



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

INTERIM REPORT

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROGRAMME

“EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010”

**Nicosia
April 2007**

CHAPTER 1: PRESENTATION OF THE NATIONAL LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGY (max. 4 pages)

1.1. Current state of play:

1.1.1 Whether a lifelong learning strategy was established in your country by the end of 2006, and if not what is the timetable for its establishment

A first draft of a comprehensive LL Strategy for Cyprus was established before the end of 2006. The Strategy extends over a 7-year time period (2007-2013), in order to coincide with the time span of other important national and European planning documents.

For the purposes of the formulation of this strategy, a Coordination Committee has been set up and a drafting team, comprising of representatives of the Planning Bureau, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Cyprus Productivity Centre and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus, has been assigned the preparation of the first draft of the strategy.

The LL Strategy for Cyprus is foreseen to receive the approval of the Council of Ministers by June 2007. Until then the main tasks remaining are:

- Finalizing the LL Strategy document by the Coordination Committee.
- Provisional approval of the LL Strategy document by the competent ministries.
- Submission of the LL Strategy document to the Council of Ministers for final approval.
- Appointment of the National Committee for Lifelong Learning by the Council of Ministers

1.1.2 Plans for future adjustment, completion or modification of the strategy

The draft of the strategy provides that the National Committee for Lifelong Learning will be the body responsible for making suggestions to the Council of Ministers for any future adjustment, completion or modification of the strategy.

1.1.3 Any obstacles encountered in the establishment of your strategy

Always the economic aspect of any policy measure is a restrictive factor, despite the fact that Cyprus has one of the highest percentages of GDP spent on education and training in the European Union (infrastructure, human resources, economic incentives for participation in these processes).

Furthermore, the effort to cater for multiple needs in education and training of various groups of the society and the difficulty in coordination of the participating public organisations in the drafting of the strategy can be considered as obstacles encountered during the establishment of the strategy.

1.2. Comprehensiveness, coherence and relevance:

1.2.1 Which systems and levels of education and training are covered

The Cyprus LL Strategy covers all levels and types of education and training, formal, informal and non-formal, from pre-primary education to adult and continuing education and training. All aspects of Lifelong Learning, including school education, technical education and training, second chance school education, tertiary education, adult education and training, informal and non-formal education and training that meet the needs of various groups of people of the Cypriot society, are addressed by the Lifelong Learning Strategy.

1.2.2 The challenges addressed by the strategy, including improving the efficiency and equity of education and training systems, and how these have been identified (evidence base)

The challenges addressed by the LL strategy are the following:

- Make education and training systems accessible to all citizens of Cyprus, including those with special needs and disadvantaged groups
- Improve education and training systems, their content and infrastructure, in order to meet the educational and training needs of a modern European-Cypriot society
- Increase research and development activities, especially in areas which are important for lifelong learning in Cyprus
- Attain efficiency in governance of LL systems, with the active participation of all social partners

The Educational Reform, the dialogue which has been initiated in 2005 for the restructuring and the modernization of the Cyprus Education system, after a comprehensive study performed by a group of experts in Education, constitutes a key vehicle of the LL Strategy, in addressing the above challenges. The main aims of the Reform is to improve the quality of the education system, to modernise curricula and teaching methods, to offer equal opportunities to young people, and to contribute to overcoming the difficulties and eliminating obstacles for education of children and young people coming from diverse backgrounds and having diverse needs.

1.2.3 The priorities for action and policy development within the strategy, in the light of these challenges

- Address the needs of the society for civil education, social cohesion, active citizenship, entrepreneurship etc.
- Address the needs of children and young people for education and counselling
- Address the needs of young adults for training in order to enter the work force
- Address the needs of unemployed adults for retraining

- Address the needs of the labour market in Cyprus

1.3. Main policy measures:

1.3.1 The main policy measures in the strategy and how these fit together, including

- Modernising teaching methods and school curricula to include the use of new technologies in teaching and European priorities
- Gradual implementation of an all-day school system for all primary and lower secondary school children
- Support systems for the education and training of students with special needs and disadvantaged people
- Expansion of the opportunities offered to young people for higher education studies in Cyprus by establishing new universities, new faculties to existing ones, and by regulating the operation of private universities and other tertiary education institutions
- Promotion of the training and strengthening of the employability of young high-school graduates, college graduates, unemployed and economically inactive women
- Redesigning of the apprenticeship system in order to meet the needs of early school leavers as well as the labour market
- Strengthening and expanding mechanisms for vocational guidance within and outside the school system
- Improvement of initial and in-service training for teachers
- Promotion and support of educational research and development
- Feasibility study for the operation of public vocational lifelong learning schools
- Strengthening the administrative capacity of the public sector through training and development
- Encouragement of the private sector to get involved in Education and training
- Encouragement of cooperation between relevant stakeholders, including policy makers, teachers unions, trade unions, political parties, parents and pupils associations, etc, for the lifelong learning

1.3.2 Outline the measures designed to address progress towards the EU benchmarks, including any national targets in these areas

Cyprus has included the EU Benchmarks in its aims for improving the quality of its education system and its LL Strategies. Some of the EU benchmarks and measures for their progress are:

(a) Early school leavers: (Cyprus does not agree with the statistics of EU concerning this particular benchmark and the Commission has already been officially informed for the reason) In order to improve in this area, several preventive and corrective measures are being taken:

- Through the special education programme which operates within the school system of Cyprus, more opportunities are offered to pupils in order to overcome their learning difficulties
- School psychologists, through special programmes, offer pupils with learning difficulties support to improve their attitude towards school and improve their learning in order to prevent their frustration and withdrawal from the school system
- The operation of second chance schools in all main towns of Cyprus offer the opportunity to those who are considered early leavers to re-enter the school system, so that they have the necessary qualifications to enter higher education
- Compulsory pre-primary education contributes to cultivation of the necessary learning culture to stay in school
- All tertiary education students are offered a state allowance as a financial support for their studies in order to encourage young people to enter Tertiary Education
- Redesigning of the apprenticeship system in order to offer young people an alternative form of training, which will contribute to their personal development and at the same time meet the needs of the labour market

(b) Increase the number of the graduates of Secondary Education and those with University Degrees, particularly in Mathematics, Science and Technology

- The above measures, mentioned for (a), contribute towards the aim for increasing the number of Secondary and Tertiary education graduates
- The establishment of the new Cyprus Technological University and the development of the new Engineering School of the University of Cyprus will contribute to the increase of the number of graduates in the field of Mathematics, Science and Technology.
- The establishment of new Universities in Cyprus (Technological and Open), the new faculties in the University of Cyprus, as well as the establishment of Private Universities by the new law, should be considered as Cyprus contribution and measures for increasing the Higher Education graduates.

(c) Increase the number of teachers participating in in-service training seminars

- Upgrading/restructuring the Pedagogical Institute, which is the main provider of such seminars in Cyprus
- The Pedagogical Institute aims to offer seminars which are directly relevant to teachers' needs, close to their location and school based.
- The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been introduced by the Pedagogical Institute, so that the skills and knowledge acquired by teachers may be accredited.

- Introduction of new compulsory and optional in-service training programmes for all the teachers, and review, based on a needs analysis, the programmes already offered.
- Development of links / networks between the Pedagogical Institute and other educational institutions.

