CEDEFOP REFERNET CYPRUS

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

CYPRUS

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION

VET IN EUROPE 2023

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  - Initial higher professional programmes leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 554.
- References.

CHAPTER 1.

Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

Summary of main elements

The vocational education and training (VET) system of Cyprus is constantly being developed to respond better to the needs of the labour market.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has overall responsibility for developing and implementing education policy. The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance has overall responsibility for labour and social policy and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) plays an important role in vocational training.

VET is available at secondary and tertiary education levels.

At upper secondary level, general education programmes (78% of enrolments in 2022/23) are with lyceums, including evening lyceums; VET programmes (22% of enrolments in 2022/23) are with technical schools, including evening technical schools. Horizontal and vertical movement across upper secondary education is possible upon successful completion of specific examinations. Technical schools offer two types of 3-year programmes, theoretical and practical, leading to EQF level 4 school-leaving certificates, equivalent to those of secondary general education schools. Specialisations are selected in the first year. Graduates are eligible for admission to universities and other tertiary education institutions in Cyprus and abroad. Both streams are school-based: they combine general education subjects with VET subjects and integrate practical training in enterprises at the end of the first and second years. However, the theoretical stream is mostly for those who wish to continue to higher education and the practical one is mostly for those oriented more towards entering the labour market.

VET is also available through the apprenticeship system, which addresses young people between the ages of 14 and 18. Preparatory apprenticeship (EQF level 2) can last up to 2 school years, depending on the level and age of the apprentice. Young people aged between 14 and 16, who have not completed lower secondary programmes, may participate. After completing ‘preparatory apprenticeship’, graduates can either continue to ‘core apprenticeship’ or upper secondary programmes, provided they pass entrance examinations.

Core apprenticeship lasts for 3 years. Eligible candidates must be less than 18 years old to apply and must have either completed a lower secondary programme or ‘preparatory apprenticeship’ or dropped out of upper secondary programmes. On successful completion, participants may continue with evening technical school programmes, which lead to an EQF 4 certificate, and receive an upper secondary education qualification (school leaving certificate) in 2 years instead of 3. The apprenticeship certificate (EQF 3) allows access to several regulated occupations, provided all other requirements of relevant legislation are met.

VET at tertiary, non-university level is provided at public and private institutes/colleges, offering an opportunity to acquire, improve, or upgrade qualifications and skills. Successful completion of these accredited programmes, which may last from 1, 2 or 3 years, leads to a certificate/diploma or higher certificate/diploma awarded by the institution (EQF level 5). The earlier-known as public post-secondary institutes of VET were accredited in 2017 by the Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education as public schools of higher (tertiary/non-university) VET; they offer accredited 2-year programmes leading to a diploma.

Vocational training for adults is extensively available in Cyprus for the employed, the unemployed, vulnerable groups and adults in general, through a mixture of public and private provision: colleges, training institutions, consultancy firms and enterprises. The employed usually participate in training programmes for job-specific

skills to meet company needs. The unemployed and vulnerable groups acquire both horizontal and job-specific skills to improve their employability. Training schemes targeted at these groups combine training with either employment in an enterprise or job placement to acquire work experience. The HRDA provides subsidies through several relevant schemes for training the employed and unemployed.

Distinctive features

Cyprus has a long-standing tradition of tripartite consultation (government, trade unions and employers' organisations) and social dialogue. The social partners are involved in:

- planning in an advisory and consultative capacity;
- supporting education reform;
- governance (in boards of directors of institutions dealing with human resource issues);
- identifying education and training needs and setting priorities.

VET is mainly public. Secondary VET - including evening technical schools and the apprenticeship system - and public higher (tertiary/non-university) VET are free of charge, while various adult vocational programmes are offered for a limited fee.

Financial incentives for participation in adult vocational training are provided by HRDA, a semi-government organisation under the remit of the labour minister.

HRDA funding has encouraged enterprises, employees and the unemployed to participate in training activities.

Cyprus' tertiary educational attainment is one of the highest in the EU. There is a cultural trend in favour of general secondary education followed by higher education. Efforts to increase VET attractiveness have resulted in an increase in upper secondary VET enrolments by 7 percentage points from 2011 to 2023.

CHAPTER 2.

Main challenges and policy responses

A major challenge is to address youth and long-term unemployment. Actions are being taken to promote the employability of young people and the long-term unemployed, through individualised guidance, training and work placements.

Another challenge is to encourage adult participation in lifelong learning (10,5% in 2022,Eurostat) and to increase VET participation among the young (17.6% at upper secondary level in 2021). Although declining, the percentage of young people aged 15-24 not in education or training (NEETs) is the third highest in the EU (12.9% in 2022, Eurostat) and below the EU average (9.5% in 2022). According to the 2022 edition of the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), Cyprus ranks 20th among 27 EU Member States, with only 50% of people between 16 and 74 years having at least basic digital skills, below the EU average of 54%.

In order to response to the challenges above, four new training schemes have been included by HRDA in the Cyprus' Recovery and Resilience Plan for the employed and the unemployed, in line with existing and future needs in the national economy and EU priorities: digital and green skills, skills related to the blue economy and entrepreneurial knowledge and skills.

A new Lifelong Learning Strategy for the years 2021-27 has been approved by the Council of Ministers in September 2022. It is structured around six strategic horizontal pillars: digital transformation, green transition and sustainability, inclusion and equality, validation of non-formal and informal learning, health and wellbeing and lifelong learning culture. The strategy aims to improve efforts to upskill and reskill low-qualified and low-skilled adults and address the high percentage of unemployment among young people and to assist national agencies and other stakeholders in Cyprus reaching the EU targets for the participation of adults in lifelong learning.

The Cyprus qualifications framework (CyQF) supports the validation of non-formal and informal learning. It includes vocational qualifications offered in the formal education and training system as well as those offered in the competence-based system of professional qualifications by the HRDA, with the aim of improving the skillset of the workforce.

CHAPTER 3.

External factors influencing VET

3.1 Demographics

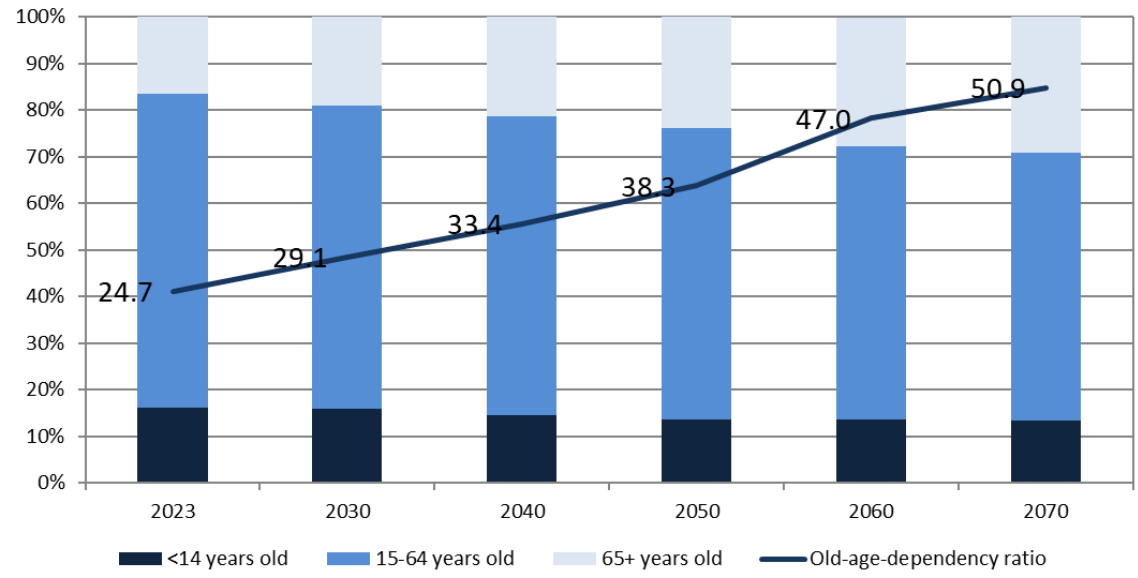
Population in 2022: 904 705 (1).

It has increased by 5.8% since 2017 (2) mainly due to the inflow of third country citizens.

As in many other EU countries, the population is ageing.

The old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 25 in 2023 to 46 in 2070.

Population forecast by age group and old-age-dependency ratio



Source: Eurostat, tps00001 and proj_19ndbi [extracted 12.6.2023]

2021/22 enrolments in Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVE) include 5 216 learners in the theoretical and practical streams, as well as evening technical schools.

2022/23 enrolments in STVE include 5 368 learners in the theoretical and practical streams, as well as evening technical schools.

The birth rate was 11.4 in 2021 and 10.1 in 2022 (3).

3.2 Economics

Most companies are micro-sized. According to social insurance data (4) for 2021, 92.2% of enterprises employed 1-9 persons, while 6.7% employed 10-49 persons. Only 1.1% employed over 50 persons.

Main economic sectors:

- wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles;
- professional, scientific and technical activities;
- construction;
- accommodation and food service activities
- manufacturing;
- financial and insurance activities;
- human health and social work activities;
- information and communication;
- administrative and support service activities;
- other service activities.

Repair of motor vehicles, construction, accommodation and food service activities, and communication sectors are strongly linked to VET qualifications.

