



## Youth Wiki national description

# Youth policies in Cyprus

## 2021

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# Cyprus

## 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, including young people. However, the development of a comprehensive [National Youth Strategy](#) in 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 former 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

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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 few highlights are the strong cross-sectoral perspective of the development and the 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](#) (Εθνική Στρατηγική για τη Νεολαία), which is the main policy document on youth policy in Cyprus, clearly defines the lower and higher age limit of the young population it targets as 14-35 years old.

The National Strategy on the sexual and reproductive health of young people ([Εθνική Στρατηγική για τη σεξουαλική και αναπαραγωγική υγεία των νέων](#)) 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. The National Youth Strategy does not identify any specific sub-groups within the main youth age group.

#### 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. The Strategy was adopted by the Council of Ministers on 18 May 2017 according to the [Decision no. 82549](#). It consists of the government’s plan for empowering young people and it covers the period 2017-2022.

### Scope and contents

The vision of the National Youth Strategy of Cyprus is that all young people of Cyprus have equal opportunities in empowerment, in order to reach their full potential in all aspects of life, and develop their talents for the benefit of themselves and the 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 as follows:

1. 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
2. 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
3. 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
4. Participation
  - Objective 1: Assurance of youth participation in all decision-making stages for shaping policies that reflect the needs and views of young people
  - Objective 2: Empowerment of youth for active participation in democratic life
5. Voluntary activities
  - Objective 1: Development of a volunteering mindset and promotion of voluntary involvement of young people
  - Objective 2: Official recognition and validation of skills acquired through volunteering
6. Social inclusion
  - Objective 1: Ensure equality and respect for human rights
  - Objective 2: Create a mindset that promotes social inclusion
7. Youth & the world
  - Objective 1: Creation and utilization of opportunities for mobility
  - Objective 2: Promotion of a universal, inter-cultural and environmental mind-set
8. 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.

## **Design of the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022**

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](#) and the [European Youth Parliament](#)) have been consulted by the responsible public authorities. The following methods were 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 the [National Youth Conference 2015](#) (available only in Greek). The conference took place on 26 May 2015 and its aim was to initiate the design of the National Youth Strategy.

More than 300 young people, from all over Cyprus and coming from diverse backgrounds 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 2010-2018. 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 [Local 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 among 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 on the opinions of the young people, especially those belonging to disadvantaged groups, nine interviews (on a '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 old). 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 migrant from Africa, a person from Palestine, a Turkish Cypriot, a person with multiple sclerosis, an unemployed person 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 and 18/09/2016 and collected in total 308 responses. The questionnaire aimed at prioritizing the existing recommendations based on a scale 'very important to not important'. It also allowed the participants to submit their own input on the objectives of the National Youth Strategy.

Last, it should 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.

## Consultations on the implementation of the Strategy

Since the establishment of the Strategy in 2017, the Youth Board of Cyprus has carried out several consultations with young people concerning the implementation and revision of the Strategy.

Specifically, in 2018 the Youth Board organised 9 local consultations with young people living in urban and rural areas with the aim to evaluate the first Action Plan (2017-2019), provide feedback and suggest new programmes or modifications to the existing ones so that they can be included in the second Action Plan. The results of these consultations were submitted to the Council of Ministers and then presented to the members of the Cross-Sectoral Working Group.

Within 2020, the Youth Board in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Development, organised two consultations in rural areas with young people and youth farmers, in order to discuss their main challenges, needs and ways for their better support, especially under the new Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

In general, consultations with youth on the implementation of the Strategy are taking place on an ad hoc basis.

## Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

The top-level authority responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the National Youth Strategy is the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#), which runs under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth.

The ministry primarily responsible for youth in regard to the National Youth Strategy is the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#). Representatives of the Ministry are members of the Monitoring Committee of the National Youth Strategy, which consists of the Cross-sectoral Working Group on Youth (includes all public services dealing with youth), the Youth Board of Cyprus and the Cyprus Youth Council. Additionally, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth is responsible for submitting to the Council of Ministers the action plans, progress reports and future steps of the Strategy which are prepared by the Youth Board of Cyprus in close collaboration with the above-mentioned bodies.

All government actors involved in the Strategy developed the two three-year Action Plans of the Strategy (2017-2019 & 2020-2022) and also prepared a progress report regarding the implementation of the A' Action Plan 2017-2019. The evaluation of the implementation of the National Youth Strategy is planned to be conducted at the end of 2022.

At the moment, the National Youth Strategy is not yet integrated into the overall national development policy. It is a separated document that sets the main goals and objectives of the policies of the government that target youth.

## Revisions/updates

The National Youth Strategy did not undergo any revisions. The first Action Plan (2017-2019) of the National Youth Strategy was completed and it has been discussed in open consultations with youth as mentioned above. The [second Action Plan \(2020-2022\)](#) has been approved by the Council of Ministers and it is currently under implementation. The second Action Plan includes all the programmes and actions that governmental authorities are implementing for the period 2020-2022 in order to achieve the priorities and objectives of the National Youth Strategy. Furthermore, preparations for drafting a new Strategy after 2022 are currently taking place.

## 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, Culture, Sport and Youth](#).

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

Many more institutional actors are involved in youth policy issues and have been formally involved in developing the National Youth Strategy, as members of the Cross-Sectoral Working Group for Youth. These include the following:

The [Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment](#) which aims at promoting sustainable development for agriculture and fishing, while contributing to environmental protection and sustainable management of both the environment and Cyprus natural resources through projects, initiatives and actions. With regards to social inclusion, the ministry aims to ensure a better quality of life for 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 existing legislation in the 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 others. 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 and Industry](#) aims to secure Cyprus' energy supplies in order to meet the needs of the country with the least burden 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-centred 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
- Answering to the new housing plans put into effect on 1 January 2007
- Upgrading the role and restructuring of local government
- The intensification of 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 archaeological wealth as well as other resources of the country is pursued.

The [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) which aims to maintain good relations 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 the above-mentioned Ministries, the following institutions/agencies are involved:

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

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

The [Deputy Ministry of Tourism](#) which is the institution responsible for the tourism in the country.

The [Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Strategy](#) whose mission is to develop a modern and efficient state, competitive at European and international level, and a dynamic digital economy, where every citizen and every business will be able to grow and prosper.

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 Citizen](#) who implement policies to encourage active citizenship for active participation at all levels.

The [Presidential Commissioner](#) who is responsible for Cypriots living abroad or in the occupied part of the country, missing people and 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 ([Αρχή Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού](#)) 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 National Addictions Authority](#) which is the responsible coordinating body of Cyprus in the field of legal and illegal use of substances and gambling.

