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Education and Training Monitor 2022

Accompanying the document

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area

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Education and Training Monitor 2022

CYPRUS



The Education and Training Monitor's country reports present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy development at all education levels in EU Member States. They provide the reader with more in-depth insight of the performance of countries with regard to the EU level targets agreed within the EEA. They are based on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence available.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 focuses on how the Member State has addressed or is addressing one of its education challenges. Section 3 covers early childhood education and care. Section 4 deals with school education policies. Section 5 covers vocational education and training and adult learning. Finally, Section 6 discusses measures in higher education.

The Education and Training Monitor's country reports were prepared by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), with contributions from the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL).

The document was completed on 30 September 2022
More background data at:
<https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2022/en/>



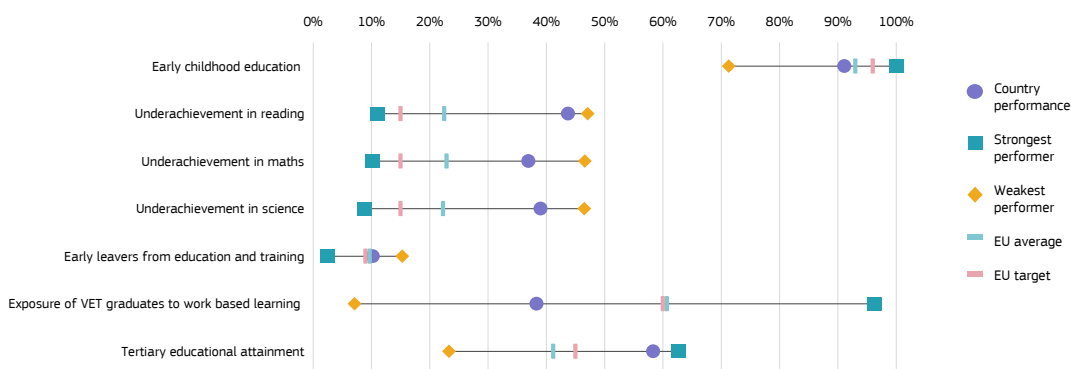
1. Key indicators

Figure 1: Key indicators overview

			Cyprus		EU	
			2011	2021	2011	2021
EU-level targets			2030 target			
Participation in early childhood education (from age 3 to starting age of compulsory primary education)	≥ 96 %		69.4% ¹³	91.1% ²⁰	91.8% ¹³	93.0% ²⁰
Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills	< 15%		:	:	:	:
Low achieving 15-year-olds in:	Reading	< 15%	32.8% ¹²	43.7% ¹⁸	19.7% ⁰⁹	22.5% ¹⁸
	Maths	< 15%	42.0% ¹²	36.9% ¹⁸	22.7% ⁰⁹	22.9% ¹⁸
	Science	< 15%	38.0% ¹²	39.0% ¹⁸	18.2% ⁰⁹	22.3% ¹⁸
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	< 9 %		11.3%	10.2% ^b	13.2%	9.7% ^b
Exposure of VET graduates to work-based learning	≥ 60 % (2025)		:	38.3% ^u	:	60.7%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34)	≥ 45 %		50.5%	58.3% ^b	33.0%	41.2% ^b
Participation of adults in learning (age 25-64)	≥ 47 % (2025)		:	:	:	:
Other contextual indicators						
Equity indicator (percentage points)			:	25.4 ¹⁸	:	19.30 ¹⁸
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native		7.3%	3.9% ^b	11.9%	8.5% ^b
	EU-born		18.3%	20.5% ^{bu}	25.3%	21.4% ^b
	Non EU-born		24.3%	31.4% ^b	31.4%	21.6% ^b
Upper secondary level attainment (age 20-24, ISCED 3-8)			87.6%	89.7% ^b	79.6%	84.6% ^b
Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34)	Native		58.8%	69.4% ^b	34.3%	42.1% ^b
	EU-born		36.0%	38.7% ^b	28.8%	40.7% ^b
	Non EU-born		34.9%	36.9% ^b	23.4%	34.7% ^b
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP		6.3%	5.9% ²⁰	4.9%	5.0% ²⁰
	Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure		14.9%	13.0% ²⁰	10.0%	9.4% ²⁰

Sources: Eurostat (UOE, LFS, COFOG); OECD (PISA). Further information can be found in Annex I and at *Monitor Toolbox*. Notes: The 2018 EU average on PISA reading performance does not include ES; the indicator used (ECE) refers to early-childhood education and care programmes which are considered by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to be 'educational' and therefore constitute the first level of education in education and training systems – ISCED level 0; the equity indicator shows the gap in the share of underachievement in reading, mathematics and science (combined) among 15-year-olds between the lowest and highest quarters of socio-economic status; b = break in time series, u = low reliability, : = not available, 09 = 2009, 13 = 2013, 18 = 2018, 20 = 2020.

