
INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY
IN APPRENTICESHIPS: FOCUS
ON LONG-TERM MOBILITY

CYPRUS





Please cite this publication as:

Theocharous, A. (2019). *International mobility in apprenticeships: focus on long-term mobility: Cyprus*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/international_mobility_apprenticeship_Cyprus_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf

Author: Aristos Theocharous, Human Resource Officer

Supervision: Constantina Kyriacou-Liveri, Senior Human Resource Officer

Contributors: Members of the Cyprus ReferNet consortium

Reviewed by Cedefop

© HRDA (Cedefop ReferNet Cyprus), 2019

Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

The thematic perspectives series complements the general information on vocational education and training (VET) systems provided in '[VET in Europe](#)' reports. The themes presented in the series feature high on the European agenda.

Thematic perspectives provide national overviews of specific themes in a common format and offer comparative dimension across the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. They are available at:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/thematic-perspectives>

This thematic perspective was prepared based on data/information from 2007 to 2019.

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of Cedefop.

Thematic perspectives are co-financed by the European Union and ReferNet national partners.

ReferNet is a network of institutions across Europe representing the 28 Member States, plus Iceland and Norway. The network provides Cedefop with information and analysis on national vocational education and training (VET). ReferNet also disseminates information on European VET and Cedefop's work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>



Contents

Contents.....	3
CHAPTER 1. Introduction.....	4
CHAPTER 2. Exogenous factors influencing mobility of apprentices at upper secondary level	8
2.1. Economic sectors and actors	8
2.2. Dynamics of skills demand and supply at medium level occupations	9
2.3. Attitude of employers towards training	12
2.4. International qualification existence.....	13
2.5. Other relevant factors	14
CHAPTER 3. The link between the apprenticeship system design and apprentices' mobility.....	15
CHAPTER 4. Conclusions	17
List of abbreviations	18
References.....	19
Annex.....	20

CHAPTER 1.

Introduction

The apprenticeship system in Cyprus was in the past a two-year initial VET (IVET) programme providing practical and theoretical training to young people who had not successfully completed their lower secondary compulsory education or upper secondary education and wished to be trained and employed in technical occupations.

In 2007, the Council of Ministers approved the proposal for the establishment of the New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA), which provides an alternative pathway for education, training and development for young people and is geared towards meeting the needs of the labour market. The NMA started its operation in the school year 2012/2013. As of September 2015, the Council of Ministers assigned full responsibility for the operation of the apprenticeship to the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MECSY). Measures for the improvement of the quality of apprenticeship and the enhancement of its relevance to labour market needs are implemented as approved by the Council of Ministers in August 2015.

The apprenticeship, which is co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the government of Cyprus, is directed towards young people between 15 and 18 years of age at two apprenticeship levels (preparatory and core). Participation in the apprenticeship 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 lower secondary education 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 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, literacy and digital skills, 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. Curricula are developed by teachers. Participation in these workshops does not lead to formal 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, may re-enter the formal education system (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

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 per week by attending classes at Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training.

The curricula of technical specialisations incorporate the Standards of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) developed by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) where these exist. The content of training in enterprises can take the form of a training plan developed by the school teacher and the in-company trainer working together and agreed by the employer. The workplace 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 (core apprenticeship) are regular qualified secondary technical and vocational education teachers. Following the development of new curricula, they went through a training programme relevant to the needs of the NMA.