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 former EU Youth Strategy 2010-2018 as described in [Section 1.3](#).

In order to gain adequate understanding of the actual needs of young people, the Youth Board of Cyprus has commissioned 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. Additionally, 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 agency established to address youth issues, design and manage youth related programmes and initiatives, support both individuals and entities in availing themselves of funding opportunities, as well as produce and disseminate information on youth policies and opportunities. It should be also noted that the Youth Board operates as the National Agency for the European Programmes “Erasmus+” in the field of youth and the “European Solidarity Corps”.

The Youth Board of Cyprus was established in 1994 as a legal entity of public law. It operates under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth which is the top-level authority primarily responsible for youth in Cyprus.

With regards to the role and responsibilities of the Youth Board of Cyprus, according to the [Youth Board Law](#) (available in Greek), its administrative board shall advise, through the Minister of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, 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:

1. The progress and welfare of all young people of Cyprus, regardless of nationality or religion;
2. 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
3. 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 other aims):

1. Study, work out and suggest to the Council of Ministers a unified policy or specialized projects regarding youth matters;
2. Undertake the implementation of programmes regarding youth upon the approval of the Council of Ministers
3. 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
4. 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;
5. Stipulate protocols/programmes of cooperation with corresponding youth bodies of other countries for the achievement of the Board's aims
6. 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, Culture, Sport and Youth has the authority:

1. 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;
2. 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, Culture, Sport and Youth anything he asks for, as well as the relevant books, documents and any other facility necessary for their check.
3. 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.

With regard to the established lines of accountability, the Youth Board, as a legal entity of public law, is subject to annual checks of the Audit Office of the Republic of Cyprus. Moreover, according to the Youth Board Law, the Administrative Board shall prepare in the form of a bill the Youth Board's budget, which is subject to the approval of the Council of Ministers and is submitted to the House of Representatives to be voted as a law. The Youth Board shall keep suitable books and accounts as defined by the Minister of Finance.

The budget of the Youth Board of Cyprus for 2021 is published in the [Cyprus Government Gazette](#). The approved budget for 2021 is €14.441.466 .

## **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 1.4 '[Structure of the decision-making](#)' and the Cyprus Youth Council. The Youth Board of Cyprus is coordinating this mechanism.

Two 3-year Action Plans were drafted for the implementation of the NYS (2017-2019 and 2020-2022). The Action Plans consist of the specific actions, as well as their budget, and provide a detailed outline of the NYS implementation mechanism, in order for the targets and priorities that have been set to be achieved within six years. The Action Plans also identify the necessary indicators that will measure the impact of the Strategy.

The monitoring of the policy takes place through progress reports and consultations with young people. The Youth Board of Cyprus, based on the contribution received by all government actors involved in the Strategy, prepared the 1st Progress report ([Α' Έκθεση Προόδου](#)) regarding the implementation results of the first Action Plan 2017-2019. In addition to that, the Youth Board of Cyprus, organized in total 9 consultations with young people living in urban and rural areas with an aim to evaluate the first Action Plan, provide



feedback and suggest new programmes or modifications to the existing ones so that they can be included in the second Action Plan.

The new Action Plan (2020-2022) and the first Progress Report were submitted to the Council of Ministers via the Minister of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and were approved in February 2021.

## 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, Culture, Sport and Youth 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, till the establishment of the National Youth Strategy, this cross-sectoral approach was taking place more on an ad hoc basis. 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 youth working group has been established. This cross-sectoral working group includes representatives from the Youth Board of Cyprus, the Ministries, Semi-governmental Organizations, and the Commissioners. While the Administrative Board has the leading role in the management of the National Youth Strategy, this cross-sectoral group 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](#) (available only in Greek) 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 was tripled since 2014. More specifically, the budget for research in 2014 was €8.330,00 while in 2021 the budget is €30.000,00 as stated in the [National Gazette](#). The allocation of funds underlines the commitment of the Youth Board of Cyprus to conduct research in the youth field. Moreover, one of the main tasks and responsibilities of the Policy Department of the Youth Board is to submit proposals and coordinate the implementation of research on youth. Lastly, the National Youth Strategy clarifies the commitment for an evidence-based youth policy as well. One of the principles of the Strategy is to follow an “evidence-based” approach for its implementation. More specifically, the Strategy outlines that one of the 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. Additionally, 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 the implemented programs are adjusted based on this.

## Cooperation between policy-making and research

There is an ad-hoc cooperation between policy making and research. Based on the Youth Board law and the Youth Board's budget, the Youth Board has the authority to commission scientific research on youth around several policy themes. Moreover, the Youth Board examines research proposals submitted from academic institutions and contributes to their implementation.

The first large scale research commissioned by the Youth Board of Cyprus was on [the current situation of young people in Cyprus](#) (available only in Greek). 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 2017-2022. The research briefs illustrate key findings for the young people in regard to the 8 themes of the National and the former EU Youth Strategy. The research was quantitative and data was collected through questionnaires. In total 1,340 young people took part in the research, 80% of whom filled in the hard-copy questionnaire and 20% the online version.

A second example of this cooperation is the research conducted in 2016 by the University of Nicosia on behalf of the Youth Board on the topic of [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 regard 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.

Within 2020, the Administrative Board decided the establishment of a large-scale quantitative survey for youth, called "Youth-Barometer" for investigating emerging issues and trends which call for policy action. The aim is to capture the situation of young people in Cyprus and explore their needs and perceptions on various topics, such as education, health, employment and active participation. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Youth Barometer were conducted within 2020, with a population of 1000 young people, aged 14-35 years old. The aim was to capture the current situation of young citizens in Cyprus with regard to their life satisfaction, happiness, education and employability and explore issues, such as lifestyle, family relationships, living conditions, health, extracurricular activities, voluntary work, future expectations and lastly opportunities and challenges. The 1<sup>st</sup> Youth Barometer study also looked at young people's general views and perceptions on issues related to social benefits, social policies, climate change, religion, immigration and digitalization. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Barometer re-examined the views of young people on lifestyle, education, employment, active participation and focused on the effects of the pandemic COVID-19 and the participation of young people in democratic life, due to the 2021 parliamentary elections.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Youth Barometer was carried out in 2021. Issues related to general life satisfaction, and in particular issues related to the quality of life, happiness, education, and employability were explored. A specific objective of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Barometer was the investigation into the effects of the pandemic on the lives of young people in Cyprus.

The outcomes of the Youth Barometer studies are published in the [Youth Policy Department's website](#).

