



## **Youth Wiki national description**

# Youth policies in Cyprus

## 2017

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**Cyprus**

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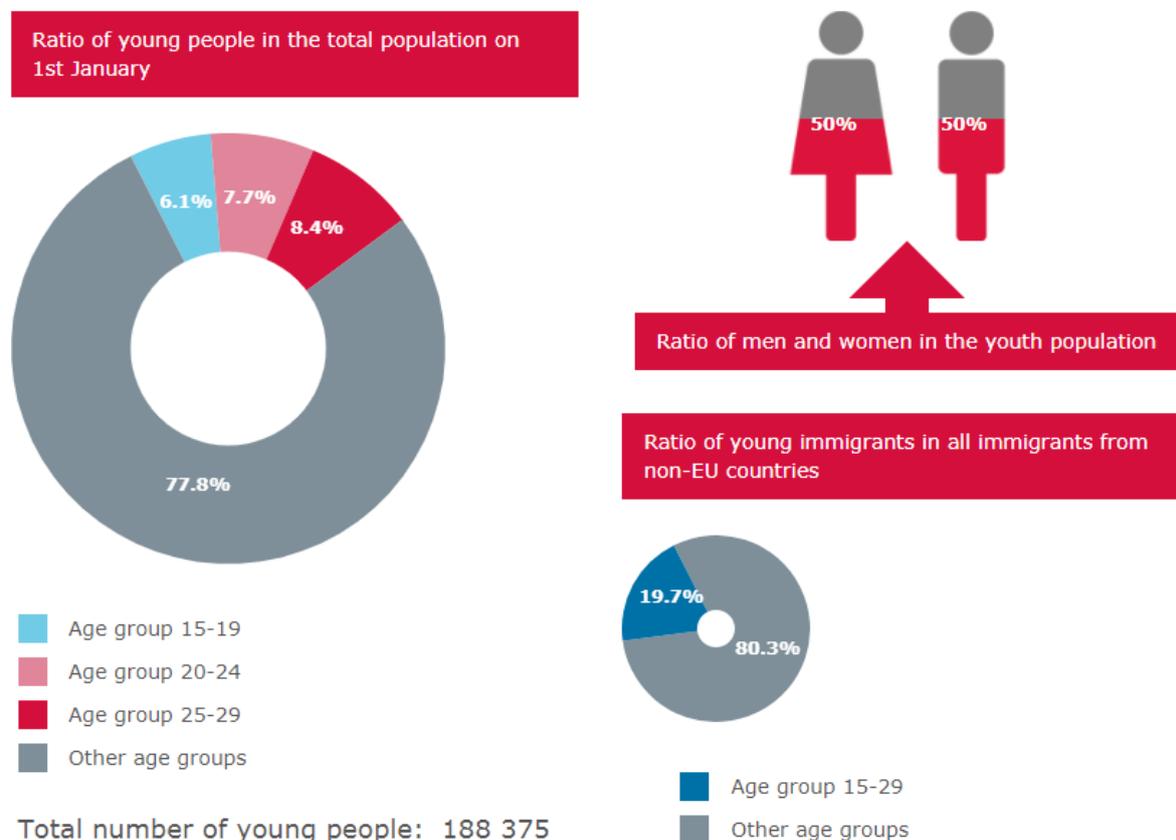
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## Overview

### Young People in Cyprus



**References:**

Ratio (%) of young people in the total population (2016): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 21/09/2017].

Absolute number of young people on 1 January for the age group 15-29 (2016): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_010 [data extracted on 21/09/2017].

Ratio (%) of men and women in the youth population (2016): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_020 [data extracted on 21/09/2017].

Young immigrants from non-EU countries (2015): Eurostat, yth\_demo\_070 [data extracted on 21/09/2017].

## Youth Policy in Cyprus

Youth policy has become a key element of interest and work for the Republic of Cyprus. The government pays gradually more attention to youth policy and consultation with youth on youth issues grows into a priority in the agenda of state officials. In the previous years, the only policy focusing on youth was the National Action Plan for Youth Employment. The rest of the policies were targeting the whole population (and thus young people too). However, the development of a comprehensive National Youth Strategy in 2016-2017 is a milestone in the field indicating the importance state officials pay on youth policy. The National Youth Strategy covers 8 fields, similar to the EU Youth Strategy. Although it is still a rather isolated document, outlining the main elements of other existing national policies targeting youth, it sets the priorities under each theme which should be implemented by other authorities for the upcoming years.

## **1. Youth Policy Governance**

The [National Youth Strategy](#) is a special feature of how youth policy is addressed in the country. The [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) representing the top national agency for youth plays a significant role in youth policy shaping, offering services and programmes.

A highlight is the strong cross-sectoral perspective of the development and the future implementation of the National Youth Strategy, the creation of an evidence based strategy as well as the involvement of young people.

### **1.1 Target population of youth policy**

The [National Youth Strategy of Cyprus](#) clearly defines the lower and higher age limit of the young population it targets as 14-35 years old. On the other hand, the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#) defines “youth” differently, targeting only youth between 15-29 years old. However, the most commonly adopted age range addressed in the field is 14-35, as defined by the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#), the National Agency for Youth. Within the main youth age group, youth NEETs (not in employment, education and training) is identified as a sub-group of the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#).

### **1.2 National youth law**

#### **Existence of a National Youth Law**

There is not a National Youth Law in Cyprus and currently it is not discussed in the country.

#### **Scope and contents**

Not applicable.

#### **Revisions/updates**

Not applicable.

### **1.3 National youth strategy**

#### **Existence of a National Youth Strategy**

A [National Youth Strategy of Cyprus](#) (Εθνική Στρατηγική για τη Νεολαία in Greek) exists in Cyprus. It consists of the government’s plan for empowering young people. It has been introduced in 2017 and covers the period 2017-2022.

#### **Scope and contents**

The vision of the National Youth Strategy of Cyprus is a place in which all youth in Cyprus have the necessary opportunities and empowerment in order to reach their full potential in all areas of their lives and to use their talents for the benefit of themselves and society. The Strategy covers the 8 areas of the EU Youth Strategy and sets 2 objectives in every area.

Therefore, the objectives of the National Youth Strategy are the following:

##### **(a) Education & training**

- Objective 1: Assurance of quality education for all young people
- Objective 2: Assurance of equal opportunities for education and training for young people

(b) Employment & entrepreneurship

- Objective 1: Development, support and promotion of entrepreneurship among young people
- Objective 2: Enhancement of the employability of young people and their integration into the labour market, while ensuring their labour rights

(c) Health & well-being

- Objective 1: Equal and uninterrupted access to quality and youth friendly health services
- Objective 2: Promotion of health and well-being and prevention of diseases

(d) Participation

- Objective 1: Assurance of youth participation in all decision-making stages for shaping policies that reflect the needs and views of the young people
- Objective 2: Empowerment of youth for active participation in democratic life

(e) Voluntary activities

- Objective 1: Development of a volunteering mindset and promotion of voluntary involvement of young people
- Objective 2: Official recognition and validation of the skills acquired through volunteering

(f) Social inclusion

- Objective 1: Ensure equality and respect for human rights
- Objective 2: Create a mindset that promotes social inclusion

(g) Youth & the world

- Objective 1: Creation and utilization of opportunities for mobility
- Objective 2: Promotion of a universal ,inter-cultural and environmental mindset

(h) Creativity & culture

- Objective 1: Creation of conditions for equal access and participation in the arts and culture
- Objective 2: Development of conditions for artistic creation

The National Youth Strategy does not identify any specific target groups within the youth population, although 3 of the priorities included in the area of Social Inclusion target mainly young people with fewer opportunities.

When designing the National Youth Strategy, young people and their representatives (such as the [Cyprus Youth Council](#), [Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization](#), [the Cyprus Children Parliament](#))? [European Youth Parliament](#) have been consulted by the responsible public authorities. The following methods have been used for consultations with young people:

- **The National Youth Conference 2015**

Taking into account that the development of the National Youth Strategy should ensure the participation of young people in its creation, the Youth Board of Cyprus launched for the first time the [National Youth Conference 2015](#) (available only in Greek). The conference took place on the 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2015 and aimed at drafting the National Youth Strategy.

More than 300 young people, from all over Cyprus and coming from diverse background were involved. During the second part of the Conference, young people had the opportunity to submit their proposals for designing the National Youth Strategy. Thus, eight thematic workshops were organized, each one corresponding to the priorities of the

European Youth Strategy. By the end of the Conference, young people came up with concrete proposals that were taken into account when developing the Strategy.

- **Focus groups**

In order to go deeper into discussions with young people about the National Youth Strategy, 9 focus groups were organized. The focus groups were organized in partnership with the [Cyprus Youth Council](#), the [Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization](#), [the Cyprus Children Parliament](#) and the [Community Youth Councils](#). Each focus group was consisted of 10 to 15 people (with a total of 147 participants) and their duration was about three hours. The ultimate goal of this method was to provide a space for dialogue and consultation between young people in order to reach specific recommendations that would be incorporated into the National Youth Strategy.

- **Interviews**

In order to get a qualitative perspective of the opinion of the young people, especially those belonging to disadvantaged groups, nine interviews (on “one to one” basis) were conducted. Interviews were conducted with two subjects from each of the following age groups (13-17, 18-24, 25-29 and 30-35 years). Also, considering the gender balance, there was a male and a female participant in each age group. The participants in this method included a teenager, a person from a remote area, an ex-unaccompanied under aged from Africa, a person from Palestine, a Turkish Cypriot, a person with multiple sclerosis, an unemployed and a gay person.

- **Questionnaire**

Based on the recommendations drafted from the previous methods, an online questionnaire was launched. The questionnaire was open between 22/08/2016-18/09/2016 and collected in total 308 responses. The questionnaire aimed at prioritizing the existing recommendation based on a scale “Very important-Not important”. It also allowed the participants to submit their own input on the objectives of the National Youth Strategy.

Last, it must be mentioned that the results of other kinds of consultations with young people, such as the Structured Dialogue national results and the Erasmus+ KA3 youth results were also taken into consideration.

Since the Strategy has not yet been enacted, no consultations concerning the implementation and revision of the Strategy have happened. However, the responsible public authorities intent to consult with young people about it.

### **Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy**

The top-level authority responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the National Youth Strategy is the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#).

The ministry primarily responsible for youth in regards to the National Youth Strategy is the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#). Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture are members of the Steering Committee and the Cross-sectoral Committee, along with representatives of the Youth Board of Cyprus and the Cyprus Youth Council. Additional, the Ministry of Education and Culture has the role of forwarding for voting by the Council of Ministers the action plans of the Strategy.

So far, there has not been any monitoring/assessment/evaluation of the implementation of the National Youth Strategy conducted.

At the moment, the National Youth Strategy is not yet integrated in the overall national development policy. It is a rather isolated document, outlining the main elements of other existing national policies targeting youth. At the same time though, it sets the priorities under each theme which should be implemented by other authorities for the next years.

## Revisions/updates

The National Youth Strategy did not undergo any revisions/updates.

## 1.4 Youth policy decision-making

### Structure of Decision-making

Youth policy-making in Cyprus takes place at central government level.

The top-level authority responsible for youth policy is the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#).

However, the Ministry does not itself manage youth issues. Instead, it has under its auspices the Youth Board of Cyprus which forms the national agency dealing with youth issues in the country.

Many more institutional actors have been formally involved in developing the National Youth Strategy. These include the following:

[The Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment](#) which undertakes the immense responsibility, to promote through an integrated coordination, the protection and sustainable management of the environment, natural resources, and the sustainable management of agricultural, livestock and fisheries production. Related to social inclusion, the ministry aims to ensure a better quality of life for the current and future generations.

[The Ministry of Justice and Public Order](#) which is responsible for the close review and consideration of the need to reform the existing legislation in a wide field of public and private law, such as criminal law, legislation that falls within the general concept of the administration of justice, family law, legislation in the fields of equality, human rights, the treatment of offenders and other. Its activities furthermore include the promotion, in collaboration with the Supreme Court, of legislative and administrative measures for the unhampered administration of Justice and the smooth functioning of the courts and criminological research for the formation of policies for the prevention and suppression of crime. It has also the responsibility, through the Police Force that the Minister of Justice and Public Order politically heads, of the maintenance of law and order, the preservation of peace and the prevention and detection of crime.

The [Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism](#) aims to secure Cyprus' energy supplies in order to meet the needs of the country with the least burdens on the economy and the environment. In order to achieve the above objective, it implements activities related to the creation of necessary energy infrastructure, the integration and supervision of the internal energy market, the promotion of energy saving, the exploitation of indigenous renewable energy sources and the protection of sensitive consumers.

[The Ministry of Interior](#) whose mission is to formulate and implement human-centered policies. The anthropocentric action of the Ministry of the Interior is based on the following policy pillars:

- A qualitative upgrading of the services provided to the citizen
- Answer to the new housing plans put into effect on 1.1.2007.
- Upgrading the role and restructuring of local government
- The intensification of the efforts to reconstruct and simplify the processes that prove inadequate to meet the modern needs and needs of the citizens.

[The Ministry of Finance](#) whose mission is to ensure conditions of macroeconomic stability and the sound management of resources and of the financial obligations of the State, in order to improve the quality of life of every citizen of the Republic.

[The Ministry of Health](#) whose mission is the continuous improvement of the health of the population of Cyprus, through the prevention of disease, and the provision to every

citizen of high level health care, respecting the rights of every patient to high quality medical care delivered with dignity.

The [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) whose mission is the promotion of social justice within a free democratic system based on the pillars of social cohesion and social inclusion. The maintenance and continuous improvement of the standard of living and the quality of life of the working population and of society in general.

The [Ministry of Transport Communications and Works](#) whose mission is the design and implementation of policies for the continuous improvement of transport (air, maritime and land) and of communications, as well as the continuous upgrading of the quality of projects implemented by the Ministry. In addition, the better promotion and exploitation of the archaeological wealth as well as other resources of the country is pursued.

The [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) which cares to maintain a good relation with other countries, to have an active involvement in processes that aim to promote international co-operation, peace, stability, and sustainable development.

The [Ministry of Defence](#) which is responsible for putting into effect Government Policy regarding the security and territorial integrity of Cyprus. In the framework of this policy, the Ministry of Defence has promoted and is promoting a series of measures which aim at strengthening the defence forces and the capability of the Republic to thwart any foreign threat and at the same time boost our negotiating ability. With consistency and high feeling of responsibility, the Ministry of Defence promotes the application of this policy.

Apart from these, the following institutions are involved:

The [Cyprus Sports Organization](#) which is under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture and takes care of the sports in the country.

The [Theatrical Organization](#) which is again under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture and is responsible for the theatre in the country.

The [Cyprus Tourism Organization](#) which is the institution responsible for the tourism in the country.

[The Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development](#) which is responsible for handling issues related to:

(a) the European Funds and Programmes, such as the European Investment and Structural Funds, the EU Competitive Programmes and the grants provided by the countries of the European Economic Area and Switzerland.

(b) development and horizontal issues, such as Research, Technological Development and Innovation, Lifelong Learning, Corporate Social Responsibility and the "Europe 2020" Strategy.

[The Commissioner for Children's rights](#) whose mission is to protect and promote the rights of the child. Her role is to represent children and their interest at all levels, to promote public awareness and sensitivity so that children's rights in the family, at school, in the community are safeguarded and to identify and promote the views of children where they themselves cannot be heard, to monitor legislation relating to children and to submit proposals aiming at their harmonization with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to carry out public awareness campaigns, to appoint a representative of the child in judicial proceedings affecting him/her and to represent children in procedures affecting them.

The [Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organizations](#) who implement policies to encourage active citizenship for active participation at all levels.

The [Commissioner to the Presidency for Humanitarian Affairs and Overseas Affairs](#) who is responsible for the Cypriots living abroad or in the occupied part of the country, the missing people and the religious minorities.

The [Commissioner for Environment](#) whose role is to propose suggestions and put in place policies for the environment.

The [Cyprus Agricultural Payments Organization](#) whose main responsibility is the payment and the management of funds, which Cyprus is entitled to for the agricultural sector, after its entry to the European Union, as well as the management of all other aid granted from national funds to support farming and rural areas.

The [Human Resource Development Authority](#) which aims at creating the prerequisites for planned and systematic training and development of the human resources of Cyprus at all levels and in all areas to meet the needs of the economy within the framework of the social and economic policy of the state.

The [Cyprus Anti-Drugs Council](#) which is responsible for the prevention and treatment related to drugs.

The [Union of Cyprus Municipalities](#) which is the main association of Local Authorities in Cyprus. Its core functions are to contribute to the development of local government autonomy, as well as to act as spokesman of local government interests vis-a-vis the central government and other national institutions. It also takes an active stand in the relations between Cyprus and the European Union.

[The Union of Cyprus Communities](#) whose aims are:

1. The defence and promotion of the Members' powers, interests, rights and privileges and, generally, of the independence and self-sufficiency of the Local Authorities.
2. The permanent and on an organised basis cooperation and exchange of views between them, for the achievement of common targets.
3. The collection of data and information being useful for the cooperation of the Communities.
4. The expression of opinions to any Authority, Body, Organism or person (including the Government and the House of Representatives) and claiming from the state matters aiming at the development and expansion of the Local Self-Government institution.
5. The participation in International Organs of Local Self-Government and its representation at Local and International Congresses.

The [Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes](#) whose mission is to manage the funds allocated to Cyprus by the European Commission, to promote the targets and policies of the European Union in the fields of Education and Vocational Training, and also to promote the targets and policies of the Republic of Cyprus in the same fields.

## **Main Themes**

The themes addressed by the National Youth Strategy were chosen based on the themes addressed by the EU Youth Strategy as described above.

In order to gain adequate understanding of the actual needs of young people, the Youth Board of Cyprus has commissioned a research on [the current situation of young people in Cyprus](#) (available only in Greek). The research was conducted in 2015 and covers the 8 themes of the National and EU Youth Strategy. Additional to this, the Youth Board of Cyprus, when preparing the National Youth Strategy has gathered additional data about the situation of young people in Cyprus from [the Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus](#), [Eurostat](#) and the European Youth Report.

## **The National Agency for Youth**

The [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) is the government's agency established to address youth issues. The Youth Board of Cyprus is a semi-governmental organisation under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture. It was established as a Legal Entity of Public Law in 1994. According to the [Youth Board Law](#), the administrative board of the

Youth Board of Cyprus shall advise, through the Minister of Education and Culture, the Council of Ministers about the configuration of a comprehensive and specialized policy on youth matters, which should promote the following aims of the Board:

The progress and welfare of all young people of Cyprus, regardless of nationality or religion;

The provision of equal opportunities to all young people and youth organizations for the participation and the assumption of responsibility in the social, economic and cultural development and progress of their community and the country in general

The engagement and recreation of young people of Cyprus

The immediate and effective confrontation of the problems of the young people.

Moreover, the administrative board of the Youth Board of Cyprus shall (among others):

- a. Study, work out and suggest to the Council of Ministers a unified policy or specialized projects regarding youth matters;
- b. Undertake, the implementation of programmes regarding youth matter upon the approval of the Council of Ministers
- c. Be informed on youth matters by the competent services of the Ministries concerned and set out to the government its views in relation to these matters
- d. Participate in international youth organizations' meetings and develop bilateral contacts with respective youth bodies of other countries in order to be informed regarding the international development youth matters;
- e. Stipulate protocols/programmes of cooperation with corresponding youth bodies of other countries for the achievement of the Board's aims
- f. Suggest, in consultation with other state agencies, the conduction of scientific studies concerning the needs of young people and measures for their fulfilment.

The Minister of Education and Culture has the authority:

- a. To issue and provide the administrative board of the Youth Board of Cyprus with directives, general in nature, regarding the exercising of its functions, that are necessary for the general interest of the Republic of Cyprus;
- b. To ask the administrative board to submit reports, accounts and any other information relative to the Youth Board's assets and activities. By virtue of this paragraph, the administrative board is obliged to provide the Minister of Education and Culture anything he asks for, as well as the relevant books, documents and any other facility necessary for their check.
- c. The Minister shall be the contact person between the administrative board and the council of ministers and any document intended for the council of ministers shall be submitted for this purpose to the Minister.

