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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

# **Education and Training Monitor 2018**

Cyprus

*Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2018 includes twenty-eight individual country reports. It builds on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence to present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy measures in each EU Member State, with a focus on developments since mid-2017. It therefore complements other sources of information which offer descriptions of national education and training systems.*

*Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 briefly identifies the main strengths and challenges of the country's education and training system. Section 3 looks at investment in education and training. Section 4 focuses on citizenship education. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise school education. Section 6 discusses measures to modernise higher education. Finally, section 7 covers vocational education and training, while section 8 covers adult learning.*

*The manuscript was completed on 1 September 2018.*

*Additional contextual data can be found online ([ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor))*

## 1. Key indicators

		Cyprus		EU average		
		2014	2017	2014	2017	
<b>Education and training 2020 benchmarks</b>						
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)		6.8%	8.6%	11.2%	10.6%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)		52.5%	55.8%	37.9%	39.9%	
Early childhood education and care (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory primary education)		82.6% <sup>13</sup>	89.7% <sup>16</sup>	94.2% <sup>13</sup>	95.3% <sup>16</sup>	
Proportion of 15 year-olds underachieving in:	Reading	32.8% <sup>12</sup>	35.6% <sup>15</sup>	17.8% <sup>12</sup>	19.7% <sup>15</sup>	
	Maths	42.0% <sup>12</sup>	42.6% <sup>15</sup>	22.1% <sup>12</sup>	22.2% <sup>15</sup>	
	Science	38.0% <sup>12</sup>	42.1% <sup>15</sup>	16.6% <sup>12</sup>	20.6% <sup>15</sup>	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-8 (total)	68.7%	71.5%	76.0%	80.2%	
Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	7.1%	6.9%	10.8%	10.9%	
Learning mobility	Degree mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	13.3% <sup>16</sup>	:	3.1% <sup>16</sup>	
	Credit mobile graduates (ISCED 5-8)	:	2.5% <sup>16</sup>	:	7.6% <sup>16</sup>	
<b>Other contextual indicators</b>						
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	6.0%	6.0% <sup>16</sup>	4.9%	4.7% <sup>16</sup>	
	Expenditure on public and private institutions per student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	€8 324	€8 868 <sup>15</sup>	€6 494 <sup>d</sup>	: <sup>15</sup>
		ISCED 3-4	€9 942	€10 749 <sup>15</sup>	€7 741 <sup>d</sup>	: <sup>15</sup>
ISCED 5-8		€9 474	€9 731 <sup>15</sup>	€11 187 <sup>d</sup>	: <sup>15</sup>	
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	4.6%	5.7%	10.4%	9.6%	
	Foreign-born	19.5%	18.1%	20.2%	19.4%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	58.3%	64.3%	38.6%	40.6%	
	Foreign-born	39.4%	40.5%	34.3%	36.3%	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-4	54.6%	54.6%	70.7%	74.1%	
	ISCED 5-8	72.4%	75.2%	80.5%	84.9%	

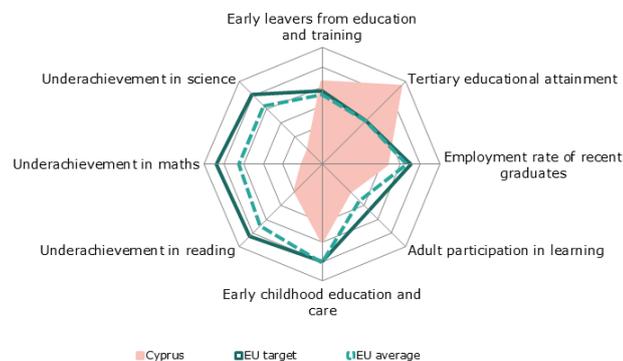
Sources: Eurostat (see section 10 for more details); OECD (PISA).

Notes: data refer to weighted EU averages, covering different numbers of Member States depending on the source; d = definition differs, 12 = 2012, 13 = 2013, 15 = 2015, 16 = 2016.

On credit graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by DG EAC on the available countries; on degree graduate mobility, the EU average is calculated by JRC over Eurostat and OECD data.

Further information can be found in the relevant section of Volume 1 ([ec.europa.eu/education/monitor](http://ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)).

**Figure 1. Position in relation to strongest (outer ring) and weakest performers (centre)**



Source: DG Education and Culture calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2017, UOE 2016) and OECD (PISA 2015). Note: all scores are set between a maximum (the strongest performers represented by the outer ring) and a minimum (the weakest performers represented by the centre of the figure).

