

Developments in vocational education and training policy in 2015–19

CYPRUS



Cedefop monitoring of vocational education and training policies and systems

Progress towards the medium-term deliverables
of the Riga conclusions

Country chapter

CYPRUS

Developments in vocational education and training policy
in 2015-19

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Introduction

In June 2015, the ministers in charge of vocational education and training in the EU Member States, the candidate countries and the European Economic Area countries, convened in Riga, agreed on objectives for vocational education and training (VET) policies for 2015-20 (¹).

Cedefop has been entrusted with monitoring the countries' policies implemented towards reaching these objectives.

This country chapter is part of the monitoring process. It was drafted based on input from the national ReferNet team. It presents an overview of the major policy developments that have taken place in the country in 2015-19, in the areas covered by the Riga medium-term deliverables (MTDs).

The country chapter is structured as follows:

- (a) the introductory section Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015 briefly sketches the VET context in the country in 2015, highlighting selected figures and major policy initiatives that were just being adopted or started at that time. This introductory section is targeted at setting a baseline to put in perspective the policy choices and developments that have taken place since the beginning of the Riga cycle;
- (b) five thematic chapters then follow, devoted to the five respective MTDs outlined in the Riga conclusions. Each thematic chapter also begins with a 2015 baseline, more specifically addressing the MTD-related topics. The baseline is followed by the presentation of the major policy developments in the MTD since 2015;
- (c) the country chapter ends with a conclusion summarising the main lines of the 2015-19 policy developments and highlighting possible priorities for the future.

This country chapter is part of the information which the European Commission used to prepare the European Semester exercises (²) in 2017-19. It also informs the work of Cedefop and the European Training Foundation (ETF) in

(¹) *Riga conclusions 2015 on a new set of medium-term deliverables in the field of VET for the period 2015-2020, as a result of the review of short-term deliverables defined in the 2010 Bruges communiqué:*

https://www.izm.gov.lv/images/RigaConclusions_2015.pdf

(²) European Semester: https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/economic-and-fiscal-policy-coordination/eu-economic-governance-monitoring-prevention-correction/european-semester_en

preparing a joint monitoring report on the implementation of the Riga conclusions. Both the joint report and the country chapter are aimed at informing the work of EU Member States' Directors General for Vocational Training (DGVTs) and Advisory Committee for Vocational Training (ACVT) on taking stock of the outcomes of the Riga conclusions and preparing the next steps for the EU VET policy for the next few years.

Aspects of vocational education and training context in 2015

At the beginning of the reporting period, the proportion of upper secondary students enrolled in vocational education and training (VET) programmes in Cyprus was far below the EU average: 13.6 % in 2013 (European Commission, 2015) compared to 48.9% in the EU; 15.1 % in 2014 compared to 48% in the EU (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 77); 16 % in 2015 compared to 47 % in the EU ⁽³⁾. The employment rate of recent upper secondary graduates was lower than in the EU: 54.6% in 2014 (European Commission, 2015) compared to 70.8 % on average in the EU; when taking VET graduates only, their employment rate was 70.3 % in 2015 (European Commission, 2015), compared to the EU average of 73 %. Adult participation in lifelong learning was also low at 6.9 % in 2014 (European Commission, 2015) and 7.5% in 2015 compared to 10.7 % on average in the EU in both years (Cedefop, 2017a, p. 77) (Table 1).

VET in Cyprus faced the challenges of involving employers on a larger scale, expanding the workplace learning component of programmes, and attracting more students. Steps were taken to address the issues. In 2012, post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training were introduced, offering high profile VET. In the 2012/13 school year, a new modern apprenticeship (NMA) model was set up in secondary education. In December 2014, a national action plan for youth employment was adopted, emphasising the importance of primary work experience in the transition from school to work. For lifelong learning, a 2014-20 national *Strategy for lifelong learning* was adopted in June 2014, aiming to promote access for all to quality education.

⁽³⁾ Eurostat, data for 2015.

Table 1. Framework data: score on VET indicators in Cyprus and in the EU: 2010-15

Indicator label	2010		2015 (*)		Trend in 2011-15 (per year)			
	CY f	EU f	Yr	CY f	EU f	Range	CY	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility								
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	A	A	'14	15.1 ^b	48.0 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▪ 1.5	▪ -0.9
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET	A	A	'14	0.0 ^z	34.0 ^b _{E2}	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ 0.1
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET			'14	98.0	69.2 ^{E3}	'13-'14	▪ 0.1	▪ -1.4
Employees participating in CVT courses (%)	37.0	38.0 ^e	'10	37.0	38.0 ^e			
Employees participating in on-the-job training (%)	18.0	20.0 ^e	'10	18.0	20.0 ^e			
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	8.1		'15	7.5	10.7 ^b	'13-'15	↗ 0.1	→ 0.0
Enterprises providing training (%)	72.0	66.0 ^e	'10	72.0	66.0 ^e			
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	A	A	'14	6.3 ^b	42.7 ^b _{E1}	'13-'14	▪ 1.1	▪ -1.0
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	24.0	25.0 ^e	'10	24.0	25.0 ^e			
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)			'15	17.7 ^b	33.0 ^b	'14-'15	▪ -3.8	▪ -0.3
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)	3.8	5.3	'15	3.7	6.9	'10-'15	↘ -0.1	↗ 0.4
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)	1.1 ^u		'15	1.6 ^c	4.3 ^{bC}	'14-'15	▪ 0.2	▪ -0.2
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	6.1 ^u		'15	5.8	9.5 ^b	'13-'15	↘ -0.1	↘ -0.4
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)	24.8 ^B	9.5 ^e _B	'11	24.8	9.5 ^e			
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)	77.5 ^B	80.2 ^e _B	'11	77.5	80.2 ^e			
Skill development and labour market relevance								
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)			'13	0.34 ^b	0.56 ^b _{E4}	'12-'13	▪ 0.00	▪ 0.03
IVET public expenditure per student (1 000 PPS units)			'13	13.4 ^b	6.4 ^b _{E5}	'12-'13	▪ -0.9	▪ 0.0
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	1.1	0.8 ^e	'10	1.1	0.8 ^e			
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET			'14	1.2 ^b	1.0 ^b _{E6}	'13-'14	▪ 0.0	▪ 0.0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	A	A	'14	56.4 ^b	30.0 ^b _{E7}	'13-'14	▪ -0.1	▪ -0.4
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates			'14		9.3 ^{E8}			
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)	90.7	41.5 ^{E9}	'12	85.5	41.6 ^{E9}	'10-'12	▪ -2.6	▪ 0.0
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20- to 34-year-olds)			'15	75.7 ^b	77.2 ^b	'14-'15	▪ 3.3	▪ 0.3

Indicator label	2010		2015 (*)		Trend in 2011-15 (per year)			
	CY ^f	EU ^f	Yr	CY ^f	EU ^f	Range	CY	EU
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)			'15	9.0 ^b	5.3 ^b	'14-'15	▪ 6.7	▪ -1.0
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)			'15	12.2 ^b	23.7 ^b	'14-'15	▪ 6.5	▪ -0.1
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)			'15	92.7	83.7			
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	46.8	55.2	'15	53.5	57.3	'10-'15	▪ 1.3	▪ 0.4
Overall transitions and labour market trends								
Early leavers from education and training (%)	12.7	13.9	'15	5.3 ^c	11.0 ^c	'10-'15	↘ -1.5	↘ -0.6
30- to 34-year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	45.3	33.8	'15	54.6 ^c	38.7 ^c	'10-'15	↗ 1.8	↗ 1.0
NEET rate for 18- to 24-year-olds (%)	16.7	16.6	'15	22.2	15.8	'10-'15	↗ 1.3	↘ -0.1
Unemployment rate for 20- to 34-year-olds (%)	8.8	13.1	'15	19.4	12.9	'10-'15	↗ 2.5	↗ 0.1
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)	78.4	77.4	'15	68.8 ^c	76.9 ^c	'10-'15	↘ -2.0	↘ -0.2
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	26.0	27.3	'15	21.9 ^c	23.5 ^c	'10-'15	↘ -0.8	↘ -0.8
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds (%)	75.0	68.6	'15	67.9	70.0	'10-'15	↘ -1.6	↗ 0.3
Employment rate for 20- to 64-year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)	66.8	53.4	'15	55.1 ^c	52.6 ^c	'10-'15	↘ -2.7	↘ -0.2
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2020 (% of total)			'16	84.1 ^d	82.8 ^d			

(*) The data in this column are the data available in 2016. Where 2015 data were not available, data from previous years were used.

