



Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills

Full Country Report – Cyprus

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1.0 COUNTRY OVERVIEW

1.1 Trends for the entire population

1.1.1 Employment rate – entire population

Table 1.1: Evolution of employment rate - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	67.9	68.6	68.6	68.4	68.4	69.2	70	71	75% of the 20-64 year-olds in employment	75-77%
Member State	72	74.4	75	73.4	70.2	67.2	67.6	67.9	68.8		

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code Ifsa_ergaed, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the average employment rate of the population (ISCED at all levels) aged 20 to 64 in a given member state over the period 2000-2016 to EU targets and averages, including the EU2020 target, national 2020 targets and the average EU employment rate for 2016.

- Comparison to EU2020 target

Cyprus suffered badly across the period of financial crisis and from 2013 to 2016 was subject to an economic adjustment programme which ended in March 2016. Although during the recession period the employment rate fell dramatically, it has started rising steadily since then from 67,6% in 2014 to 68,8% in 2016. Even though 2016 statistics record an upward trend in employment, Cyprus' rate is still behind the EU2020 target of 75%.

- Comparison to National 2020 target

The national target set for employment is 75-77%. The 2016 statistics highlighted in table 1.1 reveal that the employment rate, at 68,8%, is still behind the national target despite increasing slightly since 2013.

- Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

Cyprus' employment rate stands below the EU average employment rate by 2,4% (68,6% at the national level compared to 71% for EU-28). However, the national data reflects the EU-28 average in that increases in the employment rate have been recorded since 2013.

- Evolution over time

During the pre-crisis years, Cyprus experienced a high employment rate (relative to EU-28) showing an upward trend. Thus, in 2000, the employment rate was 72%; it rose

further to 74,4% in 2005 and to 75% in 2010. During this period, the employment rate in Cyprus was higher than the EU average which was 67,9% in 2005 and 68,6% in 2010.

However, after peaking in 2010 (75%), the employment rate then followed a decline so that in 2013 the rate fell to 67,2%. In this year, 2013, Cyprus entered its adjustment programme. Since then, statistics reveal a clear positive trend which again brought the 2016 employment rate to 68,8%. While at the present moment the employment rate still lags behind EU2020 as well as national targets, there is potential for the employment rate to converge with the average rate seen for EU-28.

1.1.2 Participation rate – entire population

Table 1.2: Evolution of the participation rate in education and training - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

Geographical area	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	9.6	9.3	9.1	9.2	10.7	10.8	10.7	10.8	15% of adults in lifelong learning (LLL)	12%
Member State	3.1	5.9	8.1	7.8	7.7	7.2	7.1	7.5	6.9		

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and age (%), Eurostat code trng_lfse_01, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 to EU data over the period 2000-2016.

- Comparison to the EU2020 target

Participation of the adult population in lifelong learning in Cyprus has been consistently low and lags behind the EU average. In terms of comparison with EU2020 targets, the national level of adult participation in education and training in Cyprus has fallen well short at just 6,9% of the EU2020 target rate of 15%.

- Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

The national data for Cyprus indicates that adult participation in lifelong learning (6,9%) stands below the EU-28 average (10,8%) by a relatively wide margin. According to 2016 statistics, Cyprus is behind the EU average by almost 4% in participation in lifelong learning programmes. The EU average of 10,8% in 2016 shows a slight rise compared to 2015 statistics (10,7%), contrary to the trend seen in Cyprus across this period.

- Evolution over time

In 2000 (prior to Cyprus' becoming a full member of the EU), participation in lifelong learning programmes amounted to just 3,1% of the population. Participation increased over the subsequent years, reaching 5,9% in 2005, and further rose to 8,1% in 2010, the last pre-crisis year. In 2011, when Cyprus entered the recession period, the participation

rate fell to 7,8%. This figure improved somewhat over the next three years following the economic crisis to 7,7% in 2012, 7,2% in 2013 and 7,1% in 2014. In 2015, the participation rate increased slightly to 7,5%, although it was still below the EU annual average (10,7%) only to fall again in 2016 to 6,9%. Overall, the participation of adults in lifelong learning programmes in Cyprus has been subject to flux over time – it can be seen to have increased between 2000 and 2010 (from 3,1% to 8,1% across this period), decreased between 2011 (7,8%) and 2014 (7,1%), increased to 7,5% in 2015, then dropped again to 6,9% in 2016.

Despite the fact that for 2015 overall participation in lifelong learning showed a rising trend compared to the previous two years, 2016 statistics record a fall from 7,5% (2015) to 6,9% (contrary to the trend seen for the EU-28 average).

1.2 Trends for low qualified adults

1.2.1 Share of low qualified adults

Table 1.3: Share of low-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	30.6	27.3	26.6	25.8	24.8	24.1	23.5	23
Member State	38.5	33.4	26	24.8	22.6	21.5	22.4	22.1	20.4

Source: Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%), Eurostat edat_ifse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: this table compares the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) in 2016 to the EU-28 average for 2016 and the period 2000-2016.

- Comparison to the EU-28 average

As of 2016, Cyprus had a lower share of low-qualified adults (20,4%) than the EU-28 as a whole (23% average).

At the national level, the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED 0-2) in Cyprus has fallen from 21,9% in 2015 to 20,4% in 2016. This decline of 1,5% can be seen as significant compared to previous years. The corresponding EU average for 2016 was 23% showing also a decline compared to 23,5% in 2015. Cyprus' share of low-qualified adults appears to have fallen at a faster pace than for the EU-28 average in 2016.

In general, compared to the EU average regarding the share of low-qualified adults within the general population, Cyprus displays a parallel decline trend. At the same time, the statistics reveal a much faster pace regarding the reduction of the low-skilled share. Thus, as the EU average has dropped by 7,6% from 2005 (30,6%) to 2016 (23%), the Cyprus average followed the same trend displaying, however, a corresponding decline of 13%, falling from 33,4% in 2005 to 20,4% in 2016. Overall, during the last decade, Cyprus,

from being above the EU average in 2015 by 2,8%, has succeeded in falling below the 2016 mean by 2,6%.

- Evolution over time

Overall, the share of low-qualified adults dropped steadily during recent years. Taking into account that in 2000 low-skilled adults in Cyprus amounted to 38% of the total population, the share of 20,4% in 2016 bespeaks a momentous improvement. The only exception to this downward trend was recorded in 2014 – the peak crisis year - when the percentage of the low-skilled rose from 21,5% in 2013 to 22,4%, only to decline again to 21,9% in 2015. During the 2010-2016 period, the percentage of low-skilled adults followed the same trend, declining considerably from 26% (2010) to 20,4% in 2016.

1.2.2 *Employment rate of low skilled adults*

Table 1.4: Employment rates of low skilled adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	55.7	53.8	53.4	52.7	52	52.6	53.2	54.3
Member State	61.9	63.8	66.1	64.8	57.9	55.5	54.5	55.3	57

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code lfsa_ergaed, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the employment rates of those with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) to the EU average over the period 2010-2016.

- Comparison to the EU-28 average

Cyprus' employment rate of low-skilled adults in 2016 was 57%, which stood 2,7% higher than the corresponding EU average of 54,3% for the same year.

Cyprus follows the rising overall trend in the low-skilled adults' employment rate recorded for EU-28 between 2013 and 2016 and onwards. However, Cyprus' figures show a drop between 2013 and 2014 (55,5% to 54,4%) contrary to the trend seen for EU-28 (an increase of 0,6% over this period). Since 2014, Cyprus' employment rates of low skilled adults have increased (54,7% to 57%), a trend also followed by the EU-28 average (52,6% to 54,3%).

- Evolution over time

The rates of employment of low-skilled adults in Cyprus appear to have been significantly impacted by the recent financial crisis. Pre-crisis rates covering the 2000-2010 decade indicated a steady rise of low-skilled adults' employment from 61,9% in 2000 to 63,8% in 2005 and, furthermore, to 66,1% in 2010. Throughout this period, employment rates of the low-skilled were considerably higher than the corresponding EU average being 55,7% in 2005 and 53,8% in 2010. The employment rate for this category of the population

started dropping slightly in 2011 (2010: 66,1%, 2011: 64,8%), when Cyprus entered the crisis period. A more serious drop was recorded in 2012 when the employment rate fell by 6,9% compared to 64,8% in 2011. The same downward trend continued during the recession period with the employment rate registering 55,5% in 2013 and 54,5% in 2014. Through the crisis period, although the employment rates of the low skilled in Cyprus were falling markedly, they remained above the corresponding EU-28 averages. In 2014, the rate increased marginally, from 54,5% in 2013 to 55,3%, and further increased in 2015 to 55,3%. The latest statistics for 2016 - the first post-crisis year - showed an acceleration of the growth pace as the employment level for the low-skilled climbed to 57%.

1.2.3 Participation rate of low skilled adults

Table 1.5: Participation rate of low skilled adults – the EU average in comparison to national average

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	3.7	3.9	4	3.9	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.2
Member State	0.5	1.1	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.2	1.4	1.6	1.5

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and educational attainment (%), Eurostat code and trng_ifse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 with low qualification levels (ISCED levels 0-2) to EU data and over the period 2000-2016.

- Comparison to EU-28 average

In general, Cyprus records a low relative figure in terms of the percentage of the low-skilled population participating in lifelong learning, and is constantly behind the EU average. In 2016 only 1,5% of the low-skilled adults took part in lifelong learning programmes in Cyprus with the corresponding rate for EU-28 being 4,2%. In both cases, the average was marginally lower compared to the previous year.

- Evolution over time

In 2000, the participation of low-skilled adults in lifelong learning in Cyprus remained as low as 0,5%. At that time, Cyprus was not yet an EU member-state and the opportunities for lifelong learning were limited, a factor that partially contributed to the low participation rate. Cyprus became a full EU member-state in 2004. Just after accession into the EU, the participation of low-skilled adults in lifelong learning programmes doubled reaching 1,1% in 2005, still a markedly low participation rate and well behind the EU average of 3,7% for the same year. Meanwhile, Cyprus elaborated its first national strategy for lifelong learning in 2007. The participation rate of the low-skilled remained unchanged (1,1%) in 2010, and since then it has fluctuated slightly from 1,1% to 1,4% in 2014 showing a marginal upward swing. During the same period, the EU average rose steadily from 3,9% in 2010 to 4,5% in 2014. In 2015, although the EU average dropped slightly, participation of the low-skilled

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in lifelong learning programmes in Cyprus increased to 1,6%, only to fall again by 1,5% in 2016.