## 2. Highlights

- Public spending on education remains high, but the low effectiveness and efficiency of the education system continue to be a major challenge.
- Citizenship education is integrated in general education and also present in digital education. The modernisation of school education has progressed further on teacher appointments, implementation of new curricula and school regulations and continuing professional development.
- Tertiary attainment is very high overall, but overqualification remains an issue and graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) are underrepresented.
- Vocational education and training (VET) was strengthened, yet participation levels and VET graduate employability remain low.
- Efforts were made to improve adult learning, but the very low share of low-skilled participants remains a concern, especially given the shrinking and ageing population.

## 3. Investing in education and training

**Public spending on education remains high.** At 6 % of GDP in 2016, public spending on education remains well above the EU average of 4.7 %. Measured as a share of total government expenditure, Cyprus spent 15.6 % on education in 2016, more than any other EU country. Change in real terms was 2.7 percentage points up from 2015. As with most countries, teachers' salaries (73 %) are the biggest expenditure. Cyprus has an education system with low effectiveness, since spending is high but educational outcomes (i.e. the knowledge, skills and abilities students attain as measured by the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), are low. The resulting low spending efficiency (Agasisti et al, 2016) could be improved. Better educational outcomes will benefit society at large given the positive effect of education on growth, productivity and income equality (OECD, 2016).

## 4. Citizenship education

**Citizenship is taught across several subjects.** The separate 'civics' subject at upper secondary level was replaced in 2017/2018 by a cross-subject approach applied mainly in history and Greek lessons. Other subjects integrating citizenship education at both primary and secondary level include social sciences, ethics/religious education, health education, physical education and STEM (European Commission, 2018a). In addition, schools can join in various programmes programs that promote lifelong civic participation (e.g. UNESCO schools, Young Volunteers, MEDIMUN). The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute provides tailored training to teachers in citizenship education, covering areas such as racism prevention, stereotypes, empathy and practices for teaching controversial issues (European Commission, 2018b).

**Citizenship education is a point of focus in digital education.** As part of the national digital strategy, each year 15-20 schools participate in a number of programmes with a specific citizenship focus. For example: (i) the EU-funded 'EduWeb-programme' where children educate digitally illiterate adults on safe and creative internet use; (ii) 'eSafe Schools' which helps schools develop strategies for safe and creative internet use; and (iii) 'Young Coaches for the Internet' which trains students to develop and apply an annual action plan and educate their peers on creative and safe internet use (NRP, 2018).

