and was co-financed by the ESF, 67 new standards were developed and opportunities for access were provided to 1 700 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.

The SVQ is also co-financed by the ESF during the programming period 2014-2020. It is expected that 80 new standards will be developed, in various areas of the economy, and the existing standards will be updated.

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

The system of vocational qualifications developed by the HRDA is integrated, at levels 2 to 7, within the CyQF.

During the Programming Period 2014-2020 it is expected that 4 000 persons will be assessed to get their vocational qualifications recognised. A €6m budget is allocated for the SVQ. From the beginning of the operation of the SVQ to date more than 2 200 people have successfully assessed their knowledge, skills, and abilities and have been awarded with a certificate of vocational qualifications.

3.2.2.2. *Assessment and Certification of Vocational Qualifications*

The SVQ has adopted the four phases of validation procedure according to the European Recommendation on Validation of non-Formal and Informal Learning (2012/C398/01).

The description of the four phases follows:

(a) Identification

Identification involves the determination of the learning outcomes gained through formal, non-formal and informal learning. The identification takes place in approved by HRDA Centres for Assessment of Vocational Qualifications (CAVQ).

At first, information is provided to the candidates about the SVQ requirements. The identification arises from an interview in which the CAVQ obtains information from the candidates related to their education and work experience, in particular to the learning outcomes. Then the candidates are advised to choose a specific qualification standard according to their knowledge, skills and competence. The results of this phase are written down in the identification and documentation report.

(b) Documentation

Documentation entails sufficient proof of the knowledge, skills and competences, which have been identified during the previous phase. The candidates submit to the CAVQ any relevant documents proving the acquisition of the learning outcomes through formal, non-formal and informal learning. i.e. educational and vocational qualifications, employment experience confirmation, social insurance statements. The results of this phase are described in the identification and documentation report.

If the candidates decide to proceed with the assessment in order to acquire the certificate of vocational qualification they have to fill in and sign the application form. The application form should be accompanied by the identification and documentation report and all the relevant documents.

When a group of up to 3 candidates is formed the director/manager of CAVQ submits to the HRDA for approval the application forms attached with the identification and documentation report and the relevant documents.

(c) Assessment

The HRDA approves the candidates' applications, provided they are compatible with the criteria of SVQ. In this case, the candidates can proceed for assessment.

The assessment of learning outcomes is carried out by two approved assessors for every team of up to 3 candidates, in 2 to 5 meetings, of 3-hour duration each, in an approved CAVQ. CAVQs may be public or private training centres, which are certified by HRDA as vocational training centres and have certified training facilities.

The assessment is based on the vocational qualification standard and the main assessment method is the observation of candidates in real or simulated working conditions. The assessment of vocational qualifications may also include, depending on each standard, interview, oral exam, written exam and

project. The results of the assessment are depicted on the report of candidate's assessment.

The assessors are independent experts, certified trainers and should comply with specific academic and professional criteria. The assessors are trained by HRDA and sign a contract regarding the terms of reference as assessors of SVQ.

As far as the quality assurance is concerned, every CAVQ is obliged to carry out at least one internal audit during each team's assessment, to provide internal quality assurance for each assessment. Additionally, each assessment is externally verified through an on the spot visit by an independent verifier authorised by HRDA. The results of the checks' verifications are depicted in separate reports.

(d) Certification

Candidates' assessment reports are submitted to HRDA, which validates the results of the assessments. The successful assessment of the candidates in all task areas constituting the vocational qualification standard and all methods of assessment is the necessary condition for the certification of the candidates.

HRDA being the awarding body approves the assessment through the relevant documentation and proceeds to the certification of the candidate. If a candidate has succeeded in only a part of the qualification task areas, an affirmation (partial certification) is provided only for these task areas. In these cases, the candidate is given the opportunity of reassessment in the failed tasks and/or methods of assessment.

3.2.3. Implementing a unit-based credit system

The 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 appointed in September 2011 and since 2012, the CY NA together with the ECVET experts in Cyprus has organised several events and seminars and managed activities for the promotion, information and development of ECVET at National and European level, within the ECVET project submitted for funding by the EU, every year.

This committee has acquired adequate training at National and European level and it has become an expert group that is currently comprised of stakeholders from the public and the private sector, such as the MoEC, the CPC which is part of the MLWSI, CY NA 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 on-going reform of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education curricula.

3.2.4. Supporting recognition of qualifications abroad and mobility

The Europass documents describe knowledge and skills acquired by learners and in this way support the mobility of learners, transparency and recognition of qualifications. The CPC, was appointed as the Cyprus National Europass Centre (NEC) 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 2017, 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. The Europass diploma supplement (EDS) is issued by most of higher educational institutes, which makes this document quite well-known amongst college and university students. The NEC gets feedback from all the major public and private universities and colleges in Cyprus on the number of EDS documents issued. For example, in 2017 four universities in Cyprus (University of Cyprus, Cyprus University of Technology, Frederick University and European University Cyprus) issued around 4 700 Europass Diploma Supplement documents. Furthermore, around 1 300 Europass Certificate Supplements have been issued to the 2017 technical schools' graduates.