There are not established lines of accountability and institutional processes to monitor the capacity of the Youth Board of Cyprus to exert its roles do not exist. The only relevant existing monitoring is related to the financial aspects. According to the Youth Board Law, the Administrative Board shall prepare in the form of a bill the Youth Board's budget, which shall be subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers and shall be laid before the House of Representatives to be voted as a law. The manner of preparation of the budget shall be determined by the Minister of Finance. The Youth Board shall keep suitable books and accounts as defined by the Minister of Finance. For the financial management of each year, a report shall be prepared as defined by the Minister of Finance.

The budget of the Youth Board of Cyprus is published in Cyprus Government Gazette. The real expenses of the Youth Board for 2015 were 5.010.619,00 euros while the approved budget for 2016 was 7.909.825,00 euro. The estimated budget for the 2017 is 9.779.117,00 euros, showcasing a significant increase. The functions of the Youth Board of Cyprus remained the same, however its actions have been enriched and reinforced.

## Policy monitoring and evaluation

The Youth Board of Cyprus recognized the need for setting up a monitoring mechanism for the National Youth Strategy. This mechanism aims at ensuring the policy monitoring and evaluation. It is based on a cross-sectoral cooperation which includes all partners mentioned in the section above "[Structure of the decision-making](#)" and the Cyprus Youth Council. The mechanism currently monitors the preparation of Action Plans of the Strategy, their implementation and also their evaluation. The Youth Board of Cyprus is coordinating this mechanism. The current purpose is to prepare and submit the Annual Progress Report to the Council of Ministers and any suggestions for necessary revisions and improvements.

Due to the fact that the National Youth Strategy is not yet enacted, no further information can be provided.

## 1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

### Mechanisms and actors

As stated in the [Youth Board Law](#), "the administrative board of the Youth Board of Cyprus shall advise, through the Minister of Education and Culture, the Council of Ministers about the configuration of a comprehensive and specialized policy on youth matters". Given this, the Youth Board Law is the main authority responsible for shaping youth policy. In case other stakeholders intent to initiate a youth policy, the Youth Board of Cyprus shall "be informed on youth matters by the competent services of the Ministries concerned and set out to the government its views in relation to these matters". In this way, as stated by the law, the ministries should consult with the Youth Board of Cyprus when preparing any youth policy. Thus, the youth policy is developed and implemented according to a cross-sectoral approach.

However, one can say that so far this cross-sectoral approach happened more ad hoc. After introducing the National Youth Strategy, a more specific political commitment underpins the cross-sectoral practice in the youth policy field.

When it comes to the National Youth Strategy, a cross-sectoral committee has been established. This cross-sectoral committee included representatives from the Youth Board of Cyprus, the Ministries, Semi-governmental Organizations, and the Commissioners. While the Steering Committee has the leading role in the management of the National Youth Strategy, this cross-sectoral committee basically coordinates its development and ensures a cross-sectoral approach.

## 1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

### Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

In Cyprus, there is an explicit commitment on the part of the top-level authorities to support youth policies with knowledge and evidence from research on youth.

The first explicit commitment derives from the [Youth Board Law](#) which enables the Board to suggest, in consultation with other state agencies, the conduction of scientific studies concerning the needs of young people and measures for their fulfilment.

The second commitment derives from the Youth Board's annual budget in which the budget for research became 5 times bigger since 2014 ([proypologismos onek 20141516 selida 35.pdf](#)). The allocation of funds there underlines the commitment of the Youth Board of Cyprus for research in the youth field. Moreover, after re-structuring the Youth Board, a new department has been initiated, which is dedicated for Department of Strategy, Development, Research and Innovation.

Last, the National Youth Strategy again clarifies the commitment for an evidence-based youth policy. One of the principles of the Strategy is "evidence-based. More specifically,

the Strategy outlines that one of its key elements in its implementation is that it is necessary to collect and analyse information in order to continually improve the situation of young people and thus the development of effective policies. Additional to this, the mechanism for monitoring and evaluating the National Youth Strategy clearly defines the commitment for an evidence-based evaluation of the strategy, mid-term, final and annual so that accurate data is collected and thus the implemented programs are adjusted based on them.

### **Cooperation between policy-making and research**

There is institutionalized and regular cooperation with providers of research on youth. Based on the Youth Board law and the Youth Board's budget, the Youth Board has the authority to proceed to research by commissioning the research community. The Youth Board assigns and pays the research centres for conducting surveys based on the themes of the National Youth Strategy.

First example of such cooperation is when the Youth Board of Cyprus commissioned KPMG for a research on the current situation of young people in Cyprus (available only in Greek) as described above. The aim of this research was to gather data concerning the current situation of young people in order to act as the basis of the National Youth Strategy. The research briefs illustrate key findings for the young people in regards to the 8 themes of the National (and the EU) Youth Strategy. The research was quantitative and data was collected through questionnaires. In total 1,340 youth took part in the research, 80% out of whom filled in the hard-copy questionnaire and 20% the online one.

A second example of this cooperation is the research in which the Youth Board of Cyprus commissioned the IMR of the University of Nicosia about Active Youth Participation in social and democratic life. The aim of this research was to record the impact of the current political environment on young people. Its ultimate goal was to map and highlight the attitudes and beliefs of young people with regards to their intention to participate in elections and the criteria based on which they choose to participate. The research sample was 1000 young people aged between 18-35 years living in Cyprus.

The research on Active Youth Participation in social and democratic life indicated an emerging issue which calls for future policy action. More specifically the key finding of the research was that young people who say they are happy with their lives, are more active citizens and participate in different forms of social and democratic life.

Last, so far, there are not any evidence based evaluation of youth policies.

### **National Statistics and available data source**

The agency responsible for national statistics is the Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT). The aim of the CYSTAT is to provide reliable and up-to-date statistical information. It is the competent authority responsible for the compilation and the publication of most of the official statistical data in Cyprus. The statistics produced by CYSTAT concern all social and economic activities of the country. The sources of information are both the public and the private sector. Data from the private sector are collected mainly through surveys whereas from Government Departments and semi-Government organisations mostly through access to administrative records.

CYSTAT conducts censuses (complete enumerations), sample surveys and ad-hoc surveys. The data are collected mainly through personal interviews. At the planning stage of the various surveys, CYSTAT takes into consideration requests and proposals from other Government Departments so that their needs in data are fulfilled.

The Statistical Service collects data on various areas, some of which are irrelevant with young people. The key areas that are subject of data collection and are relevant with youth are the following; Population, Population Census, Health, Education, Living Conditions and Social Protection, Crime, Employment and Unemployment. The statistics are collected

The following statistics are collected on a yearly basis: Population, Health (only statistics relevant with the hospitals such as number of in-patients, surgical operations, out-patient attendances, hospital beds, personnel, etc), Education, Living Conditions and Social Protection and Crime. However, the rest of statistics mentioned above are collected more rarely or more frequently. Statistics on the population's health are collected approximately every 5-6 years while, the Population Census happens every 10 years. On the other hand, statistics on employment are collected every 3 months (and annually).

Besides data collected for the general population, the following specific indicators have been established precisely for unemployed youth and youth who drop out of school.

Until now, there has not been any national youth report. Also, there are not any other sources of data and analysis on the situation of young people at national level.

### **Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field**

The government has a line of funding for research on youth explicitly supporting evidence-based youth policy making. This is done by allocating special funds for research in the budget of the Youth Board of Cyprus. In particular, the budget for Research Programmes in 2014 was 8.330euros, while in 2015, 2016 and 2017 the budget was 40.000 euros respectively as seen in the [Cyprus Government Gazette](#). ([proypologismos onek 20141516 selida 35.pdf](#)). This budget increase, together with the inauguration of the new department "Youth Strategy and Research" within the Youth Board of Cyprus indicate the commitment of the government for supporting the evidence-based youth policy.

The government does not yet allocate funds for the evidence-based evaluation of its activities and policies. Such funds will be allocated later on, when the Action Plan of the NYS will be monitored.

## **1.7 Funding youth policy**

### **How Youth policy is funded**

There is not a specific budget for youth policy at the Youth Board of Cyprus. The costs for the youth policy initiatives will be funded ad hoc from other budgets. More specifically, the Action Plan of the National Youth Strategy will include only the actions taken by the top-level authorities, such as the ministries and the commissioners.

### **What is funded?**

Not applicable yet, since the Action Plan is not yet in place.

### **Financial accountability**

Not applicable.

### **Use of EU Funds**

According to the [Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development](#), the European Structural Funds, the Development and Cohesion Fund have been used for the youth policy at top-level. The main programs funded are the [National Action Plan for Youth Unemployment](#) (which includes also the Youth Guarantee Scheme) and the [Youth Entrepreneurship Enhancement Plan](#).

There is not available data on the amount of funding earmarked for youth from those EU funds.

There are also not existing evaluations of the youth related programmes receiving EU funds, nor trends in the amount or in the type of activities supported through EU funds.

## **1.8 Cross-border cooperation**

### **Cooperation with European countries**

Cyprus has activities of policy-coordination in the youth field with Czech Republic. More specific, Cyprus used the “Bilateral support measure” offered by the Council of Europe and had a peer coaching session with the Czech Republic. The Bilateral Support Measures are activities specifically tailored to the needs and requests for support in the area of youth policy by (mostly governmental) actors of the youth sectors in individual States. They are offered to assist public institutions, especially governmental authorities with responsibility for youth issues, to address their youth policy tasks and challenges. In this spectrum, 2 key note speakers with expertise on youth policy in Czech Republic (one representative from the governmental and one from the non-governmental sector) shared their experienced and coached representatives from the Youth Board of Cyprus and the members of the cross-sectoral mechanism of the National Youth Strategy. Since that, Cyprus and Czech Republic maintain a close relationship when it comes to youth policy development.

### **International cooperation**

The Youth Board of Cyprus maintains [important international relations](#) and cooperation. It is active in both European and national level for the promotion of youth policy issues. Specifically, the organization participates in Experts Groups dealing with youth issues, such as the Youth Department of the Council of Europe and the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.

Cyprus also participated in the first Global Forum on Youth Policies. Convened by the Office of the United Nations Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth (OSGEY), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe (COE), it was the largest UN hosted youth-focused event since the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth in Lisbon in 1998. Joining delegates from 165 countries, 115 governments, and more than 70 Ministers or Deputy Ministers, it resulted as the biggest conference exclusively on youth policies ever held. As written in an [online newspaper](#), the Youth Board of Cyprus was represented at the Forum by a member of the governing board of the organization.

## **1.9 Current debates and reforms**

At the moment the first Action Plan for the National Youth Strategy is being developed. Its creation will push government for more actions for young people and also will strengthen the cross-sectoral cooperation in the field of youth policy and youth mainstreaming.

## **2. Voluntary Activities**

The [Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organizations](#) is the main actor involved in policy-making and the main governmental authority responsible for volunteering in the country. Although there is not a youth volunteering policy in the country, the field is scattered through the [National Youth Strategy](#) and other official documents produced by the Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organizations.

At the moment, a lot of reforms take place, pushing forward new laws concerning voluntary organizations and mechanisms for validating the competences gained through volunteering

## **2.1 General context**

### **Historical developments**

Based on [the Cyprus report on volunteering across Europe](#), volunteering in Cyprus, voluntary activities in Cyprus until the 19<sup>th</sup> century were rooted in initiatives of philanthropy, mostly by providing relief to the ones in need and by making altruistic expressions of kindness, love and “helping one another” especially in periods of hardship, destitution and deprivation. At that time, philanthropy and charity were acts exercised by the individual, the State and the Church.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the British administration gives municipalities the responsibility to provide relief to the poor and the destitute and to run Relief Committees in order to allocate cash allowances. Voluntary activity is furthermore initiated to collect funds for the support of school infrastructures and to establish charity associations. Also during that time, important social legislation is enacted (i.e. the Charities Law, based on the Charity Law of England and Wales and the Clubs (Registration) Law of 1930) and other major improvements are recorded towards the establishment and development of voluntary initiatives and organisations to address various needs.

The activity of organisations expanded including, amongst others, the mental health domain, the children with physical disabilities, the disabled, special education schools, family planning, prevention of crime and treatment of offenders, elderly care, general social and health services, etc. In 1963, the Community Welfare Council of the Nicosia district was established, with the task to act as a coordinating volunteer body. In 1968, the introduction of a Grants-in-Aid Scheme for voluntary organisations operated by the Department of Social Welfare enables the expansion or the introduction of programmes run by voluntary organisations. During these years, there was an official acknowledgement that the engagement of people as volunteers can bring not only an added value to community development, but can effectively address the needs of the communities, support social welfare, represent the interests of vulnerable groups and bring change in governmental policies.

Currently, Cyprus experiences a further expansion of programmes and activities run by volunteer-involving organisations, in more policy fields and ways of engagement. The activities of organisations cover the fields of social inclusion and welfare, environment, culture, human-aid, peace building, human rights, equal opportunities, development, sports, education, community development, empowerment of the social capital, the UN Millennium Development Goals, etc. The government of Cyprus, acknowledging the importance of volunteering, has enacted the office of [Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organizations](#). The youth volunteering emerges as an essential aspect in the lives of young people and is promoted by the public sector in schools, and by NGOs in extra-curriculum time.

### **Main concepts**

There is no national definition for volunteering. However, the [Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities of the Volunteer](#), initiated by the Cyprus Commissioner and approved by Council of Ministers includes two relevant definitions. First is the definition of a “voluntary activity”. A voluntary activity is carried out by volunteers. The activity is done for a non-profit purpose aiming at improving the society and not replacing paid/salaried staff. The voluntary activity can be carried out by voluntary organizations or on the initiative of a volunteer.

A second definition found in the Declaration of Rights and Responsibilities of the Volunteer is the one of the “volunteer”. Volunteer is a citizen who, having free will, carries out activities for the benefit of the society. These activities are conducted without a motive of making profit/on a non-profit-making basis, contribute to the personal development of the volunteer, who devotes his/her time and energy to the general good without financial reward/remuneration.

## **2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering**

### **Governance**

The [Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organizations](#) is the main actor involved in policy-making and the main governmental authority responsible for youth volunteering. On 29 May 2013, the President of the Republic of Cyprus appointed the Commissioner by assigning him duties and responsibilities in order to achieve the best regulation for the support and upgrading of the Volunteering Movement. His role is to:

1. Implement policies that encourage active citizenship at all levels;
2. Create tools, such as public consultation working groups, questionnaires, online discussions and surveys to strengthen and facilitate a better contact between government and citizens;
3. Coordinate all voluntary organizations, Local Authorities and Church;
4. Support and upgrade the work of Voluntary Organizations and NGOs, with respect to their autonomy and independence;
5. Make good use of the European Programs in order to raise funds;
6. Work for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning on the basis of the Volunteer Legislative Framework, which will also contribute to combat unemployment.

Based on the Annual Reports of the Commissioner, other public actors involved in the development of policies in the field of youth are:

The Youth Board of Cyprus, and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC). The MOEC is responsible for organizing informative presentations and experiential workshops in schools and for promoting in each school the manual titled "Cultivating Volunteerism and Active Citizens in Schools";

The Ministries of Interior, Justice and Public Order, Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment are responsible for the management of volunteers during disasters and/or emergencies;

The Ministry of Justice and Public Order and the Cyprus Police (Crime Combating Department) are responsible for the "[Neighborhood Watch](#)" Scheme aiming at encouraging citizens to participate on a voluntary basis so as to prevent and reduce crime;

The Ministry of Defense in cooperation with the Cypriot National Guard provides support, mainly with food, to vulnerable groups;

The Environment Commissioner, the Department of Forests, the Union of Cyprus Communities and the Cyprus Forest Association are responsible for the initiative "Re-tree Cyprus" («Πρασινίζουμε την Κύπρο») which contributes to the reforestation of Argaka and Solea areas.

In addition, the promotion of volunteerism takes place in consultation with non-public actors such as the local NGOs. One of the main non-public actors is the Pancyprrian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC).

The [PVCC](#) was founded in 1973, when there was a need for coordination amongst the voluntary organizations, development of policy for the voluntary sector and social policy consultation with the voluntary sector and cooperation with governmental authorities.

Recognizing the vital role of the Council, the State decided to provide a legal framework [the Pancyprrian Welfare Council Law (152/89)] for its operation. In 2001 it was recognized that there was a need to further upgrade the legal framework of the Council

in order to respond to its role and mission more effectively. In 2006, the House of Representatives passed a new legislation that governs “the establishment and function of the Pan Cyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council” (PVCC). Under the new legislation the Council has a new operational framework, new responsibilities and a broader role for the coordination and development of the voluntary sector and volunteerism in general. As stated in their official [website](#) “the dialogue between the PVCC and the State takes place at various levels, through meetings, participation of PVCC’s representatives in Committees and through PVCC’s activities that promote dialogue and cooperation with the state officials, the legislative and executive power”.

There is not a distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities.

### **Cross-sectoral cooperation**

There are not any mechanisms of cross-sectoral cooperation between Ministries, Departments, Agencies involved in defining policies and measures on youth volunteering.

## **2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering**

### **Existence of a National Strategy**

There is not a national Strategy on Youth Volunteering in Cyprus.

### **Scope and contents**

Not applicable

### **Responsible authority**

Not applicable

### **Revisions/ Updates**

Not applicable

## **2.4 Laws and regulations on youth volunteering**

### **Stand-alone law**

There is not a stand-alone law on youth volunteering in Cyprus.

### **Other official documents containing guidelines on youth volunteering**

The National Youth Strategy (more information about it is covered in the previous chapter) contains information on youth volunteering. The Strategy outlines the following priorities when it comes to youth volunteering:

- To institutionalize volunteering and to promote voluntary activities inside and outside school/university and/or work environment.
- To educate young people about their obligations and rights as volunteers.
- To promote modern forms of volunteering.
- To establish minimum standards for issuing a certificate for volunteers.
- To ensure the rights of volunteers so that they are not exploited.
- To support the Voluntary and Non-Governmental Organizations.
- To promote volunteering at national and transnational level as a means of expressing solidarity.

The “[Declaration of rights and responsibilities of the volunteers](#)” («Διακήρυξη των δικαιωμάτων και των υποχρεώσεων των εθελοντών») is an official document approved by the Council of Ministers that establishes a common basis for volunteering. It was introduced in 2016 by the [Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental](#)

**Organizations** and is based on relevant declarations from the European Commission, the United Nations, and the Council of Europe. It targets volunteers in general and is not specific for young volunteers.

The Declaration outlines the rights of volunteers which are clustered as following: (i) basic rights (ii) rights to receive support from the voluntary organizations (iii) rights to personal development. It also covers the responsibilities of the volunteer and the responsibilities of the voluntary organizations which are clustered as below: (i) basic responsibilities (ii) responsibilities to support volunteers (iii) responsibilities towards the personal development of the volunteer (iv) cooperation with other voluntary organizations.

Although approved by the Council of Ministers, the Declaration does not function as a binding document for all volunteers, voluntary activities and organizations. Instead, it serves as a call for the design and upgrading of policies related to volunteering, in terms of safeguarding their rights and obligations of the volunteers.

### **Regulations on standards of quality**

There are not any regulations on the standards of quality of youth volunteering in Cyprus.

### **Target groups**

The official documents do not identify specific target groups within the youth population whose participation in voluntary activities is sought.

## **2.5 Youth volunteering at national level**

### **National Programme for Youth Volunteering**

A National Programme for youth volunteering does not exist in Cyprus.

### **Funding**

Not applicable.

### **Characteristics of youth volunteering**

There is very limited research on youth volunteering in Cyprus. The two most recent studies with official statistics related to volunteerism had been conducted by the Youth Board of Cyprus and the Statistical Service of Cyprus (CYSTAT) respectively.

The first one titled "The current situation of young people in Cyprus" was assigned to KPMG on behalf of the Cyprus Youth Board (publication date: November 2015). Based on this research, most of the young people, between 14-35 years old, who answered the questionnaire (55%) have not been involved in voluntary activities the last year. From those who have been involved in voluntary activities, the majority was involved in voluntary activities on local level.

The second study which was also conducted in 2015 by the CYSTAT in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner for Volunteering and Non-Governmental Organizations, did not focus exclusively on youth volunteerism, but on volunteerism and active citizenship in the general population of Cyprus. The results showed that only 7.17% participated in volunteer work through an organization or organized group, and 2.63% participated in voluntary work on their own initiative.

From those who volunteered in an organization, 21.78% were between 16-29 years old and 24.35% between 30-39 years old. The main fields of activities took place in Parent Associations, Community and Municipal Councils, Ecclesiastical Committees, Sports Associations and Youth Centers, fundraising events, charity and other events which aimed to collect money, food, and clothing to support deprived people. Participants also

volunteered in blood donations and initiatives related to the cleanliness of parks, beaches, coasts, municipalities and schools.