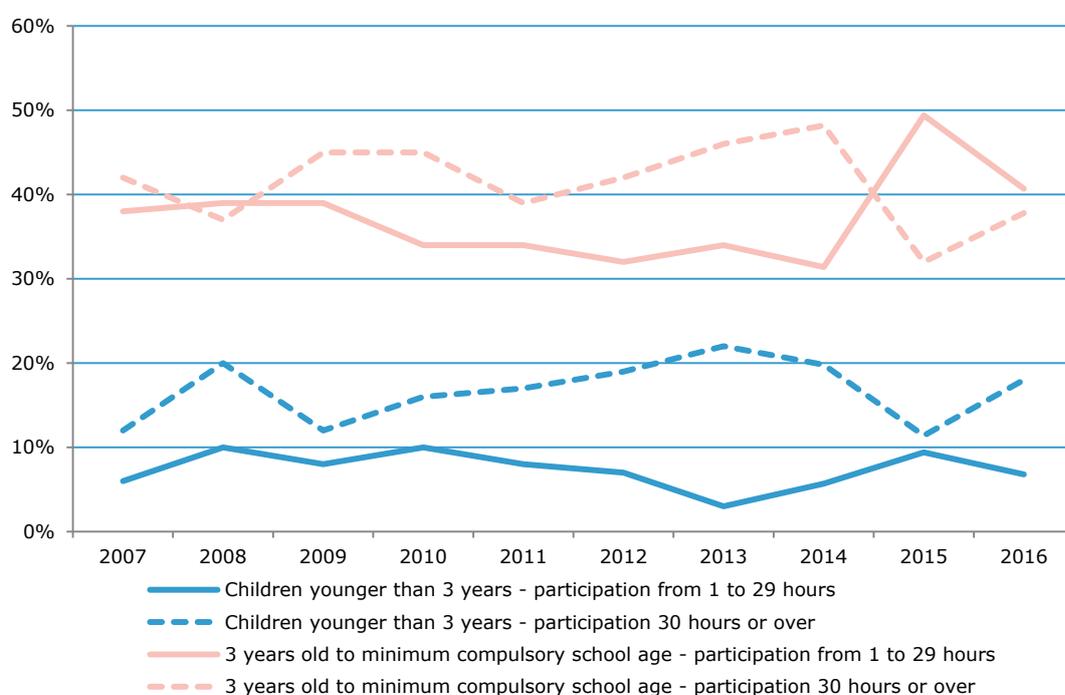
## 5. Modernising school education

**Early school leaving (ESL) rose in 2017.** At 8.6 %, the share of early leavers from education and training aged 18-24 went up by 1 percentage point between 2016 and 2017. However,

national data show that actual dropout rates remained low at 0.3 % in lower secondary and 0.2 %<sup>1</sup> in upper secondary education (Government of Cyprus, 2018). Despite the increase, Cyprus remains below the EU average (10.6 %) and the Europe 2020 national target of 10 %. The gender gap narrowed considerably, with ESL among boys decreasing by 2 percentage points to 9.4 %, while among girls it increased from a very low base of 4.3 % in 2016 to 7.8 % in 2017. The ESL share of foreign-born students remained stable at 18.1 % in 2017, while for native-born students it increased to 5.7 % from 4.6 % in 2016. Considering the booming tourism sector, causes such as the increased take up of seasonal work (European Commission, 2014) need to be explored.

**Participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is stable.** At 89.7 % in 2016, participation of 4-6 year-olds in ECEC is unchanged from 2015. In contrast, more children under 3 years-old were in formal childcare in 2016 than in 2015 (24.8 % vs 20.8 %). However, this is still far below the EU average of 32.9 % for this age group. For many years, the transition from ECEC to primary education has been challenging. To reduce the gap between the two education levels, the Ministry of Education and Culture<sup>2</sup> has started to upgrade the pre-school curriculum using success and adequacy indicators. Exchange visits between public pre-primary and primary education schools continued and further expanded in the 2017-2018 school year.

**Figure 2. Children in formal childcare or education**



Source: Eurostat, EU-SILC survey. Online data code: ilc\_caindformal.

**The entry ages for ECEC and primary education are set to increase.** As of the 2020/2021 school year, the entry age into primary education will be gradually raised from 5 years 8 months to 6 years. The Ministry of Education considers older children to be better prepared for school emotionally and therefore expects the measure to improve school success in the long term. The compulsory ECEC admission age remains at 4 years and 8 months, therefore extending the period of compulsory pre-primary education.

<sup>1</sup> 2016 data.

<sup>2</sup> Henceforth the Ministry of Education.

**The share of teachers aged 50+ has been constantly growing.** The ratio increased from 29 % in 2013 to almost 40 % in 2016 at ISCED level 3, mainly due to the increased retirement age of teachers from 60 to 65 years old. One aim of the reform of the teacher appointment system is to lower the age of first-time teachers by basing entry into the profession primarily on merit as opposed to waiting time.

**The rollout of the new teacher appointment system has begun but progress in teacher evaluation is slow.** Following the first entry exams in November 2017, the pool of successful candidates is large enough to fill positions planned for the next 2 years. The authorities considered the comparatively low overall success rate as proof of the credibility of the process, while disappointed candidates and other stakeholders expressed the opposite view. Of the 5 020 exam participants only 1 869 succeeded. The lowest success rate (6.9 %) was in the Greek language specialisation. No policy measures were taken to reform teacher evaluation<sup>3</sup>; stakeholder discussions — including with teachers' unions have yet to commence.

**Steps have been taken for more school autonomy.** From the 2017/2018 school year, all schools are asked to develop action plans based on their specific needs and the strategic goals laid down by the Ministry of Education. An online tool was developed for this purpose. However, there is currently no adequate monitoring or support system to strengthen implementation. Overall, school autonomy remains limited, as school principals have no discretion over budgetary issues or appointment of teachers, both of which are organised centrally (World Bank, 2014).

**Continuing professional development for teachers has become school-based.** In line with the individual school action plans, continuing professional development for teachers has become school-centred rather than provided by general conferences, summits or centralised training as previously (Hatzitheodoulou, 2017). After piloting the new 'professional learning' framework in 2015/2016, this new approach has gradually extended to all schools. In addition, teachers of all levels can benefit from various other forms of professional learning (school based or central) throughout the year.