(d) Increase the participation of adults in Lifelong Learning

- Upgrade the skills and competences of people at work in order to secure their employability and to meet the needs of the economy
- Provide opportunities for training in basic skills and entrepreneurship for economically inactive adults, in order to facilitate their entry to the labour market and reduce the risk of social exclusion
- Extend the scope of programmes offered by Adult Education Centres in order to enhance active citizenship, civic education, as well as to build occupational skills mainly in languages and computer literacy

1.3.3 Allocation of resources to main policy measures, including any national targets for more / more efficient use of funds and the use of EU funds to support lifelong learning (e.g. Structural Funds, European Investment Bank)

Financial resources are allocated according to the priorities set for the implementation of policy measures. In order to use national and EU funds more efficiently to support lifelong learning, effort is being exerted for detailed and comprehensive planning. Furthermore, the appropriate structures and mechanisms have been established in order to make the most efficient and timely use of available funds.

Details about the allocation of resources can be found in the “Education and Training 2010” Cyprus National Report (2005). Worth mentioning is the progress that have been made towards the introduction of ICT in the school system. Funds have been spent on the purchase of hardware and software and on the teachers training for the use of ICT.

1.3.4. Measures to change attitudes to learning

- For School Education, the aim is to transform the school environment into a pleasant, safe and attractive place for all pupils. This can be achieved through improving the infrastructure and through activities that meet the pupils’ interests, such as cultural activities, scientific activities, visits, exchange programmes etc. The development of alternative forms of learning in order to gain pupils interest and develop their abilities and lifelong learning competences is one of the priorities of the Educational Reform
- For adult education and training, special programmes are established that target groups of people with special interests, whether they are employed, unemployed or inactive. Participation to these programmes is often subsidised. Such programmes are offered through the Pedagogical Institute, the Human Resource Development Authority, and other public and semi-public organisations and the private sector.

1.3.5 Strengthening evidence-based policy making, using a culture of evaluation, leading to innovation in education and training,

In the context of the Educational Reform several measures are suggested for establishing a culture of evaluation for strengthening evidence-based policy making, including:

- A new comprehensive and fair way of external evaluation of teachers
- Introduction of self-evaluation for teachers
- Introduction of internal, institutional evaluation for the school unit
- Establishment of a Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation
- Introduction of a new scheme for the evaluation and certification of training providers
- Ex-post evaluation of existing schemes operated by the Human Resource Development Authority
- Establishment of a System of Vocational Qualifications
- Identification of the impact of Lifelong Learning on productivity and competitiveness
- Identification of trends and projections of lifelong learning needs

The discussions for all the above suggestions are well under way in the context of the deliberations of the Education Council (where all stakeholders participate), and the Ministry of Education and Culture is in the process of adopting some of them.

Apart from the above, several innovations, such as the use of Language Rooms, the implementation of the all-day school programme, etc. are evaluated by the Educational Research Unit of the Pedagogical Institute. The results of the evaluations are used for the further implementation of the programmes.

Finally, Cyprus participates in several European surveys, which are used for the development of innovations in the education and training area. The Government of Cyprus regrets that the Cyprus Education System cannot benefit from the OECD surveys, for which Community funds are used. So far, Cyprus has not participated in these surveys due to restrictions imposed by Turkey.

1.3.6 Measures to target the needs of disadvantaged people (e.g. immigrants, ethnic minorities, the disabled)

The measures, which are already in place, targeting the needs of disadvantaged people, will be extended and improved. Such measures are the following:

- The functional literacy programme that is implemented in the lower secondary school system of Cyprus, which focuses on Greek (mother language) and Mathematics
- The implementation of Educational Priority Zones, which is a programme for combating school failure and illiteracy. These zones are located in disadvantaged areas, where the majority of the population consists of low income and immigrant families.

- Extra Greek language lessons are offered to all schools with immigrant population. Greek language courses are offered to adult immigrants through the Adult Education Centres. Also, through the Adult Education Centres, Greek language courses are offered for Turkish Cypriots and Turkish language courses for Greek Cypriots.
- An increased number of seminars as regards to the teaching of immigrant students are offered through the Pedagogical Institute.
- Other measures to combat social and educational exclusion, developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture, include drug and anti-social behaviour prevention education and programmes for the development of pupils' self esteem.
- The Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the Disabled which is operated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance
- Most of the schools and education centres, as well as their facilities are accessible to the disabled people.
- Individualised guidance and training interventions for economically inactive and unemployed women
- Individualised guidance and training interventions for economically inactive and unemployed young secondary school graduates
- Redesign of the Apprenticeship Scheme, to combat early school leaving as well as to strengthen the employability and social inclusion of young persons many of whom come from socially and economically disadvantaged background

1.4. Development, implementation and dissemination of the strategy:

1.4.1 Coordination and consultation mechanisms involving all relevant stakeholders,

There is an on-going process of cooperation and consultation among relevant Ministries (Education, Labour, Finance, and Planning Bureau) as well as with various stakeholders: This includes cooperation with teachers, parents and pupils organization as well as with political parties, employers, employees and local authorities. The Ministry of Education and Culture is promoting all the aspects of Educational Reform through Councils where all the Education stakeholders participate.

1.4.2 Implementation arrangements, including publicity and dissemination.

As soon as the Strategy receives the formal approval of the Council of Ministers, the Lifelong Learning Committee will make every effort for its implementation and publicity. A lot of implementation measures are being discussed in various relevant committees, and some of them are already in place. Publicity and dissemination activities such as conferences, publications in national press, leaflets, and presentations in the local media will be organized after the formal approval of the strategy.

CHAPTER 2: IMPLEMENTATION OF TRANSVERSAL POLICY OBJECTIVES (max. 4 pages)

2.1. The establishment of national qualification systems and frameworks (in line with the European Qualifications Framework) and the elimination of obstacles between levels and systems.

A National Qualifications Framework has not been established in Cyprus yet. However, following the deliberations for the approval of the European Qualifications Framework in the EU, a working committee has been set up to formulate the policies for its introduction, on the basis of National priorities and conditions. The discussions are at their early stages and every effort has been made to involve all stakeholders and relevant government departments in this attempt. The aim of these discussions is to determine the principles on which such a system will be based on. It is clear, however, that the whole process will develop in full respect of the learning outcomes, as they are reflected by the relevant certificates of the schooling system of Cyprus. Also, it has to be mentioned that the Cyprus Higher Education system was always based on the three cycle system, including short cycle programmes, and is fully in line with the Bologna Process and the Qualifications Framework of the EHEA, as agreed in Bergen.

No obstacles can be reported in the Educational system of Cyprus between levels and systems, from pre-primary through upper secondary level. This statement can be supported by the following:

- Education is compulsory from the age of 5 (kindergarten) through the age of 15 (end of lower secondary level)
- Public Education is free for all Cypriot citizens who attend public schools in the government-controlled area of Cyprus, Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots alike. Also, public Education is free for nationals of other countries who live in Cyprus, up to the upper secondary school level
- All pupils can continue to the upper secondary level, provided that they successfully completed the lower level. They can choose to attend general secondary or technical/vocational education school
- Pupils can move between systems of education (i.e. between private and public schools, or general secondary and technical/vocational education) only by taking placement tests.