From those who volunteered on their own initiative, 24% aged between 16-29 and 20.29% between 30-39 years old. Voluntary activities included voluntary care in stray animals (mainly dogs), free work and/or service, such as repairing objects, and voluntary assistance to citizens who are ill or they needed transportation. In addition, they participated in voluntary activities aimed at collecting and/or distributing food and other basic commodities to homeless people, they provided (either directly or indirectly) financial support to other citizens and they volunteered in initiatives for the cleanliness of parks, beaches, municipalities, schools, and gardens. Last, the study mentions that it is encouraging that participation rates in volunteer activities, either collectively or individually, for the age groups 16-29 and 30-39 are among the largest.

### **Support to young volunteers**

The “Declaration of rights and responsibilities of the volunteers” outlines what kind of support should be given to volunteers. Specifically, each volunteer is entitled to reimbursement of expenses incurred during the implementation of the voluntary activity (only costs related to the activity). In addition to that, the voluntary organizations should provide an insurance which covers social protection, medical care, and civil liability.

### **Quality Assurance**

A system of quality assurance of the programmes and schemes of youth volunteering does not exist in Cyprus.

## **2.6 Cross-border mobility programmes**

### **EU programmes**

Cyprus participates in the European Voluntary Service (EVS) and the EU Aid Volunteers programme.

Regarding the EVS, the main top-level authority in charge of organizing and monitoring it is at national level is the Youth Board of Cyprus. After contacting the person responsible for EVS, we gathered the necessary data for the EVS volunteers in Cyprus. The Youth Board of Cyprus monitors the participation of young people in EVS through the applications submitted to the National Agency of the E+ Youth Programme by the accredited organizations. Volunteers participating in the approved EVS projects attend two seminars organized by the National Agency: one on arrival training and one Mid-Term evaluation meeting. Through these seminars, the Youth Board comes in contact with volunteers, informs them of everything they need to know about their service and at the same time receives their own impressions, experiences and comments.

The number of youth volunteers arriving in Cyprus in 2014 was 41, in 2015 it was 50 and in 2016 it was 73. The vast majority of volunteers came from different European countries (with the largest numbers being located in Greece, France, Italy and Spain), as well as a few of the Middle East neighboring countries, which cooperate with Erasmus + (partner countries).

Unfortunately the Youth Board does not have data about the Cypriot volunteers who participate in EVS projects abroad, due to the fact that the project applications are not submitted to the CY National Agency of the E+ Youth but to the corresponding National Agencies of the countries of the hosting organizations.

Regarding the European Solidarity Corps, it currently operates in Cyprus as a platform mainly for the EVS. As informed by the Youth Board of Cyprus, there are now 194 Cypriot youth registered on the on online platform.

Last, there is not information about the EU Aid Volunteers Programme in Cyprus.

## Other Programmes

There are not bilateral or multilateral programmes for youth cross—border volunteering in Cyprus.

### Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

When it comes to EVS volunteers, [EVS Charter](#) sets the legal framework for young volunteers coming from abroad to do EVS in Cyprus. The Charter includes the general principles governing the European Voluntary Service, as well as the obligations of both the sending organization and the Hosting Organization.

If a visa is required for youth EVS volunteers who will enter the Republic of Cyprus, the hosting organization needs to follow the [procedure and requirements for lodging a visa application](#) by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. All costs for the visa are covered by the E+ Programme.

Non-European EVS volunteers who will stay for a maximum period of up to 12 months are granted a residence permit for all the duration of their service.

Apart from this, there is not any other national framework for foreign volunteers existing in the country.

Last, there is no separate legal framework applied for the European Solidarity Corps.

## 2.7 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

### Information providers

The public body responsible for disseminating information on volunteering opportunities for young people is the Youth Board of Cyprus. Young people can get information about volunteering (mainly EVS) by visiting directly the Youth Board Office, or the [Youth information Centres](#) which also manage the [Eurodesk Cyprus](#). Young people may also get information online from the websites of the Youth Board and the newsletters of Youth Information Centres and Eurodesk.

### Key initiatives

As mentioned in the [annual reports](#) of the Commissioner for Volunteering and NGOs, the only top-level initiatives taken to disseminate information on volunteering among young people are (a) informative presentations (b) experiential workshops and (c) conferences on volunteering and active participation. They take place both inside and outside schools and are implemented by the Commissioner, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture and local NGOs. These initiatives promote also the educational manual "[Cultivating volunteering and active citizenship in schools](#)" which contains a lot of information on volunteering. The Commissioner encourages the teachers to use this manual in their classrooms and to initiate school based voluntary activities. The main target of these dissemination activities is adolescents.

## 2.8 Skills recognition

### Policy Framework

There are currently not any national criteria for recognizing skills acquired through volunteering.

### Existing arrangements

Not applicable.

## **2.9 Current debates and reforms**

As described in the [announcement of the 27/07/2017](#) of the Office of the Commissioner, the Commissioner in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and after Public Consultation, has drafted a law together with the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus which consolidates, amends and abolishes the existing legislation on associations, institutions and clubs. (New law entitled «Ο περί σωματείων και Ιδρυμάτων και για άλλα συναφή θέματα Νόμος του 2015», p. 31). The law, has been submitted to the House of Representatives for adoption, and it is expected to modernize the way non-governmental organizations (including voluntary organizations) function.

In addition, the Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the Office of the Commissioner decided on a series of measures for the creation of a legal framework for the certification of charitable organizations («Ο περί Ιδιωτικών Οργανισμών Κοινής Ωφέλειας (Πιστοποίηση) Νόμος του 2014», p. 32). The aforementioned framework is being processed by the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus.

Moreover, as mentioned in the [National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020](#), the Ministry of Education and Culture is in the process of developing a mechanism for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (including volunteering).

Last, in an interview, the **Commissioner** informed us that it has been decided together with the Ministry of Education and Culture the creation of a booklet or platform of “good practices”. This will include tangible results of the actions carried out in schools when it comes to volunteering. Furthermore, a specific label “License C” will be placed in schools whose students have excelled in voluntary initiatives.

## **3. Employment & Entrepreneurship**

A strategy dedicated on youth employment indicates the interest of the government for the employability of young people. The [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#) endorses a wide range of actions that aim to reinforce youth employment. A cross-sectoral approach is a key element of the Action Plan, addressing collectively the high level of youth unemployment in the country. Special attention is also given to the empowerment of youth entrepreneurship in the country through various grant schemes.

A highlight of youth employment policy is the integration of the outcomes of skills forecasting in the schemes of traineeship and apprenticeship and the opportunities given through cross-boarder mobility.

### **3.1 General context**

#### **Labour market situation in the country**

The key challenges regarding the labour market are the persistently high levels of unemployment, albeit with the signs of recovery and decreasing unemployment rates, and especially youth and long-term unemployment, as stated in the [National Reform Programme 2016](#). Moreover, according to the [National Reform Programme 2017](#) in the first three quarters of 2016, the employment rate stood at 68.6% indicating an improvement compared to 67.9% in 2015. As regards the sectoral distribution of employment, services continued to account for the biggest percentage of employed persons in 2016 with 79.3% compared to 79,8% in 2015, whereas industry accounted for 16.9% compared to 16,2% in 2015 and agriculture for 3.8% compared to 4% in 2015. Unemployment which had increased significantly because of the economic crisis, started to decrease in 2015, reaching 14.9%, while in 2016 it decreased further to 13%. In 2016, male unemployment rate decreased to 12,7% compared to 15,0% in 2015, while female unemployment was 13,4% in 2016 compared to 14,8% in 2015. Also, the long-

term unemployment rate which had been increasing over the past few years, in 2016 showed a decline reaching 5.7% compared to 6.8% in 2015.

According to the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#), the economic crisis hit young people extremely hard. Between 2007 and 2013, the youth unemployment rate increased by 28.7 percentage points, over twice the increase recorded of the adult unemployment rate. The youth unemployment rate in 2008 was one of the lowest in the European Union (9.0%). After five years, in 2013, it was among the highest (38.9%), a four-times increase. The unemployment rate for young people (15-24 years), fell to 28.9% in 2016 compared to 32.8% in 2015. The respective employment rate for this age group increased to 26% in 2016 compared to 25.3% in 2015.

According to the National Reform Plan 2017, the share of young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEETs) has recently decreased. It amounted to 15,2% in 2015 (age group 15-24) compared to 17% in 2014.

Currently (in 2017), as informed by the [Statistical Service of Cyprus](#) there are 10.302 unemployed young people aged between 15-24 years old, representing the 19,1% of the whole unemployed population in the country. Moreover, there are nowadays 18.324 unemployed young people aged between 25-34 years old, representing the 33,9% of the whole unemployed population in the country. This proves that young people represent almost the half of the unemployed population.

Moreover, the National Reform Programme 2016 clarifies that human resources in Cyprus are characterised by a high level of educational attainment. In 2015, the percentage of the population aged 15+ with tertiary education was 32%, while the corresponding percentage for the economically active population was 43%. However, the recent economic crisis and its adverse effects on the labour market posed a critical challenge for the Cypriot education and training system. As a result, education and training activities have been redirected to respond flexibly and effectively to the crisis, with targeted actions for the unemployed, economically inactive, but also for the employed. A major challenge is to address the increased levels of unemployment with emphasis on youth as well as long-term unemployment. Therefore, the actions of the Cyprus government mainly focus on promoting the employability of young persons and the long-term unemployed, through individualised guidance, training and work placements.

### **Main concepts**

In Cyprus, every young person who has completed the age of 14 has the right to work, as defined by the [Law on the Protection of Young Persons in the Employment](#). However, a big number of young people find it challenging to enter the labour market. According to the KPMG research on the situation of young people in Cyprus, the top two concerns of young people in Cyprus regarding their employment after their graduation are that: (1) there are no work places in their field of studies; (2) there are no work places at all. From the same research, it is obvious that 28% of the youth would be willing to work abroad for a long period of time, and 43% would be willing to work abroad for a short period of time. At this point, it must be mentioned that the Employment target set for Cyprus within the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy is 75-77% for the population aged between 20-64.

In addition to the well-known forms of work, a new form of employment, entrepreneurship, is promoted in Cyprus the last years. The KPMG research indicates that 77% of youth would like to create their own business. The government has recently started cultivating competences in this field, however, the available statistics/data on it are extremely limited.

## **3.2 Administration and Governance**

### **Governance**

The main governmental authority responsible for youth employment and entrepreneurship is [the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) and particularly, the Department of Labour. The mission of the Ministry (among others) is the maintenance and continuous improvement of the standard of living and the quality of life of the working population and of the society in general. The Department of Labour is responsible for:

- The employment and the labour market;
- Combating discrimination and promoting the principle of equality in the workplace.

Moreover, the Department is responsible for providing employment services and filling vacancies, protecting special groups in employment, monitoring the function of the labour market and coordinating the National Employment Policy.

According to the National Action Plan for Youth Employment, together with the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, the following public actors are involved in policy making in this field:

- the Youth Board of Cyprus, as explained in detail in chapter 1;
- the [Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism](#): It is responsible for the formulation and implementation of Government policy on matters pertaining to trade, industry, tourism and Consumer, in such a way that it will contribute positively towards the further development of the Cyprus economy and the well-being of the population of the island. The administration of the Ministry handles the general policy and directs and co-ordinates all the departments and services of the Ministry for its effective implementation;
- the Ministry of Education and Culture;
- the [Human Resource Development Authority](#): the mission of the Human Resource Development Authority is to create the prerequisites for planned and systematic training and development of the human resources of Cyprus at all levels and in all sectors in order to meet the needs of the economy within the framework of the social and economic policy of the state;
- the [Cyprus Productivity Centre](#): The mission of Cyprus Productivity Centre is to assist private and public organizations to utilise their human and capital resources in the best possible way so as to increase productivity.

As non-public actors, the State and Private Universities – operating in the Government controlled area of the Republic of Cyprus – are also involved in policy-making in this field.

There is no distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities regarding the main governance approach to youth employment and entrepreneurship. All responsibilities are held on the top-governmental level.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

As stated in the National Action Plan for Youth Employment, a result-based management system is established by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance to regularly assess the quality of service delivery and the outcomes achieved by labour market policies. This system:

- (i) identifies in measurable terms the results being sought and a roadmap for their achievement;
- (ii) sets targets and indicators (to judge performance);

(iii) develops a method for the regular collection of data to compare the results achieved against the targets;

(iv) integrates evaluations to gather information not available through monitoring; and

(v) uses monitoring and evaluation information for decision-making, accountability and strategic planning.

Monitoring and evaluation is overseen by the Working Group which was established for the development of the National Action Plan for Youth Employment. This working group includes representatives from all implementing bodies, social partners and youth organisations.

### **3.3 Skills Forecasting**

#### **Forecasting system(s)**

The Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) is the responsible authority for identifying future demands in the labour market. It implements a 10-year employment forecasts on a regular basis. The forecasts aim to contribute substantially to the planning and implementation of education and training activities through the provision of employment needs forecasts in the Cyprus economy. [The 2015 forecasts for the period 2014-2024 as regards employment, expansion and replacement demand](#) covered 52 sectors and 309 occupations (173 high level occupations, 130 middle level occupations and 6 low level occupations) covering the whole spectrum of the Cyprus labour market.

The main output of this forecast is an extended report which is published on the website of the HRDA. Furthermore, the HRDA participates actively in initiatives and actions that are promoted at European level in the framework of the European network Skillsnet for skill needs forecasting.

The [Ministry of Finance](#) provides projections for the growth of the economy, which include forecasts of value added, productivity and employment, and submits proposals for the required policy changes.

The [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) (MoEC) and more specifically the [Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education](#) (STVE) is responsible for the introduction, with the participation of the social partners, of new fields of study and specialisations, the design of curricula and the identification of special skills needed.

To carry out these tasks, while considering the developmental needs of the Cyprus economy and the latest scientific and technological advances, the Department of STVE has developed close cooperation with all major stakeholders such as Ministries and the [Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development](#), the social partners (employers' and employees' organisations), teachers and their associations, the [University of Cyprus](#) (UCY), the [Pedagogical Institute](#) (PI) and the HRDA. The findings of the research studies of the HRDA are also taken into account for the design of curricula.

In addition, the [Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation](#) (CERE) of the MoEC participates in the [Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies](#) (PIAAC), a survey recognised by [OECD](#) and delivered by ETS. PIAAC assesses the level and distribution of adult skills in a coherent and consistent way across countries. It focuses on the key cognitive and workplace skills that are needed for successful participation in the economy and society of the 21st century.

#### **Skills development**

Skills anticipation outputs are used by policymakers to develop appropriate policies to support public and private organisations involved in human resource planning in adapting to the country's skill needs. Other key users of the results from the HRDA skills anticipation studies are public and private organisations, future graduates and their

families, school counsellors, general education and VET institutions (universities, colleges, and public and private schools of all levels), employers, trade unions, MoEC, and [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) (MLWSI).

More specifically, the outcomes of the HRDA forecast are used to support the acquisition of skills by young people in the following formal education programmes, as stated in the National Reform Plan 2016:

1. Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE). A review and reform of the fields of study and specialisations offered by Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE) has already been done in order to become more attractive and relevant to labour market needs.
2. Evening Technical Schools. The Evening Technical Schools are equivalent to the formal STVE programmes offered in mainstream Technical Schools, adapted to the needs of adult students. Therefore, Evening Technical Schools operate as second chance schools, offering good quality mainstream VET education to adults who are early school leavers, so that they have the opportunity to re-enter the formal school system, obtain a qualification at upper secondary level, move on to tertiary education if they wish and/or re-enter the labour market as skilled workers.
3. The Apprenticeship Scheme. The Apprenticeship Scheme becomes more flexible through the development of about forty specialisations, which are offered alternately to the various districts, on the basis of (among others) labour market needs.
4. The Post-Secondary Institutes of VET (PSIVET): The programmes offered by PSIVET are especially designed, after consultation with the social partners and stakeholders, to respond to the needs of emerging economic sectors and to be relevant to labour market needs.

The outcomes of the HRDA forecast are not used in the non-formal and informal learning field.

As described in the [Skills Panorama](#), the outputs are disseminated in a number of ways:

- The HRDA organises press conferences for the presentation of its forecasts and other studies.
- Special lectures are organised for secondary school guidance counsellors in collaboration with the MoEC, and for employment counsellors in collaboration with the PES.
- Findings of the forecast studies are disseminated to the public through the media such as articles in newspapers and participation in relevant radio and television programmes.
- Detailed forecasts of employment demand for around 300 occupations are provided on the HRDA website. Users may search for information on occupations of interest.

### **3.4 Career Guidance and Counselling**

#### **Career guidance and counselling services**

The following career guidance and counselling services are offered by government:

1. The first type is offered by the Public Employment Services (PES) of the [Department of Labour](#) (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance) to all unemployed people (including youth), providing information and guidance. The Public Employment Services of the Department of Labour operate at central and district level, with four Labour Offices at the Districts of Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Pafos and 2 sub-offices at Paralimni and Polis. At the District Labour Offices, job seekers are assisted in finding suitable employment through registration and placement services, as well as

through the provision of vocational guidance and counselling on training opportunities. The PES counsellors invite young people for providing support, guidance and assistance through individualised services, aiming at their return back into education or participating in active labour market policies to facilitate their entry into the labour market. This guidance service is independent of the Youth Guarantee's scheme.

2. The second type is a special career guidance offered by the PES to the youth aged between 15-29 years old. Registration with the PES will be the entry point for youth into the Guarantee. The registration requirement will allow the PES to collect the information necessary for planning service delivery, allocate resources, monitor individual progression and evaluate policy outcomes. At the low-intensity service stage, young individuals will be informed about the services available, what they may expect from the guarantee and the specific requirements that apply. This stage of assistance provides young people with labour market information, group counselling and job search training to enable them to search for work independently for a period of three months. If by the end of the assisted job search period the young beneficiary still has no concrete job prospects, she/he is referred to individualized counselling and guidance. This second tier of assistance will allow to: i) identify the specific barrier(s) faced by the young individual in entering the labour market (risk factors), and ii) select the most effective mix of services and programmes to lead to a job or back to education. The intervention strategy agreed upon by the casework and the young person will become the core feature of the Individual Employment Plan (IEP).

70% of the budget and the target to be allocated for the age group 15-24.

This is an integrated service delivery model is introduced for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

3. The [Career Counselling and Educational Services](#) (CCES) operate under the umbrella of the Secondary Education Administration of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture. Their main aim is the personal, social, educational and vocational development of high school students and other people.

The CCES maintains Counselling and Career Guidance offices in all public Secondary and Technical schools as well as Central Career Guidance offices at the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Taking into consideration the individuality of each person, their abilities and their freedom of will, the CCES aims to help students and other people to:

- Develop positive self-esteem, self-approval and self-confidence.
- Identify their abilities, interests and skills.
- Use their unique capabilities and aptitudes to achieve self-awareness.
- Acquire the right skills to deal effectively with personal, family and/or social issues in life.
- Adjust to the school environment in order to progress both educationally and socially.
- Develop critical thinking.
- Develop the necessary skills that will allow use of appropriate information effectively and make well informed decisions concerning educational, vocational and personal choices.
- Learn about the nature and demands of various vocations as well as the current social, economic and cultural developments so that correct educational choices are made.

This guidance service is independent of the Youth Guarantee's scheme.

4. The [Career Counselling and Career Management Services](#) are offered by the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#). The services are provided to young people aged up to 35 years old, in order to help them to make the best possible educational and professional choices.

The meetings take place at the Youth Information Centres in Nicosia, Larnaca, Paphos and Limassol. A new Youth Information Centre will soon open in Sotira and will provide the same services. The services provide:

- Counselling Career Planning taking into consideration the circumstances of the recent labour market (new skills, enhancement of employability opportunities, CV, job searching methods, entrepreneurship initiative, information on European and national opportunities).
- Information on education and training opportunities in Cyprus and abroad.
- Guidance on lessons' choices for students attending Secondary Schools classes.
- Help in filling the applications for access to public universities.

This guidance service is independent of the Youth Guarantee's scheme.

