

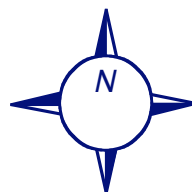
# Achieving the Lisbon Goal:

The Contribution of Vocational Education and Training Systems

# Country Report: Cyprus

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This report is one of a series of European country reports. It has been written to support a larger report: Achieving the Lisbon Goal: the contribution of VET, prepared by the Lisbon-to-Copenhagen-to-Maastricht Consortium for the European Commission. This report is not intended as an official view. But rather independent insight into specific aspects of National VET systems in Europe.



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#### Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author and do not represent those of the European Commission.

## List of Acronyms

CCCI	Cyprus Chamber of Commerce & Industry
CFP	Community Support Framework
COU	Cyprus Open University
CPC	Cyprus Productivity Centre
CVT	Continuing Vocational Training
EL	<i>Eniaio Lykeio</i> – Unified Lyceum
ENQA	European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ETF	European Training Foundation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HRDA	Human Resources Development Authority
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MTEE	<i>Mesi Techniki Eppagelmatiki Ekpaidefsi</i> – Secondary Technical Professional Education
PI	Pedagogical Institute
SEKAP	Council on Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies
SETE	Advisory Committee of Tertiary Education
UASA	University of Applied Sciences and Arts

## 1. Introduction

All references in this report refer to the Government of Cyprus and the Republic of Cyprus. This report does not address the area of Cyprus under Turkish occupation.

The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for managing public education, including secondary and tertiary education. It shares responsibility for the apprenticeship system with the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. Several other organisations are involved in VET, including the Human Resources Development Authority (HRDA), which provides continuing vocational training; the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC), which provides training to artisans and manual trades; the Adult Learning Centres; and others. The Planning Bureau, part of the Government of Cyprus, develops overall strategic planning at the national level: the recent Strategic Plan 2004-2006 confirms the critical role of VET in national development, and establishes key objectives and resources for the sector.

Education is compulsory for primary and secondary schooling, to the age of 15. Primary education (*Dimotiki scholi*) and secondary education (*Gymnasio*) offer general education. At the end of *Gymnasio*, students can choose to enter upper secondary education, which is divided between general education (the *Eniaio Lykeio – Unified Lyceum*) or technical education (*Mesi Techniki Ekpaidefsi-MTEE*). Students may also opt out of upper secondary and take up apprenticeships between the ages of 14 and 16. Cyprus currently has 11 technical educational institutes and is in the process of building three more. There have been significant reforms of upper secondary education between 1997 and 2001 which has brought about major changes in curricula, teaching methods, resources, mobility and other key aspects. Despite this, there is little mobility between general and technical education, and the latter still suffers from a negative perception in society, where a clear preference for higher education (university) exists.

Tertiary education has recently been expanded in Cyprus with the foundation of the University of Cyprus (in 1989), the Cyprus Open University (2001), the Technical University of Cyprus (2003) and other institutions. Vocational streams exist within institutes such as the Higher National Institute, the Higher Hotel School, and others, which will eventually be integrated into the Technical University. Access to tertiary education is open to graduates of both upper secondary institutions as well as apprentices. A wide range of other tertiary and CVET providers exist, including the HRDA, CPC and others. Cyprus is also in the process of developing its first Lifelong Learning Strategy.

The Labour Forecast 2004-2005 projects an addition of 3,687 places of employment in 2004, and a further 3,712 places in 2005. The majority of new places is seen in the tertiary sector, particularly in trade, automotive repair, consumer products, tourism and domestic help. Employment in the economy has undergone a paradigm shift in activity: the tertiary sector has grown significantly in recent years, and in 2005 is projected to account for 71.5% of employment:

Year	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
2003	7.9%	21.2%	70.9%

2004	7.9%	20.9%	71.2%
2005	7.8%	20.7%	71.5%

HRDA Employment Forecasts Cyprus 2004-2005

In 1990, in contrast, the relative shares were: primary sector: 14%; secondary sector: 29%; tertiary sector: 57%. Total employment in 2003 was 327,094, while the employment rate of economically-active inhabitants was 69.2%. The unemployment rate was 4.1% in 2003.

Indicator, 2003	Total	Male	Female
Activity rate* (%)	72.2	82.1	63.1
Employment (000's)	327,094	181,606	145,487
Employment Share-Gender (%)	(100%)	(56%)	(44%)
Employment rate**	69.2	78.8	60.2
Unemployment rate***	4.1	3.8	4.6

\*[(employed+unemployed, 15-64 years)/population, 15-64 years] (%)

CYSTAT, Labour

Statistics, 2004

\*\* (employed, 15-64 years/population, 15-64 years) (%)

\*\*\* (unemployed/labour force) (%)

Educational Attainment is high: a total of 14.3% of the population (15-64) have a university degree, while a further 10.8% have a tertiary degree.

Attainment Indicator, 2001	Total	Males	Females
Students in Tertiary Education (in Cyprus and Abroad)	28,809	12,974	15,835
% of Population (aged 15-64) with a University degree (Census 2001)	14.3	15.9	12.8
% Distribution of Population (aged 15-64) by Level of Education (Census 2001)			
Never attended school	0.6	0.5	0.7
Not completed primary	2.5	1.6	3.4
Primary	17.5	16.5	18.3
Gymnasium	14.6	15.5	13.7
Lyceum	39.6	41.4	37.9
Third-level (non-university)	10.8	8.5	13.1
University	14.3	15.9	12.8
Not stated	0.1	0.1	0.1

Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
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CYSTAT Statistical Indicators for Gender Comparison in Cyprus, 2004

In the past, imbalances in the labour market were solved mainly through the use of foreign labour on a temporary basis. In 2003, foreign workers accounted for 11.7% of the total workforce<sup>1</sup>. The sectors with acute qualitative imbalances are hotels and restaurants, manufacturing and the wholesale and retail trade, which employ a high percentage of foreigners and have high rates of unemployment. This indicates that the labour supply cannot be met from unemployed sources, and in fact is met through foreign workers.<sup>2</sup> Factors that account for the imbalances in the labour force include the small size of the workforce, the paradigm shift towards services, single market entry (deregulation/liberalisation), and technological changes. In addition, the traditional family nature of business is gradually changing towards a more professional labour force. Changing the quality and quantity of the workforce as well as improving flexibility and adaptability constitute critical factors for future growth.