The only 'obstacle' that can be reported in the Cyprus Educational System is the entrance examinations that are necessary for acceptance at the public Tertiary Education Institutions. The existence of the entrance examinations is considered necessary due to the fact that a very high percentage of high-school graduates in Cyprus continue their studies to Tertiary Education, therefore, public education institutions cannot accommodate all of them. As a result of that, a large number of Cypriot students attend Universities in other European countries and the U.S.A. Also, there are a number of private institutions in Cyprus, where any high-school graduate can be considered for acceptance. To minimize this obstacle and to encourage participation to tertiary education, the government of Cyprus is taking the following steps:

- Students who attend tertiary education institutions, whether in Cyprus or abroad, where they have to pay tuition fees, they receive annually £1500 from the government as a subsidy for their studies, while students who attend tuition-free institutions receive £1000 as a subsidy.

New faculties are added to already existing institutions and two newly established universities, the Technical University of Cyprus and the Open University of Cyprus will be operational in September of 2007. Also, a recent legislation has been adopted, providing for the establishment of private universities. Therefore the number of students that can be accepted to tertiary education in Cypriot Institutions will be increased.

2.2. Identification and validation on non-formal and informal learning

At present, there are no procedures or national guidelines for the recognition of prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning within the Educational System. Individual higher education institution may allocate at their own discretion a number of credits for prior learning when evaluating entry or transfer requirements. A recent modification of the Law of the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS) allows the Council to recognize, at its discretion, transfer credits based on previous work experience as part of a formal degree title. The general issue of recognizing prior learning arose in the context of the discussions about the development of a National Qualifications Framework, but the discussions are at a very early stage. However, some steps have been taken on the initiative of institutions. For example, the Continuing Education Centre, operating within the University of Cyprus, has assigned learning outcomes and credits to the modules of some of its lifelong learning programmes.

Any decision regarding the identification and validation on non-formal and informal learning, from the education point of view, will influence the legislation of Cyprus, relating to the recruitment, employment and promotion of staff, especially in the public sector. Change of legislation will require in-depth dialogue and consent by all stakeholders involved, a process which will be time-consuming, therefore this is not included in the government's priorities. This process can follow the Educational Reform which is the government's main priority in the field of Education and Training. However, some steps have been taken in this area, regarding vocational qualifications.

Great importance has been attached by Cyprus to the European Commission's suggestion for the development of a Competence-based System of Vocational Qualifications. This is a high priority objective which is included in the National Programme for the Lisbon Strategy and in the Lifelong Learning Strategy of Cyprus.

The Board of Directors of the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) in May 2005 and subsequently the Council of Ministers in November 2005 approved a detailed proposal for the gradual introduction of a System of Vocational Qualifications in 2 phases: 1st phase: 2006 and 2nd phase: 2007 – 2013. The approval by the Council of Ministers included a provision for the utilization of the infrastructure of public training institutions and the trainers themselves during the 1st phase. There was also a provisional approval of the inclusion of the 2nd phase in the projects to be co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

The System of Vocational Qualifications is designed specifically for the assessment and certification of the knowledge, skills and competences of a person to perform competently in a working environment under normal working conditions at a predetermined level of occupation. Candidates can be registered and participate in the assessment and certification procedure to acquire the qualification, independently of how and when they acquired the relevant knowledge and skills. The benefits from the gradual introduction of such a system are great and concern the whole Cyprus economy and in particular the enterprises and the employers, the training

institutions and the employees themselves. The three main functions of the System are the following:

- Development of the Standard of Vocational Qualification.
- Awarding of the Vocational Qualification, including the stages of diagnosis, preparation of the candidate, assessment and certification.
- Accreditation/ Recognition of Qualification

At the 1st phase during 2006 which is extended to 2007, 5 Standards of Vocational Qualifications at level 2, for the occupations of waiter, cook, receptionist, construction mason and sales person (retail trade) have been developed and utilized. From June 2006 onwards, opportunities for access were provided to employees in relevant occupations and about 100 employees submitted applications in 2006.

During Phase 2, which covers the period 2007 – 2013, the development of standards for additional occupations at various levels is envisaged. Specifically, it is envisaged to cover occupations in the economic sectors of Manufacturing, Hotel/ Catering Industry, Construction, Trade/ Repairs of Motor Vehicles as well as cross-sectoral occupations, mainly the administrative ones. During this phase, opportunities for access will be provided to employees, unemployed and economically inactive persons. The possibility of incorporating into the system students, apprentices and trainees will be discussed with the relevant ministries.

2.3 Widely accessible lifelong guidance policies and systems

The Counselling and Career Education Service (C.C.E.S) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (M.O.E.C.) has already proposed the operation of regional (district level) Centres of Counselling and Guidance, which will operate at convenient to the general public hours. The Centres will be accessible to all European citizens and emphasis will be given on the provision of counselling / guidance to all citizens, irrespective of age, gender, religion, race, ethnicity, and disability. The qualified counsellors, who will serve in these Centres, will have in-service training with special consideration on helping their clients to develop appropriate career managing skills over their lifetime. The M.O.E.C. has accepted the proposal and most likely the above-mentioned Centres will operate within the new school year 2007-2008.

Also, the offices of the Department of Labour throughout the island provide individualized guidance to unemployed youth and economically inactive / unemployed women

At the same time the M.O.E.C. has already proceeded to the upgrading of its services, such as the acquisition of a new psychometric test specialized in Educational / Vocational Counseling. Furthermore, the M.O.E.C. has included in its short-time goals: a) the research on long-term labour market demand forecast, and b) the promotion of the establishment of a firmer connection between education and labour market.

Furthermore, the M.O.E.C. has included in its short-term goals the development of the students' and other interested persons' lifelong learning and management skills.

Specifically, the school counselors through the teaching of the Career Education course at the 3rd grade of the Gymnasium (Lower High School), individual and group counseling, and through seminars to students and parents, promote the development of the above – mentioned skills, as well as the development of reflective techniques and autonomous learning.

Reflective learning techniques and autonomous learning is also promoted through the teaching of other courses included in the Secondary School (General and Technical) curriculum. The Secondary School teachers receive special pre-service training before entering the Public Educational System, as well as in-service training on including in their teaching practices the promotion of reflecting learning techniques and autonomous learning.

Additionally, the C.C.E.S. has strengthened the efforts for increased cooperation with parents, parents' organizations, youth organizations, public and private education and training institutions, labour organizations, private guidance practitioners, employers organizations, universities, and the world of work in general. However, it is acknowledged that the effort of involving the appropriate key players needs to be more systematic, organized and intensified. A very important issue related to the above is the establishment of a National Forum on Guidance, which is promoted by the M.O.E.C.

Counseling students with special needs

The policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture is the inclusion of children with special needs in the mainstream Secondary Education. Based on the principle of providing equal opportunities for education to the children with special needs, the school counselors provide personal, educational, and family counseling to the students with special needs and contribute to the development of individual educational programs for these students. Additionally, the C.C.E.S. has intensified its efforts for the social acceptance of these students by the school community.