(^A) UOE (UNESCO OECD Eurostat) back reconstruction of 2010 values based on ISCED (international standard classification of education) 2011 not yet available.

(^B) AES (adult education survey) 2011, used as proxy for 2010 baseline.

(^C) 2014 b flags in Eurostat online tables ignored on the basis of other relevant Eurostat metadata.

(^D) Forecast made in 2016.

(^{E1}) Based on 28 countries; partial information for NL.

(^{E2}) Based on 25 countries (missing: ES, PL, RO); partial information for NL.

(^{E3}) Based on 27 countries (missing: NL); partial information for EL, IT.

(^{E4}) Based on 19 countries (missing: BE, DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT, SK).

(^{E5}) Based on 21 countries (missing: DK, IE, EL, FR, HR, IT, PT).

(^{E6}) Partial information for NL.

(^{E7}) Based on 25 countries (missing: HR, IT, UK).

(^{E8}) Based on 23 countries (missing: BE, IE, FR, CY, UK).

(^{E9}) Based on 22 countries (missing: DE, IE, EL, NL, SI, UK).

(^b) Break after 2010, therefore baseline data not included.

(^u) Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

(^z) Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

(^e) Eurostat: 'estimated'.

NB: EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified. Arrows ↗ or ↘ signal a positive or negative trend based on more than two data points and of magnitude 0.1 per year or more. Trends based on more than two data points but of smaller magnitude are indicated by →; trends based on two points only are marked ▪. Trends are estimated by means of regression models.

Source: Cedefop, 2017a, p. 77.

CHAPTER 1.

MTD 1 – All forms of work-based learning with special attention to apprenticeships

1.1. **Baseline 2015**

At the beginning of the reporting period, initial VET in Cyprus included secondary school-based programmes along with apprenticeship.

The apprenticeship system, offered since 1966, had been reformed in 2012 with the introduction of the new modern apprenticeship (NMA) model. The NMA model was organised on two levels. Level 1 was a one-year Preparatory apprenticeship programme providing learners with the opportunity of developing their numeracy and literacy skills and a first discovery of the world of work. Level 2 was the core three-year apprenticeship programme comprising a workplace learning component, based on a contract signed between the apprentice and the employer. Apprentices received remuneration. Social partners were represented in the Apprenticeship Board which supervised the operation of the apprenticeship system. Since 2015, the Ministry of Education and Culture was governing the apprenticeship programme and took over certain responsibilities which were before assigned to the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. The NMA model however still faced significant weaknesses, as its cooperation with the industry was insufficient and it was positioned outside of the formal education system, which hampered its recognition and enrolment rates.

Post-secondary VET at EQF level 5 was provided since the school year 2012/13 at post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training (MIEEK) ⁽⁴⁾. They offered two-year programmes which included practical training in industry and business allowing the students to acquire, improve, or upgrade their skills and qualifications so that they were better prepared for the labour market. Social partners were actively involved in the design and curricular development of these programmes, deemed to lead to a high prestige and enrolment rates. The demand for enrolment surpassed the number of available places, which allowed the training providers to select the most qualified students. The offered programmes were flexible and responsive to labour market changes.

⁽⁴⁾ In Greek: Μεταλυκειακά Ινστιτούτα Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης.

VET at tertiary non-university level was provided at four public institutes/colleges and at several private institutes.

Vocational training for adults was in place. Data from the 2010 Continuing vocational training survey (CVTS) suggested that the share of enterprises providing CVT in Cyprus (72%) was higher than the EU average (66%), whereas slightly less employees participated in on-the-job training (18% in Cyprus compared to 20% the EU).

One of the major issues which work-based learning in initial VET was faced with in Cyprus in 2015 was the limited level of employer engagement in VET, especially in supporting work-based learning in schools. This was mainly due to the predominance of micro and small-sized enterprises, for which providing training places for work-based learning and apprenticeships is a challenge, all the more in the aftermath of the economic crisis. Employers were also not keen to receive apprentices as they had in the past poor experience with low performing and low qualified students. To tackle this issue, an ESF co-funded scheme had been set up, subsidising eligible employers to offer work-based learning places (e.g. paying 10% of apprenticeship-trainers' salaries; and compensating employers for wages paid to apprentices absent for in-class training, and for social insurance contributions).

On learners' side, apprenticeship was also not in high demand. A strong cultural bias in favour of academic qualifications existed.

1.2. Policy priorities for 2016-20

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this area, as set by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC), are:

- (a) for apprenticeship, to:
 - (i) enhance the quality and skills of all involved trainers, teachers and counsellors;
 - (ii) develop closer ties and improve cooperation with industry;
 - (iii) ease access to formal qualifications for graduates of the apprenticeship scheme;
 - (iv) increase the flexibility of the scheme to respond better to labour market needs;
- (b) for work-based learning in school-based VET, to:
 - (i) develop closer ties and improve cooperation with industry;
 - (ii) reform and upgrade the programme of secondary technical and vocational education (STVE) for students' practical training in industry.

1.3. Main actions taken in 2015-19

1.3.1. Reform of the apprenticeship scheme

A 2015-20 strategic plan for technical and vocational education and training was approved in April 2015. It aims to reform the public VET system. The plan was set up by the STVE Department. Based on the plan, a proposal for upgrading the apprenticeship scheme, in cooperation with the apprenticeship board ⁽⁵⁾, was approved in August 2015. The reform affects both the preparatory and core programmes:

- (a) at preparatory apprenticeship level: to respond to the needs of students from different academic backgrounds, two different classes (A and B) are offered. Assessment criteria have been developed for students wishing to attend this programme. For example, students who have been examined by a psychiatrist or a psychologist, and need special psychiatric or psychological treatment, are not permitted to enrol if they have not completed their treatment successfully. Also, students who are drug users or traffickers cannot be accepted. Other criteria include serious conduct and behavioural problems, serious kinetic/disability problems and intellectual disability. Learners below the age of 15 have the option to return to the first cycle of lower secondary education;
- (b) at core apprenticeship level: the improving cooperation between apprenticeship scheme programmes and industry, through meetings with representatives of employers' organisations, is an ongoing process. Apprenticeship programmes have been linked with the education programmes offered by the evening technical schools (second-chance schools). The graduates of the apprenticeship scheme are entitled to attend the upper secondary programme offered at evening technical schools with part of their acquired education and training being recognised (they can complete upper secondary education in one or two years instead of four). The flexibility of the apprenticeship scheme is gradually increased through the development of new specialisations, such as graphic design, cooking – preparation of food, and retail sales. About 40 new specialisations are envisaged, which will be offered alternately on the basis of apprentice demand, labour market needs and the readiness of organised employers to cooperate with the Ministry of Education and Culture by offering industrial

⁽⁵⁾ The apprenticeship board supervises the operation of the apprenticeship scheme and comprises representatives of the government, technical schools and the employers' and employees' organisations.

placements to apprentices. Several are already offered in occupational fields in high demand in the labour market.

1.3.2. Reform of the work-based learning component in school-based VET

In December 2015, after consultation with employers' organisations, the government decided ⁽⁶⁾ to increase the work-based learning component (increased duration of industrial placements) of STVE programmes. The decision was implemented in the school year 2016/17. Since then, the practical training of STVE students in enterprises has increased and the work-based learning component is offered during the summer. The Minister of Education and Culture, after authorisation by the Council of Ministers ⁽⁷⁾, appointed a committee to monitor the implementation of all STVE reforms, including this one. The committee examines/monitors issues mainly related to the development and introduction of the STVE new curricula, which is currently underway.

