

## Inventory of lifelong guidance systems and practices - Cyprus

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## Introduction

In March 2012, the [Cyprus National Forum of Lifelong Guidance](#) (*Κυπριακή Πύλη Διά Βίου Μάθησης, Kypriaki Pyli Dia Viou Mathisis*) was established by a [Decision of the Council of Ministers](#) with representatives from national providers of guidance. Its aim is to develop a specific policy in line with the [2004 and 2008 Council of Europe resolutions](#) on lifelong guidance and the Commission Communication (2010) [Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth](#). Its main objectives are:

- coordination and communication between guidance services.
- establish a guidance quality assurance framework.
- enhance citizens' access to guidance services.
- promote research on guidance.
- representing Cyprus in meetings and working groups at European and international levels on lifelong guidance (Euroguidance, 2020).

The main challenges for the LLG strategy in Cyprus include:

- addressing the impact of the economic crisis and the re-skilling of the labour force.
- adapting the lifelong learning system to a greener economy.
- promoting transparency of qualifications (through formal, non-formal or informal learning) and mobility of the human resource (inter-sectoral and geographical) (Euroguidance, 2020).

### Sources

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European Commission (2010). *Europe 2020 - A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. COM(2010) 2020 final. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:2020:FIN:EN:PDF>

## Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

At a national level, guidance and counselling in Cyprus is mainly provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MOEC) and the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI), which maintain close collaboration with the [Human Resource Development Authority](#) (HRDA).

The implementation of the [New modern apprenticeship](#) (*Νέα Σύγχρονη Μαθητεία, Nea Syghroni Mathiteia*) is the result of a collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MOEC) and the Cyprus Productivity Centre. A new programme is under development.

Other important providers of guidance in Cyprus include:

- the [Cyprus Youth Board](#) (*Οργανισμός Νεολαίας Κύπρου, Organismos Neoleas Kyprou, ONEK*), specialised in guidance for Youth. The Youth Board collaborates with youth organisations to provide career guidance for young people (further information can be found [here](#));
- youth information centres have been set up; their work is based on and regulated by European standards;
- trade unions and municipalities;
- career services of universities in Cyprus.

In 2014, Cyprus adopted the [National strategy for lifelong learning 2014-20](#) with the aims of:

- increasing learning mobility and ICT skills;
- improving qualifications and the validation of previous learning;
- enabling correlation between education and the labour market.

Increasing the provision of guidance and counselling services to all population groups is a policy priority. Lifelong learning (LLL) and lifelong guidance (LLG) aim to define an integrated strategy which covers all kinds/types of learning - formal, non-formal and informal at all levels - from pre-school, primary, secondary general and vocational education to higher education, vocational training and adult education. The main objective of the Cyprus lifelong learning (LLL) strategy is to create a society in which all citizens have the skills that enable them to deal with any challenges and changes that happen in their lives, moving freely between learning settings, jobs, regions and countries. The strategy envisages equal and active participation of all members of the society, strengthening the country's productivity, innovation, competitiveness and dynamism (Euroguidance, 2020).

In addition, a transregional international network which supports the development of career guidance services and the exchange of good practices was set up (further information can be found [here](#)). It includes representatives from Bulgaria, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Spain, and Turkey. International collaboration between Euroguidance Greece and Euroguidance Cyprus led to the development of career training seminars and career management skills (CMS) training seminars for career professionals. Euroguidance promotes up-to-date information about education and training opportunities available in Cyprus and in EU countries.

#### Sources

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Human Resources Development Authority. <http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/>

## Access to guidance

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In Cyprus, career guidance services are available for students, adults, the young, people with special needs, employed and unemployed individuals, long-term-unemployed, women returning to work and people living in rural areas. When requested, an interpreter facilitates career guidance services for people who speak minority languages. The development of career services is a shared responsibility for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, Cyprus Youth Board, Trade Unions and the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA).

Among the priorities of the lifelong strategy, the following are included:

- increasing participation in lifelong learning programmes, for example in [Adult Education Centres](#) (Επιμορφωτικά Κέντρα);
- developing forecasting tools;
- providing access to quality career guidance services;
- developing the employability of individuals from disadvantaged groups.

