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# TEACHERS AND TRAINERS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Building up competences for  
inclusive, green and digitalised  
vocational education and training

# CYPRUS

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# **Teachers and trainers in a changing world**

## **Cyprus**

Building up competences for inclusive, green and digitalised vocational education and training (VET)



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## CHAPTER 1. Introduction

Upgrading the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of teachers and the enhancement of the quality, attractiveness and efficiency of Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an important challenge for the education system of Cyprus and a policy priority of the [strategic plan for technical and vocational education and training \(2015-20\)](#). Another important challenge is the improvement of the digital competences of teachers, especially following the COVID-19 outbreak. Also, teacher evaluation remains a major challenge and this policy is expected to give impetus to the implementation of a crucial reform, which will enhance the quality of education and the improvement of educational outcomes.

Policy measures for upgrading the CPD of teachers were included in the three-year Strategic Plan 2015-17 of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MoECSY, Υπουργείο Παιδείας, Πολιτισμού, Αθλητισμού και Νεολαίας) and the Strategic Plan for the System of Technical and Vocational Education 2015-20 (approved by the Council of Ministers on 15 April 2015).

According to the decisions of the Council of Ministers (August 2015, July 2017), the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) is the official department of the MoECSY, which runs teachers' professional development. It offers a variety of training programmes that are repetitive and compulsory for teachers, mainly because they are either offered according to education laws and schemes of service, or because these programmes are developed with reference to the current needs and context of schools.

During the last four years, the CPI, as the official carrier of the teachers' in-service training, proceeded to extend the implementation of the Policy for Teachers' Professional Development, based on the latest decision of the Council of Ministers (dated 17/7/2017). The decision was made according to the pilot and evaluation stage of the professional development programme conducted by the Technical Assistance Group of Experts of the European Committee (June 2017).

In 2015, a new framework for Teachers' Professional Learning (TPL) was approved by the Council of Ministers. It includes VET teachers and sets principles for CPD, which will be systematic, addressed to all teachers, and targeted to teachers' and schools' needs. This decision also tasked the CPI with the professional training of teachers.

## CHAPTER 2. Types of teaching and training professionals

### 2.1. Main types

There is no formal or legal definition of Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) in Cyprus. IVET is provided in Core Apprenticeship, in Upper-Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE), including Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education, and in public higher VET (tertiary/non-university). Within IVET the following teachers are included:

- (a) Teachers in STVE (teachers of general education subjects and teachers of technological and/or workshop practice subjects);
- (b) Teachers in Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (*Μεταλυκειακά Ινστιτούτα Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης*) which have been accredited as Public Schools of Higher VET by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education;
- (c) Teachers in public institutions of tertiary education (higher professional/vocational schools);
- (d) Teachers in private institutions of tertiary education.

### 2.2. VET schools

IVET is provided in STVE, in Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (*Μεταλυκειακά Ινστιτούτα Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης*), and in public and private institutions of tertiary education (higher professional/vocational schools).

Teaching and training professionals can be identified in:

- (a) STVE:
  - i. Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training (*Τεχνικές και Επαγγελματικές Σχολές Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης*),
  - ii. Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education (*Εσπερινές Σχολές Τεχνικής και Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης*);
- (b) Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (*Μεταλυκειακά Ινστιτούτα Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης*);
- (c) Public institutions of tertiary education (higher professional/vocational schools) comprising:

- (i) Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus, (HHIC, Ανώτερο Ξενοδοχειακό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου) under the aegis of the MoECSY;
  - (ii) Cyprus Forestry College (Δασικό Κολέγιο Κύπρου) under the aegis of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment (Υπουργείο Γεωργίας, Αγροτικής Ανάπτυξης και Περιβάλλοντος);
  - (iii) Tourist Guides School (operates whenever there is a need) under the aegis of the Deputy Ministry of Tourism (Υφυπουργείο Τουρισμού);
  - (iv) Cyprus Police Academy (Αστυνομική Ακαδημία Κύπρου) under the aegis of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (Υπουργείο Δικαιοσύνης και Δημόσιας Τάξης);
- (d) Private institutions of tertiary education.

