



Vocational education and training in Cyprus

Short description





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The **European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

Cedefop was originally established in 1975 by Council Regulation (EEC) No 337/75. This decision was repealed in 2019 by Regulation (EU) 2019/128 establishing Cedefop as a Union Agency with a renewed mandate.

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Foreword

Vocational education and training (VET) in Cyprus is undergoing significant transformation to respond to demographic trends, economic shifts, and the twin digital and green transitions. The system provides diverse pathways for young learners and adults, spanning secondary and tertiary education, and blends classroom learning with practical experience to support lifelong learning. While participation in VET has increased in recent years, enrolment at upper secondary level remains well below the EU average, as many learners continue to favour academic education. At the same time, Cyprus demonstrates strong tertiary attainment and excellent employment outcomes for VET graduates, confirming the potential of vocational routes to deliver quality jobs and career progression.

Broader demographic and social changes – such as an ageing population and migration – make inclusive strategies and tailored upskilling essential for older workers, newcomers and young people outside education or employment. Economic restructuring and the growing importance of sustainability and technology are reshaping skills demand, while the prevalence of micro and small enterprises limits opportunities for work-based learning. Digital skills gaps and persistent early leaving from education add further complexity, highlighting the need for flexible and attractive VET provision.

Cyprus has taken important steps to address these challenges, including through its national implementation plan, to strengthen the quality and relevance of initial VET and continuing VET programmes and tackle the challenges posed by the digital and green transitions. Technical schools and modern apprenticeships offer vocational options at upper secondary level, while public schools of higher VET (MIEEK) offer accredited European qualifications framework level 5 programmes tailored to labour market needs. Adults can access second-chance education, continuing training, and targeted schemes under the Cyprus lifelong learning strategy 2021–2027 and EU-funded programmes such as THALIA 2021–2027 and the Recovery and Resilience Plan. Initiatives such as recognition of prior learning, personalised learning credits and wider use of digital tools are designed to open up lifelong learning opportunities. Guidance and counselling services for young people – especially youth outside education and training – employer matching platforms and incentives for companies complement these efforts, reinforcing links between education and labour market needs.

Labour market insights are a key driver of policy. The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus's forward-looking analyses point to growing needs for technical and professional roles, particularly in ICT, healthcare and green economy fields. These findings inform curriculum reform, vocational qualification standards and targeted training programmes, ensuring that VET provision remains relevant and responsive to evolving economic priorities.

In the coming years, Cyprus plans further modernisation of VET aligned with EU objectives. During its 2026 Council Presidency, vocational education and training will remain a top priority, with emphasis on quality, inclusiveness and innovation. The Presidency will also promote digital and green skills, mobility and partnerships, in line with the [European Education Area](#), the [Union of Skills](#), and the [VET Recommendation](#). By investing in flexible pathways and lifelong learning, Cyprus aims to make VET a driver of competitiveness, resilience and social fairness, contributing to Europe's shared goals for sustainable growth.

This publication, prepared in close cooperation with national stakeholders, offers a concise overview of Cyprus's VET system, its distinctive features, and ongoing developments. It is part of Cedefop's series of short descriptions published for countries holding the Presidency of the Council

of the European Union. We hope it supports mutual learning, cross-border cooperation and policy innovation in vocational education and training across Europe. Additional resources, including a Spotlight on VET flyer and an animated video presenting Cyprus's VET system, are available on Cedefop's website.

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Contents

Foreword	4
Acknowledgements	6
Cyprus	9
External factors influencing VET	10
Chapter 1. VET provision	12
1.1. Education and training system overview	14
1.1.1. Structure of the education system	14
1.2. Government-regulated VET provision	14
1.2.1. Upper secondary VET programmes	14
1.2.2. Apprenticeships	14
1.2.3. Higher (tertiary/non-university) VET	15
1.2.4. Piloting VET in lower secondary education	15
1.3. Upskilling programmes for adults	15
1.4. VET governance	16
1.4.1. IVET providers	16
1.4.2. CVET providers	16
1.5. Financing VET	17
1.5.1. Financing IVET	17
1.5.2. Financing continuing VET / adult learning	18
1.6. VET teachers and trainers	18
1.6.1. VET teacher types	18
1.6.2. Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers	19
Chapter 2. Shaping VET qualifications	20
2.1. Anticipating skills needs	21
2.2. Designing qualifications	21
2.2.1. VET qualifications under the remit of the MESY	22
2.2.2. System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) administered by the HRDA	22
2.3. Recognition of prior learning	24
2.4. Quality assurance	24
Chapter 3. Promoting VET participation	26
3.1. Incentives for learners	27
3.1.1. Incentives for young people in education and training	27
3.1.2. Incentives for adults (inactive, employed and jobseekers)	27
3.2. Incentives for companies, VET providers, teachers and trainers	27
3.3. Guidance and counselling	28
3.3.1. Guidance and counselling in IVET	28
3.3.2. Guidance and counselling in continuing VET / adult learning	29
3.4. Challenges and development opportunities	30
Abbreviations	32
References	34
Further sources of information	35
Websites and databases	35

Figures

Figure 1. VET in the Cypriot education and training system	13
Figure 2. Development of SVQ qualifications.....	23

Cyprus



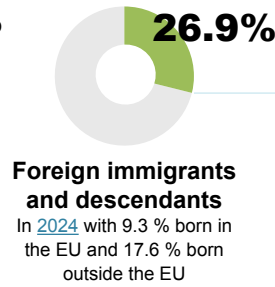
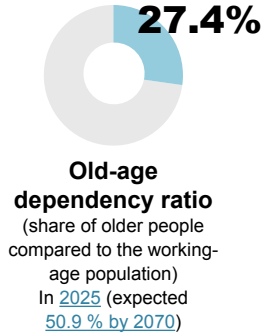
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General Information

Area	9 253 km²
Capital	Nicosia
Government	The President of the Republic is both head of State and of government
Legislature	Presidential Republic
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita	EUR 37 800 (2024)

External factors influencing VET

Demographics and immigration

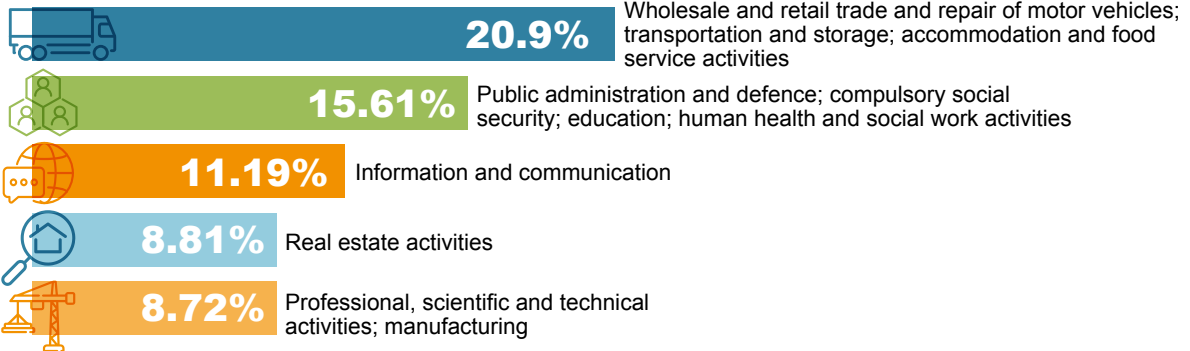


Immigration impact:

The **integration** of individuals of migrant backgrounds and refugees into education and employment directly influences vocational education and training (VET) and lifelong learning policies.