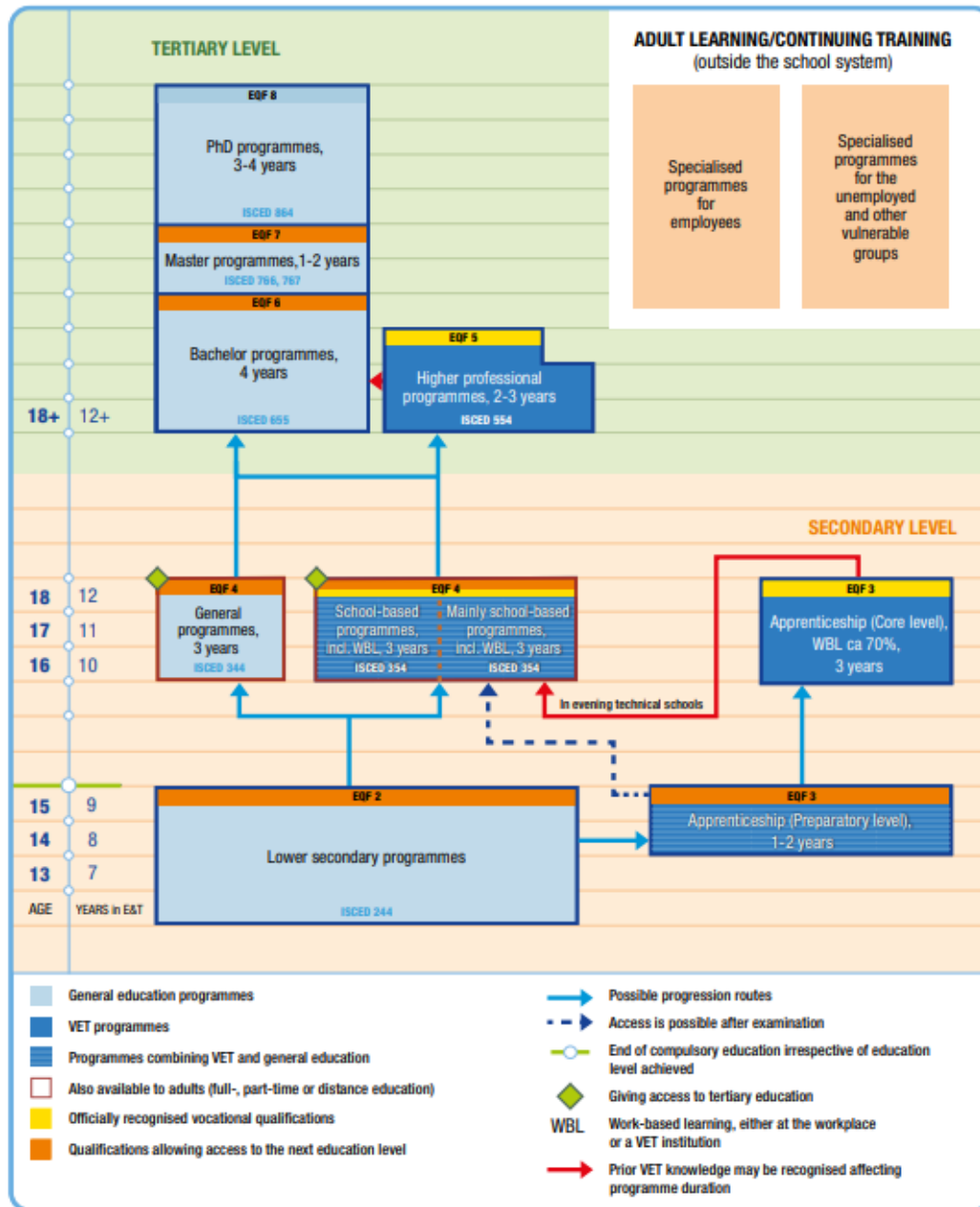
In the academic year 2018/2019, 71 apprentices were enrolled in preparatory apprenticeship and 124 in core apprenticeship (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of students enrolled in apprenticeship per year

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Preparatory	91	86	73	77	71
Core 1 st year	71	85	71	79	62
Core 2 nd year	20	55	57	47	30
Core 3 rd year	7	16	37	36	32
Total	189	242	238	239	195

Source: Cyprus Productivity Centre and Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth.

Figure 1. VET in the education and training system in Cyprus



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Cyprus.

CHAPTER 2.