The Planning Bureau identifies a number of development needs in the national human resources structure and VET system in the Strategic Plan 2004-2006, including:

- Quantitative and qualitative imbalances, between supply and demand in the labour market, seen in the hotels and restaurants segment, wholesale and retail trade, and construction.
- Weaknesses of the educational system to respond to labour market needs in a flexible way, in conjunction with the existence of deficiencies in the counselling and professional orientation system. Other weaknesses are observed in school buildings infrastructure and the teachers training in information technology skills. Another weakness constitutes the relatively limited possibilities available in Cyprus for tertiary education.
- Greater concentration of unemployment among the youth, women and older persons. The unemployment rate in these groups fluctuates at higher levels than the respective average. There is also low labour participation rate of persons with special needs. The participation rate amounts to merely 26% and is half the corresponding rate in the EU countries.
- Low utilisation of flexible forms of employment.
- Inadequate provision of care facilities to dependent persons (e.g. children, adults, disabled persons), thus hindering the entry of women into the labour market.
- Inadequate provision of support services, including counselling, to families with multiple problems (e.g. divorced families, violence in the family, single parent families).

These issues, together with the dramatic policy changes brought about by the harmonisation of national law with the *Acquis communautaire*, have created a new dynamic for change in Cyprus. The VET system will need to adapt further to meet the challenges of the new competitive environment. These reforms are already well

<sup>1</sup> CYSTAT Labour Force Survey 2003

<sup>2</sup> Wage rates, working conditions and seasonality all play a significant role in sectors such as hotels, restaurants and construction in Cyprus.

underway, and a critical issue will be sustainability in the post-accession environment, particularly given budgetary pressures as well as the impact of a potential reunification of the island.

## 2. Progress of national VET systems towards meeting the challenges of Lisbon

### 2.1 Strategies and barriers for improving IVET

*What strategies are being used to by government, social partners and providers etc. to achieve these objectives: (a) Raise the status of IVET? (b) Improve the attractiveness of IVET? (c) Increase the flexibility of IVET? (d) What are the main barriers to achieving these objectives?*

Cyprus implemented a major reform to the IVET system in the late 1990s, designed to improve the quality and supply of training and educational opportunities. The reform focused on the development of the two main institutions of IVET: the Unified Lyceums (EL) and the institutes of Technical and Professional Education (MTEE).

The Unified Lyceums (EL) institutions replace the former Lykeion Epilogis Mathimatou (LEM, or “Selected Studies Lyceum”, in which students chose between set study streams such as classical studies, mathematics and sciences, economics and mathematics, commercial and language studies. The ELs were specifically designed to take into account international changes in pedagogy and teaching, including the findings of the 1997 UNESCO study on the Cyprus Educational System. The curricula were reformed to improve both general and subject-specific learning as well as personal electives, and offered a more learner-centred basis of education.

Provisions were made for life-long learning and to prepare the student for an active life of citizenship and employment. The reforms enhanced elements such as critical thought, creativity and innovation, imagination, observation, cooperation, problem-solving, analytical skills, and evaluation skills. The method of teaching was changed to emphasize experiential and group learning, with the reduction of rote learning and memorization. Students are encouraged to learn through group- and student/teacher interaction, analysis, criticism, independent thought and creativity.

Several new curricular subjects were introduced, including languages (English and French were already offered; the range was broadened to include German, Spanish and Italian); ICT studies, environmental studies, tourism, technology and electives such as theatre, journalism, child-care, photography and others.

In addition, a series of changes was made in the management of the EL educational process and the institution. Reforms were undertaken to enhance and reinforce the position of Head of Studies, school libraries, teacher training, school facilities, special teaching, professional counselling and guidance, laboratories, class sizes, school computerisation and internet access, and others. A series of new initiatives and programmes were launched, including the programme “Creativity-Action-Social Contribution” (DDK) and “New Analytical Skills”. New methods of grading and student evaluation were introduced, while the role of teacher evaluation was strengthened. It is hoped that through these reforms, the average completion rates will rise from approximately 85% in 1995 to 90% in 2004.

The vocational stream was reformed following policy decisions made in September 2001. The MTEE institutions offer upper-secondary-level technical and vocational education as well as lifelong learning. Curricula were modernised, and additional options in ICT, technology, business studies and tourism studies were added. Budgeting of three new schools as well as maintenance and renovation of existing schools has been passed, while investment in ICT resources and teacher training have also been approved.

At the upper-secondary level, two tracks are established: the Theoretical and the Practical. Fields include mechanics, electronics, civil engineering & architecture, design, chemical technology, woodworking & furniture-making, fine arts, fashion, garments & leather goods, hairdressing, hydrology, services and hotel and tourist studies.

Enrolment in MTEEs is offered to those students that successfully complete the Third Class of Gymnasium (lower secondary). Horizontal mobility was strengthened; students can transfer between the MTEE and the ELs (and vice versa), while successful completion of the MTEE renders eligibility for higher education in Cyprus or Greece. School-industry links were strengthened with better-designed placements for students and teachers in Cypriot companies. Furthermore, the links between MTEEs and lifelong learning opportunities was strengthened by giving MTEE students the change of enrolling in the new Evening Technical Schools, which are in the process of being developed across Cyprus.