1.3.3. Prospective review of the apprenticeship system

In April 2017 the Cypriot government started a joint project with Cedefop. The objective was to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the national apprenticeship system. Interviews with apprentices and the companies involved were conducted. Exchange forums were held. This joint project intends to help national stakeholders plan further development of the national apprenticeship scheme. The project ended in October 2018. The areas identified for reform include the updating of the legislation, increasing the role of the Apprenticeship Board, introducing more structure into the system through, for example, the development of clear guidelines and handbooks, improving the quality of training delivered in the workplace, and making apprenticeship more attractive to employers.

1.3.4. Erasmus+ programme for tailored apprentice support to SMEs

From October 2016 to September 2018, the *Erasmus+* project *Apprenticeship helpdesk for small and medium size enterprises* in Cyprus (and Poland) aimed to build the capacity of key intermediary bodies to support those SMEs (small- and medium-sized enterprises) offering training places for apprentices. The need for this project derived from past experience, when the lack of support structures for

⁽⁶⁾ Decision of the Council of Ministers, dated 14 December 2015.

⁽⁷⁾ Decision No 79.985, dated 14 December 2015.

enterprises deterred SMEs from offering apprenticeships. The main project goals were to:

- (a) set up a national apprenticeship support service for SMEs, offered by intermediary bodies (such as chambers of commerce and professional and trade associations);
- (b) provide training to appointed staff acting as apprenticeship facilitators;
- (c) set up a national online apprenticeship resource centre as a central office providing support to SMEs and apprenticeship facilitators;
- (d) raise awareness about the benefits of apprenticeship schemes among SMEs and other national stakeholders.

A set of recommended quality indicators for SMEs taking on apprentices has been developed and focus groups with SMEs and key stakeholders have been formed to identify SME needs. Toolkits for employers have been developed, for offering quality placements for apprentices and learners, with necessary information about apprenticeship. Training workshops took place, targeted at trainers and officials in this service. A leaflet and two newsletters have been prepared. The project's website ⁽⁸⁾ has been developed, incorporating an online toolkit to support SMEs, facilitators at the intermediary bodies, and learners/apprentices.

⁽⁸⁾ <https://www.apphelp4smes.eu>

CHAPTER 2.

MTD 2 – Quality assurance mechanisms in line with EQAVET and continuous information and feedback loops to IVET and CVET

2.1. **Baseline 2015**

A quality assurance national reference point (QANRP) was set up in 2008. It covers initial vocational education and training (IVET), continuing vocational education and training (CVET) and non-formal learning. In April 2015, the 2015-20 strategic plan for technical and vocational education and training (Section 1.3.1) introduced measures for quality assurance by setting up a framework for quality assurance according to the EQAVET ⁽⁹⁾ recommendation. In IVET, quality standards for providers were set out in law and used for accreditation/approval.

In CVET, quality standards were used for accreditation and as a condition for funding. The Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) approved and subsidised training programmes set up by public and private CVET providers. A system for the assessment and accreditation of training providers and trainers was introduced in 2012. On 1st January 2015, accreditation through the system became compulsory for those wanting to cooperate with the HRDA for the implementation of subsidised, co-funded or/and tendered training activities.

Cyprus did not have in 2015 a structured approach to VET graduate tracking. Some sporadic measures were reported to be in place. These included studies on the destination of those who participated in job placement schemes.

The HRDA was responsible for forecasting labour market needs. Other ministries and organisations also engaged in some forecasting. The main HRDA forecasting instruments were the annual and the ten-year forecasts. The annual forecasts were based on market research and were used to identify skill needs (including the needs for specific skills) and the number of persons required for specific occupations. Questionnaires were sent to enterprises, social partners, public employment services (PES) through the District Labour Offices and other stakeholders, and provided information on future needs. The ten-year forecast

⁽⁹⁾ European quality assurance in vocational education and training.

studies would provide forecasts of employment needs in economic sectors and occupations, covering the whole spectrum of the labour market.

The main users of the HRDA forecasts were future graduates and their families, secondary school vocational and employment counsellors, employers and their organisations, trade unions, HRDA itself, the Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and its agencies (which were involved in training programmes, labour relations, PES) and, through them, the unemployed.

The HRDA had also in place a comprehensive system for evaluating the impact of its activities. The evaluation studies were conducted on a continuous basis and focused on the impact of its Schemes on the participants. All studies included field research through telephone interviews with all participants, which were conducted by external consultants.

2.2. Quality assurance in line with EQAVET in 2015-19

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this matter, as set by the Ministry of Education and Culture, and/or the HRDA, include:

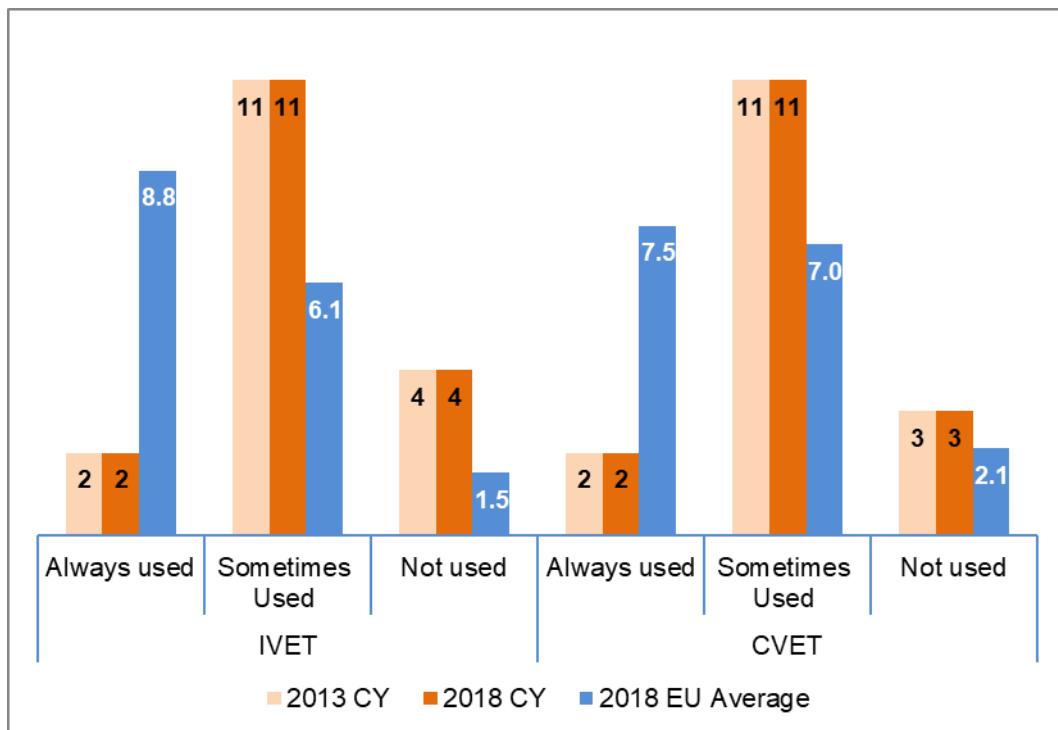
- (a) promoting the EQAVET recommendation in Cyprus, among VET providers and other VET stakeholders, to develop a national approach to VET quality assurance according to the EQAVET recommendation;
- (b) improving the quality assurance system in the provision of training, including the accreditation of training providers in line with the EQAVET recommendation.

In the reporting period, carrying out the national quality assurance approach has been linked to the setting up of the Cyprus qualifications framework.

The QANRP is using *Erasmus+* funds to promote the work of EQAVET in Cyprus through dissemination activities, information seminars to VET providers and social partners and the development of a website. It also informs the further development of the national quality assurance approach in line with EQAVET.

The systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor the VET system ('always used' item in Figure 1), has remained unchanged compared to 2013. Cyprus was below the EU average in IVET and CVET in 2018. The EQAVET indicators that are systematically used in IVET are those related to the investment in training of teachers and trainers. The indicators not used, both in IVET and CVET, are those related to the prevalence of vulnerable groups.

Figure 1. Use of EQAVET indicators



NB: Of the 17 indicators suggested by the 2009 EQAVET recommendation, two were 'always used' in IVET in 2013 and 2018, compared to 8.8 in the EU on average in 2018.

In 2013 and 2018, no reply was provided for the use of one indicator in CVET.

EU average was calculated based on available information for 31 out of 35 VET systems.

Source: Cedefop calculations based on EQAVET Secretariat surveys for 2013 and 2018 data.