The results of the Youth-Barometer surveys are communicated to the members of the [Cross- Sectoral Working Group](#) of the National Youth Strategy and to the relevant Parliamentary committees.



A recent example of an ad-hoc cooperation between the Youth Board and the scientific community is the research "[The relationship between young people in Cyprus with social networking and the internet](#)". The survey was conducted in 2020 by the Alexander college, with the support of the Youth Board of Cyprus.

So far, there is no 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 CYSTAT is to provide reliable and up-to-date statistical information. It is the competent authority responsible for the compilation and 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 is collected mainly through surveys whereas from Government Departments and semi-Government organizations mostly through access to administrative records.

CYSTAT conducts censuses (complete enumerations), sample surveys and ad-hoc surveys. The data is 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 are fulfilled. The Statistical Service collects data on various areas, some of which are irrelevant to young people. The key areas that are the subject of data collection and are relevant to youth are Population, Population Census, Health, Education, Living Conditions and Social Protection, Crime, Employment and Unemployment. Until now, there has not been any national youth report. Youth-Barometer, established in 2020 by the Youth Board of Cyprus, can be considered a valuable source 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 achieved by allocating special funds for research in the budget of the Youth Board of Cyprus. In particular, the budget for Research in 2021 was €30.000. The government has not yet allocated funds for the evidence-based evaluation of its youth-related activities and policies.

### **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 are funded ad hoc from other budgets. More specifically, the [B' Action Plan](#) 2020-2022 of the National Youth Strategy includes only actions taken by the top-level authorities, such as the ministries and the commissioners.

#### **What is funded?**

The policy priorities receiving funds are the 8 areas included in the National Youth Strategy and they can be found under the section "[Scope and contents](#)" of sub-chapter 1.3.

The Youth Board, through the National Funding Scheme "Youth Initiatives" with a budget of around €600.000– described in [section 10.3](#)- provides funds to the National Youth Council, youth centers, youth organisations, municipal and community youth councils in order to carry out projects targeting youth.

#### **Financial accountability**

With regard to the budget administered by the government agencies- including the Youth Board of Cyprus- the competent authority for the assessment of public financial management and accountability is the [Audit Office of the Republic of Cyprus](#). As an independent authority, the Audit Office of the Republic of Cyprus is responsible for auditing the accounts of the central government, of public law entities, local administration

authorities and other public organizations and funds. It conducts financial, performance and compliance audits as well as technical audits of development and other projects.

The main regulation governing, among others, the financial accountability of associations and institutions, is the "The Societies and Institutions and Other Related Matters Law of 2017" (available only in Greek). The 2017 Law introduced, between others, [the financial accountability and transparency](#) of NGOs.

For the time being, there are no links between external evaluation of programmes and policies and accountability of recipients of public funds.

## Use of EU Funds

According to the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development and the Second Action Plan (2020-2022) of the National Youth Strategy, the European Structural Funds, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund have been used for the youth policy at top-level.

The main policy initiatives/programmes funded are the [National Action Plan for Youth Unemployment](#) (which includes also the Youth Guarantee Scheme) and the Grant Scheme on "Strengthening New Entrepreneurship" that was announced in 2021. Other youth-related initiatives/ programmes receiving EU Funds is the Project "Establishing Non-Formal / Informal Learning Validation Mechanisms and Pilot Implementation" ([Θέσπιση Μηχανισμών για την Επικύρωση της Μη-Τυπικής και Άτυπης Μάθησης](#)) and the [Youth makerspace](#) of the Youth Board, cofunded by the European Social Fund.

There is no available data on the amount of funding earmarked for youth from those EU funds.

There are also no 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

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport & Youth has signed cooperation agreements with Bulgaria and Poland, which are valid till the 30/6/2022 and 31/12/2026 respectively.

Both agreements include activities in the field of youth, so the Youth Board of Cyprus is in close cooperation with the Ministry for these actions.

### International cooperation

The Youth Board of Cyprus maintains [important international relations](#) and cooperation. It is active on both European and national levels 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](#), the [Youth Partnership between the European Union and the Council of Europe](#) and the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy.

Moreover, the organisation participates or supports the participation of young people in United Nations conferences and Commonwealth meetings, on issues related to youth.

The Youth Board is also a member of the [European Youth Information and Counselling Agency \(ERYICA\)](#) and the [European Youth Card Association \(EYCA\)](#).

Moreover, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport & Youth has signed cooperation agreements with Israel and China, which include activities and actions in the field of youth.

## 1.9 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

The Youth Board of Cyprus has initiated the process for the design of the new National Strategy for Youth after 2022, in cooperation with all the stakeholders.

### Ongoing debates

In view of the upcoming 4<sup>th</sup> National Youth Conference, which has been scheduled for 2022, several debates are taking place for the thematic policy areas that will be explored during the Conference.

## 2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

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Although there is not a youth volunteering policy in the country, the field is scattered through the [National Youth Strategy](#) coordinated by the Youth Board of Cyprus and other official documents that have been adopted on volunteering.

At the moment, some important reforms are taking place, pushing forward new policies and mechanisms for the validation of competences gained through volunteering.

### 2.1 General context

#### Historical developments

Based on [the Cyprus report on volunteering across Europe](#), voluntary activities in Cyprus until the 19th 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 20th 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, an 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 Sustainable Development Goals, etc. 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** ([Διακήρυξη των Δικαιωμάτων και Ευθυνών των Εθελοντών](#)), approved by the Council of Ministers includes two relevant definitions:

1. The definition of “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.”
2. 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 Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen ([Γραφείο Επιτρόπου του Πολίτη](#)) - among its other duties and responsibilities - is also responsible for the support and empowerment of the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the supervision and management of the infrastructure created to support the work of NGOs, as well as the contribution to the implementation of government policies and decisions for the validation of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal learning. Also, the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#), as the coordinator of the [National Strategy](#) is the other public actor involved, since one of the eight policy fields of the National Strategy is Volunteering.

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 in volunteering is the [Pancyprian 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 Pancyprian 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 PVCC 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**

Cross-sectoral cooperation takes place in an organic way. Right now, the only available mechanisms of structured cross-sectoral cooperation in youth volunteering policies are found through the National Youth Strategy.

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

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

There is not a standalone national Strategy on Youth Volunteering in Cyprus. However, one of the 8 thematic areas covered by National Youth Strategy (please advise [Chapter 1](#)) is volunteering. The Strategy outlines the following seven priorities when it comes to youth volunteering:

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

Also, the **Declaration of rights and responsibilities of the volunteers** ([«Διακήρυξη των δικαιωμάτων και των ευθυνών των εθελοντών»](#)) is an official document approved by the Council of Ministers that establishes a common basis for volunteering. It was introduced in 2016 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 to young volunteers.