### 2.3. Teaching and training professionals by type of VET school

Teachers working in public schools and public institutions of tertiary vocational education are civil servants with their terms of service detailed in governing laws and schemes of service. Teachers in Cyprus, including VET teachers, are specifically trained for one certain level of education. Secondary school teachers are subject specialists.

Teachers in the public upper STVE are required to hold an appropriate diploma in their subject area. In STVE two different types of teachers are included. These are the teachers of general education subjects and the teachers of technological and/or workshop practice subjects. These two types of teachers have the same pre-admission requirements apart from the fact that the teachers of technological and/or workshop practice subjects must have two years of work experience in the area of their specialisation. The two years of work experience is not a requirement in case they hold a master's degree either in their area of specialisation or in the field of education. Private schools (governed by Laws N. 5/1971 – N. 77(I)/2008 on Private Schools and Institutes) are responsible to set their own selection criteria for recruiting teachers.



## CHAPTER 3.

# Teaching and training professionals in school-based settings

### 3.1. Legislation

According to the decisions of the Council of Ministers (August 2015, July 2017), the CPI is the official department of the MoECSY, which runs teachers' professional development. The CPI extended the implementation of the Policy for Teachers' Professional Development, based on the decision of the Council of Ministers (dated 17/7/2017), following a pilot and evaluation stage of the professional development programme conducted by the Technical Assistance Group of Experts of the European Committee (June 2017).

### 3.2. Qualification and competence requirements

Teachers at all levels of school education are university graduates with a Bachelor's degree as a minimum qualification. A very small number of VET teachers <sup>(1)</sup> employed at Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training (*Τεχνικές και Επαγγελματικές Σχολές Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης*) hold a diploma or similar qualification from colleges or other similar educational establishments of tertiary (non-university) education in courses of at least three years duration and were appointed at a lower salary scale.

For the Apprenticeship Scheme of Vocational Education and Training (ASVET, *Σύστημα Μαθητείας Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης*) specialisations, VET teachers are permanent staff employed by the MoECSY, except for the specialisation of Hairdressing, in which case VET teachers are hired through an open call for tender every two to three years. Qualified professionals from the fields of Career Counselling and Educational Services, Educational Psychology, Clinical Psychology and Social Work are employed to work exclusively for the ASVET, to support and help all apprentices, particularly the vulnerable ones, who are considered as learners at risk of dropout/early leaving, to succeed.

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(<sup>1</sup>) Due to a lack of candidate VET teachers with a Bachelor's degree in certain fields of study, qualified VET teachers who were Diploma holders were employed in the past.

Teachers in public institutions of tertiary education (higher professional/vocational schools), are civil servants with their terms of service detailed in governing laws and schemes of service. According to Law 67(I)/1996 and its amendments and the job specifications, they must hold either a diploma from a tertiary institution, usually the one in which they teach, or a degree relevant to the subject they will teach. Most of them hold additional academic qualifications at postgraduate and doctoral level. Teachers in private institutions of tertiary education usually hold the qualification of the level of the subjects they teach or higher. Private schools are responsible to set their own selection criteria for recruiting teachers. Work experience is not usually an entry requirement.

### 3.3. Initial training programmes

The 'Pedagogical Training of Prospective Secondary General and Technical and Vocational Education Teachers' has been developed by the Department of Education of the University of Cyprus (Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου) according to the 'Public Education Service Legislation (n.3) 2018'. The purpose of the programme is the preparation of university graduates for teaching in secondary schools. The programme aims to enrich graduates' background with experiences and skills related to pedagogical theories and practices. Participants are expected to gain the necessary skills and knowledge both in context and pedagogical theories, so they can be successful teachers. The goals of the programme are to prepare participants in supporting their students and to provide participants with the necessary skills and knowledge in understanding and applying pedagogical theories and effective teaching practices.