2.3. Continuous information and feedback loops in initial VET and continuing VET in 2015-19

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this matter, as set by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) and/or the HRDA, are to:

- (a) develop a national monitoring system of IVET and CVET graduates;
- (b) continue carrying out evaluation studies on the impact of the activities of the HRDA.

The 2015-20 strategic plan for technical and vocational education and training (Section 1.3.1) aims to set up a national monitoring system of IVET and CVET graduates, which will inform the upgrading of the VET system. The STVE Department has proceeded to purchase services for the design and development of the platform, which is in the last stages of planning and was expected to be operational in 2019. A European Social Fund (ESF) project *Improvement of the*

quality, attractiveness and efficiency of VET in Cyprus and new modern apprenticeship 2014-20 (budget: EUR 13 250 000) is being used to fund the setting up of the monitoring system.

In 2016, the Department of Labour of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI) finalised the user requirements for developing an evaluation system for active labour market programmes (ALMPs). The computerised system for collecting information on ALMPs was put in place in 2016. The system for continuously monitoring and evaluating ALMPs became operational in 2017.

The HRDA provides 10-year employment forecasts every two to three years. In October 2017 forecasts of employment needs were made available by HRDA for the period 2017-27. The forecast covers 309 occupations in 52 economic sectors in Cyprus (HRDA, 2017) and will be used to plan and implement education and training activities (HRDA, 2017).

In March 2018, the study *Identification of green skill needs in the Cyprus economy 2017-27* was published. The main aim of the study was to examine and analyse the green economy and green occupations, to map out the green economy of Cyprus and to identify consequent green skill needs for 2017-27 (HRDA, 2018).

Additionally, the HRDA conducts an annual study on the identification of employment and training needs. This study provides estimates for the number of persons required for specific occupations and the needs for specific skills. Based on these estimates, suggestions are put forward for the implementation of training programmes. In the study, the views of social partners, other stakeholders and enterprises are collected and analysed.

CHAPTER 3.

MTD 3 – Access to VET and qualifications for all through more flexible/permeable systems, guidance and validation of non-formal and informal learning

3.1. Baseline 2015

At the beginning of the reporting period, the overall objectives in the MTD at large were to raise the attractiveness of VET and support the provision of alternate pathways for students as well as strengthen the links between VET and the labour market. Cyprus had considerably improved its performance on early school leaving (9.1% in 2013 and 5.2% in 2015, below the EU averages of 11.9% and 11% in respective years).

A national guidance forum had been established in 2012, coordinating guidance services provided through various channels and involving all stakeholders. It provided strengthened support for the unemployed, economically inactive women and secondary education graduates through individualised guidance.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education and Culture set up an interdepartmental committee with the task to develop and overview the implementation of a comprehensive action plan for the validation of non-formal and informal learning, in line with the Recommendation of the Council of the European Union of 20 December 2012. The committee developed the action plan for validating non-formal and informal learning and took into consideration work already done by HRDA, which had developed a System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) through which it was possible to validate non-formal and informal learning by the award of full or partial qualifications.

In order to improve permeability (both horizontal and vertical) within its education and training systems, Cyprus had developed a comprehensive, learning-outcomes based, national qualifications framework: the Cyprus qualifications framework – CyQF ⁽¹⁰⁾. A draft version of the framework had been

⁽¹⁰⁾ European inventory on NQF 2016: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/country-reports/cyprus-european-inventory-nqf-2016>

presented in 2014. The CyQF was first referenced to EQF (European qualifications framework) in mid-2014.

Participation in adult learning was on the rise. Vocational training for adults was 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. However, the percentage of 25 to 64 year-olds participating in education and training was lower than the EU average.

The challenges were the relatively low levels of basic skills and the continued lack of efficiency of public spending in the education system. In addition, in the aftermath of the economic crisis, the education and training systems were requested to better support the unemployed, the economically inactive and the employed.

In this respect, the country had initiated a strategic reform of the vocational education and training sector. The strategic plan for the System of Technical and Vocational Education and Training 2015-20 was approved in April 2015 (Section 1.3.1). One of the Ministry of Education and Culture's top priorities was to ensure the classification of post-secondary VET programmes at level 5 of the European qualifications framework. This was deemed important to upgrade VET to tertiary level status.

At the beginning of the reporting period, issues which were regarded as deserving further consideration in the future included further developing guidance and providing groups in need (e.g. the long-term unemployed or the NEETs) with targeted training opportunities.

3.2. Policy priorities for 2016-20

For 2016-20, the country's priorities in this area, as set by the MoEC, and/or the HRDA, are two-fold:

- (a) for young people: ease access to formal qualifications for graduates of the apprenticeship scheme;
- (b) for adults:
 - (i) ease access to formal qualifications for graduates of the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools (CVET);
 - (ii) improve mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning so that people will not have to be examined when evidence of prior learning is already available; and, to that end, further develop the range of vocational qualifications.

3.3. Main actions taken in 2015-19

3.3.1. Opening up youth opportunities

On 18 May 2017, the Council of Ministers adopted the National youth strategy (NYS) of Cyprus 2017-22. The strategy was prepared by the Youth Board of Cyprus. Its overall aim is to guarantee quality of life and offer opportunities for young people, covering eight main fields of action including education and training. The NYS establishes an integrated, cross-sectoral mechanism for designing, implementing and monitoring all interrelated policy areas that affect young people.

On 17 December 2018, the Youth Board of Cyprus made a preliminary announcement proposing the creation of a STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics) school in Cyprus. An opinion survey was carried out amongst high-school students (participation 750), which indicated the degree to which they are satisfied with the education system and school curriculum. The largest percentage noted that the education system does not equip them with the necessary skills to face the challenges of the future. The STEAM educational approach that the Youth Board proposes will encourage students to think creatively, critically and freely, trust and cultivate their talents, be innovative and responsible citizens. The STEAM school would be a pioneering educational approach in Cyprus and is meant to be designed within the framework of the existing education framework. The Ministerial Council adopted the Youth Board's proposal on 17 April 2019. This is considered an important landmark in marking the beginning of fundamental educational changes in Cyprus.

3.3.2. Guidance

A scheme targeting NEETs age 15–24, which includes outreach activities to attract non-registered NEETs followed by provision of career counselling, was designed, as part of the measures covered under the National action plan for youth employment (NAPFY) for the years 2015-17. The main goal of the project is to expand and enrich the existing counselling services to NEETs and help them to reflect on their capabilities, while giving them options for either employment or further education and training. The scheme is intended to offer the services of career guidance counsellors and counselling psychologists to 4 000 NEETs. When necessary, further educational, psychological and social support is to be offered through referrals to qualified professionals. During the process, counsellors are to evaluate the aptitudes, knowledge, skills and attitudes of NEETs using psychometric testing, specialised tools or guidance

evaluation questionnaires. Based on their individual action plans, recipients will be referred to regular secondary or tertiary education, to second-chance school programmes, or to vocational training programmes. The project is being carried out in 2018-19. It is expected to lower youth unemployment and engage as many young people as possible in the workforce and/or education (as suggested by the EU policy agenda).

The Youth Board of Cyprus also offers career counselling services to young people aged 14-35 at youth information centres across Cyprus. The services provide the following:

- (a) counselling in professional career planning based on current market needs (developing new skills, improving employment opportunities, drafting CVs, job search, developing entrepreneurial initiative, information on European and local opportunities);
- (b) information about studies and training in Cyprus and abroad;
- (c) guidance to students in choosing school subjects;
- (d) support for applying to public universities.

3.3.3. Permeability and flexibility

The 2015-20 strategic plan for technical and vocational education and training (Section 1.3.1) provides for all IVET and CVET curricula under the remit of the Ministry of Education and Culture to be modularised and to use ECVET points to improve permeability. Modularisation and ECVET, along with recognition of prior learning, are expected to ease the access of people who completed CVET programmes (offered by the afternoon and evening classes of technical schools) to upper secondary formal qualifications (offered by the evening technical schools). The programmes of afternoon and evening classes in technical schools provide initial and advanced technical skills and competences to people of all ages to satisfy the need for updated knowledge and retraining.