2.0 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

2.1 Main features and a concise summary of historic development

Cyprus' adult learning system has developed slowly and tardily since the island's becoming an independent state in 1960. Until then, the economy of the island was based on agriculture with no significant industry, a factor contributing to the belated development of adult education. The second historic turning point impacting the growth of adult education was the Turkish invasion in 1974. The Turkish invasion resulted in the relocation of 200.000 refugees and the loss of a significant proportion of the island's agricultural lands. These new conditions created the need for reskilling in the adult population and induced the development of corresponding administrative and educational structures (Persianis, 1996). Cyprus' accession to the European Union (EU) in 2004 was the third important turning point that led to efforts toward systematization in the educational field. Nowadays, Cyprus records a strong tendency towards tertiary education and a ¹corresponding high percentage (53,4% in 2016)² of tertiary educational graduates. Nevertheless, Cyprus faces a relatively low employment rate of recent tertiary graduates at 73,6% in 2015 compared to the EU-28 average of 81,9%³. The high unemployment level of young graduates reflects the skills mismatch phenomenon due to the incidence of over-education⁴. On the other hand, the low level of basic skills among the adult population unveiled by the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)⁵ in 2013 presents an additional challenge for adult learning in Cyprus.

During the last six years, Cyprus has passed through an economic crisis which has been pivotal in illuminating the need for upgrading and the further development of adult educational provisions. The need for upskilling/reskilling the workforce due to high unemployment rates, and for combating the adult population's low level of basic skills, led to the elaboration of the National Lifelong Learning Strategy (2014-2020)⁶. As outlined in the Strategy, the four priority axes are:

- Promotion of access and participation in Lifelong Learning Programmes for all and recognition of learning outcomes
- Improvement of the quality and efficiency of education and training
- Promotion of research and development for the support of Lifelong Learning

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/european-semester-your-country/cyprus/europe-2020-targets-statistics-and-indicators-cyprus_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/european-semester/european-semester-your-country/cyprus/europe-2020-targets-statistics-and-indicators-cyprus_en

³ European Commission, (2016). Education and training monitor 2016 – Cyprus. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/monitor2016-cy_en.pdf [accessed: 30/09/2017]

⁴ International Labour Office, (2014). Skills mismatch in Europe. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_315623.pdf [accessed: 30/09/2017]

⁵ OECD, (2016). Skills Matter: Further Results from the Survey of Adult Skills. Available at: http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-matter_9789264258051-en [accessed 18-07-2016]. The PIAAC was the first wide-scale survey of adult population skills that took place in Cyprus.

⁶ Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development, (n.d.). National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020 (summary in English). Available at: [http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/499A1CB95981643FC2257C7D00486172/\\$file/National%20%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%20in%20English%20\(Summary\).pdf](http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/499A1CB95981643FC2257C7D00486172/$file/National%20%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%20in%20English%20(Summary).pdf) [accessed 20/09/2017]

- Promotion of employability (toward integration/reintegration into the labour market).

Over time, Cyprus' educational culture tends to favour general education over the Vocational Education and Training (VET) pathway or stream⁷. In order to counterbalance this trend, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) devoted a special awareness of the National Lifelong Learning strategic effort toward the promotion of VET. Furthermore, since 2015, public VET programmes – secondary and post-secondary – have undergone reform aimed at increasing their attractiveness⁸.

Today, the adult learning system's main features are diversity and fragmentation. Adult educational structures operate all over the island offering formal, non-formal and vocational education and training. The majority of the provisions are public and they operate under the aegis and supervision of several different authorities: the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI), the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), and the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC). Fragmentation of the programmes and the absence of a coordinator body is seen as one of the main problems facing the adult learning system. Additionally, and despite the ongoing reforms, certain challenges, such as the mismatch in skills demand and supply, the outdated programmes of certain educational structures, and the deficiency of expertise in the field remain to be addressed effectively.

As seen above (Table 1.2), the participation of adults in lifelong learning in 2016 was well below the EU average of 10,9%, then standing at 6,9%. This percentage is notably lower among low-skilled adults (see Table 1.4), a factor that renders further reforms an urgent necessity. The table below provides further information on the number of participants by age clusters in formal education and training. The figures indicate that the majority of adults over 25-years-old who participate in formal education attend post-graduate educational programmes.

⁷ For example, the school year 2014-15 round 19000 students followed the pathway of general higher secondary education and only 4300 students attended the Technical Schools. See: MOEC, (n.d.). Annual report. Available at: http://www.moec.gov.cy/etisia-ekthesi/pdf/annual_report_2015_qr.pdf [accessed: 30/09/2017]

⁸ <http://www.refernet.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%81%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B7%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%8C%CF%82%20%CE%A3%CF%87%CE%B5%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%BC%CF%8C%CF%82%20%CE%94%CE%9C%CE%A4%CE%95%CE%95.pdf>

Table 2.1 Number of participants in formal education and training by level of education and age

Level of education	Age 20-24	Age 25+	Total
Level of education (i.e., basic, vocational, higher)			
Primary	24	2	26
Lower secondary	35	43	78
Upper secondary	304	244	548
Post-secondary non-tertiary education		73	
Short-cycle tertiary education		476	
Bachelor's or equivalent level		3.994	
Master's or equivalent level		9.872	
Doctoral or equivalent level		1.041	

Source: Eurostat, Eurostat database table "Pupils and students enrolled by education level, sex and age (educ_uoe_enra02)", accessed 2017.08.21.

2.2 Provision

Different types of institutions in Cyprus – public, semi-governmental and private - provide adult education at all levels.⁹ The majority of the institutions offering adult education in Cyprus are public or State-sponsored. Despite this fact, there is no separate Department¹⁰ with the responsibility for overseeing and coordinating adult education provisions in the Ministry of Education and Culture. Consequently, the provisions operate under the authority of the existing three Departments. As a result, the Department of Primary Education is responsible for Adult Education Centres (AECs); the Department for Secondary Education is responsible for Evening Schools and the State Institutes of Further Education; and the Department for Secondary Technical Education is responsible for Evening Technical Schools and other VET provisions.

2.2.1 Helps adults improve their Basic Skills

In terms of basic skills, there are three main institutions working with adults who wish to enhance their basic skills, particularly for language and ICT competences. AECs, State Institutes of Further Education (SIFE) and the Open Schools (OS), all publicly funded, offer

⁹ Information taken from Eurydice network URL
https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Cyprus:Institutions_Providing_Adult_Education_and_Training

See also Gravani, M. & Ioannidou, A., (2014). Adult and Continuing Education in Cyprus, Bielefeld.

¹⁰ The MOEC is organised under three main Departments, each of which is responsible for overseeing the corresponding level of education. Accordingly, there is the Department of Primary Education, the Department of Secondary Education and the Department of Secondary Technical Education. For the structure of MOEC see: <http://www.moec.gov.cy/>

ICT training and Greek language lessons for repatriated Cypriot, foreigners, asylum seekers and illiterates¹¹

2.2.2 Helps adults achieve a Recognised Qualification

Official educational institutions include

Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums are schools offering secondary general education to adults and younger (16+) early school leavers who did not complete their lower or upper secondary education. At the present time, this is the sole educational pathway providing an opportunity for completion of secondary education (lower and upper) to early school leavers. The programme offers two levels of study: the lower (preparatory grade and third grade), and the upper (grades fourth to seventh) which are equivalent to the lower and upper secondary levels respectively.

2.2.3 Helps adults develop other knowledge and skills not for vocational purposes

At the level of non-formal adult education, Adult Education Centres (AECs) offer evening classes in various subjects aiming at general adult education, which includes personal development of adults. The AECs, which operate under the department of Primary Education, are considered to be the first agencies, providing adult education in Cyprus since 1952. Every year more than 20.000 adults attend courses at AECs. The AECs utilize for their lessons the infrastructure of existing morning primary and secondary schools.

Other non-formal adult educational programmes are those offered by the State Institutes of Further Education. These Institutes offer to adults¹² programmes in foreign languages, Greek for foreigners and Turkish Cypriots, ICT training and Accounting courses.

Additionally, the Open School institution (OS), provided by municipalities with the support of the MOEC, offer programmes of non-formal education. OSs deliver a variety of courses – among others foreign languages (French, Italian, Russian), Theater, Music, Dance - in order to address the particular needs of citizens in each municipality. At the moment, there are ten OSs operating all over the island. The implementation of this institution is still in its pilot stage, and it underwent assessment by the MOEC in 2015¹³.

In order to promote lifelong learning, social and cultural development, the University of Cyprus, in cooperation with municipalities and other working authorities, established the Free University. The eight free universities operating currently provide lectures in various

¹¹ <http://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/en>

¹² State Institutes for Further Education, (n.d.) State Institutes for Further Education. Available at: http://www.moec.gov.cy/kie/pdf/state_institutes_further_education_en.pdf [accessed: 30/09/2017]

¹³ Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation, (2015). *Evaluation of the Open School* (in Greek). Available at: http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/files/keea/pdf/Anoikto_sxoleio2015.pdf [Accessed: 30/09/2017]

fields and diverse topics, focusing on subjects of general interest such as history, poetry, and social and political issues¹⁴.

The University of Cyprus, with the aim of advancing Modern Greek language skills, established the School of Modern Greek. The School offers Greek language lessons from A1 to C2 levels of proficiency to adult non-native speakers, nationals, repatriates and foreigners, as well as to those who wish to perfect their knowledge of Greek. The Greek language certificate awarded to its students has been officially accredited and is recognized by the Republic of Cyprus¹⁵.

2.2.4 *Facilitates Transition to the Labour Market for unemployed persons or those at risk of unemployment (ALMPs)*

VET has played a significant role in combating the recession prevailing in the Cypriot economy over recent years. This thrust has succeeded through the various opportunities for training provided to the unemployed and vulnerable populations. A key organization in VET is the HRDA, a semi-governmental entity, which is responsible for the systematic training and development of Cyprus' human resources. Accordingly, the HRDA has established a variety of programmes targeting the upskilling of the active and 'inactive' populations. As part of its mission, the HRDA offers or finances training programmes such as¹⁶:

- The Training of secondary and tertiary education graduates: these two programmes aim to provide training and work experience for the unemployed and newcomers to the labour market. The training cost is totally or partially covered by the HRDA; in addition, a weekly allowance is granted to participants.

- The Schemes for the Improvement of the Employability of the Unemployed and Economically Inactive Women: this scheme offer the opportunity to unemployed women to attend Information Technology, English language and Secretarial Skills training programmes. In addition, women can participate in work experience programmes in enterprises for 8 – 10 weeks.

Another VET structure that delivers second chance VET to adult and younger (16+) early school leavers is the Evening Technical School (ETS). Currently, two ETSs operate in urban areas providing full-time educational programmes. The aim of this programme is to support the integration of early school leavers into the labour market and society.

Furthermore, the New Modern Apprenticeship programme (NMA) offers a combination of vocational education and workplace learning to young people from 14 to 21 years old who leave school after the completion of lower secondary education (gymnasium). The NMA is an alternative educational option or pathway for those at risk of early school leaving.

¹⁴ <https://www.ucy.ac.cy/pr/en/free-universities>

¹⁵ <https://www.ucy.ac.cy/mogr/en/general-information>

¹⁶ HRDA, (2015). Annual Report 2015. Available at:

[http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/ANNUAL%20REPORT%202015%20\(15-3-17\).pdf](http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/ANNUAL%20REPORT%202015%20(15-3-17).pdf)
[accessed: 30/09/2017]

Furthermore, it is oriented toward meeting the needs of the labour market and toward enabling young adults to access a variety of viable occupations¹⁷.