The Declaration outlines the rights of volunteers which are clustered as follows: (i) basic rights (ii) rights in receiving 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 and (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 point of reference for the design and upgrading of policies related to volunteering, in terms of safeguarding the rights and obligations of volunteers.

### **Scope and contents**

Not applicable.

### **Responsible authority**

Not applicable.

### **Revisions/ Updates**

Not applicable.

## 2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

### National Programme for Youth Volunteering

A National Programme for youth volunteering does not exist in Cyprus. However, a new website has been launched under the name [prosfero.com](http://prosfero.com). The website is used as a platform in which people can register in order to volunteer in different NGOs.

### Funding

Not applicable.

### Characteristics of youth volunteering

There is very limited research on youth volunteering in Cyprus. The most recent available source on youth volunteering is the [Youth Barometer research](#), conducted by the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) since 2020.

The "[Youth Barometer](#)" survey is a source which provides us with general information about youth volunteering. So far, it has been carried out thrice: the first one was carried out in [January-February 2020](#), the second one in [November-December 2020](#) and the third one in [September 2021](#), all of them with a sample of 1000 people between the ages of 14-35. Although this research does not focus on volunteering, in the chapter "Participation" there is a section for the participation of young people in volunteering or voluntary organizations. Specifically, in the first Youth Barometer, it appeared that 26% of respondents were involved in volunteering, in the second one this percentage increased to 29% and in the third one reached to 37%. Despite the fact that the rate is relatively low, it is quite significant that there is a steady increase every year, as well as that the participation of young people in volunteering activities/organisations is the highest among all the other forms of participation.

### Support to young volunteers

The 'Declaration of rights and responsibilities of the volunteers' ([Διακήρυξη των Δικαιωμάτων και Ευθυνών των Εθελοντών](#)) 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). It should be noted, though, that the decision to provide such reimbursement for their volunteers or not is up to the organisation. In addition, the voluntary organizations should provide insurance which covers social protection, medical care and civil liability.

The operation of the "Home of Volunteer" ([Σπίτι του Εθελοντή](#)) is another measure for the support of volunteers. It aims to meet the basic housing and office needs of voluntary and Non-Governmental Organizations, such as the free provision of housing and basic office equipment (offices, computers, telephones etc.). The spaces are provided for use by a number of organizations and they are configured to be suitable for organizing events and meetings. The first "Home of Volunteer" inaugurated in 2014 in Larnaca and the second one in 2016 in Nicosia.

### Quality Assurance

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

### Target groups

Given the fact that there is not a national Programme for Youth Volunteering, there are not any target groups specified.



## 2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

### EU programmes

Cyprus currently participates in the **European Solidarity Corps (ESC)** and the **EU Aid Volunteers programme**.

Regarding the ESC, the main top-level authority in charge of organizing and monitoring it is at national level is the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#). The Youth Board of Cyprus monitors the participation of young people in ESC through the applications submitted to the National Agency by the accredited organizations. Volunteers participating in the approved ESC 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.

In 2020 and 2021, 38 Cypriot volunteers participated in ESC voluntary projects abroad, as it is visible from the Cigna Insurance. They volunteered in Greece, Italy, Spain, Croatia, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, Hungary, Germany, Slovakia, Czech Republic, France, Denmark and Norway. According to the awarded projects of 2021, 133 young people are expected to take part in the volunteering and solidarity projects, which will be implemented either locally or abroad. In addition, as informed by the Youth Board of Cyprus, there are around 1172 Cypriot youth registered on the ESC online platform (March 2022).

There is no information about the participation of Cypriot youth in EU Aid Volunteers Programme.

### 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 ESC volunteers, the ESC Programme Guide, the ESC Info-kit and the Agreement signed between all parties involves sets the legal framework for young volunteers coming from abroad to do volunteering in Cyprus.

If a visa is required for youth ESC volunteers who will enter the Republic of Cyprus, the hosting organization needs to follow the ESC Programme Guide, as well as the **Aliens and Immigrants (Conditions of Entry and Residence of Third-Country Nationals for Research, Studies, Internships, Voluntary Service, Student Exchanges or Educational Programs) Law of 2019 (Law 7 (I) / 2019)**.

Non-European ESC 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.

## 2.6 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 European Solidarity Corps) by visiting or contacting the National Agency for ESC at the Youth Board, the **Youth information Centres** or the **Eurodesk Cyprus**.

### Key initiatives

The Youth Board of Cyprus, carries out several awareness raising actions, through its social media channels and the ["Up to Youth" show](#).

## 2.7 Skills recognition

### Policy Framework

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth is in the process of developing a [mechanism for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning](#) (including volunteering). More information on this mechanism can be found in [Chapter 6.10](#).

### Existing arrangements

Not applicable.

## 2.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

According to the statement of the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth about the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2021-2027](#), the Ministry is in the process of developing a mechanism for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (including volunteering). More information on this project entitled "Establishment of Validation Mechanisms for non-formal and informal Learning - Pilot Implementation" ([Θέσπιση Μηχανισμών Επικύρωσης Μη-Τυπικής και Άτυπης Μάθησης – Πιλοτική Εφαρμογή](#)) can be found in [Chapter 6.10](#).

### Ongoing debates

Within the framework of the project referred to above, public consultations with the participation of governmental and private organisations and bodies that provide non-formal or informal learning and/or specialising in youth, volunteering and adult education, will be conducted within 2022.

## 3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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In Cyprus, the main governmental authority responsible for employment, including youth, is the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#). "Employment and entrepreneurship" is also one of the eight pillars of the [National Youth Strategy \(2017-2022\)](#), coordinated by the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#).

As a result of the economic crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic, youth unemployment remains one of the main challenges faced by Cyprus. However, it is generally recognized that several measures tackling youth unemployment had a positive impact during the recent years.

### 3.1 General context

#### Labour market situation in the country

As mentioned in the Cyprus [National Reform Programme 2020](#), Cyprus, like most states, is in a highly challenging period following the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis. In 2019, the Cyprus economy grew at a great rate of [5,3%](#) and the labour market continued to perform strongly with unemployment, including youth unemployment, declining markedly. The improvement of the quality of the Active Labour Market Policies, particularly for young people is included in the main reform priorities presented in the National Reform Programme. In addition, it is important to state that Cyprus GDP is expected to grow by 4,1% in 2022 ([Stockwatch](#)).