Figure 2: Position in relation to strongest and weakest performers



Source: DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2021, UOE 2020) and OECD (PISA 2018).

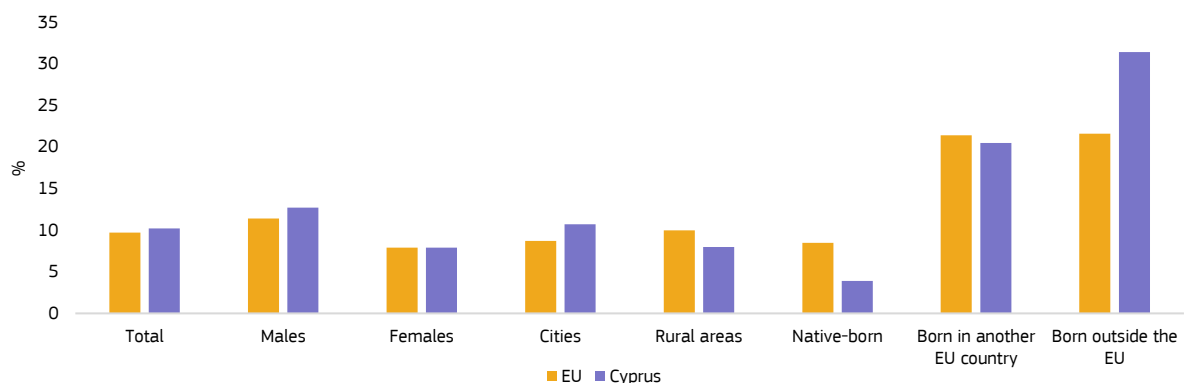
2. A focus on inclusive education and early leaving from education and training

Early leaving from education and training (ELET) has increased since 2015, affecting especially foreign-born young people. With one of the EU's highest asylum application-to-inhabitant ratio, integrating asylum seekers into the education system is not easy. The proportion of young people (18-34) among recently arrived asylum seekers is especially high (62% in 2018). The early leaving rate (27.9%), much higher among foreign-born young people (EU average 21.5%), shows a worsening trend (+1.3 percentage points (pps) since 2020). By contrast, the rate of native-born early leavers was 3.9% in 2021 vs the EU average 8.5%. The highest proportion of early leavers in 2021 was reported in urban areas (10.7%): an increase of 6.9 pps from 2015 (3.8%). About two thirds of early leavers are boys. Support for students at risk of dropping out of secondary education is provided as an integrated project under the EU's Technical Support Instrument (TSI) and early warning systems are in place. However, data collection is

insufficient and the method most used relies on school-by-school reporting (Donlevy V. et al., 2019). There are targeted support measures for pupils from a migrant background, supported by the European Social Fund (ESF+) through the DRASE+ project 'School and social integration actions' (European Commission, 2021). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports (Ministry of Education) also helps teachers to manage linguistic and cultural diversity in schools.

The Ministry of Education supports pupils with disabilities or other special educational needs (SEN). A planned policy framework reform will be based on a TSI project and its recommendations. The main purpose is to support the academic and social development of pupils with disabilities or other special educational needs to help them integrate into mainstream classes. In the 2019/2020 school year, 5 679 SEN students studied in Cypriot classes in pre-primary and primary education and 4 711 SEN students in general secondary education and secondary vocational education and training (VET). Special education and support in mainstream classes and in addition to regular schooling is provided for children from age 3 until they complete their studies (including VET and higher education).

Figure 3: Early leavers from education and training in Cyprus 2021 (%)



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS), [edat_lfse_02]; [edat_lfse_14]; [edat_lfse_30]. Note: Data for Cyprus on rural areas and ESL born in another EU country are low reliable.

Where necessary, the appropriate infrastructure is also being developed in schools.

The low level of basic skills among pupils in Cyprus indicates socio-economic disparities.