The program involves 44 ECTS credits and consists of one compulsory course (4 ECTS credits), one subject specialisation course (4 ECTS credits), two elective courses (2 x 4 ECTS credits), two teaching methodology for subject specialisation courses (2 x 4 ECTS credits) and field experience (20 ECTS credits). During field experience trainees follow school time schedule and participate in all school activities (such as meetings, committees, assisting headmaster), observe various teaching lessons, discuss their lesson plans with mentors and/or programme professors and reflect on their own and mentor's teaching lessons. The duration of the programme is 8 months (2 academic semesters, including university-based courses and field experience) and it is held in the afternoon (15:30-19:30).

Upon completion of the course, participants receive a certificate from the University of Cyprus, which is a prerequisite for appointment to permanent teaching posts in secondary education.

Additionally, pre-service training for public institutions teachers is usually not a requirement. In private institutions of tertiary education, previous work and teaching experience and pre-service training are not usually required although institutions will consider experience and training as an advantage when hiring teachers.

### 3.4. Requirements for continuous professional development

In-service continuing training for STVE teachers consists of compulsory training programmes that cover all eleven fields of study offered at Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training, as well as optional training programmes which are conducted in the afternoon.

The CPI delivers and supports the framework for teacher professional development for all school levels and implements the Policy for Teachers' Professional Development. The aim of the professional development strategy is the quality improvement of teachers' and pupils' education.

All schools are expected to prepare a Professional Development Action Plan (PDAP), which is an integral part of the School Improvement Action Plan. The PDAP should be focused on a specific issue that would be set as a priority to be improved, according to teachers' and students' needs assessment at each school. It should include focused school-based training, as well as several school-based activities, according to teachers' decisions. The schools have at their disposal the electronic base for professional development, which offers supporting material.

Also, an opportunity was offered to a small number of schools, on a voluntary basis, to follow a more systematic procedure with annual systematic support of the CPI. Each school followed a methodology (e.g. action research, case study), which was considered suitable according to the specific issue set as priority and teachers' specific needs. The CPI supports teachers in the participating schools in order to decide, plan and implement a variety of actions and practices that are consistent with the educational reality in their school and reflect on them, aiming at critical awareness, always in order to meet the professional and developmental needs of each school teacher.

The CPI organises compulsory in-service training programmes for school leaders (head teachers and deputy head teachers), focused on their professional development, based both on the European Union for School Leadership policy and on recent national and international literature review and research results on effective leadership. The main priority of the training programmes is to put theory into practice, so as to enhance participants' effectiveness in their leading roles.

Therefore, in the specific programmes, expert practitioners present practical implications concerning leadership practice. In the case of newly-promoted head teachers, experienced mentor head teachers provide them with guidance and support.

Additionally, a series of optional training seminars are offered, which aim at the professional development of teachers on issues related to pedagogy, psychology, methodology, the teaching of specialised subjects of the curriculum and educational technology. The thematic seminars are established on the basis of the training needs of teachers from the public and private education including VET teachers.

The CPI, in collaboration with the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET), offers training programmes on various specialised subjects of the curriculum to all VET teachers. Optional seminars of the CPI are usually held during afternoon or evening hours and they are open and free for all teachers. The training needs and the content are identified by the Department of STVET in cooperation with the CPI. Attendance certificates are issued to all participants for both compulsory and optional programmes and conferences.

As regulated (Law 99/1989), secondary school teachers are obliged to attend compulsory seminars delivered twice a year. These two days in the academic year are common for all schools and the dates are decided by the education ministry every year. During these days, students do not go to school and teachers attend seminars for the whole working days. The CPI and the Department of STVET organise in December and March every year, this two-day training seminar. The teachers have the opportunity to choose training activities offered in their schools. The aim of the two-day training seminars is teachers' professional development based on their current needs.

Also, the CPI, in collaboration with the Department of STVET, offers a training programme for substitute secondary education teachers. The aim of this training programme is the enhancement of the substitutes' teaching and learning efficacy in aspects such as legal and administrative issues of the Cyprus educational system, the national curriculum, teaching methodology, lesson planning, as well as classroom organisation and administration. The main priority of this training programme is to combine theory and practice, in order to help them to be effective in their substitute roles.