In addition to MTEE reform, the Apprenticeship System was also been reviewed. Responsibility for apprenticeships has been centralised and new curricula and training methods introduced, including the use of modular classes and the integration of ICT in learning. Three diplomas have been introduced: Certificate, Diploma, Higher Diploma. National occupational standards are in the process of being developed: a total of 5 standards (waiting, cooking, reception, construction and retailing) have been developed on a pilot basis, and work on further standards is ongoing. Links with European Pathways and Europass are being established to improve European mobility.

The links between the IVET system and CVET and LLL have been strengthened. The Open University of Cyprus has begun operations, with the Technical University of Cyprus has been ratified and is in the process of being established.

There continue to be barriers, however:

- Vocational education is still perceived as being of lower value than higher education. Despite reforms, there is still little horizontal mobility between vocational and academic streams.
- While work has begun on occupational standards, there is still no national vocational qualification and certification system.
- While social partners play a role in definition of occupational standards, the final decisions are still driven by the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- While work has begun on accreditation of prior learning and recognition of workplace learning, there is not an established system in place.

- Many of the vocational occupations continue to be perceived as “men’s work” (i.e. carpentry, welding, masonry): there continues to be a strong gender split between participation and completion in vocational training.
- A number of quantitative and qualitative weaknesses are identified in the VET system, including the need for closer alignment with the labour market, improvement of counselling and professional qualifications, teacher training, integration of ICT into learning, school facilities, and limited tertiary education possibilities.<sup>3</sup>

A number of future policies and initiatives are underway to address these barriers:

- The Planning Bureau’s Strategic Development Plan 2004-2006 as well as the Single Planning Document has confirmed the importance of VET and human capital in the continued development of Cyprus. Human resources development is seen as the key factor in maintaining and enhancing competitiveness. The Plan states, for instance “*Human Capital is the most important factor of production in Cyprus. Similarly, the rapid changes in telecommunications and information technology sectors, and the changes in production systems, the organisation of work and labour market needs, require the adaptation of the educational and training systems to the current needs of the labour market and of the information society, as well as the embedding of lifelong learning.*”<sup>4</sup> The Plan establishes the importance of issues such as inclusion, teacher training, ICT and learning, development of a vocational training system and qualifications, and others.
- There have already been initiatives launched by the Ministry of Education and Culture on Life-long Learning, teacher training, school reform and other areas.
- Investment in secondary school facilities as well as teacher training and evaluation are underway: the Pedagogical Institute is running a series of in-service as well as external teacher training courses.

It is highly likely that the system will be able to change to meet the demands of the Lisbon Agenda. A major further area should be the integration of social partners. Based on prior experience in VET and other projects in Cyprus, it is also highly likely that a greater effort in this regard will have to come from the social partners themselves, who at present are often fragmented in terms of representation and organisation, and who may not have the appropriate time and resources to fully participate.

## 2.2 Reducing the number of early school leavers

*How does your country relate to other countries in terms of the contribution to increasing or reducing the number of young people: (a) Who leave education or training at the earliest opportunity and with few or no recognised qualifications? (b) Who leave formal education with low levels of basic skills at age of 15?*

In 2002, Cyprus had a rate of 14% early school leavers in the 18-24 population who were not in education and training and who had completed only lower secondary education. This compares to an EU average of 18.5%, but is above the accession country average of 8.4%. Completion of secondary education is at 86.9%, as

<sup>3</sup> Planning Bureau. *Strategic Development Plan, 2004-2006*.

<sup>4</sup> Planning Bureau. *Strategic Development Plan 2004-2006*. p. 13.

opposed to an EU average of 76% and a combined EU+ACC average of 78.7%.<sup>5</sup> This estimate, however, rose to 15% in 2003.

Some 2,000 students leave the secondary school system every year. Of these, only approximately 400 students, mostly male, enter the apprenticeship system, which until recently did not lead to recognised qualifications, and had only low female participation. According to ETF<sup>6</sup>, the system is not responsive enough at the individual level, especially in terms of preventive actions against drop-out.

Reforms since the ETF Monograph have focussed on centralising apprenticeships and have introduced three diplomas (Certificate, Diploma, Higher Diploma). A total of five occupational qualifications and profiles have been introduced with the participation of social partners, and work is underway on additional ones.

Other alternatives exist: training is offered by the Cyprus Productivity Institute and the Higher Hotel Institute, although enrolment can only start from the age of 18. In the absence of an upper-secondary completion certificate, it is difficult to gain access to the Open University or the Technical University.

The Ministry's response has been to introduce measures aimed at reforming the apprenticeship and upper secondary educational institutions (as already described in Section 2.1). It is hoped that the completion rate will rise from 86% in 2002 to 90% the next few years. It is also necessary to develop a national vocational qualifications system, which includes accreditation for prior learning.

The Strategic Development Plan 2004-2006 recognises the need to raise completion rates, and resources have been budgeted for additional schools and the development of the national system for VET qualifications. Additional measures are being taken to improve tertiary education, as described in Section 2.3, below.

## 2.3 Increasing VET at tertiary level

*What steps are being taken to establish or improve technological and vocational qualifications at the tertiary (higher) educational level? Please refer in particular to any attempts to make pathways more flexible, and to introduce shorter post-secondary VET courses.*

The development and enhancement of tertiary education has long been identified as a critical national strategic priority. Both the Strategic Plan<sup>7</sup> as well as planning by the Ministry of Education and Culture have confirmed this principle, and a number of steps have been taken to improve tertiary education across all streams:

- The University of Cyprus was founded in 1989 and began operations in 1992.
- In the context of Life-long Learning, Cyprus established the Cyprus Open University (COU) in 2001. Funding has been granted, and the COU is expected to start options in September 2005 with the following departments: Degree programme in Hellenic Civilisation; Post-Graduate Programme in Administration of Health Services; Post-Graduate Programme in Pedagogic Science.