Public employment services (PES) have been reorganised in 2006 and provide access to up-to-date information about education, training and job opportunities for employees and unemployed individuals. The PES established a national candidate placement system where data about registered jobseekers and registered employers are gathered, providing information about job vacancies. The system provides access to a self-help option and has features which allow users to schedule online job interviews and training-matching. PES have 14 local labour offices. Throughout the years, they have developed partnerships with trade unions, employers' associations, municipalities, NGO's and different inter-ministerial structures (further information can be found [here](#)).

Career internet points are available in different public places with the aim of increasing awareness of ICT career tools which allow competence check-ups and job and/or education matching. Furthermore, [Euroguidance staff](#) and [EURES professionals](#) provide up-to-date information about career opportunities abroad.

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Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. [http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/mlsi.nsf/index\\_en/www.aboutcyprus.org.cy](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/mlsi.nsf/index_en/www.aboutcyprus.org.cy)

## Quality assurance

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PES has no quality standards for the career guidance services provided. There are quality principles in the education sectors, success and adequacy indicators which are based on the European framework.

## Career management skills

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There are no development measures as CMS but there is a European programme called NEET aimed at the population not in employment or education or training.

Although not yet in the general school curriculum, career management skills have been included in the career education subject and are high on the lobby agenda of the Cyprus National Forum of Guidance.

There is a framework/strategy for careers education, which is included within the broader role and duties of career advisors; six teaching periods during the first semester of the third grade of gymnasium include topics such as self-awareness, LMI, education systems and choices, and decision-making.

## Evidence, monitoring and assessment

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In 2010, new legislation was introduced on improvement and modernisation of public employment services (PES). The aim of this initiative was to aid job placement and job creation by improving the matching process; it also sought to strengthen administrative and technical facilities, to improve monitoring and individualised counselling, and help private placement agencies improve their service. It ran since 2015 up until the present time.

An external evaluation of the Counselling and Career Education Service (CCES) of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth was carried out in 2010; the recommendations of the committee provide the basis for making improvements by extending the target groups and including secondary students, young people, and employed individuals. Key conclusions can be found [here](#).

The Careers Counselling and Educational Service (CCES) appoint a school counsellor at each secondary public school. School counsellors are assessed

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by the Inspector of Secondary Education of CCES every two years. The evaluation involves a thorough presentation of the issues the school counsellor had to handle and the methods they employed to achieve the best possible outcome. The inspector also evaluates the records the school counsellor keeps. This practice aims to promote good practices among the school counsellors.

Practice	Accessed/yearly	Number and types of guidance interventions	Number of guidance practitioners
Career Counselling and Education Service	Non-applicable	One-to-one career guidance sessions	Seven career counsellors in the central offices of Careers Counselling and Education Service and 135 school counsellors at secondary public schools and the district offices of the departments of CCES of the MOEC in the main cities.
Career training seminars for career professionals	The seminars organised by the CCES of the MOEC in collaboration with other institutions concern the school counsellors; those attending them fill in an evaluation report by the end of the seminar.	Non-applicable	Non-applicable
Public employment services	Non-applicable	Individual counselling, face-to-face interviews Group guidance, Active labour market policies, career trainings.	Non-applicable

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## Career information, ICT in guidance

The [Career Counselling and Educational Service](#) (CCES) organises trainings and seminars for school counsellors in collaboration with professionals from the ICT field. These are announced on the Ministry's [web page](#) before the scheduled date of the event so that Counsellors are informed.

#### Sources

Ministry of Education and Culture (n.d.). *Career Counselling and Educational Services (CCES)*. [http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/career\\_counselling.html](http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/career_counselling.html)

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth. <http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/>

## Training and qualifications

The [Career Counselling and Educational Service](#) (CCES) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MOEC) is part of the Department of Secondary Education. The service is staffed with qualified counsellors who have gone through specialised post-graduate education either in Cyprus or abroad in career guidance. To be employed in the service or in secondary public schools, all guidance practitioners must also have a specialist first degree in secondary education and complete a pre-service training programme. They also have access to entrepreneurship-oriented seminars, workshops and training. Some of the seminars are organised by the [Human Resource Development Authority](#) of Cyprus.