In April 2017, the programmes offered by post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training were accredited at higher education level. This contributes to much towards the aim of further strengthening vocational education and training in Cyprus. The institutes, as public schools of higher vocational education and training, offer two-year accredited programmes (NQF level 5B, ISCED level 5, leading to the acquisition of a two-year Diploma of Higher VET), which can also be recognised by universities. Upgrading the institutes, therefore, provides new opportunities for developing academic cooperation with other higher education institutions both in Cyprus and abroad.

3.3.4. Transparency, recognition, validation

3.3.4.1. Establishment of a national qualifications authority

On 18 May 2017, the Council of Ministers approved (11) the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority, with the powers to make change: improve quality assurance systems in education and training; monitor and integrate in the CyQF the scheme for the validation of non-formal and informal learning after its completion; monitor the CyQF/EQF levels on certificates, diplomas and Europass documents; further strengthen the legal aspect of CyQF; and develop a registry for the CyQF. The National Qualifications Authority is operational but, from the experience gained so far, it has become apparent that there is a need for its mandate to be redefined and clarified in order for its objectives to be achieved more effectively. Furthermore, its institutional role, as the competent authority for the assessment and validation of qualifications acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning, needs to be expanded and become more concrete.

3.3.4.2. National qualifications framework (12)

A draft version of the Cyprus qualifications framework (CyQF) was presented in 2014. The CyQF is learning-outcomes based and intended to cover qualifications awarded both within and outside formal education and training. The system of vocational qualifications (SVQ) developed by the HRDA is integrated within the CyQF at levels 2 to 7. The CyQF was referenced again to the EQF in February 2017. A more thorough analysis of the SVQ and how it is connected with formal education was presented to the EQF advisory group. The CyQF booklet, which provides full information on the CyQF and its social benefits, was prepared and circulated to all stakeholders. Implementation of the CyQF is progressing smoothly and consultation with stakeholders was planned for 2019. The referencing report will be updated when there are changes in the Cyprus education system that need to be included.

3.3.4.3. Validation (13)

The Ministry of Education and Culture is currently coordinating the implementation of the project *Establishing a mechanism for the validation of non-formal and informal learning*. The project is part-funded by the European Social

(11) Decision No. 82.592.

(12) Cedefop, 2017b.

(13) Cedefop, 2017b; Manoudi, 2016.

Fund and the Republic of Cyprus. This project has supported a mapping study of the current situation in Cyprus into validation of non-formal and informal learning. Based on this mapping study, an overall national action plan for the creation of mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus was developed in early 2018. It was then put into public consultation and was completed in May 2018. In October 2018, the Council of Ministers approved (14) the plan. The national action plan foresees setting up a validation mechanism and its pilot implementation. The first results from the pilot operation of the mechanism in the fields of adult education, youth and volunteering were expected to be available at the end of 2019.

Validating non-formal and informal learning is possible for certain competence-based VET qualifications but such learning cannot yet be validated for the award of qualifications by VET schools. The government has agreed that VET qualifications, usually granted by labour market institutions or employment services, will have the same learning outcomes as those obtained through the formal system. Quality assurance measures linked to validation are in place and are being further developed.

3.3.5. Training, reskilling and upskilling vulnerable groups, jobseekers and employees

On 24 April 2018, fast-track initial vocational training programmes for the unemployed in technical professions were put in place by the Cyprus Productivity Centre (15). The objective is to train or retrain unemployed persons of all ages (16) in a range of technical vocations (17), aiming towards the improvement of their

(14) Decision No 85.959, dated 16 October 2018.

(15) www.mlsi.gov.cy/kepa

(16) With priority given to young unemployed people up to 25 years. Candidates should be registered as unemployed in the public employment services (PES), at least 18 years old, with no army obligation during the programme and with a linguistic ability to communicate in Greek, at least at a basic level. Additionally, candidates should not have a health problem that prevents their participation in the programme and their employment in the relevant profession, must be citizens of the Republic of Cyprus or any other Member State of the European Economic Area, or refugees legally present in Cyprus.

(17) Cooling and air conditioning technician, Photovoltaic systems installer, Electrical installations technician, Welding and steel construction technician, Plumbing and central heating technician, Network & telecommunications technician, Auto body technician, Car mechanic, Builder, Drywall installer, Landscape and woodworking technician, Lift installer and lift maintainer, and Fashion designer. Programmes on additional topics will be announced, if needed, at a later stage.

employability. Candidates undergo an assessment of their technical skills and a personal interview. Participation is free of charge. The activity has reached the full-scale implementation stage but a major issue encountered is the lack of funding for establishing any sort of training allowance for programme participants. As a result, the demand for the programmes remains low.

3.3.6. Supporting VET participation through increased attractiveness

In order to make STVE more attractive and relevant to labour market needs, new STVE fields of study and specialisations have been introduced as of the school year 2016/17. The new specialisations offered include Natural gas transmission and distribution, Renewable energy sources, Digital technology and programming, and Industrial design.

The accreditation of the post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training as Public Schools of Higher VET in 2017 (Section 3.3.3) also contributes to reinforcing the attractiveness of VET.

CHAPTER 4.

MTD 4 – Key competences in both IVET and CVET

4.1. Baseline 2015

In 2015, key competences (communication, problem-solving, social and learning-to-learn) were already part of the Cyprus qualifications framework (CyQF) level descriptors. They had been promoted in the same way in both practical and theoretical parts of upper secondary VET since 2004/05. For example, communication in the mother tongue was promoted in VET through compulsory subjects. The English language was also a compulsory part of the curricula and either French or German – an optional subject. Mathematics was a compulsory subject and students through practical training were given the opportunity to develop competences in mathematics, science and technology (18).

VET relevance and quality were pursued through an increased emphasis on key competences, career management skills and entrepreneurship which were part of most curricula by 2015 (19). Promoting key competences was at the core of the 2014-20 lifelong learning strategy. It recognised the acquisition of transversal skills, for example, entrepreneurship, technologies/digital competences and languages, as important in enhancing people's employability and improving the economy's potential for growth. In addition, key competences have also been promoted through the strategic vocational education and training (VET) plan 2015-20 by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC).

A recent survey (20) showed that, compared with general education graduates, those who completed VET programmes felt they had:

- (a) stronger or similar (ranged by priority):
 - (i) science and technology skills;
 - (ii) ability to be creative;
 - (iii) ability to pursue and organise their own learning;

(18) For more information on key competences in VET see Korelli, Y.; Mourouzides, Y. (2016). Key competences in vocational education and training – Cyprus. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

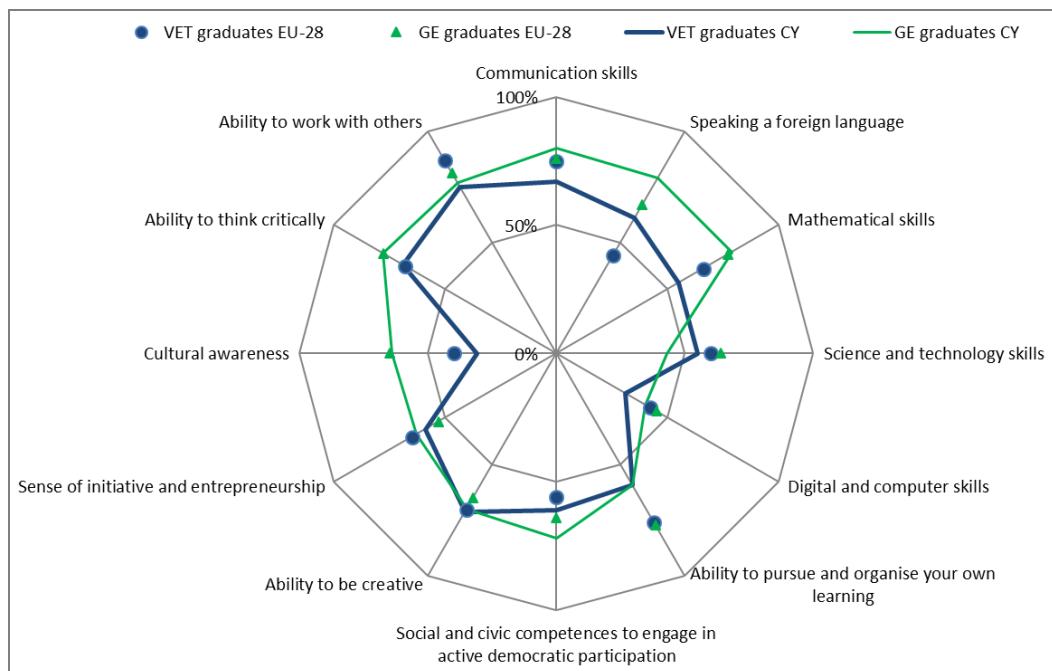
(19) ET 2020 monitor 2015, p.8.