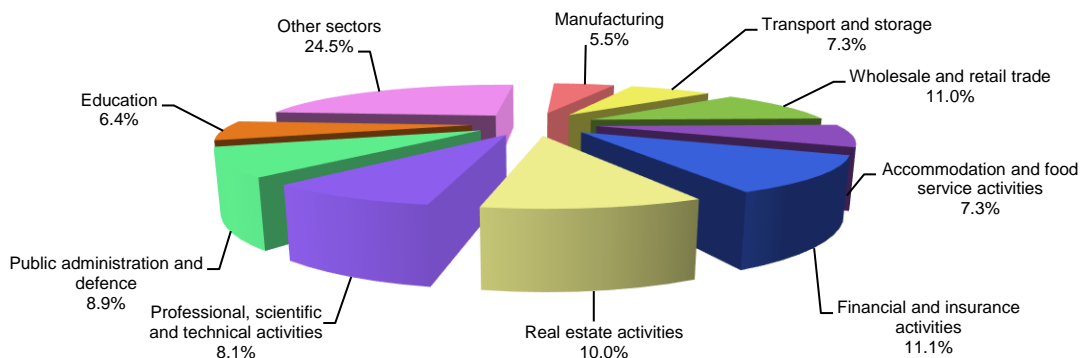
Exogenous factors influencing mobility of apprentices at upper secondary level

2.1. Economic sectors and actors

The economy of Cyprus is diversified, and many economic sectors are open to the international and EU context. The business' tax system in Cyprus, has attracted enterprises from around the globe.

presents the distribution of gross domestic product (GDP) by sector in 2017. The Cypriot economy is mainly service-based and the tertiary sector accounts for about 84.7% of GDP, while the secondary sector accounts for 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.

The financial and insurance activities sector includes foreign enterprises in the banking and foreign exchange services. In the wholesale and retail trade sector, international enterprises have well established their presence in Cyprus. Cyprus is also a favourable destination for international enterprises to invest in the accommodation and food service activities, with one of the latest big

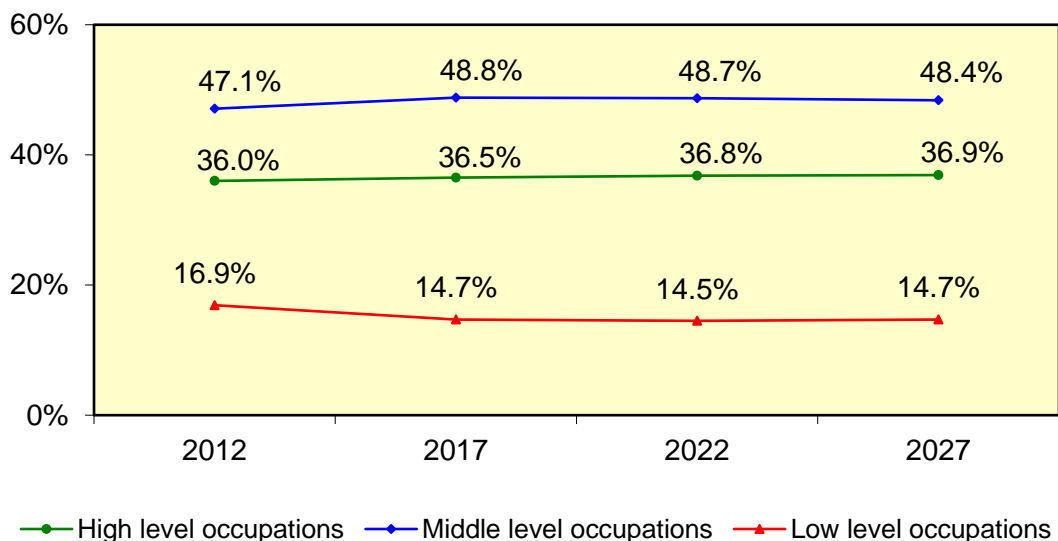
investments being the development of the first integrated casino-resort in Cyprus. It can be assumed that these companies, especially the multinational ones, will provide more places for apprentices, favouring in this way both outgoing and incoming mobility of apprentices.