In addition, the CPI implements programmes for entrepreneurship in education, in accordance with the National Policy Statement for the Enhancement of the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Cyprus (2015), the legislation for Social Entrepreneurship (2018) and the European Union's Policy on the strategic

framework for European cooperation in education and training 2020. Teacher training priorities include the development of entrepreneurial and communication skills of teachers themselves and the provision tools for the development of creative thinking, innovative ideas, participation and self-confidence among students, through meaningful learning experiences.

The CPI also organises various seminars, conferences and workshops, as well as interactive seminars aimed to disseminate teachers' experience and knowledge on pedagogical issues and on effective teaching approaches for physics that are being applied in the classroom.

There is no validation or recognition of the competences acquired on the various training programmes offered to teachers.

The Apprenticeship Scheme is not part of secondary education; it is a pathway towards vocational training. The Apprenticeship System consists of two Levels:

- (a) Preparatory Apprenticeship 1-2 years – at compulsory lower secondary education Certificate 9<sup>th</sup> class. It does not involve employment or occupational specialisation but provides an opportunity for students to develop basic skills and creative talents.
- (b) Core Apprenticeship 3 years – at upper lower secondary education certificate 10<sup>th</sup> class. The core apprenticeship lasts three academic years. Apprentices alternate between school-based education (general education, theoretical vocational training and laboratory lessons) and company-based practical training.

Regarding Core Apprenticeship, teachers of the theoretical training that takes place at Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training are STVE teachers. Furthermore, a training programme is implemented for Preparatory Apprenticeship teachers. The MoECSY, in collaboration with the CPI, provides seminars to VET teachers and trainers working with apprentices, and recruits VET teachers specifically for the ASVET.

In-service, continuing training of IVET teachers in public institutions of tertiary education is common practice. It is voluntary in almost all public institutions and incentives to attend continuing training programmes have still to be introduced to increase participation. The majority of in-service training programmes attended by the teachers in the public institutions are related to the institutions' areas of interest as well as to the teachers' training needs.

In-service, continuing training of teachers in private colleges is voluntary, but in some of the institutions, there are funds available for supporting the upgrading of teachers' knowledge and skills.

### 3.5. Data on teachers and trainers in school-based settings

There are no databases for available data on teacher training/development.

According to the Annual Report <sup>(2)</sup> 2019 of the MoECSY, during the school year 2018/19, a total of 1 082 participants, teachers from the public and private education (figure includes general education teachers, no VET data available), were registered in 81 optional training seminars on issues related to pedagogy, psychology, methodology, the teaching of specialised subjects of the curriculum and educational technology.

During the period 2018-21, almost 100 schools participated in the CPI Professional Development Support Programme <sup>(3)</sup>, including five technical-vocational education schools. During the period 2019-21, more than 30 courses on VET subjects were offered.

During the period 2019-21, 40 Headteachers, 160 Deputy Headteachers and more than 300 Deputy Headteachers have successfully completed the in-service training programmes <sup>(4)</sup>.

Regarding initial training, during the period 2018-21, 939 secondary education teachers successfully completed the 'Pedagogical Training of Prospective Secondary and Technical Education Teachers' <sup>(5)</sup>.

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<sup>(2)</sup> Annual Reports of the MoECSY: <http://www.moec.gov.cy/etisia-ekthesi/index.html>

<sup>(3)</sup> CPI: <https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/>

<sup>(4)</sup> STVET: <http://www.moec.gov.cy/dmteek/index.html>

Education Portal (Greek only): <http://www.schools.ac.cy/>

<sup>(5)</sup> University of Cyprus - Pedagogical Training of Prospective Secondary and Technical Education Teachers: <https://ucy.ac.cy/proypiresiaki/>

## CHAPTER 4. Training professionals in work-based settings

### 4.1. Definitions

Apprenticeship Inspectors: They are VET teachers by profession and have similar duties to VET school inspectors, with the difference that they inspect companies providing in-company training to apprentices throughout the year for three days per week. Inspection is usually performed through monthly on-site visits to the apprentices' workplaces. Apprenticeship inspectors are teachers in Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training, thus also MoECSY employees. These teachers coordinate and oversee implementation of apprenticeship in their district, maintain contact with employers and sometimes help apprentices to find placements.