Labour market conditions continued to improve in 2019 as a result of the continuous economic growth. Specifically, employment (age 15+) in persons increased by 3.9% (15,600 persons) in 2019 while the employment rate reached 75.7% compared to 73.9% in 2018, meeting the national employment target range ([EUROPE 2020, Cyprus National Reform Programme](#)). The employment rate of young people (15-24) decreased by 6,5% to 18,2% in 2020 ([Eurostat 2021](#)).

As regards the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) for the age group 20-34, this was 16.4% in 2020 ([Eurostat 2021](#)). Young people (15-24) have also experienced a great drop in the unemployment rate which reached the level of [15.10%](#) in 2021 (Trading Economics),. Lastly, the youth unemployment for the age group from 15 to 29 years old is estimated at 13,3% in 2020 ([Eurostat 2021](#)), while the youth long-term unemployment rate (12 months or longer) for the age group of 15-29 years old is estimated at 2,6 ([Eurostat 2021](#)).

In December 2021, as announced on the [official website of the Statistical Service of Cyprus](#), there were 14.800 registered unemployed people. In particular, according to the latest [statistics](#), there were 78 unemployed under 20 years old, 720 unemployed between 20-24 years old, 1799 unemployed aged between 25-29 years old and 4095 unemployed aged between 30-39 years old ([Statistical Service](#)). This indicates that young people represent a significant part of the unemployed population in the country, even though there is great improvement since the previous year.

## Main concepts

In Cyprus, every young person from the age of 14 has the right to work, as defined by the Law on the Protection of Young Persons in the Employment. ([Ο Περί Προστασίας των Νέων κατά την Απασχόληση Νόμος](#)). However, some young people still find it hard to get a job, especially young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs). After the financial crisis, Cyprus continues its efforts to tackle unemployment and modernise and enhance its [Public Employment Services](#) (PES) [[Δημόσια Υπηρεσία Απασχόλησης](#) (ΔΥΑ)] through the strengthening of its human and technical capacity and also exploring the potential to improve efficiency in service provision, the performance of PES, as well as reinforcing outreach and activation support for young people who are NEETs. At the same time, a significant effort to encourage young people to be engaged in entrepreneurship is put by government.

## 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](#) ([Υπουργείο Εργασίας, Πρόνοιας και Κοινωνικών Ασφαλίσεων](#)) and particularly, the [Department of Labour](#) ([Τμήμα Εργασίας](#)). 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 operation of the labour market and coordinating the National Employment Policy.

According to the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#) in Cyprus (2014-2017) and the [National Youth Strategy \(2017-2022\)](#), 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 the competent government agency for youth affairs in Cyprus. More information is provided in [Chapter 1](#);
- the [Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry](#): It is responsible for the formulation and implementation of Government policy on matters pertaining to energy, trade, industry, competitiveness and consumers, 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 Ministry is also responsible for the management of the “Youth Entrepreneurship” Programme ([Σχέδιο Ενίσχυσης Νέας Επιχειρηματικής Δραστηριότητας](#)) which provides financial support to young people (20 to 40 years old).
- the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth \(Υπουργείο Παιδείας, Πολιτισμού, Αθλητισμού και Νεολαίας\)](#);
- the [Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy \(Υφυπουργείο Έρευνας, Καινοτομίας και Ψηφιακής Πολιτικής\)](#) is also one of the main actors in the field of entrepreneurship in general. It was established in March 2020, with law ([Ν. 14\(I\)/2020 \(Ο περί της Ίδρυσης Υφυπουργείου Έρευνας, Καινοτομίας και Ψηφιακής Πολιτικής και Διορισμού Υφυπουργού Έρευνας, Καινοτομίας και Ψηφιακής Πολιτικής παρά τω Προέδρω και Συναφών Θεμάτων Νόμος του 2020\)](#)). Its vision is Cyprus to become a dynamic and competitive economy, driven by research, scientific excellence, innovation, technological development and entrepreneurship, and a regional hub in these fundamental areas.
- the [Human Resource Development Authority \(Αρχή Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού\)](#): 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 \(Κέντρο Παραγωγικότητας Κύπρου\)](#): 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. Trade unions are also important social partners in the discussions taking place on topics related to employment.

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

National Youth Strategy is a product of cross-sectorial cooperation, based on the active and direct involvement of Ministries, government agencies dealing with young people, youth organizations and, above all, young people themselves. With the existence of the National Strategy, coordinated actions can now be taken at national level, which will have greater impact on the lives of young people. Especially for the chapter of Employment and Entrepreneurship, the two main goals are the development, support and promotion of entrepreneurship of young people, as well as enhancing the employability of young people and their integration into the labor market, while safeguarding their labor rights. More information for the Strategy can be found in [section 1.3](#). More information about Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries is provided in [Chapter 1.5 Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries](#).

## 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. In 2017, the HRDA released another study under the name "[Forecasts of employment needs in the Cyprus economy 2017-2027](#)" [the study is available in the provided link in both Greek and English]. The study provides forecasts for employment needs in economic sectors (3 broad sectors, 21 main sectors and 52 sectors) and in 309 occupations (173 high level occupations, 130 middle level occupations and 6 low level occupations) covering the whole spectrum of the Cyprus labour market for the period 2017-2027. In addition, in March 2018 the HRDA published a study named "[Identification of green skills in the Cyprus Economy 2017-2027](#)". This study provides forecasts for employment and demand for labour in the economic sectors and occupations with participation in the green economy for the period 2017-2027. Additionally, it identifies the green skill needs for specific occupations of the green economy of Cyprus.

Moreover, the HRDA performs on an annual basis the "Identification of Employment and Training Needs" study ([Διερεύνηση Αναγκών Απασχόλησης και Κατάρτισης κατά το 2020](#)), which provides annual estimates for the number of persons required for specific occupations and the needs for specific skills. According to the [National Reform Programme 2020](#), on the basis of these estimates, suggestions are put forward for the implementation of training programs. The study collects and analyses the views of social partners, other stakeholders and enterprises.

The main output of these forecasts are extended reports, which are 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](#) ([Υπουργείο Οικονομικών](#)) 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, Culture, Sport and Youth](#) and more specifically the [Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education \(STVE\)](#) ([Διεύθυνση Μέσης Τεχνικής και Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης](#)) 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, 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 [Cyprus University of Technology](#), 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 Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth 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, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, and the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#).