(20) Cedefop (2017). *Cedefop European public opinion survey on vocational education and training*. Luxembourg: Publications Office. Cedefop research paper; No 62. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2801/264585>

(b) and weaker:

- cultural awareness;
- mathematical skills;
- foreign language speaking (Figure 2).

Figure 2. **Self-evaluation of acquired skills in general education and VET**



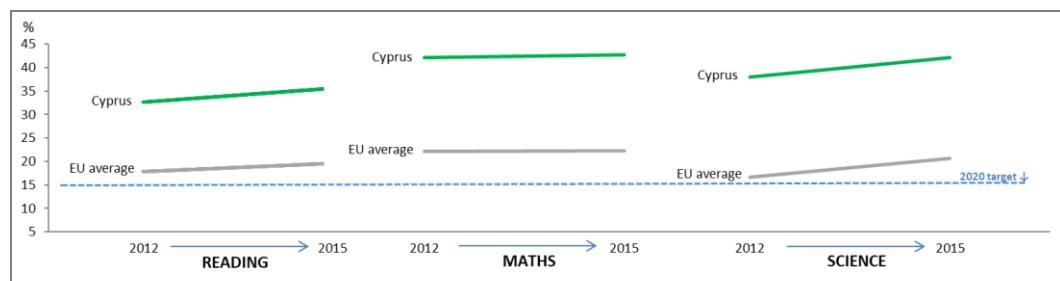
NB: GE stands for general education.

Respondents who attended upper secondary education. Interviewees were asked in summer 2016 about their overall experience in upper secondary education. Aggregated data do not take account of different types and sectors of VET and age groups of respondents.

Source: Cedefop, 2017c.

The context of key competences in 2015 was mainly characterised by an increasing share of young low achievers in reading, maths and science compared with 2012 (Figure 3). The share of low achievers in Cyprus was much higher than in the EU, where the trend was similar.

Figure 3. **Share of 15-year-olds with low achievement in reading, maths and science**



NB: Low achievement means failing level 2 on the PISA (programme for international student assessment) scale.

Source: OECD, 2014; OECD, 2016.

In 2015, a new competence-based national curriculum, learning outcomes oriented, was about to be launched, placing more emphasis on key competences, especially foreign languages, entrepreneurial skills, maths, science and technology, digital skills, and learning to learn. The challenge was to provide curriculum designers and teachers with sufficient training (21).

4.2. Key competences addressed in the reporting period

Table 2 outlines the key competences in initial and continuing VET that were addressed in the reporting period. A description of policies is provided in the following sections.

Table 2. **Key competences addressed in 2015-19**

	IVET	CVET
Country language(s) and literacy		
Foreign languages	YES	
Digital competence	YES	YES
Maths	YES	
Science	YES	
Technology	YES	

(21) For more information on key competences in VET see Korelli, Y.; Mourouzides, Y. (2016). *Key competences in vocational education and training – Cyprus*. Cedefop ReferNet thematic perspectives series.

https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/ReferNet_CY_KC.pdf

	IVET	CVET
Social and civic competences		
Learning to learn	YES	
Financial literacy		
Entrepreneurship competence	YES	
Cultural awareness and expression	YES	
Key competences as a package		

NB: The list derives from the 2006 EU key competences framework for lifelong learning; it has been restructured and expanded with additional competences that can be considered key.

Source: Cedefop based on ReferNet input.

4.3. Key competences in initial VET

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area, as set by the MoEC, is to promote the acquisition of key competences through the new learning outcomes and credit points-based VET curricula. From the school year 2016/17, the curricula have emphasised foreign language(s), entrepreneurial skills, maths, science, technology, digital skills and learning to learn competences.

The 2014-20 national strategy for lifelong learning promotes the acquisition of key competences that enhance employability and improve the economy's potential for growth. The 2015-20 strategic plan for the system of technical and vocational education and training (Section 1.3.1) promotes foreign languages, entrepreneurial skills, maths, science/technology, digital skills, and learning to learn competences. The resulting new curricula under development include these competences along with career management skills, numeracy and literacy. To promote cultural expression, music is now a compulsory subject in the first year of studies in secondary VET and optional in the second and third years. Russian has been introduced as an optional subject in the hotel and catering study field since 2016-17.

The Council of Ministers adopted a decision on 8 January 2016 for setting up the National Alliance of Digital Jobs and called on all parties to commit to implementing actions, in order to address the lack of qualified personnel in information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Within this framework, in order to address the low digital skills of the population, the MOEC, in cooperation with other ministries involved, introduced, on a voluntary basis, the European computer driving licence (ECDL) certification programme. The programme started from the school year 2016/17 and is offered free of charge to all students in public and private lower secondary education schools, as well as to soldiers, the unemployed and people with disabilities.

4.4. Key competences in continuing VET

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area, as set by the MoEC, is to include key competences in CVET programmes.

Since 2017, the HRDA has included the acquisition of basic digital skills for employees over the age of 35 in the single- and multi-company training programmes that it subsidises. Both schemes aim at providing continuing training to meet the training needs of employees, as well as the unemployed who are registered with PES in the case of multi-company training programmes.

In September 2017, the Cyprus Productivity Centre of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, in cooperation with the Department of Electronic Communications of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works, started offering adults free workshops on e-government systems and training courses on basic digital skills, with emphasis on the use of internet and its basic applications:

- (a) 181 workshops (four-hours each) were offered on e-government systems to 2 513 participants from September 2017 to December 2018;
- (b) 83 training courses were offered to 1 013 participants on basic digital skills and the internet from September 2017 to December 2018;
- (c) 24 training programmes were offered to 302 senior citizens (65+) on Windows, Android and IOS, and 14 training programmes on internet security were offered to 215 participants in 2018.

Consultancy services were also offered in 2018 to 100 municipalities, community councils and other bodies for the purpose of improving their e-business level. For the same purpose, public presentations on e-government systems took place in 30 municipalities and communities across Cyprus.

The project budget was taken from the annual budget of the Department of Electronic Communications. Workshops and training courses were still offered for free in 2019. The objective is to offer at least 120 training programmes across Cyprus which will include workshops on e-government systems, training courses on digital competences, training programmes in internet security and training programmes on digital skills to those over 65 (Windows, Android, IOS).

The Youth Board of Cyprus, the State department for youth issues, runs a *Youth entrepreneurship development* programme within the framework of the national action plan for youth employment. The mission of this new programme is to support young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs) aged 15 to 29, who want to undertake entrepreneurship initiatives. Through this, the programme promotes the development of business culture among the young in Cyprus: young people with limited knowledge and networks

are given the opportunity to discover their business potential, develop viable businesses and create decent working conditions for themselves and for their peers. More specifically, the *Youth entrepreneurship development* programme provides:

- (a) education and development of business skills, such as business plan creation, project management, sales and communication techniques, business start-ups;
- (b) guidance through developing a network of mentors and advisors;
- (c) support and information through a dedicated online platform.

The programme is implemented in cycles across Cyprus. Each round of seminars lasts for a total of 28 hours and, after completion, each participant receives personalised counselling from experienced business mentors for a period of six months. The programme, which is jointly funded by the European Social Fund, runs for 30 months and will be completed in 2020.

CHAPTER 5.

MTD 5 – Systematic initial and continuing professional development of VET teachers and trainers

5.1. **Baseline 2015**

The enhancement of quality, attractiveness and efficiency of VET through the upgrade of teacher continuing professional development (CPD) was an important challenge, which was featured prominently in the (then) ongoing Education Reform, initiated in 2005. Further aims of the Cypriot Government were the modernisation of the recruitment system in public education and of the evaluation system for teachers (European Commission, 2015). The Government's next step was to enhance the understanding of the learning outcomes approach in VET teachers, and lead these to use the approach while describing VET programmes/courses (Cedefop, 2015).