In-company trainers/mentors: A company taking apprentices is expected to have at least one technician or related professional in the field the apprentice is studying, to act as a trainer/supervisor or/and mentor and supervisor. Often, particularly in SMEs, the trainers/supervisors are the owners themselves who also act as mentors.

### 4.2. Legislation

The Apprenticeship Law of 1966 (No 13/66) governs the operation of the Apprenticeship System. In 2012, it was reformed and renamed into New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA) by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI). The proposal for the establishment of the NMA had been approved by the Council of Ministers in November 2007 (decision no. 66.304). The NMA was co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Government of Cyprus and it had been implemented by the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC, Κέντρο Παραγωγικότητας Κύπρου), in cooperation with the MoECSY. In an effort to upgrade it, full responsibility has been undertaken by the Department of STVET of the MoECSY as of 1 September 2015 (approved by the Council of Ministers with Decision No 79.274, dated 19 August 2015). The Department of STVET has implemented educational reforms and in 2018 renamed NMA into ASVET. The MoECSY is in the process of developing a new legal framework to reflect recent changes related to the ASVET.

#### 4.3. Provisions for continuous professional development

In-company trainers/mentors and apprenticeship inspectors do not usually receive any training. Most enterprises in Cyprus are micro, small and medium-sized and those most likely to recruit apprentices are family-owned businesses that employ less than five persons. These enterprises usually do not have the necessary means to provide training to the trainers of their apprentices. However, the decision of the Council of Ministers of 19 August 2015 for upgrading the Apprenticeship Scheme includes measures for developing closer ties and further enhancing cooperation with the industry and providing suitable training to all trainers, teachers and counsellors of the apprentices.

#### 4.4. Data on trainers in work-based settings

There are no data since in-company trainers/mentors and apprenticeship inspectors do not usually receive any training.



## CHAPTER 5. Partnerships between schools and companies

### 5.1. Examples of practice

Examples of practice is the opportunity to teachers employed at technical schools to become attached to industry. The scheme for the industrial placement of VET teachers was adopted in 1986 and operates on a new basis as of the school year 2017/18.

### 5.2. Cooperation between VET schools and companies

Cooperation between the world of education and the world of work is materialised through a scheme which allows teachers employed at technical schools to become attached to industry on a part-time basis, with their salary being paid by the State. The scheme for the industrial placement of VET teachers was adopted in 1986. It provides VET teachers with the opportunity to be placed in industry on a part-time basis, with specific terms of employment. VET teachers participating in the scheme have hands-on practice at selected enterprises for one day per week throughout the school year, gaining experience regarding the operation of businesses/enterprises in their sector.

The scheme has been reviewed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, and operates on a new basis as of the school year 2017--18. In this context, the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training implemented a pilot programme for the design and development of an innovative product, in collaboration with an industrial unit in Cyprus. The objective of the programme was to design, develop and produce an innovative greenhouse. VET teachers from the fields of Mechanical Engineering and Agriculture were placed in this specific industrial unit (one day per week over a period of two years) to be involved in the whole process. The user of the final product is able to monitor and modify, through a mobile phone, the temperature, ventilation, humidity and sunlight in the greenhouse, in order to achieve maximum yield of plants.

On the basis of the recent review of the scheme, the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training collaborates with industry whenever there is need for specific training of VET teachers.

In order to increase links with the labour market and enhance employers' engagement, the MoECSY signed 'memoranda of cooperation' with the employers' organisations: the 'Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry' in June 2019, and the 'Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation' in July 2019.

### 5.3. Hybrid teachers and trainers

Hybrid teachers/trainers are not available in Cyprus.

### 5.4. Data on cooperation and hybrid teachers

There are no data available.