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 Programme 2020](#):

1. [Secondary Technical and Vocational Education](#) (STVE) ([Διεύθυνση Μέσης Τεχνικής και Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης](#)). 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 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 yet 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 Service](#) (PES) ([Δημόσια Υπηρεσία Απασχόλησης](#)) 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 Labour Offices at the Districts of Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Pafos. 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 introduced for the implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

3. The [Career Counselling and Educational Services \(CCES\)](#) ([Υψηλούς Συμβουλευτικής και Επαγγελματικής Αγωγής](#)) operate under the umbrella of the Secondary Education Administration of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport & Youth. 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 Services](#) are offered by the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#). It offers young people of various ages and needs counselling and guidance on academic, professional and personal development. The meetings take place at the Youth Information Centres. Career Counselling Services are based on four action pillars:

- Personalized career counselling and guidance: Personal meetings between YBC career counsellors and school students, university students and young people. Personal counselling sessions may cover a wide range of topics: school subjects selection guidance, filling of public university entrance application forms, information on studying in Cyprus and abroad, CV building, academic and professional options, etc.

Career test and result analysis: Career tests are suitable for students (Middle school, High school, Technical school), university students and other young people. Career test is a valuable supportive tool for career counsellors that allows them to offer personalised guidance based on the interests and skills of each young person. Through the career test, young people achieve self-awareness and discover certain hidden talents, skills and personality features. This self-discovery will help them select a more suitable academic and professional path. The test is offered free of charge, following a preliminary meeting with the YBC career counsellor who will decide whether a career test is recommended or not.

- Series of workshops on soft skills development: These address school and university students, job seekers and young professionals. The workshops aim at preparing young people for the job market (e.g. CV drafting, preparation for a job interview, good practices for job hunting, etc.). They also provide professional development skills that help young people become successful professionals (e.g. presentation and communication skills, cooperation and group work, digital skills development, etc.).
- Career academies: Career academies are open to students, job seekers and young professionals who wish to achieve professional development. Youth Board of Cyprus Career Academies are one or two-day events that offer comprehensive training on professional development through lectures and workshops by leading key-note speakers. Participants attend intensive lectures, inspirational speeches by young professionals or other trainers from the business sector and participate actively in experiential workshops. Through their active participation, young participants exchange good practices, practice networking and develop on a personal and professional level. A wide range of topics is covered, such as: Career choice, job hunting, junior career development, funding opportunities, professional skills development, etc. All Career Counselling Services are offered free of charge to all young people.

## Funding

The funding information of the career guidance and counselling services mentioned in the section above is provided below:

1. As illustrated in the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#), the budget for the 1st 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 2nd 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 euros.
3. The budget for the [Career Counselling and Educational Services \(CCES\)](#) is managed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport & Youth and its source is public funding.
4. The source of funding for the Career Counselling Services offered by the Youth Board comes from the State's budget. The amount of funding for 2020-2021 is €55.000.

## 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 are 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-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training** ([Μεταλυκειακά Ινστιτούτα Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης \(ΜΙΕΕΚ\)](#)): 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. **Vocational Education and Training Apprenticeship System** ([Σύστημα Μαθητείας Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης και Κατάρτισης \(ΣΜΕΕΚ\)](#)): This Apprenticeship System aims to ensure that young people are employed and remain socially active as active citizens while meeting the needs of the labour market. 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 labour offer with young people who are adequate, qualified and certified professionals, ready to meet the needs of the economy.
3. [Providing Opportunities to New Graduates of Architecture and Civil Engineering up to 29 who are NEET](#) (offered by Technical Chamber of Cyprus). The project is expected to run until autumn 2022 and the aim is to offer 1-year-traineeship to NEETs who are up to 29 years old and graduates of Architecture and Civil Engineering.
4. [Providing Opportunities to Graduates of Law \(2017-2021\) up to 29 who are NEET](#) (offered by Cyprus Bar Association). The project is open to law graduates who have obtained a Certificate of Registration for a Practitioner and at the same time they are up to 29 years old and NEETs at the commencement stage of their training. This project is co-funded by the European Social Funds and the Youth Employment Initiative.

### 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- Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training](#) and the [Vocational Education and Training Apprenticeship System](#), 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-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training](#) and the [Vocational Education and Training Apprenticeship System](#) are co-funded by the European Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus. The amount of funding is not available.

The budget for the Scheme "[Providing Opportunities to New Graduates of Architecture and Civil Engineering up to 29 who are NEET](#)" (offered by the Scientific and Technical Chamber of Cyprus) is € 6,000,000. The scheme is co-funded by the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Funds.

### 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, Culture, Sport and Youth prepares [annual reports](#), which includes information on the Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training and the Vocational Education and Training Apprenticeship System.

## 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 [Department of Labour](#) of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus. They both offer various schemes to unemployed people of all ages who are facing particular barriers in finding and retaining jobs (low-skilled youth, social protection beneficiaries, unemployed at risk of long-term unemployment). All the available ongoing schemes can be found at the website of the [Department of Labour](#). Below is a list of the schemes that ran within 2021.

1. [Provision of Incentives for the Employment of Unemployed Youth aged 15 up to 29 years old who are not in employment, education or training -NEETs \(offered by the Department of Labour\)](#): The Scheme aims to alleviate youth unemployment (aged 15 to 29) years neither in Employment nor in Education or Training (NEETs) and the sustainable integration of young people in the labour market, by placing them in subsidized jobs and further gaining work experience. The total amount that will be allocated under the 3<sup>rd</sup> call will be €2,500,000 and it runs between 8/11/2021 until the exhaustion of the total budget or relevant announcement. The Scheme is included in the measures of active employment policy promoted by the Government for the implementation of the "Youth Guarantee".
2. [Provision of Incentives for the Employment of Unemployed \(offered by the Department of Labour\)](#): The Scheme includes the sponsorship of a part of the salary cost of the person to be hired.
3. [Provision of Incentives for the Employment of People with Disabilities 2021 \(offered by the Department of Labour\)](#): The Scheme includes the sponsorship to employers in the private sector for the recruitment of unemployed persons with disabilities



registered with the PES. This scheme runs between 8/11/2021 until the depletion of the fund or the announcement of the end of the Plan.

4. [Scheme for the Employment and Training of Tertiary Education Graduates](#) (offered by HRDA): 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 into 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 programme. The subsidy is calculated on the basis of the eligible costs of the implemented training programme. The scheme runs until 2021.
5. [Scheme for the development of New Business activity](#) (Σχέδιο Ενίσχυσης Νέας Επιχειρηματικής Δραστηριότητας) The Scheme was announced in May 2021 by the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry. It aims to develop, support and promote the entrepreneurship by focusing on specific target groups, such as young people and women who wish to do business in any economic activity, utilizing their knowledge, experience and talents. The scheme included a budget of 30 million euros. Young people aged 18-29 are among the eligible beneficiaries and are entitled up to 70% of funding.