2.2. Dynamics of skills demand and supply at medium level occupations

The HRDA provides 10-year employment forecasts on a regular basis every two to three years. The latest study of employment forecasts for Cyprus which was completed in 2017, covers the period 2017-2027 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 six low level occupations), covering the whole spectrum of the Cyprus labour market (Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (2017)).

An increase in employment is expected for all three broad occupational categories - high, middle and low-level occupations. As shown in , almost half of employed persons will continue to be in middle level occupations (occupations that require secondary level education) while one in three employed persons will be in high level occupations (occupations that require tertiary level education).

Figure 3. Employment shares in broad occupation categories for the period 2017-2027



Source: Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (2017).

Among the middle level occupations with the highest employment demand, eleven occupations belong to Service and sale workers, five to Craft workers, three to Clerks, two to Plant and machine operators and assemblers and one to Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishing workers (Table 2).

Table 2. **Middle level occupations with the highest employment demand**

	Middle level occupations
1	Cashiers and ticket clerks (617 persons or 6.6% per year)
2	General office clerks (595 persons or 4.1% per year)
3	Waiters (567 persons or 5.8% per year)
4	Shop sales assistants (535 persons or 3.4% per year)
5	Car, van and motorcycle drivers (288 persons or 3.8% per year)
6	Material-recording and transport clerks (268 persons or 5.1% per year)
7	House builders (251 persons or 3.7% per year)
8	Cooks (244 persons or 4.7% per year)
9	Secretaries (general) (234 persons or 4.1% per year)
10	Heavy truck and bus drivers (228 persons or 4.0% per year)
11	Shop keepers (203 persons or 3.6% per year)
12	Hairdressers (189 persons or 4.3% per year)
13	Police officers (172 persons or 3.4% per year)
14	Beauticians (146 persons or 4.3% per year)
15	Building caretakers (142 persons or 7.4% per year)
16	Motor vehicle mechanics and repairers (138 persons or 3.5% per year)
17	Information and communications technology installers and servicers (134 persons or 6.3% per year)
18	Bartenders (114 persons or 5.1% per year)
19	Child care workers (111 persons or 5.5% per year)
20	Carpenters and joiners (110 persons or 3.9% per year)

21	Market gardeners and crop growers (104 persons or 2.2% per year)
22	Bakers, pastry-cooks and confectionery makers (103 persons or 4.1% per year)

Source: Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (2017).

In theory, most of the indicative specialisations proposed below for the NMA are in line with the occupations covered by the SVQ operated by the HRDA, so that the apprenticeship certificate is also certified through the above system:

- (a) Hotel / Food Industry, including cooking, bakery, pastry, hotel maintenance and housekeeping
- (b) Food processing
- (c) Manufacturing, including welding, steel and aluminium constructions
- (d) Building Industry, including building, carpentry, plumbing, cooling and heating, insulation, electrical installations etc.
- (e) Retail sector, including retail, warehouse and household electrical/electronic appliances
- (f) Vehicle repair, including car motorcycle and bicycle mechanics, vehicle electrical and A/C engineers, body and tire repair
- (g) Hairdressing and Aesthetic Art, including beauticians
- (h) Agriculture - Livestock – Floriculture, including fish farming and gardening

Comparing the middle level occupations with the highest employment demand as shown in Table 2 with the above mentioned possible specialisations, it is evident that the NMA may offer, if requested, programmes to address the labour market shortage in specific occupations. It is understood that not all of the following specialisations will be implemented at the same time, but will be offered alternately in different cities, depending on the interest shown by apprentices and organised employers. In 2017/18 the 162 apprentices enrolled in core apprenticeship, were in the specialisations of car mechanics, electrical installations, hairdressing, carpentry/furniture making and bakery-confectionery. This significant alignment of apprenticeship specialisations with the occupations with high employment demand could in theory act as an enabler of mobility too, but at the moment does not seem to be a major factor in this direction, as other factors seem to matter more.