PISA 2018 indicated that Cyprus has a high proportion of low achievers in reading, maths and science and a low proportion of top performers compared to other EU countries. Almost two out of three students from the lowest socio-economic quartile are low achievers in reading (vs 36.4% EU average). In the top socio-economic quartile, one out of three students is a low achiever, one of the EU's highest proportions. At 25.4 pps, the difference in the proportion of low achievers between low and high socio-economic status is high (EU: 19.3 pps). There is also a significant gender gap in reading, with girls outperforming boys by 47 score points on average. Compounding this, there is the risk that the pandemic will have a long-lasting negative effect on learning outcomes. Targeted social inclusion campaigns in schools are ongoing and curricula have been revised at all education levels to support the acquisition of skills and competences (Donlevy, V. et al., 2019).

Cyprus is among the few EU Member States¹ whose higher education strategy focuses exclusively on the social dimension, equity, inclusion and diversity. Equal opportunities to access higher education is the strategy's bedrock. In higher education, the State Student Welfare Service's scholarship schemes give students financial aid based on socio-economic criteria and academic excellence. Free online education is provided by the Open University of Cyprus free for undergraduate programmes.

¹ Croatia, Cyprus, the Netherlands, Austria, Finland.



Box 1: Good practice: Inclusive education and early leavers from education and training

The European Commission helped Cyprus in 2021, under its Technical Support Instrument (TSI), to improve the engagement of students at risk of dropping out of school. The project was implemented by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports.

The support provided consisted of the following.

- i) An analysis of the reasons students disengage from and drop out of secondary education, and of the policy measures in place to address these reasons.
- ii) A set of policy recommendations to improve the engagement of secondary students who have difficulties and to re-engage those who left education and training early.
- iii) An action plan for effectively implementing those policy recommendations.

The action plan gave the Cypriot authorities guidance on how to provide differentiable and equitable educational opportunities for students struggling in school and students who have dropped out. It will help to further reduce early school leaving.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/commission-supports-cyprus-address-students-disengagement-and-early-school-leaving-2021-mar-30_en

3. Early childhood education and care

Despite coordinated efforts, accessible and affordable early childhood education and care (ECEC) remains a challenge. At 91.1%, participation in early childhood education from age 3 to the starting age for compulsory primary education is below the EU average (93%) and the EU-level target for 2030 (96%) (European Commission, 2020). Public spending on early childhood education remains among the lowest in the EU. Cyprus relies heavily on informal settings or private institutions (OECD 2021), especially for children under 4. Through the 'Thalia 2021-2027' ESF+ (European Social Fund) programme, the European Structural and Investment Funds aim to

expand capacities and provide a greater amount of affordable ECEC (European Commission, 2022). Affordability is important, with net childcare costs in Cyprus being high: over one third of median female earnings (OECD 2021).

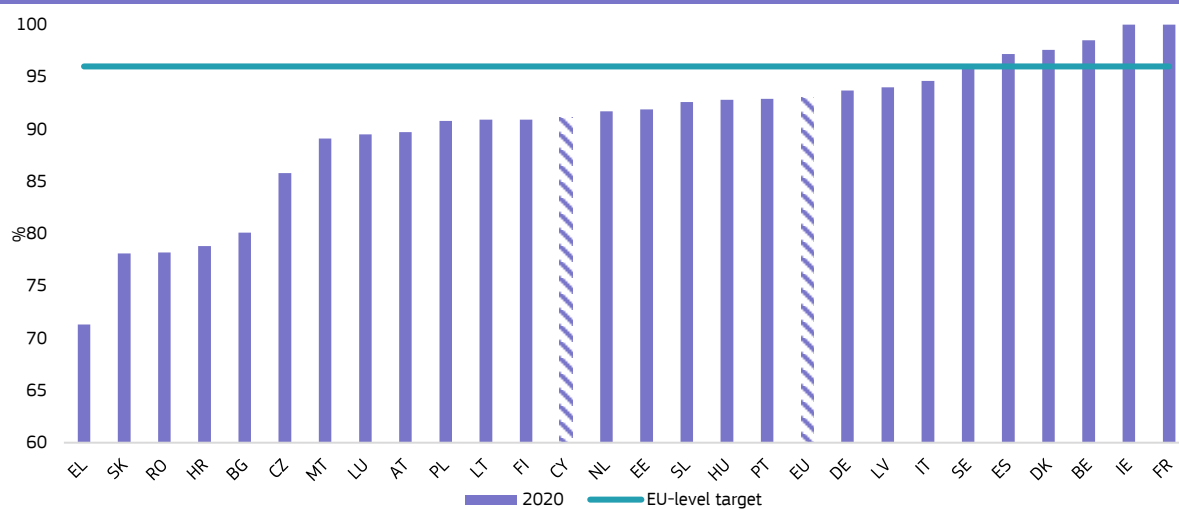
The extension of free compulsory pre-primary education from age 4 will be implemented in three stages until 2026 under the EU Recovery and Resilience Facility. During the first stage, compulsory education will be extended for 2 months. During the second stage, it will be extended for 4 months. The last stage will see it extended by 8 months by June 2026. The lowering of the compulsory schooling age will be accompanied by subsidies for disadvantaged families. Prompt implementation of ECEC reform, together with the dedicated ESF+ funds, could enhance ECEC access and affordability. However, efforts remain fragmented and a more integrated approach would be necessary from 0–6 years, focusing on quality and educational methods at all stages of ECEC. The necessary national strategy for ECEC and its accompanying action plan are included in the Cyprus’ national recovery and resilience plan and are expected to be concluded in 2024. The