**Digital skills are improving but STEM graduates remain rare.** Half of the population reported to have at least basic digital skills vs 43 % in 2016. However, Cyprus' share of STEM graduates (9.8 %<sup>4</sup>) remains the lowest in the EU (European Commission, 2018c). To boost digital skills, the National Coalition for Digital Jobs has introduced cost-free digital certification for students and school competitions in fields such as coding and robotics. Furthermore, computer science is taught in all-day primary schools and secondary schools.

**Cyprus is reforming special needs education to make the education system more inclusive.** In 2014/2015, 5 559 students, i.e. around 7 % of all primary and secondary students, were officially recognised as requiring special needs education<sup>5</sup>. Most were integrated in the general classes of mainstream schools, 583 were schooled in separate classes within mainstream schools and another 373, i.e. those with severe physical, mental or emotional needs, were placed in special needs schools. Despite most children with special needs being schooled in mainstream education, in its 2017 report the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities criticised the 'absence of a clear and implemented concept of inclusive education in mainstream schools in national legislation' (UN, 2017). According to the UN, segregated approaches remain common in teachers' and other professionals' attitudes. To address the problem, Cyprus is currently reviewing its policy.

<sup>3</sup> In 2017 Cyprus received a country-specific recommendation to 'Complete the reform of the education and training system, including teacher evaluation and actions to increase the capacity of vocational education and training.' (Council of the European Union, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> Per 1 000 individuals aged 20-29

<sup>5</sup> According to 2014/2015 data from the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (EASIE).

### Box 1: Schooling of recently arrived migrant children

The number of migrants and in particular asylum-seekers in Cyprus has grown sharply in recent years. From 2002 to 2017, 59 099 asylum applications were received, of which 8 968 asylum-seekers were granted protection (UNHCR, 2017b). Asylum applications increased by 36 % between 2015 and 2016. 221 unaccompanied minors, coming from Syria, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other countries, applied for asylum in 2016 and another 109 in 2017. The country's only accommodation and reception centre in Kofinou has a capacity of 400 people.

According to the Refugee Law of Cyprus of 2000, asylum-seeking children's school enrolment should start no later than 3 months from the date of their asylum application. In 2016, an action plan based on recommendations by the EU's SIRIUS network for the education of children with a migrant background, was developed to coordinate individual actions by schools and create a single educational policy on integrating migrant (including refugee) children.

Five priorities guide actions and programs in this field:

1. learning the Greek language
2. reception of newly arrived children with a migrant background
3. teacher education and continuing professional development
4. collection and analysis of data on the needs of pupils with migrant background
5. intercultural approach through the new curricula.

Most refugee children follow general education. Support for their educational integration has come in particular from the DRASE programme (Actions for School and Social Integration), which supports disadvantaged students at all education levels.

However, difficulties remain. A recent study by the University of Nicosia on living conditions of asylum seekers in Cyprus reports that participation in and effectiveness of refugee education is limited so far. According to the report, the state's role in enrolment of refugee children has not been clarified. In addition, in secondary education the language barrier prevents refugee children from being active participants in class. Therefore, challenges to be tackled include enforcing school access and attendance including for children aged 16+, language learning, cooperation between schools and the local community and conflict resolution (University of Nicosia, 2018).

Assessing educational level and matching needs with offers can be problematic (UNHCR, 2017a). In addition, there is a need to ensure continuity of migrant-specific competences in schools when teachers leave<sup>6</sup> and to appoint teachers with intercultural competences.

## 6. Modernising higher education

**Higher education (HE) attendance further increased but many graduates struggle to find adequate jobs.** Tertiary educational attainment has risen by 2.4 pps since 2016 to reach 55.8 % — a record high. Cyprus is far above the EU average (39.9 %) and second only to Lithuania. At 40.5 %, foreign-born students are notably less likely to obtain tertiary degrees than native-born students (64.3 %). While still below the EU average of 84.9 %, at 75.2 % in 2017 the employment level of recent HE graduates is still markedly higher than that of people with lower qualifications (ISCED 3-4: 54.6 %). However, a very high proportion (41.2 %<sup>7</sup>) of HE graduates work in jobs that require lower skills (Cedefop, 2018).