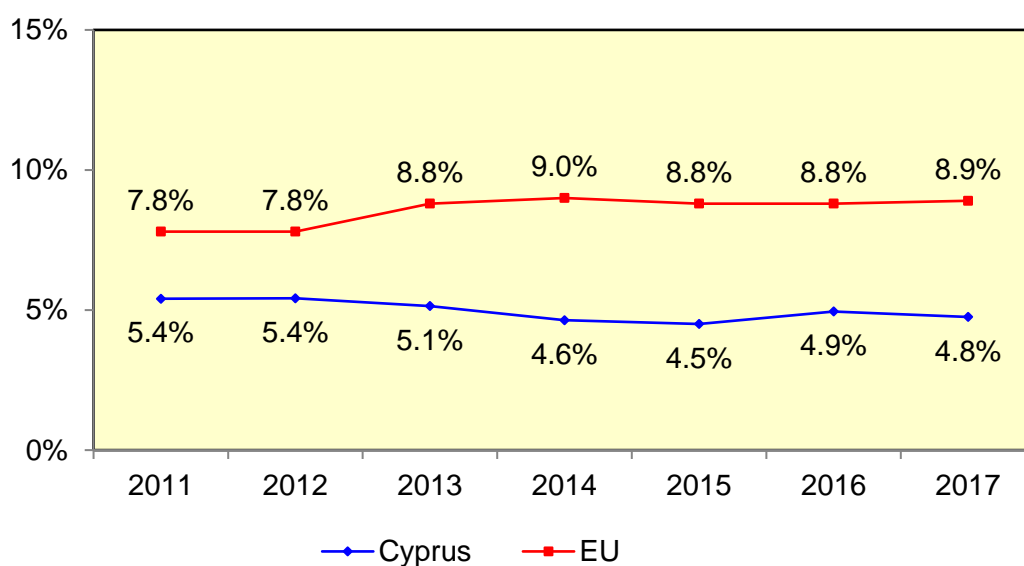
2.3. Attitude of employers towards training

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 and self-employed. 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 total eligible costs. The HRDA provides subsidies to the employers. In 2017, the number of enterprises which participated in the HRDA's activities that provide subsidies to enterprises, has shown a significant increase and reached 4 883 enterprises (+22.8% compared to 2016) (Human Recourse Development Authority of Cyprus (2018b)).

In general, the population aged 24-65 with up to post-secondary non-tertiary education has relatively low participation in education and training activities. The HRDA's study 'Trends of Human Resource Indicators in Cyprus 2011 – 2017' (Human Recourse Development Authority of Cyprus (2018a)) has revealed that 4.8% of this population had participated in 2017 in education and training activities, much lower than the EU average (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Figure 4. **Percentage of the population aged 24-65 years old with up to post-secondary non-tertiary education that participated in education and training activities, 2011-2017**



Source: Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (2018a).

Even though enterprises, especially medium and large ones, seem to be positive in providing training for their employees, when it comes to the apprenticeship system they are reluctant to accommodate apprentices for the practical training due to their perceived attitude and behaviour, their low skills level and because they are unwilling to pay the remuneration set by the law. Therefore, finding apprenticeship places among employers is a major challenge, and investing in their training through a mobility spell abroad seems to be an even bigger challenge at the moment.

2.4. International qualification existence

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 Cyprus Qualifications Framework (CyQF). Through this detailed roadmap, Cyprus became the 31st country that was referenced to the EQF. The curricula of technical specialisations offered in the NMA incorporate the standards of vocational qualifications developed by the HRDA, which are part of the CyQF.

There are several programmes, offered primarily by private schools, colleges and universities, that lead to international qualifications such as the Chartered Certified Accountant qualification and the Cisco Certified Network Associate certificate.

The current specialisations offered through the NMA do not lead to any internationally recognised qualification and this may be registered as a barrier for any incoming apprentices.