Commission supports Cyprus on this reform through the EU Technical Support Instrument (European Commission, 2021). This gives the authorities time to introduce comprehensive solutions for quality, affordable and accessible ECEC for all.

4. School education

A new system of centralised semester exams will be put into practice from the 2022/2023 school year onwards. The new centralised exams will be extended to all levels of lower and upper secondary education, including VET. For twelfth-graders (18 years old), the exams give access to the school leaving certificate (Apolytirion). Monitoring and analysis of the results will support the quality of teaching and the improvement of learning outcomes (Ministry of Education). For this, an evaluation mechanism to analyse exam results is necessary (Christoforidou and Kyriakides, 2021) and has been put in place. Nevertheless, teachers’ experience in using such instruments for formative assessment is lacking and dedicated training is needed.

Figure 4: Pupils in ECE from age 3 to the starting age for compulsory primary education, 2019 and 2020 (%)



Source: Eurostat (UOE) [educ_uoe_enra21].

Most candidate teachers failed the exam they needed to pass to be appointed.

In Cyprus, teaching graduates need to pass an additional exam to be appointed. These exams took place in November 2021 and resulted in a high failure rate. The success rate for pre-primary teachers was the highest, with only 42.42% of candidates scoring above the pass mark (10 out of 20).

For primary education the success rate was even lower: only 1 out of 5 candidates scored above the pass mark.

Candidate secondary teachers' success rate varied according to subject. For example, candidate maths teachers' scores were particularly low, while 9 out of 10 biology teachers scored above the pass mark. To support already employed teachers' professional development, activities are being organised dedicated to teacher training as part of each school's improvement plan²

Pupils in the first grade of primary education were tested on their understanding of, and their ability to produce written texts in, Greek.

PISA 2018 revealed that the proportion of low achievers in reading was particularly high in Cyprus (43.7% vs 22.46% EU average). In addition, 25.7% of pupils are low achievers in all three subjects tested (reading, science and maths), compared to the EU 13% average. The aim of the programme is to observe and analyse pupils' basic skills in the first year of primary education in order to adapt teaching methods accordingly. The programme was developed by the directorate of primary education of the Ministry of Education and the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE) of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI). However, the analysis has not yet finished.

Multilingualism is also being promoted in Cypriot schools as part of the creation of the European Education Area.

In 2020, Cyprus was among the EU countries with the lowest proportion

² In addition to any other kind of training teachers take part in.

of upper secondary students learning two or more foreign languages (38% vs 49% EU average). During the 2021/2022 school year, besides English, taught in all Cypriot schools, compulsory French lessons started, in the 11th grade of six upper secondary schools and the 10th and 11th grades (16 to 17 years old) of four technical and vocational schools. From the 2022/2023 school year, compulsory teaching of French is expanded to all grades of lower and upper secondary education. In parallel, since September 2021, a free pilot certification programme in French is being offered to students in public schools³. A second pilot is already running in 25 upper secondary schools for the certification of competence in English⁴.

The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education is on the rise in Cyprus.