At the level of VET, the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC)¹⁸ offers short programmes aimed at enhancing the skills and improving the employability of the members of the labour force. Funded by the Human Resource Development Authority, the CPS provides technical training programmes and programmes in Management Development, Health and Safety to unemployed adults.

Moreover, the Afternoon and Evening classes offer short term and longer term training courses to adults and especially to unemployed adults. The preparatory afternoon and evening classes train adults for entrance examinations into tertiary education or for various examinations for the recognition of vocational qualifications.

A newly developed structure is the Post-secondary Institutions of VET (PSIVET). These operate as public schools of Tertiary Education and they offer vocational education and training to adults. PSIVET programmes are available to interested secondary school graduates¹⁹.

Additionally, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism together with the Youth Board of Cyprus run the programme Youth Entrepreneurship for the period 2014-2020²⁰. This programme provides financial support and training for young people aged 20 to 39 years old who wish to develop their own small-medium business enterprises.

2.2.5 *Opens up Higher Education to adults*

The Open University of Cyprus²¹ is the first State University offering distance learning at undergraduate and postgraduate levels as well as training courses and lifelong learning programmes. The methodology of distance learning enables mature students of any age to begin or advance their tertiary education. Furthermore, the other two state Universities, the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus University of Technology, as well as the private universities offer programmes aimed at the personal and professional development of adults. In this terms, they offer part-time or full-time f2f and distance learning courses.

At the tertiary, non-university level, four public institutions offering vocational training operate, namely the Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus, the Forestry Institution, the Tourist Guides School and the Cyprus Police Academy; In addition, the Mediterranean Institute of Management offers postgraduate programmes to adults.

¹⁷ Human Resource Development Authority, (2014). Apprenticeship-type scheme and structured work-based learning programmes. Available at:

http://www.refernet.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/ReferNet_CY_2014_WBL.pdf [accessed 29/09/2017]

¹⁸ http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/kepa/kepa_new.nsf/index_en/index_en?OpenDocument

¹⁹ <http://www.mieek.ac.cy/index.php/en/#>

²⁰ <http://onek.org.cy/en/home-page/programs-and-service/funding-opportunities/youth-entrepreneurship/>

²¹ <http://www.ouc.ac.cy>

Additionally, there are many private institutions offering a wide variety of VET at the level of tertiary education in hotel management, aesthetics, secretarial studies, food preparation, engineering and more.

2.2.6 *Enables adult employees to develop their work-related skills*

The HRDA provides a series of training opportunities to enterprises and employees in the context of its mission to work towards the enrichment and broadening of skills. In this regard, it implements single or multi-company training programmes in Cyprus and abroad. The HRDA subsidizes training programmes designed and implemented by enterprises themselves in accordance with the particular needs of their employees. Moreover, it subsidizes the Trade Union Officials Continuing Training Programmes in which a subsidy is granted by the HRDA to the trade unions in order to undertake the training of their officials in issues related to their duties.

The pre-service training of educational staff²² is a compulsory one-year training programme for prospective secondary and technical school teachers. The objective of the training is to enhance the quality of competence of the teaching staff by enabling them successfully to undertake teaching responsibilities. The programme was delegated to the University of Cyprus by the MOEC.

In the context of the teaching staff's training, the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus²³ offers continuous professional development programmes to educational staff of pre-primary, primary and secondary educational institutions. Among them there are optional in-service seminars for teaching staff and the mandatory in-service training programme for school leaders. Concurrently, the Institute holds the main responsibility for the organization and implementation of the new system of Teachers' Professional Learning.

In addition, the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration²⁴ offers seminars, training courses, workshops and other educational activities for the Public Service staff members.

Moreover, the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment offers lifelong learning programmes aiming in upskilling farmers, training new farmers and rural women. Among others, they offer courses for rural development, plant protection, organic farming, greenhouse management and more²⁵.

Furthermore, in the private sector, especially accounting and banking sector, many companies fund further education or training of their employees. According to Gravani & Ioannidou (2014), round 48% of enterprises provided Continuing Vocational Training courses for their employees²⁶.

²² <https://ucy.ac.cy/proypiresiaki/>

²³ http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=50&Itemid=268&lang=en

²⁴ http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/capa/cyacademy.nsf/index_en/index_en?OpenDocument

²⁵ http://www.moa.gov.cy/moa/da/da.nsf/page22_en/page22_en?OpenDocument

²⁶ Gravani and Ioannidou, (2014). Adult and Continuing Education in Cyprus, Bielefeld. Available at: <http://www.die-bonn.de/doks/2014-zypern-01.pdf>. [accessed 10/08/2016]

2.2.7 *Other (if any)*

Other institutions and non-governmental organizations are taking some initiatives, providing adult education opportunities. These include the Orthodox Church, the trade unions as well as the Pancyprrian school of Parents²⁷.

²⁷ *ibid.*

3.0 ADULT LEARNING POLICIES

3.1. Context

3.1.1. Distribution of responsibilities regarding adult learning

The nature of the Cypriot educational system provides few opportunities for the delegation and distribution of responsibilities to regional/local authorities. As stated in the World Bank's analysis of the structure of the Ministry of Education and Culture, Cypriot schools retain little/no autonomy regarding their financial or human resources, teaching and learning²⁸. As a result, the main provider of adult learning is the State, and the organisation and governance of the corresponding provisions are highly centralised²⁹. The Ministry of Education and Culture oversees the supervision and control of the main provisions for adult learning (Adult Learning Centres, Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums and Technical Schools, Post-Secondary Institutes of the VET, State Institutes of Further Education, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute). Despite the highly centralized nature of the adult learning system around MOEC, at the moment there is no single department inside the Ministry to undertake general responsibility for lifelong learning.

Furthermore, some responsibilities are distributed to other Ministries such as the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment, and the Ministry of Justice and Public Order³⁰.

Since 2013, the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development (DG EPCD) has been responsible for issues related to lifelong learning³¹. In accordance with its responsibilities, the DG EPCD in cooperation with the MOEC, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, the Human Resource Development Authority and the Cyprus Productivity Centre has prepared the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020. Additionally, the DG EPCD is responsible for monitoring the enactment of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020, and it was appointed as the National Authority for the implementation of the Erasmus+ Programme³².

Another key actor in the area of policy development and organisation of adult learning is the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA). The HRDA is a quasi-governmental body established in 1999 for undertaking the mission of providing appropriate conditions

²⁸ World Bank, (2014). Analysis of the Function and Structure of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus. Available at: <http://media.philenews.com/PDF/education.pdf> (p. 22) [accessed 30/09/2017]

²⁹ See for details:

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Cyprus:Organisation_and_Governance [accessed 08/08/2016]

³⁰ For a more detailed account see:

https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Cyprus:Distribution_of_Responsibilities [accessed 08/08/2016]

³¹ http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/index_en/index_en?OpenDocument

³² DG EPCD, (n.d.). Strategic Plan 2017-2019 (Στρατηγικός Σχεδιασμός 2017-2019). Available at: [http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/C2F67D1575E083A2C2257C7D00477C26/\\$file/Medium%20-Term%20Financial%20Framework%202017-2019.pdf](http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/C2F67D1575E083A2C2257C7D00477C26/$file/Medium%20-Term%20Financial%20Framework%202017-2019.pdf) [accessed: 30/09/2017]

for the systematic training and development of human resources in Cyprus³³. The HRDA is not a training provider itself, but it is the main agency responsible, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, for raising funds and for developing training programmes provided by public and/or private institutions³⁴.

3.1.2. Major national socio-economic strategies governing the provision of Adult Learning

The national priorities for adult education were established in the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020³⁵ which was approved by the Council of Ministers in June 2014. In light of the persistent high unemployment rate and the low level of skill attainment by the adult population, the strategy planning represents an effort to combat these challenges through education and training. The strategy has four priority pillars³⁶:

- **Improving access to lifelong learning for all and recognising learning outcomes**

The actions under this priority aim at promoting adult education, making educational and training programmes more attractive, and enhancing lifelong counselling services. As regards the promotion of lifelong learning and learning mobility, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) initiated the development of a comprehensive national qualification framework (NQF) in order to support recognition and validation of qualifications (Cedefop, 2015). Obviously, this priority addresses the problem of low participation registration in lifelong learning programmes. Although the same strategic goal was included in the previous Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007-2013³⁷, the available statistics do not indicate any positive difference in terms of participation (general participation [25-64 age group]: 2007: 8,7%, 2013: 7,2%), and the participation level of low qualified adults in particular which remains very low (2015: 1,6%). The proposed actions are intended to serve as motivation for increasing participation.

- **Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training**

The PIAAC survey has revealed the low basic skills of the working population. In line with these results, the EC has commented in its latest country report³⁸ on the need to address skills insufficiency. With regards to adult education, this priority refers to the need to improve basic skills and competencies within the overall population. The new strategy aims at the implementation of a wider synergy among vocational education and training

³³ For details of the legislative framework and the mission of HRDA, see: <http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/el/η-απαδ-η-απαδ-και-η-αποστολή-της>. [accessed 08/08/2016]

³⁴ For the plans and strategic goals of HRDA see: <http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/Στόχοι%20ΑνΑΔ%202017.pdf>

³⁵ See: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2014/nrp2014_cyprus_en.pdf [accessed 08/08/2016]

³⁶ Information taken from the National Strategy of Lifelong Learning 2014-2020. Available at: [http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/499A1CB95981643FC2257C7D00486172/\\$file/National%20%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%20in%20English%20\(Summary\).pdf](http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/499A1CB95981643FC2257C7D00486172/$file/National%20%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%20in%20English%20(Summary).pdf) [accessed 20/09/2017]

³⁷ Planning Bureau (2007). Εθνική Στρατηγική για τη Διά Βίου Μάθηση 2007-2013 (National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007-2013). Nicosia.

³⁸ EC (2016). Country report Cyprus 2016-Commission Staff Working paper (p. 3). Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/cr2016_cyprus_en.pdf. [accessed on 20/08/2016]

providers and enterprises. The main target is to combat the existing skills mismatch between education and training supply and the needs of the labour market, a phenomenon identified by the European Commission³⁹. A gradual expansion of VET opportunities available to the adult population will address this priority.

Additionally, there is a provision for improving the initial and continuing education of educators in order to assure the quality of the education and training programmes provided. Within the framework of a broader reform, the MOEC is implementing a new system for teachers' professional development and learning with the support of the CPI⁴⁰.

- **Promoting research and development to support lifelong learning**

This priority serves the need to establish a more suitable lifelong learning strategy in Cyprus. Three thrusts or foci were accepted to address this priority: the need to establish credible tools for skills forecasting lifelong learning (LLL) in order to ensure better programme planning; the need to develop LLL systems that match the needs of the labour market; and the need to develop mechanisms for the evaluation of the impact of LLL programmes on the Cypriot economy. The urgent need for further research concerning the skills of the adult population and the development of appropriate programmes targeting specific needs was identified after further analysis of the PIAAC results⁴¹.