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 2017, 822 documents were issued.

In 2017, the Cyprus NEC organised 41 workshops with 510 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.

The Council of Ministers on 18 May 2017 approved (Decision No. 82.592) the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority, with the powers to further enhance the quality assurance systems in education and training, to monitor and integrate in the CyQF the scheme for the validation of non-formal and informal learning after its completion, to monitor the CyQF/EQF levels on the

certificates, diplomas and Europass documents, to further strengthen the legal aspect of CyQF and to develop a registry for the CyQF.

3.3.1.1. *Secondary Technical and Vocational Education*

The respective Inspector of each field of study 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, by using effective teaching methods. Constant assessment of the progress of learners, in the form of written assignments, projects, tests and a final examination is instrumental for Inspectors to evaluate the outcome of the educators' work.

3.3.1.2. *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; and
- (b) the CYQAA which is an independent body responsible for the external evaluation and accreditation of all higher education institutions.

3.3.1.3. *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 regarding training providers is the introduction of a System for the assessment and accreditation of training providers. The aim of this System is to assess physical and legal entities dealing with the organisation and implementation of training activities or/and with the provision of infrastructure facilities for their implementation, to be accredited as Vocational Training Centres, Vocational Training Facilities and Trainers of Vocational Training. As of 1st January 2015, accreditation through the System, is compulsory for those who want to cooperate with the HRDA for the implementation of subsidised, co-funded or/and tendered training activities.

Persons who want to become Trainers of Vocational Training must successfully go through the assessment and certification procedure following the

System of Vocational Qualifications (3.2.2.2) and acquire the Trainer of Vocational Training Qualification (EQF/CyQF 5, SVQ Level 5).

The HRDA also carries out evaluation studies on the effectiveness and impact of its activities (HRDA, 2018b; HRDA, 2017a; HRDA, 2017b; HRDA, 2017c; HRDA, 2017d). 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.

CHAPTER 4.

Promoting participation in VET

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 VET learners

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 training 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 centres and providers, which prepare and submit for approval, every six months, continuing training programmes, in accordance with the themes eligible for funding 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.

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) of the MoEC, the PES, 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 CCES 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/counselling throughout upper secondary education. In addition, to become acquainted with the world of work, the students have the opportunity to attend presentations given by professionals in different fields and visit workplaces. Each school organises career days where professionals and staff from higher education institutions give lectures to students. Personal and group counselling, administration and analysis of psychometric tests along with presentations to classes of all levels, are provided to students by qualified guidance school counsellors. Also, school counsellors give lectures to parents to inform them about the educational options of their children.

The counsellors have undergone post-graduate education in counselling and/or career education/guidance. They are placed in schools of secondary education as well as at the central and regional offices of the CCES offices of the MoEC. The counsellors at the central offices give support to the counsellors placed in schools and they are also responsible for many publications that address the needs of the counselling and career education service. They also provide counselling and career guidance services to the public.

An open school day, organised by the Department of STVET, has been established to raise public awareness and increase initial VET attractiveness. 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, to further promote awareness of the career possibilities provided by initial VET programmes.

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 Cyprus Guidance and Counsellors Association, member of the Organisation of Secondary School Teachers of Cyprus, also organises an Annual Careers Fair and more than 150 organised professional bodies and organisations participate.

The British Council and the Education USA, a US Department of State network, with the participation of different universities and colleges from the UK and the US respectively, also organise education fairs, to provide information to prospective students for further studies in these countries. In recent years, education fairs are also organised by institutions of other countries.

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

In 2017, the Euroguidance Cyprus Centre, created a new website for the National Centre, re-structuring and reorganising its content and context in accordance with the Euroguidance initiative. The Euroguidance network operates in all EU and EEA countries and in all counties candidate countries. The Network is co-financed by the European Commission and the relevant national authorities. Its main task is the facilitation of mobility in respect of education and/or employment, through guidance and support. The website provides among other things information on

- (a) The Euroguidance Network
- (b) Seminars, Workshops and Trainings organised in Cyprus and abroad targeting the guidance community
- (c) living and studying in Cyprus; and
- (d) 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 mainly guidance practitioners, individuals and organisations in need of counselling and guidance, and students and parents seeking information related to mobility issues in the European Union.

The CCES of the MoEC in cooperation with the Euroguidance centre of the MLWSI are setting up a database with all the public and private institutions of

higher education in Cyprus. The first phase of the new database will include data gathered from all Tertiary Education Institutions operating in Cyprus, while the second phase will include data from all Higher Education Institutes, both public and private. The database will be used to set up a search engine that will be open to the public, via the national education portal.

4.2.1.3. *Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus*

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 website with information and advice on approved training opportunities. The HRDA also displays its research studies in a downloadable form. A special section in the website contains occupational employment forecasts in all the occupations and economic sectors of the labour market 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. The CCES has extended access to guidance for other groups of people, such as the NEETs.