This is the most the case at lower secondary level, where ICT is a compulsory subject, with one of the highest number of annual hours (135) allocated to it in the EU (European Commission, 2020). The various measures put in place in this area during the COVID-19 lockdowns improved matters. The RRF and the ESF+ also support Cyprus in this area. The country has many 16-19-year-olds with basic or above basic overall digital skills: 82% compared to 69% EU average (2021).

Education for environmental sustainability is a key aspect of Cypriot education.

Environmental education is an integral part of the new primary and secondary curricula. The aim is to create a long-lasting awareness in schools of the need to address global warming, climate change, energy and urban development (Ministry of Education). Schools can also join the network of environmental education centres. One-off actions are also being organised, such as seminars on specific topics, participation in EU projects⁵ or environmental awareness-raising campaigns.

³ DELF *scolaire*, A1, A2, B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

⁴ Levels B1 and B2 of the CEFR.

⁵ Example: Schools as Living Labs (SALL).

Education for environmental sustainability is part of professional development courses for teachers at all levels. Cyprus is at the process to revise its national strategy for education for sustainable development under the framework of education for the environment, sustainable development and green transition 2030.

Schools' energy efficiency will be improved under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and Horizon 2020. At least 405 public school buildings, representing 55% of Cypriot schools, will be upgraded under the RRF energy efficiency programmes. The investment concerns the installation of photovoltaic systems in school buildings (Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry). Photovoltaic panels have already been installed in 114 public schools (European Commission, 2020). As a result, over 70% of Cypriot schools will use renewable energies. The aim is to achieve a reduction of at least 30% in energy consumption. From an educational perspective, the projects will raise pupils' environmental awareness. Cyprus is also developing innovative energy efficiency approaches in 25 public schools through Horizon 2020. The buildings will be transformed into almost zero energy consumption buildings and long-standing heating, air conditioning and lighting problems will be addressed. The project aims to activate EUR 7.5 million in public and private investments and develop a long-term energy renovation strategy for all public school buildings. In parallel, a framework for energy upgrades will be established based on environmental, energy and socio-economic criteria.

5. Vocational education and training and adult learning

VET will continue to be supported by the ESF+ and the RRF. Cyprus' VET sector remains relatively small, with only 16.8% of upper secondary pupils enrolled in VET in 2021 (compared to 48.7% on average in the EU). Exposure to work-based learning is also fairly limited (38% in 2021, compared to 60.7% in the

EU). Recent VET graduates' employment prospects have improved though, reaching 74.6% in 2021, close to the EU average of 76.4%. EU support for VET will come from the co-funded Ministry of Education project 'Upgrading of Technical and Vocational Education'. The overall objective is to further develop and improve VET, by providing the necessary knowledge, skills and competences to address labour market challenges. The project's indicative actions and initiatives include:

- the development and introduction of new study programmes;
- the purchase of technical equipment;
- the organisation of promotional campaigns;
- the provision of high-quality professional training for VET teachers;
- the development of a national monitoring system to track VET graduates;
- the construction of new technical schools.

In addition, the Cypriot national recovery and resilience plan includes the construction of two model technical schools which will provide students and educators with a modern well-equipped environment for learning increasing the capacity, quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training (VET) in Cyprus. Since 2019, three new second-chance VET schools have opened. Efforts are also being made to improve curricula for evening secondary schools by aligning them with those of morning schools. During the 2021/2022 school year, the compulsory teaching of French was introduced in the 1st and 2nd grades (15 and 16 years old) of four technical and vocational schools.

Cyprus has developed a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for all qualification levels. The NQF has been cross-referenced to the European Qualification Framework (EQF) and it is intended to keep it up to date according to European developments. A distinct part of the NQF is the System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ), developed by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus. It is dedicated to the recognition of vocational skills based on a series of standards of

vocational qualifications created for specific professional sectors.

A new Lifelong Learning Strategy was adopted for the period 2021-2027.

The Ministry of Education's intention in adopting the strategy is to increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning by improving the quality of adult education, establishing incentives for participation and eliminating barriers, improving outreach and awareness, and developing programmes for non-job-related learning. The accompanying actions include:

- the development by 2022 of a framework for the adult education sector, including explanations of relevant concepts, functions, processes and quality assurance criteria for programmes and trainers;
- the continuous supervision of the strategy to ensure its relevance and usefulness;
- the promotion of mechanisms for the validation and recognition of learning outcomes;
- a comprehensive segmentation and needs analysis, to be conducted every 3 years;
- guidelines on upskilling and reskilling pathways;
- programmes for developing basic and digital skills;
- the promotion of distance learning programmes;
- a communication strategy and general campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of lifelong learning.