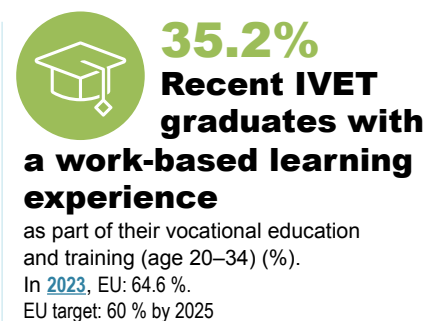
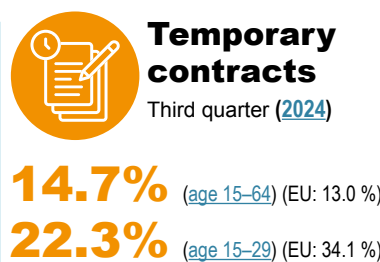
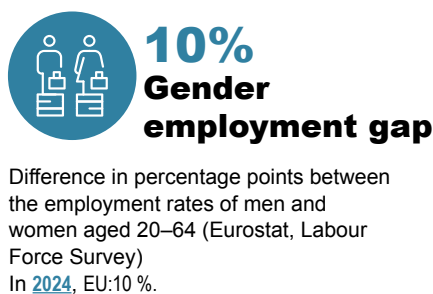
Economy and employment

Main economic sectors, **first quarter (Q1) 2025**



Labour market

There are few restrictions in the labour market. Holding a specific qualification/diploma or compulsory registration at the appropriate professional body are necessary to exercise some occupations and professions.





Occupations with most job openings by 2035

(Cedefop, 2025c)

- Professionals
- Service workers and shop/market sales workers
- Technicians and associate professionals

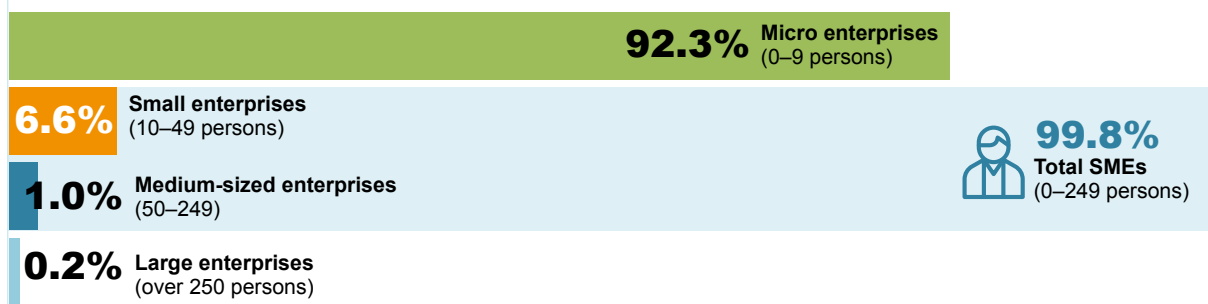


Occupations with most replacement demand by 2035

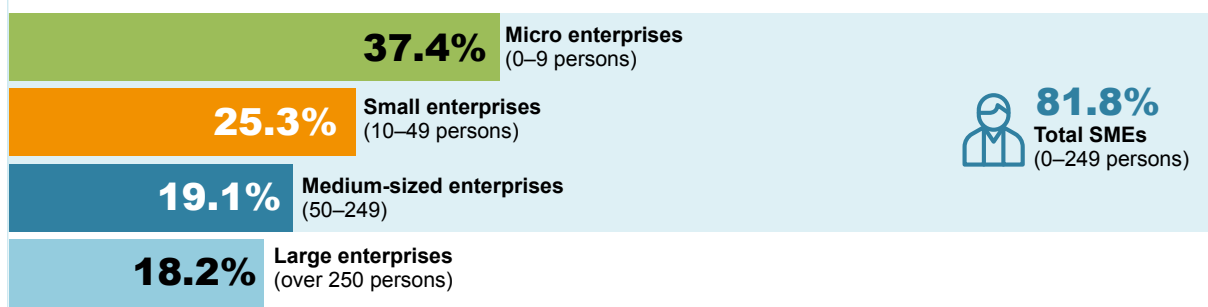
(Cedefop, 2025c)

- Service workers and shop/market sales workers
- Professionals
- Elementary occupations

Enterprise structure by size (2024)



Enterprise structure the share of employees (2024)

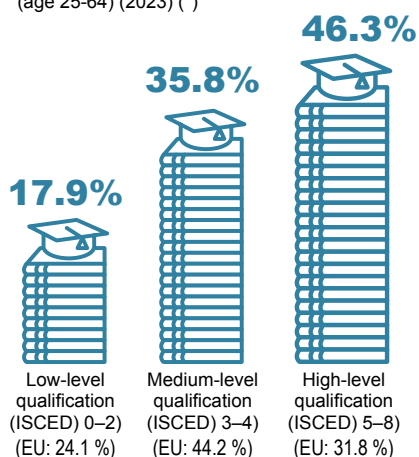


Education and skills

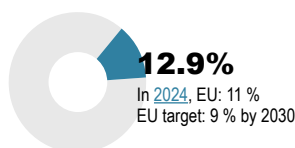
0€ Public education cost
Free for learners

Education attainment

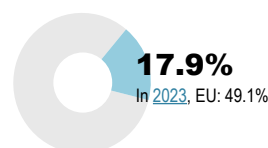
(age 25–64) (2023) (*)



NEETs rate for 15–29 year-olds



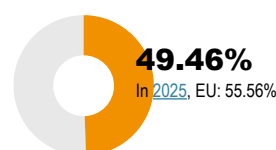
IVET students as a % of all upper secondary students



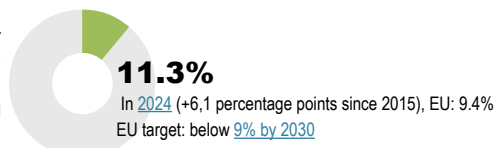
Lifelong learning participation (age 25–64)



Basic digital skills (% of the population)