- **Improving employability by promoting entry and re-entry to the labour market**

The improvement of employability through education and training is a core priority in order to tackle high levels of unemployment. The promoted actions focus on the training of the unemployed and long-term unemployed, graduates of secondary as well as tertiary education, and persons with disabilities. Furthermore, this priority promotes the support of enterprises and of the public sector as providers of training programmes. A great proportion of the planned actions has been undertaken and funded by the Human Resources and Development Authority (HRDA).

Besides the priorities included in the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning, the HRDA has set its own objectives for the year 2017⁴²:

- a) Contributing to the integration of the unemployed and the inactive population in employment.
- b) Promoting Lifelong Learning for employed persons.
- c) Enhancement of quality assurance systems.
- d) Promoting research and development.

³⁹ EC (2016). Country report Cyprus 2016-Commission Staff Working paper. Available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/csr2016/cr2016_cyprus_en.pdf. [accessed on 20/08/2016]

⁴⁰ http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1437&Itemid=453&lang=en

⁴¹ Μοδέστου, Μ., & Καραγιώργη, Γ. (υπό δημοσίευση). Δεξιότητες Μαθηματικού Αλφαριθμητισμού του Κύπριου Ενήλικα: Αποτελέσματα από τη Διεθνή Έρευνα Δεξιοτήτων Ενηλίκων (PIAAC). Παιδαγωγική Επιθεώρηση.

⁴² HRDA, (2016). Objectives 2017 (Στόχοι ΑνΑΔ 2017). Available at:

<http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/%CE%A3%CF%84%CF%8C%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%B9%20%CE%91%CE%BD%CE%91%CE%94%202017%20-%20%CE%92%CE%9F%CE%A5%CE%9B%CE%971.pdf> [accessed 23/10/2017]

- e) Promoting effective governance.

3.2. Adult learning policy framework

3.2.1. A summary of major developments / changes since 2010

A significant reform in adult learning has been the establishment of the National Committee for Lifelong Learning which has lately been instituted by the Council of Ministers (Decision no.79.917/27.05.2015)⁴³. The Committee is comprised of the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, the Human Resource Development Authority and the Cyprus Productivity Centre. It is authorized to coordinate the implementation of the newly initiated National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020 and its relevant associated bodies.

As regards VET, the low participation level (13,6% compared with the EU average of 48,9% in 2013), and the low employability rate of upper secondary graduates (54,6% compared with the EU average of 70,8% in 2014), led to the elaboration of the Strategic Plan for the system of technical and vocational education and training 2015-2020⁴⁴. This plan was prepared by the department of secondary technical and vocational education (STVE) of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The planning incorporates short-term and long-term goals in an effort to enhance the attractiveness and the quality of the VET programmes.

The Post-Secondary Institutions of VET (PSIVET) have operated since 2012. The programmes offered are flexible, and they are harmonised with labour market demands. In April 2016, as proposed in the Strategic Plan, the MOEC decided to upgrade the status of PSIVET from a post-secondary institution to a Public School of Tertiary Education starting in the academic year 2016-2017⁴⁵.

In parallel, apprenticeship is undergoing major reform with co-funding from ESF. The first step was the re-allocation of the responsibility for the – previously labelled – Apprenticeship Scheme (Systema Mathiteias) from the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance to the Ministry of Education and Culture (April 2015)⁴⁶. The MOEC was appointed to submit a proposal for the reform of the scheme. The MOEC proposed the New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA-approved by the Council of Ministers in August of 2015)⁴⁷, a

⁴³Επίσημη Εφημερίδα της Κυπριακής Δημοκρατίας (2015). Available at: [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/A1D9C55F1F5AA40EC2257E850020C233/\\$file/4451%20%2017%207%202015%20PARARTIMA%204o%20MEROS%20I.pdf](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/gpo/gpo.nsf/All/A1D9C55F1F5AA40EC2257E850020C233/$file/4451%20%2017%207%202015%20PARARTIMA%204o%20MEROS%20I.pdf). [accessed 01/10/2010]

⁴⁴ Ministry of Education and Culture (n.a.). Στρατηγικός Σχεδιασμός Τεχνικής και Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης. Available at: <http://www.refernet.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/Στρατηγικός%20Σχεδιασμός%20ΔΜΤΕΕ.pdf>. [accessed 10/09/2016]

⁴⁵ See the corresponding communication from MOEC (available in Greek) at:

<http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp3995a>

and the decision from the Council of Ministers at:

[http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm_2013/cm.nsf/159D94FC0D2F8E2BC2257FD9001ED233/\\$file/80.574.pdf](http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm_2013/cm.nsf/159D94FC0D2F8E2BC2257FD9001ED233/$file/80.574.pdf) [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁴⁶ See the decision of the Council of Ministers, available at:

[http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm_2013/cm.nsf/F23CE47081E718D0C2257E66003EA33B/\\$file/78.658.pdf](http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm_2013/cm.nsf/F23CE47081E718D0C2257E66003EA33B/$file/78.658.pdf). [accessed 08/09/2016]

⁴⁷ See the decision of the Council of Ministers, available at:

scheme that provides opportunity for young persons aged 14 to 21 who have not graduated from upper secondary education to attend one of the two apprenticeship level programmes (preparatory or core). The new scheme is based on the hands-on concept of 'learning by doing', and it combines both training at school and practical training at enterprise-based locations.

Additionally, subsequent to the 2011/12 academic year, a new Evening Technical School, the second of its kind, has been established and is operating in an urban area (Limassol). The Evening Technical Schools are supervised by the Department of Secondary Technical Education, and offer second chance vocational education to adults.

In line with the need for systematisation of adult education in Cyprus was the development of a new Master's Programme in Adult Education in the context of the Erasmus Mundus call of 2014⁴⁸. The Master's programme is jointly offered by the Open University of Cyprus (OUC) with the Universities of Glasgow, Malta, Tallinn and Toronto. The programme offers the promotion of specialised knowledge and the development of expertise for stakeholders, policy makers and practitioners in the field of Adult and Continuing Education and Vocational Training. At the same time, since academic year 2014-2015, the OUC offers a new postgraduate programme in "Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning", which elaborates e-learning practices. Additionally, two private universities, offer postgraduate programmes in Adult Education. The Frederick University offer a master programme in Adult Education and the University of Nicosia offers a distance learning Master's degree in Education and Training jointly with the University of Peloponnese.

At the level of tertiary education, the Council of Ministers approved (October 2015)⁴⁹ the establishment and operation of the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education. The Agency is expected to monitor and ensure the quality of Tertiary Education in Cyprus. According to a new legislation regarding the quality of the tertiary education, the Agency has extended competences like⁵⁰:

- Institutional, Departmental and Programmatic Evaluation and accreditation of higher education
- Quality Assurance in higher education on the basis of the European Standards
- The Evaluation and Accreditation of cross-border forms of education, offered by local institutions in member states or third countries
- Assessment of the conditions for the provision of cross-border education from foreign institutions in Cyprus
- Assessment of inter-institutional cooperation of higher education institutions
- The provision of information of Quality Assurance in higher education

[http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm_2013/cm.nsf/8E78CD1DFF45FEFFC2257EE6003CBBDD/\\$file/79.274.pdf](http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm_2013/cm.nsf/8E78CD1DFF45FEFFC2257EE6003CBBDD/$file/79.274.pdf).
[accessed 08/08/2016]

⁴⁸ For a more detailed description of the programme and its objectives see: <http://www.ouc.ac.cy> [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁴⁹ See the decision of the Council of Ministers at:
[http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm_2013/cm.nsf/3F13956A4F5BED56C2257EEE00418660/\\$file/79.682.pdf](http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm_2013/cm.nsf/3F13956A4F5BED56C2257EEE00418660/$file/79.682.pdf)
[accessed 08/08/2016]

⁵⁰ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/dipae/foreas>

The latest advancements –policy changes and reforms– comprise some important steps for the harmonisation of Cyprus’ adult learning with the EU’s priorities. The establishment of the National Committee of Lifelong learning can be seen as a major step towards better governance of the adult education sector. The plurality of the partners under the Committee is expected to ensure a greater level of coherence among different stakeholders and programmes.

The initiation of the new Evening Technical School and the new Master’s programme of the OUC provide better educational opportunities to the adult population and increase the supply of adult learning provision. The expansion of Evening Technical Schools, in particular, is considered an important advancement as it provides second-chance education to low qualified adults. At the same time, the upgrading of the PSIVET to the status of tertiary education is a promising step for the supply of better quality programmes, in accordance with the standards for tertiary education set by the newly established Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education. The establishment of the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation marks another major advancement in terms of quality assurance for the provided programmes.

The system of Master’s programmes offered by the OUC is another step towards offering more flexible adult learning opportunities and enhancing ICT use through the elaboration of e-learning practices. In contrast, steps are yet to be taken with regard to addressing the need for flexible programmes targeting low qualified adults.

The MOEC has recently (June 2016)⁵¹ set up a special committee for addressing the need for modernisation of the second-chance educational institutions. The committee was assigned the duties of upgrading the curricula, the legislative and the general operational framework of the Evening Technical Schools and of the Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums, which provide second-chance general and technical education to adults. The work is still in progress, and the renewed institutional framework is due to be delivered in 2018.

Additionally, the National Action Plan for Youth Employment, which operates through the Youth Guarantee, will cover the period 2016-2017 with an allocation of €11.57 million. The action refers to young graduates (from secondary, post-secondary or tertiary education) from 15 to 24 years old, and it includes work experience schemes.

Regarding the transparency of qualifications and the validation of non-formal and informal learning, there is an on-going project for the implementation of a National Qualification Framework (NQF), which will link the national qualification levels to the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The objective is to develop an inclusive NQF, which will also include the existing system of vocational qualifications established by the HRDA. The HRDA has developed 72 standards of vocational qualifications, and it is expected that

⁵¹ See the corresponding Communication from MOEC (available only in Greek) at: <http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/ypp4304> [accessed 20/08/2016]

during the programming period 2014-2020, it will offer certification for over 80 new standards⁵².

3.2.2. *Main legislative act(s) governing the provision of adult learning*

The legislative framework covering Adult Learning derives from the 1960 Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus and all amending laws⁵³. A lot of official acts, laws and regulations concerning Adult Learning are scattered throughout many pieces of legislation, often at other levels of education, i.e., Primary (responsible for Adult Education Centres), Secondary (responsible for Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums) or Technical (responsible for Evening Technical Schools). The main decisions concerning policy reforms and developments are taken by the Council of Ministers, the responsible body for co-ordination and supervision of all public services⁵⁴, and the House of Representatives. Consequently, at this moment a single distinctive legislative framework governing Adult Learning does not exist⁵⁵, a fact that obviously hinders the efforts toward implementation of a comprehensive policy framework for adult learning.

The most solid framework of adult learning at the moment is the one provided by the National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014 – 2020. The strategy has set the main priorities (see 3.1.2.), and acts as a guideline for future activities.

3.3. National quantitative policy targets

Table 3.1 outlines the main national targets set for adult learning in the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020 which is the core document underpinning adult learning policies in Cyprus⁵⁶.