**The high number of social science graduates and comparatively few STEM graduates creates an imbalance.** One third (33 %) of bachelor's students graduate with a degree in business, administration and law. This is higher than any other field of study in Cyprus<sup>8</sup> and the highest in the EU. The majority of bachelor's graduates continue to master's level, thus

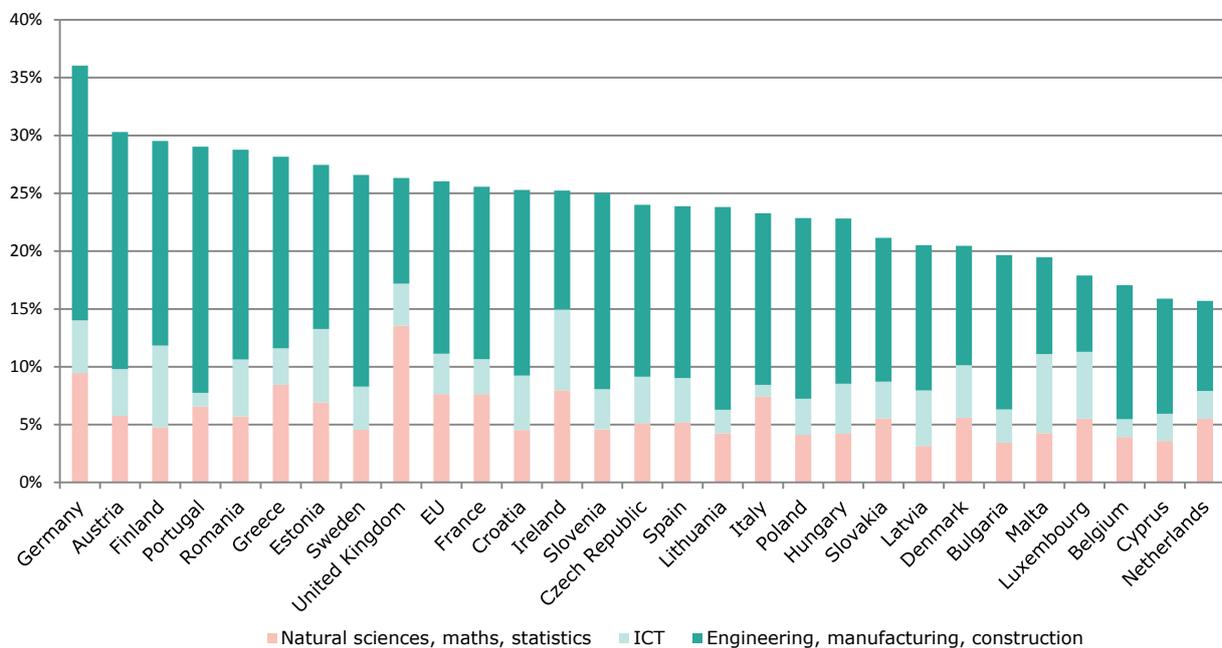
<sup>6</sup> Teachers are required to change schools every 6 years.

<sup>7</sup> Only Greece has a higher share.

<sup>8</sup> Engineering, manufacturing and construction in second place gathers 13 % based on 2016 Eurostat data.

contributing to a participation rate at that level of almost 35 % of all enrolled students<sup>9</sup> (European Commission 2018). Again, business, administration and law are the most attractive subjects at master's level, chosen by 38.2 % (2016) of all graduates. A large share of master's students also graduate in education studies (30.8 %) irrespective of their bachelor's degree subject — an indication of the attractiveness of the teaching profession. At the other end of the spectrum, subjects critical to innovation are underrepresented. At 2.4 %, the share of students obtaining a master's in natural sciences, mathematics and statistics is the lowest in the EU. At 1.5 %, ICT is also among the lowest in the EU. However, at PhD level this trend is reversed, with the highest share of graduates having studied natural sciences, mathematics and statistics (26.7 %) followed by engineering, manufacturing and construction (18.9 %<sup>10</sup>). While this data is positive, only 3 % of all students were enrolled in PhD programmes in 2014/2015 (European Commission, 2018d) so STEM is a very small part of overall degrees. There is therefore clearly a need to increase the attractiveness of science and technology subjects (HRDA, 2017).