## CHAPTER 6. National and EU-funded projects and initiatives

### 6.1. Digital skills for remote and blended teaching

The CPI with its Department of Educational Technology (DET) implements programmes of continuing professional development in the areas of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), designs research and practice, proposes new educational implementations and promotes innovations related to the use of new technologies in education. At the same time, it provides pedagogical and technical support facilitating the effective use of ICT, including online learning, communication and management <sup>(6)</sup>.

In addition, DET implements projects that support the work of the Ministry's ICT Unit and more specifically the use of ICT in teaching and learning sub-unit. The focus of the activities planned and implemented is on the Education and Training 2020 European priorities as well as the Cyprus Digital Agenda. Under this scope, the following actions on Opening up Education through digital technologies have been taking place during the last few years, with an emphasis on transversal skills needed for the digital society, as well as effective teaching and learning: Use of Digital Technologies in teaching and learning, Creative, safe and responsible use of the internet, Media literacy, Transversal and digital skills for students and teachers and various Conferences.

European projects include programmes for a safer internet for children <sup>(7)</sup>, Assessment of Transversal Skills in STEM <sup>(8)</sup>, Digital Competences Development for Educators (DCDE) <sup>(9)</sup> and a number of European competitive programmes for innovative learning projects.

Another project concerns the reform and upgrading of the element of industrial placement and training in the curricula of initial VET (work-based learning) as regards access to state of the art equipment and infrastructure such as digital readers and tablets, 3D printing, virtual reality, gamification, cloud technology, artificial intelligence and machine learning. The aim is to achieve a breakthrough reform with regards to innovative pedagogical methodologies and the usage of the latest technological advancements to bridge any gaps between the

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<sup>(6)</sup> <http://www.pi.ac.cy/tet/> ; <https://tet.pi.ac.cy/>

<sup>(7)</sup> <https://www.cybersafety.cy>

<sup>(8)</sup> <http://www.atsstem.eu>

<sup>(9)</sup> [https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/files/anakoinoseis/2020\\_2021/20210215\\_dcde.pdf](https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/files/anakoinoseis/2020_2021/20210215_dcde.pdf)

classroom/school laboratories and the in-company training. This will create a unique opportunity to invest in digitalisation in order to provide the necessary skills for the apprentices so they can be fully equipped and empowered for a smooth transition to the ever changing digital environment of the labour market. The focus of the objective is to prepare tomorrow's workforce for the ongoing fourth industrial revolution. This reform will be based on the European Commission's strategy in shaping Europe's digital future following policies such as the Digital Learning & ICT in Education and the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition.

In order to counter the COVID-19 emergency, the government of Cyprus decided to suspend the in-school operation of all public and private schools at all levels on 11 March 2020. Within a few days after school closure, teachers were recalled to schools to teach through distance synchronous and asynchronous methods. Teachers worked mainly from home using online tools and were present at the school only when necessary.

Existing infrastructure was used to support distance learning. Priority was given to students' access to a computer/tablet and internet at home. A distance synchronous education programme had been implemented using Microsoft Teams with more than 110 000 teachers and students having access to the software.

Intensive online teacher training courses were provided by the CPI. In CPI's official website, a new section has been created in order to present useful information to teachers, students and parents about COVID-19 and provide supporting material for distance teaching and learning in the context of teacher support.

The material was created on the one hand to inform teachers about tools and resources that exist and can be used in distance learning lessons and on the other hand to offer pedagogical ideas and examples that teachers can use to shape their own distance activities, questions and tasks.

In addition, supportive educational material for all students was uploaded onto the MoECSY web page, CPI's webpage and on individual school web pages. Public and private television channels supported overall efforts by broadcasting lessons and other educational programmes, especially for younger students. In addition, a website <sup>(10)</sup> was created in order to support students and to help teachers' efforts in distance learning. The material posted, as well as guidance from other sources, has been useful to parents and guardians trying to support children living at home.

Core Apprenticeship has also been affected with regards to both education and employment. The only apprenticeship specialisation which continued its

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(10) <http://elearning.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/>

operation under a special Government Decree during the lockdown was that of car mechanics and apprentices continued to work. In-company training for all other specialisations across all four districts ceased during lockdowns.