C.C.E.S. and early school leavers

As a result of the socio-economic and cultural changes which have been taking place lately, the youngsters are faced with increased social dangers such as use or abuse of alcohol / drugs, involvement in socially unacceptable behavior, early school leaving, etc. Therefore, the role of the Counseling and Career Education Service for prevention and intervention is very significant.

Specifically, the Counselors through (a) personal, group or family counseling, (b) the teaching of the subjects of Career Education and Social Education, (c) the organization and implementation of special seminars addressed to students and parents, (d) the participation into different Committees in the Ministry of Education and Culture which work towards the development and implementation of prevention programs, (e) the use of psychometric tests devices, (f) the publication of informative books, etc, help young people at risk to develop the necessary skills to deal with their problems more effectively and thus, keep them into the school system until they complete High School.

2.4. Measures to reinforce transnational mobility in all sectors, including through the removal of administrative and legal obstacles, the implementation of Europass, or by the provision of financial and other support.

Mobility in Cyprus, including the exchange of students, teachers and trainers, is promoted within the framework of the European Lifelong Learning programmes. According to data obtained from the Cyprus National Agency, the sectoral programmes Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci and Grundtvig have become very well known in Cyprus and there is great interest by eligible beneficiaries for participation. The government of Cyprus co-finances the National Agency which implements European Programmes in order to facilitate transnational Mobility. School twinning is also very popular, especially in the primary school sector. The Ministry of Education and Culture,

as well as other governmental services, facilitate the participation in mobility activities by providing paid leave of absences to beneficiaries. Mobility activities are often co-financed by local organizations.

The teaching of seven foreign languages (English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Turkish) in the secondary education level is also a measure for reinforcing transnational mobility. Several innovations with respect to language teaching, such as the use of Language Rooms, the restructuring of the national curriculum for languages based on the CERF and the preparation of the first National (European) Portfolio of Languages for teenagers will contribute to the effective language learning and facilitate mobility.

At tertiary education level, aiming at the increase of incoming and outgoing mobility (student, academic, researcher, and employee mobility) the following initiatives have been implemented:

- The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) has been applied to all programmes of study at the University of Cyprus, both as a credit accumulation as well as a credit transfer system. The two new Public Universities have adopted, right from the beginning, the use of ECTS. Some public and private institutions of higher education have started using the ECTS for their programmes and they have been consulting the Bologna Promoters Group in this respect.
- Regulations governing the operation of the University of Cyprus have been amended to provide for the award of joint degrees in collaboration with other Universities.
- All 1st and 2nd cycle students graduating from public Universities and some private tertiary education institutions will receive a Diploma Supplement, in English, automatically and free of charge, which corresponds to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format.
- Higher Education institutions both university-level and non-university level award comparable qualifications to those awarded by EU countries based on three cycles for the Bachelors, Masters, and Doctorate levels as well as qualifications for short-cycle programmes, as provided by the Bologna Process.
- The School of Modern Greek of the University of Cyprus was founded in 1998 in order to provide courses of Greek to non-native speakers. The School welcomes in its programmes prospective students, members of the academic staff of the University, exchange students and other non-native speakers. It also offers intensive short-term Greek courses tailored to specific needs and requirements, e.g., to children of Cypriot immigrants or groups of professionals. ERASMUS students can enroll, free of charge, in the Summer Intensive Course or in any of the regular courses of the School, depending on the duration of their stay in Cyprus.

Europass is also implemented in Cyprus as of the year 2006. The Cyprus Productivity Centre was appointed as the Cyprus National Europass Centre (NEC) by the Decision of the Council of Ministers on May 1st 2005. Europass was officially launched in Cyprus on December 13th 2005.

In 2006 96 Europass Mobility and 2014 Europass Diploma Supplements were issued.

CHAPTER 3: IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY OBJECTIVES IN SCHOOLS, HIGHER EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING, ADULT EDUCATION (max. 12 pages)

3.1. Elements to be reported on for all levels (schools, higher education, vocational education and training, adult learning)

3.1.1. Governance and leadership of education and training institutions (e.g. organizational and administrative reforms, autonomy and accountability measures, public private initiatives):

School Education:

The Educational System of Cyprus remains a centrally directed system, with the central authority being the Ministry of Education and Culture, regarding the curricula and the content of education delivered by public schools. However, there is an on-going process for changes in the framework of the Educational Reform, such as the restructuring of the Ministry and the Pedagogical Institute. There is also a debate regarding school autonomy.

As far as financing public schools is concerned, public funds are distributed to regional Public School Authorities, which have the responsibility of maintenance and supply of public schools in their region. Some small steps have been taken during the 2006-2007 school year towards school operational/financial autonomy. A small budget of £4 per pupil, per year (£500 minimum per primary school and £1500 minimum per secondary school) is allocated to each school for the day to day expenses. The responsibility for this budget lies on the school headmaster.

Tertiary Education:

Autonomy:

- Public Universities are self governed and autonomous institutions operating under respective laws which outline the provisions for their governance.
- Law 109 (I)/2005, which regulates the establishment, operation and control of private universities in Cyprus, was approved by the House of Representatives in the summer of 2005. This new law is expected to upgrade eligible private HEIs to autonomous universities. Five applications are currently under evaluation by the ECPU (Evaluation Committee for Private Universities) and the first private universities are expected to operate in the very near future.

Accountability:

According to Law 144/1989 - 2006 the University of Cyprus is obliged to maintain the proper books and accounts in respect of its operations. The law also provides that the accounts of the University shall be audited annually by the Auditor General of the Republic who submits his report to the Council of the University and forwards a copy thereof to the Council of Ministers and the House of Representatives. In addition, the University of Cyprus after the end of each academic year prepares and forwards to the Council of Ministers, a report regarding its activities, operations and policy during the preceding academic year. Similar laws govern the operation of the two new public Universities in Cyprus (Technological and Open University).

3.1.2. Stimulating private investment from enterprises, households and individuals

The situation concerning private investment in Education and Training in Cyprus has not been substantially differentiated since the previous National Report on 'Education and Training 2010' was drafted. Some elements of differentiation are the following:

- Very recently a collaboration programme was signed recently between the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus Employers' and Industrialists' Federation. Through this collaboration framework the University of Cyprus provides the opportunity to local companies to contribute to the development of a knowledge-based society in our country.
The agreement stipulates the following:
 - 1 Provision of specialized counseling services
 - 2 Organization of international conferences, specialized seminars and events aiming at further developing of human resources in the local industry
 - 3 Organization of fundraising campaigns (funds to be used for the financial support of students at the postgraduate level through scholarship schemes, awards for academic and industrial excellence etc)
- An increasing number of companies and individuals support the University of Cyprus through various donations which aim at the development of the Cypriot economy and society in general.
- At school education level, parents and teachers associations provide financial support for several school activities or help schools with soliciting sponsors for school events.

3.1.3. Widening access and improving equity of participation, treatment and outcomes, especially for disadvantaged learners (e.g. migrants, ethnic minorities, the disabled)

Education is compulsory and offered freely to everybody living in Cyprus, from the age of 5 years and eight months old to the age of 15. Students whose mother language is other than Greek are offered extra Greek language courses within the regular school programme and in extra classes running in the afternoon.