## Funding

Below, the funding information of the career guidance and counselling services mentioned in the section [3.4 Career guidance and Counselling](#) are elaborated:

1. As illustrated in the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#), the budget for the 1<sup>st</sup> type of service as described above (as well as others under measures aiming for the objective "Enhance the Service Capacity of the PES and providing information and guidance to the youth") for the period 2015-2017 is 2.000.000 euros, the funding source of which is European Structural Funds. It is managed by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance.
2. As illustrated in the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#), the funding for the 2<sup>nd</sup> type of career guidance and counselling services (as described before) is the European Structural Funds. These are managed by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and is calculated at 500.000 euro.
3. Again, as illustrated in the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#), the budget for the 3<sup>rd</sup> service for the period 2015-2017 is 1.200.000 euros. It is managed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and its source is the ESF.
4. The source of funding of the 4<sup>th</sup> type of service (Career Counselling and Career Management Services offered by the Youth Board) comes from the State's budget. The amount of funding is not available.

## Quality assurance

There was no information found about any existing system of quality assurance of the services of career guidance and counselling in the country.

## 3.5 Traineeships and Apprenticeships

### Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

There is no main top-level official guidelines concerning traineeships or apprenticeship in Cyprus.

Depending on the traineeship or apprenticeship scheme, the responsibilities of each party involved (providers and participants) are formulated. Few examples of traineeships or apprenticeship can be found below:

1. [Post-Graduate Vocational Education and Training Institutes](#). This traineeship offers opportunities for Cypriot citizens and especially young people to acquire, improve or upgrade their professional qualifications and skills to make them more capable of employment and participation in the labor market. The idea is to offer modern curricula that provide scientific, technical and professional knowledge and skills while being flexible and adaptable to the rapid changes in employment, the economy, the professions and the content of the professions. The programme aims to facilitate

access to and integration into the labor market of graduates of secondary education and people with difficulties of integration / reintegration into employment.

Social security is not covered by this scheme.

2. [New Contemporary Apprenticeship Programme](#): The Ministry of Education and Culture has made the necessary reforms for a New Modern Apprenticeship, where youth can find their own path and get into the labor market. The skills youth will develop will help them succeed in what they want. The remodeling and modernization of the Apprenticeship Scheme in a New Modern Apprenticeship responds to the current and future needs of youth education, training and development. At the same time, it strengthens the labor market with well-trained technical staff.

This programme runs since September 2015. Its main objectives are:

To offer alternative learning styles to adolescents who leave the formal education system and who need to develop specific skills or professional skills, taking the appropriate skills, either for further education in choices offered by the education system or for employment in the labor market.

To ensure mobility and flexibility in the choices of young people offered by the education system, apprenticeship and work, without dead ends and exclusions.

To improve the labor offer with young people who are adequate, qualified and certified professionals, ready to meet the needs of the economy.

### **Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships**

The traineeships and apprenticeships are usually promoted through the career guidance and counselling services described in section 3.4.

Apart from this, there are no other top-level policy measures or initiatives to facilitate the participation, support and awareness of young people about traineeships and apprenticeships.

### **Recognition of learning outcomes**

When it comes to the [Post-Graduate Vocational Education and Training Institutes](#) and the [New Contemporary Apprenticeship Programme](#), the skills young people acquired are formally recognised by Cyprus. As a result of their participation, they obtain a diploma or a certificate. So far, young people cannot validate the knowledge, skills and competences acquired in any other way since such mechanisms are not yet in place.

### **Funding**

Both, the [Post-Graduate Vocational Education and Training Institutes](#) and the [New Contemporary Apprenticeship Programme](#) are co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus. The amount of funding is not available.

### **Quality assurance**

There are not any existing systems of quality assurance applied to schemes of traineeships and apprenticeships in the country. The Ministry of Education and Culture, prepares annual reports which includes information on the [Post-Graduate Vocational Education and Training Institutes](#) and the [New Contemporary Apprenticeship Programme](#).

## **3.6 Integration of Young People in the Labour Market**

### **Youth employment measures**

The main policy measures implemented at top-level to foster the access of young job-seekers to employment are offered by the [Human Resource Development Authority](#) of

Cyprus. The HRDA also offers various schemes to unemployed people of all ages who are facing particular barriers in finding and retaining a job (low-skilled youth, social protection beneficiaries, unemployed at risk of long-term unemployment). Below, there is a list of the available schemes offered:

1. [Provision of Incentives for Hiring Recipients of Guaranteed Minimum Income Combined with a three-month Training Period](#)

The scheme offers practical training and work experience opportunities to Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) recipients in order to improve their employability and prepare their employment in a specific enterprise/organisation of the private sector. The target group for this programme is GMI recipients with the goal to have 3 months training and 12 months employment. For the 12-month period of employment of the GMI beneficiary, the enterprise/organization can receive from the Department of Labour a subsidy of up to 60% of the beneficiary's wage, and a maximum amount of €6,000. The running period is from 2016 to 2018.

2. [Job Placement of GMI Recipients for the Acquisition of Work Experience in the Public and Broader Public Sector](#) (HRDA and Department of Labour):

The aim of the scheme is to provide work experience opportunities to 2,000 GMI recipients capable to work, in order to improve their employability and help them re-enter the labour market. The running period for this scheme is from 2017 to 2018. GMI recipients, who must be between 28-40 years old, will be placed in the public and broader public sector for 6 months while they receive their GMI benefit.

3. [Scheme for the Employment and Training of Tertiary Education Graduates:](#)

The scheme aims at strengthening the management capacity of enterprises and organisations through the employment and training of qualified tertiary education graduates under 30 years of age, while helping the smooth integration of graduates in suitable job positions. Young unemployed tertiary education graduates are offered a training subsidy while they receive on the job training for 6 months. The HRDA sets the minimum gross wage of €950 per month paid by the employer to the graduate during the program. The subsidy is calculated on the basis of the eligible costs of the implemented training programme.

4. [Job placement of unemployed young secondary education graduates for the acquisition of work experience:](#)

The scheme offered job placements to young unemployed graduates of lower secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary education of up to 2 years, in order to improve their employability, providing at the same time the opportunity to enterprises/organisations to utilise suitable personnel. The duration of the programme was from 2014 to 2016. The latest call to enterprises and the unemployed took place in 2015. In 2016 implementation of the job placement programmes continued. Young unemployed secondary graduates (< 25 years old registered with the PES) were offered a training subsidy while they received on the job training in the public and private sector for 6 months.

5. [Job placement of young unemployed tertiary education graduates for the acquisition of work experience:](#)

The scheme offers job placements in enterprises/organisations to young unemployed tertiary education graduates with limited work experience, in order to improve their employability. The duration of the programme was from 2014 to 2016. The latest call to enterprises and the unemployed took place in 2015. In 2016 implementation of the job placement programmes continued. Young unemployed tertiary education graduates (< 35 years old registered with the Public Employment Services of the [Department of Labour](#)) were offered a training subsidy while they received on the job training in the public and private sector for 6 months.

6. According to the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#) 2014-2017 (policy objective No.3) which aims to implement a National Youth Guarantee, there is a specific outcome 3.6 "Incentives to recruit youth are provided to private sector enterprises with emphasis on priority and growing sectors". Its goals are:

600 eligible youth (15-24) will be referred to the employment programme;

At least 60 per cent of young subsidized workers will still be employed 12 months after the end of the programme

The Scheme will be flexible and its main purpose will be to provide incentives to employers in order to hire unemployed persons. The Scheme will offer additional (to the basic) incentives to employers in priority sectors of the economy (information and communications technology, health, tourism, energy and social, green and blue economy) which have prospects for growth.

The subsidy will cover part of the wage of the subsidized young worker for a period of six months (with an obligation to retain the worker for an additional period after the end of the subsidized period).

The scheme will also target high-growth sectors of the economy. Priority areas are defined as the areas of information technology and communications, health, education, tourism, social economy and green and blue economy. An additional incentive will be offered to companies operating in the above-mentioned sectors.

The implementing Body of this scheme will be the Public Employment Services (PES) of the [Department of Labour](#) and its budget is 2,000,000 €.

Target: 600 eligible youth (15-24)

The main large-scale outreach strategy to disseminate information about job opportunities among young people in Cyprus is the "ActiveYouth: Youth Guarantee to ACTIVate and Empower YOUTH in Cyprus: an integrated communications campaign". The main purpose of the Programme is to raise awareness of the Youth Guarantee among young people as essential for reaching out to those not registered with their respective national Youth Guarantee systems, informing them that it is a pre-condition for them to contact relevant services and benefit from available offers. The project will be carried out by the Youth Information Centres of the Youth Board of Cyprus.

ActiveYouth is a complete communication strategy for an 18-month national communications campaign aiming to activate NEETs and young people in general, guiding them to the Public Employment Services and enabling them to actively search for a job, training or internship opportunity, making the most of the existing Youth Guarantee schemes. At the same time, ActiveYouth aims to promote synergies between key Youth Guarantee stakeholders in Cyprus, focusing on those who have the capacity to reach out to NEETs from diverse backgrounds (poverty, disability, low educational attainment or ethnic minority/ migrants).

The ActiveYouth campaign will adopt and build upon the existing Youth Guarantee media toolkit entitled "Youth Guarantee in 3 steps". A list of complementary online and offline training and networking activities has been drawn, inspired from and based on best practices of other EU Member States. ActiveYouth is expected to increase the number of young people (15-24) registered with the Public Employment Services and thus support the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance Services of the Republic of Cyprus in the implementation of the National Action Plan.

### **Flexicurity measures focusing on young people**

There are currently no top-level policies or measures to enhance flexibility and security in the labour market.

## Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

The [Department of Labour](#) is responsible for the proper implementation and monitoring of the Equal Treatment of men and women in employment and vocational training Law. The implementation of the legislation and its improvement through the introduction of new laws and the modification of the existing ones aim at achieving equal treatment of men and women in the field of work. The recent amendment concerning the Protection of Maternity Law (116(I)/2017) to cover cases of surrogate maternity and the adoption of legislation on Paternity Protection (117(I)/2017) constitute measures and policies for the reconciliation of professional and family life.

In addition, between 2007 and 2013, the [Subsidy Scheme for attracting people in the Labour Market through Flexible Forms of Employment](#) was valid, aiming to mitigate the unemployment problem by attracting unemployed people who wish to work on a Flexible Form of Employment while giving businesses a means to cope with the difficulties that the economic crisis had. The scheme targeted citizens who were registered as unemployed in the PES. The last participants of this scheme finalized their employment in August 2015. Also, between 2010-2015 the [Grants Scheme for Inclusion in Employment with Flexible Arrangements](#) was available. This Scheme targeted specifically unemployed women, unemployed citizens 50 years old or older, parents who had to take care of a child under 16 years old or citizens who took care of dependent on them children (children with special needs, etc).

Last, the project "[Actions for Reducing the Remuneration of Men and Women](#)" took place between 2010-2015. The project aimed at addressing the causes that create and sustain the pay gap in Cyprus. However, currently, there are no other top-level policies or measures to help young people reconcile their private and working lives.

### Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

Information about the funding of the schemes/initiatives described above ([Youth employment measures](#)) are:

1. The scheme "[Provision of Incentives for Hiring Recipients of Guaranteed Minimum Income Combined with a three-month Training Period](#)" runs on national funds offered by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Security. The amount of funding is 203.000 euros
2. The scheme "[Job Placement of GMI Recipients for the Acquisition of Work Experience in the Public and Broader Public Sector](#)" is funded by the European Structural Funds. There is no available information about the amount of funding.
3. The source of funding for the "[Scheme for the Employment and Training of Tertiary Education Graduates](#)" is not available. However, the funding allocated is 4.000.000 euros
4. The scheme "[Job placement of unemployed young secondary education graduates for the acquisition of work experience](#)"
5. The scheme "[Job placement of young unemployed tertiary education graduates for the acquisition of work experience](#)" is funded by the European Structural Funds and National Funds. The amount of funding is 4.000.000 euros
6. The scheme "Incentives to recruit youth are provided to private sector enterprises with emphasis on priority and growing sectors" as described in the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#) is funded by the Youth Employment Initiative. The amount of funding is 2.000.000 euros

The implementing Body of this scheme will be the Public Employment Services (PES) of the [Department of Labour](#) and its budget is 2,000,000 €.

Target: 600 eligible youth (15-24)

## Quality assurance

Regarding vocational training provided to unemployed people, the training programmes are implemented by public and private institutions and enterprises. To be approved they need to adhere to the criteria laid down by the [Human Resource Development Agency \(HRDA\)](#). The HRDA ensures the quality of the programmes it subsidises by undertaking controls in the programme approval stage, the programme implementation stage and the payment of subsidy stage.

An important development with regard to training providers is the introduction of a system for the assessment and certification of training providers. Through this system, which has been fully implemented as of 1 January 2015, vocational training centres, vocational training facilities and trainers are assessed against specific criteria to ensure that they are eligible for certification. For trainers, the criteria are based on their competence as well as their academic qualifications and their professional experience as trainers.

The HRDA also carries out evaluation studies on the effectiveness and impact of its activities. These evaluations are included in the [2016 Vocational Education and Training Report of Cyprus](#). To this end, a comprehensive system evaluating the impact of HRDA on the economy of Cyprus has been set up. Within this system, evaluation studies, which include field and desk research, are conducted by either independent consultants or the HRDA.

The evaluation studies carried out by the HRDA assess and evaluate its activities and its contribution towards the Cypriot economy and society. They aim to identify possible weaknesses in order to take appropriate policy decisions and relevant corrective measures and, at the same time, to achieve good governance and transparency.

In this context, the HRDA prepares the study "[Indicators of Participation in HRDA's activities](#)" on a regular basis. The main objective of the study is the analysis of the participation in HRDA's activities, for example during the period 2009 - 2015, and specifically the number of enterprises which participated and received subsidies, the number of eligible enterprises which paid the Human Resource Development Levy, the subsidies provided to enterprises by the HRDA and the levy paid by enterprises.

It must be noted that the analysis includes those Schemes for which the enterprises receive a subsidy for the participation of their employees and does not include all the Schemes from which they benefit, such as the Schemes providing job placements for the unemployed for the acquisition of work experience. For those Schemes, there are specific studies which will be mentioned later.

Some of the main indicators/criteria mentioned in the study "Indicators of Participation in HRDA's activities" are:

- The number of enterprises participating in the HRDA's activities
- Percentage coverage indicator of enterprises benefiting from HRDA's activities
- Coverage Indicators by Economic Sectors
- Coverage Indicators by Size of Enterprise
- Coverage Indicators by District

In addition, regarding Evaluation studies conducted for the impact of the "scheme for job placement of unemployed young tertiary education graduates for the acquisition of work experience", some indicators being mentioned are:

- Impact of the Scheme on the Employability (both on broader public and private sector)
- Percentage of participants in the Scheme who continue to work in the enterprise/organisation of their placement

- The employment status of participants
- The degree of utilisation of knowledge and skills acquired
- The degree of improvement of employment prospects
- The Satisfaction of Participants in the Scheme

Last – as it is stated in the HRDA’s evaluation studies – based on the level of contribution of each Scheme in alleviating youth unemployment, new calls of the Schemes are announced.

### **3.7 Cross-Border Mobility in Employment, Entrepreneurship and Vocational Opportunities**

#### **Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility**

The main top-level programmes/schemes, for cross-border mobility are:

##### 1. [Your First EURES Job Mobility Scheme](#)

EURES is a cooperation network designed to facilitate the free movement of workers within the EU 28 countries plus Switzerland, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The network is composed of: the European Coordination Office (ECO), the National Coordination Offices (NCOs), EURES Partners and the Associated EURES Partners.

Partners in the network may include Public Employment Services (PES), Private employment services (PRES), trade unions, employers' organisations and other relevant actors in the labour market. The partners provide information, placement and recruitment services to employers and jobseekers whereas the European and National Coordination Offices oversee the organisation of the activities at European and national level respectively. In Cyprus, EURES is well intergraded into the operations of the Public Employment Services (PES) of the [Department of Labour](#). All EURES Services in Cyprus are offered by the PES through a network of 7 EURES Advisers in all major cities in Cyprus, All EURES Advisers have received the proper training at EU Level.

In every District and Local PES Office, EURES Services are highly visible. EURES Desks, clearly marked with EURES signs, are situated next to other PES services while job seekers can access the EURES Job Portal from the self-service area available in all offices.

“Your first EURES Job” is a “targeted mobility scheme”, financing mobility in Europe.

The scheme aim to fill vacancies in a certain sector, occupation, country or group of countries, or

Support particular groups of workers with a propensity to be mobile, such as young people. “Your first EURES job” is open to young candidates and employers of the EU-28 countries, Norway and Iceland. Candidates must be nationals and legal residents in any of those countries. The scheme aims to help young people up to 35 years old to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in another Member State. According to the [National Youth Employment Action plan](#), special attention is given to unemployed secondary and tertiary education youth under the age of 29.

The public funding available at top level to support above-mentioned opportunity is not available.

##### 2. The [EURODYSSÉE](#) Programme

Eurodyssée is a programme for young people aged 18 to 30 years old, who are resident in one of the program’s member Regions. Under this programme, trainees are entitled to:

- Traineeship from 3 to 7 months

- Language Course
- Accommodation
- Monthly allowance or salary
- Insurance cover
- Certificate

In Cyprus, Eurodyssee is jointly managed by the Department of Labour (EURES Network) of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and the [Union of Cyprus Municipalities](#) (UMC). For support and guidance, youth who are interested must contact the Department of Labour.

According to the [Eurodyssee news](#) The Eurodyssee programme in Cyprus is co-funded by the Republic of Cyprus and the European Social Fund. The department of Labour has secured a grant of 20.000 EUR per year for 3 years which will enable the welcoming of 4 or 5 trainees in Cyprus each year.

### 3. ERASMUS + project – [WE.AR.E](#)

The Ministry of Labour & Social Security through the Department of Labour in cooperation with the universities of Cyprus created the W.E.AR.E. programme with the aim to give young graduates the opportunity to gain work experience for a 4-month period at an organization of their choice in a country in Europe, subsidizing their mobility costs (travel and subsistence costs).

Support and guidance is available to the candidates by the Department of Labour. There is no public funding for the above-mentioned opportunity. The project is funded 100% by the Erasmus+ programme.

### 4. [Erasmus Programme for Young Entrepreneurs- Cyprus](#)

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs helps provide aspiring European entrepreneurs with the skills necessary to start and/or successfully run a small business in Europe. New entrepreneurs gather and exchange knowledge and business ideas with an experienced entrepreneur, with whom they stay and collaborate for a period of 1 to 6 months.

There are 3 entities selected by the European Commission who will guide youth throughout their exchange: help with the application, help establish a successful relationship with a suitable entrepreneur as well as providing with all the answers to questions. Youth should choose a local contact point which is active in their region. Youth may also be offered the opportunity to participate in an induction course to prepare you for your exchange. There is no information about the public funding for the above-mentioned opportunity.

### 5. [Cyprus Start-up Visa Scheme](#)

The "Cyprus Start-up Visa" programme/scheme allows talented entrepreneurs from third countries [outside the European Union (EU) and outside the European Economic Area (EEA)], individuals or in a team, to enter, reside and work in Cyprus in order to establish/operate/develop a start-up with a high growth potential, provided that they meet certain criteria.

There is no information about the support and guidance to young people engaging in this cross-border mobility.

The public funding made available at top level to support above-mentioned opportunity is not available.

## Legal framework

There are no top-level policy measures setting a clear legal framework applying to incoming and outgoing young workers, trainees/apprentices and young professionals/entrepreneurs. However, information about each country's regulations, social security, etc. can be found on the website of the EURES Network under the section "[Living and Working](#)":

Especially for incoming youngsters who would like to work in Cyprus, information can be found on the website of the [EURES Cyprus](#).

## 3.8 Development of Entrepreneurship Competence

### Policy Framework

There is no central level strategy related to entrepreneurship competence of an entrepreneurial mind-set among young people in Cyprus. However, a [National Policy Statement for the Enhancement of the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Cyprus](#) has been formulated, in close cooperation with the [Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism](#), and endorsed by the Council of Ministers on the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015. This policy document also focuses specifically on social cohesion and on the employment of people experiencing difficulties in accessing the labour market. The Policy Statement provides for targeted actions to be promoted under five Priority Axes:

- Cultivating the entrepreneurial culture
- Improving the business environment
- Enhancing the entrepreneurial innovation
- Facilitating access to finance
- Improving access to markets

Moreover, one of the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#)'s objective is "to promote Entrepreneurship as a career path - Boosting labour demand through sectoral growth, promotion of micro- and small enterprises and entrepreneurship development". The aim to promote youth entrepreneurship as a viable career option for young Cypriots builds on the access to finance, with a focus on those economic sectors that have been identified as key for the development of the country.