2.5. Other relevant factors

According to the Erasmus+ National Agency for Education and Training in Cyprus, other possible factors affecting long-term mobility include military service obligations. This is considered as a disabling factor for participation in long-term mobility programmes. Up until the call of 2018, the military service could be an obstacle for male students who would like to participate in long-term mobility after their graduation. However, from the call of 2018 onwards, the European Commission has given exemption to countries with mandatory military service and the following applies for recent graduates: *'Recent graduates of a VET*

provider (including former apprentices) may also participate in the activity. Recent graduates must undertake their training placement abroad within 12 months after their graduation. For those countries where recent graduates must enrol in obligatory military or civil service after graduation, the period of eligibility for recent graduates will be extended by the duration of that service'. Another view expressed by the National Agency, is that long-term mobility will not be popular among female students due to reluctance of families that oppose to mobility of the age group in concern and also that apprenticeship schools are reluctant to support graduates, after completion of their military service, i.e. more than a year after their graduation.

Cyprus being an island, also poses obstacles in long-term mobility in general not only in apprenticeship. Travelling to mainland EU countries is only possible via air transport and being a popular tourist destination, ticket prices are high, especially during the tourist season.

CHAPTER 3.

The link between the apprenticeship system design and apprentices' mobility

The NMA's initial aim was to provide an alternative VET route to students and provide enterprises with skilled employees. Taking into consideration the profile of the students that choose to register in these programmes, NMA's primary role is now to provide a second chance for students who are at risk of early school leaving.

Because of the prevailing profile of apprenticeship students, a prejudice has developed against the apprenticeship system, since it has long been considered as the only option for these students. Students with low learning capabilities, psychological problems and delinquent behaviour participate in the apprenticeship system, usually not by option but because they have no other choice. For this reason, psychologists were employed in the NMA to support apprentices, in both preparatory and core apprentice levels. In this context, the role and position of the apprenticeship system is perceived by many stakeholders as of lower esteem than intended, thus limiting participation and not favouring commitment to activities that could improve its quality and attractiveness to learners. Important barriers arise, first and most importantly, from this perceived role and function of the NMA in the education system.

The apprenticeship system is governed by Law 13/1966 on Apprentices, complemented by decision 78.658/2015 by the Council of Ministers which assigned the responsibility for apprenticeship to the MECSY. An apprenticeship board is in place, with a wide representation of government bodies/Ministries and social partners. However, promoting long-term mobility in apprenticeship does not seem to be, currently, a priority.

Taking into consideration the mode of delivery of the core apprenticeship, where apprentices follow practical training in enterprises for three days per week and receive theoretical training for two days per week by attending classes at schools, it is difficult to accommodate cross-country mobility of apprentices, without redesigning the structure of the system through amendment of the law or by decision of the Council of Ministers. However, the overall duration of core apprenticeship is in theory long enough (three years) and could be considered as an enabler for long-term mobility.

Also, amendment of the law will be required to incorporate changes related to the contract signed between the apprentice and the employer, that regulates the terms of employment and in-company training.

As per Article 5 of the Apprenticeship Law of 1966, an enterprise needs to be registered with the Apprenticeship Board to be able to participate in the apprenticeship system.

In conclusion, there seems to be no link between the apprenticeship system design and apprentices' mobility. On the contrary, the apprenticeship is designed and structured in a way that makes it extremely difficult for apprentices to participate in long-term mobility.

Amendments of the law in order to enable mobility are theoretically possible (although the process might be time-consuming), but it should be pointed out that they are less likely to be introduced or actually work, unless they are accompanied by an increased investment, for redesigning the system and by safeguarding stakeholders' commitment to the apprenticeship system overall.

CHAPTER 4.

Conclusions

The apprenticeship system in Cyprus, which faces many challenges in order to provide an alternative education pathway, does not favour outgoing cross-border mobility of apprentices, especially when it comes to long-term mobility. An initiative was registered at the core apprenticeship programme in Limassol, which has applied for the first time for Erasmus+ grants in 2019 but not for long-term mobility (ErasmusPro).