3.3 Labour market

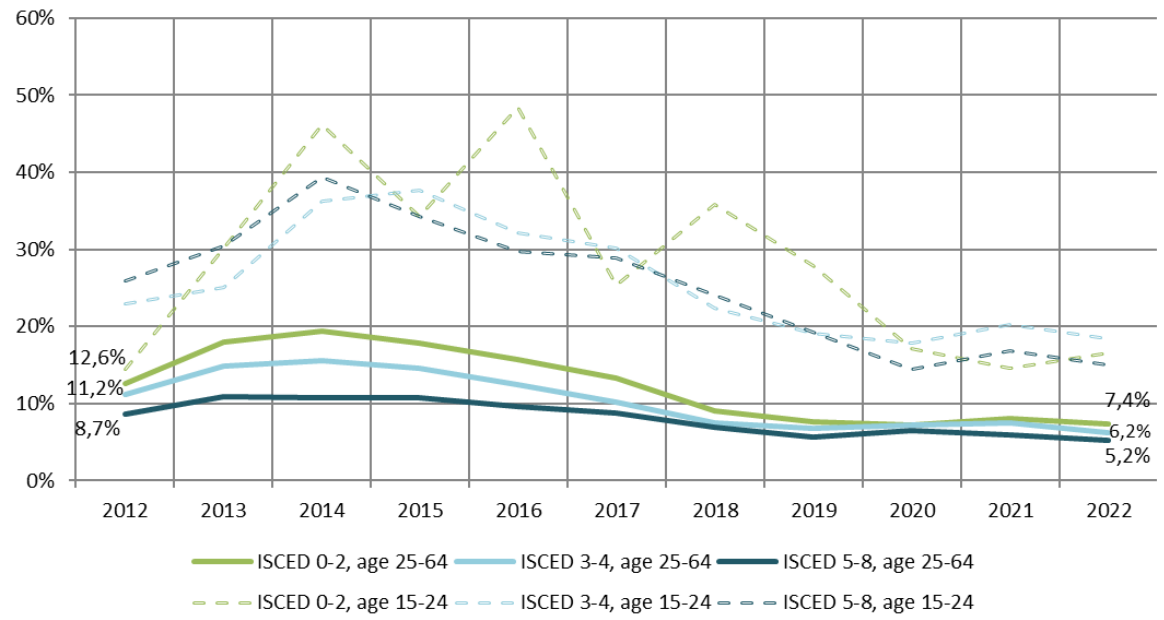
There are generally few limitations/restrictions in the labour market.

For some occupations/professions, it is compulsory to hold specific certificates/diplomas or to be registered at the appropriate professional body.

According to regulation, it is compulsory for plumbing, heating and cooling systems technicians to hold the appropriate vocational qualification issued by the Human Resource Development Authority through the system of vocational qualifications, in order to practice the profession.

Total unemployment (5) (2022): 6.8% (6.2% in EU27); it decreased by 1.6 percentage points since 2018 (6).

Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2012-22

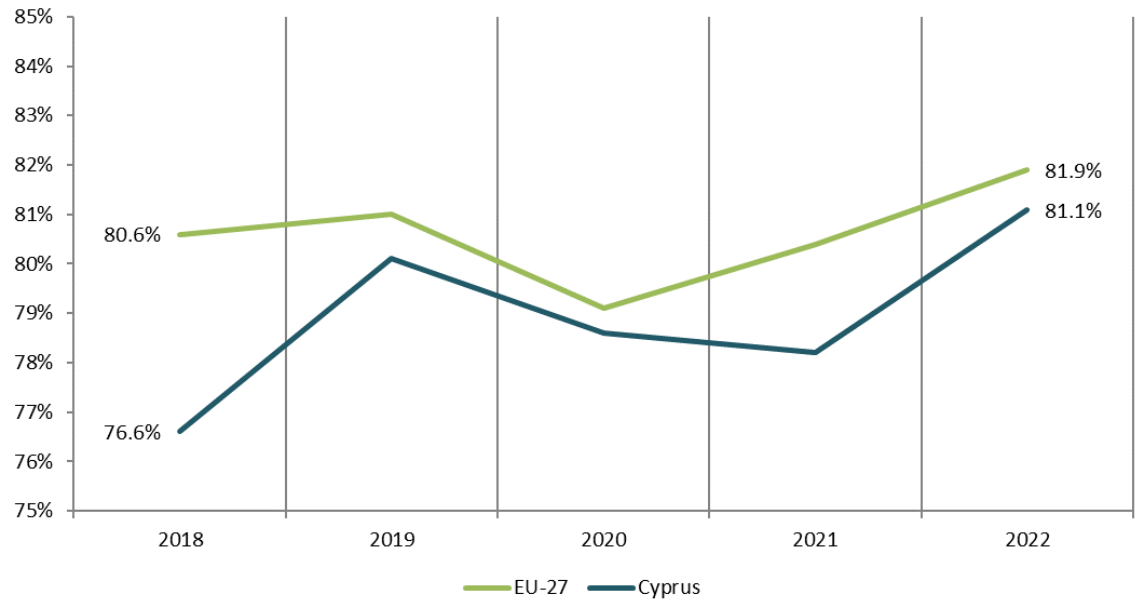


NB: data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series; low reliability for ISCED 0-2 and 5-8, age 15-24.
ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education
ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education
ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education
Source: Eurostat, lfsa_urgaed [extracted 12.10.2023].

Unemployment is distributed unevenly between those with low- and high-level qualifications. For the age group 15-24, the unemployment is higher for persons with mid-level qualifications, whereas for the age group 25-64 the unemployment is higher for persons with low level qualifications.

The employment rate of 20 to 34-year-old VET graduates increased from 78.7% in 2018 to 80.1% in 2022.

Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 years old, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.
ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education
Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

The increase (+1.4 pp) in employment of 20 to 34-year-old VET graduates in 2018-22 was lower compared to the increase in employment of all 20 to 34-year-old graduates (+4.5 pp) in the same period in Cyprus (7).

[1] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat, tps00001 and proj_19ndbi [extracted 12.6.2023].

[2] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat, tps00001 and proj_19ndbi [extracted 12.6.2023].

[3] Births by Sex and Birth Rates, Annual PxWeb (cystat.gov.cy)

[4] ReferNet Cyprus calculations, based on data provided by the Department of Social Insurance Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance

[5] Percentage of active population, 25 to 64 years old

[6] Eurostat table une_rt_a [extracted 6.12.2023]

[7] Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

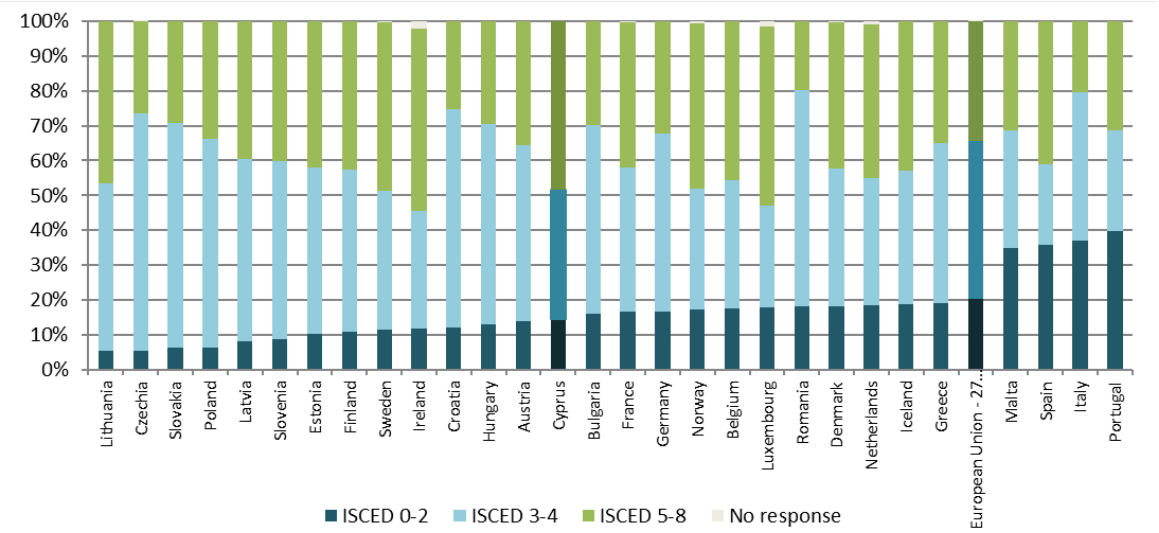
CHAPTER 4.

Education attainment

4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

Education traditionally has high value in Cyprus. The share of the population aged up to 64 with higher education is 48.2%. The share of those with low or without qualification is 14.7%, below the EU27 average (20.5% in 2022).

Population (aged 25 to 64) by highest education level attained in 2022



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011. Low reliability for "No response" in Czechia and Latvia
ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education
ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education
ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education
Source: Eurostat, lfsa_pgaed [extracted 12.6.2023].

4.3 VET learners by level

Share of learners in VET by level in 2021

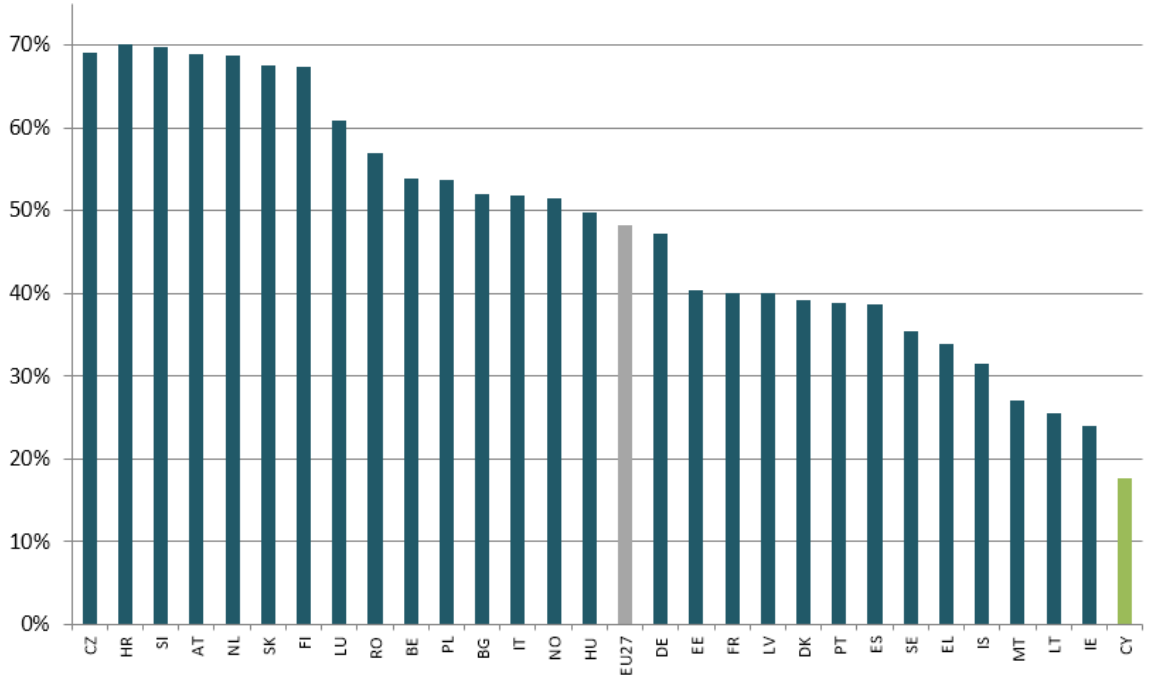
lower secondary	upper secondary	post-secondary
not applicable	16.8%	not applicable

NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs01, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [extracted 12.6.2023]

In upper secondary VET, the share has increased by 0.1 percentage points since 2017.

Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper-secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2021



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.
Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [extracted 13.6.2023].

4.4 Female share

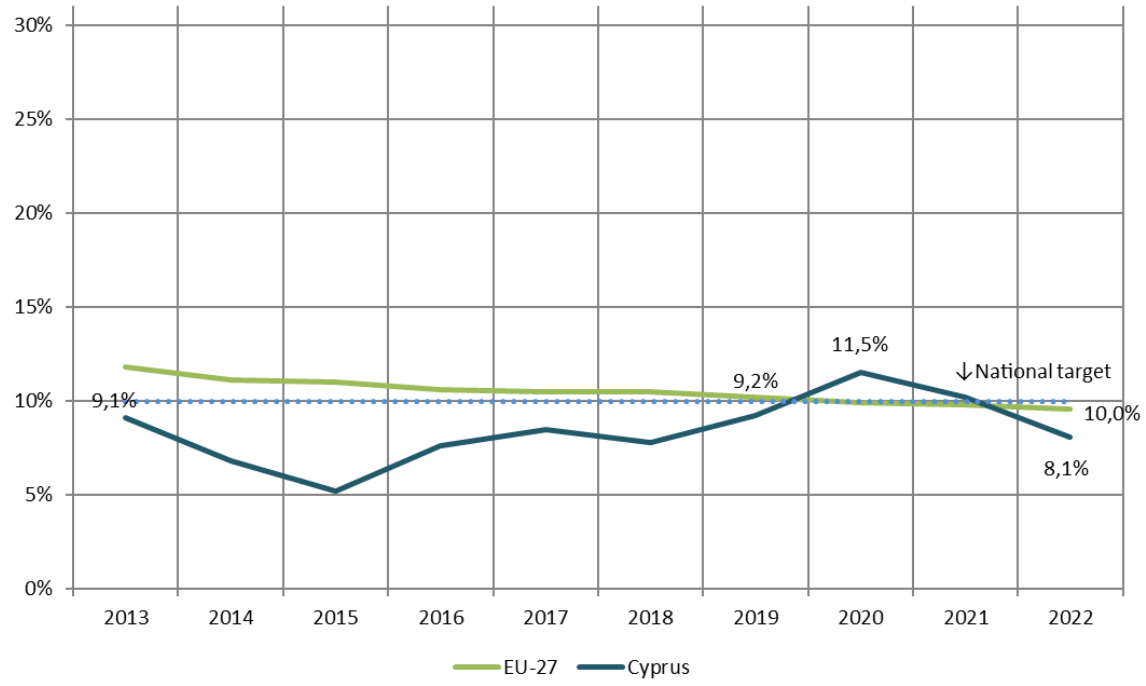
There are more males in VET. Based on data provided by the education ministry, for the school year 2020/21, 82.4% of learners in all VET fields and specialisations at upper-secondary level were males, while for the school year 2022/23 male VET learners are 79%. Also, in public higher (non-tertiary) VET programmes offered by the education ministry, approximately 60% of the learners are males.

At upper secondary level, for the 2022/23 school year, the most popular fields of study and specialisations among males were cooks and waiters and automobile engineering and car electrics and electronics. Among females, the most popular fields were also cooks and waiters and hairdressing (8).

4.5 Early leavers from education and training

The share of early leavers from education and training has decreased from 11.5% in 2020 to 8.1% in 2022. The result is below the national target of not more than 10% and the EU27 average of 10%.

Early leavers from education and training in 2013-22



NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training
Source: Eurostat, edat_lfse_14 [extracted 12.6.2023] and European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stability-convergence-programmes_en [extracted 14.11.2018].

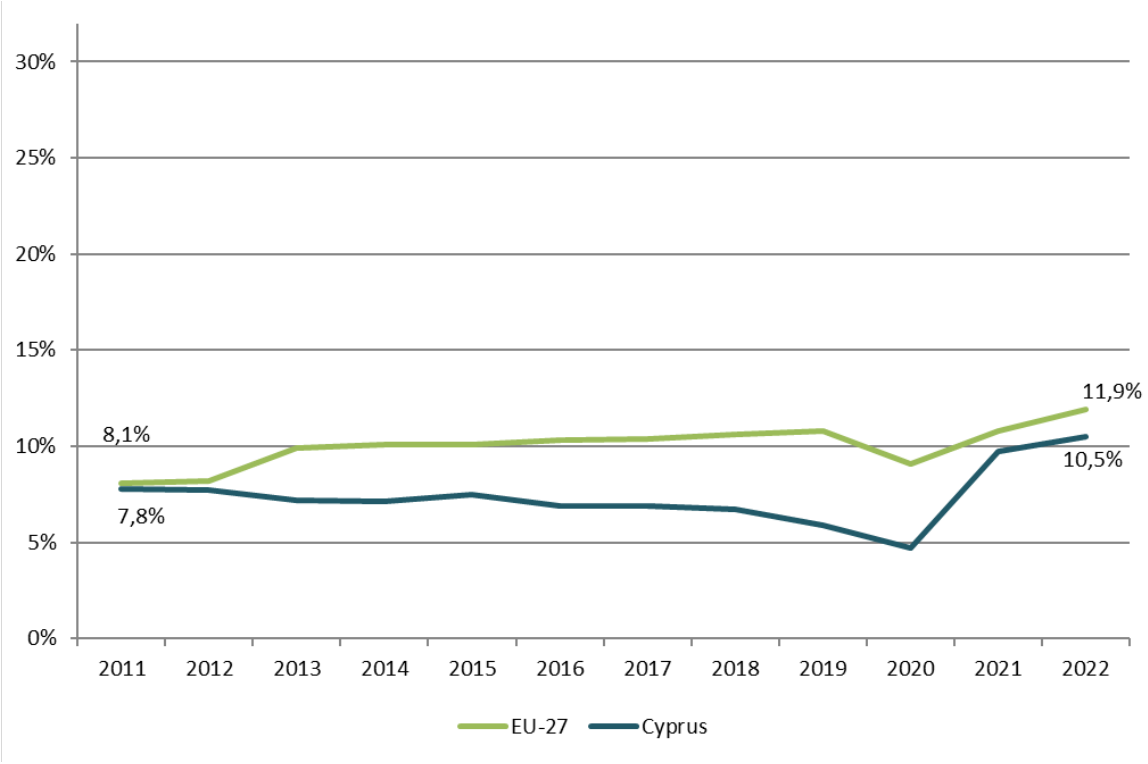
Drop-out rate from VET: information not available

For more information visit Cedefop project page on tackling early leaving and our interactive toolkits: Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving and Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs.

4.6 Participation in lifelong learning

Lifelong learning offers training opportunities for adults, including early leavers from education.

Participation in lifelong learning in 2011-2022



NB: Share of adult population aged 25 to 64 participating in education and training; break in series 2021
Source: Eurostat, trng_lfse_01 [extracted 12.6.2023].

According to Eurostat (Labour Force Survey (9)), the share of 25 to 64-year-olds participating in education and training over the 4 weeks prior to the survey was 10.5% in 2022, which is lower than the EU-27 average of 11.9% in 2022 and the national target for 2020 of 12%.

4.7 VET learners by age

Pupils enrolled in upper-secondary education by programme orientation, sex and age

	2019			2020			2021		
AGE	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females
Total	**4 658**	**3 533**	**1 125**	**4 654**	**3 460**	**1 194**	**4 927**	**3 685**	**1 242**
<= 19 years	4 416	3 322	1 094	4 340	3 200	1 140	4 498	3 320	1 178
From 20 to 24 years	195	174	21	193	165	28	257	229	28
25 + years	47	37	10	121	95	26	172	136	36

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs05 [extracted 24.8.2023]

[8] These are the names of the relevant specialisations.

[9] The European Union Labour Force Survey (EU LFS) is conducted in all Member States of the European Union, four candidate countries and three countries of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in accordance with Council Regulation (EEC) No 577/98 of 9 March 1998. LFS

microdata for scientific purposes currently contain data for all Member States plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.The EU Labour Force Survey is a large household sample survey providing quarterly results on labour participation of people aged 15 and over as well as on persons outside the labour force. All definitions apply to persons aged 15 years and over living in private households. Persons carrying out obligatory military or community service are not included in the target group of the survey, as is also the case for persons in institutions/collective households. The data collection covers the years from 1983 onwards. In general, data for individual countries are available depending on their accession date. The labour force surveys are conducted by the national statistical institutes across Europe and are centrally processed by Eurostat. The national statistical institutes are responsible for selecting the sample, preparing the questionnaires, conducting the direct interviews among households, and forwarding the results to Eurostat in accordance with the requirements of the regulation. Thus, it is possible to make available harmonised data at European level. More information available here.

CHAPTER 5.

VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- pre-primary education (ISCED level 0);
- integrated primary and lower secondary education (ISCED levels 1 and 2, ISCED 244) (hereafter basic education which is compulsory until the age of 15);
- upper secondary education (ISCED levels 4 and 3 for apprenticeship learners who leave formal education between grades 8-10) (EQF 4 (ISCED 344, 354) and respectively 3);
- Higher (tertiary/non-university) professional VET programmes, (EQF 5, ISCED 554, 454);
- Higher (tertiary/university) education (EQF 6-8, ISCED 655, 766 and 767 for post-graduate studies at master level (1-2 years)), ISCED 864 for PhD programmes).

Education in Cyprus is available from pre-primary to the postgraduate levels. It is compulsory at the pre-primary, primary (grades 1 to 6), and lower secondary (grades 7 to 9) levels, until the student reaches the age of 15.

In upper secondary education, which lasts for 3 years (grades 10 to 12) there are two types of school: the lyceum and technical schools.

The number of higher (tertiary/university) education places in Cyprus is limited, as there are only three public and nine private universities. A large proportion of young people continuing to higher education enrol in educational institutions abroad.

Government regulated VET provision leads to four qualification levels (2- 5) that are the same as in the European qualifications framework (EQF).

European qualifications framework levels 2-3 VET qualifications are only offered in the form of apprenticeship.

There are several VET learning options:

- at upper secondary level VET is provided at technical schools for learners aged 15-18;
- the education ministry also offers formal education programmes free of charge, in the practical stream, through the five evening technical schools (second chance schools), to further promote participation in secondary vocational education and support the integration of school dropouts in the workplace and in society in general;
- also, 1- year and 3-year programmes are provided in the context of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools (lifelong learning VET programmes), which are administered by the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET). These offer a variety of courses such as plumbing, electrical installations, engineering, computers, car mechanics, cooking and graphic design.

Higher (tertiary/non-university) VET

VET at higher (tertiary/non-university) level is provided at public and private institutes/colleges offering people the opportunity to acquire, improve, or upgrade their qualifications and skills. Successful completion of these accredited programmes, which may last for 1, 2 or 3 years, leads to a diploma/certificate or higher diploma/certificate, awarded by the institution (EQF level 5).

The public post-secondary institutes of VET (10) were accredited in 2017 by the Cyprus Agency of Quality

Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) (11) as public schools of higher VET. They offer 2-year accredited programmes that lead to the acquisition of a diploma (12). All graduates of the Public Schools of Higher VET (EQF level 5) secure employment in the labour market, while a significant percentage (about 83 %) of the graduates secure employment in their field of study (13).

There are four higher VET (tertiary/ non-university) public institutions of offering programmes in forestry, culinary arts and other vocations.

Training for employees

The main bodies promoting training provision for the employed are the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), the education ministry, the labour ministry, and other ministries and public institutions. 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 HRDA.

Other ministries offer training, usually relative to their mandate:

- the labour ministry offers short modular programmes for employees in technical occupations and management through the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC);
- the agriculture ministry offers training to farmers, foresters and forestry graduates. These courses are offered mostly by the agricultural educational centres;
- the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration offers training courses to civil servants;
- the health ministry is responsible for the planning and coordination of continuing professional development of public sector nurses;
- the justice and public order ministry 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.

Training for the unemployed

The main bodies promoting training provision for the unemployed are the HRDA, in cooperation with the labour ministry and the education ministry. HRDA offers the following training activities:

- training programmes for the unemployed aim at the participation of the unemployed who are registered with the public employment services in training programmes for specific occupations/themes that the HRDA defines after consultation;
- employment and training of tertiary education graduates;
- training of the long-term unemployed in enterprises/organisations;
- multi-company training programmes;
- targeted training schemes for the employed and the unemployed ondigital and green skills, skills related to the blue economy and entrepreuneurial skills within the framework of the national recovery and resilience plan;
- re-skilling and up-skilling programmes for the (un-)employed and young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) (operational programme THALIA 2021-27)

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[10] In 2012, the education ministry in cooperation with the labour ministry and other stakeholders established, within the context of the education reform, post-secondary institutes of VET, jointly financed by the ESF, which offered further technical specialisation as of the academic year 2012/13. These were in April 2017 by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education granted them tertiary non-university level status.

[11] In Greek: Φορέας Διασφάλισης και Πιστοποίησης της Ποιότητας της Ανώτερης Εκπαίδευσης (ΔΙΠΑΕ)

[12] Private institutions of tertiary education offer a wide range of academic as well as vocational programmes of study at various levels (1- or 2-year diploma, 3-year higher diploma, 4-year bachelor degree and 1- or 2-year master 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.

[13] Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, 2023

[19] Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC). In Greek: Κέντρο Παραγωγικότητας Κύπρου.

CHAPTER 6.
Apprenticeship

The apprenticeship system was a 2-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 had approved the proposal for the establishment of the NMA as an alternative pathway for young people who withdraw from the formal education system; it is geared towards meeting the needs of the labour market. As of September of 2015, the Council of Ministers, assigned full responsibility for the operation of the apprenticeship system to the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET) (14) of the education ministry. Improving the quality of the apprenticeship and its relevance to labour market needs is implemented as approved by the Council of Ministers in August 2015.

The apprenticeship system, which is jointly 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 core apprenticeship is not part of compulsory education and is free of charge. The apprenticeship targets two distinct groups of learners:

- learners 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 giving them a taste of VET, and helping them to choose a specialisation when they proceed to the core level of apprenticeship;
- learners who have completed either compulsory education or preparatory apprenticeship can enrol at the core apprenticeship level.

Preparatory apprenticeship does not involve employment but offers an alternative form of education and training for learners 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. The curricula are developed by the trainers (15). Participation in these workshops is part of the programme and does not lead to individual qualifications. Learners also receive individual counselling from psychologists according to their needs. Learners 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 3 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 3 days per week where they are remunerated for their work and receive theoretical training for 2 days per week by attending classes at technical schools.

Curricula have been developed for the technical specialisations such as car mechanics, plumbing/central heating, welding/metal constructions, bakery/confectionery, carpentry/furniture production, electrical installations, graphic design, hairdressing, preparation of food and beverages, retail sales, building and construction works and home appliances technicians. The technical specialisations are offered according to apprentices' demand (16) Curricula have also been developed for the theoretical subjects of the core apprenticeship, such as Greek, maths, physics, English and information technology. The curricula of technical specialisations incorporate the standards of vocational qualifications developed by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA). The content of training in enterprises is based on a training plan developed by

the school trainer and the enterprise trainer working together and agreed by the employer. The enterprise training of the apprentice is monitored by regular visits of the school trainer to the enterprise and a monthly report prepared and submitted to the apprenticeship officer (17).

Teachers of the theoretical training that takes place at school are teachers of secondary technical and vocational education. Following the development of new curricula, a training of trainers programme has been implemented for preparatory apprenticeship trainers.

Learn more about apprenticeships in the national context from theEuropean database on apprenticeship schemes by Cedefop.

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[14] In Greek: Διεύθυνση μέσης τεχνικής και επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης.

[15] In Preparatory Apprenticeship trainers are not school teachers. Up to the school year 2022-23, in preparatory apprenticeship, trainers were selected through a purchase-of-services procedure and were self-employed, working on a contract basis. As of the school year 2023-24 this has changed and Preparatory Apprenticeship trainers have the status of temporary employees of the government, again on a contract basis. This does not apply for Core Apprenticeship trainers, who are school trainers.

[16] A specialisation is offered if it is selected by 5 or more apprentices

[17] the person at the education ministry (MESY), in charge of the education programme

CHAPTER 7.
VET governance

The education ministry has overall responsibility for the development and implementation of education policy, including lifelong learning, while the labour ministry has overall responsibility for labour and social policy.

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET) of the education ministry is responsible for the apprenticeship system.

The Directorate General Growth, Ministry of Finance (18) is responsible for European funds and programmes (including the Recovery and resilience facility plan for Cyprus, the Cyprus operational programme THALIA, Erasmus + and the National reform programme), coordination of government work, research and technological development and innovation.

The Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), a semi-government organisation, creates the necessary prerequisites for the planned and systematic training and development of the human resources of Cyprus.

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[18] In Greek: Γενική Διεύθυνση Ανάπτυξης, Υπουργείο Οικονομικών (ΓΔ Ανάπτυξης)

CHAPTER 8.
VET financing mechanisms

Public funds administered mainly by the education ministry are the primary source for financing VET, along with European funds.

The financing provided by the European Union (EU)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 jointly financed by EU funding mechanisms has are addressed to the unemployed and groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market. The National recovery and resilience plan 2021-26 and the Cyprus operational programme THALIA, 2021-27, also include planned training programmes for the unemployed and groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market.