<sup>5</sup> European Commission. *Education and Training 2010: Success of the Lisbon Agenda Hinged on Urgent Reforms*. 2004.

<sup>6</sup> European Training Foundation. *Vocational Education and Training and Employment Services in Cyprus*. 2002.

<sup>7</sup> The 2004-2006 Strategic Plan sees Cyprus developing into a regional centre for higher education, and allocates resources for a number of new institutions to be developed as well as an upgrading of existing ones.

- The Technological University of Cyprus has been ratified by Parliament in December 2003. This university will offer tertiary studies, starting with the University of Applied Sciences and Arts (UASA). The following schools are foreseen: School of Technological Applications, School of Health Services, School of Administration and Economy, School of Geotechnical Sciences, School of Applied Arts and Communications. The Operation is expected in 2-3 years time, and is based on tertiary VET offered by European institutions such as Polytechnics, Fachhochschulen, the Greek TEIs, and others). UASA will also absorb the Higher Technical Institute, the Higher Hotel Institute, the School for Nursing, the Forestry College and possibly the Mediterranean Institute of Management of the Cyprus Productivity Centre.
- The Council on Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies (SEKAP) and various national laws between 1996 and 2004 govern the operation of private tertiary institutions. SEKAP has recognised Bachelor's degree programmes in private colleges as university degrees. Since 2000, the SEKAP accreditation process has resulted in a significant upgrading of curricula, facilities and teaching methods in the private sector. An Advisory Committee of Tertiary Education (SETE) as been established to advice the Ministry of Education on higher education. A number of Cypriot private institutions, such as the Cyprus Institute of International Management (CIIM) or Intercollege have become significant educational institutions in the tertiary sector.
- Plans are being developed for the development of the new University of Applied Sciences and Arts, the expansion of the Cyprus Open University and the expansion of the University of Cyprus.
- A study is being conducted to the establishment of a post-Lyceum Agricultural School.
- The Cyprus Productivity Centre offers a range of training programmes in building, electronics, telecommunications, auto mechanics, fashion design, welding, plumbing/central heating and other areas. Cooperation with the Human Resources Development Authority (HRDA) and the Planning Bureau for course offerings are being coordinated. The Productivity Centre also offers training of new entrants into the labour market, and is developing eLearning systems.
- Adult Learning Centres are run by the Ministry of Education in centres across Cyprus, and are seeing high enrolment figures. In the 2002-2003 academic year, some 18,348 adults attended classes in 230 centres staffed by 400 teachers.
- The Human Resources Development Authority (HRDA) offers a wide range of continuing vocational education and training services. These include customised corporate trainings, open trainings, as well as modular SME business development programmes.
- Professional organisations, such as the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the Federation of Employers and Industrialists organise training programmes on entrepreneurial and business skills. The Cyprus Institute of Technology offers a range of training relating to ICT and entrepreneurial skills.

In addition to supply, efforts have been made to make pathways shorter. Work is underway on developing a national vocational standards system. It is also easier to

switch between vocational and academic streams, although in practise this is rarely done.

As a result of these investments, Cyprus has a 54% enrolment ration for all students in higher education in 2001/2002. Of these, some 28% of students studied in Cyprus, while 26% studied internationally, largely in Greece, United Kingdom or the United States.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.4 Incentives for updating knowledge & skills

*What initiatives and measures are the following taking to motivate employees to update knowledge and skills? (a) Government (b) Employers (c) Other stakeholders. Please provide examples (if any) of the contribution of VET to successfully promoting inclusion*

A number of incentives and opportunities are offered to employees for skills development:

- The HRDA offers grants to companies and individuals for training participation. This can be either in the form of attendance at open training courses, or can include in-company or international training. However, a condition is usually that training has to be for enterprise personnel: this tends to restrict access to certain self-employed professions.
- Institutions such as the Institute of Nursing and others offer support grants to students participating in programmes.
- The Civil Service promotion code rewards academic achievement in addition to other factors (including length of employment).
- Both the civil service as well as enterprises are in general pre-disposed to support staff participation in training in terms of employee time.
- Participation in most Government institutions, including the University of Cyprus, is usually free of charge.

There have been problems identified in the participation of the unemployed. The Public Employment Services refer individuals to HRDF, but cannot sponsor the training of unemployed. Many of the Adult Training Centre or Productivity Centre training schemes are often perceived as being gender-restrictive or gender-stereotyped, which may prevent take-up. The question of promoting inclusion has been specifically identified by the Planning Bureau as a critical strategic priority for 2004-2006.

## 2.5 Meeting the challenges of an aging population

*Please identify any innovations and initiatives in VET that are being introduced to encourage older people (55+) to remain at work longer and to participate in training and other forms of lifelong learning.*

Cyprus has low rates of participation in Lifelong Learning. Based on the 2002 Labour Market Survey, only 3.7% of the population sampled participated in LLL courses. The Ministry of Education is in the process of drafting a National Strategy for Life-long

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<sup>8</sup> CYSTAT. *Education Statistics*. 2004.

Learning based on the European Commission's Memorandum on Lifelong Learning. A policy conference was organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture in Nicosia in 2003 and 2004 towards this end. Cyprus has also invested in a number of institutions designed to increase lifelong learning opportunities, including:

- Adult Education Centres: while these centres have operated since 1960, today training has been extended to a network of 230 centres in both urban and rural areas. In the 2002-2003 year, some 18,348 adults attended classes.
- The HRDA, CPC, and other institutions are offering a large variety of training courses.
- The Cyprus Open University has been founded; the Technical University is in the process of being established.