An obvious disabler is the law which the apprenticeship system is governed by. An extensive amendment/redrafting of the law appears necessary to create the necessary conditions that will allow long-term mobility through apprenticeship.

The current practice of the NMA, which mostly accommodates learners that drop out from the formal education system and the background of several learners choosing to attend the apprenticeship system are both disablers for short-term and long-term mobility. The low skill level of some learners, sometimes in combination with personal characteristics and behaviour, makes it difficult to find enterprises in Cyprus that would be willing to offer practical training positions for apprentices and most probably this will also be the case for enterprises abroad.

The lack of specific strategies and instruments to promote apprenticeship to companies and inform them of the benefits of taking on apprentices, related responsibilities and available incentives, is also a disabler, when it comes to incoming apprentices.

Another disabler, for incoming cross-border mobility, would be the lack of a mechanism providing support to enterprises participating in the system, taking also into consideration that most enterprises in Cyprus are micro enterprises with limited administration capacity.

The increasing demand in medium level occupations, the presence of international enterprises in various sectors of the economy and the possibility of acquiring a vocational qualification, internationally recognised through the CyQF, are enablers for incoming cross-border mobility in Cyprus.

List of abbreviations

CYSTAT	Statistical Service of Cyprus
CyQF	Cyprus Qualification Framework
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
GDP	Gross domestic product
HRDA	Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
MECSY	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth
NMA	New Modern Apprenticeship
STVET	Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training
SVQ	Standards of Vocational Qualifications
VET	Vocational Education and Training

References

URLs accessed 16.03.2020

Korelli, Y; Kyriacou-Liveri, C; Theocharous, A. (2018). *Vocational education and training in Europe – Cyprus*. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports.
<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/vocational-education-and-training-europe-cyprus-2018>

Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (2018a). *Διαχρονικές Τάσεις Δεικτών Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού στην Κύπρο 2011-2017. Trends of Human Resource Indicators in Cyprus 2011–2017*.
http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/easyconsole.cfm/page/project/p_id/497

Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (2018b). *Δείκτες Συμμετοχής σε Δραστηριότητες της ΑνΑΔ 2011-2017. Indicators of Participation in HRDA's Activities 2011 - 2017*
http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/easyconsole.cfm/page/project/p_id/482

Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (2017). *Προβλέψεις Αναγκών Απασχόλησης στην Κυπριακή Οικονομία 2017-2027. Forecasts of Employment Needs in the Cyprus Economy 2017-2027*.
http://www.anad.org.cy/easyconsole.cfm/page/project/p_id/404

Statistical Service of Cyprus (2018). *National Accounts*.
http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/economy_finance_11main_gr/economy_finance_11main_gr?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=2

Annex

1. National coordinator
 - 1.1. Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus
www.anad.org.cy
2. Ministries/Government departments
 - 2.1. Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf
 - 2.2. Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance/Department of Labour www.mlsi.gov.cy/dl
 - 2.3. Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth www.moec.gov.cy
 - 2.4. Statistical Service of Cyprus
www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/index_gr/index_gr?OpenDocument
 - 2.5. Cyprus Academy of Public Administration (CAPA)
www.mof.gov.cy/mof/capa/cyacademy.nsf/index_en/index_en
 - 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
4. Other organisations/non-profit making organisations
 - 4.1. University of Cyprus www.ucy.ac.cy
 - 4.2. Research and Innovation Foundation www.research.org.cy
 - 4.3. Open University of Cyprus www.ouc.ac.cy
 - 4.4. Cyprus University of Technology www.cut.ac.cy/
 - 4.5. Youth Board of Cyprus onek.org.cy/en/
5. National agencies/units for managing European programmes/initiatives
 - 5.1. Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes www.erasmusplus.cy
 - 5.2. National Eurydice Unit www.moec.gov.cy/eurydice