Expenditure on Education (% on GDP)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Public expenditure on education	6.4	6.2	6.0	5.8	5.5	6.0	5.6
Total expenditure on education	8.7	8.4	8.3	7.9	7.6	8.1	n.a

NB: .n.a.: not available

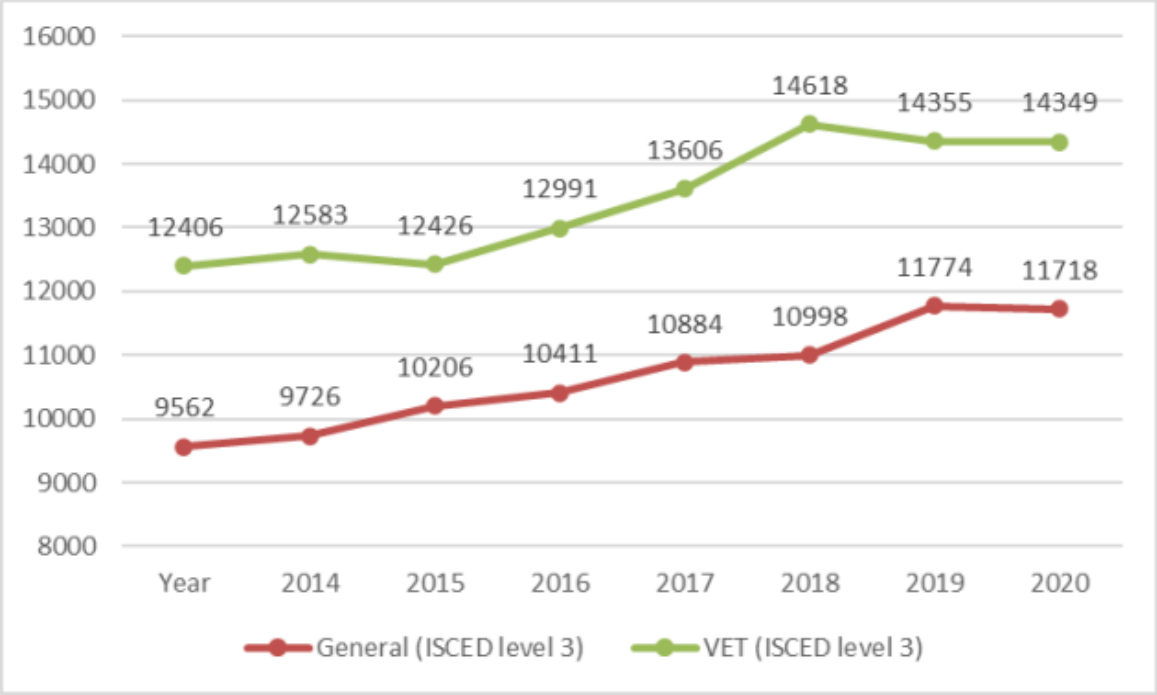
Source: CYSTAT, 2023.

Expenditure on VET (% on GDP)

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Public expenditure on VET	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3

Source: CYSTAT, 2023.

Expenditure per student in 2014-20 (EUR)



NB: Most recent data.
Source: CYSTAT, 2023.

Total public expenditure for secondary technical vocational education and training (STVE) was estimated to be EUR 65.2 million in 2019 and EUR 65.8 million in 2020 (CYSTAT). The share of secondary technical and vocational public expenditure was estimated to be 5.1% of total public expenditure on education in 2019 and 5.0% in 2020 (19).

Expenditure per student in secondary general education was estimated to be EUR 11 774 in 2019 and EUR11 718 in 2020; in upper secondary VET it was estimated to be EUR 14 335 in 2019 and EUR 14 349 in 2020 (20).

VET for adults is met by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) which subsidises a range of training activities, implemented by training institutions and enterprises, addressed to the employed and unemployed.

HRDA funds mainly come from the human resource development levy of 0.5% on the payroll of employers, excluding the government. Enterprises and vocational training centres are directly involved in training activities and continuously prepare and submit training programmes to HRDA. The subsidy covers about 80% of the eligible total costs.

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1 VET teacher types

In VET there are:

- teachers for the theoretical part;
- apprentice tutors;
- trainers of vocational training.

Teachers for the theoretical part teach in upper secondary technical and vocational schools, in the school-based component of apprenticeships, and in higher (tertiary/non-university) VET institutes. Teachers at all levels of school education are university graduates with a bachelor degree as a minimum qualification. A small number of VET teachers employed at technical schools hold a diploma or similar qualification from colleges or other similar education establishments of tertiary (non-higher) education in courses; these are of at least 3 years duration and appointed at a lower salary scale.

Apprentice tutors are employees of the enterprise where the in-company training component takes place. No specific training is needed to perform these duties.

Upgrading the continuous professional development of teachers and improving the quality, attractiveness and efficiency of VET and the apprenticeship scheme are important challenges for the education system in Cyprus. This is reflected in the education reform, which is a long process involving all VET stakeholders, as well as in the strategies and policies of the education ministry.

People who wish to become vocational training trainers must pass the assessment and certification procedure of the system of vocational qualifications and acquire the trainer of vocational training qualification (European qualifications framework/Cyprus qualifications framework level 5, system of vocational qualifications level 5). Through the multi-company training programmes scheme, ‘train the trainer’ programmes are offered to prepare trainers for assessment and certification.

Certified trainers of vocational training, deliver courses approved and subsidised by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), both at vocational training centres and in companies for in-house training.

9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) (21), according to a Council of Ministers’ decision (August 2015), is the official department of the education ministry which runs teachers’ professional learning. The same decision approved a framework for teachers’ professional learning (TPL), setting principles for systematic continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers, including VET teachers, under the coordination of the CPI. The institute offers a variety of free-of-charge training programmes that either cover TPL needs on an individual level or cover TPL needs on a school-based level. These programmes may be compulsory (if provided for by the education laws and service plans) or are developed with reference to the particular needs of the schools.

For example, the CPI provides compulsory courses for newly appointed VET head teachers and deputy head teachers. These courses are offered once a week, during a school year, from October to May.

CPI, in collaboration with the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training, also offers training programmes on various subjects of the curricula to all teachers. Optional seminars on instruction and pedagogy are also offered by the institute during the afternoons and they are open and free for all teachers.

Based on the decisions of the Council of Ministers (August 2015 and July 2017), emphasis is given to school-based professional learning.

All schools, including technical schools, have the opportunity to receive systematic annual support from the CPI under the scheme of the special support programme for TPL. At the beginning of the school year, schools are expected to follow a needs assessment procedure in order to define their specific needs and target a single priority theme. Then, according to their needs, each school has to organise its own training programme for teachers, making use of the many training programmes offered by the institute or elsewhere. Based on its training, each school designs its own action plan. Every year, a small number of schools can implement their teacher professional learning action plan with the support of a facilitator from the CPI.

Technical schools have participated since 2017 in this programme of systematic support and followed enquiry-based methodologies like action research lesson studies or quality teacher rounds. This methodology was implemented systematically in the technical schools participating in special support Programme for TPL. It is a collaborative form of lesson planning, peer observation and occurs in the classroom, in real-time. It entails intentional reflection, observation, enquiry and collaboration. All members of the group of teachers are reflective partners and take away something from the lesson.

For trainers in vocational training, the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) offers programmes through the multi-company training programmes scheme to prepare trainers for assessment and certification or further enhance their training skills in various subjects.

For more information visit Cedefop project page on Teachers' and Trainers' professional development and our interactive toolkits for VET practitioners: Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving and Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs. You may also read Cedefop/ReferNet country reports on Teachers and Trainers in a Changing World and Cedefop comparative analysis.

[21] In Greek: Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

10.1 Anticipating skill needs

The assessment of skill needs is operated by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA). The finance ministry provides projections for the growth of the economy. The education ministry is responsible for the identification of educational and special skill needs.

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

Long-term employment trends and forecasting in Cyprus

- HRDA provides 10-year employment forecasts on a regular basis every 2 to 3 years. The latest study 'Forecasts of labour demand and supply in the Cyprus economy 2022- 2032' provides forecasts of both labour demand and supply in the Cyprus economy for the next decade. Labour demand forecasts are provided in economic sectors (3 broad sectors, 21 main sectors and 52 sectors) and in 309 occupations (173 high level occupations, 130 middle level occupations and 6 low level occupations), whereas the labour supply forecasts are provided for the total workforce, by gender and by education level. It was the first time that the HRDA provided forecasts for the labour supply. The study results are used for timely planning of the HRDA's activities and implementation of training programmes. Also, the findings are utilised for preparing every two years the content/themes for the training programmes it subsidises. The material is then disseminated to various stakeholders (businesses, consultants, trainers, employees, unemployed, inactive, young people and the general public) to support collaborations with VET services and bodies and it is utilised by many public and private bodies and services dealing with human resource planning and career guidance of young people as well as by policy makers in the fields of education, training and lifelong learning (22);
- annual investigations for the identification of employment and training needs with the involvement of the social partners (23).

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.

- There are two such studies. The first is the Identification of blue skills in the Cyprus economy, a study which 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 (24). It provides forecasts for employment demand in economic sectors and occupations which are part of the blue economy. The second is the Identification of green skill needs in the Cyprus economy (25). 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 finance ministry 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.

See also Cedefop's skills forecast and European Skills Index.

10.2 Designing qualifications

The specialisations offered in the context of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (including Evening Technical Schools), Core Apprenticeship and the Public School of Higher VET have been especially designed to be relevant to labour market needs. For the design of the specialisations, the Department of STVET has developed cooperation with the Human Resource Development Authority, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, as well as with employers' and employees' organisations. Furthermore, cooperation has been developed with specific specialised professional associations, such as the Association of Cyprus Tourist Enterprises, the Cyprus Shipping Chamber, the Cyprus Cheesemakers' Association and the Cyprus Furniture and Woodworking Industry Association. In order to increase further the links with the labour market and enhance employers' engagement, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MESY) has signed Memoranda of Cooperation with employers' organizations: the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (June 2019) and the Cyprus Employers and Industrialists' Federation (July 2019). The Memoranda include measures for the development of new or the review of existing VET specialisations/curricula, so that they are better aligned with changing labour market needs and demands. The Memoranda also include measures for the facilitation of the industrial placement of VET students in enterprises.

The system of vocational qualifications (SVQ) is based on vocational qualification standards (VQS) developed by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) with the assistance of Vocational qualifications technical committees, comprising representatives of industry, employers and workers and education and training institutions. The SVQ system assesses in real or simulated working conditions the ability of a person to carry out specific tasks according to a VQS. At the same time, the SVQ sets out the framework for the design and development of training activities to prepare the candidates for a successful assessment, to obtain a certificate of a vocational qualification, and to acquire the necessary skillset to perform the tasks for professions corresponding to the VQS that served as the basis of their training.

The system is addressed to employed and unemployed adults, inactive and low-qualified individuals who enhance their employment opportunities, either by recognising their prior learning or attending training programmes designed on the basis of VQS. It's also a system beneficial for companies in order to improve their productivity and competitiveness by recruiting qualified new personnel (or up-re-skilling their existing employees).