Early leavers from education and training

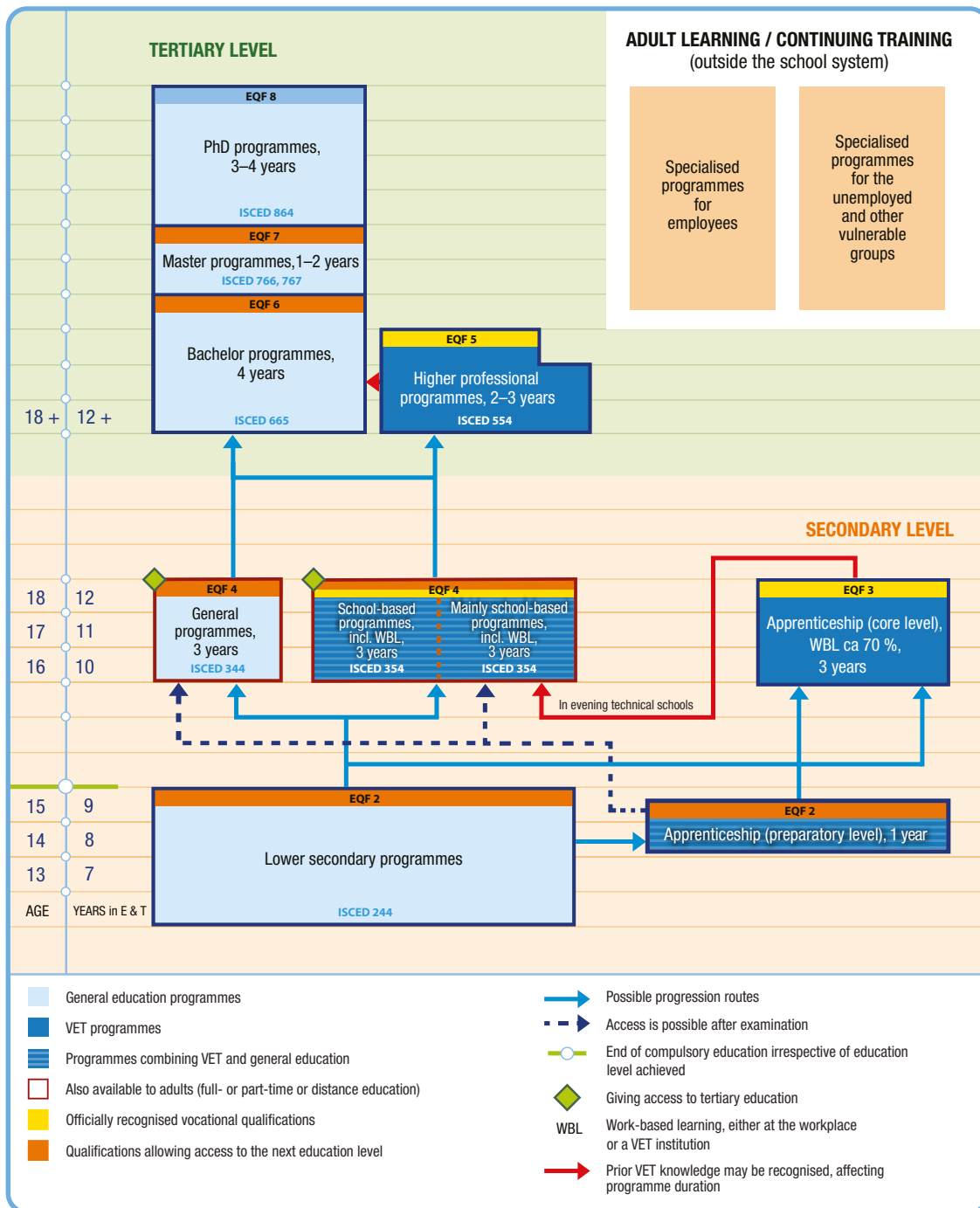


(*) Computed from Eurostat, [ifsa_pgaed](#) [extracted 24.11.2025].

CHAPTER 1.
VET provision



Figure 1. VET in the Cypriot education and training system



NB: IISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Cyprus, 2025.

1.1. Education and training system overview

The Cypriot education and training system spans all levels, from pre-primary to postgraduate. It includes both general and vocational pathways, with vocational education and training (VET) offered at secondary and tertiary levels. Education is compulsory until the age of 15.

1.1.1. Structure of the education system

- (a) pre-primary education (ISCED 0);
- (b) primary and lower secondary education (ISCED 1 and 2), compulsory until age 15;
- (c) upper secondary education (ISCED 3) – includes general and vocational programmes;
- (d) higher non-university VET (ISCED 5, EQF 5) and higher university education (ISCED 6–8, EQF 6–8).

Upper secondary VET is provided in technical schools. Evening technical schools offer second-chance education for adults and early school leavers. Apprenticeships are an alternative VET pathway for learners aged 14–18.

Higher VET programmes deliver European qualifications framework (EQF) level 5 professional qualifications with a focus on skills in demand. Programmes are offered by public schools of higher VET ([MIEEK](#)) and [accredited public and private tertiary institutions](#) (see Section 2.1.1).

Special education in Cyprus prioritises inclusion, with most children supported in mainstream schools through individualised plans and specialised staff.

Adults can also follow secondary general and vocational education programmes provided through evening schools and graduate and postgraduate programmes offered by tertiary institutions.

1.2. Government-regulated VET provision

VET in Cyprus is offered at secondary and tertiary levels, with distinct pathways tailored to learners' age, prior education and career orientation. Programmes are publicly regulated and free of charge, with options for both initial and continuing vocational education.

1.2.1. Upper secondary VET programmes

Upper secondary VET is delivered in technical schools and includes both theoretical and practical streams. Programmes last for three years and lead to EQF level 4 qualifications. Learners follow a school-based curriculum combining general education subjects with vocational training. Practical training is integrated through workshops and enterprise placements, particularly in the second and third years. Graduates may enter the labour market or continue to higher education (EQF level 5 or 6). Evening technical schools offer second-chance education for adults and early school leavers.

1.2.2. Apprenticeships

The apprenticeship system offers preparatory and core apprenticeship programmes. Preparatory apprenticeship, non-formal programmes (EQF level 2) target learners aged 14–16 who have left compulsory education. Learning focuses on basic skills, personal development and exposure to vocational fields through workshops. Upon completion, learners may progress to core apprenticeship programmes or re-enter formal education provided they succeed in special exams.

Core apprenticeship programmes are formal three-year programmes (EQF level 3) for learners aged 15–18. They combine school-based theoretical instruction with paid work-based learning (WBL) in enterprises (approximately 70 % WBL). Specialisations include car mechanics, plumbing,

electrical installations, cooking and more. Graduates may enter the labour market or continue in evening technical schools to obtain an EQF level 4 qualification.

1.2.3. Higher (tertiary/non-university) VET

Higher VET short-cycle programmes are offered by accredited public and private colleges and institutes and lead to EQF level 5 higher diplomas, diplomas and certificates. Programmes typically last two to three years and include both school-based and enterprise-based practical training ⁽¹⁾. Public schools of higher VET (formerly post-secondary institutes) offer accredited programmes in fields such as culinary arts, automation systems, maritime studies and dairy technology. Graduates may enter the labour market or pursue further studies at EQF level 6.

1.2.4. Piloting VET in lower secondary education

In 2025/2026, Cyprus launched a pilot initiative to introduce vocational orientation at lower secondary level through the establishment of two technical gymnasiums, in Nicosia and Limassol.

The initiative aims to strengthen the attractiveness of technical professions, address skill mismatches and offer learners an alternative educational pathway from an earlier age. Learners may choose between two specialisations – engineering science, and design and construction – and follow an enriched curriculum combining general education with practical, technology-enhanced learning. Learner engagement is supported through afternoon teaching periods and the provision of meals.

Programmes aim to foster creativity, teamwork and real-world application, and prepare learners for further education or employment, and are considered a strategic investment in youth and national competitiveness. The expansion of the initiative is envisaged, subject to its success and stakeholder feedback (MESY, 2025).

1.3. Upskilling programmes for adults

Adult education and training in Cyprus offers a wide range of formal and non-formal general and vocational learning opportunities aimed at upskilling, reskilling and personal development. There is no unified legislative framework that defines adult learning provision. Different institutions operate under the responsibility of a ministry within its remit, offering adult education and training, including public universities, vocational schools, [adult education centres](#) and the [State institutes of further education](#).