It is highly likely that besides LLL strategies and opportunities, measures will have to be taken to address the none-VET issues that affect employment of older people. For instance, the retirement age of 62 is low compared to other EU countries, and many people choose an early retirement at 60. Furthermore, it is highly likely that remuneration in the private sector will have to be made more competitive, while changes to the traditional, family-oriented management style of many companies will have to change. There are indications that this process is already underway.

## 2.6 Effectiveness and efficiency of VET

- a. *In the current the national debate, how effective is the system of VET perceived to be? (Is the VET route effective in fostering individual careers, self-confidence and personal identity? Benefits of training for employers? Is the VET route effective in combating youth unemployment?)*
- b. *In the current national debate, is the VET system seen as offering efficiency/ good value for money? (These questions are given as examples and need not all be answered: Who is investing in VET - the state, the employers, and individuals – and what are their benefits? How can we make the best use of existing resources: Better balance between practical and theoretical training, accreditation of prior learning, raising completion rates, etc.? Improving management and organisation of VET?)*
- c. *What are the main trends in terms of investment in VET (Public investment? Incentives to employers as well as to individuals to invest more? Public-private partnerships?)*

VET is widely perceived to be of critical importance in the national debate. The Planning Bureau's National Strategy 2004-2006 emphasizes the critical aspect of human resources development, which is confirmed in the Single Planning Document and a number of other policies and strategic action plans. This commitment is confirmed not only in policy planning, but in the delivery of resources. In 2000 public expenditure on education was estimated at 5.6% of GDP, well above the EU-15 average of 4.94% and the EU-25 average of 4.94%. The 2001 expenditure was reported by CYSTAT at 6.3%, while 2002 expenditure is projected at 6.4%.<sup>9</sup> Private expenditure on education was estimated at 3.2% of GDP in 1998, giving Cyprus one of the highest OECD averages for expenditure.<sup>10</sup>

Employers pay a levy on payroll of 0.5% to the HRDA, which is used to fund continuing vocational training. In addition to this, it is estimated that employers spend

<sup>9</sup> CYSTAT *Educational Statistics*, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> European Training Foundation. *Vocational Education and Training and Employment Services in Cyprus*. 2002.

an additional 1 – 1.5% of payroll on further training. Expenditure on public employment services, in contrast, is relatively low, at 0.01% of GDP.

The main trends in investment in VET include:

- The growth of “branded” management development programmes, such as those offered by CIIM, CTL College, Intercollege and others. These are often taught based on curricula co-developed or licensed from international universities (particularly the UK) as well as by international faculty. The quality and attendance rate for private management education has increased significantly in recent years.
- The growth of training providers and absorption of training and consultancy funds offered by the HRDA, the Institute of Technology and a range of other semi-governmental organisations. Training has become a regular part of business life in Cyprus, particularly at the management level or in business subjects.
- The increase in technical vocational education brought about by new technologies as well as regulatory requirements. New technologies include the impact of ecommerce and ICT applications such as enterprise resource planning platforms or specialised accountancy software. The impact of regulatory change brought about by the *Acquis communautaire* harmonisation and compliance has been wide-reaching in Cyprus. Nearly all technical professions have had to implement new quality and hygienic assurance systems, comply with new directive or common market policies, etc.
- Increase in technical vocational education and training from various sectoral associations. The Pancyriot Farmers Association, for instance, has opened up a training centre specialising in Common Market regulations and new technologies. The Association of Cyprus Travel Agents has implemented a number of training programmes for its members on issues such as ecommerce, online reservation systems, VAT applications, and others.
- The attraction of non-Cypriot students into the Cypriot VET system. A professional consultation of Intercollege and CTL College by this consultant, for instance, revealed a relatively high enrolment of Russian and Chinese students. Cyprus is on its way to becoming a regional educational centre, and this has been actively promoted by Government.
- The strong partnership between the public and private sectors is a defining characteristic of the Cypriot system. On the one hand, the public sector has been relatively efficient in designing and implementing reforms: key institutions, such as the University of Cyprus or the COU, have been developed and implemented at relatively fast rates. On the other hand, the public sector has been unusually pragmatic and flexible in terms of key decisions, such as the role of private education. Even in the absence of a defining law on degree equivalency, for instance, a viable alternative was found to recognise degrees. The participation of public sector staff in private sector training and educational programmes is also quite positive.

There is a broad agreement between social partners and the government on the need to achieve higher rates of educational attainment, reduce early school leavers, achieve gender mainstreaming and social inclusion and meet the other requirements of the Lisbon Agenda. This agreement has already been tested in practise in the

often-difficult run-up to accession, when Cyprus led the rate of harmonisation with the *Acquis* in terms of closing of various chapters. It is highly likely that with the completion of accession, attention will turn to further policy implementation and development.

### 3. Theme 2: Innovation in Teaching and Learning

#### 3.1 Improvements in learning processes and contents

*Please identify innovation in teaching and learning methods and contents for VET. (For example, developments towards student-centred learning styles; a possible shift from content/subject based learning to competences/outcomes; more problem- and project-based pedagogy, and contextualised work-based learning processes and contents.)*

Extensive innovations in the learning process and content have been brought about. At the upper-secondary level, the reforms of the EL and MTEE institutions has been based on internationally-accepted educational and pedagogical objectives (see Section 2.1). Aspects such as individual learning, contextualised learning and project-based learning have all been implemented.

At the tertiary level, these approaches have been traditionally incorporated into the learning process. The recent reforms towards the development and expansion of vocational training centres are expected to accelerate this process. The Case method, for instance, is a standard aspect of tertiary curricula at the University of Cyprus as well as private colleges.