Since 2017, the SVQ is an integral part of the National Qualifications Framework (CyQF) which is linked to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Aiming at the direct comparison and reference of the SVQ competence-based qualifications with educational qualifications in the CyQF the SVQ has adopted the level descriptors of the EQF. In 2022, a total of 167 professional qualifications were developed and/or have been revised in line with the new framework.

The four phases are as follows.

- **Identification**

Identification involves determination of the learning outcomes gained through formal, non-formal and informal learning. It takes place in centres approved by the HRDA for assessment of vocational qualifications (CAVQs) which sign an agreement on the terms of their operation, after their representatives receive HRDA training.

Candidates are given information about the vocational qualifications requirements system and interviewed to collect information about their education and work experience, particularly relevant to the learning outcomes. Candidates are advised to choose a specific qualification standard according to their knowledge, skills and competence. The results are documented in a report.

- **Documentation**

Documentation provides proof of the knowledge, skills and competences identified during the previous phase. The candidates submit any relevant documents proving the acquisition of the learning outcomes through formal, non-formal and informal learning: educational and vocational qualifications, employment experience, and social insurance statements. These 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 complete an application form which should be accompanied by the identification and documentation report and all the relevant documents.

When a group of up to five candidates is formed, the director/manager of centres for assessment of vocational qualifications submits to HRDA for approval the application forms, identification and documentation report and the relevant documents.

- **Assessment**

HRDA approves candidate applications, provided they are compatible with the criteria of the system of vocational qualifications. In this case, candidates can proceed to assessment.

The assessment of learning outcomes is carried out by two approved assessors for every team of up to five candidates, in two to five meetings of 3-hour duration each, in a centre approved for the assessment of vocational qualifications. These may be public or private training centres, certified by HRDA and having certified training facilities.

The assessment is based on the vocational qualification standard. The main assessment method is observation of candidates in real or simulated working conditions. It may also include, depending on the standard, interview, oral exam, written exam and project. The results are provided in the candidate's assessment report.

The assessors are independent experts and should comply with specific academic and professional criteria. They are trained by HRDA and sign an agreement regarding their terms of reference.

Each centre for the assessment of vocational qualifications is obliged to carry out at least one internal audit during each team's assessment, to provide internal quality assurance. Each assessment is also externally verified through an on-the-spot visit by an independent verifier authorised by HRDA. The results are detailed in separate reports.

- **Certification**

Candidate assessment reports are submitted to HRDA, which validates the results. The successful assessment of the candidates in all task areas for the vocational qualification standard and all methods of assessment required for candidate certification.

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

Accredited vocational training centres also offer training programmes which are based on the vocational qualifications standards and prepare participants for assessment and certification.

More information on national qualifications frameworks and the qualification types can be found in the NQF online tool.

CHAPTER 11.
Quality assurance

The Council of Ministers on 18 May 2017 (26) approved the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority, with the powers to improve quality assurance systems in education and training, to monitor and integrate the scheme for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Cyprus qualifications framework after its completion, to monitor the Cyprus qualifications framework/European qualifications framework (CyQF/EQF) levels on the certificates, diplomas and Europass documents, to strengthen the legal aspect of the Cyprus qualifications framework and to develop a registry for the CyQF:

- for secondary VET (IVET) (27) the respective inspector of each field of study (28) is responsible for the proper implementation of the curricula and ensures that the teaching material is adequately covered by using effective teaching methods. The constant assessment of the progress of learners, alongside a final examination, are instrumental for the evaluation of an educator's work;
- for tertiary education, there are two bodies responsible for quality assurance: one is the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, an independent body responsible for the recognition of diplomas awarded by higher education institutions; the other is the Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (29), an independent body responsible for the external evaluation and accreditation of all higher education institutions;
- for adult learning/continuing training the body responsible is the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA). Quality is assured by checking the programmes that a training provider wishes to implement and by accreditation of these providers (vocational training centre status is granted). Also, accreditation of vocational training facilities and trainers for vocational training (system of vocational qualifications/Cyprus qualifications framework/European qualifications framework level 5) is granted after appropriate qualitative assessment.

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[26] Decision No 82.592.

[27] It does not apply in the case of preparatory apprenticeship.

[28] The term 'field of study' (*κλάδος*) is broader than the term 'specialisation' *(ειδικότητα)*, as it includes several specialisations. In these terms the field of study 'mechanical engineering' includes four specialisations: 'mechanical engineering', 'vehicle technology', 'building services engineering', and 'natural gas transmission and distribution'.

[29] Cyprus Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) was established on the basis of the Quality assurance and accreditation of higher education and the establishment and operation of an agency on related matters law, of 2015, and is responsible is to ensure the quality of higher education in Cyprus and to support, through the procedures provided by the relevant legislation for the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programmes of study. More information available here .

CHAPTER 12.
Validation of prior learning

A national action plan for setting up a system for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, in line with the Council Recommendation (2012/C 398/01) is active since 2018. It foresees setting up a validation mechanism and its pilot implementation in adult education, youth and volunteerism.

The Council of Ministers on 18 May 2017 (30) approved the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority, with the powers to improve the quality assurance systems in education and training, to monitor and integrate the scheme for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in the Cyprus qualifications framework (CYQF) after its completion, to monitor the CYQF /European qualifications framework (EQF) levels on the certificates, diplomas and Europass documents, to strengthen the legal aspect of the CYQF and to develop a registry for the CYQF. Discussions are under way for finding the means to support further the National Qualifications Authority so it could perform its tasks in a more effective way.

In the system of vocational qualifications (SVQ), a validation procedure consisting of four phases has been developed. The procedure is aligned with the European Recommendation on validation of non-formal and informal learning (31). The four phases are:

- identification: at this stage the learning outcomes gained through formal, non-formal and informal learning are determined. The identification takes place in centres for assessment of vocational qualifications (CAVQs) approved by Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA). CAVQs sign an agreement with HRDA regarding the terms of their operation, after their representatives receive training by HRDA. As a first step, information on the system of vocational qualifications is provided to the candidate and through an interview; they are advised to choose a specific qualification standard, relevant to their set of knowledge, skills, competence. The results of this phase are described in the identification and documentation report;
- documentation: this phase provides proof of the previously identified knowledge, skills, competence. The results are recorded in the identification and documentation report. If the candidates decide to proceed with the assessment in order to acquire the certificate of the vocational qualification, they have to fill and sign an application form. When a group of five candidates is formed, the director/manager of the centre for assessment of vocational qualifications submits the application forms and all paperwork to the HRDA for approval;
- assessment: if the HRDA approves the applications, which are examined against the criteria of the system of vocational qualifications, the candidates may proceed with assessment. This is carried out by two approved assessors in two to five meetings and is based on the relevant vocational qualification standard. The results are detailed in the assessment report. The assessors are trained by the HRDA;
- certification. the assessment reports are submitted to the HRDA, the results are validated, and full or partial certification is given.

For more information about arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning please visit Cedefop's European database.

[30] Decision No 82.592.

[31] Council Recommendation 2012/C398/01.

CHAPTER 13.
Incentives for learners

Allowances, meals and travel subsidy

- the provision of secondary technical and vocational education (STVET) (including evening technical and vocational education), of the apprenticeship system and of public tertiary vocational education and training is free of charge;
- various lifelong learning programmes which are considered VET are subsidised (i.e. offered for a small fee);
- a government grant is paid to parents with a child in tertiary education based on specific income and property criteria;
- student allowances are also provided to students based on specific financial criteria. There are four types of allowance (maximum allowance in brackets): for housing (EUR 1 800), for feeding (EUR 1 092), for buying university books (EUR 300) and for buying or upgrading a computer (EUR 500). The amount that each student is allowed, is calculated based on an elaborate point system.

Study leave for employees

- 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, provided that they are 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, ensuring a certain level of education and training. Such sectors include the hotel industry, banking sector, cabinet making and carpentry industry and private clinics.

Incentives for the unemployed

VET programmes for adults, implemented by vocational training centres and enterprises, are provided free of charge and participants receive training allowances which are paid by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA). The amount of the allowance varies depending on the programme.

The financing provided by the EU funding mechanisms 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 jointly financed by the EU are addressed to the unemployed and groups at risk of exclusion from the labour market.

CHAPTER 14.

Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

Wage subsidy and training remuneration

The funds of the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) come from the human resource development levy of 0.5% on the payroll of employers, excluding the government.

Enterprises are directly involved in vocational training for adults and continuously prepare and submit training programmes to the HRDA. The subsidy generally covers 80% of the eligible total costs. HRDA provides subsidies to the employers. In the case of single-company initial and continuing training programmes (32), eligible costs include the cost of trainers, the personnel cost for trainees, administrative expenses and cost of training materials.

For multi-company continuing training programmes (33), HRDA provides the subsidies directly to the training providers and the employer covers the remaining cost.

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[32] The 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. The 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;

[33] The training programmes are implemented by accredited vocational training centres, at accredited vocational training facilities by certified trainers of vocational training. The programmes are subsidised by the Human Resource Development authority (HRDA):

- multi-company training programmes provide continuing training for meeting the training needs of employed and unemployed persons 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;
- high-priority multi-company training programmes provide continuing training to meet the training needs of employed persons through their participation in training programmes in specific high-priority issues.

Employees from different companies attend these programmes.

CHAPTER 15.

Guidance and counselling

Improving the provision of guidance and counselling services to all population groups is a policy priority for Cyprus. The main bodies delivering guidance and counselling are the Career Counselling and Educational Services (CCES) of the education ministry, the public employment service (PES), and the Euroguidance centre Cyprus of the labour ministry, the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), the Youth Board of Cyprus and certain private organisations. Guidance is provided to learners in secondary and students in tertiary education, to both the unemployed and employed as well as to the economically inactive.

An important development related 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 government policy makers in lifelong guidance. All major stakeholders, such as the education ministry, the labour ministry, HRDA, the Youth Board of Cyprus and the social partners are represented in the Forum.