**Figure 3. Distribution of tertiary STEM graduates in the EU (2016)**



Source: Eurostat. Online data codes: [educ\\_uoe\\_grad02](#)

**Demand for education professionals is growing.** Cyprus' Human Resource Development Authority expects the highest labour market growth to be among mid-level jobs that require secondary education. These will account for almost half of the available positions until 2027, as opposed to 1 in 3 people being in jobs requiring tertiary education. The high and increasing choice in tertiary education pathways might exacerbate the existing overqualification challenge. The biggest employment sector in 2027 will be car trade and repairs, followed by tourism, while the highest increase (45.6 %) in occupation needs will be for technical and scientific profiles. Jobs in education, expected to increase by 22.9 % and to account for around 8 % of those employed in 2027, also show a significant upward trend.

**Cyprus has a very mobile student population.** Inward degree mobility (i.e. students from other countries coming to study and obtain a degree in Cyprus) as a percentage of the total enrolled student population was the third highest in the EU in 2014/2015 after Luxembourg and the UK (European Commission, 2018d). Whereas well over 90 % of EU international students come from Greece, the shares of non-EU students are more equally distributed with the top three countries of origin being Bangladesh, Nigeria and Pakistan<sup>11</sup> (Ministry of Education, 2016). National data shows

<sup>9</sup> 2014/2015 data.

<sup>10</sup> 2016 data.

<sup>11</sup> In 2014/2015.

that Cyprus hosted more than 21 000 students from abroad during the 2016/2017 academic year vs 8 300 in 2012/2013. Outward degree mobility is even higher, with more than half of the country's graduates having received their degree abroad in 2014/2015<sup>12</sup>. Cyprus is one of the few EU countries with unrestricted portability of public grants and loans for studying abroad, both for full degrees and shorter-term exchange programmes (European Commission, 2018d).

**Attracting international students remains essential.** Cyprus is continuing its efforts to become a regional hub for HE and research. Franchise agreements with British and other European universities help support the high rate of inward degree mobile students (European Commission, 2017). To attract foreign students, Cyprus' universities focus on improving infrastructure, offering a higher number and more attractive study programmes and allowing for instruction in English. Further bilateral agreements on cooperation in HE were concluded with a number of countries in 2018, including China and Germany.

**An Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts has been established.** The Academy, established in 2017, serves as the country's highest-level institution devoted to cultivating and advancing the sciences and humanities, literature and art. Its objectives include promoting research by Cypriot scientists internationally, providing scientific advice and facilitating cooperation between local industry, universities and research centres.

## 7. Modernising vocational education and training

**Further progress was made in reforming secondary technical and vocational education, but participation in VET is still far below the EU average.** Only 17 % of upper secondary students participated in VET in 2016 (EU average: 49 %). The employment rate of VET graduates was the lowest in the EU in 2017 (52 % vs 76.6 %). Efforts have been made to increase participation levels and the capacity of VET schools and to update the curricula in cooperation with industry. A comprehensive analysis of the national apprenticeship system was completed in June 2018 in cooperation with Cedefop. It will help national stakeholders to build their capacity to further develop the national apprenticeship scheme.

**Several recent measures are expected to strengthen the VET sector.** For example: (i) the accreditation of post-secondary institutes of VET (PSIVET) in April 2017; (ii) the reform of the teacher appointment system (see Section 2), which extends to VET teachers who obtain the qualification 'Vocational Trainer – Level 5' as part of the Cyprus Qualifications Framework (CyQF); and (iii) stepping up VET teachers' training as part of the new training policy (see Section 2).

**Steps have been taken to tackle skills mismatches in the VET sector, but challenges remain.** Tracking of graduates is implemented and information campaigns to reduce skills mismatches are planned. However, these measures are insufficient given the scale of the challenge. According to the 2015 Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS), most Cypriot companies need customer service and teamwork skills.

### Box 1: Liaison offices to improve universities' labour market links

Liaison offices have been created in all Cypriot universities to improve the relevance of education to the labour market and facilitate students' transition to work, e.g. through: (i) student placement in companies (already in place in some universities); (ii) developing methodological tools; (iii) anticipating needs for certain skills; and (iv) developing work-based learning systems, including dual learning<sup>13</sup> and apprenticeships. Furthermore, an online platform will be established to match students with businesses and track placements and the project in general.

<http://www.liaisonoffices.ac.cy>

<sup>12</sup> Only Luxembourg has a higher share at 77.5 %.

<sup>13</sup> Integrated courses of learning at both companies and schools.