Pedagogical and training approaches at the upper-secondary and tertiary levels are affected by the exchange of educational experience from the United Kingdom, the United States, Greece, Germany and other countries. A large number of Cypriots have studied and worked in these countries, and are able to implement relevant training approaches upon their return. The situation is quite dynamic, and there are a number of “early adopters” of new methods, which is also a major competitive factor in this small, island economy.

The role of ICT in both learning approaches as well as the economy has also risen significantly. ICT use features prominently in the secondary and tertiary educational systems and is considered indispensable today. In addition, the Cyprus Institute of Technology as well as a range of private education providers offer a range of in-depth training courses leading to internationally-recognised certifications, such as Microsoft, Informix, C++ and others. It is still difficult, however, to gain ERP-related programming certification, such as for Oracle or SAP, and interested students often have to follow courses internationally.

There have also been several initiatives in teaching the subject of entrepreneurship in the upper-secondary and tertiary levels. The ELs, for instance, have a class on “Business Administration”, while individual and class projects are designed to foster entrepreneurship. The Mediterranean Institute of Management (part of CPC), offers a range of training programmes for business administration and management. CCCI offers training for family businesses. The University of Cyprus offers courses in entrepreneurship, and also organises the “Cyprus Entrepreneurship Competition” in conjunction with the Cyprus Development Bank.

There are, however, weaknesses identified in the links between the labour market needs and the VET curricula as well as factors such as social inclusion. It is likely that additional reforms may be needed in some aspects of Adult Education Centres as well as CPC classes. Interestingly enough, there are no standard training approaches recommended for CVET courses funded by HRDA.

### 3.2 Improving integration; integration of formal and informal learning

*Please identify the institutional and organisational links (or lack of them) between learning sites at schools and companies. (How are the traditional barriers between learning at schools/colleges and learning in the workplace being overcome? How far can “simple experiencing” at work be transformed into a “reflective experiencing” by linking company-based learning with school/college based learning?)*

Links between companies and schools have been established in the secondary VET system at the MTEE, but less so at the EL level. At the tertiary level, extensive links exist, and it is expected that students implement part of their training within companies, both in terms of formal classes as well as through summer internships and other practical exercises.

There is no qualifications framework in place that takes into account accreditation of prior learning or competency management. While pilot occupational standards have been developed, there is still a need to adapt these to a national system. The Scottish Qualifications Authority has supported the Ministry of Education and Culture in the first such standards: further work is underway with the support of the European Commission.

### 3.3 Evaluation and quality assurance of VET provision

*What systems are in place to evaluate the processes and outcomes of VET – for learners, systems and the system? (a) For the individual (assessment of competences and knowledge) (b) For the institution (internal/external quality management) (c) For the system (monitoring and evaluation)*

The main methodology of evaluating individual learners continues to be examination-based, although a number of other factors (such as performance during the year) is now taken into account in scoring. Qualifications schemes therefore comprise the school-leaving or graduation certificate. There are only five occupations where social partner-involvement in qualifications schemes has been developed, although further ones are being developed. Even though social partners have participated in the standards development, assessment of qualifications is still performed by the institutions, and not by outside bodies. Therefore, a system-wide widespread assessment of competencies and knowledge does not exist. However, schools are responsible for certification, and in general this does result in acceptable standards. It would be highly useful, however, for a national system of competency-based standards, as it is clear from companies and entrepreneurs that the requirements of the job market are changing very quickly, and this trend is likely to accelerate with accession.

The role of quality assurance at the institutional and system levels has been affirmed by recent legislation as well as the Strategic Plan 2004-2006. The Pedagogical Institute is responsible for annual performance evaluations of school curricula and

teachers. are judged on the quality of teaching and teachers. The Council of Educational Evaluation, Accreditation of Programmes of Tertiary Education (SEKAP) is responsible for tertiary-level curriculum assurance and review. It works with the Council on Education Evaluation, which accredits programmes of tertiary education in Cyprus.

Cyprus and Cypriot institutions participate in a number of international certification, information exchange and peer review organisations, including ReferNet, ENQA and others.

### 3.4 Professional development and status of teachers and trainers

*Teachers' and trainers' professional development is now recognised as a decisive factor in improving learning processes and outcomes. Please indicate the key initiatives and innovations that are taking place in the training of teachers and trainers.*

*(These questions are given as examples and need not all be answered: Is initial training being introduced or reformed? If so, how? What provision is made for the continuous professional development of VET teachers and trainers? How do innovative education and training practices benefit students, companies and society? What is the position of trainers within organisations? How much autonomy do they have? What is the professional status - social status and self-esteem - of VET teachers and trainers in the society?)*

The professional development of teachers and trainers has been identified in the Strategic Plan of 2004-2006 as a critical area for development.

The PI provides for in-service induction and continuing training of teachers at the MTEE and EL levels. Teachers are recruited with existing general or specialised qualifications: since 2000, all new hires are required to undergo induction training. This training typically lasts for 26 weeks, of part-time instruction (i.e. 2 days per week). There are two main modules: general pedagogy (110 hours) and subject-specialised materials (110 hours). This is followed by an additional 150 hours of practical teaching attendance, observation and pilot training. An assessment follows the end of the course. A cost of living allowance is granted to teachers following the induction course.

Continuing training is extended during the school year. Courses include 15-hour and 60-hour modules on pedagogy, ICT, subject-related content, experiential learning and similar fields. Training of school heads and assistant heads is also offered. Other in-service training, including UNOPS bi-communal training or participation in EU-funded programmes, occurs regularly.

In order to reach out to teachers that were recruited prior to 2000, the Ministry of Education nominated change agents and teams who would work within each school to spread the new curricular methods, student-centres learning and pedagogical tools.