Adult education and training programmes to acquire a formal qualification are offered at graduate and postgraduate levels by public and private institutions and at secondary general and vocational levels in evening schools. Obtaining secondary education qualifications is crucial for [low-skilled adults](#) to better meet labour market demand and to reintegrate into sectors facing skilled labour force shortages (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

Non-formal adult education focuses on the personal growth and self-development of individuals without necessarily leading to formal qualifications; programmes are delivered in adult education centres and State institutes of further education and other private providers. Continuing vocational training (see Section 2.4.2) targets skills development and upgrading for technical professionals, along with training for the unskilled or workers that need to reskill. Targeted programmes exist for vulnerable groups, such as young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) and migrants (Eurydice, 2025).

⁽¹⁾ The list of institutions delivering higher VET short-cycle programmes is available online in [Greek](#) and in [English](#).

1.4. VET governance

VET in Cyprus is governed through a multi-level structure involving several ministries and agencies. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MESY) oversees education policy, including lifelong learning and the formal VET system. The ministry's Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (DoSTVET) manages the public system of VET, which includes secondary and higher VET, lifelong learning VET programmes and the apprenticeship system.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (MLSI) is responsible for the labour market and social policy and works closely with the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), a semi-governmental organisation that plans and implements vocational training and manages the system of vocational qualifications.

The Directorate General Growth of the Ministry of Finance (MoF) coordinates European funding programmes (Recovery and Resilience Facility, [operational programme THALIA 2021–2027](#)), innovation and strategic planning.

Cyprus maintains a tradition of tripartite consultation and social dialogue. Social partners – employers' organisations and trade unions – contribute to planning, governance and identifying training needs.

The [Cyprus lifelong learning strategy 2021–2027](#) sets out a comprehensive framework to promote lifelong learning as a national priority, aiming to build a knowledge-based, inclusive society. Developed with support from the European Commission, the strategy addresses the lack of a coordinated institutional framework and fragmented adult learning provision in Cyprus. It identifies four strategic priorities: (a) establishing governance, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms; (b) tackling youth unemployment and aligning learning with labour market needs, especially in the context of the digital and green transitions; (c) boosting adult participation in learning by improving quality and accessibility; and (d) enhancing the professional development of educators. The strategy is supported by key performance indicators and a dynamic action plan, which will be regularly updated through stakeholder consultation and annual reviews (MESY, 2023).

1.4.1. IVET providers

Initial vocational education and training (IVET) is primarily delivered by public institutions under the MESY. These include upper secondary VET in technical schools; second-chance education programmes in evening technical schools; the new modern apprenticeship system (EQF levels 2 and 3), coordinated by DoSTVET; and the MIEEK, offering accredited EQF level 5 programmes. Moreover, in 2025/2026, the MESY is running VET pilot programmes in lower secondary ⁽²⁾. All IVET programmes are free of charge. Curricula are developed in cooperation with the HRDA, the labour ministry and sectoral stakeholders.

1.4.2. CVET providers

Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) in Cyprus is delivered through a broad network of public and private providers, coordinated primarily by the HRDA. CVET serves adults, including employees and the unemployed, vulnerable groups and those seeking to upskill or reskill (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

Several ministries provide specialised training within their respective remits. The MLSI, through the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC), offers modular programmes in technical and managerial [fields](#). The Ministry of Agriculture offers training for farmers and foresters via agricultural education centres. The Ministry of Health coordinates continuing professional development for nurses, while

⁽²⁾ More information is available [online](#) in Greek.

the Ministry of Justice oversees police training through the Cyprus Police Academy. The Cyprus Academy of Public Administration delivers training for civil servants. Public provision includes [HRDA-accredited](#) vocational training centres, which offer programmes aligned with national skill needs and are subject to regular quality assurance (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

Private CVET consists of colleges, consultancy firms and enterprises, which offer both subsidised and non-subsidised programmes. These providers may operate independently or in partnership with the HRDA. The HRDA plays a [central role](#) in CVET delivery. It accredits providers and facilities, subsidises training programmes – typically covering up to 80 % of eligible costs – and [designs and implements](#) programmes that respond to national and EU priorities, including digital transformation, green skills and inclusion. It supports both single-company and multi-company training formats, including high-priority thematic programmes (Cedefop, & HRDA, 2023; Cedefop, & ReferNet, 2025).

CVET is also supported by EU funding mechanisms, notably the [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) and the [operational programme THALIA](#), which finance targeted training for the unemployed, NEETs and adults in need of upskilling (see Section 2.4). These programmes often combine classroom-based learning with work-based components and are increasingly delivered through digital [platforms](#) to enhance accessibility and reduce administrative burden (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

1.5. Financing VET

VET is funded primarily through public resources, with additional support from European Union programmes. This funding approach has enabled the expansion of training opportunities, especially for individuals facing barriers to labour market entry. EU co-financing has been instrumental in launching new initiatives under national strategies such as the Recovery and Resilience Plan and the ESF+ under the cohesion policy programme [THALIA 2021–2027](#) (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

1.5.1. Financing IVET

In 2023, total public expenditure in education was 5.2 % of GDP ⁽³⁾. Public expenditure in VET increased from EUR 65.7 million in 2020 to EUR 78.2 million in 2022 ⁽⁴⁾. IVET is offered free of charge at both secondary and tertiary (non-university) levels. This includes technical schools, evening technical schools and the apprenticeship system, all of which are [tuition-free](#) for learners. Public tertiary VET programmes are also [free](#) for Cypriot and EU nationals.

DoSTVET, under the MESY, oversees the provision and development of the public secondary technical and vocational education and training (STVET) system. Developments encompass secondary technical and vocational education, evening schools of technical and vocational education, the apprenticeship system, lifelong learning programmes of VET, and public schools of higher vocational education and training (MIEEK), and are complemented by EU funds. In the last decade, this work has supported curriculum reform, infrastructure upgrades and the provision of digital equipment, along with professional development for VET instructors, including training on emerging technologies and industrial practices. Around 60 % of this budget was EU-funded ⁽⁵⁾.

⁽³⁾ Eurostat, [gov_10a_exp](#) [accessed 22.9.2025].

⁽⁴⁾ Eurostat, [educ_uae_fini02](#) [accessed 22.9.2025]

⁽⁵⁾ More information is available [online](#).

1.5.2. Financing continuing VET / adult learning

Continuing vocational education and training (CVET) is primarily supported by the HRDA, a semi-governmental organisation under the MLSI. The HRDA's funding is sourced from a 0.5 % levy on employers' payrolls, excluding the public sector. This funding mechanism enables the HRDA to [subsidise](#) a wide range of adult training programmes, including:

- (a) training for the employed, tailored to each enterprise's needs;
- (b) upskilling and reskilling for the unemployed, often combined with job placements or work experience; and
- (c) subsidised lifelong learning programmes, offered at modest fees.