The strategy states that lifelong learning should be accessible and relevant to all adults and strike a balance between academic subjects, job-related development, socio-emotional fulfilment, civic education and well-being, while helping adults to develop life skills.

The Human Resource Development Authority provides opportunities for flexible knowledge development and upskilling.

This will occur based on labour market needs, including through the introduction of individual learning accounts (ILAs) and micro-credentials. ILAs will give eligible groups of employed and unemployed people credits to acquire new knowledge and

skills, and/or upgrade existing knowledge and skills. Through ILAs, a wide range of training programmes will be offered as part of the Human Resource Development Authority's multi-company training programmes, particularly on the green and blue economies and for the development of digital skills. The introduction of ILAs, part of Cyprus' 'Thalia 2021-2027' programme, will be co-funded by the ESF+. Micro-credentials are qualifications that demonstrate learning outcomes and certify skills acquired through short learning experiences. They may be particularly useful for people who wish to develop professionally by making use of their knowledge without completing a complete tertiary education programme.

The adoption of the 'E-Skills Action Plan 2021-2025' will enable the development of digital skills and the continuous upskilling of all population groups.

It falls within the competence of the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy and was financed through the RRF. The action plan includes:

- a platform comprising a self-assessment tool and a directory of personalised suggestions for upskilling classes;
- programmes for professionals in the public sector;
- upskilling/reskilling opportunities for the workforce in general;
- investments in equipment and connectivity;
- the development of a communication strategy to raise awareness and promote lifelong learning and a digital culture.



Box 2: ESF+ project: Upgrading of Technical and Vocational Education and Training

This project is being implemented by the Directorate of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth during the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

2014-2020 programming period. The project will contribute to an attractive, flexible and high-quality system of technical and vocational education and training. For the project, the Cypriot authorities are mainly developing new programmes, new secondary technical and vocational education and training specialities and new curricula, and offering career guidance services and in-service training for students and trainees. The project is expected to increase the rate of participation in secondary technical and vocational education and training, increase the number of students completing secondary education and post-secondary education and to increase the employment rate of secondary technical and vocational education and training graduates.

Public budget: EUR 15.9 million.

Source:

<https://mdet.moec.gov.cy/index.php/el/erga/programmatiki-2014-2020/17-2014-2020/116-anaptyxi-mtee>

6. Higher education

Cyprus' tertiary educational attainment (58.3% in 2021 vs 45% EU-level target) is one of the highest in the EU, but the labour market relevance of education needs to be increased. There is also a significant gender gap, with male tertiary educational attainment around 16 pps lower than female. There is also a wide gap of 31.9 pps between people born in and outside Cyprus. So far, interaction between academia and the business sector has been limited and graduates' pathways after leaving higher education have not been analysed. In order to better link higher education to labour market needs and improve comparability with other EU countries' labour markets, the department of higher education (DHE) of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth is developing a graduate tracking mechanism with RRF funding. To this end, an employers' skills survey is being designed.

The number of STEM graduates falls short of the labour market demand. There were 13.1% STEM graduates among all higher education

graduates in 2020, the second lowest proportion in the EU (EU average 24.9%). In Cyprus, the most popular study areas are education, business, administration and law. This is in sharp contrast to the European Employment Services' forecasts for the best employment prospects for 2021 for jobs requiring a high level of education. At the top of the EURES lists are technical services, consultants and programmers, ICT specialists, medical staff and engineers. In 2020, of a total of 10 403 tertiary education graduates, only 7.7% had studied engineering, manufacturing and construction, 2.7% ICT and another 2.7% natural sciences, maths and statistics. There were 4.6% female STEM graduates among all graduates in 2020, almost half the EU average of 8.1%. This is a drop of 2.6 pps since 2015, one of the highest drops in the EU during this period. The proportion of total STEM graduates out of total graduates in Cyprus dropped from 2015 to 2020 by 4.3 pps. Despite this very low number of STEM graduates overall, one out of three STEM graduates is a woman (34.8% in 2020), a good score compared to the EU average of 32.5%. The Ministry of Education has introduced STEM programmes across primary and secondary education in order to encourage the participation of students in STEM programmes. This initiative aims at increasing the number of students in STEM programmes in the country's higher education institutions.