Special care is also taken for children with special needs which include the upgrading of the existing infrastructure and the individual or small group teaching. In Primary Education, specialized teachers such as speech therapists, kinisiotherapists and others are appointed for the pupils with special needs. Psychological and counseling support is also offered by the Department of Educational Psychology of the Ministry of Education and Culture in cooperation with the Special Education Unit of the Primary Education Department.

There are several programmes operating within the school education system targeting youth at risk, organized by the Educational Psychology Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture, in collaboration with other relevant institutions and services, such as "Standing on my feet", "communication within the family", "youth debates", "Anti-drug Education Seminars"

Some specific measures taken by the Ministry of Education and Culture to address the issue mentioned in the headline are the following:

1. Educational Priority Zones:

The programme of Educational Priority Zones (EPZs) is one of the main measures that are implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture with the aim of offering equality of opportunity in education and of combating school failure and illiteracy.

Each EPZ consists of one Gymnasium (lower secondary school), the main primary schools in its capture area and the main kindergartens linked with these primary schools, in degraded areas with a pupil population coming from families of a low socioeconomic and educational level. The criteria for defining an area as EPZ is a high record of school failure and functional illiteracy in the area's school units, a high share of foreign or foreign language speaking pupils, a high number of drop-outs and high incidence of violent and offensive behaviour.

The EPZs innovation was introduced as a pilot project in the school year 2003-2004 in two school complexes, one in Nicosia and one in Limassol, and it was expanded to one area in Pafos, in 2004-2005. These three EPZs continued functioning during the school years 2005-2006 and 2006-2007.

The **general objective** of EPZs is the qualitative improvement of the educational system as a whole, that is the maximization of its effectiveness to a degree leading all children to school success.

The EPZs **specific objectives** are:

- The drastic reduction of functional illiteracy upon completion of primary education and its elimination by the end of the nine-year compulsory education.
- The elimination of the drop-out phenomenon, especially during the lower secondary education.
- The drastic reduction of school failure at all levels of education.

During the pilot implementation of the EPZs plan, the Ministry of Education had taken the following **measures**:

- Reduction of the number children per classroom.
- Employment of teachers speaking the mother tongue of foreign language speaking pupils.
- Offer of free meals to (Turkish Cypriot) pupils of the all-day school.
- Offer of afternoon activities (groups, clubs) at the Gymnasiums included in EPZs.
- Posting of two educationists in each EPZ as coordinators.
- All-day functioning of the primary schools and Gymnasiums covered by EPZs.

The pilot operation of EPZs had, inter alia, the following **positive results**:

- In the school units covered by EPZs there has been a reduction of pupil drop-outs, of school failure (referrals and repetitions) and of referrals to the Educational Psychology Service, as well as improvement of school success.
- Support of the foreign language speaking pupils has led to increasing their entry into the educational system of Cyprus, to reducing the number of drop-outs and to improving their performance.
- Increase of school presence and of the proportion of enrolment and attendance of gipsy pupils.

2. Adult Education Centres

The Adult Education Centres provide non-formal continuing education which aims at improving the quality of life of both men and women involved and offering them fulfillment, with the aim of improving their self-image and developing their communication skills, thereby contributing to their all-round development. This is achieved through a nationwide network of programmes aimed at all citizens.

The three hundred Adult Education Centres in Cyprus offer programmes in both urban and rural areas, usually on the premises of public schools. Most of the classes operate in the afternoon and evening, with a small number also taking place in the morning.

In an effort to offer access to free education for all citizens, the Adult Education Centres organize special classes each year which are tailored specifically to meet the needs of various disadvantaged groups, such as prisoners, senior citizens, individuals with disabilities and learning difficulties, i.e. handicapped, deaf, blind, psychologically distressed. Greek Cypriots who wish to learn Turkish, Turkish Cypriots who wish to learn Greek, children of repatriated Cypriots, Diaspora Greeks and foreigners, Asylum Seekers and Political Refugees may also attend free of charge courses of the Adult Education Centres.

In **Tertiary Education** the following measures apply:

- Law 113 (I) of 1999 to 2001 published in the Official Gazette of the Republic on 28 August 1999 and its amendment on 4 May 2001, and Regulations K.Δ.Π. 186/2001 published in the Official Gazette of the Republic on the same date, set out entitlements to support within HEI, for people with disabilities. The abovementioned legal framework makes it mandatory for every higher education institution to respond to the needs of every student with special needs registered at the institution as regards to his/her education, examinations, housing, psychological support etc.
- At the University of Cyprus, Regulations of 1992 until 1998, published in the Official Gazette of the Republic on 24 July 1992 and 19 June 1998, also provide for the support of students with Special Needs. Specifically, the University of Cyprus may arrange special examinations for students with special needs and in addition, within the framework of the above-mentioned regulations, it is mandatory for the University to offer the necessary infrastructure for persons with special needs. For instance, the Library of the University is blind and visually impaired user friendly. It should be noted further, that a limited number of positions at the University of Cyprus are granted to handicapped candidates or candidates with special needs.
- Private Institutions of Tertiary Education are encouraged to state in their internal regulations that they adhere to a policy of non-discrimination in admitting their students without reference to race, colour, religion, gender, handicap or national origin.
- It is quite common for Higher Education Institutions to have a special service providing support for students with disabilities. At the University of Cyprus, the Academic Affairs and Student Welfare Service is, among others, also responsible to offer services to students with special needs.

- The establishment of the Open University of Cyprus provides a flexible method for the provision of higher education to the less privileged members of the society and to adults who did not have the opportunity to attend Higher Education. Similarly private HEIs offer evening courses and in this way higher education is more accessible from larger segments of the population.

Apart from the measures taken by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance also provides for disadvantaged groups of people. The Vocational Rehabilitation Centre for the Disabled trains people with learning disabilities and handicapped people to become professionally active and enter the work force. It also provides employment for those who are not able to find suitable employment elsewhere.

3.1.4. Measures to address gender aspects in education and training

No gender equality problems can be reported in the Education system of Cyprus. Both men and women have equal opportunities to the education and training programmes in Cyprus. In fact, the percentage of female students in Tertiary Education is higher than that of male students.

Several steps are being taken, however, for the training of economically inactive and unemployed women. A large project, aiming at the training and improving the employability of the inactive women force in Cyprus, is co funded by the European Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus. The project is managed by the Human Resource Development Authority. The budget of the project is £985.000 and it concerns the training of 800 women.

The objective for gender equality is being promoted among pupils of primary and secondary schools through several activities such as competitions (art, theater, essay), local and regional pupil congresses etc.

It is worth mentioning that, although both men and women participate equally in the Adult Education Centres' programmes, women exceeding 75% of the total participation.

3.1.5. The use of learning outcome based approaches for the definition and design of education and training objectives, standards and curricula, and their relevance to the needs of society and the economy

The Educational system of Cyprus, especially up to the upper secondary level, mainly aims at the development of active and democratic citizens, with critical thinking and well balanced personality, citizens who will be able to contribute to social cohesion and to the national economy.

The Educational Reform focuses attention on reforming the curricula and modernizing the teaching methods in order for the above goals to be achieved. Taking into account the fact that all classes in public schools in Cyprus are mixed ability classes, this will become possible by promoting a learning culture among the pupils, and give them the opportunity to develop their own abilities and interests, without ignoring key competences that enable them to cope with the challenges of real life. Learning to learn is one of these key competences, which according to the Educational Reform, the educational system should focus on.