The HRDA typically covers around 80 % of eligible training costs, making participation more accessible for individuals and enterprises. In 2024, the HRDA [updated](#) its policy and procedure manuals for all major training schemes, extending their validity until 2030. These include single-company and multi-company training programmes, high-priority multi-company training programmes and continuing training programmes for trade union officials. Since January 2024, the System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ), which certifies adults based on occupational standards aligned with the Cyprus qualifications framework (CyQF) and the EQF, is fully funded by the HRDA following the end of ESF co-financing. In [2024 alone](#), 310 individuals were certified in various technical fields (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Under the Cyprus Recovery and Resilience Plan, the HRDA is implementing targeted [training schemes](#) in digital, green, blue economy and entrepreneurial skills. In the first half of 2024, EUR 342 478 was allocated for digital skills training, benefiting 1 679 participants (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). The cohesion policy programme THALIA 2021–2027 also [finances](#) the HRDA's actions, such as establishing individual learning accounts (ILAs) and providing training for NEETs. These schemes provide flexible learning opportunities and promote social inclusion (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

1.6. VET teachers and trainers

1.6.1. VET teacher types

In VET, the following roles exist:

- (a) teachers responsible for theoretical and practical instruction in school workshops;
- (b) apprentice tutors;
- (c) lifelong learning trainers.

Teachers in upper secondary technical and vocational schools are university graduates, typically with at least a bachelor's degree. They deliver both theoretical and practical components in school workshops, support the school-based part of apprenticeships and may also teach at MIEEK.

A limited number of teachers in technical schools may have diplomas or equivalent qualifications from tertiary level (non-university) institutions in three-year programmes⁽⁶⁾. These teachers are placed on a lower salary scale.

Apprentice tutors are staff members within the companies that deliver the in company training part. There are no formal training requirements for taking on this role.

⁽⁶⁾ In 2025, 51 out of 529 permanent VET teachers were graduates from higher VET short-cycle three-year programmes (Source: internal communication with ReferNet Cyprus).

Individuals aiming to become lifelong learning trainers must successfully complete the assessment and certification process under the SVQ and acquire the EQF level 5 lifelong learning trainer qualification ⁽⁷⁾. The multi-company training programme includes ‘train the trainer’ courses designed to prepare candidates for this certification. Certified lifelong learning trainers deliver training programmes that are approved and financially supported by the HRDA. These courses are offered at certified vocational training centres and within companies as part of in-house training initiatives (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

1.6.2. Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

The [Cyprus Pedagogical Institute](#) (Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου) (CPI) coordinates continuous professional development of teachers, including those in VET, under a [national framework](#) established by the Council of Ministers. The PI offers free training programmes tailored to individual or school-level needs, which may be compulsory or optional depending on legal provisions and school priorities. These seminars support both pedagogical and subject-specific competence development. A [digital competency training programme](#), delivered via an eLearn platform, helps educators integrate digital technologies into teaching.

Newly appointed VET school leaders attend mandatory year-long courses, while all teachers can access curriculum-related training and afternoon seminars on pedagogy. School-based learning is a key focus, with schools conducting annual needs assessments and developing action plans supported by PI facilitators. Since 2017, technical schools have engaged in collaborative, enquiry-based approaches such as lesson studies and teacher rounds. By 2024, participation in continuous professional development activities had been integrated across all VET schools in Cyprus.

The HRDA provides training through multi-company training schemes to support certification and enhance instructional skills of lifelong learning trainers. Within the SVQ system, in 2023 and 2024, over 900 individuals were trained and received the EQF level 5 lifelong learning trainer qualification (see Section 2.5.1) (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

(7) The ‘vocational training trainer’ requirements were updated in 2024, and the qualification was renamed ‘lifelong learning trainer’. It is part of the education reform process to offer quality VET programmes, including through the update of SVQ qualifications and appropriate training of VET educators and lifelong learning trainers. More information is available [online](#).

CHAPTER 2.

Shaping VET qualifications



2.1. Anticipating skills needs

Skills anticipation in Cyprus is primarily carried out by the HRDA. The Ministry of Finance contributes economic growth projections, while the public employment service (PES) supports the HRDA's work through direct engagement with employers and qualitative research. The MESY oversees the identification of educational and special skill requirements. Ministries, employer organisations and trade unions – through their representation on the HRDA's board – contribute to the consultation process for programme design (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023; Cedefop, 2023).

The HRDA conducts long-term employment trends studies and forecasting every few years. Its [2022–2032 study](#) includes projections for labour demand across 309 occupations and 52 sectors, and for the first time, labour supply forecasts by gender and education level. It projects an employment rise of 12.1 % and increased demand for medium- and higher-level occupations. Data are used to shape the HRDA's training programmes and inform stakeholders such as businesses, trainers and policymakers (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023; ReferNet Cyprus & Cedefop, 2023c).

Moreover, the HRDA conducts annual studies collecting data from employers, trade unions and public employment services via structured questionnaires. It also carries out sector-specific studies, complementing the broader forecasts, to identify skills gaps in cutting-edge areas, like the green and blue economies, healthcare or energy, and define training needs. The latest [2024–2030 study on green skills and occupations](#), aligned with the EU's Green Deal initiative, suggests that 25 % of the employed workforce will be occupying jobs in green economy sectors and identifies fields of activities and main occupations that will be in high demand (ReferNet Cyprus & Cedefop, 2024; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Studies provide valuable insights to stakeholders in education and employment, supporting career guidance and informing lifelong learning policies. They are used to shape continuing training programmes subsidised by the HRDA, including other EU funded programmes, like THALIA 2021–2027, and to guide the development of vocational qualification standards and curriculum design. The findings are widely disseminated by the HRDA through targeted events, media campaigns and other outreach activities, for example, presentations to school counsellors (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023; Cedefop, 2023c).

The education ministry has developed a digital platform ([DEETE](#)), to facilitate graduate–employer connections and to collect information on graduates' career progression to support curriculum development. Initially focused on post-secondary VET, DEETE is being expanded to include secondary-level graduates and enable data analysis by field of study. In higher VET, the [2023](#) external evaluation of MIEEK results are used to tailor VET to increase its outreach and relevance through modularisation, micro-certifications, flexible learning modes and broader territorial coverage (Cedefop, 2023c; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

2.2. Designing qualifications

In Cyprus, qualifications offered in initial VET and through continuing training are designed in close collaboration with labour market actors. The MESY and the HRDA coordinate with employers, unions and sectoral bodies to ensure relevance and responsiveness to evolving skills needs. The CyQF includes two types of qualifications, those delivered in formal education and those administered by the HRDA.