Career professionals working in public employment services (PES) have access to in-service specialised career training.

Since 2014, guidance courses at master level have also been taught in universities in Cyprus (see also [here](#)). A special agreement is in place and postgraduate students are allowed to make their fieldwork placement at the Counselling and Career Education Service (CCES) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MOEC) and in secondary schools, where they will have a mentor assigned to coordinate and supervise their activities.

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## Funding career guidance

European funds have been used to develop the public employment services and to provide career guidance services for jobseekers. Moreover, all the services provided by the Counselling and Career Education Service (CCES) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) are government funded; however, some of their actions are funded from European funds.

Name of the initiative	Funding
National Forum of Guidance	MOEC
Career Counselling and Education Service	MOEC
Preparatory apprenticeships	European
New modern apprenticeship	European Government

Public employment services	2009: 5.02 (million EUR) 2010: 5.41 (million EUR) 2011: 6.03 (million EUR) 2012: 7.37 (million EUR) 2013: 5.09 (million EUR) 2014: 3.59 (million EUR)
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## Career guidance for school pupils

Elementary teachers are responsible for providing career education to elementary interdisciplinary students, while in upper secondary school the responsibility is shared between teachers and school counsellors/career professionals.

The main aim of the [Career Counselling and Educational Service](#) (CCES) is the personal, social, educational and vocational development of students of public secondary general and technical schools as well as of other individuals. Academic and vocational guidance is provided through the CCES to students during class sessions or on a personal basis upon request. All schools have to develop an institutional education plan in which they should include information about career management skills and provide students with the opportunity to become aware of the necessity to be actively involved in school life. Students should also learn what a CV is. Taking into consideration the individuality of each person, their abilities, needs and their freedom of will, the [CCES](#) aim to help students and other people to:

- develop positive self-esteem, self-approval and self-confidence;
- identify their abilities, interests and skills;
- use their unique capabilities and aptitudes to achieve self-awareness;
- acquire the right skills to deal effectively with personal, family and/or social issues in life;
- adjust to the school environment to progress both educationally and socially;
- develop critical thinking;
- develop the necessary skills that will allow the effective use of appropriate information and make well-informed decisions concerning educational, vocational and personal choices;
- learn about the nature and demands of various vocations as well as the current social, economic and cultural developments so that correct educational choices are made (Ministry of Education and Culture, n.d.).

Career education is a six-period lesson which is a compulsory subject in the first term for upper secondary school students and is provided by school counsellors. The contents of this subject are designed, defined and integrated by experts from the CCES. The book published by CCES is available at this [link](#).

School counsellors are placed in each upper secondary public school. They lay special emphasis on helping students equip themselves with all the necessary skills and up-to-date information to make effective personal, educational and career choices through the following actions:

- individual and group counselling on personal, social, educational, and career guidance issues;
- providing career education;
- publication of instructional and informative books (career education, scholarships);
- organisation of training seminars for school counsellors;
- access to information on educational and vocational guidance;
- participation in various committees for student benefit.

Extra-curricular seminars are provided in school with the aim of facilitating the understanding of the labour market and of different careers. Another option refers to the opportunity that all students have, to access short-time work placements. In addition, career support is provided also for the parents.

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## Guidance for VET participants

After the [reform](#) of the VET system in 2016, Cyprus:

- improved the infrastructure between VET schools and apprenticeships;
- provided access to VET programmes for university studies;
- developed VET programmes in higher and tertiary education institutions (HEIs);
- initiated evening VET programmes for adults.

The reform of the VET system also focused on improving career management and entrepreneurship skills and on increasing access to more work-based learning opportunities. Currently, more than 90% of VET students are involved in entrepreneurship education programmes (further information regarding the VET system's curriculum can be found [here](#)).