Teaching is an attractive profession in Cyprus due to salary level, job security and employment status. The position in the state system carries a good starting salary level, pension and health insurance and long vacation times. Civil service starting salaries are higher than equivalent salaries in the private sector. Entrance into the civil service is based on a waiting list and entrance examinations.

Other VET providers, including the HRDA, the Institute of Technology, the CPC and others all devote resources to training of trainers and teachers.

## 4. Theme 3: Building Competences for a European Labour Market

### 4.1 Challenges & policies in relation to the Lisbon employment strategy

*What are the main challenges to achieving the Lisbon employment objectives for your country, according to the European Commission 'Kok Report'? Please identify any policies and strategies being developed to tackle these challenges. Please identify any obstacles standing in the way of reform of VET in relation to achieving the Lisbon objectives.*

The Kok Report outlined the following main objectives for Cyprus:

- Increasing Adaptability: Raising innovation capacities and diversifying the service sector;
- Making Work a Real Option: Bridge gender gaps and improve childcare; increase participation of women; make part-time work attractive; review policies for employment of foreign workers; strengthen preventive and active labour market measures; strengthen and modernise the employment services;
- Invest in Human Capital: Develop a comprehensive national strategy for lifelong learning; improve links between initial education and continual training.

The Planning Bureau has fully integrated these recommendations in the National Strategy for Cyprus 2004-2006. (c.f. Section 1). However, there remain a number of challenges that can be identified, which are both intrinsic to the VET and employment area as well as to the basic structure of business:

- The role of the Public Employment Services until now has been to refer individuals to HRDA for training programmes. HRDA eligibility criteria, however, are typically for employed staff of companies that pay into the payroll scheme. It is necessary to expand the role of the PES to include training and counselling for unemployed and at-risk groups. The role of training, counselling and support for the self-employed or groups that do not fit into current HRDA eligibility criteria should also be reviewed.
- Additional focus and services are needed to prevent early school leavers and, if they have already left, offer them additional services and a re-entry point into the workforce or VET system.
- In addition to the lifelong learning strategy, which is under development, the concept of competency management and human resources development has to be more widely accepted in the private sector. The consultant has consulted leading companies in Cyprus, with between 60-100 staff, which do not have an HR manager or HR plan. It is vital that the importance and role of HR as a competitive factor be introduced and expanded in the private sector.
- Finally, it is likely that the general organisation of work and enterprises in the private sector will have to change following accession. There are, for instance, over 600 travel agencies in Cyprus, while projections by NAVIGATOR Consulting Group and the Association of Cyprus Travel Agents point to a potential reduction

to 350-400 agencies by 2006.<sup>11</sup> A wide range of other professions and enterprises, for instance, small retail points, trader and distributors, small artisanal manufacturers and others are being affected by the growing consolidation of the retail chain and the liberalisation of the economy. It will be necessary for companies to invest in productivity, which may also mean fundamentally addressing issues such as the nature of family businesses, the role of national distribution or sales, and the role played by human resources and staff. The last point should include a resolution of the role of low-paid staff in enterprises, and a re-consideration of the links between productivity and performance assessment on the one hand and staff recruitment, management and remuneration on the other.

It is therefore likely that only the first symptoms of the new competitive environment are being seen in Cyprus. These include issues such as falling price margins, employee turnover, the role of foreign competitors and the growing economies of scale. The underlying causes behind these symptoms, namely the tremendous competitive pressures unleashed through technology, deregulation and the globalisation of the supply chain, will only intensify in the years following accession.

## 4.2 Involving stakeholders

- a. *Please describe the role of stakeholders or social partners in the planning of VET at national, sector and company level*
- b. *Which actions to anticipate and recognise skills and qualifications needs (at national, sector or regional level) for your country do the European social partners identify as important in their recent report?*

Cyprus has a tradition of cooperation between various stakeholders and social partners in the VET system. Social partners are usually directly represented in the Boards of Directors of most semi-governmental organisations, such as the HRDA, or are consulted through tripartite agreements and consultation mechanisms. The role of the stakeholders is sometimes adversarial, particularly between labour unions or special representative organisations (such as the Pancyprian Farmers Association) and government and the private sector. The social partners need to move beyond the limited understanding most of them have of VET to a more knowledge-intensive and stronger awareness of key policies. It would be particularly helpful if the competency model agreed to by the European social partners were adapted to a greater extent in practise.

This consultation, however, will have to be improved in at least three ways:

- The current system of consultations is dominated by government apparatus, and particularly the Ministry. Social partners who do participate may not have the time to be fully aware of the various issues involved, and may not be able to contribute effectively to policy-making or the definition of specific strategies. It is necessary to review how the social partners can participate effectively. This calls into question the capacities of these partners: based on first-hand experience with a number of them, it is clear that in the run-up to accession tremendous demands have been placed upon their time and resources. It is nonetheless necessary to

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<sup>11</sup> Association of Cyprus Travel Agents. *Strategic Development Plan*. 2002.

give a clear signal of priority for VET. One effective means of ensuring this may be to convene some form of consultative body under the Ministry of Education, the Parliament or even the President, although it will be necessary that this body functions effectively and is able to take specific actions on policies.