Other universal values, such as race and gender equality and tolerance for other cultures, necessary for today's multiethnic societies, as well as respect for the environment, are promoted

not only through the official curriculum but also through multi-disciplinary approaches and school activities.

There are no barriers separating school life from real life and the society. The needs of the Cypriot society are greatly considered in the educational system. Therefore, during the upper secondary level, both at general and technical education, the needs of the society and the economy are reflected in the taught subjects which are introduced.

The learning outcomes are constantly evaluated, as provided by the educational system, through a formative-everyday evaluation by the teacher, as well as through written exams, during and at the end of the school year. These exams are the responsibility of each individual school. However, final national exams are carried out for some subjects for the pupils attending the last year of Upper Secondary Education. The results of these exams are used for the issuance of their High School Diploma and also for their entry to the Tertiary Education institutions. Often the results of the final exams are used for the restructuring of the curricula.

The principles that govern school education in Cyprus apply also to the rest of the levels of Education and Training, all through adult education and training.

3.1.6. Quality assurance systems:

For school Education, an internal system of quality assurance is being applied, through large scale evaluation projects of the innovative programmes implemented by the Ministry, especially within the reform measures already taken in various areas of our educational system.

The Research and Evaluation department of the Pedagogical Institute is responsible for large scale evaluation programmes for 'quality control' purposes.

In Tertiary Education, the external QA system of Cyprus is presently implemented within the scope of the Council for Educational Evaluation and Accreditation (SEKAP), which conducts programme evaluation and accreditation to the programmes of the private institutions of tertiary education. SEKAP consists of seven senior academics, of international standing, from at least three different countries (see section 4.1.5. of the 2006 Cyprus report).

A recently established external evaluation and accreditation process is embodied in the operation of the Evaluation Committee for the establishment of private universities (the relevant law was approved in July 2005). This Committee operates on the same principles as SEKAP but it also applies institutional evaluation and accreditation on the proposed private universities.

Presently, the public universities and institutions are not subjected to any central regulatory quality assurance provisions but they have established peer review evaluations from bodies like the EUA.

The University of Cyprus attaches particular importance to the development of its internal quality culture. In 2000 it appointed three member committees of external experts to evaluate its departments. In 2001 it went through EUA's institutional evaluation with a follow-up evaluation in 2004. The evaluation of departments by external experts is in the process of being institutionalized with the purpose of applying it every 4-5 years.

The need to develop a comprehensive internal QA policy, supported by appropriate quality indicators and including continuous feedback mechanisms is a major strategic goal of the

University. The internal QA policy under development is based on the Bergen standards and guidelines for QA in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Moreover, EUA's QA proposals, in particular the proposed quality indicators for research have been adopted.

A proposal regarding the establishment of the Cyprus Quality Assurance and Accreditation Board (CyQAAB) was the product of the collaboration of the University of Cyprus and the Ministry of Education and Culture. The proposed national QA Agency will be responsible for the external evaluation of all tertiary education institutions, both state and private. Furthermore, it will evaluate the provision of transnational education in Cyprus by foreign institutions, and by Cypriot institutions abroad. The Agency will also incorporate provisions for the evaluation of flexible and borderless programmes of study. The proposal has been discussed at the Higher Education Council and at the Education Council, two advisory bodies, where all the stakeholders are represented.

Its operation will subsume the operations of SEKAP, the Evaluation Committee for the establishment of private universities, the Advisory Committee for Tertiary Education, and the recognition of internal qualifications awarded by private, non-university level, institutions that is currently performed by KYSATS – the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. Thus the operation of the CyQAAB will subsume and streamline the existing external QA mechanisms and processes, in a comprehensive fashion.

Finally, worth mentioning is the close cooperation of Cyprus with NARIC in promoting quality in Higher Education, as well as the establishment of the Cypriot team of Bologna Promoters for the implementation of the Bologna Process in Cyprus.

3.1.7 Developing learning partnerships with stakeholders (policy makers at national, regional and local levels, social partners, learners and representatives of civil society)

In the context of the Educational Reform a public dialogue has been initiated in 2005, and several working groups have been formulated, in which all stakeholders are represented. The dialogue in these groups is progressing well, a lot of issues have been agreed on, and their implementation is expected soon. Some of these groups are the following:

- Education Council (Symvoulío Ekpaidefsis), which deals with issues of School Education, constituted by Decision of the Council of Ministers
- Higher Education Council (Symvoulío Anotatis Ekpaidefsis), which deals with issues of Tertiary Education, constituted by Decision of the Council of Ministers
- Higher Education Advisory Committee (Symvouleftiki Epitropi Tritovathmias Ekpaidefsis), an advisory body, constituted by law in order to counsel the Minister of Education and Culture on any matter concerning Tertiary education

Apart from the above, the Pedagogical Institute has made efforts to involve a wider range of stakeholders in its projects. An example is the recent programme/debate on online communities, in which several representatives of civil society were invited to participate.

3.2. Schools

3.2.1. Increasing investment in and strengthening pre-primary education

Pre-Primary education has become mandatory from the 1st of September 2004 and is offered freely to children aged 4 years and 8 months to 5 years and 8 months who attend public Kindergartens. Younger children aged 3 years to 4 years and 8 months take up vacant places in public Kindergartens and pay low fees as set by the Ministry of finance. The state is covering all the expenses for running all public Kindergartens, while at the same time is subsidizing the functioning of Community Kindergartens.

Within this innovation the state is gradually:

- Upgrading the quality of nursery school premises by building new schools and repairing the existing ones
- Providing new equipment according to the European Standards
- Carrying out a study to evaluate, maintain and ensure health and safety in Kindergartens and their playgrounds
- Setting up All-day Kindergartens to meet the needs of working parents and their children.

3.2.2 Modernizing school curricula and assessment arrangements (inter alia to address learning outcomes and the attainment of key competences)

In the context of Educational Reform, the Ministry of Education and Culture is currently preparing a full restructuring of the National Curriculum, in cooperation with the University of Cyprus.

Some of the issues which will influence the restructuring of the curriculum are the following:

- The introduction of the new technologies as teaching tools
- The modernization of the curricula, in order to achieve the best possible learning outcomes
- The introduction of new competences and priorities, such as Learning to Learn, Interculturalism, Active Citizenship, Environmental Education, Inclusion
- The Common European Framework of reference for Languages
- The multi-disciplinary approach in teaching
- The European dimension in education

3.2.3 Addressing the specific learning/training needs of teachers (including pre-primary) to enable them to cope with the changing roles in the knowledge-based society

The Pedagogical Institute implements an organized policy for the training of teachers in Cyprus. Through the Pedagogical Institute the Ministry of Education and Culture provides various opportunities for the teachers' professional development. The Pedagogical Institute organizes a series of courses and seminars based on the needs identified annually by the Ministry of Education and Culture. These courses are either compulsory or optional. The compulsory courses comprise a pre-service training course for secondary school teachers as well as in-service training courses for newly appointed heads of secondary schools, deputy heads of secondary schools, and deputy heads of primary schools. All these series of courses include sessions dealing with EU priority issues as, for example, new technologies in education, intercultural education, the European dimension in education and action research.