The 'ActiveYouth: Youth Guarantee to ACTIVate and Empower YOUTH in Cyprus: an integrated communications campaign' was the main large-scale outreach strategy to disseminate information about job opportunities among young people in Cyprus. The main purpose of the programme was 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 was carried out by the [Youth Information Centres](#) of the Youth Board of Cyprus.

### **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. 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.

### **Funding of existing schemes/initiatives**

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

1. The budget of the scheme "Provision of Incentives for the Employment of Unemployed Youth aged between 15-29" is 2,5 million euros for the 3<sup>rd</sup> call that was announced within 2021. The scheme is co-funded by the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Funds.
2. The budget of the scheme "Provision of Incentives for the Employment of People with Disabilities 2021" is €2 million euros. The Plan may potentially be co-funded by the European Youth Initiative and the European Social Fund (ESF) .
3. The budget for the scheme "[Scheme for the Employment and Training of Tertiary Education Graduates](#)" comes from national funds. For the period 2017–2021, it is

estimated that the annual HRDA Budget for the operation of the Plan will not exceed the amount of €8,000,000.

4. The budget of the [Scheme for the development of New Business activity](#) is expected to reach 30 million euros.

## Quality assurance

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. The HRDA also carries out evaluation studies on the effectiveness and impact of its activities. 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.

In addition, many employment schemes include vocational training. Regarding this, 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 HRDA.

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 announced on a specific part of the [HRDA's website](#). In this context, the HRDA has prepared the study '[Indicators of Participation in HRDA's activities 2012-2018](#)' on a regular basis. The main objective of the study is the analysis of the participation in HRDA's activities, for example, during 2012-2018, 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 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 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,

### **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:

#### **Your First EURES Job Mobility Scheme**

[EURES](#) is a cooperation network designed to facilitate the free movement of workers within the EU 27 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. [EURES](#) Cyprus is well integrated 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' for young people, financing mobility in Europe. 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. It also helps employers to find the workforce they need for their hard-to-fill vacancies.

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

#### **The [EURODYSSÉE](#) Programme**

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

- Traineeships from 3 to 7 months,
- Language Courses,
- Accommodation,
- Monthly allowance or salary,
- Insurance cover,
- Certificates.

In Cyprus, Eurodyssée 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 **Eurodysee news**, the Eurodysee 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 per year for 3 years, which will enable the welcoming of 4 or 5 trainees to Cyprus each year.

### **Erasmus Programme for Young Entrepreneurs - Cyprus**

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a cross-border exchange programme that gives new or aspiring entrepreneurs the chance to learn from experienced entrepreneurs running small businesses in other Participating Countries. 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 areas selected by the European Commission to guide youth throughout their exchange: help with the application, help to establish a successful relationship with a suitable entrepreneur, as well as providing 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 them for the exchange. There is no information about the public funding for the above-mentioned opportunity.

### **Cyprus Start-up Visa For Foreign Nationals Of Non-EU Countries**

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. The programme run between 2017-2019 and now the Ministry of Finance renewed the programme for another 2 years (March 2019-March 2021).

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 young people 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 for the development of entrepreneurship competence and 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 Energy, Commerce and Industry](#), and endorsed by the Council of Ministers on the 14th 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.

This policy statement establishes a comprehensive policy framework and a targeted action plan for the integrated development of an entrepreneurial ecosystem in the country. The main purpose is the creation of an entrepreneurial ecosystem that will contribute to the country's economic growth, by providing the proper conditions for the successful development of business initiatives, ensuring the creation of added value for the whole economy.

The Policy Statement is the result of an extensive consultation with all the key stakeholders of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Cyprus.

Moreover, the first pillar of the National Youth Strategy is **“Employment and Entrepreneurship”**. National Youth Strategy is a product of cross-sectoral cooperation, based on the active and direct involvement of Ministries, government agencies dealing with young people, youth organizations and, above all, young people themselves. With the existence of the National Strategy, coordinated actions can now be taken at national level, which will have greater impact on the lives of young people. Especially for the chapter of Employment and Entrepreneurship, the two main goals are the development, support and promotion of entrepreneurship of young people, as well as enhancing the employability of young people and their integration into the labor market, while safeguarding their labor rights. More information for the Strategy can be found in [section 1.3](#).

## 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 1st Annual Progress Report published in January 2017 by the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry 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 upper 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, Culture, Sport and Youth conducts an entrepreneurship competition for students in the second and third year of upper secondary education. The competition took place annually between 2003-2016 and conducted again between June-December 2020.
- The NGO "Junior achievement Cyprus" organized the [1st Student Entrepreneurship Competition JA Enterprise Challenge 2020](#). The competition was part of the program Junior Achievement Europe, which gives the opportunity to students, aged 18-30 to develop their own business idea and helps them to use their skills in various areas and activities of a business. The students form groups and in parallel with the duration of the spring semester of studies they work on the development of a business idea, having the support of teachers and mentors. The final phase of the JA Enterprise Challenge 2020 took place on 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2020.
- 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.

Also, as mentioned in the [Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policies: Country Assessment Notes, Cyprus, 2020](#), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, with the support of the Pedagogical Institute initiated a series of entrepreneurial training programmes and competitions targeting secondary education teachers and students. While still at the beginning of their implementation, these programmes appear to have a high impact amongst students and educators: there has been an increased interest in running intraschool entrepreneurial competitions, participating in business idea/plan programmes and competitions, submitting bids on the themes of entrepreneurship and innovation, etc. These actions help strengthen the entrepreneurial culture within the education system in Cyprus, which is expected to have a role in building an entrepreneurship culture more broadly.

Universities have also strengthened their curriculums from an entrepreneurial perspective, offering certificates and minor degrees in entrepreneurship, according to the "Inclusive Entrepreneurship Policies: Country Assessment Notes, Cyprus, 2020".

In addition, [C4E Centre for Entrepreneurship \(C4E\)](#) of the University of Cyprus, the biggest public university in the country, aims to offer the training, expertise, mentorship, support and connections required for undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students, researchers and young scientists to become successful entrepreneurs. C4E aspires to serve the common good by transforming new knowledge into novel products, processes and services, implemented by new or existing business, private or public organisations, governmental or non-governmental institutions. C4E organises successful events with the aim of bringing together multidisciplinary knowledge from researchers, practitioners, industry experts and successful entrepreneurs seeking for potential research, economic and technological synergies.