- The social partners do not play a wide role in the determination of occupational standards or competencies, or their administration. This effectively cuts the link between the VET system and qualifications / competencies awards. Cyprus should consider methods of direct stakeholder involvement, taking into account the lack of a consensus in many sectors on what constitutes acceptable quality or staff training. It is highly suggested that pilot actions in key areas, for instance tourism, catering and construction be implemented, as this would reinforce the competitiveness of the economy. Stakeholder associations, such as the Cyprus Hoteliers Association, the Cyprus Tourism Organisation or the Association of Cyprus Travel Agents, should be involved in the process of defining qualifications and competencies standards, as well as participate in the testing / qualification process.
- The work of the social partners should focus on the introduction of the competency model as well as other “standard” human resources functions in the private sector. The HRDA, together with labour unions and employers associations, should play a leading role in supporting the transition to such a model. Given the current nature of business, it may even be necessary (though regrettable) to consider legislative solutions as a means of achieving some progress. It would be helpful if recruitment, personnel assessment and promotion practises in the public sector could also be revised to ameliorate some of the more destructive elements. For instance, the process of legal appeals by staff who have been passed up for promotion against their colleagues is a particularly debilitating practise. The lack, in many governmental offices and semi-governmental organisation, of any real evaluation method for performance beyond standard elements such as university degree or duration of service is also occasionally unhelpful. The consultant does not, however, underestimate how difficult such a change would be.

### 4.3 Transparency, recognition & mobility

*A key objective of the Copenhagen Agreement is to establish mechanisms that can lead to a European labour market. Credit transfer, qualification frameworks and Europass are specified in this respect. What measures, if any, are being developed at national and/ or sector level (a) To establish credit frameworks (b) To establish or reform a qualifications framework (c) To implement Europass?*

The Cypriot Council on Recognition of Educational Degrees (KYSATS) is the responsible authority for accreditation of foreign degrees. Recognition is based on the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), including the Diploma Supplement. KYSATS is also working on accreditation of lifelong learning.

The accreditation of national curricula and qualifications systems is the responsibility of SEKAP, which is a member of the European Network of Quality Assurance (ENQA), the European University Association (EUA), and the International Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (INQAAHE).

At the vocational level, the Ministry of Education as well as participating institutions (such as the Higher National Institute, the Higher Hotel Institute) are responsible for the development and accreditation of qualifications frameworks. As seen in Section 2.1, additional work is needed to bring occupational standards and competencies in line with best practise. Experiential learning is currently not open to certification, while the social partners have a highly limited role in the design and administration of occupational standards.

Assistance from the European Commission is currently underway for the future development of a national vocational qualifications system.

## 5. Scoreboard: Achieving the Lisbon VET Objectives in Cyprus

LISBON VET OBJECTIVE	CURRENT STATUS	RESPONSE
<p><b>1. Investment in Education and Training</b></p> <p>No benchmark. However, 1999 EU average was 5.0% for public expenditure on education as share of GDP, while average of three best performing countries was 7.4%.</p>	<p>Government expenditure on VET reached 6.3% in 2001 and 6.4% in 2002. Private sector expenditure is estimated at approximately 3.2% in 1998.</p>	<p>Expenditure is expected to rise still further with the opening of three new vocational schools, the further expansion of the Cyprus Open University, and the start-up of the Technical University of Cyprus – University of Applied Sciences and Arts.</p> <p>As GDP grows, the contributions of payroll to HRDA will grow in proportion.</p>
<p><b>2. Early School Leavers</b></p> <p>Benchmark is an EU-average rate of 10% or less by 2010, down from 1999 EU average of 19.4%.</p>	<p>Cyprus had an estimated 15% of early school leavers in 2003.</p>	<p>The Ministry is trying to expand the availability and quality of the upper-secondary system as well as the Apprenticeship system.</p> <p>Nonetheless, it is necessary to improve guidance and counselling for this group, particularly female early school leavers.</p>
<p><b>3. Graduates in Mathematics, Science and Technology</b></p> <p><i>“By 2010, Member States will have at least halved the level of gender imbalance among graduates in mathematics, science, technology whilst securing an overall significant increase of the total number of graduates compared to the year 2000.”</i></p>	<p>Cyprus had a total of 17.7% of all graduates enrolled in tertiary education in math, science and technology in 2001. Of these, 8.7% were female and 30.1% were male. There is a clear gender imbalance.</p>	<p>The need for gender mainstreaming and inclusion is outlined in several key policy documents. However, it may be difficult in the short term to achieve results given the small population size. More active measures are needed.</p>

<b>LISBON VET OBJECTIVE</b>	<b>CURRENT STATUS</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
<p><b>4. Upper Secondary Education Attainment</b></p> <p><i>“By 2010, Member States should ensure that average percentage of 25-64 year olds in the EU with at least upper secondary education reaches 80% or more.”</i></p>	<p>Cyprus had an 86.9% completion rate of upper secondary education.</p>	<p>The national target is to expand this to 90% through the construction of three new vocation schools as well as reforms in teaching methods and curricula. The reform of the apprenticeship schemes, the expansion of the Cyprus Open University, and opening up of further educational opportunities in the tertiary sector is expected to further contribute to raising the attainment rate.</p>
<p><b>5. Key Competencies</b></p> <p><i>“By 2010, the percentage of low-achieving 15 year olds in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy will be at least halved in each Member State.”</i></p>	<p>Data not available</p>	<p>The curricula reforms in the EL and MTEE system is expected to improve literacy, particularly through adaptation of modern learning techniques as well as the use of ICT.</p>
<p><b>6. Lifelong Learning</b></p> <p><i>“By 2010, the EU-average level of participation in lifelong learning should be at least 15% of the adult working age population (25-65 age group) and in no country should it be lower than 10%.”</i></p>	<p>Cyprus has a 3.7% participation rate in 2002 based on Labour Force Survey methodology.</p>	<p>The Ministry is in the process of developing its Lifelong Learning Strategy. This has also been identified as a crucial priority in the Single Planning Document (2003) as well as the National Strategy 2004-2006.</p> <p>Investment in LLL provision, including the Cyprus Open University and the Technical University of Cyprus, are expected to increase participation.</p> <p>Results at end 2004 in the Adult Education Survey will be published.</p>

## Annex I: List of Sources

*This is a partial list of sources consulted.*

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