Five main groups of teachers and trainers were at play in IVET programmes:

- (a) teachers in upper secondary technical and vocational education;
- (b) teachers in post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training;
- (c) teachers in public institutions of tertiary education (higher professional schools);
- (d) teachers in private institutions of tertiary education;
- (e) in-company trainers.

Additionally, teachers employed at upper secondary technical and vocational schools were appointed every year as apprenticeship inspectors, visiting apprentices at their place of work on a regular basis.

5.1.1. Access to VET school teaching: entry requirements and initial training

Teachers at all levels of school education were university graduates with a bachelor's degree as a minimum qualification. A very small number of VET teachers appointed at a lower salary scale at technical schools held a three-year diploma from colleges (or other similar educational institutions).

Pre-service training was an obligatory requirement for all teachers newly recruited in upper secondary technical and vocational education and post-

secondary VET institutes. The *Pre-service training* programme was delivered by the Department of Education of the University of Cyprus (22). It was a nine-month training, which provided for a combination of theory and practice; participants had to complete 48 ECTS. The programme was made up of the following elements: common core subjects; school experience; subject specialisation; teaching methodology for subject specialisation; and elective courses.

Teachers in public institutions of tertiary education (higher professional schools) had (23) to hold a diploma from a tertiary institution. Most of them held additional academic qualifications at postgraduate and doctoral level. Work experience was required; the length of this varied depending on the position. Pre-service training was usually not a requirement.

Teachers in private tertiary education institutions usually held a qualification at least at the level of the programmes they were teaching. Previous working or teaching experience and pre-service training were not usually required, although institutions considered experience and training as an asset when hiring teachers.

5.1.2. In-company trainers: entry requirements and initial training

Apprenticeship in-company trainers did not usually receive any training.

5.1.3. VET school teachers: main lines for CPD

The Ministry of Education and Culture was responsible for organising in-service training for teachers in the public sector. The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) was the main provider of in-service training for secondary education teachers, offering both compulsory and optional courses based on the targets set and the areas of interest identified by the ministry and the teachers and schools themselves. Conferences, afternoon classes, school-based seminars and short training exercises were some of the forms of in-service training applied. In-service continuing training for secondary school teachers consisted of compulsory training programmes (24) that covered eight fields in theoretical studies and eight fields in practical studies offered at technical schools, as well as optional training programmes (including special needs education). The CPI had also implemented CPD programmes in the ICT education and used to provide pedagogical and technical support to the effective use of ICT. The CPI also provided two compulsory courses for newly appointed head teachers and deputy

(22) Law 52(I)/ 2007.

(23) Law 67(I)/1996 and its amendments.

(24) Law 99/1989.

head teachers. A programme of industrial placement for IVET teachers was also in place (Cedefop, 2015).

Although voluntary, in-service teacher CPD in public tertiary education institutions was common practice. Funds were also available for in-service continuing training of teachers in private colleges.

5.1.4. In-company trainers: main lines for CPD

A train-the-trainers programme in the use of ICT skills in education was in place, aiming to keep in-company trainers abreast with technological developments (Cedefop, 2015).

5.2. Initial training for teaching/training staff in VET schools 2015-19

A law designed to make teacher recruitment more effective was adopted in July 2015. Teacher appointments have been since then based on:

- (a) examination results;
- (b) extra qualifications;
- (c) seniority.

The new recruitment system applies to VET teachers (VET school teachers are referred to as 'trainers' in the national context). The first entrance exams took place in November 2017.

5.3. Initial training for trainers in enterprises 2015-19

The decision of August 2015 upgrading the apprenticeship system (Section 1.3.1) included measures to provide suitable training for apprenticeship in-company trainers. A training programme has been developed for preparatory apprenticeship in-company trainers, teachers and counsellors, to assist them in addressing the needs of apprentices.

5.4. CPD for teaching/training staff in VET schools 2015-19

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area is to enhance the quality and competences of VET teachers.

The 2015-20 strategic plan for technical and vocational education and training (Sections 1.3.1 and 3.3.3) sets the further development of the quality and competences of VET teachers as a priority. Practical workshops were planned on modern teaching methods aimed at updating VET teachers' knowledge in their field of specialisation.

A new framework for teachers' professional learning was approved in 2015 (25). It includes VET teachers and sets principles for CPD, which will be systematic, addressed to all teachers, and targeted to teacher and school needs.

A 2015 decision of the council of ministers tasked the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) with the professional training of teachers. CPI offers a variety of training programmes that are either compulsory for teachers (if provided for by the education laws and service plans) or are developed with reference to the particular needs of the schools. This new policy for the professional training of teachers was piloted in school year 2015/16. Based on evaluation findings, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) decided that all schools at all levels (pre-primary, primary, secondary and technical/VET) should implement a professional learning action plan (26). A 2017 decision (27) introduced the preparation of the school professional learning plan as part of the school improvement plan. During the school year 2017/18, more than 300 school-based seminars were offered, while over 100 conferences and 100 afternoon workshops were organised, in cooperation with the Departments of Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Evaluations were carried out (28), indicating that the teachers' professional learning policy is very well perceived by the schools and that it has a positive impact not only on teachers' learning, but on learners as well.

As part of the promotion of the European agenda for adult education, a series of seminars was held from May to June 2015 to enhance the knowledge and skills of adult educators who teach vulnerable adult learners, including those at evening technical schools, the afternoon and evening classes of the technical schools, and the adult education centres of the MoEC.

(25) Decision No 79.273 of the Council of Ministers, dated 19 August 2015.

(26) http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1580&Itemid=456&lang=el

(27) Ministerial Decision No 82.966, dated 12 July 2017.

(28) External evaluation in 2016 by experts from the European Union; internal evaluations carried out by the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE).

The training programme that has been developed for preparatory apprenticeship staff to assist them in addressing the needs of apprentices (Section 5.3) also covers the continuing training of VET school teachers.

In January 2016, the CPI, in cooperation with the department of secondary general education and the department of secondary technical and vocational education, organised two-day in-service training seminars. The teachers attending the seminars had the opportunity to choose training activities offered in their schools. For the school year 2017/18, the CPI, again in cooperation with the two departments, organised training activities on two different days (one in each semester).

In 2016, an in-service training programme for school leaders took place; 15 newly promoted headmasters and 59 deputy headmasters of secondary general and technical schools successfully completed the programme. In the school year 2017/18, 14 newly promoted headmasters of secondary general and technical schools successfully completed the programme. A short four-day training programme for 115 deputy headmasters was implemented in autumn 2017.

Vocational training centres for adult learning provide mainly non-formal programmes. Trainers involved in continuing training subsidised by HRDA are subject – since 2015 – to the specific requirement of obtaining the certificate for the vocational qualification Vocational trainer – level 5 (level 5 of the Cyprus qualifications framework and the EQF). The assessment criteria are related to the applicant's ability to identify the training needs, and design, carry out and evaluate the training.

5.5. CPD for trainers in enterprises 2015-19

For 2016-20, the country's priority in this area is to improve the quality and competences of in-company trainers.

The August 2015 decision to upgrade the apprenticeship system (Section 1.3.1) included measures for greater cooperation with industry and providing suitable training to all in-company trainers, teachers and counsellors involved in apprenticeships.

The training programme developed for preparatory apprenticeship staff to assist them in addressing the needs of apprentices (Section 5.2) also covers the continuing training of in-company trainers.

Since 2015, employees who are in-company trainers involved in training subsidised by HRDA may participate on subsidised train-the-trainer programmes and/or go through the assessment process according to specifications set by

HRDA and obtain the certificate for the vocational qualification Vocational trainer – level 5.

Statistical overview – 2019 update

Table 3 updates the figures that were provided in Table 1. Although Table 1 may contain data for 2015, these are not systematically repeated here. In some cases, not repeating is due to breaks in time series, which prevent comparability. In other cases, values differ due to methodological changes.