Career guidance for jobseekers is provided by labour counsellors employed in all district and local offices of the PES. The guidance services offered by PES specialise in supporting the unemployed in finding and placing them in suitable jobs, providing guidance, counselling and information services for professions and career prospects, as well as for available employment opportunities in Cyprus and Europe, providing information on existing vocational training and education opportunities in various professions, providing information on employment conditions based on applicable collective agreements and labour legislation, and providing personalised service to vulnerable groups of people, who face particular difficulties in finding work.

Career guidance and counselling for learners is provided mainly by the CCES, the Euroguidance centre Cyprus of the labour ministry, HRDA and the Youth Board of Cyprus.

More specifically, CCES maintains offices in all public secondary schools, both general and vocational, as well as in the central career guidance offices at the education ministry. CCES were first introduced in the Cyprus education system, as part of a pilot scheme, in 1964/65.

The main stated goal of CCES is to assist learners and other individuals to meet the general goals of the education ministry:

- the healthy development of the learners' personalities;
- the development of problem-solving skills in order to deal effectively with their personal, educational, professional and social problems.

The main objective of the service is 'to provide specialised assistance through counselling and guidance to all interested individuals in order to deal effectively with their personal, educational, career and social problems'. Emphasis is placed on:

- self- awareness and assistance in acquisition of soft skills;
- self- approval and self-confidence;
- self-actualisation;
- decision-making and problem-solving skills;
- healthy adjustment to the school and social environment;
- critical thinking and effective use of appropriate information.

School counsellors work with individuals or small groups of learners (normally 2-4), through timetabled sessions during class periods (usually around 45 minutes). Shorter sessions during breaks are also available. Sometimes learners may be accompanied by their parents. These shorter sessions can cover a wide range of issues such as guidance on educational and career choices (sometimes by using psychometric tests), disciplinary and relationship issues, and any other related issues that might concern the student population.

Counsellors liaise with other teachers, parents and with a range of external services and professionals, including educational and clinical psychologists, social workers, psychiatrists and the police, in relation to the problems that learners might face. Specifically, in the case of learners with special needs (with physical disabilities and/or learning difficulties) the counsellor plays a vital role in convening case conferences to determine an action plan for addressing their distinctive needs within the school. Similar approaches are also used for learners with literacy problems or with challenging behaviour within the school.

Alongside their guidance and counselling work, the counsellors undertake a variety of administrative and informative tasks. These may include maintaining student records for guidance purposes, writing reference letters for overseas universities, organising parents' evening meetings relating to educational choices and potentially delivering preventive programmes to teachers and learners.

Learners also have the opportunity to become acquainted with the world of work, through presentations given by professionals in different fields and organisational tours. Each school organises career days where professionals and staff from higher education institutions give informative lectures/presentations to learners.

For a person to be eligible to work as a school counsellor in public secondary schools, an accredited first degree in any subject taught in secondary education and a postgraduate qualification in counselling or/and careers guidance are required.

School counsellors are allocated in schools of secondary education as well as at the central and regional offices of the counselling service offices of the education ministry. The counsellors at the central offices give support to those 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.

Through various actions, the CCES constantly tries to expand its services in order to include the general population (e.g. NEETs, early school leavers), while assisting them to reflect on their capabilities and giving them options for either employment or further education and training. The national Resilience and Recovery Plan is being used to improve CCES further and to address skills mismatch.

An open school day, organised by the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET), has been established to raise public awareness and increase initial VET attractiveness. In these open days, learners in the third year of lower secondary education and their parents can visit a technical school of their choice and be guided by teachers and other learners to the various facilities of the school. Each technical school organises a demonstration of learner achievements, to promote greater awareness of the career possibilities provided by initial VET programmes.

Learners attending technical schools receive traineeships in the specialisation of their choice as part of their curriculum.

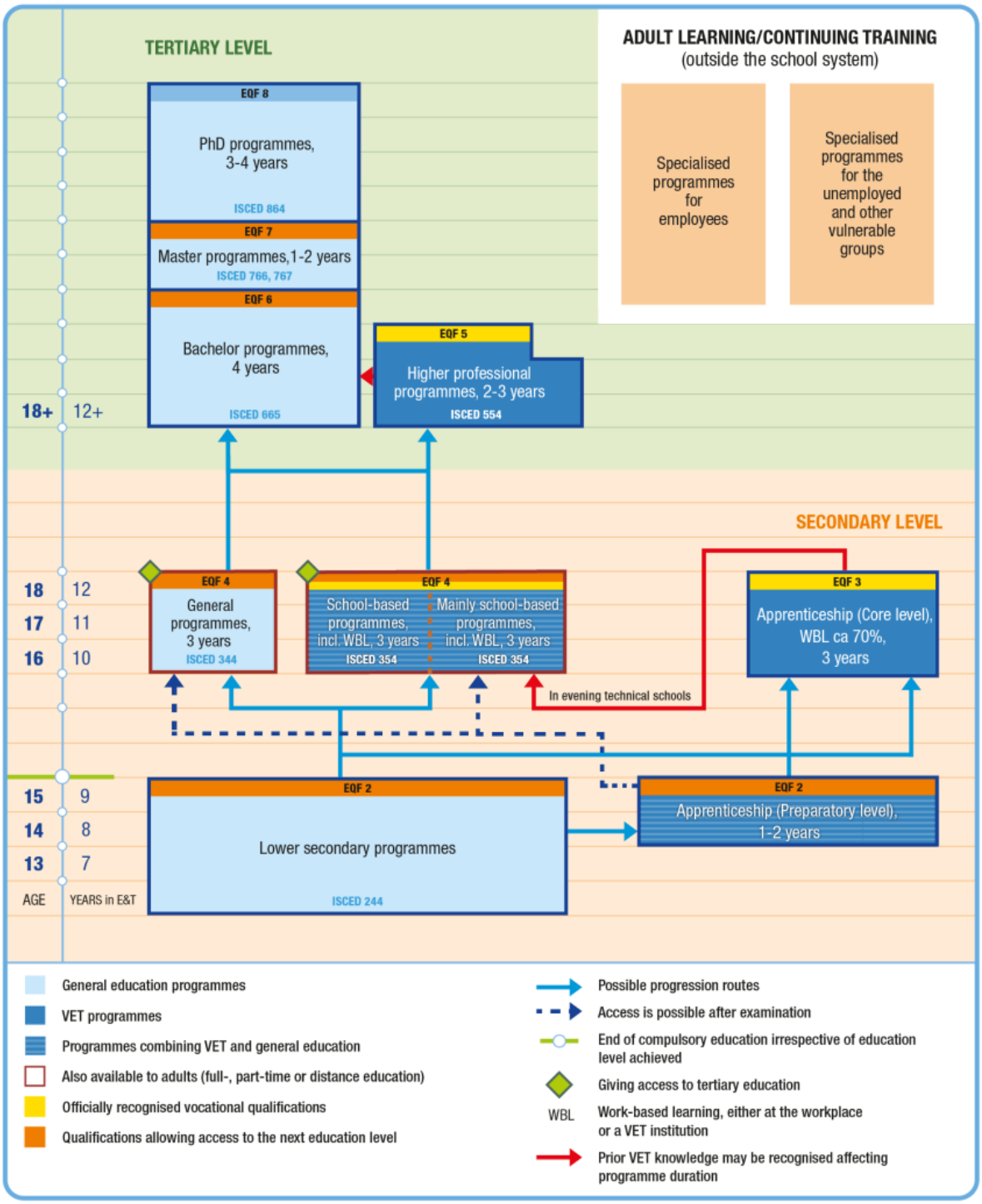
Each year, the education ministry organises the international education fair where learners and other interested parties receive information about university study programmes, entrance requirements, fees and scholarships. Over 200 higher education institutions and universities from 35 countries, as well as national universities and colleges, usually attend the fair.

The British Council and education USA, a USA Department of State network, with the participation of different universities and colleges from the UK and the USA 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.

Please see:

- Guidance and outreach Cyprus national report
- Cedefop's labour market intelligence toolkit.
- Cedefop's inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices.

Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA). (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Cyprus: system description. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). *Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions* [Database]. www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/cyprus-u3

VET Programme Types

EQF 2

Apprenticeship

(Preparatory level),

1-2 years

Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 2 (Apprenticeship (preparatory level)) (Προπαρασκευαστική Μαθητεία)

EQF level	2	**ISCED-P 2011 level**	Not applicable
Usual entry grade	8	**Usual completion grade**	9
Usual entry age	14	**Usual completion age**	16
Length of a programme (years)	2 (up to)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	**Is it part of formal education and training system?**	✗
Is it initial VET?	✓	**Is it continuing VET?**	✗ It is considered IVET
Is it offered free of charge?	✓ It is offered free of charge	**Is it available for adults?**	✗ Preparatory apprenticeship is not available to adults

ECVET or other credits	Not applicable
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	• work practice in enterprises • participation in workshops
Main providers	The main provider is the education ministry.
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Information not available
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	• in-company practice • workshops

Main target groups	Young people aged 14-16 who have withdrawn from the formal education system. They receive individual counselling according to their needs.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners must be at least 14 years old to enrol.
Assessment of learning outcomes	Assessment of preparatory apprenticeship learners 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.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Preparatory programme - New modern apprenticeship (*Προπαρασκευαστικό Πρόγραμμα Νέας Σύγχρονης Μαθητείας*)
Examples of qualifications	Not applicable
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete preparatory apprenticeship can enrol in core apprenticeship (EQF 3) or continue their studies to EQF 4 (upper secondary technical and vocational education or upper secondary general education) provided they succeed in a special set of exams.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	General education programmes constitute the main part of this programme, since learners attending preparatory apprenticeship are taught maths, modern Greek, English, computers, music, theatre, art, physical education and technology.
Key competences	✓ Numeracy skills (maths), mother tongue (Greek language), digital skills
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available(34)

[34] In the academic year 2022/23 about 50 learners were enrolled onto preparatory apprenticeship. However, this number is not included in VET statistics.