⁵² For further details see at: Source:

http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/easyconsole.cfm/page/project/p_id/82/pc_id/17154 [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁵³ The legislation covering adult learning in Cyprus is collected in two reports:

1) Country report on the action plan on adult learning: Cyprus (2011), GHK, Research voor Beleid. Available at: http://adultlearning-budapest2011.teamwork.fr/docs/Country_Report-CY_final.pdf. [accessed 10/08/2016]

2) Gravani, M. & Ioannidou, A., (2014). Adult and Continuing Education in Cyprus, Bielefeld. Available at: <http://www.die-bonn.de/doks/2014-zypern-01.pdf>. [accessed 10/08/2016]

⁵⁴ See: http://www.cm.gov.cy/cm/cm_2013/cm.nsf/page31_en/page31_en?OpenDocument [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁵⁵ See: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Cyprus:Adult_Education_and_Training [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁵⁶ Source: National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020 Available at:

[http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/499A1CB95981643FC2257C7D00486172/\\$file/National%20%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%20in%20English%20\(Summary\).pdf](http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/499A1CB95981643FC2257C7D00486172/$file/National%20%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%20in%20English%20(Summary).pdf) [accessed: 30/09/2017]

Table 3.1 Targets linked to Adult Learning in broader economic policies / LLL strategies / framework or implementing act

General information		Progress toward target		
Target (target figure and date to be achieved by)	Adoption date (e.g., 31/03/2018)	Initial value (at date of adoption)	Current value	Summary of progress against the target
Reduce early school leavers to 10% by 2020	2014	9,1% in 2013	7,7% (2016)	Cyprus has made notable progress in combating early school leaving. At the moment, the percentage of early school leavers is well below the EU2020 and national target set at 10%, although higher than the remarkable 5,2% of 2015. Albeit the progress in this field, Cyprus did not choose to set a more challenging target below the EU2020 target of 10%.
Increase participation of adults in lifelong learning to 12% by 2020	2014	7,2% in 2013	6,9% (2016)	Increasing the participation of adults in LLL programmes is one of the greatest challenges Cyprus is facing. Despite the fact that the National Strategy for LLL has been implemented for 4 years, the percentage of participation declined to 6,9%, and it is still behind the national target of 12% and the EU2020 target of 15%.
Retain the percentage of population (aged 30-34) with tertiary education above 46%	2014	47,8% in 2013	53,4% (2016)	Over time, Cyprus has shown a high percentage of tertiary educational attainment which has surpassed the respective EU2020 average set at 40% and is well above the national target of

Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills
Full country report - Cyprus

				<p>46%. In accordance to the objective of increasing participation in VET, Cyprus has developed pathways for VET in the level of tertiary education. At the moment, there are four public colleges offering VET education: the Higher Hotel Institute, the Forestry College, the Tourist Guides College, and the Cyprus Police Academy. Additionally, there are many private institutions offering a wide variety of VET at the level of tertiary education. Moreover, since 2016/17 the PSIVET functions as a Public School of Tertiary Education providing opportunity for the graduates to continue their education in other tertiary educational institutions.</p>
Reduce the share of the population with low basic skills. No target set.	2014	21,5% in 2013	20,4% (2016)	<p>The PIAAC survey revealed that a significant share of the adult population in Cyprus is characterized by low basic skills. Although the percentage of low-qualified adults is decreasing and at the moment is set below the EU average, the implementation of the National Strategy is expected to further decrease this percentage.</p>

3.4. Quality assurance

There is no national comprehensive policy regarding quality assurance in adult learning provisions. Subsequently, different bodies and various policies are set at different educational levels. As discussed previously, the main provider of adult learning in Cyprus is the State. Accordingly, issues regarding quality assurance are the responsibility of the State and the corresponding Ministries under which different provisions for adult education operate. As a result, the evaluation of adult learning falls under the authority of other levels of education (i.e., primary, secondary, and technical).

General Adult Education

At the level of general adult education, the MOEC and its Department of General Secondary Education is responsible for inspecting the Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums, the State Institutes of Further Education. The Adult Education Centres are overseen by the Department of Primary Education.

Regarding the VET, the MOEC and particularly the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education are responsible for inspecting the Evening Technical Schools, the Afternoon and Evening classes, the Post-secondary Institutions of VET and the New Apprenticeship Scheme (jointly with the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance).

The main tool used by the MOEC for quality assurance is the evaluation of teachers' performance through inspection, which is carried out by Ministry officers (inspectors). According to the World Bank report⁵⁷, a significant deficiency of the existing mechanism originates in the fact that the present evaluation scheme primarily targets individual teachers and not the educational unit as a whole.

The Centre for Education Research and Evaluation (CERE)⁵⁸ is another body which undertakes educational research and evaluation of educational institutions and reforms in order to monitor their quality and efficacy. The CERE functions under the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI)⁵⁹, and it is overseen by the MOEC and, as such, its evaluations are considered to be internal. The CERE is appointed by the MOEC to carry out research and evaluation of educational provisions or particular interventions and reforms. As for adult education, the CERE has been the National Agency that carried out the PIAAC survey, the latest (2016) evaluation of second chance schools (Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums and Evening Technical Schools) and the evaluation of the Open School (2015), among others⁶⁰.

⁵⁷ World Bank (2014). Analysis of the Function and Structure of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus. Available at: [HYPERLINK "http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp156"](http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp156)
<http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp156>. (p. 25) [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁵⁸ See: http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=606&Itemid=343&lang=en
[accessed 08/08/2016]

⁵⁹ http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=329&Itemid=161&lang=en
[accessed 08/08/2016]

⁶⁰ http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=443&Itemid=167&lang=en

Vocational Education and Training

The HRDA has established an important mechanism of quality assurance at the level of VET through the development of a competence-based System of Vocational Qualifications. The System provides the assessment and certification of the competence of an individual to carry out a specific job on the basis of the Standard Vocational Qualifications⁶¹. Additionally, the System assesses the quality of vocational training institutions and infrastructure to ensure they are eligible for certification.

In an effort to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the training provided, the HRDA has linked its subsidy policy to quality assurance of the relevant training programme. The System of Assessment and Certification of Training Providers aims to evaluate and certify eligible providers of training or of infrastructure facilities for training implementation. The System was developed on the basis the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training⁶².

Tertiary Education

At the level of tertiary education, the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education⁶³, a newly created public body, was founded in order to ensure the quality of higher educational programmes. The Agency operates on the basis of the "Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters, Laws 2015 and 2016"⁶⁴; it provides a quality assurance legislative framework for higher education in Cyprus. In parallel, the Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS) is the responsible authority for the recognition of higher educational qualifications⁶⁵.

3.5. Future policy developments

While Cyprus has overcome the sharp recession it experienced during the period 2012-2015, there are residual challenges to face: a high unemployment rate, skills mismatch due to incidence of over-education⁶⁶, and low basic skills of the adult population. Hence, the priority of future policies is set on the VET as a means to improving the employment level and developing the economy.

⁶¹ http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/easyconsole.cfm/page/project/p_id/82/pc_id/17154

⁶² EQAVET, (2016). Report of Cyprus – 2016. Available at: http://www.eqavet.eu/Libraries/Website_Update_2016_Reports/2_CY_final_Template_for_updating_info_on_the_EQAVET_website.sflb.ashx [accessed: 30/09/2017]

⁶³ <http://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/en/>

⁶⁴ Office of the Law Commissioner, (2016). The Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education and the Establishment and Operation of an Agency on Related Matters Laws, 2015 and 2016 (English translation). Available at:

http://www.dipae.ac.cy/archeia/nomothesia/nomothesia_2015_agency_quality_assurance_en.pdf [accessed 30/09/2017]

⁶⁵ <http://www.kysats.ac.cy/index.php/en/>

⁶⁶ International Labour Office, (2014). Skills mismatch in Europe. Available at: http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---stat/documents/publication/wcms_315623.pdf [accessed: 30/09/2017]

According to the NRP provisions, a main priority is the improvement of skills. The strategic plan includes the reform and upgrading of the two Evening Technical Schools, of the Afternoon and Evening classes at the Technical Schools, and the further development of the Post-Secondary Institutes of VET. There is also a provision for expanding the counselling services offered at the secondary educational level in order to reach young people Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETs). Furthermore, the long-term objective of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020⁶⁷ is to achieve the common (standard) European objectives in education and training.

As regards the offer of second-chance VET opportunities to low qualified adults (ISCED 0-2), the Strategic Plan for the VET includes a provision for expanding the operation of the Evening Technical Schools which currently operate in only two towns.

Additionally, the Department of Secondary VET, under a committee of experts⁶⁸, works towards the creation and implementation of ECVET units (European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training). The proposal has been submitted to the EU and is awaiting approval⁶⁹.

Currently, the HRDA is holding a public consultation for the expansion of the System of Professional Qualifications. The Authority is planning to add 80 more Professional Qualification Systems in accordance with labour market needs.

In terms of general adult education, a committee of experts has been established in order to propose appropriate reform measures for the modernization of second-chance schools (Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums). The reform is still at the stage of negotiation with different departments and stakeholders.

At the same time, an interdepartmental committee has been set up for the development of mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning up until 2018. The committee is comprised of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, the Human Resource Development Authority, Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development and the Foundation for the Management of the Lifelong Learning Program, the Commissioner of Volunteering and the NGO Commissioner⁷⁰. The MOEC submitted a proposal for funding to the ESF which has been approved for €1.517.000. The funds will be used for the development and implementation of a mechanism for the validation of non-formal and informal learning⁷¹.

⁶⁷ DG EPCD (n.a.). National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020 (Εθνική Στρατηγική Διά Βίου Μάθησης 2014-2020). Available at: [http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/499A1CB95981643FC2257C7D00486172/\\$file/National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%20in%20Greek.pdf](http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/499A1CB95981643FC2257C7D00486172/$file/National%20Lifelong%20Learning%20Strategy%20in%20Greek.pdf) [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁶⁸ See: <http://www.erasmusplus.cy/uploadfiles/ecvet/experts.html> [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁶⁹ See: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Cyprus:Validation_of_Non-formal_and_Informal_Learning [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁷⁰ See: https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Cyprus:Validation_of_Non-formal_and_Informal_Learning [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁷¹ See: European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014). European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014: country report Cyprus. . [accessed 10/09/2016]

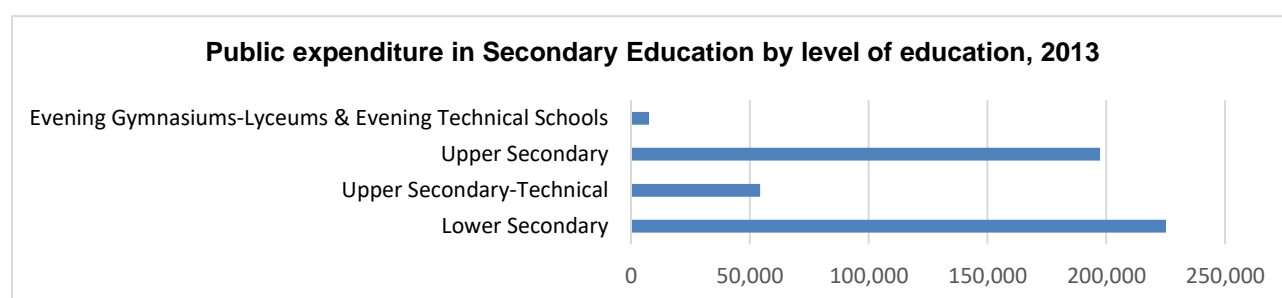
4. INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS

4.1. Total investment in adult learning and change over time

In past years Cyprus had a high level of government expenditure on education. Expenditure in education has decreased over recent years, falling from 6,5% of the GDP in 2013 to 5,8% in 2014. There is no available data for total investment in adult learning. However, a relative picture is provided by the annual report "Statistics of Education". According to the statistics released, in 2010/11 the current expenditure in adult education programmes (Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums, Evening Technical Schools and non-formal education) was only 1,38% of the total expenditure for all levels of education⁷². For the year 2014/15⁷³, expenditure increased at the rate of 2,01% of total expenditure displaying a slight increase in the monies invested in adult learning - probably due to the inclusion of investment in PSIVET.