2.2.1. VET qualifications under the remit of the MESY

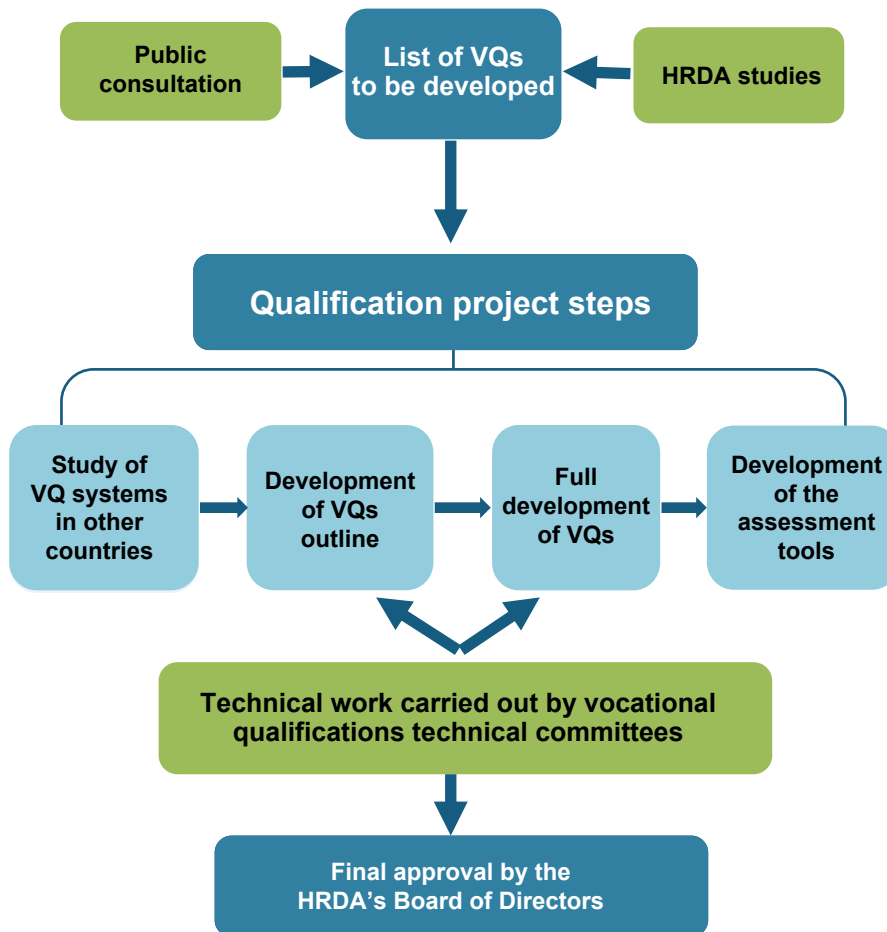
VET qualifications developed under the MESY's Department of Technical and Vocational Education, apprenticeships and in MIEEK are designed in line with the level descriptors of the EQF principles and developed to reflect labour market demands. DoSTVET works closely with the HRDA, the MLSI and social partners. It also collaborates on qualification design with sector-specific 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. Memoranda with employer organisations support curriculum updates and facilitate student placements in enterprises.

The concept of micro-credentials is being explored in VET, higher education and adult learning to support modularisation and flexible pathways and the recognition of existing skills and knowledge. The 2023 external valuation of MIEEK also supports the development of micro-certifications (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025). Moreover, the [Centre for Lifelong Learning](#) at the Cyprus University of Technology delivers targeted CVET courses to professionals, including VET teachers, and runs micro-credentials projects within the European University of Technology partner initiatives (Cedefop, 2023c; ReferNet Cyprus & Cedefop, 2025a).

2.2.2. System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) administered by the HRDA

The SVQ is built on vocational qualifications standards (VQS) developed by the HRDA, with input from technical committees representing industry and education (see Figure 2). The vocational qualification content covers the qualification's identity, assessment methods, and a detailed analysis of each task in terms of required knowledge, skills and competence development. The system allows individuals to validate competences and practical skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning, making it suitable for short, focused learning experiences. It targets a wide range of adults, including unemployed and low-qualified individuals, and helps companies upskill their staff (Cedefop, 2025a; Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

Figure 2. Development of SVQ qualifications



Source: HRDA, 2025.

Vocational qualifications standards were aligned with EQF descriptors in 2017 and are the points of reference for the assessment of candidates' knowledge, skills and competences in real or simulated work settings. They can also be used to guide training design. Standards are divided into compulsory and optional task areas. Candidates choose a specific number of optional areas in addition to the compulsory ones, allowing for flexible and targeted skills acquisition, leading to the award of a qualification following a specific process for identifying, documenting, assessing and certifying skills (see Section 3.3.).

Currently, the CyQF includes SVQ qualifications at levels 3–6 (Cedefop, 2025a). Plans are in place to formally include micro-credentials in the CyQF registry in future updates. In 2024, 310 individuals were certified in various occupational fields, including hospitality, cooling and air-conditioned systems, plumbing, central heating systems and vocational training. All qualifications were awarded at VQS/EQF level 5 (Cedefop, 2023c; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

2.3. Recognition of prior learning

Cyprus lacks an established, unified national system for validating non-formal and informal learning, However the CyQF serves as a reference tool that supports the validation and comparability of qualifications, thereby facilitating learner and worker mobility (Cedefop, 2025a)..

Validation is primarily implemented through the SVQ, managed by the HRDA. The SVQ enables individuals to validate prior learning and obtain vocational qualifications at CyQF levels 3–6 (Manoudi, 2024). It includes four stages, with assessments conducted in certified centres under real or simulated work conditions:

- (a) identification – candidates’ learning outcomes from formal, non-formal and informal learning are mapped through interviews at HRDA-approved centres, resulting in a documented report;
- (b) documentation – candidates submit evidence of skills (e.g. diplomas, work experience) along with their report and application; centres forward complete files to the HRDA for approval;
- (c) assessment – approved candidates are evaluated by trained assessors in certified evaluation centres, using observation and other methods; internal audits and external verification ensure quality; and
- (d) certification – the HRDA validates assessment results and issues the certification; candidates may retake failed components, and training centres offer preparatory programmes (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

Validation methods include observation, interviews, presentations and written tests, with ICT integration expected to improve thanks to the [Ermis](#) digital platform. Since 2018, the system has expanded to cover 167 standards across nine sectors, with enhanced quality assurance for candidates, assessors and centres (Manoudi, 2024).

Validation in formal education is minimal. The [Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications](#) (*Κυπριακό Συμβούλιο Αναγνώρισης Τίτλων Σπουδών*) (KYSATS) can recognise up to 10 % of non-formal or informal learning towards a degree. Some non-formal programmes ⁽⁸⁾ offer certificates of attendance but lack formal validation pathways (Manoudi, 2024).

A national action plan (2018–2022), [coordinated](#) by the MESY, partly co-funded by EU structural funds, piloted validation mechanisms in adult education, youth work and volunteering. It proposes a more elaborate five-stage mechanism: information and individualised counselling, identification, recognition of learning outcomes, assessment of learning outcomes, and certification. The National Qualifications Authority now oversees further development, though its visibility remains limited (Cedefop, 2025a; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025; Manoudi, 2024).

2.4. Quality assurance

In Cyprus, quality assurance in VET is guided by the principles of the European quality assurance reference framework (EQAVET). The country has implemented mechanisms to monitor and improve the quality of VET provision, focusing on both IVET and CVET.

The National Qualifications Authority, operational since 2017, is tasked with enhancing quality assurance across education and training sectors. Its responsibilities include overseeing the validation of non-formal and informal learning (see Section 3.3), integrating these into the CyQF, ensuring alignment with the EQF. It also monitors the use of CyQF/EQF levels on certificates,

⁽⁸⁾ For example, evening schools, adult education provided by the State training institutes (*Κρατικά Ινστιτούτα Επιμόρφωσης, ΚΙΕ*) and teacher training offered by the PI.

diplomas and Europass documents, and develops a national registry for qualifications (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2023).

In the STVET system – covering upper secondary VET, core apprenticeships and tertiary non-academic higher VET programmes – quality assurance is managed by the inspector responsible for each field of study (*κλάδος*), which may include several specialisations (*ειδικότητες*). These inspectors ensure that curricula are properly implemented and that teaching materials are effectively covered using appropriate pedagogical methods. Learner progress is continuously assessed, and final examinations contribute to evaluating the educator's performance. A comprehensive external evaluation was conducted to assess MIEEK programmes, infrastructure, teaching quality and graduate outcomes. It included employer satisfaction, student feedback, and adequacy of curricula and facilities. The evaluation, completed in 2023, led to improvements such as upgraded labs, flexible learning pathways and enhanced practical training (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Two independent bodies are responsible for quality assurance in tertiary academic education. The Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (*Κυπριακό Συμβούλιο Αναγνώρισης Τίτλων Σπουδών*, [KYSATS](#)) handles the recognition of diplomas awarded by higher education institutions. Meanwhile, the [Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education](#) conducts external evaluations and accredits institutions and programmes.