The Ministry of Education is improving the internationalisation of higher education institutions. The aim is to make Cyprus an international education and research hub. The department of higher education of the Ministry of Education is in the process to promote higher education and attract students to study in Cyprus for example through participation in international fairs. Educational agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) support efforts for internationalisation. Agreements⁶ on the mutual academic recognition of higher education qualifications and MoUs⁷ have been concluded

⁶ With Germany, Italy, Romania, Russia, China, Armenia and Jordan.

⁷ With China, Kuwait, UAE, Japan, Oman, Iran and Qatar.

with a number of countries. In addition, three higher education institutions, the University of Cyprus⁸, the Cyprus University of Technology⁹ and the Frederick University¹⁰ have succeeded in participating in European Universities Alliances. A national working group was formed within the Ministry of Education in order to make the most of new opportunities afforded by European higher education initiatives. The main challenges to be addressed are the joint European degree label and the institutionalised EU cooperation instruments to explore the feasibility of European legal status for alliances of higher education institutions.

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¹⁰ EUCONEXUS Plus 'European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability'.

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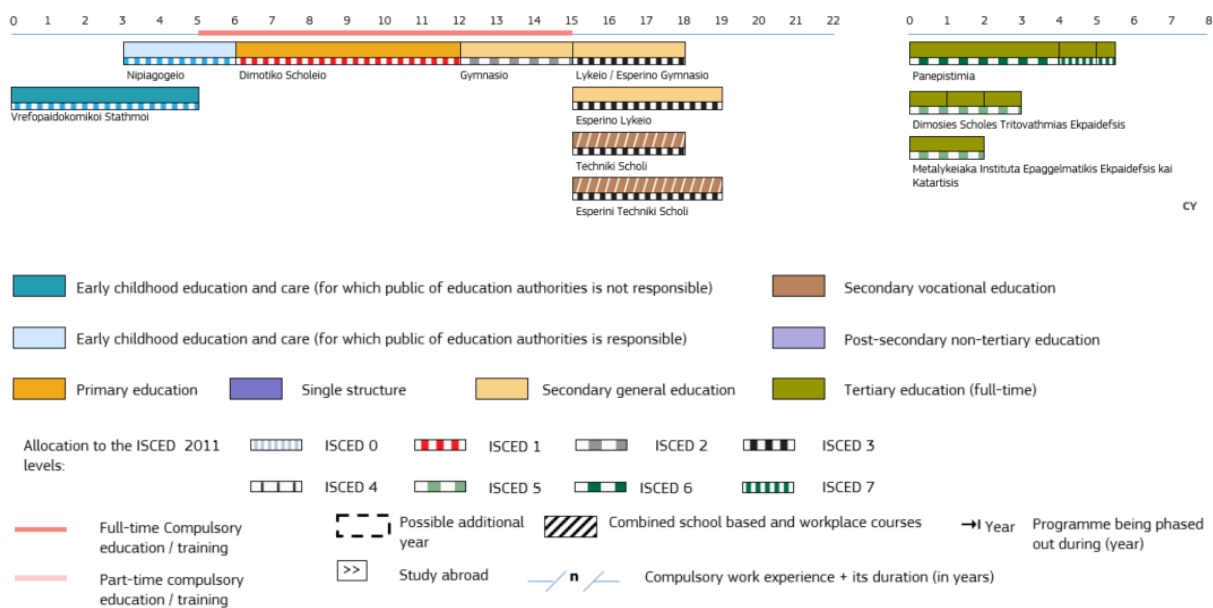
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Annex I: Key indicators sources

Indicator	Source
Participation in early childhood education	Eurostat (UOE), educ_uae_enra21
Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills	IEA, ICILS
Low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science	OECD (PISA)
Early leavers from education and training	Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_14 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_02
Exposure of VET graduates to work based learning	Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfs_9919
Tertiary educational attainment	Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_9912
Participation of adults in learning	Data for this EU-level target is not available. Data collection starts in 2022. Source: EU LFS.
Equity indicator	European Commission (Joint Research Centre) calculations based on OECD's PISA 2018 data
Upper secondary level attainment	Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp
Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure	Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp

Annex II: Structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022. The Structure of the European Education Systems 2022/2023: Schematic Diagrams. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Please email any comments or questions to:
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