A source of information regarding investment in adult learning is the HRDA. According to the latest report release⁷⁴, HRDA sponsorships to enterprises for training of their employees was €22,8ml for 2015, increased by 2,5% compared to 2014. This amount is lower relatively compared to the pre-crisis years, as in 2010 the same sponsorship sum was €26,4ml. Additionally, the HRDA's income in 2015 from the Human Resource Development Fund [HRDF] (a levy paid by all companies in the private sector and semi-governmental organisations) was €11,8ml, slightly lower than the €12,3ml in 2010. Consequently, the indicator of sponsorships coverage by the HRDF income was 51,7% in 2015, higher than the 46,8% in 2010.

4.2. Public national investment



The main source of investment in adult education is the State as most of adult learning provisions are public. Cyprus has one of the highest expenditures in education among the

⁷² Statistical Service, (2011). Statistics of education 2010-2011. Available at: [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/AC480B06DE4C29E5C2257D54002D9A0A/\\$file/EDUCATIO N-1011-281212.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/AC480B06DE4C29E5C2257D54002D9A0A/$file/EDUCATIO N-1011-281212.pdf?OpenElement) [accessed: 30/09/2017]

⁷³ Statistical Service, (2015). Statistics of education 2014-2015. Available at: [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/204AA86C4060D499C22577E4002CA3E3/\\$file/EDUCATIO N-14_15-300817.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/204AA86C4060D499C22577E4002CA3E3/$file/EDUCATIO N-14_15-300817.pdf?OpenElement) [accessed: 30/09/2017]

⁷⁴ HRDA, (2015). Indicators of participation in HRDA activities 2009-2015. Available at: <http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/%CE%A3%CF%8D%CE%BD%CE%BF%CF%88%CE%B7% 20%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82%20%CE%9C%CE%B5%CE%BB%CE%AD%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%820005.pdf> [accessed: 30/09/2017]

EU member states. The latest statistics provided by Eurostat⁷⁵ show that 5.8% of the national GDP is invested in education. Unfortunately, at the present moment, there is no clear picture of the exact level of investment absorbed by adult education provisions as the funding reaches the institutions through the administrative structures of other levels of education (i.e., primary, secondary and technical).

Source: CYSTAT, Investments in education - Year 2013

As stated previously, for the year 2014/15 the expenditure invested in State-sponsored adult learning provisions was some 2,01% of the total expenditure for education.

Another source of funding for adult learning and training initiatives is the HRDA, a quasi-governmental body. HRDA is funded by the Human Resource Development Fund [HRDF] (every employer is obliged to pay to the fund a levy of no more than 1% of the Cypriot payroll). For 2016, the HRDF is expected to yield an income of approximately €22.458.000⁷⁶. Alongside the HRDF, the Authority runs training and other schemes with co-funding from the European Social Fund (ESF). According to CEDEFOP⁷⁷, the HRDA allocates funds for training, to create tax incentives for companies, to provide grants to companies, and to fund leave for training for eligible group members. For the year 2016, the Authority is expected to absorb a total of €10.516.900 for projects co-funded by the European Union under the ESF⁷⁸.

At the same time, the HRDA carries the main responsibility for the creation and implementation of the System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ). The main objective of the SVQ project is the promotion of human resources through validation of formal and non-formal qualifications. The preliminary phase of the project was funded from national sources. During the period 2007-2013, the implementation of the SVQ was co-funded from the ESF. The HRDA is expected to enrich the SVQ with even more standards of professionalization, and the ESF is expected to provide further funding during the period 2014-2020⁷⁹.

⁷⁵ Eurostat (March 2016). Government expenditure on education - 2014. Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Government_expenditure_on_education [accessed 05/10/2016]

⁷⁶ HRDA, (2016). HRDA objectives (2016). Available at: <http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/Στόχοι%20AvAA%202016.pdf>. [accessed 05/09/2016]

⁷⁷ See: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/FinancingAdultLearning/> [accessed 08/09/2016]

⁷⁸ HRDA objectives (2016). Available at: <http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/images/media/assetfile/Στόχοι%20AvAA%202016.pdf>. [accessed 05/09/2016]

⁷⁹ See: European Commission; Cedefop; ICF International (2014). *European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2014: country report Cyprus*. Available at: http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2014/87082_CY.pdf [accessed on 16/08/2016]

Table 4.1 Breakdown of public national investment

Title of public investment source	Source of funding	Amount of funding	Targeted number of participants	Targeted level of provision	Start / end date
Adult Education Centres	public	€1.950.000	24.000	non-formal adult education	2014/2015
Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums & Evening Technical Schools	public	€64.115	500	second chance general education & VET	2014-2015
Post-Secondary non-tertiary & non-formal education	public	€18.512	n/a	post-secondary non-tertiary & non-formal education	2014-2015
Training activities of the HRDA	HRDA	€18.408.603	51.302	vocational training	2015

4.3. EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF)

4.3.1. Structural fund support planned as part of the 2014-2020 financial framework

ESF funding is delivered to Cyprus through the ESF programme Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion 2014-2020, which is under the management of the DG EPCD. The main objectives of the programme are:

- Improvement of employment opportunities especially of disadvantage populations (53% of funding).
- Combating poverty and enhancing social inclusion focusing on disadvantaged social groups (20% of the funding).
- Improvement of the vet system (20% of the funding).
- Improvement of the efficiency of public administration (4% of the funding).

The cost of the operational programme is €163ml from which the €140ml is funded by the ESF. Within the amount of €140ml, €11,5ml comes from the Youth Employment Initiative⁸⁰. The following actions are connected to adult learning⁸¹:

- Expansion and operation of a System of Vocational Qualifications (SQV) – The programme is carried out by the HRDA
- Enhancement of the quality, attractiveness and efficiency of VET (€7.250.000). Under this priority the following actions, which address adult learning needs, are co-funded by the ESF⁸²:
- Evening Technical Schools (second chance VET): expansion and creation of more flexible programmes to accommodate the needs of the adult population
- PSIVET: expansion and equalization with level 5 of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF)
- New Modern Apprenticeship: expansion (€6.000.000)
- Development and implementation of the validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

Regarding funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)⁸³, the latest report (September 2016) states that from the €89 million that were paid to Cyprus for urban regeneration and social infrastructure only 2% went for social infrastructure investment, especially education-oriented buildings and equipment. No special reference is made to adult education.

4.3.2. EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) provided as part of the 2007-2013 financial framework

The ESF has been a major partner in co-funding of previous adult educational reforms. During the period 2007-2013, ESF was the main founder of the programme called Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion, which had a total cost of €140,9ml including €119,8ml co-financed by the ESF⁸⁴. For the 2007-2013 period, the ESF co-funded the following projects:

- Scheme for the improvement of the employability of the unemployed
- Scheme for the improvement of the employability of inactive women

⁸⁰ <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?catId=576&langId=en&pay=CY>

⁸¹ DG EPCD (n.a.) Annual Implementation Report (2015). Available at: http://www.structuralfunds.org.cy/uploadfiles/Apasxolisi_AnthropinoiPoroi/EKTHESI_AKSIOLOGISIS_PAN_final_NEW.pdf. [accessed 06/10/2016]

⁸² Strategic Planning for VET (MOEC). Available at: www.moec.gov.cy [accessed 05/09/2016]

⁸³ EC (Sept. 2016). Synthesis report-Ex post evaluation of Cohesion Policy programmes 2007-2013, focusing on the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the Cohesion Fund (CF) Available at: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docgener/evaluation/pdf/expost2013/wp1_cy_report_en.pdf [accessed 20/08/2016]

⁸⁴ DG EPCD, (2017). Operational programme "Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion 2007-2013 – Final Report". Available at: <http://www.structuralfunds.org.cy/uploadfiles/FINAL%20REPORT%20ESF%20290317.pdf> [accessed: 30/09/2017]

- Scheme for the job placement of unemployed young tertiary education graduates, for the acquisition of work experience in enterprises / organisations
- The New Modern Apprenticeship scheme
- Courses for unemployed persons in foreign languages (i.e., in English) and in the use of ICT
- The System of Vocational Qualifications.

Additionally, public adult learning provisions absorbed national funds for their operational needs during this period (as seen in section 5.1).

4.4. Effectiveness of investment

The programming period 2007-2013 coincided with the beginning of the recession globally and locally. Under these conditions, the plan of operation went through two amendments during the materialization phase in order to serve the newly emerging needs. According to the final report prepared by the DG EPCD⁸⁵, the activities under the axis "Promotion of Lifelong Learning through upgrading of education and training systems" during the period 2007-2015 yielded the following results:

- Relatively satisfactory progress of the implementation of the New Modern Apprenticeship scheme. The initial target of 200 students was partially met with 175 students in 2015
- Satisfactory progress of the implementation of the project "In-service training of secondary education teachers". In terms of participation, the initial target was 4.000 participants and the participants in 2015 were 4.161
- Successful development of two VET structures: of the Limassol Evening Technical School and the post-secondary institutions of VET. The initial target for participation was set at 680 learners and in 2015 the learners were 734
- Relatively satisfactory progress of implementation of the project System of Vocational Qualifications through the development of 67 standards until 2015 against the 70 that were the initial target.
- successful implementation of six yearly programmes of the project "Secondary teachers' pre-service training" with 1.981 participants until 2013.

Furthermore, under the objective "Increasing female labour force participation and employability", 2.279 women participated in training programmes against the initial target of 2.000 participants. In addition, various other projects were implemented under the priority axis "Expansion of the labour market and social cohesion". Until 2015, 28.000 persons, among them participants from vulnerable social groups (women, the unemployed, young unemployed, migrants), participated in various training schemes.