Starting from the academic year 2007-2008 the pre-service training for secondary school teachers will be undertaken by the University of Cyprus in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture, in an effort to upgrade this training.

The optional courses offered by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) are organised according to the teachers' needs as identified by the CPI in cooperation with the departments of primary, secondary general and secondary technical/vocational education. They are held in the afternoon (after school hours) in selected centres around Cyprus or on a school basis.

Another opportunity for in-service training for teachers is offered to them through the European Lifelong Learning Programme, which subsidizes their participation to training seminars in other European Countries. According to data provided by the Cyprus National Agency of the Programme, there is great interest among teachers for participation in these seminars.

The teachers of secondary education are obliged to attend, twice a year, seminars that are organized by the Inspectors of their subject. During these seminars, the priorities of the particular year, as well as the innovations that the Ministry of Education and Culture plans to implement are presented to the teachers.

During the last two years, funds from the European Social Fund have been used for the training of teachers on the use of the new technologies. So far, around 40% of teachers have been trained. There are also plans for training the teachers on the use of the new software that has been purchased using European Social Fund in the near future.

3.2.4. Measures to reduce early school leaving, to increase rates of completion of upper secondary school, to reduce the proportion of low-achieving 15 year-olds in literacy and to increase the take-up of mathematics, science and technology subjects (EU benchmarks)

Even though Cyprus contests the statistics about early school leaving in Cyprus, several measures are taken to even reduce this number as well as the number of low-achieving 15 year-olds. These measures have been explained before and will be mentioned again here:

- The operation of second chance schools in all major towns
- The programme of the Zones of Educational Priority
- The special literacy programmes (for Greek and Mathematics) offered at lower secondary school level, which provide support to pupils who need it
- Several programmes operating within the school education system targeting youth at risk, organized by the Educational Psychology Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture, in collaboration with other relevant institutions and services. Such programmes are, "Standing on my feet", "communication within the family", "youth debates", "Anti-drug Education Seminars". The objective of the above programmes is to improve the self esteem of the pupils, to help the families support and guide their children, and to build up resistance against drugs among the pupil population.
- The redesign of the Apprenticeship system

Regarding the EU goal for increasing the number of pupils who take-up Mathematics, Science and Technology subjects, the measures taken by the Ministry of Education and Culture include the modernization of the curricula of these subjects, with the simultaneous upgrading of the school laboratories, and the introduction of new, modern equipment and software to support the curricula in order to attract more students. The introduction of a Technology Subject in the upper secondary general education level, since the year 2000, also constitutes one of these measures. Furthermore, through several competitions on MST subjects on national level, as well as fairs, conferences and exhibitions, the Ministry of Education and Culture attempts to develop an interest among the pupils for these subjects.

3.3. Higher Education

3.3.1 Measures to reinforce the knowledge triangle between education, research and innovation:

The Cyprus Government has set as its strategic goal the establishment of Cyprus as a regional education center. Within this strategic goal, the government of Cyprus is implementing a series of measures to reinforce the knowledge triangle between education, research and innovation. The following are indicative:

- The Cyprus Government has signed an agreement with Harvard University regarding the establishment of an educational and research center on Public Health. This new establishment, “Cyprus International Institute for the Environment and Public Health in Association with Harvard School of Public Health” has accepted its first students in September 2006 in its postgraduate programme in Public Health.
- Measures are being taken for the establishment of “Cyprus Institute”, an international educational and research center, which is expected to operate soon. The plans for the “Cyprus Institute” is to collaborate with renowned research centers abroad and to provide the opportunity to its researchers to pursue postgraduate degrees at a Masters level or at a Doctoral level.
- Within the framework of the general government policy for the establishment of Cyprus as an international educational and research center, the Department of Tertiary Education has prepared an action plan which is being examined by the relevant Special Committee. The Committee is constituted by representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
- The Government is also planning for the establishment of a Science and Technology Park in Cyprus. This park is expected to attract companies investing in high technology research in Cyprus. Presently, a feasibility study is conducted for the project.
- Research policy at the University of Cyprus, was set into action in October 2003, is implemented by the Research Committee and it includes the following:
 - (a) Support of research activities of individual researchers, including their mobility. Individual members of academic staff can claim annual support for their research activities ranging from 3,500 to 7,500 Euro.

- (b) Start-up funds for newly appointed members of academic staff. Within their first year of appointment new members can claim up to 85,000 Euro, to be spent within a period of two years.
 - (c) Co-funding of external research projects. This covers internal financial support for externally funded research projects.
 - (d) Internal research projects. Research projects, can be supported by University funds, with maximum support up to 100,000 euro per year for up to four years.
 - (e) Support of graduate students that are also researchers in funded projects. The University covers the tuition fees of graduate students that also work as researchers on funded projects, in order to attract high quality graduate students.
- The Research Promotion Foundation (RPF) was established in 1996 at the initiative of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus, to promote the development of scientific and technological research. Among RPF's main activities is the development of national competitive programmes for financing of research projects and support of research activities. Moreover, RPF has developed several activities to facilitate the creation of networks between Cypriot and foreign scientists. Most of these activities relate to the involvement of Cypriot scientists in European research programmes, the cooperation with international organizations supporting research activities and the preparation and implementation of bilateral agreements between Cyprus and other countries in the field of research and technological development.

3.3.3. Measures to increase excellence

The following measures apply for the University of Cyprus, since this is the only university which operates in full capacity in Cyprus so far:

Building an internal quality culture:

The University of Cyprus is gradually building its internal quality culture by using several mechanisms and strategies for assessing the quality of its educational programmes and research. It has gone through EUA's institutional evaluation with very encouraging results and has carried out departmental evaluations with external experts from different universities (see section 3.1.6)

The university's internal quality assurance and evaluation policy make it accountable to the society and at the same time they increase its self-awareness and assist to the detection of problems and weaknesses. Self-awareness is a precondition to improvement and excellence.

Centre for Teaching and Learning

An important development as regards to the increase of excellence is the establishment of the Centre for Teaching and Learning in the context of the strategy of the University of Cyprus for quality management. The aim of the Centre for Teaching and Learning is the support / development of teaching / learning, so that these may correspond to modern needs and internationally compatible and competitive quality criteria.

3.3.4. Measures to increase the number of graduates in mathematics, science and technology (EU benchmark)

As regards to higher education one of the main measures taken to increase the number of graduates in technology is the establishment of the Cyprus University of Technology in 2003. (see section 4.1.4 of the 2006 report)

- The Cyprus University of Technology, which will accept its first students in September 2007, aspires to become a modern and pioneering University capable of offering high level training

and research in popular fields, which today offer great economic, technical, and scientific output.

- The School of Engineering of the University of Cyprus began accepting students in September 2003. Its full operation in 2005 with the introduction of the programme of study in Architecture in addition to other science courses offered at the university will have a significant impact on the increase of the Science and Technology graduates.