The attainment of the youth entrepreneurship development objective is grounded on two interlinked outcomes: 1) the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, and 2) the Social Enterprise programme, 3) the provision of training and advisory services for young people wishing to set up their own account activity.

### Formal learning

Based on the [Eurydice Entrepreneurship Education study published in February 2016](#), Entrepreneurship education is not explicitly recognised in steering documents and implementation guidelines. However, since 2010, new curricula for primary and secondary education have been developed and implemented focusing on key competences, including creativity and innovation. In these, as part of the educational innovation that started back in 2004, there is an emphasis on developing competences related to entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity. More specifically, the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Progress Report published in January 2017 by the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism mentions that the new curricula of the Cyprus Ministry of Education aim at cultivating the following skills, attitudes and competences which are useful in a modern competitive society:

Creativity;

Critical thinking;

- Theoretical thinking and the ability to translate theory into practice;
- Analytical skills and abilities;
- The ability to collaborate and exchange information;
- The ability to solve problems and, at the same time, to find alternatives;
- Excellent and prudent use of information and communication technologies;
- Consciousness and interpersonal communication skills.

In addition, students in the 2nd year of lower secondary education can also gain experience in a profession of their choice over one week (Working gaining experiences week). Also, two or three times a year, the "Enterprise Day programme" gives students the opportunity to become familiar with the workplace and the daily activities of a person in business.

Equally important is the progress made in the acquisition of experiential learning skills through the participation of students of all ages in competitions and/or entrepreneurship programs. For example:

- The University of Cyprus in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Culture conducts an annual entrepreneurship competition for students in the second and third year of upper secondary education.
- The program "JA More than Money" was also launched in primary education in cooperation with the non-profit organization "Junior Achievement Cyprus" and the Association of Cyprus Banks. The program aims to familiarize children with concepts related to management of money, such as income, expenses, savings. Students in this context develop skills and understand concepts through experiential learning.
- In secondary schools, it is implemented on a voluntary basis the "[JA Company Programme](#)" which provides an entrepreneurial learning experience for young people aged 15 to 18. The programme seeks to nurture a new generation of entrepreneurial, innovative and civic-minded talents for Cyprus. It is the largest youth entrepreneurship programme on the island. Participants learn how to take a business idea from concept to reality and have hands-on experience of running a real business, from team formation, capital raising, business plan development, product development, marketing and sales to liquidating the company.

The Eurydice Entrepreneurship Education study also mentions that Cyprus is organizing optional but targeted all-year seminars in cooperation with the [Cyprus Pedagogical Institute](#). These were delivered through in-service training for Cyprus primary, secondary and technical teachers, school head-teachers and policy-makers. The seminars are organised in cooperation with the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) and the industry sector and until the beginning of 2017, 140 educators participated.

### **Non-formal and informal learning**

There are not any top-level policy measures and/or large-scale public initiatives to encourage young people to develop entrepreneurial skills and attitudes through youth work and volunteering. Currently, there are also not any policies regulating the recognition and validation of entrepreneurial learning in non-formal and informal learning environments.

### **Educators support in entrepreneurship education**

There are not any existing top-level policies and public initiatives providing support to the work of educators and youth workers in the field of entrepreneurship.

### **3.9 Start-up Funding for Young Entrepreneurs**

#### **Access to information**

There are no top-level policy measures implemented to ensure that young people know about funding opportunities to create a start-up, programmes and service providers devoted to the funding of start-up, and specific professional guidance. However, the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) within the framework of the "Grant scheme on the Enhancement of Youth Entrepreneurship" as described in the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#) is responsible for:

- The promotion of the program and the distribution of any relevant information to the interested young people;
- The organisation of seminars in order to present and analyse the program;
- The provision of technical assistance and other consulting services to the interested people;
- To enhance the cooperation between the young entrepreneurs participating to the program.

Within this framework the Youth Board of Cyprus organises informational seminars in all the cities of Cyprus before the applications deadline. In addition, it offers free counseling services for the provision of information on the Program and for help young people to submit successfully their business plan and application.

In addition, access to information on schemes and programmes can be found online on the website of the [Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism](#).

#### **Access to capital**

The grant based schemes for young entrepreneurs specific for start-up creation are the following:

1. The Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme as described in the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#)

This scheme is available to young people (20-35) to set up their own enterprise. The target is to have 70 new enterprises created by young people through support from the National Entrepreneurship Scheme. It is expected that additional 1,500 new jobs will have been created.

2. Social Enterprise Program as described in the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#)

This programme's target is 40 new small/medium enterprises created from young people up to 29 years old.

3. The "[Students in Action](#)" Program is a new grant program, implemented by the Youth Board of Cyprus in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture. The purpose of the Program is to support and empower students. The program aims to: (a) enhance research and documentation on youth issues, (b) enhance the employability of young people through strengthening their skills and abilities, (c) strengthen the participation of students and (d) enhance student entrepreneurship. The "Students in Action" Program supports and is linked to the implementation of the National Youth Strategy.

4. "[Grant scheme on the Enhancement of Youth Entrepreneurship](#)" under the umbrella of the [Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism \(Industrial Development Service\)](#). The program aims to develop, support and promote entrepreneurship to young people for the development of new and sustainable small/medium enterprises, through financial support and educational training courses. Through this scheme particular emphasis is given to the usage of new technologies and innovative production

methods, to the promotion of products and services, to the enhancement of entrepreneurship in the field of the environment and generally to the promotion of modern entrepreneurial operations for the development of dynamic, evolving and competitive businesses. Young people can participate in this program if they:

- Have reached the 20<sup>th</sup> year of age and do not exceed the 39<sup>th</sup> at the date of application submission.
- Are unemployed, employed or self-employed.
- Did not exercise any business activity at least a year before the date of the application submission.

Last, it is important to mention that a new legal framework was approved – and is effective as from January 1, 2017 – after the revision of the Income Tax Law so as to create an attractive incentive through tax relief to individuals investing in innovative companies, either directly or through an investment fund.

For this reason, a guide on "[Tax incentives to individuals for investing in innovative enterprises](#) and start ups" was created to include **some** general information for interested companies and investors. It is an informative driver and aims to inform through a brief description of the procedure governing tax incentives on the basis of the Income Tax Law. The information in the guide is general and is not exhaustive, does not constitute and may not be considered as a legal advice to any person. The information contained in the guide briefly reflects the major provisions of the law and does not contain information regarding access to grant financing, access to debt financing or to EU funding programmes.

### **3.10 Promotion of Entrepreneurship Culture**

#### **Special events and activities**

Some of the public measure or initiatives organised at top level by public funds in order to promote the entrepreneurship culture are the following:

1. "[Information workshop on Legal Regulatory Aspects of E-Commerce and Best Practices in the Use of Digital Technology](#)" organized by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism. The purpose of the workshop was to inform about the opportunities offered by the use of digital technology, especially in SMEs, to promote the Electronic Commerce Legal Framework and to inform about the obligations of natural/legal persons who are active or wish to operate in the field of electronic trade. The workshop was addressed to professional associations/unions, as well as to entrepreneurs, mainly SMEs, active or wishing to operate in the field of e-commerce.

2. [Programme for encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation in the Cypriot National Guard](#): workshops on entrepreneurship and innovation have been organized in soldiers camps in 2016 with the participation of approximately 500 National Guards. The 1st Innovative Business Ideas Competition has also been conducted with the participation of 5 entrepreneurial ideas from guardsmen.

3. The [Cyprus Entrepreneurship Competition](#). This competition is organized on an annual basis since 2003 by the [University of Cyprus](#). It aims to nurture entrepreneurial culture among young scientists, startup founders and hi-tech entrepreneurs in Cyprus and challenge them to transform their ideas into real business opportunities and to leading companies of tomorrow. It is an initiative launched by the University of Cyprus, [CYTA](#) (a semi-government telecommunications organization), the [Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism](#) and some other local actors.

4. "[Students in Research - MERA](#)" and "[Technology and Innovation in Education - TEKE](#)". Both competitions are organized by the [Research promotion foundation](#) and are

being launched in cooperation with the [Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation](#).

### **Networks and partnerships**

There are no public policies or initiatives organised at top level, by public funds, specifically targeting young people.

However, the University of Cyprus coordinates the Project "[Development and operation of Offices acting as a liaison between Business/ Industry and the various Universities in the Republic of Cyprus](#)", which is funded by the European Union Structural Fund. Specifically, the Project concerns the establishment and operation of Offices for the Liaison with Business, in each of the six universities in the Republic of Cyprus with the aim of attaining a better and stronger communication and cooperation between Business and the Universities on subjects such as, technology transfer, promotion of applied research responding to specific industrial problems, collaboration in research programmes, placement of students in Industry and, generally the promotion of innovation in Business and the Universities in this Country.

The main strategic aims of the Project are:

- The establishment of a network of model offices for liaison between the academic and business worlds.
- The utilisation and exploitation of the results of University innovation by the Cypriot Business.
- The enhancement of the employment potential of students and graduates resulting from their contact with Business during their studies.

### **3.11 Current Debates and Reforms**

The main current debates are reforms are the following:

1. "[The Law for Social Enterprises 2017](#)" is bill for establishing a legal framework on Social Entrepreneurship and social enterprises. It is currently under legal vetting by the Legal Service.
2. The Department of Labour Relations promotes the preparation and implementation of legislation which sets and safeguards the minimum employment conditions and a range of other rights and obligations for both workers and employers, such as flexible forms of employment, part-time employment, etc.
3. As mentioned in the [National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020](#), the Ministry of Education and Culture is in the process of developing a mechanism for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning which will also cover how entrepreneurial competences are acquired through non-formal and informal learning.

## **4. Social Inclusion**

The [Strategy for Social Policy 2014-2020](#) is the primary strategy dealing with social inclusion in the country. The cross-sectoral cooperation is a key element of the strategy and a lot of actions happen in order to support the social inclusion of groups at risk.

A highlight is that over the last years, policies and services for the social inclusion of people have been reinforced. However, a main challenge remains the fact that there is a lack of services targeting specifically young people.

## **4.1 General context**

### **Main challenges to social inclusion**

There are different challenges when it comes to social inclusion on young people in Cyprus. According to the survey on the "[The current situation of young people today in Cyprus](#)" conducted for the Youth Board of Cyprus, these social groups are at risk for social exclusion, based on the opinion of young people: unemployed youth, young people whose families live below the poverty line, women, youth with mental disabilities, chronic health and disability problems, gay, immigrants and children of single parent families or divorced parents. Moreover, the [Demographic Report 2014](#) of the Statistical Service counted that in 2014, 9.212 immigrants arrived to Cyprus out of which 5.721 were aged between 14-35 years old. The [Demographic Report 2015](#) counted that in 2015, 15.183 immigrants arrived to Cyprus out of which 10.274 were aged between 14-35 years old.

As said in the [National Programme for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund](#), Cyprus is exposed to high flows of potential beneficiaries of international protection. Statistics show that these have been constant over the past years and, based on the instability of the region, they will continue until 2020. The number of asylum applications in 2013 was 1246 (994 cases) and 1728 (1373 cases) in 2014 (38% increase). By April 2015 the number of asylum seekers pending before the Asylum Service (AS) was 1652 persons.

The data from the [2015 Income and Living Conditions of Households Survey](#) of the Statistical Service of Cyprus show that the poverty risk limit in Cyprus is calculated to an annual amount of € 8.276 per person and € 16,944 for households with two adults and two dependent children under 14 years of age. The Corresponding figures based on the 2014 Survey were respectively € 8,640 and € 18,418. According to the results of this survey, 16.2% of the population of Cyprus households had income below the poverty line. More precisely, 16.4% of the youth aged between 14-35 years old risked to live under the poverty limit.

As stated in the [Strategy for Social Policy 2014-2020](#), housing in Cyprus can be considered to be in a particularly good condition since housing shortages are scarce and a large percentage of the dwellings are privately owned. However, with the financial crisis, it was revealed that a large number of citizens made loans for the acquisition of their home, which today are not paid and this creates concerns about the future situation of these households.

When it comes to Roma, around 1,250 Roma live in Cyprus (0.16% of the population), according to the Council of Europe estimations, as stated in the [National Strategy for Roma integration](#).

Moreover, the KPMG research indicates that 66% of the youth who answered the survey get financial support from their parents, 70% of the youth who answered the research say that the reason they live longer with their parents is financial obstacles. In fact, the 2015 Income and Living Conditions of Households Survey indicated that 10.9% of the whole population and 10.3% of youth aged between 14-35 years old lived with low work intensity.

Last, according to the KPMG research, young people identify the following biggest challenges towards social inclusion of young people in Cyprus are (in a descending order)

1. The assurance of income and resources for a decent living (55%)
2. The creation of a labour market which will strengthen and promote employment and entrepreneurship (12%)
3. The combat of inequalities in education (10%)
4. Equal access to social and health services for all (8%)

5. Good conditions for housing for all (6%)
6. Protection of children's rights (5%)
7. Link labour market with education (3%)

Most young people who took part in the research feel neutral about the future.

### **Main concepts**

There is no national definition of social inclusion. However, the main concepts associated to social inclusion, as stated in the [Strategy for Social Policy 2014-2020](#) prepared by the [Social Welfare Services](#) of the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) are unemployment, poverty, health, education, housing.

## **4.2 Administration and governance**

### **Governance**

The main actor involved in policy making in the field of social inclusion of young people is the [Social Welfare Services](#) of the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#). The Ministry's role is the promotion of social justice within a free democratic system based on the pillars of social cohesion and social inclusion. The Ministry cares about the maintenance and continuous improvement of the standard of living and the quality of life of the working population and of society in general.

In addition to this, another important actor in policy making in the field is the [Department for Women issues- Gender Equality](#) of the [Ministry of Justice and Public Order](#). The Unit has the primary responsibility for shaping, coordinating and implementing governmental equality policy and monitoring international developments. The Unit also monitors the [National Mechanism for Women's Rights](#) which was established to promote equality and women's rights in all areas of life.

Together with these two Ministries, the following public actors are also involved in policy making:

The [Gender Equality Commissioner's office](#) which is the institution responsible for designing Gender Equality Policies, implementing and monitoring the implementation of these policies.

[The Commissioner for Children's rights](#) whose mission is to protect and promote the rights of the child. Her role is to represent children and their interest at all levels, to promote public awareness and sensitivity so that children's rights in the family, at school, in the community are safeguarded and to identify and promote the views of children where they themselves cannot be heard, to monitor legislation relating to children and to submit proposals aiming at their harmonization with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to carry out public awareness campaigns, to appoint a representative of the child in judicial proceedings affecting him/her and to represent children in procedures affecting them.

[The Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment](#) which undertakes the immense responsibility, to promote through an integrated coordination, the protection and sustainable management of the environment, natural resources, and the sustainable management of agricultural, livestock and fisheries production. Related to social inclusion, the ministry aims to ensure a better quality of life for the current and future generations.

[The Ministry of Justice and Public Order](#) which is responsible for the close review and consideration of the need to reform the existing legislation in a wide field of public and private law, such as criminal law, legislation that falls within the general concept of the administration of justice, family law, legislation in the fields of equality, human rights, the treatment of offenders and other. Its activities furthermore include the promotion, in

collaboration with the Supreme Court, of legislative and administrative measures for the unhampered administration of Justice and the smooth functioning of the courts and criminological research for the formation of policies for the prevention and suppression of crime. It has also the responsibility, through the Police Force that the Minister of Justice and Public Order politically heads, of the maintenance of law and order, the preservation of peace and the prevention and detection of crime.

The [Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism](#) aims to secure Cyprus' energy supplies in order to meet the needs of the country with the least burdens on the economy and the environment. In order to achieve the above objective, it implements activities related to the creation of necessary energy infrastructure, the integration and supervision of the internal energy market, the promotion of energy saving, the exploitation of indigenous renewable energy sources and the protection of sensitive consumers.

[The Ministry of Interior](#) whose mission is to formulate and implement human-centered policies. The anthropocentric action of the Ministry of the Interior is based on the following policy pillars:

A qualitative upgrading of the services provided to the citizen

Answer to the new housing plans put into effect on 1.1.2007.

Upgrading the role and restructuring of local government

The intensification of the efforts to reconstruct and simplify the processes that prove inadequate to meet the modern needs and needs of the citizens.

[The Ministry of Finance](#) whose mission is to ensure conditions of macroeconomic stability and the sound management of resources and of the financial obligations of the State, in order to improve the quality of life of every citizen of the Republic.

[The Ministry of Education and Culture](#) which is responsible for the field of education, youth, sports and culture, as well as the [Cyprus Sports Organization](#) which is connected with the Ministry takes care of the sports culture in the country.

[The Ministry of Health](#) whose mission is the continuous improvement of the health of the population of Cyprus, through the prevention of disease, and the provision to every citizen of high level health care, respecting the rights of every patient to high quality medical care delivered with dignity.

[The Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development](#) which is responsible for handling issues related to:

(a) the European Funds and Programmes, such as the European Investment and Structural Funds, the EU Competitive Programmes and the grants provided by the countries of the European Economic Area and Switzerland.

(b) development and horizontal issues, such as Research, Technological Development and Innovation, Lifelong Learning, Corporate Social Responsibility and the "Europe 2020" Strategy.

The [Ministry of Transport Communications and Works](#) whose mission is the design and implementation of policies for the continuous improvement of transport (air, maritime and land) and of communications, as well as the continuous upgrading of the quality of projects implemented by the Ministry. In addition, the better promotion and exploitation of the archaeological wealth as well as other resources of the country is pursued. Additional to the Ministry, its following departments are also included: [Department of Public Works](#), [Department of Antiquities](#).

Several departments of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, such as [Social Welfare Services](#), [Department of Labour](#), [Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities](#), [Department of Labour Relations](#), [Unit of the European Social](#)

[Fund](#), [Higher Hotel Institute](#), the [Statistical Service](#), the Grant and Benefit Service, the [Cyprus Productivity Centre](#), the [Human Resource Development Authority](#).

The [Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights \(Ombudsman\)](#) is a senior independent state officer. The institution of the ombudsman constitutes the most prevalent institution of extra judicial control of the administration and protection of human rights. The main pivots of the mission of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights are to ensure legality, to promote good governance, to combat maladministration and to protect citizens' rights and human rights in general.

Apart from this, the main non-public actors taking part in the development of policies in the field of youth social inclusion are the following:

[The Union of Cyprus Municipalities](#) which is the main association of Local Authorities in Cyprus. Its core functions are to contribute to the development of local government autonomy, as well as to act as spokesman of local government interests vis-a-vis the central government and other national institutions. It also takes an active stand in the relations between Cyprus and the European Union.

[The Union of Cyprus Communities](#) whose aims are:

1. The defence and promotion of the Members' powers, interests, rights and privileges and, generally, of the independence and self-sufficiency of the Local Authorities.
2. The permanent and on an organised basis cooperation and exchange of views between them, for the achievement of common targets.
3. The collection of data and information being useful for the cooperation of the Communities.
4. The expression of opinions to any Authority, Body, Organism or person (including the Government and the House of Representatives) and claiming from the state matters aiming at the development and expansion of the Local Self-Government institution.
5. The participation in International Organs of Local Self-Government and its representation at Local and International Congresses.

[The Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus](#) which is a democratic progressive labor union that aims to preserve and improve wages and benefits, safety and health at work, and the social protection of all workers, who systematically defend labor rights and claim a decent standard of living in the economic and social environment of Cyprus and Europe.

[The Pancyprian Federation of Labour](#) which is a labour union

[The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council](#) whose mission is to promote the principles and values of volunteerism, to advance the shared interests of the voluntary organisations and to deliver a strategic vision for the further development of the voluntary sector.

There is no distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities. All responsibilities remain at top-level.

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

A mechanism of cross-sectorial cooperation has been set up for the [Strategy for Social Policy 2014-2020](#) between Ministries, Departments, Agencies involved in defining policies and measures on social inclusion.

In particular, for the development of the Strategy, the Social Welfare Services, as the competent coordinating authority for social protection and integration issues, worked closely with representatives of the two main categories of partners:

- Ministries / Services and Local Authorities, and
- Social partners and civil society

Following the adoption of the Package of Social Investment Measures, the Social Welfare Services carried out an analysis of the main points of the measures and briefly outlined the policy pillars stemming from them as well as the recommendations from the European Commission. Then, a roadmap was then prepared for each section of the package.