A two-year apprenticeship system was in place as part of IVET. Starting with 2013, it was replaced by the [New modern apprenticeship](#) (*Νέα Σύγχρονη Μαθητεία, Nea Syghroni Mathiteia*) (See Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders).

Please see the description of VET system in Cyprus [here](#).

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Department of secondary technical and vocational education and training. <http://www.moec.gov.cy/mtee/en/index.html>

## Guidance for higher education students

In higher education, career guidance is provided by career professionals and the teaching staff. To increase students' entrepreneurship skills, universities include courses on entrepreneurship in their curriculum and provide start-up guidance and support. Career counsellors at the [Career](#)

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Counselling and Educational Service (CCES) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) also offer their career guidance and counselling services to higher education students.

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Ministry of Education and Culture (n.d.). *Career Counselling and Educational Services (CCES)*. [http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/career\\_counselling.html](http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/career_counselling.html)

## Guidance for adult learners

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Adult education programmes also include career guidance services offered by the Ministry of Labour, at career guidance offices, as well as by career counsellors who work at evening schools. The career guidance services are coordinated by the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) and [Euroguidance Cyprus](#).

#### Sources

Euroguidance Cyprus. [http://www.euroguidance.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/euroguidance/euroguidance.nsf/index\\_gr/index\\_gr?OpenDocument](http://www.euroguidance.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/euroguidance/euroguidance.nsf/index_gr/index_gr?OpenDocument)

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## Guidance for the employed

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Career guidance services for employees are coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and [Euroguidance Cyprus](#). Their development is undertaken by experts from public employment services (PES) or from trade unions (with no background on career counselling). Career guidance services for the employed from both the [Career Counselling and Educational Service \(CCES\)](#) of the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#) (MOEC) and the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) (MLWSI) focus on providing access to up-to-date quality information about training and job opportunities.

#### Sources

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## Guidance for unemployed adults

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The career guidance services (NEETs programme) for unemployed adults are coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and [Euroguidance Cyprus](#). The career guidance services for unemployed adults from both the [Career Counselling and Educational Services \(CCES\)](#) of the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#) (MOEC) and the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) (MLWSI) focus on providing access to up-to-date quality information about training and job opportunities.

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## Guidance for older adults

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Public employment services (PES) organise career guidance activities for older adults. The basic aim is for older adults to become employable again. The [Ministry of Education](#) also operates the electronic platform [EPALE](#) (Education Platform of Adult Learners).

#### Sources

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (n.d.). *Electronic platform for adult learning in Europe*. <http://www.moec.gov.cy/epale.html>

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth. <http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/>

## Guidance for early leavers

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In Cyprus, the ESL rate has a value of 6.8%. Career guidance for young people under 30 is organised by the [Cyprus Youth Board](#) and the public employment services (PES).

An ongoing measure to tackle youth unemployment and especially in respect of ESL is the *Proparaskevastiki Mathiteia (Προπαρασκευαστική Μαθητεία, Preparatory Apprenticeship)* that was introduced in 2014 (more information is available [here](#)). Two initiatives, with a total budget of EUR 17 million, provide placement for six 6 months of 2500 young unemployed school leavers of lower secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary education less than 25 years old, and of 2500 young unemployed of tertiary education graduates less than 35 years old with limited work experience.

The implementation of the Youth guarantee scheme includes two phases of support. First, there is general support provided mainly during group sessions during which individuals have access to information about education and job opportunities. Once this phase is completed, individual support is provided during interviews, organised with the aim of identifying what challenges they face when pursuing an educational programme or looking for a job. The public employment service has access to a [national tracking system](#), operated by the [Department of Labour](#).

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One-year preparatory apprenticeships are available for the early school leavers aged 15 to 17. The aim of the practice is to provide support in order to enrol in a secondary or VET school.

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## Guidance for NEET

The project Counselling and career guidance for NEETs, implemented by the [Career Counselling and Educational Services \(CCES\)](#) of the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth \(MOEC\)](#) in cooperation with the public employment service (PES) of the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) aims to expand the counselling and career guidance services offered to people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), aged 15 to 24; this includes all those who have permission to work in Cyprus. The project is financed by the European Social Fund, the Youth employment initiative (YEI) as well as State funds.