Table 3. **Score on VET indicators in Cyprus and in the EU: 2015, last available year and recent change**

Indicator label	2015				Last available year				Recent change			
	CY	f	EU	f	Yr	CY	f	EU	f	Range	CY	EU
Access, attractiveness and flexibility												
IVET students as % of all upper secondary students	15.6		47.3	ce	'17	16.7		47.8	ce	'15-'17	1.1	0.5
IVET work-based students as % of all upper secondary IVET		z	28.3	ce	'17		z	27.9	ce	'15-'17		-0.5
IVET students with direct access to tertiary education as % of all upper secondary IVET	97.9		68.1	ce	'17	98.1		68.6	ce	'15-'17	0.2	0.4
Workers participating in CVT courses (%)	33.2		40.8		'15	33.2		40.8				
Workers participating in on-the-job training (%)	40		34		'15	40		34				
Adults in lifelong learning (%)	7.5		10.7		'18	6.7		11.1		'15-'18	-0.8	0.4
Enterprises providing training (%)	69.5		72.6		'15	69.5		72.6				
Female IVET students as % of all female upper secondary students	6.9		42	ce	'17	8		42.7	ce	'15-'17	1.1	0.7
Employees of small firms participating in CVT courses (%)	21.7		30		'15	21.7		30				
Young VET graduates in further education and training (%)	17.7	u	33		'18	22.3		33		'15-'18	4.6	0
Older adults in lifelong learning (%)	3.7		6.9		'18	2.8		7.3		'15-'18	-0.9	0.4
Low-educated adults in lifelong learning (%)	1.6		4.3		'18	1.5	u	4.3		'15-'18	-0.1	0
Unemployed adults in lifelong learning (%)	5.8		9.5		'18	5.7		10.7		'15-'18	-0.1	1.2
Individuals who wanted to participate in training but did not (%)					'16	27.4		11.4				
Job-related non-formal education and training (%)					'16	72.4		79.4				

Indicator label	2015				Last available year				Recent change			
	CY	f	EU	f	Yr	CY	f	EU	f	Range	CY	EU
Skill development and labour market relevance												
IVET public expenditure (% of GDP)	0.3		0.5	ce	'16	0.3		0.5	ce	'15-'16	0	0
IVET public expenditure per student (1000 PPS units)	13.1		7.1	ce	'16	12.8		7.4	ce	'15-'16	-0.3	0.3
Enterprise expenditure on CVT courses as % of total labour cost	0.7		0.9		'15	0.7		0.9				
Average number of foreign languages learned in IVET	1.2		1	ce	'17	1.1		1	ce	'15-'17	-0.1	0
STEM graduates from upper secondary IVET (% of total)	57.6		29.2	ce	'17	53.6		29.1	ce	'15-'17	-4.1	0
Short-cycle VET graduates as % of first time tertiary education graduates	20.7				'17	19.5		14.3	b ce	'15-'17	-1.2	
Innovative enterprises with supportive training practices (%)					'16	86.3		37.7				
Employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 year-olds)	75.8		77.2		'18	76.6		80.5		'15-'18	0.8	3.3
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over general stream)	9		5.4		'18	-1.9		6.6		'15-'18	-11	1.2
Employment premium for IVET graduates (over low-educated)	12.2		23.7		'18	8.1		23.3		'15-'18	-4.1	-0.4
Workers helped to improve their work by training (%)	92.7		83.7		'15	92.7		83.7				
Workers with skills matched to their duties (%)	52.6		57		'15	52.6		57				
Overall transitions and labour market trends												
Early leavers from education and training (%)	5.2		11		'18	7.8		10.6		'15-'18	2.6	-0.4
30-34 year-olds with tertiary attainment (%)	54.5		38.7		'18	57.1		40.7		'15-'18	2.6	2
NEET rate for 18-24 year-olds (%)	22.2		15.8		'18	18.8		13.7		'15-'18	-3.4	-2.1
Unemployment rate for 20-34 year-olds (%)	19.3		12.9		'18	11.9		9.4		'15-'18	-7.4	-3.5
Employment rate of recent graduates (%)	68.9		75.9		'18	78.8		80.6		'15-'18	9.9	4.7
Adults with lower level of educational attainment (%)	22.1		23.5		'18	17.8		21.9		'15-'18	-4.3	-1.6
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds (%)	67.9		70		'18	73.9		73.1		'15-'18	6	3.1
Employment rate for 20-64 year-olds with lower level of educational attainment (%)	55.1		52.6		'18	61.6		56.1		'15-'18	6.5	3.5
Medium/high-qualified employment in 2030 (% of total)					'18	87.3	D	85.8	D			

EU refers to EU-28, unless otherwise specified.

(D) Forecast made in 2018.

(ce) Cedefop estimate based on available country data.

(b) Eurostat: 'break in time series'.

(u) Eurostat: 'low reliability'.

(z) Eurostat: 'not applicable'.

(e) Eurostat: 'estimated'.

(d) Eurostat: 'definition differs'.

Source: Cedefop (2020).

In 2017, 16.7 % of all upper secondary students in Cyprus were enrolled in IVET. This percentage is 31.1 points below the EU average. It appears that the percentage of upper secondary students in IVET is higher by 1.1 points compared to the situation in the country in 2015.

In 2018, 6.7% of the adults participated in lifelong learning activities, which is slightly lower (0.8 points less) than in 2015. The EU average is 11.1 %.

In 2018, the employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 years old) was 76.6 %. It appears that the employment rate for IVET graduates (20-34 years old) is higher by 0.8 points compared to the situation in the country in 2015. The EU average is 80.5 %.

Conclusion

Since 2015, Cyprus has further reformed its apprenticeship and work-based learning systems, while also building on international cooperation and providing support to the SMEs involved. Steps have been taken to improve quality assurance mechanisms and the information system (especially on transition monitoring) to guide the strategy for VET development. Initiatives have been taken to increase flexibility and permeability in VET. Progress has been made in further developing the Cyprus qualifications framework and the system for validating non-formal and informal learning. The development of key competences is being supported, particularly through the new VET curricula, which are under development. Rules and programmes for the initial and continuing training of VET school teachers and in-company trainers are being developed.

The main changes in 2017 have taken place in MTDs 3 and 4. In MTD 3, a guidance scheme targeted at reaching out to non-registered NEETs and providing them with career counselling was designed (Section 3.3.2). The National Qualifications Authority, with responsibility for quality assurance and monitoring validation and for the Cyprus qualifications framework (CyQF), was established (Section 3.3.4.1). In the area of key competences, workshops on e-government systems and training courses on basic digital skills were offered for free to adults, with emphasis on the use of the internet and its basic applications (Section 4.4).

Compared to 2015-17, the main changes in 2018 have taken place in MTDs 3 and 4. In MTD 3, a national action plan for the creation of mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning has been adopted (Section 3.3.4.3). Fast-track initial vocational training programmes for the unemployed in technical professions were put in place (Section 3.3.5). A proposal for the creation of a STEAM school was announced (Section 3.3.1). In MTD 4, the *Youth entrepreneurship development* programme was launched, targeted at developing entrepreneurship competence in NEETs aged 15 to 29 (Section 4.4).

The actions carried out show that the main lines of the Riga conclusions and the country's policy priorities for 2016-20 are being addressed. However, information available to Cedefop at the moment suggests that an issue which could benefit from further consideration is that of making more systematic use of EQAVET indicators to monitor VET developments.

Acronyms

AES	adult education survey
ALMPs	active labour market programmes
CPD	continuing professional development
CPI	Cyprus Pedagogical Institute
CVET	continuing vocational education and training
CyQF	Cyprus qualifications framework
DGVT	Director General for Vocational Education and Training
EQAVET	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
EQF	European qualifications framework
ESF	European Social Fund
Eurostat	statistical office of the European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
GE	general education
HRDA	Human Resource Development Authority
ISCED	international standard classification of education
IVET	initial vocational education and training
MLWSI	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
MoEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
NEETs	not in education, employment, or training
NMA	new modern apprenticeship
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PISA	programme for international student assessment
PPS	purchasing power standards
QANRP	quality assurance national reference point
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
STEM	science, technology, engineering and math programmes
SVQ	system of vocational qualifications
STVE	secondary technical and vocational education
UOE	UNESCO, OECD and Eurostat
VET	vocational education and training

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