Then, the Social Welfare Services sent the road map to all stakeholders, inviting them to provide a brief description of their sector's mission and their development goals for the 2014-2020 period, their views on the European Commission's recommendations contained in the Package, the list of measures / actions falling within their responsibilities, and the record of their planned actions for the period 2014-2020.

Based on the data collected, a first draft was prepared with the contributions and positions of the involved parties, which was sent to all stakeholders for gathering views / positions on the final Strategy. On the basis of their feedback, the final draft of the Social Policy Strategy for the period 2014-2020 was prepared.

### **4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people**

#### **Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion**

There is not a national strategy on the social inclusion exclusively of young people. However, the [Strategy for Social Policy 2014-2020](#) (Στρατηγική για την Κοινωνική Πολιτική) targets the whole population of the country, which also includes young people. This strategy is the government's decree which outlines the social priorities of the Republic of Cyprus for the period 2014-2020.

#### **Scope and contents**

The focus of the State's effort through the Strategy for Social Policy is to better address the social impact of the economic crisis by building a strong and efficient social state, achieving economic recovery, citizens' prosperity and rapid and balanced development in conditions of stability, justice and social cohesion. In this context, the key objective of the Republic of Cyprus is to introduce viable social welfare and health systems as well as to preserve and empower the family, society and local authorities in order to enable the citizens to respond to their roles.

Based on these, the goals of the Strategy are:

- A) Promote child welfare: This goal is geared to improve public investment.
- B) Reform of the Welfare System
- C) Active inclusion, with ensuring adequate income, integration into the labor market and access to quality and affordable services
- D) Long-term care
- E) Effective Governance

The Strategy identifies children, people with disabilities, the elderly who need long-term care and people trapped in welfare benefits as specific target groups within the whole population. However, the strategy mentions in different parts of the document several groups identified as at-risk of social exclusion, such as the unemployed, people at risk for poverty, young NEETs, immigrants.

#### **Responsible authority**

The top-level authority responsible for the implementation, coordination and monitoring of the Strategy for Social Policy is the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) and particularly the by the [Social Welfare Services](#). The strategy is not integrated in any other national strategy fighting exclusion. So far, there is not information about evidence-based monitoring/assessment/evaluation of the implementation of the strategy.

## Revisions/Updates

The strategy has not undergone major revisions/updates.

### 4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

#### Programmes specific for vulnerable young people

1. The [National Programme for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund \(AMIF\)](#) (Εθνικό Πρόγραμμα Ταμείου Ασύλου, Μετανάστευσης και Ένταξης). It was introduced in 2015 and has a time frame 2014-2020. The responsible authority for the implementation and coordination of this programme is the Ministry of Interior and the European Funds Unit. Basically, the programme provides funds through an open call and thus State authorities, local public bodies, non-governmental organisations, international public organisations or private and public law companies can implement projects relevant with the aim of the programme. The projects of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund mainly aim to support the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), strengthen the accommodation capacity of asylum seekers, provide of all necessary services related to asylum procedures, facilitate the integration of third country nationals in the local community with the help of local authorities/NGO's/public bodies/other social partners, increase assisted voluntary returns, increase cooperation with other member states as well as support the administrative capacity of Cyprus to manage successfully all sectors related to migration.

On one hand, the programme targets third country nationals in the local community (asylum seekers and immigrants) with an aim to achieve their integration in the society. On the other hand, the programme targets local community, with an aim to raise awareness and facilitate the acceptance of the third country nationals.

There are not data on youth participation in these programmes.

2. [Cyprus National Platform for Roma](#) (Κυπριακή Εθνική Πλατφόρμα για τους Ρομά)

The Cyprus Social Welfare Department (of the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#)) is the National Contact Point for the [National Roma Integration Strategy](#) with the authority to coordinate its development and implementation. The primary purpose of the Platform is to create a framework for strengthening the dialogue on Roma issues, such as housing, education, social services, health and employment. The "Cypriot National Roma Platform" includes, apart from government bodies, independent authorities, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, academics as well as the Roma themselves. To promote this dialogue, four meetings will be held over the period 2016-2017, covering both the broader policy framework at national, European and international level, as well as in specific areas focusing on specific Roma issues, such as the access to health, employment, education, social services and housing. All Roma people are invited to participate. The level and trends of participation in these programmes are not yet recorded by the official statistics.

3. The [National Drugs Policy and Alcohol Policy 2013-2020](#) [Εθνική Στρατηγική για την αντιμετώπιση της εξάρτησης από παράνομες ουσίες και την επιβλαβή χρήση του αλκοόλ 2013-2020] was endorsed in January 2013 by the [Cyprus Anti-drugs Council](#) which is the supreme coordinating body in the field of addictions, responsible for the development of the national policy for drugs and dependence. The main fields of activity include prevention and treatment from drugs and alcohol, targeting mainly young people.

There are more than 30 public and other actors involved in the proposed programmes of the National Drug and Alcohol Policy, such as ministries, the Cyprus Police, the Youth Board of Cyprus, associations, trade unions, NGOs. Their role is to implement collectively the strategy.

The level and trends of participation in these programmes are not yet recorded by the official statistics.

4. The [Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities](#) offers a variety of services and social benefits to people with disabilities. The department is under the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#). Each service offered to people with disabilities has different criteria, starting dates, target groups and services provided. The services offered are: 1. Severe Motor Disability Allowance Scheme, 2. Care Allowance Scheme for Quadriplegic Persons, 3. Care Allowance Scheme for Paraplegic Persons, 4. Special Allowance for Blind Persons, 5. Mobility Allowance, 6. Allowance to persons with disability for the provision of a car, 7. Scheme for the Provision of Financial Assistance for the Purchase of a Wheelchair, 8. Scheme for Wheelchair Loans to persons with motor Disability, 9. Disability Parking Card Scheme (Blue Badge), 10. Financial assistance scheme for the provision of technical means, instruments and other aids, 11. Scheme for the management/provision of technical means, instruments and other aids, 12. Financial Assistance for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, 13. Financial Assistance to the Organisations of Persons with Disabilities for hiring Social Assistants for their members, 14. Assistance through the Welfare Lottery Fund.

There are not other actors involved and the level and trends of participation of young people in these programmes are not available.

5. "Actions for social and school inclusion (DR.A.S.E.)" («Δράσεις Σχολικής και Κοινωνικής Ένταξης (ΔΡΑ.Σ.Ε.)») As explained in the [Annual Report 2015](#) of the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) "Actions of School and Social Inclusion" is a project implemented by the Ministry on national level between 2014-2020. Key actors involved are the schools which basically need to implement the programme. The programme refers to the implementation of actions aiming to support and strengthen public school pupils and at the same time to promote school and social inclusion. The project aims to support, expand and improve the outcomes of the project against "Early School Leaving, School Failure and Delinquency in Zones of Educational Priority". The main variation of the project "Activities of School and Social Inclusion" in relation to its predecessor is that the new project is not zone based, i.e. school units will not be grouped into geographical clusters. Rather, individual school units and / or clusters of schools (kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and technical schools) will be selected, regardless of the geographical area in which they are located. The project's main objectives are the following:

- Support the Cypriot population living below the poverty line or being at risk of poverty and social exclusion;

- Ensure the welfare and support of the financially weaker groups of the population particularly affected by the economic crisis;

- Reduction of early school leaving;

- Improvement of learning outcomes;

- Reducing school failure and delinquency;

- Strengthening social cohesion by reducing the risk of social marginalization and exclusion.

DRASE program develops innovative preventive actions, such as the creation of a space for the development of creative and entertaining activities, the creation of student clubs (dance, theater, journalism, music, painting, amateur radio, football, etc.) and the development of a program which includes educational, cultural and other activities on health education.

The trends of participation of young people in this programme are not available.

6. The [Scheme for the Vocational Training of Persons with Disabilities](#) (Σχέδιο Επαγγελματικής Κατάρτισης Ατόμων με Αναπηρίες) is offered by the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance which is the responsible authority for its implementation. The main purpose of the project is to broaden the opportunities for training and education of people with disabilities based on individual programs in training institutions or private or public-sector enterprises. Beneficiaries are persons with disabilities who may experience employment difficulties in their field, despite their level of education. The Scheme is addressed to people with disabilities of all ages. No specific targets for the level of youth participation have been established. In addition, the level and trends of participation in this scheme are not yet recorded by official statistics.

7. "[Provision of Incentives for Hiring Recipients of Guaranteed Minimum Income Combined with a three-month Training Period](#)" Scheme. (Σχέδιο Παροχής Κινήτρων για την Πρόσληψη Δικαιούχων Ελαχίστου Εγγυημένου Εισοδήματος (ΕΕΕ) σε συνδυασμό με τριμηνή Κατάρτιση). The scheme is provided by the [Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus](#) and offers practical training and work experience opportunities to Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) recipients in order to improve their employability and prepare their employment in a specific enterprise/organisation of the private sector. The target group for this programme is GMI recipients of all age groups. The running period is from 2016 to 2018. No specific targets for the level of youth participation have been established. In addition, the level and trends of participation in this scheme are not yet recorded by official statistics.

## Funding

1. For the National Programme for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) there is a specific budget allocated at top level. The amount of funding dedicated to the programme for the period 2014-2020 is 34,918,677.00 euros. It is not clear what is the funding dedicated for the programme in the current year or in the previous one. The programme is not in line with prioritised goals in any other national strategy fighting social exclusion that mobilise resources to address serious social deficits and to reduce consistent poverty for young people. The programme is financed 90% by the European Social Fund. The remaining 10% is financed by the Republic of Cyprus.

2. The "Cyprus National Roma Platform" is co-financed by the European Union's Programme Rights, Equality and Citizenship 2014-2020 and amounts to 95% of the total cost of the project, which is 26,526 euros, and the remaining 5% of the cost is covered by national funds for a period of 12 months. The programme is not in line with prioritised goals in any other national strategy fighting social exclusion.

3. The budget of the National Drugs and Alcohol Strategy 2013-2020 is not available, therefore it cannot be said if there is a specific budget allocated at top level or if/how the EU funds are used. The actions of this strategy are not in line with other strategies.

4. The budget for the [Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities](#) is not available, therefore it cannot be said if there is a specific budget allocated at top level or if/how the EU funds are used. The actions of this department are in line with [Strategy for Social Policy 2014-2020](#).

5. The total budget for the DRASE programme until 2020 reaches €12.000.000 Euro and it is co-financed by the European Social Fund (85%) and the Republic of Cyprus (15%). For the school years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20, the estimated budget allocated is €6.100.000. The programme is not in line with prioritised goals in any other national strategy fighting social exclusion.

6. The exact total amount of funding and source of funding for the Scheme for the Vocational Training of Persons with Disabilities are not stated in the official documents

7. The estimated budget allocated by the HRDA for the "Provision of Incentives for Hiring Recipients of Guaranteed Minimum Income Combined with a three-month Training Period" Scheme does not exceed €203,000 for a period of one year (14/11/2016 until 31/12/2017). It is not available if and how the EU funds are used. The scheme is not in line with prioritised goals in any other national strategy fighting social exclusion.

### Quality assurance

1. For the National Programme for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), a Monitoring Committee is set and is responsible for the monitoring of the implementation of the National Programme. The Committee meets at regular intervals – at least once a year – in order to examine the progress of the programme. Extraordinary meetings may be held if needed. Its purpose is to monitor the progress of the Programme regarding the specific objectives, indicators, financial implementation, deadlines, needs for possible amendments, possible unforeseen circumstances and any other issues that may influence the successful implementation.

The main criteria/indicators/standards used to assess the quality of these programmes are not mentioned. The main outcomes of the quality assurance process are not published.

2. There is not information available about the mechanism that monitors the quality of the "Cyprus National Roma Platform".

3. Regarding the National Drugs and Alcohol Strategy 2013-2020, a lot of indicators are set in order to check the implementation of the strategy, as well as several deliverables for each action. The Cyprus Anti-drugs Council monitors the assessment of the strategy. Currently, the second action plan is being developed which covers the years 2017-2020. However, the results of the evaluation of the first action plan (2013-2016) are not available.

4. The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities does not mention any quality assurance criteria set for the variety of services and social benefits provided to people with disabilities.

5. No specific quality assurance criteria are mentioned for the "Actions for social and school inclusion (DR.A.S.E.)".

6. There is not information available if there is a mechanism which monitors the implementation of the Scheme for the Vocational Training of Persons with Disabilities.

7. The HRDA has in place a comprehensive system which was designed by independent external consultants for the "Provision of Incentives for Hiring Recipients of Guaranteed Minimum Income Combined with a three-month Training Period" Scheme. Every year the HRDA conducts evaluation studies regarding the impact of its Schemes on the participants. No quality assurance criteria or any results about the quality assurance process are published for the specific scheme until now.

## **4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness**

### **Intercultural awareness**

The main top-level institution that aims to develop intercultural awareness and promote intercultural dialogue is the [Ministry of Education and Culture](#).

Through the adoption of the intercultural model, the Ministry of Education and Culture has in recent years promoted a series of actions in the context of Intercultural Education and Education with the aim of mutual acceptance, confidence building and the elimination of negative stereotypes and prejudices among children. The existing educational policy seeks to smoothly integrate pupils with migrant biography into the Cypriot Educational

System and to provide more effective communication by providing education through the provision of enhanced and diversified Greek language learning programs.

Thus, the Ministry of Education and Culture offers a website dedicated solely on [Intercultural Education and Training](#). The website targets school teachers and offers materials that can be used by teachers to respond more effectively to the needs of migrant students studying in public schools. These materials include books in other languages, guideline books and books with activities that can be done in schools to foster intercultural awareness. Schools are also encouraged to send material and / or other good practices that they consider useful and can be used by other teachers.

The website remains constantly available to teachers and its core aim is a democratic school that incorporates and does not exclude. This means equal opportunities for access, participation, success, respecting the diversity and multiculturalism of the student population as well as individual needs. The vision is a school system that fully recognizes and accepts diversity, pluralism (cultural, linguistic, religious) and multiple intelligence.

### Young people's rights

The main top-level initiatives taken in Cyprus to promote young people's rights are the following:

1. [The activities of the Commissioner for Children's Rights](#): The Commissioner has competence and responsibility (among others) to organise seminars and educational programs relevant to children's rights as well as to promote public awareness and sensitivity so that the society will be mobilized and safeguard in practice children's rights in the family, the school, the community where they live and the society in general. For carrying out her competences the Commissioner meets and talks with children in schools, child care institutions, youth centres, etc and gives information on the rights of the child through her webpage, publications, seminars, etc. The main target groups addressed are children (until the age of 18 years old) as well as the wider public.
2. [No hate speech movement](#): This is a youth campaign of the Council of Europe for human rights online, to reduce the levels of acceptance of hate speech and develop online youth participation and citizenship, including in Internet governance processes. Cyprus participates in this campaign through the Youth Board of Cyprus. The main target groups are young people.
3. organizes many educational workshops and seminars and makes presentations against racism and discrimination in primary and secondary schools and to policy members all over Cyprus.
4. The [2nd Pancyprian Student Forum on Diversity and Integration](#) organized by the Youth Board of Cyprus, the Anti-Discrimination Body of the Office of the Commissioner of Administration and Protection of Human Rights and the Ministry of Education and Culture, with the support of the non-governmental organization [ACCEPT LGBT Cyprus](#). The event was held in Nicosia on March 20, 2017 and more than 120 high school students from all the provinces of Cyprus attended the Forum. The individual themes to be discussed were: (a) Refugees and asylum seekers; (b) Discrimination and racist incidents; (c) Sex stereotypes; (d) Homophobia and transphobia; (e) Religious freedom; and (f) Freedom of artistic expression. The main target group was students.
5. ["Code of conduct against racism and guide for management and recording of racist incidents"](#) in schools. This manual is divided in two basic parts: (a) the Code of conduct to combat racism and (b) the Guide for managing and recoding racist incidents. In the first part, the necessity for the preparation of the Code is established and a relevant theoretical background is provided. This part includes the purpose and the objectives of the code as well as the responsibilities and commitments undertaken by all members of the school environment. The Guide, on the other hand, entails the

steps that need to be taken in order to manage racist incidents as well as a Table of Sanctions. It includes the Self-reflection Document, the Document for the Registration of Racist Incidents and the Yearly Document of Reference of Racist Incidents. The Code and the Guide have been prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and the Curriculum Development Unit, with the contribution of the Anti-Discrimination Authority.

The purpose of this manual is to identify any direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional reasons, procedures and processes that lead to negative discrimination for individuals based on their diversity. It also aims to action in order to prevent and tackle racist incidents, and take action in developing anti-racist culture. The main target groups are school students.

In addition, during the school year 2016-2017, the [“Aware” Campaign](#) was introduced in secondary schools as described by the [Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus](#). It is an information and awareness-raising campaign for the respect and acceptance of migrants and refugees/asylum seekers who are beneficiaries of international protection. It is co-financed by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Republic of Cyprus and includes two-hour seminars for secondary school students. Seminars are interactive and include video viewing and an experiential workshop. Within the framework of the campaign, a photographic competition, a student conference and a youth conference will be organized under the auspices of the Minister of Education and Culture. The main target groups are school students.

### **Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism**

The Ministry of Justice and Public Order of Cyprus in [an announcement on 11/03/2016](#), stated that Cyprus has adopted a National Strategy for dealing with Terrorism where all necessary measures are taken to protect critical infrastructures and vulnerable targets, to implement effective border controls and to continuously upgrade technological equipment to enhance the exchange of information. However, there is not further information about it available.

## **4.6 Access to quality services**

### **Housing**

There is not a specific Housing Policy by the [Ministry of Interior](#) targeting young people or young people at risk of social exclusion or young couples who wish to live in rural areas. However, there are different housing schemes addressing the general population in Cyprus, including younger ages. For example, the Ministry of Interior through the [Housing Finance Corporation](#) and in cooperation with the [Cyprus Land Development Corporation](#) offers different schemes either for the purchase of house/apartment or land. Specific housing loans for displaced persons and for low-income and medium-income families are also offered. In addition, the [Central Agency for Equal Distribution of Burdens](#) offers housing schemes, including a scheme for newly-married couples. The eligibility criteria and the amount of funding vary based on the income, the repayment capability and the number of dependent family members of the mortgage holder.

### **Social services**

There are not any top-level policy measures providing social services exclusively for young people. Instead, some social services may target the whole population and thus the young people too. For example, the [Electricity Authority of Cyprus](#) (EAC) offer different social schemes as explained in the [Annual Report 2014](#). EAC has prepared a plan that would allow households to apply for reduced electricity power supply in an effort to help vulnerable groups facing difficulties to pay off their bills. The application

concerns vulnerable customers including large families, public assistance recipients, guaranteed minimum income recipients, and people on disability allowances.

Furthermore, in June 2014, the EAC requested applications from domestic consumers belonging to vulnerable groups of society and eligible for a subsidy from the Special Fund for Renewable Energy Sources (RES) and Energy Conservation for the installation of 70 photovoltaic systems with a 3kW capacity. This project is part of the EAC's expanded Corporate Social Responsibility plan and aims to help vulnerable groups of the population repay the relevant cost of installing such a system.

## Health care

The top-level policy measures establishing health care services and facilities for young people are the following:

1. [The 1410 Help Line](#) and the [e-counseling](#) (which is the web-site of the 1410 Line). The Help Line and the e-counseling are offered by the Youth Board of Cyprus. The Help Line was introduced in 1990 and it continues offering help until today. It is the first Help Line to operate in Cyprus. This line and e-counseling aim to help people that want to receive responsible answers on issues that concern their daily life, but also on more complex issues such as addictive substances, sexuality issues, eating disorders and further.

The Line and e-counseling offer:

Information for various psychological issues.

Information provision for other bodies, organisations and associations operating in our country.

Referral to other services, when this is considered as important for further evaluation and intervention.

'Counseling' so that callers will be able to speak about the issue that concerns them, to recognise the next step and be encouraged to do it.

'Crisis management' in cases that it is an urgent need.

The Line and e-counseling are available for all youth.

2. [Protasi](#): The main aim of the 'Protasi' counseling services is to provide support and guidance for young people, couples and families that face difficulties in their lives. This applies for children, adolescents and young people that want to share their personal concerns with a professional counselor in a confidential approach. In addition, couples and parents that face difficulties in their interpersonal relationships or in their families can benefit from this service as well.