The HRDA ensures quality assurance in adult learning and continuing vocational training. It ensures quality by evaluating proposed training programmes. It conducts appropriate qualitative assessment for accrediting training providers as authorised vocational training centres. All professionals wishing to work as vocational trainers under the VQS system must be accredited and hold the [lifelong learning trainer](#) EQF level 5 qualification (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

CHAPTER 3.

Promoting VET participation



3.1. Incentives for learners

Financial and non-financial incentives in IVET and CVET aim to boost participation, promote inclusion and improve accessibility for diverse learner groups. These measures are aligned with major national VET policies, such as the strategic plan for VET, currently under preparation, and the [Cyprus lifelong learning strategy 2021–2027](#).

3.1.1. Incentives for young people in education and training

STVET, including evening programmes, the apprenticeship system, and public tertiary vocational education and training are provided free of charge.

The [Youth Makerspace Larnaka](#) physical venue and its mobile unit offer free access to advanced technological equipment and workshops, especially targeting young people in remote areas, promoting digital inclusion and creativity. The [STEAMers](#) programme provides low-cost workshops on robotics, programming, arts, and digital content creation for young people aged 6–35, fostering engagement with VET-related fields (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

Families with children in tertiary education may receive a government grant, subject to income and property criteria. Students themselves may be eligible for financial allowances based on need, assessed through a point-based system. These allowances cover – up to a certain limit – housing, meals, university books, and computer purchase or upgrades. (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

3.1.2. Incentives for adults (inactive, employed and jobseekers)

Lifelong learning programmes considered part of VET are subsidised and offered at low fees, making them accessible to a wider population.

Adults following training in vocational training centres or enterprises receive free training and are eligible for training allowances paid by the HRDA. The amount of the allowance varies depending on the programme. EU co-financing has significantly contributed to expanding training opportunities, particularly for unemployed individuals and those at risk of exclusion from the labour market. Training programmes under the [Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) support the acquisition of green, blue, digital and entrepreneurial skills, with priority given to unemployed individuals and women.

Public sector employees may take educational leave for studies relevant to their job if they receive a scholarship approved by the government or other authorised bodies. In addition, collective agreements in sectors such as hospitality, banking, carpentry and private healthcare include provisions for education and training leave, supporting continuous professional development. WBL in [public and non-profit sectors](#) offers unemployed individuals subsidised placements, including weekly training and travel allowances, to gain hands-on experience (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023; Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025).

3.2. Incentives for companies, VET providers, teachers and trainers

Cyprus has a structured system of incentives that encourages active participation in VET by companies, providers and educators. These incentives aim to improve the responsiveness of VET to labour market needs, support WBL and enhance the quality and inclusiveness of training provision.

Targeted measures are in place to reduce the cost burden of training and support the integration of VET graduates into the labour market. Companies benefit from financial incentives through various

schemes managed by the HRDA. These include the provision of financial [support to businesses](#) for the integration of the inactive and the unemployed, [subsidies](#) for single-company training programmes enabling tailored staff upskilling – for example, on [basic digital skills](#) – and subsidies for high-priority multi-company and trade union training programmes addressing broader sectoral and strategic skills needs. Additional funding mechanisms are available under the cohesion policy programme THALIA 2021–2027 to encourage companies to provide [jobs and training](#) to the unemployed, with a focus on NEETs, and under the 2021–2026 Recovery and Resilience Plan to boost company engagement in training in priority sectors, like the digital, green and blue economies.

The HRDA runs the [Ermis](#) digital portal, which streamlines registration and participation processes for companies, providers and individuals. The portal reduces administrative burden and improves transparency in scheme management. Moreover, companies also have access to [DEETE](#) to find suitable VET graduates.

VET providers and trainers also benefit from [targeted incentives](#). Providers must be accredited to deliver subsidised training, ensuring quality assurance and eligibility for funding. Professionals can obtain certification as lifelong learning trainers, which enhances their professional status and access to teaching opportunities. Teachers and trainers are supported through a [structured professional development](#) framework and a [digital upskilling](#) programme. These initiatives aim to improve teaching quality, support the integration of modern technologies and enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession.

3.3. Guidance and counselling

Guidance and counselling are integral to national lifelong learning and employment strategies. Services are coordinated by key ministries and agencies, ensuring access across education and training levels. Provision is tailored to support learners' personal development, career planning and labour market integration, with a focus on inclusive, quality-assured and evidence-informed practices.

3.3.1. Guidance and counselling in IVET

In IVET, guidance is primarily delivered through the Counselling and Career Education Services ([CCES](#)) of the MESY. Qualified counsellors, placed in all public secondary general and technical schools, support students in identifying their interests, skills and career aspirations. Services include both group sessions and individual counselling, and additional support during class periods or breaks, sometimes involving parents. These sessions address educational and career choices, disciplinary concerns and interpersonal relationships. Counsellors collaborate with teachers, families and external professionals – such as psychologists and social workers – to support learners facing complex challenges, including disabilities, literacy difficulties or behavioural problems. They also manage administrative tasks like maintaining student records, writing reference letters and organising parent meetings and preventive programmes (Cedefop, 2023a; Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

Career management skills are incorporated in upper secondary general and technical education, focusing on self-awareness, labour market information and decision-making. Digital tools such as career internet points and online job-matching systems are increasingly used to support guidance delivery in schools. These tools enhance access to career information and facilitate personalised support (Cedefop, 2023a).

School counsellors are evaluated biennially by inspectors who assess case handling and documentation practices. These evaluations contribute to continuous improvement and align with

European quality assurance principles. The CCES also provides academic and vocational guidance to the wider public. Counsellors are required to hold postgraduate qualifications in guidance and complete initial teacher training. Their role is supported by continuous professional development and collaboration with other stakeholders (Cedefop, 2023a).

Labour market intelligence from the HRDA informs guidance provision, ensuring alignment with current and future skills needs. Additionally, the PES offers complementary vocational guidance to secondary school graduates. To strengthen coordination, the guidance system in IVET is supported by collaboration between the education and labour ministries, the HRDA and other stakeholders (such as municipalities, trade unions and university career services). The Cyprus National Forum of Lifelong Guidance (*Εθνικός Φορέας Διά Βίου Καθοδήγησης*), in place since 2012, promotes coordination, quality assurance and access to guidance services, aligning national efforts with EU policy frameworks (Cedefop, 2023a; Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

The [2022/2023 CCES report](#) shows that career guidance in secondary VET is strong, with many students taking part and using tools that help them choose their future paths. However, not enough parents are involved and few students are connected with expert support services – so better teamwork with families and outside professionals is needed to give students stronger overall support (CCEES, 2025).

The MESY organises annual international education fairs, providing learners and the public with information on study programmes, entrance requirements and scholarships. These events attract institutions from over 35 countries and are complemented by similar fairs hosted by organisations such as the British Council and Education USA (Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

The CCES also provides academic and vocational guidance to the wider public. Counsellors are required to hold postgraduate qualifications in guidance and complete initial teacher training. Their role is supported by continuous professional development and collaboration with other stakeholders.