The Department of STVET took an immediate measure, in collaboration with the CPI, to include all the apprentices in order to be provided with tablets and sim cards with pre-paid broadband roaming. The theoretical part of both levels of the Apprenticeship Scheme continued with remote learning and all VET teachers and trainers were provided with the digital tool 'Microsoft Teams', granting them also access to Office 365. Enhanced technical support was provided to VET teachers and trainers. VET teachers and trainers had a choice to either use the schools' equipment and infrastructure or provide their own according also to the various COVID-19 governmental decrees and measures which varied throughout the school year 2020/21.

## 6.2. Green skills for sustainability

The Unit of Education for Environment and Sustainable Development (EESD) is the responsible body of MoECSY for planning, implementing, monitoring and upgrading the National Strategy for Environmental Education (EE)/Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) not only in formal education, but also in non-formal and informal education. Thus, as a horizontal structure, it works in close cooperation with the Departments of MoECSY and with other Ministries and governmental bodies, as well as with other interested parties in EE and ESD (NGOs, Universities, Research Centers, Commissioner of Environment, Commissioner of Citizens, National Youth Council, and so on). The actions of the EESD are multifaceted and developed in many levels. All the actions and activities of the Unit are presented on its official website <sup>(11)</sup> .

In the framework of strengthening the provided Education on Environment and Sustainable Development for students and teachers at all educational levels and on the basis of the introduction of the Curriculum for Environmental Education / Education for Sustainable Development as part of the ongoing education reform, the MoECSY created the Network of Environmental Education Centers (NEEC). The NEEC is under the auspices of the CPI which is cooperating with all the interested parties and bodies (like Department of Forestry, local communities) for its effective implementation.

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(11) <http://www.moec.gov.cy/dkpe/index.html>

Other activities and actions developed by the Unit of Education for Environment and Sustainable Development are the teachers' professional development in EE and ESD, the production of educational materials in various environmental and sustainable development issues.

The EESD participates in various European projects which are funded by various European funding mechanisms. An example of the participation as a partner is the project SEA4ALL, 'Enhancing Critical Thinking in Schools for Marine Pollution using Innovative ICT Technologies', which is funded by the Erasmus+KA2. It provides also expertise in other EU projects such as GENESIS, RSPII, ICTeEFS, PUAT, RefTeCP.

The Department of STVET promoted the Cedefop Photo Award 2020 competition and encouraged VET teachers and trainers to engage their apprentices. The District Director of Core Apprenticeship Limassol who is also a VET trainer in the Car Mechanics specialisation inspired his students and developed a sustainable project 'Cyprus bicycle recycle' and the photos submitted documenting the process was a runner up in the competition.

### 6.3. Preventing early leaving from VET

The CPI supported the creation of school networks in all school districts in Cyprus, in order to organise training and promote cooperation between schools on teaching Greek as a second language. The CPI also supported school networking in order to implement the Action Plan of the MoECSY, for the inclusion of children with a migrant background in the Cyprus educational system. The operation of the Networks began in October 2019 and 93 teachers applied. The design of the meetings was based on a blended learning approach, which included the combination of face-to-face meetings, videoconferencing, and networking through discussions and activities on the Moodle platform.

The MoECSY operates the programme 'Activities of School and Social Inclusion' (DRA.S.E.) <sup>(12)</sup>, which aims at reducing early school leaving, creating positive attitudes towards the school and improving learning outcomes. The programme, co-funded by the European Social Fund, aims to mitigate the negative impact of the economic crisis on education and to prevent the social exclusion of vulnerable groups of students. The various measures are offered in 96 schools at pre-primary, primary, secondary and technical education levels in Cyprus and include, among others, the following: (a) provision of morning and afternoon programmes for reinforcing learning and creativity of students and their families

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(12) <https://www.structuralfunds.org.cy/Drase>

and (b) psychosocial support for students and their families through the establishment of 'Information and Social-emotional Support Centres'. Students with migrant backgrounds are attending these programmes every year.