The services are offered by the Youth Board of Cyprus and cover the following issues:

Possible concerns and problems for discussion:

Relationships problems (friendly, love or marital).

Considerations on Substances dependence issues

Family violence

Antisocial/ delinquent behavior

Any other issue of concern

3. [Prevention Centre "Micri Arktos"](#): The main aim of the Prevention Centre is the development of personal and social skills, the enhancement of protective factors and the reduction of factors that may lead a person to the use of addictive substances, to an addictive relationship or to any harmful or delinquent behavior.

Micri Arktos organises and accomplishes prevention programs and fragmented actions (eg lectures) in schools and for the wider community: parents, children, adolescents, teachers and for other social groups (journalists, police officers, militants etc.).

4. [Health Visitors](#) is a service offered by the [Ministry of Health](#). Health visitors, among others offer School Health Services.

The main target of this service is the prevention of illness as well as the promotion of health and well being of the students.

The role of the Health Visitor at school:

- To carry out various screening tests in order to detect disease at an early stage or to prevent it.
- To offer health education and health counseling to promote health and prevent illness.

Health education is handled by the Health visitors

1. During their daily contacts with students or other school personnel.

2. During applied health education programs which aim at giving knowledge and/or promoting the adaptation of healthy behavior or even changing an unhealthy behavior.

- To care for the ill or injured students or co-ordinate the care given by other professionals.
- To carry out, at school, the vaccinations according to the Cyprus Ministry of Health Vaccinations Schedule.
- To prevent and investigate communicable diseases at school.

There is not information about the professional development for health care mediators.

A national health mediators network does not exist in Cyprus.

### Financial services

Some of the top-level policy measures regarding financial services accessible to young people in Cyprus are the following:

1. Student Grants. Different Student Grants such as [Scholarships](#) or [Allowances](#) are offered on the basis of socio-economic criteria to Cypriot students or students from other EU countries who reside permanently in the Republic of Cyprus or non-EU students who have graduate from Cypriot secondary schools and have at least on parent who is from Cyprus or another EU country. The different grants include: housing allowance per month, board allowance, grant for the purchase of university books and grant for the purchase or upgrade of a computer. The grants are offered by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

2. [Family benefits](#). Family benefits include among others Child Benefit, Single Parent Benefit and the Grant for Special Assistance to single mothers for child birth.

3. [Services and Social Benefits for persons with disabilities](#). These include allowances schemes for people with different kind of disabilities.

4. The [Guaranteed Minimum Income](#) (GMI) scheme. The GMI scheme is part of the Guaranteed Minimum Income and Social Benefits Law of 2014 which has two basic aims: a) to provide better support to groups who were becoming increasingly more exposed to the risk of poverty, and b) to improve the operational efficiency of the overall system. The monetary benefits available fall into two basic categories: a monthly payment to bring the beneficiary's income up to the level of the GMI and monthly housing benefit, either as a rent allowance or as an allowance to cover interest on housing loans. The GMI recipients' eligibility criteria include the following:

- Age conditions: The applicant must be at least 28 years old. However, this restriction does not apply to married persons, single parents, orphans, disabled persons and persons who are under the legal care of the Director of Social Welfare.
- Nationality conditions: Third country nationals are eligible if they are permanent residents, refugees or victims of human trafficking.
- Residency conditions: Recipients should have been legally residing in the controlled area of Cyprus continuously for at least five years before the date of the application.
- Employment conditions: Unemployed and low-paid employees are eligible for the benefit, but a set of conditionalities should be fulfilled.
- Asset conditions: Both the movable and immovable assets of the recipient unit must not exceed a certain amount of money.

### Quality assurance

It is not available whether systems of quality assurance of these inclusive services exist in Cyprus.

## 4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

### Policy/legal framework

A top level policy framework designed for youth work to foster social inclusion does not exist in Cyprus.

### Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

The main inclusive youth-work programme in Cyprus is the "[Youth Initiatives Project](#)" of the Youth Board of Cyprus. The Youth Initiatives Project refers to grant activities established by young people and organised youth organisations. One of the programme's priorities is called "Social interventions" and covers (among others) Prevention, Social Discrimination, Health and Well-Being, Youth and Sport, and Social Contribution Actions. This priority aims at empowering young people with fewer opportunities. At the same time, another priority of the programme is called "Bi-communal Youth Contacts" which aims at strengthening contacts between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriots, aiming at the joint reflection and setting common goals for the future of the place.

Given this, the "Youth Initiatives Project" target youth in general and specifically youth with fewer opportunities and Turkish Cypriot youth.

Targeted young people may participate in the design and delivery of these main inclusive youth work programmes if they decide to apply for a funding through a non-governmental organization.

The public funding allocated to the whole Youth Initiative Project for 2017 is 943.804 euros as published in the [Cyprus Government Gazette announcement for Youth Board Budget](#).

### Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people

The main Youth work provider involved in social inclusion of young people funded by the state is the [Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization](#) (Greek acronym KOKEN). KOKEN is the secretariat of a national network of youth clubs in the Republic of Cyprus. Through more than 86 associations and 20 local youth groups in urban and rural areas, KOKEN reaches 8.000 young people aged 13-35 from rural areas each year. The mission of KOKEN is to offer opportunities to young Cypriots, especially to the ones from remote areas to develop their skills and attitudes and to promote active participation in society at local, national and international level. KOKEN is funded by the Youth Board of Cyprus. In this way, KOKEN works for the inclusion of young people with less opportunities.

The main way of conducting, managing and evaluating the work of KOKEN is through an annual report. The allocated public funding for KOKEN is not available.

### **Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes**

Youth workers active in social inclusion programmes in Cyprus do not receive any training or support by top-level authorities in the country.

There are not possibilities offered to youth workers to validate and to develop professional qualifications at universities, higher education institutions and training institutions in Cyprus.

A national Youth-work foundation, Institute of Youth work funded by the country's public authorities does not exist.

### **Financial support**

Besides the main programmes organised and/or funded by top-level authorities described above, there is not an additional public funding to youth work for social inclusion. The Youth Board of Cyprus offers financial organizational support to the following organizations:

- Student Organizations (tertiary education students)
- The Pancyprian Federation of Student Unions (tertiary education students)
- The Pancyprian Students Coordination Committee (secondary education students)
- The National Youth Council of Cyprus
- The Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization
- Turkish Cypriot Youth Political Organizations
- Young Overseas Cypriots (NEPOMAK)

These organizations may do youth work for social inclusion, however, it is not their main mission. The amount of financial support devoted to them is 300 000 euros as stated in the annual budget of the Youth Board of Cyprus. The main source of funding is public. The funds cover operational costs.

### **Quality assurance**

For the "Youth Initiatives Project" a quality assurance system exists, but is mainly focused on the evaluation of the applications and the final outcome. Basically the evaluation mechanism covers the eligibility and the quality check of the applications received. The main criteria for the quality check are the following: (a) quality of the project (b) relevance of the project with the objectives of the programme (c) impact and dissemination (d) level of involvement of the participants. For funded projects a final evaluation takes place.

Apart from this, there are not other systems of quality assurance of the main inclusive Youth work programmes in Cyprus.

## **4.8 Current debates and reforms**

In the beginning of 2018, a service dedicated to handle cases of abused children is expected to start operating in Nicosia as mentioned in an [announcement of the Cyprus News Agency](#). The "Children's Home" (as it is named) will facilitate all specialized services required to identify abused children and provide them with support. It will not provide shelter, only services and it is being set up in accordance with the Council of Europe's Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, better known as "the Lanzarote Convention". The Children's Home will work in cooperation with "Hope for Children", an NGO, housing a team of experts, such as social

workers, psychologists and members of the Police. Each case will be dealt with on an individual basis, providing protection to the child and the family.

Moreover, as mentioned in the [National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020](#), the Ministry of Education and Culture is in the process of developing a mechanism for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (including youth work through which a lot of work is done in the area of social inclusion).

## **5. Participation**

There is not a strategy targeting youth participation in the country, although the topic is underpinned in the [National Youth Strategy](#) and other initiatives taking place. The number and structure of youth representation bodies underlines that youth participation becomes gradually a priority.

A highlight is the young people's participation in policy-making, although there are still limited initiatives dedicated to learning to participate in the country.

### **5.1 General context**

#### **Main concepts**

Youth participation emerges as an important aspect of the lives of young people in Cyprus. Politicians, stakeholders and state officials are gradually more concerned about the low level of youth participation in the country. The [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) as well as the [Commissioner of Volunteering and NGOs](#) take more actions to measure and boost the youth participation in the social and democratic life.

#### **Institutions of representative democracy**

The system of government of the Republic of Cyprus is presidential democracy, with a clear separation of powers between the executive, the legislative and the judicial. As it is stated on the official [website of the House of Representatives](#), Executive power is exercised by the President, the Vice-President and the Council of Ministers, judicial power lies with the courts of the Republic and legislative power is exercised by the House of Representatives and the Communal Chambers.

As it is mentioned both on the website of the House of Representatives, the 1960 constitution has provisions to ensure a balance of power between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. The separate majority of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Representatives needed for the amendment of the electoral law and for the adoption of any law relating to the municipalities or imposing taxes and duties. The House of Representatives, was to be elected by universal suffrage with 35 Greek and 15 Turkish seats and a term of no longer than five years. Under the amendment of 1985, the legislature was to comprise 80 seats (56 Greek, 24 Turkish). In 1996 a system of proportional representation was introduced. The seats reserved for Turkish Cypriots have been unoccupied since 1963.

The presidential term lasts five years, with the next presidential election due in 2018. Ministers, who are appointed by the President, may not be members of the parliament. In the Republic of Cyprus currently there are 11 Ministries. These are:

- Ministry of Agriculture, Resources and Environment
- Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism
- Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Education and Culture
- Ministry of Finance

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Interior
- Ministry of Justice and Public Order
- Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance

As for the district administration, the official website of the [District Administration Offices of the Republic of Cyprus](#) mentions that Cyprus is divided into six administrative districts. These are: Nicosia, Limassol, Pafos, Larnaka, (in the government-controlled areas) and Famagusta and Keryneia (in the occupied areas). Each District is headed by a District Officer who is a senior civil servant appointed by the Government as its local representative. The District Officer is the chief coordinator and liaison for the activities of all Ministries in the District and is accountable to the Ministry of Interior. The District Offices are not elected local or regional authorities, but are part of the civil service.

On local level, there are two types of local authorities, Municipalities and Communities, which are governed by separate laws. In principle, Municipalities constitute the form of local government in urban and tourist centres while communities constitute the local structure in rural areas. Any community may become a municipality by local referendum, subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers, provided it has either a population of more than 5.000, or has the economic resources to function as a municipality. Mayors are elected directly by the citizens on a separate ballot, for a term of five years and are the executive authority of the municipalities. In addition, the official website of the [Union of Cyprus Municipalities](#) mentions that the functions of Communities are generally similar to those of municipalities, although structurally different. The residents of the community elect the President of the Community and the Community Council for a term of five years.

As stated in the [Law for electing members of the parliament 1979](#), all Cypriot citizens who are resident in Cyprus for a period of six months before becoming eligible to vote, have the right to vote. Voting was compulsory in Cyprus and failures to register or to vote were violations of law with sanctions applicable but not enforced in practice. However, based on the [Cyprus Government Gazette](#), on May 31, 2017, the cabinet approved a bill abolishing compulsory voting in elections.

## **5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy**

### **Young people as voters**

The voting age limit for voting in the elections of the country's representative democracy institutions at all levels, including for the European Parliament elections is 18. In the rare case of a referenda, the age limit for being eligible to vote is again 18.

At the moment, there are not imminent plans or any debate to lower the voting age limit.

There are not any special provisions for young people in the electoral law and/or rules.

There is not any legislation aiming at facilitating specific groups of young people to exercise their voting rights.

The [Ministry of Interior](#) which is responsible for the elections in the country keeps record for the turnout of the whole population, but not the young people specifically. According to the [announcement](#) of the [Press Information Office](#) of Cyprus, in the 2016 national parliamentary elections, the overall turnout was 66.74%. At the same time, the "[Active youth participation in social and democratic life](#)" research conducted among young people aged 18-35, for the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#), indicated that 72% of the respondents voted in the 2016 parliamentary elections. According to the same sources, in the 2014 European elections, the overall turnout was 42,37% while the turnout of young people was 61%. Last, regarding the 2016 local elections, the [announcement](#) of the Ministry of

Interior mentioned that the overall turnout for local council elections was 54.8%. There was not available data for the youth participation in these elections.

### **Young people as political representatives**

There is not any existing top-level legislation dealing with young people as members of political parties.

According to the [Parliamentary elections Law](#), the age limit for standing as a candidate is 26 (candidates must complete the age of 25). According to the [Local elections law](#), the age limit for standing as a candidate is 22 (candidates must complete the age of 21 by the date the elections happen). It must be mentioned that there is not any quota of seats reserved for young people nor any existing provisions aiming at facilitating young people standing as political candidates.

After communicating with the [Ministry of Interior](#), in the last parliamentary elections (2016) 75 young people were candidates in the parliamentary elections 2016, 5 of which were elected. The average age of the members of the parliament is 52. In the most recent Local Elections (2016) young people were the 21.1% of the candidates. Eventually, 19.4% of the people elected are young people. Last, in the European elections 2014, young people were the 8.2% of the candidates and none of them was elected.

There are not any functions reserved for young people within the representative assembly.

## **5.3 Youth representation bodies**

### **Youth parliament**

The youth representation bodies in Cyprus are:

Youth parliament

#### **1. [Cyprus Children's Parliament](#)**

The Cyprus Children's Parliament was set up in 2001. It was a development of the traditional event of Children's Week, during which a group of children occupied symbolically the seats of the members of the Parliament. With the support of the President of our Parliament it was decided that the symbolic event should develop into a formal session in imitation of the normal sessions of Parliament and under his own Chairmanship. The next step was to set up the Children's Parliament as a standing body, in operation throughout the year and not only as an event of Children's Week. The Children's Parliament was an initiative introduced by the PCCPWC (Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children). The first "statute" which was passed unanimously by children "parliamentarians" in the Plenary Working Session of September 2004, it was called "The Regulation of the Cyprus Children's Parliament" and consists of 16 articles. The statute has been modified several times through the years. In addition, the article 16 of "The Regulation" details the role of PCCPWC as the support body with rights and obligations concerning the proper operation and development of the new institution. Last, this institution gained substantial recognition from both the State and the Cypriot society, but it is not one of the country's fundamental institutions mentioned in the constitution.

Child "parliamentarian" may be any person under the age of 18 who legally has his/her permanent residence in Cyprus. The Children's Parliament consists of 80 voting members: 56 Greek-Cypriots and 24 Turkish-Cypriots and 3 Observers: 1 Maronite-Cypriot, 1 Latin-Cypriot and 1 Armenian-Cypriot representing the three constitutionally recognized Cypriot minorities. Members are distributed to the five Districts of the Republic in the same analogy as the Republic's House of Representatives. Their term of

office is two years and they are elected by District electoral assemblies which consist of delegates nominated by the Pupil's Councils of secondary schools and of non-school delegates (up to 10%) who apply for membership. The Parliament elects its President, Rectors and Secretaries and appoints Special Commissions. The Parliament is convened in Plenary Working Sessions every two months and in an annual celebration session, under the chairmanship of the President of the Republic's House of Representatives, during the Children's Week in November. The Regulation provides for the operation of five District Parliamentary Groups which elect their own officers and convene monthly in preparation for the plenary sessions.

"Guided by the certainty that in a democratic country all citizens must participate in all procedures and implementing the principle of non-discrimination [on the basis of age or any other]" and "because the movement for the defense of children's rights, PCCPWC, considers of capital importance the participation of children themselves in the process of identification of problems and the introduction of measures for implementing the Convention for the Rights of the Child", the Children's Parliament was set up. For a better discussion of issues and problems, Special Committees are recommended by the plenary of the Children's Parliament, which may include the following: 1. Legislative Control Committee, 2. Education Committee, 3. Health and Environment Committee, 4. Cultural Committee, 5. Press and Communication Committee. The PCCPWC is responsible for safeguarding the adoption and implementation of the views and suggestions of the Children's Parliament.

In the statute, it is stated that the PCCPWC is responsible for finding funding for the efficient operation of the institution. However, it does not state the sources and means.

## 2. The "Youth Parliament" programme

According to the official [brochure](#) of the programme, the "Youth Parliament" is an educational programme organized for the first time by the Greek Parliament in the 1995-1996 school year and since then, it has been running on an annual basis in the Hellenic Parliament in Athens. It has been achieved due to the collaboration between the Greek Parliament and the Ministries of Education in Cyprus and Greece.

The program is addressed to students of grades A and B of Lyceum (Upper Secondary Education) of the schools of Greece, Cyprus, and Greek diaspora. The [European Youth Portal](#) also mentions that in order to take part in this program, students must answer two questions (50-150 words each) and their answers will be sent electronically to the evaluation committee in Greece. If their answers are assessed as excellent, then they have the right to take part in the draw, where 300 youth parliament members will be finally elected randomly for participating to the "Youth Parliament" (260 students from Greece, 20 from Cyprus and 20 from emigrant Hellenic). Only students who have not reached the 21<sup>st</sup> year can take part.

The program aims to pursue the involvement of youth in "citizenship". By actively participating in discussions that concern important issues of their country, youth become more active, responsible and politicized citizens. On the official [Youth parliament programme](#), it is stated that different topics are being discussed each year. For example, during the latest "Youth Parliament", students discussed about the active citizen in relation to democratic school, human rights, culture, social solidarity, digital age and the environment. Although it is an educational programme, it is worth noting that Members of the Greek and Cypriot Parliament ask for information on what has been discussed during the work of the "Youth Parliament".

There is no information available regarding the sources of funding for the operation of this programme.

## 3. The "[House of Young Representatives](#)"

The House of Young Representatives is an initiative organized for the first time in 2016 by the Cyprus Youth Council (CYC) and the youth NGO Cyprus Youth DiplomaCY. It is a three-day event where young people from all over Cyprus conduct a simulation of the

House of Representatives of the Republic and the House of Young Representatives will convene to "legislate" in a special way through the adoption of parliamentary committee reports that will be simulated.

All young people in Cyprus, aged 16-30, are invited to participate in the event. No other specific criteria are set regarding participation. There is an online participation form and the two responsible organizations undertake the selection of the 56 participants.

Role and responsibilities: The overall aim is for the "House of Young Representatives", as it is stated in the [Cyprus Youth Council dedicated website](#), to become an institution in Cyprus so as to give permanent space to young people to express their views on everything that concerns them, both at the political level and at the decision-making level. The participants are divided into 5 Parliamentary Groups (Foreign and European Affairs Committee, Committee on Employment, Committee on Home Affairs, Education Committee, Environment Committee). Each Parliamentary Committee will discuss a subject and draft a report on the subject to be discussed and voted in plenary. If the report is approved, it will be handed over to the respective Ministers (of the real Government) and other technocrats, with the mandate to take the report into account and include it in the responsibilities of each Ministry.

The project is co-funded by the European program Erasmus+.

## **Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards**

### 1. [Cyprus Youth Council](#)

The Cyprus Youth Council (CYC) was founded in 1996 as a voluntary, non – governmental, non – profit organization. It aims at promoting dialogue and cooperation between youth in Cyprus and connecting them with youth in Europe and globally. The CYC seeks to act as a platform of exchange and communication between all youth NGOs in Cyprus and is in continuous cooperation with the European Youth Forum. It has over 60 member-organizations (both Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot organizations, political youth parties and non-political youth organizations). CYC is not part of the country's constitutional structure but it acts on national level.

The General Assembly is the supreme body of the CYC. The General Assembly meets with decision of the Secretariat once a year with the participation of representatives of all Member Organizations of CYC. The General Assembly deals with the subjects set in the agenda, such as Activity Reports, Financial Reports, Discussion of issues that affect young people, Setting the general framework for the CYC, Presence and participation of the Council in a local and an international level and decision making and drafting of resolutions.

The Secretariat is comprised of 9 members. The members of the Secretariat are elected within candidacies which are submitted by the Full Member-organizations of the CYC for a two-year term. As regards the positions at the Secretariat, except the position of the President, 4 Political Parties' and 4 Non-Political Parties' Youth Organizations shall be elected. The Secretariat executes the provisions of the Articles of Association and the decisions taken at the General Assembly and has the obligation to keep the members-organizations informed in relation to issues of common interest. The meetings of the Secretariat are regular. Last, the Financial Control Committee is comprised of three members from Full Member-organizations are elected at the General Assembly for a period of two years starting from the date of election and have the right to vote. The age range of the CYC's members and its various bodies varies between 18 to 40 years old.