EQF 3

Apprenticeship

(Core-level),

WBL ca. 70%,

3 years

Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 3, apprenticeship (core-level) (Νέα Μαθητεία)

EQF level	3	**ISCED-P 2011 level**	Not applicable
Usual entry grade	10	**Usual completion grade**	12
Usual entry age	15	**Usual completion age**	18
Length of a programme (years)	3 (up to)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	**Is it part of formal education and training system?**	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	**Is it continuing VET?**	✗
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	**Is it available for adults?**	✗ Maximum completion age is 21 (but adults cannot enrol in core apprenticeship).

ECVET or other credits	Not applicable
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	• school-based learning • apprenticeships • work practice
Main providers	• schools • enterprises
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=70%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	in-company practice

Main target groups	Programmes are available for early leavers from education (young people, including adults, up to the age of 18 years old, who have either completed a lower secondary program (EQF2) or preparatory apprenticeship or dropped out of upper secondary programmes).
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners must be aged 15-18 old to enrol. • minimum age: 15 • maximum age: 18 • previously acquired qualification/education level: lower secondary education leaving certificate (35) or preparatory apprenticeship certificate (36).
Assessment of learning outcomes	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 in industry, apprentices are assessed by their supervisors and their grades appear on the apprenticeship certificate (EQF level 3).
Diplomas/certificates provided	New modern apprenticeship certificate (*Νέα Σύγχρονη Μαθητεία*) Allows access to several regulated occupations (e.g. building contractor and electrician) provided that all other requirements of the relevant legislation are met.
Examples of qualifications	Currently, the apprenticeship system in Cyprus has the capacity to offer the following specialisations, according to apprentices' demand (37): • car mechanics • plumbing/central heating • welding/metal constructions • bakery/confectionery • carpentry/furniture production • electrical installations • graphic design • hairdressing • preparation of food and beverages • retail sales • building and construction works • home appliances technicians
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete core apprenticeship can enter the labour market or continue their studies at EQF level 4 (only in evening schools which they can complete in 2 years instead of 3).
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	Information not available
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available

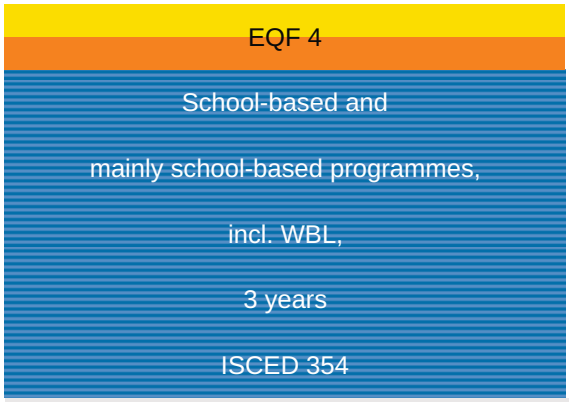
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	2.9%(38)

[35] In Greek: Απολυτήριο Γυμνασίου.

[36] In Greek: Πιστοποιητικό Προπαρασκευαστικής Μαθητείας.

[37] A specialisation is offered if it is selected by 5 or more apprentices.

[38] The data (percentage) in the text is for the school year 2022-23 and includes the number of VET students in upper secondary vocational education (not including Evening Technical Schools), which is 4758, and Core Apprenticeship, which is 143. The total number is 4901.



Initial VET programmes leading to EQF level 4, ISCED 354, school-based and mainly school-based programmes (Μέση Δευτεροβάθμια τεχνική και επαγγελματική εκπαίδευση)

EQF level	4	**ISCED-P 2011 level**	354
Usual entry grade	10	**Usual completion grade**	12
Usual entry age	15	**Usual completion age**	18
Length of a programme (years)	3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	**Is it part of formal education and training system?**	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	**Is it continuing VET?**	✓ The 3-year lifelong learning programmes 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 reintegration in the labour market in areas where there is shortage of skilled workforce.
Is it offered free of charge?	✓	**Is it available for adults?**	✓
ECVET or other credits	Information not available		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	• school-based learning (contact studies) • work practice (practical training at school and in-company practice)		
Main providers	Schools		

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Information not available
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	• in-company practice • workshops at schools For the theoretical stream, the percentage of general education subjects is 70%; the percentage of technological and workshop subjects is 30%. For the practical direction, the percentage of general education subjects and the percentage of technological and workshop subjects is 50% respectively. Both directions integrate practical training in enterprises at the end of the first and second years.
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people but also for adults.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners must hold a lower secondary certificate (EQF2) or apprenticeship certificate (only applicable for entry at evening technical schools, due to age restrictions), or pass special exams (for learners of the preparatory apprenticeship (EQF2).
Assessment of learning outcomes	The criteria used to assess learners include class participation, workshop and laboratory work, written assignments, projects, tests and a final examination.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Upper secondary technical and vocational education and evening technical school certificates - 12th grade (*Απολυτήριο Μέσης Τεχνικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης*) are awarded upon completion and also provide access to regulated occupations, provided that all other requirements of the relevant legislation are met.
Examples of qualifications	Beautician, hairdresser, bartender (39)
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete upper secondary VET can enter the labour market or continue their studies at EQF level 5 and EQF level 6.
Destination of graduates	Information not available
Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	✓ Both streams, theoretical (*θεωρητική*) and practical (*πρακτική*), of formal upper secondary VET combine general education subjects with technological and workshop subjects.
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available

Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	97.1% (40)

[39] As described in ILO: international standard classification of occupations: ISCO 08.

[40] . The data (percentage) in the text is for the school year 2022-23 and includes the number of VET students in upper secondary vocational education (not including Evening Technical Schools), which is 4758, and Core Apprenticeship, which is 143. The total number is 4901.

EQF 5

Higher professional

Programmes,

2-3 years

ISCED 554

Initial higher professional programmes leading to EQF level 5, ISCED 554

EQF level	5	**ISCED-P 2011 level**	554
Usual entry grade	12	**Usual completion grade**	Not applicable
Usual entry age	18	**Usual completion age**	18+
Length of a programme (years)	3 (up to)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	**Is it part of formal education and training system?**	✓
Is it initial VET?	✓	**Is it continuing VET?**	✓
Is it offered free of charge?	✓ only for Cypriot and EU students and only in public institutions.	**Is it available for adults?**	✓

ECVET or other credits

Each accredited 2-year programme of study offered at the Public School of Higher VET - MIEEK awards 120 ECTS (41).

The accredited programmes of study are the following:

- pastry - bakery
- computer and communication networks
- refrigeration and air conditioning installations
- design and CNC technology - woodworking industry
- dairy technology - cheese making
- organic horticultural crops
- supply chain management and maritime studies
- electrical installations and automation systems
- culinary arts
- catering services
- automotive technician
- industrial technician
- foreman for building and technical works

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	• in-company practice • practical training at schools In-company practice, i.e. work based learning (industrial placements) lasts for 6 weeks per academic year. Suitable enterprises and industrial units are selected on the basis that they have the capacity to provide learners with the necessary skills and competences required for their chosen programme of study. Practical training at schools is provided at the workshops of the technical and vocational schools of education and training where the institutes operate.
Main providers	Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET)
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Information not available(42)
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	Information not available
Main target groups	Programmes are available for people (adults) with upper secondary level (EQF4) certificate (either from general education or VET). Higher education places are rather limited in Cyprus so many young Cypriots enrol to institutions abroad.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners must hold an upper secondary level certificate (EQF4) (general education or VET).
Assessment of learning outcomes	• 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.
Diplomas/certificates provided	Information not available Certificates and diplomas (2 years) *(Μεταλυκειακά Διπλώματα Διετούς Διάρκειας)* Higher certificates and diplomas (3 years) *(Ανώτερα Διπλώματα και Πιστοποιητικά)*
Examples of qualifications	Tourist guide, police chief constable, police commissioner, cook, graphic designer(43)
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete VET can enter the labour market or they can continue their studies at EQF level 6 (only in a specialisation relevant to their diploma).
Destination of graduates	Information not available

Awards through validation of prior learning	Information not available
General education subjects	Information not available
Key competences	Information not available
Application of learning outcomes approach	Information not available
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Information not available

[41] The formerly known as post-secondary institutes of VET (MIEEK), as public schools of higher (tertiary/non-university) VET (since 2017), offer 2-year accredited programmes (European qualifications framework level 5), leading to the acquisition of a diploma of higher VET, which can be recognised by universities in the case of graduates who wish to pursue university studies in a relevant field. In Cyprus the standard formula used for each credit point per year is 25-30 of workload hours per credit point. The Cyprus law (136 (I)/2015) states that programmes should be designed according to the guidelines of ECTS and ECVET as they were declared in Ministerial meetings in the context of the European Higher Education Area.

[42] There are work-based-learning enterprises in the programme but information on the share of work-based learning is not available.

[43] As described in ILO: international standard classification of occupations: ISCO 08.

References

[1] European Commission (2022). *Education and training monitor - Cyprus*

[2] Based on data collected by the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET) of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth

[3] Eurostat (2022) participation rate in education and training (previous 4 weeks)

[4] Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (15-24 years) - % of the total population in the same age group [tipslm90]

[5] European Commission (2022). Cyprus in the Digital Economy and Society Index

[19] CYSTAT (n/a). *Statistical abstract - timeseries, chapters A-I (EN)*.

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[22] Human Resource Development Authority (2022). *Προβλέψεις ζήτησης και προσφοράς εργατικού δυναμικού στην κυπριακή οικονομία 2022-2032 (Δεκέμβριος 2022)* [Forecasts of labour demand and supply in the Cyprus economy 2022-2032]

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[25] Human Resource Development Authority (2018). *Εντοπισμός Αναγκών σε Πράσινες Δεξιότητες στην Κυπριακή Οικονομία 2017-2027 [Identification of green skill needs in the Cyprus economy 2017-27]*.

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