## CHAPTER 7. National surveys of teaching and training populations

There are no national surveys, however, the CPI collects, analyses and utilises internally data for its programmes through an evaluation process by the participating teachers.

Cyprus participates, along with more than 40 other countries, in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS 2018) <sup>(13)</sup>, a survey about teachers, teaching, and learning environments, sponsored by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Cyprus participated in 2008, 2013 and 2018 in the survey through the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE), (Κέντρο Εκπαιδευτικής Έρευνας και Αξιολόγησης, ΚΕΕΑ) of the CPI.

The survey was composed of two questionnaires —one for teachers and one for their principals— which asked questions about their backgrounds, their work environments, professional development, and their beliefs and attitudes about teaching.

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<sup>(13)</sup> [www.keea.pi.ac.cy/talis](http://www.keea.pi.ac.cy/talis)



## CHAPTER 8. Conclusions

Upgrading the continuous professional development of teachers and the enhancement of the quality, attractiveness and efficiency of VET and the Apprenticeship Scheme of Vocational Education and Training (ASVET) are important challenges of the education system of Cyprus. This is reflected in the strategic plan for technical and vocational education and training.

The improvement of the skills and competences of teachers through the organisation of specialised educational and training programmes and participation of teachers in various European programmes is a top priority for increasing the quality and effectiveness of education. Teachers' professional development is a factor which determines the quality of their work and a laborious process during which teachers constantly modify their practice, according to their experiences and their participation in formal and non-formal types of training, either within the system of STVE, or through the CPI programmes and other European programmes. The various aspects of professional development are directly related to lifelong training, the necessity of which is further enhanced due to the constant changes that are taking place in education and in society in general. These changes create new needs on the qualifications of teachers and their role, which have to be effectively addressed.

Another important challenge is the improvement of the digital competences of teachers, especially following the COVID-19 outbreak. The capacity of teachers to use information and communication still varies, the new forms of digital learning require further upgrade of equipment and there is still a need to improve pedagogies to unlock the potential of digital education.

Also, teacher evaluation remains a major challenge and this policy is expected to give impetus to the implementation of a crucial reform, which will enhance the quality of education and the improvement of educational outcomes. The MoECSY has tabled a well-prepared proposal drafted by a scientific committee. Although initial consultations with the teachers' unions and other stakeholders took place, there has not been significant progress yet. Comments and suggestions have been received by several stakeholders on the drafted proposal and the consultations with all stakeholders will continue until an agreement is reached. A future agreement on the framework of the new evaluation system will be validated by a relevant decision of the Council of Ministers and a revised legislation bill will be submitted to the House of Representatives.

Finally, some suggestions for topics/areas to be included in a future Pan European survey are the:

- (a) Provision of effective and flexible initial and in-service teacher education and training programmes to VET teachers (e.g. general and subject-specific pedagogy, subject content, classroom and lab practices).
- (b) Increase of participation of VET teachers in relevant professional development opportunities (for example, use of innovative pedagogy and ICT, integration of new technology into VET, cooperation between VET sector and the industry).
- (c) Design and provision of initial training and ensure professional development opportunities to VET leaders.

## List of abbreviations

ASVET	Apprenticeship Scheme of Vocational Education and Training
CERE	Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation
CPC	Cyprus Productivity Centre
CPD	Continuous professional development
CPI	Cyprus Pedagogical Institute
DCDE	Digital Competences Development for Educators
DET	Department of Educational Technology
EE	Environmental Education
EESD	Unit of Education for Environment and Sustainable Development
ESD	Education for Sustainable Development
ESF	European Social Fund
HHIC	Higher Hotel Institute of Cyprus
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
MoECSY	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth
MLWSI	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
NEEC	Network of Environmental Education Centers
NMA	New Modern Apprenticeship
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PDAP	Professional Development Action Plan
STVE	Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education
STVET	Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TALIS	Teaching and Learning International Survey
TPL	Teachers' Professional Learning
VET	Vocational education and training

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