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 or entering the labour market.

Furthermore, the PES help 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.

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 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 CCES, in cooperation with the PES of the MLWSI, are implementing the European Project 'Counselling and Career Guidance for the NEET group of people (aged 15 – 29)'. The aim of this project is to promote the empowerment, participation and the active citizenship of young people NEET by offering free support mechanisms and consultation to whoever is in need.

The CCES aims to provide counselling and career guidance services to 4 000 NEETs by career guidance counsellors and counselling psychologists. When necessary, further educational, psychological and social support is offered through referrals to qualified professionals. During the process, counsellors evaluate the aptitudes, knowledge, skills and attitudes of NEET persons by using psychometric testing, specialized tools or guidance evaluation questionnaires. Through the establishment of an individual action plan for each recipient, counsellors refer them to regular secondary or tertiary education, to second-chance school programs, or to vocational training programs.

The overall expected benefits of the project include and are not limited to, the enrichment and overall enhancement of the current Career Counselling Services offered throughout the country and to lower the youth unemployment rate. Furthermore, through this project CCES aims to effectively engage as many of young people as possible in the workforce and/or education (as suggested by the EU policy agenda).

Lastly, through this project the MoEC will be able to further identify the characteristics (including sociodemographic factors, educational background) of the NEETs and thus carefully plan any future plans/projects. The project is financed by ESF, the Youth Employment Initiative as well as state funds. It is expected to run until the end of November 2019.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

CAPA	Cyprus Academy of Public Administration
CAVQ	Centres for Assessment of Vocational Qualifications
CCES	Counselling and Career Education Service
CPC	Cyprus Productivity Centre
CTO	Cyprus Tourist Organisation
CVET	Continuous Vocational Education and Training
CY NA	Cyprus National Agency
CYQAA	Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education
CyQF	Cyprus Qualifications Framework
CYSTAT	Statistical Service of Cyprus
ECVET	European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training
EEA	European Economic Area
EDS	Europass Diploma Supplement
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMI	Guaranteed Minimum Income
HHIC	Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus
HRDA	Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	Initial Education and Training
LFS	Labour Force Survey
MARDE	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment
MoEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoH	Ministry of Health
MJPO	Ministry of Justice and Public Order
MLWSI	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
MTCW	Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works
NEC	National Europass Centre
NEET	Not in Education, Employment, or Training
NCP	National Coordination Point
NMA	New Modern Apprenticeship
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PES	Public Employment Services

STVE	Secondary Technical and Vocational Education
STVET	Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training
SVQ	System of Vocational Qualifications
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USA	United States of America
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VQS	Vocational Qualifications Standards

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Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry	www.ccci.org.cy
Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation	www.oeb.org.cy
Cyprus Productivity Centre	www.kepa.gov.cy
Cyprus Workers Confederation	www.sek.org.cy
Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Education	www.dipae.ac.cy
Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development	www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf
Euroguidance centre Cyprus	www.euroguidance.gov.cy
Europa	www.ec.europa.eu
Eurydice	https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/home_en
Forestry College of Cyprus	www.moa.gov.cy/fc
Foundation for the management of European lifelong learning programmes	www.erasmusplus.cy
Funding programmes portal	www.fundingprogrammesportal.gov.cy
Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus	www.hhic.ac.cy
Human Resource Development Authority	www.anad.org.cy
Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment	www.moa.gov.cy
Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus	www.moec.gov.cy
Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance	www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/mlsi.nsf/index_gr/index_gr?OpenDocument
() National Education Portal	http://www.epe.ac.cy
National Resource Centre for Guidance Cyprus	www.nrcg.dl.mlsi.gov.cy
Nursing Services	www.moh.gov.cy
Pancyprian Federation of Labour	www.peo.org.cy
Police Academy	www.police.gov.cy
Pre-service training programme	www.proy.ucy.ac.cy
Statistical Service of Cyprus	http://mof.gov.cy/en/
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 - 2.3. Ministry of Education and Culture www.moec.gov.cy
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 - 2.5. Cyprus Academy of Public Administration (CAPA)
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 - 2.6. Pedagogical Institute www.pi.ac.cy
 - 2.7. Cyprus Productivity Centre www.mlsi.gov.cy/kepa
3. Social partners: employer and trade union organisations
 - 3.1. Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation www.oeb.org.cy/
 - 3.2. Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry www.ccci.org.cy
 - 3.3. Cyprus Confederation of Professional Craftsmen and Shopkeepers
www.povek.com
 - 3.4. Cyprus Workers' Confederation www.sek.org.cy
 - 3.5. Pancyprian Federation of Labour www.peo.org.cy
 - 3.6. Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus www.deok.org.cy
 - 3.7. Cyprus Union of Bank Employees www.etyk.org.cy
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 - 5.2. National Eurydice Unit www.moec.gov.cy/eurydice
 - 5.3. Youth Board of Cyprus onek.org.cy/en/

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