3.3.2. Guidance and counselling in continuing VET / adult learning

In CVET and adult learning, guidance is delivered through a network of actors, including the PES, the HRDA and the Cyprus Youth Board (*Οργανισμός Νεολαίας Κύπρου*) (ONEK). The PES provides career guidance to adults seeking employment, upskilling or career transitions. Services include personalised counselling, job matching and information on training programmes, delivered through four district and 12 local offices.

The HRDA conducts regular labour market studies to identify skills gaps and inform guidance services. These insights support the development of targeted upskilling and reskilling initiatives, particularly for vulnerable groups. The Youth Information Centres (*Κέντρα Πληροφόρησης Νέων*) operated by ONEK offer counselling and information services to young adults up to age 30, promoting access to learning and employment opportunities.

Guidance services in adult learning are designed to be inclusive, targeting unemployed individuals, NEETs, older adults, immigrants and persons with disabilities. Measures include interpreter support, outreach programmes and tailored counselling to ensure equitable access. Specialised support programmes for unemployed adults, early leavers and NEETs exist, such as vocational training, entrepreneurship initiatives and validation of prior learning. These efforts aim to re-engage individuals in education and employment. Gender-based policies ensure that guidance services address the specific needs of women, particularly those with low-level qualifications. Programmes include mentoring, entrepreneurship support and flexible learning formats (Cedefop, 2023a).

Employed individuals benefit from career guidance linked to upskilling and reskilling initiatives. The HRDA supports sector-specific training and the validation of vocational qualifications, promoting career mobility and workforce adaptability.

Guidance practitioners in adult learning settings are trained professionals, often with backgrounds in psychology, sociology or human resources. Since 2014, several universities in Cyprus have introduced postgraduate programmes in career counselling and guidance, contributing to the professionalisation of the field.

ICT-based guidance tools are widely used in adult learning, including online portals, self-assessment platforms and digital career counselling. These tools support remote access and enhance service delivery, especially in underserved areas.

Efforts to improve access and quality include the integration of digital tools, outreach to underrepresented groups and alignment with the Cyprus lifelong learning strategy 2021–2027, which emphasises inclusion, the digital and green transitions and the validation of non-formal learning (Cedefop, 2023a; Cedefop & HRDA, 2023).

3.4. Challenges and development opportunities

In IVET, Cyprus continues to work towards increasing participation and improving access. Although IVET is generally well-regarded, enrolment remains relatively low in comparison to the EU average (17.9 % and 49.1 % in 2023, respectively) ⁽⁹⁾. This is partly due to a general preference for academic pathways and the limited availability of VET provision in rural areas. To address these issues, the national authorities have set clear targets to raise IVET participation by 2030 and are implementing measures such as curriculum reform, infrastructure upgrades and promotional activities. The development of new technical schools and the expansion of higher VET programmes also contribute to improving access and attractiveness (Cedefop, 2025b).

Another area of focus in IVET is the enhancement of labour market relevance. While efforts have been made to strengthen employer engagement and expand WBL, the share of IVET learners gaining practical experience remains below EU benchmarks. To improve this, Cyprus is investing in graduate tracking mechanisms, employer matching platforms and updated study programmes informed by labour market intelligence. These developments aim to support smoother transitions from education to employment and ensure that VET provision reflects evolving economic needs (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025; European Commission, 2025).

In CVET, increasing adult participation remains a priority. Participation rates are still below EU averages, particularly among older adults, low-qualified individuals and the unemployed. To address this, Cyprus is implementing its 2021–2027 lifelong learning strategy, which promotes flexible learning opportunities and outreach to vulnerable groups. Key measures include the introduction of individual learning accounts, validation of prior learning, and targeted training programmes under the cohesion policy programme THALIA 2021–2027 and the Recovery and Resilience Plan (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025; European Commission, 2024a).

Digital transformation is another cross-cutting challenge in CVET. Although progress has been made in developing digital platforms and enhancing teacher competences, digital skills among the adult population remain relatively weak. Ongoing initiatives such as the HRDA's digital portal Ermis (see Section 3.2.) aim to improve access to training and support the integration of digital tools in learning environments (Cedefop & ReferNet, 2025; European Commission, 2025).

⁽⁹⁾ Cedefop. [Key indicators on VET](#) [accessed 14.11.2025].

Finally, improving the attractiveness of the teaching profession continues to be an area for development. Recruiting and retaining qualified teachers, particularly in technical and STEAM subjects, remains difficult. Cyprus is addressing this through professional development frameworks, targeted upskilling programmes and mechanisms to engage professionals from industry in VET delivery.

Abbreviations

CCES	Counselling and Career Education Services
CPC	Cyprus Productivity Centre
CPD	continuous professional development
CPI	Cyprus Pedagogical Institute
CUT	Cyprus University of Technology
CVET	continuing VET
CyQF	Cyprus qualifications framework
DEETE	<i>Δίκτυο επικοινωνίας με εργοδότες για τεχνικά επαγγέλματα</i> (Communication network with employers for technical occupations)
DoSTVET	Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF+	European Social Fund Plus
EU	European Union
EUR	euro
GDP	gross domestic product
HRDA	Human Resource Development Authority
ILA	individual learning account
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial VET
KIEs	<i>Κρατικά Ινστιτούτα Επιμόρφωσης</i> (State training institutes)
KYSATS	<i>Κυπριακό Συμβούλιο Αναγνώρισης Τίτλων Σπουδών</i> (Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications)
MESY	Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth
MLSI	Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance
MIEEK	<i>Δημόσια σχολή ανώτερης επαγγελματικής εκπαίδευσης και κατάρτισης</i> (public school of higher vocational education and training)
NACE	<i>Nomenclature statistique des activités économiques dans la Communauté européenne</i> (general industrial classification of economic activities within the European Union)
NEETs	young people not in education, employment or training
PES	public employment service
PI	<i>Παιδαγωγικό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου</i> (Cyprus Pedagogical Institute)
Q1	first quarter

QA	quality assurance
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
STEAM	science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics
STVET	secondary technical and vocational education and training
SVQ	System of Vocational Qualifications
VET	vocational education and training
VQ	vocational qualification
VQS	vocational qualifications standards
WBL	work-based learning

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[Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training](#)

[EQAVET](#)

[Euroguidance](#)

[Europass](#)

[Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus \(HRDA\)](#)

Vocational education and training in

Cyprus

Short description

This short description provides an overview of Cyprus's vocational education and training (VET) system, highlighting its characteristics and policy priorities.

The VET system offers upper secondary level programmes in technical schools, including evening options for adults, an apprenticeship system for young learners and higher VET programmes. Recent efforts include curriculum reform, upgraded facilities, closer employer links and vocational orientation in lower secondary to boost awareness and attractiveness. Public schools of higher VET, supported by graduate tracking, operate nationwide in key economic sectors linked to the digital and green transition.

Adult learning participation is guided by the Cyprus lifelong learning strategy 2021–2027, which aims to establish a robust monitoring framework, strengthen governance and promote inclusive lifelong learning. The THALIA 2021–2027 cohesion policy programme supports individual learning accounts, validation of prior learning and outreach to vulnerable groups. Transversal priorities include digitalisation in teacher upskilling, STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) learning and stronger guidance and career support services.

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