3.4. Vocational Education and Training and Adult Learning

3.4.1 Measures to improve the quality and attractiveness of vocational education and training and of adult education

In order to improve the quality of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education in Cyprus, the Ministry of Education and Culture has undertaken to conduct an external evaluation of the STVE curricula, co-financed by the European Social Fund with the amount of £348 000 (Measure 2.2.2 Improvement and Reinforcement of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education).

Furthermore, in order to improve both the quality and attractiveness of STVE, the Ministry of Education and Culture continues its policy of developing the infrastructure of Technical and Vocational Schools and also of introducing Modern Technology in the STVE curricula.

It is also worth mentioning that the Technical and Vocational School (Secondary Technical and Vocational Education) graduates have the same rights and privileges as the Lyceum (Secondary General Education) graduates, since the Leaving Certificate (Apolysterion) awarded by Technical and Vocational Schools is equivalent to that awarded by Lyceums.

As far as Adult Education is concerned, the efforts towards upgrading it continue. The Leaving Certificate awarded by the Evening Technical School entitles its graduates to sit for the Pancyprian Exams, in order to compete for a place in Institutions of Tertiary Education in Cyprus and Greece. Furthermore, the Leaving Certificate awarded upon completing the three-year programmes offered in the context of the Evening Classes of Technical and Vocational Schools is equivalent to the Leaving Certificate awarded to the graduates of Technical and Vocational Schools as far as the Technical part is concerned.

3.4.2 Measures to reinforce the link between VET and labour market needs including early identification of skills needs, improving the relevance of curricula and qualifications

The Directorate of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education, in order to be able to re-examine and adapt the content of its curricula according to the needs of the Cyprus economy and industry, and taking into account the latest scientific and technological advances, has developed close cooperation with the following agencies:

- The Advisory Committee for STVE
- The Branches and Specialties Advisory Committees for STVE
- The organized agencies of employers and manufacturers (Employers' Organizations)
- The organized agencies of employees (Employees' Organizations)
- The Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA)

- The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance

Cooperation between the Directorate of STVE and the agencies mentioned above has been developed in the following areas:

- The introduction of revised curricula, as well as of new branches and specialties in STVE
- The levels and content of the STVE curricula
- The employment prospects and career opportunities of the Technical School graduates
- The practical training of final year pupils of the Practical Direction in industry, under actual working conditions, in order to be able to assimilate and implement the knowledge and skills which they have been taught at school
- Establishing on an annual basis the technical specializations available to students in the Apprenticeship Scheme, so that these are in line with current labour market needs

3.4.3 Opening up pathways to further and higher education

As it has already been mentioned in paragraph 3.4.1, the School Leaving Certificate (Apolysterion) awarded by Technical and Vocational Schools, as well as by the Evening Technical School, is equivalent to the Leaving Certificate awarded by Lyceums. This entitles Technical and Vocational School graduates to compete for a place in any field of studies in Tertiary Education they wish to pursue.

3.4.4 Addressing the specific learning/training needs of vocational and adult teachers and trainers to enable them to cope with their changing roles in the knowledge-based society

All optional and compulsory courses and training offered to teachers, deputy headmasters and headmasters of General Secondary Education, as mentioned above, also include trainers and teachers in vocational education. Specifically, for the STVE staff, a special programme provides industrial placement for trainers. This programme, adopted in 1986, allows trainers to become attached to industry on a full or part-time basis, with their salary being paid by the state. The aim is to offer trainers of STVE the opportunity to update their knowledge and keep in abreast of technological changes. They also act as links between STVE and industry and therefore enhance the cooperation between them.

3.4.5 Measures which reinforce social partner involvement in training, in particular sectoral approaches to skills and qualifications

The third year of studies in the Practical Direction of STVE combines a school-based environment with a real workplace as final-year pupils are placed in industry for one day per week, (seven teaching periods per week) where they follow a practical training programme. The programmes of practical training in industry aim to provide final-year pupils of the Practical Direction with specialized knowledge and skills, under actual working conditions and in accordance with authorized curricula.

3.4.6 Enhancing access and opportunities for learning among the disadvantaged, and alternative pathways, including for early school leavers

In section 3.1.3 the operation of the Adult Education Centers, design to offer access to free education and training to all citizens has been explained in detail.

Moreover, during the school year 2006-2007, special units for disadvantaged groups of people were introduced in two Technical and Vocational Schools. These units offer children with special needs the opportunity to attend mainstream education schools. The children who participate in these units acquire knowledge and skills in Cooking and Waiting, and, at the same time, they are taught subjects of general education, as well as Music, Physical Education, Art etc. After completing almost one year of operation, these units seem to be effective. As a result, they will continue to operate and their quantitative and qualitative improvement is underway.

An Evening Technical and Vocational School operates as a second chance school for the people who do not hold a leaving certificate from a secondary education school. Also, pupils who discontinue their attendance of secondary education have the option to attend the Apprenticeship Programme. The Apprenticeship Scheme in Cyprus has been in operation since 1963. The Apprenticeship Law of 1966 is the basic law that governs the operation of the Scheme. The Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance run the Apprenticeship Scheme jointly. The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the vocational education and training of the apprentices, while the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance is responsible for the administration of the Scheme.

The Apprenticeship Scheme is a two-year initial vocational education and training programme, which is mainly directed to those pupils who do not wish to continue their studies within the formal upper secondary education system when they complete the lower secondary education level. Pupils who have completed the second year of gymnasium are also accepted to enroll in the Apprenticeship Scheme programmes. Pupils must be at least fourteen to be accepted in the Apprenticeship Scheme and must not be over eighteen at the time of graduation.

The Apprenticeship Scheme study programmes provide practical and theoretical training alternately. Practical training takes place in industry, where apprentices are remunerated for their work, for three days per week. Theoretical training is provided at Technical Schools for two days per week. The Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) subsidizes employers for wages paid to apprentices during the two days per week when they attend classes at Technical Schools.

In the context of the Educational Reform the Apprenticeship Scheme will be redesigned, in order to provide young people an alternative education and development pathway, and at the same time meet the labour market needs.

3.4.7 Measures to increase the rate of adult participation in lifelong learning, and to reinforce key competences among adult learners and older people whether employed or not (EU benchmark)

Lifelong Learning programmes are highly developed in Cyprus and are provided in a multitude of settings by public promoters and numerous public and private providers, as indicated below:

- MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

- (a) Adult Education Centres
- (b) State Institutes for Further Education
- (c) General Education Evening Schools
- (d) Evening Technical School
- (e) Afternoon and Evening Classes of Technical Schools
- (f) Vocational Schools of Lifelong Learning (under way)
- (g) Open University of Cyprus
- (h) Cyprus Pedagogical Institute

- MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL INSURANCE

- (a) Cyprus Productivity Centre
- (b) Mediterranean Institute of Management
- (c) Cyprus Hotel and Catering Institute

- MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

Agriculture Vocational Training Centres

- MINISTRY OF FINANCE Cyprus Academy
of Public Administration

Most of the above schemes are offered to the Cypriot Community free of charge, while for some of them financial and other (such as taking them into account for promotion) incentives are offered for participation. These programmes are usually advertised through circulars, leaflets, and in the local and national media, in order to become known to the general public.

The newly established “Foundation for the Management of the European Lifelong Learning Programmes”, which will be co-funded by the Government of Cyprus is another measure of supporting Lifelong Learning in Cyprus.