According to the ESF final report⁸⁶ on achievements for the period 2007-2013, the number of participants in a range of different interventions (i.e., training for the employed and

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ EC (2014), ESF Expert Evaluation Network -Final synthesis report: Main ESF achievements, 2007-2013. Available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf/BlobServlet?docId=452&langId=en> [accessed 04/09/2016]

unemployed, adult basic education) revealed that the percentage of low qualified adults who participated in adult learning activities remained low.

Despite the partial recovery of the economy, core challenges remain similar. Consequently, current investments serve objectives similar to those of the previous programming period, focusing mainly on the improvement of the employability of the disadvantaged groups, enhancing social cohesion and improving VET provisions.

5. ASSESSMENT OF THE EXISTING POLICY

The following sub-sections assess the existing policy through the lens of the six key success factors for effective adult learning policy that have been identified in a recent study.⁸⁷

5.1. Develop learners' interest in learning

A major challenge for Cyprus has been the increase of participation levels in adult education and the improvement and attractiveness of the programmes offered. Although there is a major reform in progress focused mainly on young people's education and training, this has not been accompanied by corresponding counselling provisions. There is a lack of targeted action towards the delivery of individualised guidance to social groups that are in need of more of this kind of support, namely young and older unemployed people, NEETs, and disadvantaged learners. Some activities for raising awareness about the provision of adult education took place under the "Renewed European agenda of adult education 2012-2014"⁸⁸, but these were fragmentary and did not achieve any long-term impact.

The challenge is even bigger regarding hard-to-reach populations, such as those who are not in education, employment or training (NEETs), and older and low qualified adults. The operation of NMA is still not an attractive option for young people, perhaps due to the predominating cultural attitude according to which apprenticeship schemes have lower educational status. Although, the provision of NMA went through a recent reform, it seems that the adopted measures did not have any effect on the general low status that the previous Apprenticeship Scheme had in the mind of the general public. The MOEC needs to offer better motivation to young people, especially to early school leavers and the low skilled, combined with better guidance in order to attract more learners into this educational pathway.

The NMA and the VET in general terms are characterized by low prestige in the Cypriot culture, and they are associated in the public mind with low academic performance or outright academic failure. In this context, the MOEC and the relevant counselling services need to raise awareness of the benefits and the potential positive outcomes of the two structures as a means for increasing participation.

In addition, the absence of skills accreditation mechanisms - the NQF and the mechanism for the validation of formal, non-formal and informal learning - is another deficiency in the effort to enhance participation. Ensuring the recognition of prior learning qualifications

⁸⁷ Key success factors, indicating the strength of evidence (available in all EU languages): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-tool/key-success-factors>; Study "An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe" by EC (2015): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final-report-20150817-en.pdf>

⁸⁸ MOEC, (2012). Lifelong learning programme – Action plan. Available at: http://www.moec.gov.cy/aethee/schedio_drasis/2012_2014/schedio_drasis_2012_14.pdf [accessed: 18/08/2017]

might motivate adults – especially low qualified adults - to certify their skills and those competencies gained through non-formal and informal learning and to re-enter education.

Additionally, most of the adult educational provisions are developed and implemented using top-down approaches, where the MOEC or other stakeholders execute the pivotal decisions regarding the development of learning courses. Consequently, there arises a need for building social synergies with local communities, local enterprises and the learners in order to develop provisions and courses that meet the requirements of the learners and their communities.

5.2. Increase employers' investment in learning

The HRDA uses tax monies from the human resource development levy of approximately 0,5% on the Cypriot payroll to subsidize up to 80% of the cost of eligible training programmes proposed by business enterprises. Despite these efforts, there is still a need for stronger engagement of the private sector, especially of business enterprises and employers, with training activities. In line with this demand is the need for investment on the part of employers for the training and upskilling of their workforces. Although the HRDA provides various pathways for employers' investment in learning, there is no engagement of employers in other forms of education, such as adult basic skills education.

Additionally, the New Modern Apprenticeship scheme, although it promotes the provision of work-based learning, is not an attractive option for most young adults.

5.3. Improve equality of access for all

Nevertheless, there is a gap in provision and planned reforms targeting at-risk populations, as well as in provision for non-vocational adult education. The PIAAC survey recorded a high number of low-skilled adults (ISCED 0-2) and adults with low proficiency in basic skills. There is also evidence from low-scale local research⁸⁹ demonstrating the need for targeted actions towards empowering low qualified adults through the enhancement of their basic skills. The majority of current policy reforms are focused on VET, and there is a paucity of reforms aimed at addressing the need for adult basic education.

5.4. Deliver learning that is relevant

Another challenge for adult education in Cyprus is the need to bridge the gap between the world of education and training and the real world of work. The National Lifelong Learning Strategy for 2014-2020 focuses on the promotion of vocational education and training especially targeted at young adults. The implemented and planned developments and reforms are a serious step towards combating skills mismatch and youth unemployment.

⁸⁹Papaioannou, E. (2016). Empowerment of adults through second chance education: a case study, Nicosia: Open University of Cyprus (unpublished thesis).

The HRDA has taken some important steps by providing funding to enterprises and employees in order to participate in training activities. Another work-based learning path is that of the PSIVET where work-based learning is a compulsory component. Furthermore, the MOEC, with co-funding from the ESF, offers provisions for work-based learning for low qualified young individuals through the NMA apprenticeship scheme.

Significant developments and reforms have been made as regards the facilitation of labour market needs. The HRDA is promoting research activities (skills forecasting) for understanding and harmonising the supply of skills with the needs of the economy. The study programmes offered by the PSIVET are also flexible and are adjusted yearly to the demands of the economy. As of the previous academic year (2016-2017), the PSIVET functioned as a Public School of Tertiary Education providing opportunity for the graduates to continue their education in other tertiary educational institutions. This development adds extra motivation for the learners and enhances learning mobility.

On the other hand, there is not much activity targeted at the identification and understanding of learners' needs. Most of the programmes offered in formal adult education, especially those offering second-chance education to low educated adults (i.e., Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums, Evening Technical Schools), do not use tools for assessing the learners' needs and adjusting to them. In contrast, their curricula and their operational framework are directly imposed by MOEC, leaving little opportunity for adjustments. Additionally, most of the adult educational programmes (with the exception of the Open University of Cyprus and latterly some private universities) do not offer any form of e-learning or distance learning; these are usually well-suited to the lives of adults and enhance the attractiveness of the programmes.

5.5. Deliver learning that is of high quality

A framework for the professional development of school teachers (pre-primary, primary, secondary) have been set up as a response for providing learning at schools that it is of a high quality. On the contrary, the professional development of adult educators and trainers in other settings (Evening Gymnasium-Lyceum, Open Schools, Adult Education Centres) is still very limited and fragmented.

5.6. Ensure coherent policy

What is still missing from the overall system is a mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the quality of the programmes offered in different educational settings. The dispersion of adult education programmes under different Department (i.e., the Adult Education Centres administered under the Department of Primary Education, the Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums run by the Department of Secondary Education) and bodies (MOEC, HRDA), in the absence of an over-arching Department of Adult Education, does not ensure the quality of the programmes. Furthermore, other challenges regarding the quality of adult education include limited research activities at a local level and the limited expertise of one of the main providers of adult educational programmes (MOEC).

6. STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

6.1. Strengths

In Cyprus, a lot of adult educational programmes were previously out-dated (for example, the Evening Gymnasium-Lyceums and Technical Schools, the Apprenticeship Schemes). Over the past few years, and under the pressure from the current economic crisis, major efforts and important progress have been made to adapt the adult education programmes to the current situation. The implementation of reforms towards the enhancement of VET (i.e., the creation of PSIVET), the modernisation of out-dated adult education schemes (i.e., NMA), and the inter-connection or linking of education to the labour market are some indicators of improvement in terms of the programmes' efficiency. In the process of adaptation, the HRDA is playing a significantly positive role. Furthermore, at the moment there is an on-going effort made on behalf of the MOEC for the reform of the operational framework and the curriculum in Evening Gymnasium-Lyceums and Technical Schools.

Another strength of the adult educational system is the fact that most of the programmes, either funded from local sources or co-funded by EU sources, are offered free-of-charge or at a low learner cost. This factor creates an open-access adult educational system which offers equal opportunities to all. Although the participation in lifelong learning programmes is still low, free-of-charge courses function as an extra motivation and incentive for participation.

In Cyprus, although there are not many choices regarding the provision of formal general adult education, at the same time there exists a range of options for non-formal adult education programmes. An important structure is that of the Adult Education Centres⁹⁰ which provide the opportunity to all adults – irrespective of their educational attainments – to develop their skills through various interdisciplinary courses. Adult Education Centres (AEC) are the most popular structure for adult education on the island. During the academic year 2013-14, 420 AECs were operating, serving 26.000 adult learners⁹¹.

6.2. Weaknesses

A major weakness of adult education in Cyprus is the fragmentation of provisions, of the reforms made and the developments proposed, due to the absence of a Department of Adult Education in the MOEC. Although this might appear in other European countries, the challenge here is to overcome the absence of a central body that could undertake the role of a co-ordinator. The lack of co-ordination leads to inevitable contradictions in decisions and reforms, causes delays in the implementation of reforms, and hinders the exchange of information and data as well as the overall systematisation of efforts in the field.

⁹⁰ See: <http://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/en/index.html> [accessed 08/08/2016]

⁹¹ MOEC (2015). Annual Report - 2014. Available at: http://www.moec.gov.cy/etisia-ekthesi/pdf/annual_report_2014_gr.pdf. [accessed 03/10/2016]

At the moment, adult education is not as inclusive as it should have been in facilitating the learning needs of the entire population. Undoubtedly, the upgrading of the VET represents a positive development, but there has been a shortage of policies and provisions targeting other vulnerable populations, especially the low-skilled adults. There is a need for establishing focused policies and developments targeting the enhancement of basic skills (literacy, numeracy, digital skills) within the adult population.

Furthermore, another significant weakness is the absence of quality assurance mechanisms and the continuous training and development of the adult educators. With the exception of some important improvements in the VET sector, there is a lack of targeted training in the other provisions. The corresponding absence of a comprehensive law that systematizes adult education and the centralized and bureaucratic nature of the Cypriot educational system are additional shortcomings that hinder the provision of high quality adult education programmes. These deficiencies have an inevitable negative impact on the overall quality of the programmes provided. It is, additionally, reflected in the poor educational outcomes Cyprus registers despite its high expenditure on education.

7. FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED

In recent years, Cyprus has experienced a reconstruction of the adult educational sector and especially of the VET. Nevertheless, during upcoming years this restructuring must be intensified in order to address current and contemporary challenges. Orientation of future policy developments must focus on:

- Skills mismatch
- Linkage of the vet to employment
- Improvement of adult education basic skills
- Systematization of the adult educational field

The National Strategy of Lifelong Learning 2014-2020 is oriented towards updating and expanding VET provisions in an effort to combat unemployment and the skills mismatch phenomenon. Although developments and reforms have taken place in the VET sector, there is still the need for stronger bridging between education and training and the everyday world of paid work. Work-based learning is good practice towards realising this imperative. The setup of synergies between education providers and private enterprises and industries will facilitate the creation of a more skilful workforce, and this will have the effect of narrowing the gap between active demand and the supply of skills. Policy reforms can regulate the offer of stronger incentives given to industries and enterprises in order to support and co-operate with VET programmes. Additionally, there is a pressing need for offering better educational and training opportunities to at-risk populations such as the NEETs and the long-term unemployed.