All the activities of the project aim to increase the number of employed young people aged 15 to 24 and facilitate their entry into the labour market as a measure to tackle increasing youth unemployment, particularly among the NEET group of people.

During the counselling process, career guidance counsellors evaluate the aptitudes, knowledge, skills and attitudes of NEET persons using specialised tools/guidance evaluation questionnaires. Through the development of an individual action plan for each recipient, counsellors can refer them to return to the standard education system, to attend second-chance school programmes, and to enrol in vocational training programmes or Higher Education Institutions. Counsellors will also encourage NEETs to participate in employment and training programmes. The personal information of NEET individuals will be shared with the PES; those not attending educational programmes, provided they are enrolled in the PES unemployment system, will be able to have their PES profile matched with vacancies and training programmes offered by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Security.

Through the implementation of the project, counselling and career guidance services will be offered to 4000 NEETs by career guidance counsellors and counselling psychologists in counselling and career guidance service offices throughout the non-occupied area of the Republic of Cyprus. When necessary, further educational, psychological and social support will be offered through referrals to qualified professionals.

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Ministry of Education and Culture (n.d.). *Career Counselling and Educational Services (CCES)*. [http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/career\\_counselling.html](http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/career_counselling.html)

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## Guidance for young people at risk

The career guidance services for young people at risk are coordinated by the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#).

Starting in 2014, Cyprus has a [National action plan for youth employment](#) with the aim of supporting graduates' entrance into the labour market, by providing more access to work-based learning opportunities.

The career guidance services for young people at risk focus on providing access to quality information about training and job opportunities. Such services are also provided by their school counsellors in collaboration with other professionals so that a supportive system is provided.

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## Guidance for persons with disabilities

The career guidance services for people with special needs are coordinated by the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#). *The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities provides empowerment and support to persons with disabilities by promoting innovative actions and implementing programmes, in order to protect and ensure their equal enjoyment of human rights and achieve their full and effective participation in society.* It focuses on providing access to quality information about training and job opportunities, designing targeted schemes for training and retraining of people with special needs and disabilities, while, with the help of the [Department of Labour \(PES\)](#), ensuring equal access into the labour market.

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## Guidance for immigrants

School counsellors keep their practice up-to-date and are trained and informed about good practices and useful tools (such as the EU skill profile tool for third country nationals), so that they can offer appropriate services to individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds.

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## Coronavirus Update

Since 13 March 2020, when the Government issued the official closing day of schools due to the pandemic, guidance may be regarded as temporarily 'closed down'. However, individual counsellors employed in secondary education attempt to stay in contact with their students through online communication. The Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture approved a [specific platform](#), now in active use. In Cyprus, counsellors are contacting students through the Ministry of Education's approved [web page](#). They are posting specific articles and advice on the Facebook web page 'Guidance in Cyprus'. Various articles and programmes are also appearing on [web pages](#).

The [Ministry of Welfare, Labour and Social Insurance](#), a provider of guidance in Cyprus, is not able to provide any additional guidance at the moment, due to the total lock down that was enforced by the Cyprus Government. The main reason is that there is an increased work related to the different measures put in place to serve the workers who are forced to stay at home without pay from their employers whose businesses were closed down. The [web page of the Ministry](#) shows the large number of announcements (Ανακοινώσεις) made from the 12th March onwards, regarding the various programmes. These programmes mainly concern grants and similar, for the various vulnerable adults (e.g. unemployment caused by the shutdown, one parent families, child support, sickness pay, temporary closing of businesses etc.).

Furthermore, the [Higher Research Development Authority of Cyprus](#) (HRDAUTH), another guidance provider in Cyprus, has a [special page](#) in which various options and information related to Covid are announced. In addition, HRDAUTH offers various training programmes for the short- and long- term unemployed, providing them with the necessary guidance to help them enter gainful employment (an example can be accessed [here](#)).

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