## 8. Promoting adult learning

**Adult learning is slow to respond to the low share of low-skilled people in learning and the shrinking and ageing population in Cyprus.** Adult participation in learning remains below the EU average (6.9 % vs 10.9 %) and critically low (1.0 %) among low-skilled adults. According to the CVTS, 69.5 % of Cypriot companies (EU average: 72.6 %) provided vocational training to their employees in 2015 and only 33.2 % of employees participated in this training (EU average: 40.8 %). Furthermore, 50 % of adults aged 25-64 reported to have basic or above basic digital skills – 10 percentage points lower than the EU average.

**Remedial actions have been taken to ensure that low-qualified people upgrade their skills and acquire new ones.** In line with the Council of the EU's Recommendation on upskilling pathways, measures to strengthen the adult learning system include: (i) initiating a validation system for informal and non-formal learning; (ii) developing additional professional standards; and (iii) strengthening the capacity of PSIVET schools and second-chance schools. The National Qualifications Authority, established in May 2017, has the responsibility to further strengthen the legal aspects of the CyQF by: (i) developing a registry; (ii) integrating the validation of non-formal and informal learning; and (iii) monitoring the CyQF/European Qualifications Framework levels of certificates, diplomas and Europass documents<sup>14</sup>. Several ongoing programmes are helping to integrate unemployed and inactive people into employment and promote learning opportunities for workers.

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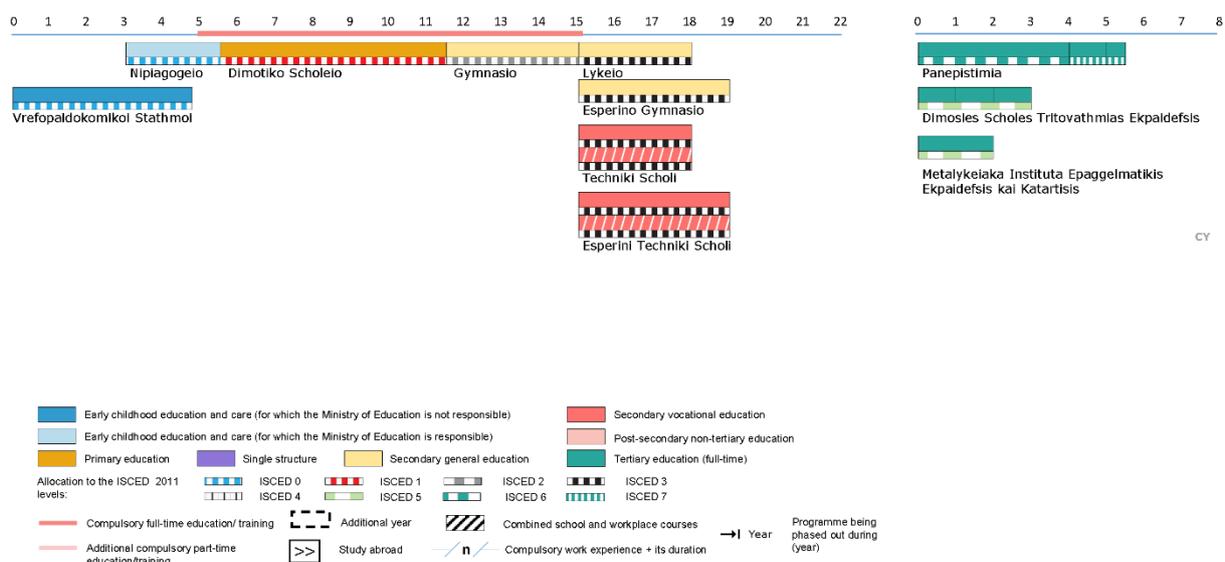
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## 10. Annex I: Key indicator sources

Indicator	Eurostat online data code
Early leavers from education and training	edat_lfse_14 + edat_lfse_02
Tertiary educational attainment	edat_lfse_03 + edat_lfs_9912
Early childhood education and care	educ_uoe_enra10
Underachievement in reading, maths, science	OECD (PISA)
Employment rate of recent graduates	edat_lfse_24
Adult participation in learning	trng_lfse_03
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	gov_10a_exp
Expenditure on public and private institutions per student	educ_uoe_fini04
Learning mobility: Degree mobile graduates	JRC computation based on Eurostat / UIS / OECD data
Credit mobile graduates	educ_uoe_mobc02

## 11. Annex II: Structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017. *The Structure of the European Education Systems 2017/18: Schematic Diagrams*. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Comments and questions on this report are welcome and can be sent by email to:  
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