At the level of general adult education, there is a gap in the policy reforms regarding the appropriate provisions for addressing the low basic skills of the adult population. Therefore, new provisions and modernisation of the current institutions (Evening Schools, Institutes of Further Education, Adult Education Centres) must become a priority. The adoption of new educational approaches, such as the incorporation or blending of on-line learning, or the validation of formal and non-formal learning, can offer new motivation for participation to adults.

For the enhancement of adult education's efficacy in all levels, it is obvious that the current context in which it is operating is insufficient. Consequently, radical reforms are needed aiming at the modernization of the field. Particular issues that are connected to adult education and need to be addressed are:

Governance framework: a major challenge for adult education is the planning and implementation of a special Directorate of Adult Education and Lifelong Learning under the aegis of the MOEC. The Directorate is an opportunity for the creation of a group of adult education experts which will lead to the promotion of reforms and developments under a unified plan. This advancement will face the lack of expertise in adult education at the level of the MOEC which is the core player in adult education and lifelong learning.

Legislative framework: there is a need for the establishment of a legislative framework that will define and regulate the adult educational field and assure the quality of the

programmes. Currently there is no clear definition of who is to be considered an “adult educator/trainer”, and what their corresponding requirements should be. There is also a lack of quality training and professional development for a large proportion of the staff working in the adult educational sector. This reform would regulate the qualifications and the required training of the adult educational staff in a legislatively harmonised way.

Monitoring and available data: Adult education is characterized by a lack of monitoring mechanisms. There is a need for the development of a comprehensive monitoring mechanism through which data on provision, participation, dropout, and accreditation and learning outcomes in adult education can be made available. At the same time, this evolution would address the need for the creation of a database of information, data and literature on adult education on a local basis, and would further promote the systematisation of the field. Additionally, this reform will ease the creation of a monitoring mechanism to ensure better quality for adult learning programmes.

Quality of educational staff: Presently, the only institution that offers a certification for trainers working under the VET provisions is the HRDA through the certification of the trainers of vocational training. Besides that, no other mechanisms ensure the quality of the educational staff that are employed in other adult education provisions. In fact, the educational staff which is employed in many adult education agencies (i.e., Evening Gymnasiums-Lyceums, Evening Technical Schools, Adult Education Centres, Further Education Institutes, Open Schools) has no expertise in adult education or training as it comes from other levels of education (Primary, Secondary or Technical Secondary). In this context, the quality of the educational staff and the corresponding learning provided is not guaranteed. That being the case, the MOEC must take into consideration the need for the development of appropriate training for the educators and trainers within the adult education sector.

Certification and accreditation: At the moment there are certain gaps in the process of consistent certification and accreditation of adult education programmes. The bridging of the existing provisions to the National Qualification Framework and the mechanism of validation of formal and non-formal learning would provide a clearer picture of the objectives of all programmes. Additionally, these mechanisms would provide better motivation for adults to participate in lifelong learning programmes. The implementation of these two mechanisms would benefit adult educational structures and overall participation.

8. SUMMARY

Cyprus passed through a sharp recession during the period 2012-2015, and despite partial economic recovery it is still confronting major economic, educational and social challenges. Under these circumstances, the overall employment level has dropped from 73,4% in 2011 to 67,9% in 2015 with a slight increase to 68,8% in 2016 (EU average: 71,1%), although it is still behind the national target of 75-77%. According to the latest statistics (2017)⁹², the unemployment rate for the age group 15-24 is 25,3%, and for the age group 25-64 it is 9,4%. Among the age group 15-24 years the percentage for long-term unemployment (12+ months) is up to 46,2%. While unemployment follows a decreasing trend, it still remains high, especially among young people.

Cyprus maintains relatively high expenditure on education, which was up to 11,8% of the general government expenditure in 2014. Notwithstanding, Cyprus records a low level of basic skills attainment among the adult population according to the PIAAC survey. Additionally, it falls behind the EU average of 10,7% for adult participation in lifelong learning, with participation standing at 7,5% for the year 2015. Nonetheless, Cyprus has met the EU2020 target of less than 10% early school leavers with a percentage of 7,7% in 2016.

The attention attributed to the field of adult education by the State is an indicator of the significant role that adult education has to play, especially in helping to overcome the current financial crisis and the consequent challenges such as unemployment, skills mismatch and adults' low level of basic skills. The National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020 is an important step toward addressing key challenges in the field of adult education and lifelong learning, although the implementation of planned reforms is not always either timely or on time. Under the National Reform Programme, some important policy reforms took place: the establishment of the National Committee for Lifelong Learning, the elaboration of the Strategic Plan for the system of technical and vocational education and training 2014-2020, the upgrade of the status of PSIVET from a post-secondary institution to a Public School of Tertiary Education, and the reform of the apprenticeship scheme.

Nevertheless, there are still challenges that need to be addressed. Prevailing skills mismatch needs to be confronted by strengthening the relevance of training programmes and apprenticeship schemes to the labour market needs. VET has a critical role to play by providing flexible and attractive programmes for the adult population and by offering desirable incentives to job seekers to encourage them to take up training programmes.

Although important advancements have been adopted at the level of VET, the general adult learning structures are still out-dated. As such, they are unable to face the shortage of basic skills among the adult population; this has an intrinsic negative impact on their employability and overall development. The lack of targeted provisions for addressing the

⁹² CyStat, (2017). Labour Force Survey 2017. Available at: [http://www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/4742453464F6E817C22578BC0030FED3/\\$file/LAB-LFS-Q217-EL-200917.xls?OpenElement](http://www.cystat.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/4742453464F6E817C22578BC0030FED3/$file/LAB-LFS-Q217-EL-200917.xls?OpenElement) [accessed: 30/09/2017]

needs of vulnerable adult groups, such as older adults, low qualified and those lacking basic skills, is a critical gap in the context of the NRP. Taking into consideration the low participation rate of adults – especially of the low-qualified – in lifelong learning programmes, the current provisions seem incapable of attracting these populations. Therefore, new provisions and modernisation of the current institutions (Evening Schools, Institutes of Further Education and Adult Education Centres) must become a priority. The adoption of new educational approaches including the incorporation of blended or online learning, and the validation of formal and non-formal learning, can offer new motivation for participation to adults.

Furthermore, the finalization of the National Qualification Framework and the mechanism of validation of formal and in-formal learning would support the overall effort for the systematization of the field of adult education in Cyprus. These two mechanisms are expected to increase the transparency of qualification, support learners' mobility between different sectors, and set standards regarding learning outcomes, factors that are currently missing from Cyprus' educational system.

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https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Cyprus:Validation_of_Non-formal_and_Informal_Learning

<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/mogr/en/general-information>

<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/pr/en/free-universities>

ANNEXES

Annex 1: List of adopted legal acts, strategies, laws

Name	Date of adoption	Short description of content
National Strategy of Lifelong Learning 2014-2020	18/06/2014	<p>National Strategy of Lifelong Learning 2014-2020 has set four priorities as a guideline of future act in lifelong learning:</p> <p>Improving access to lifelong learning for all and recognising learning outcomes.</p> <p>Improving quality and efficiency of education and training</p> <p>Improving employability by promoting entry and re-entry to the labour market</p> <p>Promoting research and development to support lifelong learning.</p>
Establishment of the National Committee for Lifelong Learning	27/05/2015	The Committee is comprised of the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, the Human Resource Development Authority and the Cyprus Productivity Centre. It is entitled to coordinate the implementation of the newly initiated National Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020 and the relevant associated bodies.
Establishment of the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (Ministers' Committee decision)	29/10/2015	The Agency is expected to monitor and ensure the quality of Tertiary Education in Cyprus.
Upgrading of PSIVET from post-	21/04/2016	The PSIVET has become the first VET structure awarded the level of Public Schools of Tertiary

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secondary non-tertiary schools to public School of Tertiary Education (Ministers' Committee decision)		Education. They offer vocational education and training to adults.
Strategic Plan for the system of technical and vocational education and training 2015-2020 (Ministers' Committee decision)	15/04/2015	The plan was prepared by the department of secondary technical and vocational education (STVE) of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The planning includes short-term and long-term goals in an effort to enhance the attractiveness and the quality of the VET programmes
New Modern Apprenticeship (Ministers' Committee decision)	08/2015	NMA is a scheme that provides the opportunity for young persons aged 14 to 21, who have not graduated from upper secondary education, to attend one of the two apprenticeship level programmes (preparatory or core). The new scheme is based on the idea of 'learning by doing' and it combines both training at school and practical training at enterprise-based locations.
National Action Plan for Youth Employment (Ministers' Committee decision)	12/2014	The action plan focuses on seven priorities, which include the implementation of the EU Youth Guarantee, monitoring and assessment of the policies on the employment market, enforcement of the effectiveness of the employment services, promotion of small and medium sized enterprises, prevention measures against dropping out of school, and policies to increase youth inclusion in the job market.

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Annex 2: Inventory of policy interventions

Name of intervention	Source (with hyperlink)	Budget	Outputs	Which of the 6 building blocks for successful adult learning policies does it target? (tick all relevant)						Further details/description (purpose, duration, responsible entity, etc.)
				Fosters learners' interest in learning	Employers' investment in learning	Improve equity of access for all	Learning that is relevant	High quality learning	Coherent policy	
Strategic Plan for the system of technical and vocational education and training 2015-2020	http://www.refernet.org.cy/images/media/assetfile E%95%CE%95.pdf				✓	✓	✓		✓	The Strategy will be implemented until 2020 and it provides the main guidelines for adult education.

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New Modern Apprenticeship	8/2015	n/a			✓	✓	✓			The NMA is an alternative educational pathway for those at risk of early school leaving. Furthermore, it is oriented to meet the needs of the labour market and to enable young adults to access desirable occupations.
Reform of Evening Adult and Technical Schools			n/a	✓		✓				At the moment there is an ongoing negotiation among the MOEC, stakeholders, policy makers, experts and the trade union for the development of a strategic plan aiming in upgrading the educational status of second chance schools (Evening Adult and Technical schools)

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New system of teachers' Professional Learning	http://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1580&Itemid=456&lang=en			✓			✓	✓	✓	The MOEC is implementing a new system for teachers' professional development and learning with the support of the CPI. A framework for the professional development of school teachers (pre-primary, primary, secondary) have been set up as a response for providing learning at schools that it is of a high quality.
HRDA strategic plan	http://www.hrdauth.org.cy/					✓		✓		The HRDA has established a variety of programmes targeting the upskilling of the active and 'inactive' populations. As part of its mission, the HRDA offers or

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										finances training programmes such as The Training of secondary and tertiary education graduates and The Schemes for the Improvement of the Employability of the Unemployed and Economically Inactive Women:
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