The CYC organises events, seminars, workshops and activities that provide the necessary space for its members to exchange good practices, interests and experience on any youth related topic. The CYC also acts as a platform for its members for participating in European projects. The CYC is also the main stakeholder in the Structured Dialogue that seeks to promote the political participation of all Cyprus youth. Areas of interest, always in relation to youth, include human rights and equality, employment and social issues,

active citizenship and life-long learning, non-formal education and youth policies. Moreover, the CYC voices the concerns of youth NGOs including lobbying to policy makers for a number of youth related issues (e.g. youth unemployment, validation of non-formal education, etc.).

The CYC receives funding from various sources (national funding coming from the Youth Board of Cyprus and European programmes).

## 2. [Municipal/Community Youth Councils](#)

The Municipal/Community Youth Councils began in Cyprus in late 2001- early 2002, with the support of the Local Authorities and Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC). Today there are 23 Municipal and 3 Community Youth Councils established. The role of the YBC is to support and help the Municipal/Youth Councils in regard to any action or issue that benefit young people. This help and support to the Local Authority and the Municipal/Community Youth Councils can be financial, technical and advisory for activities, programs or even infrastructure projects that could be developed.

Each Municipal/Community Youth Council follows the statutes and operating regulations set by the Youth Board of Cyprus in collaboration with the local authority. The chairman of the Council is always a member of the Municipal/Community Council. Two-three more members of the Municipal/Community Council can participate and the rest (depending on the number of members decided by the local authority) are young people coming from local youth NGO's. If the candidates are more than the set number of members then elections are taking place.

The role of the Municipal/Community Youth Councils is to advise the Municipality and Community Authorities. The Municipality and Community Youth Councils prepare an annual action plan, addressed to youth people, including a financial budget. Similarly, they recommend solution-policies in regard to problems that young people face in relation to the Local Authority. Further, they can recommend the implementation of infrastructure projects, programs and actions for the benefit of young people of each Municipality and Community.

The Local Authorities support financially the Municipal/Community Youth Councils. Specific programs and activities can also be sponsored by the YBC through the "[Youth Initiatives Project](#)". It is also possible for the Municipal/Community Youth Councils to receive financial help from the private sector in the form of grants for a specific program or activity.

## **Higher education student union(s)**

### [Pancyprian Federation of Student Unions](#) (POFEN)

The Pancyprian Federation of Student Unions is a recognized social partner in Cyprus which was established in 1973. The supreme body of the Federation is the Congress. For the period between two congresses, the highest governing body is the Administrative Committee. The executive board of the Administrative Committee is the Secretariat. There are regular and exceptional congresses. The Regular Congress meets once a year. The Congress is made up of all student unions-members of the Federation represented by regular and alternate representatives.

POFEN has 18 member-organizations. The Secretariat has eleven members (President, Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer, and five other members) and it is also made up of the representatives of student unions-members. All Student Associations are represented by at least one member of the Secretariat. The Secretariat is elected for one-year term until the next regular Congress. The voting system follows a certain regulation depending on the number of members each student union has. The frequency of the meetings of the Secretariat is regular.

The objectives of the Federation include supporting, promoting and enforcing the rights and interests of Cypriot students in any legitimate means available to the Federation

through the participation and representation in committees and bodies dealing with student and other academic issues, and in the bodies of all Higher and Tertiary Education institutions. The role of the Federation is very important in Cyprus as it influences the decision-making on student issues.

The regular resources of the Federation are the registration fees of each student member-organization and the annual membership fees which vary for each member-organization. In addition, there are exceptional resources which may be donations, bequests, fundraisers, contributions and any other income that Federation received.

### **School student union(s)**

Pancyprian Student Coordination Committee (P.S.E.M)

PSEM's regulations are included in the general regulations of the secondary public schools' operation of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Its Secretariat has 10 members-representatives (President, Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer, and six more members).

The composition of PSEM follows the following order. In each public secondary school, each class votes (secret ballot) for its 5-member student council. All the student councils of each school vote (secret ballot) for a seven-member Central Student Council which is consisted of the President, Vice President, General Secretary, Treasurer, and three more members. The seven members of the Central Student Council of each school vote (secret ballot again) for two members which are going to represent their school in the Regional Student Coordination Committee. Then, two members from the Secretariat of each Regional Student Coordination Committee constitute the Pancyprian Student Coordination Committee. The Secretariat of PSEM changes every year based on the representatives elected from the above-mentioned processes and its regular meetings take place every two months.

The objectives of PSEM is to safeguard the rights of school students in Education as well as their representation in the decision-making processes related to school reforms and other educational policies and matters.

PSEM does not receive any funding.

### **Other bodies**

There are no other bodies in Cyprus that are important forums or assemblies of youth representation.

## **5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making**

### **Formal Mechanisms of Consultation**

The top-level authorities in Cyprus involve young people in the formulation of policies in the following ways:

1. The [Youth Board Law](#) includes legal provisions and guidelines on youth consultation. In particular, the law contains the establishment of Advisory Bodies and clearly says that the Council should seek and take seriously into consideration the recommendations made by the Advisory Bodies on matters that it examines and fall under its jurisdiction. The Advisory Body is there to express views and submit suggestions regarding general principles of youth policy. Taking into consideration that the Youth Board of Cyprus shall advise, through the Minister of Education and Culture, the Council of Ministers about the configuration of a comprehensive and specialized policy on youth matters", this consultation mechanism is across all policy areas directly influencing the situation of young people.

In this way, young people are officially consulted by the Youth Board of Cyprus and the rest of the top-level institutions on a national level for the formulation of policies in youth field.

The Advisory Body can meet (face to face) whenever the Chairman of the Council deems it necessary, but he is also obliged to convene a meeting if there is a written request by the majority of the members.

2. Municipal/Community Youth Councils through which young people are consulted on local level (go to the section 5.3 for further information on the Municipal/Community Youth Councils).

3. The [Commissioner of Volunteering and NGOs](#) has introduced the "Day for public consultation" (Ημέρα Δημόσιας Διαβούλευσης). As explained in the [Annual Report 2016](#) of the office of the Commissioner, this is a pioneer initiative approved by the Council of Ministers and is repeated on a regular basis. The Republic of Cyprus and the State Officials, consult with civil society on issues that they care and concern them. The initiative does not target solely young people, but the citizens in general. The results of the consultations are given to the Government officials who are asked to take them into account before taking any decision.

## Actors

There are different types of actors involved in the mechanisms of consultation, as well as on the actual levels of youth participation.

1. For example, the Advisory Body is consisted of the following committees:

(a) the Political Committee which includes representatives of each youth organization of the parties which have a parliamentary group and which are nominated by the corresponding organizations

(b) the Trade Union Body which includes labour, rural and scientific youth organizations as well as student federations and organizations operating on an island-wide basis and with proven activity

(c) the Students Committee which includes two representatives of each student federation or organization operating on an island-wide basis and with proven activity, as well as the school organizations, nominated by the body they represent.

All committees of the Advisory Body are chaired by the president of the Council of the Youth Board of Cyprus, they top level public authority for youth. There are no other stakeholders involved. The Youth Board of Cyprus did not take any measures in order to encourage the participation of specific target groups.

2. Regarding the Municipal/Community Youth Councils, the main actors are mentioned in the section 5.3.

3. The actors involved in the "Day for public consultation" are students, organized groups, unorganized citizens and others, depending on the target group and topic addressed. The participation of specific target groups depends on the topic of the consultation, however, the Commissioner for Volunteering and NGOs did not take any proactive measures in order to encourage the participation of specific groups in all consultations. The public authorities represented in this consultation process vary, depending on the topic of the consultation. Some examples of state officials taking part in previous consultations are Ministries, the Human Resource Development Authority, the Cities Union and the Cyprus Sports Organization. Additional stakeholders may also participate, but again they depend on the topic of the consultations. Some examples of additional stakeholders involved in previous consultations are: state and private universities, private sector companies.

## Information on the extent of youth participation

Public authorities collect data on young people's participation in the consultation processes.

1. The Youth Board of Cyprus has a database with the number of representatives of the Advisory Body. The members of the Advisory body are chosen from the beginning of the mandate and remain the same throughout all consultation processes.
2. The Municipal/Local Youth Council have again a database with the number of representatives. The members of the Local Youth Council are chosen from the beginning of the mandate and remain the same throughout all consultation processes.
3. The Commissioner for Volunteering and NGOs keeps data about the participation of citizens through a list. However, it is not available if the Commissioner keeps record of the age of the participants.

## Outcomes

1. The Youth Board of Cyprus usually requests input from the Advisory Body when it comes to policy issues, such as defining goals and objectives. As an outcome, their opinions are integrated into policy document prepared by the Youth Board of Cyprus. An example of such work was the [National Strategy of Cyprus](#). The National Youth Strategy is publicly available.
2. The type of input requested from the Municipal/Local Youth Councils is an annual action plan addressed to youth people, including a financial budget and recommendations for solutions and policies in regard to problems that young people face in relation to the Local Authority. It is not available if the Municipal/Local authorities make public the final outcomes.
3. The Commissioner for Volunteering and NGOs usually requests input regarding recommendations and suggestions for new policies or measures the government should make. The outcomes of this consultation are publicly available in the annual reports of the Commissioner.

## Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

The biggest large-scale initiative that exist for young people for participating in dialogues or debates with public authorities responsible for policy-making is the National Youth Conference. The National Youth Conference is organized by the Youth Board of Cyprus and it targets young people from NGOs, informal youth groups, pupils, students and any other young people aged between 14-35 years old. The Conferences usually happen under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Cyprus and they engage into consultations young people and state officials/stakeholders. The aim of the Conference is to hear young people's thoughts and views, expectations and concerns about tomorrow. Each Conference has a different topic and its main outcome is a policy paper which is then given to the state officials for taking it into consideration when making any decision.

More than 500 young people from all across Cyprus took part in the 2016 National Youth Conference. The Youth Board of Cyprus made the Conference accessible to all young people, arranging buses from rural areas to come to the conference and offering a permission for students and soldiers in order to attend it. Moreover, the Youth Board encouraged the participation of Turkish Cypriots whose transportation to the venue was again arranged.

## **5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation**

### **Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation**

There is no specific national strategy on youth participation in Cyprus however, the National Youth Strategy (more information about it is covered in the first chapter) contains a whole action field dedicated to youth participation.

#### **Scope and contents**

The Objectives of the National Youth Strategy, for youth participation, are:

- 1: Assurance of youth participation in all decision-making stages for shaping policies that reflect the needs and views of the young people;
- 2: Empowerment of youth for active participation in democratic life.

#### **Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy**

Youth Board of Cyprus.

#### **Revisions/Updates**

The specific measures for implementing the Strategy are being developed at this stage. More information will be available on January 2018.

## **5.6 Supporting youth organisations**

### **Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations**

There is not a specific legal or policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations in Cyprus. The youth organizations function in the framework of the "[Associations and Foundations Law](#)". Its main goal is to define the term "association" and "foundation" and to give guidelines about their registration and their function.

#### **Public financial support**

Youth organizations may receive financial support through the [Youth Initiatives Project](#). The "Youth Initiatives Project" is offered by the Youth Board of Cyprus and refers to grant activities established by young people and organised youth organisations. The source of Youth Initiatives Project is solely national and it is not earmarked within a particular national programme, grant programmes for youth organisations, or support coming from European funds.

The Youth Initiatives Project supports several activities such as conferences, workshops, cultural activities (concerts, art expositions, creation of CD/short film/documentary, book publishing, buying books for library, printing manuals), social intervention projects, sports activities, excursions, festivals, campaigns, and furniture and equipment supplies for youth NGOs. Especially with the last one (furniture and equipment) youth organizations can improve their youth facilities.

#### **Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants**

There are not specific national or large-scale initiatives aiming to increase the diversity of young people participating in youth organisations.

## **5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning**

### **Policy Framework**

There is not a specific national strategy which applies to social and civic competences and their development.

### **Formal learning**

Social and civic competences are incorporated in curricula for general and vocational education at upper secondary level. The citizenship education is not a separate subject. Instead it is integrated into the subjects of Greek Language (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class of upper secondary education) and History (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class of upper secondary education). As mentioned in the [curriculum of Greek Language](#) and the [curriculum of History](#) the main learning objectives of the citizenship education are cultivating values, adopting attitudes and demonstrating behaviors that make up the modern democratic civilization. By teaching the lesson, students are encouraged to become responsible and active citizens capable of helping reconcile and foster mutual trust among people and promote fundamental values such as democracy and freedom.

### **Non-formal and informal learning**

Participative structures within formal education settings (e.g. pupils' participation in school councils)

[A newsletter of the official newspaper of the Republic of Cyprus](#) describes the regulations of upper secondary schools in the current school year. The regulations require pupils'/students' participation in decision-making in their educational institution. More specifically, each class is entitled to elect a class council with 5 members who then elect the school students council.

There are not any top-level or large-scale programmes aimed at training school staff and pupils to enhance their skills to participate in decision-making structures.

Partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers

There is not a policy/legal framework for partnerships between formal education providers, youth organisations and youth work providers.

There also no public funds available to support the formation of such partnerships.

Supporting non-formal learning initiatives focusing on social and civic competences

There are no national/top-level programmes establishing, encouraging or supporting education projects related to the promotion of civic and social competences.

### **Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning**

There are no existing system of quality assurance of non-formal learning activities/projects.

### **Educators' support**

The office of the Commissioner for Volunteering and NGOs supports the educators training to the development of social and civic competences through the [“Teacher’s manual for cultivating volunteering and active citizenship in schools”](#). This manual outlines key concepts and definitions and suggests concrete sessions or campaigns that can be done at school.

## **5.8 Raising political awareness among young people**

### **Information providers / counselling structures**

There are two public authorities responsible for disseminating information about democratic rights and democratic values for young people;

- (a) the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#)
- (b) the [Commissioner for Volunteering and NGOs](#)

Young people can have access to information in the [Youth Information Centers](#) and their website, as well as the [European Youth Portal](#) of the European Commission which is powered by Eurodesk , and if it is accessible online (e.g. a dedicated website);

There is not a framework for youth information and counselling structures in Cyprus besides the standards set by the [European Youth Information and Counselling Agency](#) (ERYICA) and the [Eurodesk Brussels Link](#) which is funded by the EU. These youth information and counselling services receive public financial support from the Republic of Cyprus and they are both operated by the Youth Board of Cyprus.

### **Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values**

There are no large-scale, youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and/or democratic values.

### **Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people**

The Youth Initiatives Project (see section 5.6 on Public Financial Support) dedicates a whole action for bi-communal activities which promote the dialogue between young people coming from the Turkish-Cypriot community and the Greek-Cypriot community.

### **Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication**

There are no policy frameworks or guidelines on transparent public communication targeting young people in Cyprus.

There are no national or large-scale programmes or initiatives on providing training for policy-makers at various levels on suitable and youth-tailored communication.

## **5.9 E-participation**

A project of the Youth Board of Cyprus that encourages young people to participate in political processes electronically is called "Engaging Youth in the Cyprus National Youth Strategy",. The project aims at engaging youth in the finalization of the objectives of the NYS and the preparation of its 1st Action Plan. The project runs between March - December 2017 and it implements a series of combined offline and online participation activities, using the tool [OPIN](#). The project targets youth aged between 14-35, without any specific target groups addressed within the youth population.

There are not any national data or studies treating the relationship between e-participation and youth political engagement.

## **5.10 Current debates and reforms**

The youth participation is definitely an issue that concerns government, especially the Youth Board of Cyprus and the Commissioner of Volunteering and NGOs. In this context, in the [announcement of the 27/07/2017](#) of the Office of the Commissioner, the Commissioner in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and after Public Consultation, has drafted a law together with the Law Office of the Republic of Cyprus

which consolidates, amends and abolishes the existing legislation on associations, institutions and clubs. (New law entitled «Ο περί σωματείων και Ιδρυμάτων και για άλλα συναφή θέματα Νόμος του 2015», p. 31). The law, has been submitted to the House of Representatives for adoption, and it is expected to modernize the way non-governmental organizations (including youth organizations) function.

The Parliamentary Committee on Educational Affairs and Culture is also discussing now (October 2017) the inclusion of citizenship education as a separate subject for lower and upper secondary schools. The discussion concerns also the academic qualifications of the tutors.

## **6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

### **Information providers / counselling structures**

#### **Awareness raising initiatives**

## **6. Education and Training**

**Youth:** Youth are all people between 14-35 years old.

**Youth Board of Cyprus:** The Youth Board of Cyprus is the government's agency established to address youth issues. The Youth Board of Cyprus is a semi-governmental organisation under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture. It was established as a Legal Entity of Public Law in 1994. According to the Youth Board Law, the administrative board of the Youth Board of Cyprus shall advise, through the Minister of Education and Culture, the Council of Ministers about the configuration of a comprehensive and specialized policy on youth matters.

**Council of Ministers:** The Council of Ministers is the executive branch of the Cypriot government, consisting of ministers. The council is chaired by the President of Cyprus and the ministers head executive departments of the government. The President and ministers administer the government and the various public services.

**The Cyprus Problem:** Cyprus was proclaimed an independent State, The Republic of Cyprus, on 16 August 1960, based on the Zurich-London Agreements between United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey, which were signed by the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot Communities.

The 1960 constitution has provisions to ensure a balance of power between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities. In 1963 the Turkish Cypriot members of the Parliament left their seats for ever, since conflicts arose.

On July 1974, claiming to act under article 4 of the Treaty of Guarantee, the Turkish armed forces staged a full scale invasion against Cyprus. Turkey proceeded to occupy the northern part of the island and empty it from its Greek inhabitants. By the end of the following year the majority of the Turkish Cypriots living in the areas left under the control of the Republic had also made their way to the part of Cyprus occupied by the Turkish army. The situation remains the same since then.

## **6.1 General context**

### **Main trends in young people's participation in education and training**

#### **Organisation of the education and training system**

#### **Main concepts**

## **6.2 Administration and governance**

**Cross-sectorial cooperation**

**Governance**

## **6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)**

**National strategy**

**Formal education: main policy measures on ELET**

**Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

**Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions**

## **6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning**

**Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning**

**Information and guidance**

**Quality assurance**

## **6.5 Cross-border learning mobility**

**Policy framework**

**Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education**

**Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work**

**Quality assurance**

## **6.6 Social inclusion through education and training**

**Educational support**

**Social cohesion and equal opportunities**

## **6.7 Skills for innovation**

**Innovation in formal education**

**Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work**

## **6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

**Information providers / counselling structures**

**Awareness raising initiatives**

## **6.10 Current debates and reforms**

## **7. Health and Well-Being**

### **7.1 General context**

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

Main concepts

### **7.2 Administration and governance**

Governance

Cross-sectorial cooperation

### **7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity**

National strategy(ies)

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

Physical education in schools

Collaboration and partnerships

### **7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition**

National strategy(ies)

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

Peer-to-peer education approaches

Collaboration and partnerships

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

### **7.5 Mental health**

National strategy(ies)

Improving the mental health of young people

### **7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks**

Policy framework

Stakeholders

Guidance to stakeholders

Target groups

Funding

### **7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly**

## **7.8 Current debates and reforms**

# **8. Creativity and Culture**

## **8.1 General context**

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

Main concepts

## **8.2 Administration and governance**

Governance

Cross-sectorial cooperation

## **8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people**

Existence of a national strategy

Scope and contents

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

Revisions/updates

## **8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation**

Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people

## **8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences**

Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

Providing quality access to creative environments

## **8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture**

Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

## **8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies**

New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

## **8.8 Synergies and partnerships**

**Synergies between public policies and programmes**

**Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers**

## **8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture**

**Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities**

**Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities**

## **8.10 Current debates and reforms**

# **9. Youth and the World**

## **9.1 General context**

**Main concepts**

**Youth interest in global issues**

## **9.2 Administration and governance**

**Governance**

**Cross-sectorial cooperation**

## **9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues**

**Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level**

**Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level**

## **9.4 Raising awareness about global issues**

**Formal, non-formal and informal learning**

**Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues**

**Information providers**

**Key initiatives**

## **9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption**

**Green volunteering**

**Green production and consumption**

## **9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation**

**Intercontinental youth work cooperation**

## Development cooperation activities

### 9.7 Current debates and reforms

## Glossary

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