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

[Youth Makerspace Larnaka](#) is a venue of innovation, built upon the example of similar successful venues that operate in various cities around the world, following the international standards of Makerspaces that are developed by academic institutions and



communities globally. It offers young people the opportunity to have access to high-end technological equipment that will enable them to develop their business ideas and put them in practice.

Makerspace venues contribute to the democratization of design, construction, engineering and education. Through their distinct learning philosophy, they empower young people on multiple levels: technology, handcrafts, creativity, construction, etc. In Makerspaces, young people have the chance to share and implement their skills and knowledge, boosting their vast potential of creativity.

In 2019, Youth Board of Cyprus created the mobile unit of Makerspace. The mobile unit aims to reach young people who live in rural areas, away from urban centres, and who therefore do not have access to programs and technologies such as Youth Makerspace. It is specially designed for this purpose and houses high tech technological equipment.

Currently, there are not any policies regulating the recognition and validation of entrepreneurial learning in non-formal and informal learning environments.

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

According to the [2020 Annual Report](#) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, the [Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus \(C.P.I\)](#) implements programmes for entrepreneurship in education in accordance with the National Policy Statement for the Enhancement of the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Cyprus (2015), the [new legislation for Social Entrepreneurship \(2020\)](#) and the European Union's Policy on the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). The aim is to foster entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurship in Cypriot education, since the development of initiative and entrepreneurship is one of the eight (8) Key competences for lifelong learning (ERF 2007) and its support is vital for the development of the young people's skills.

In 2018 - 2019, four hundred and thirty-four (434) teachers, four hundred and fifty-three (453) pupils, ten (10) University students and four (4) academics had the opportunity to participate in different training and empowering activities/projects. The C.P.I. provided a combination of training through workshops / school-based visits / co-teaching and highlighted the role of entrepreneurship in education as a key – competence for lifelong learning in a cross - curriculum manner promoting team / problem-based learning.

## **3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs**

### **Access to information**

The 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 are the following:

The Youth Board of Cyprus is responsible to promote the [Scheme for the development of New Business activity](#) (Σχέδιο Ενίσχυσης Νέας Επιχειρηματικής Δραστηριότητας) which was announced in May 2021 by the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry (Industry and Technology Service).

More specifically, the Youth Board of Cyprus is responsible for:

- The promotion of the program and the distribution of relevant information to young people,
- The organization of seminars to present the program,
- The provision of technical assistance and other consultation to interested people,
- The enhancement of the cooperation among young entrepreneurs participating to the program.

## Access to capital

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

1. The "Students in Action" Program ([Φοιτητές σε Δράση](#)) is a grant program, implemented by the Youth Board of Cyprus in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth. 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.
2. The [Scheme for the development of New Business activity](#) ("Σχέδιο ενίσχυσης νέας επιχειρηματικής δραστηριότητας") under the umbrella of the [Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry](#). The program aims to develop, support and promote entrepreneurship, by focusing on specific target groups, such as young people and women who wish to do business in any economic activity, utilizing their knowledge, experience and talents. Beneficiaries are unemployed or employed, (a) young people aged 18-29, (b) men aged 30-50 and (c) women aged 30-55. Young people aged 18-29 are entitled up to 70% of funding.
3. The Cyprus Entrepreneurship Fund (CYPEF). As mentioned in the [National Reform Programme 2020](#), the Cyprus Entrepreneurship Fund supports both working capital and investment loans to Small-Medium Enterprises.
4. Tax incentives. As mentioned in the [National Reform Programme 2020](#), the amended Income Tax Law N135(I)/2016, established a framework of incentives effective from January 2017 until the end of 2020 through tax relief to individuals who invest in innovative Small-Medium Enterprises, including start-ups, either directly or through an investment fund. The incentives provide for the following:
  - exemption of the investment from the investor's taxable income (up to a maximum amount of 50% of the taxable income);
  - deduction of up to €150,000 per year as well as the right of allocation and distribution of the
  - discount in a 5 (five) year period, and investment in shares, loans, or granting guarantees to innovative companies.

As reported in the aforementioned National Reform Plan, the measure was promoted in the context of the Policy Statement on the Enhancement of the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem with the goal to support business innovation and also support the efforts of young scientists and the startup community.

Lastly, it has to be underlined the fact that a new law regarding the establishment of Social Enterprises has been voted by the Parliament (December 2020) ([ο περί Κοινωνικών Επιχειρήσεων Νόμος του 2010 \(N.207\(I\)/2020\)](#)), which creates a positive environment for the creation of new business endeavor for young people.

## 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. Annual Conference on Entrepreneurship and Start-ups organized by the Youth Board of Cyprus. The first conference was implemented in [December 2017](#) and the second in [February 2019](#). Both events were very successful in attracting a big number of young people and informing them about entrepreneurship.



2. The Youth Board of Cyprus is responsible to promote the Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme ([Σχέδιο Ενίσχυσης Νέας Επιχειρηματικής Δραστηριότητας](#)), which operates under the umbrella of the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry (Industrial Development Service). More specifically, the Youth Board of Cyprus is responsible for:
  - The promotion of the program and the distribution of relevant information to young people,
  - The organization of seminars to present the program,
  - The provision of technical assistance and other consultation to interested people,
  - The enhancement of the cooperation among young entrepreneurs participating to the program.
3. The Annual Innovation and Entrepreneurship Forum that is run by the [Centre for Entrepreneurship](#) (C4E) of the University of Cyprus and its partners. The fifth edition of the Forum was carried out in December 2020. The Forum highlights research results with a potential for market exploitation and/or societal impact and celebrate entrepreneurial success, by awarding individuals or teams that excelled in innovative entrepreneurship in Cyprus or abroad. It brings together multidisciplinary knowledge from researchers, professionals, industry and business leaders and successful entrepreneurs seeking for potential research, economic and technological synergies.
4. "[Students in Research - MERA](#)" and "[Technology and Innovation in Education - TEKE](#)". Both competitions are organized by the [Research and Innovation 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

### 3.11 Current debates and reforms

#### Forthcoming policy developments

The government initiative for the promotion of social entrepreneurship was approved, through the adoption of the legislative framework for the establishment of Social Enterprises. The Action Plan will endorse 3 priorities:

- Creating a friendly business environment,
- Promoting a culture of social entrepreneurship,
- Enhancing Access to Funding.

The Action Plan is put forward by the Department of Administrative Reform.

Moreover, as mentioned in the [National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020](#), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth 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.

#### Ongoing debates

There are currently not any ongoing debates taking place in the public or political sphere.

## 4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

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Cyprus has adopted various national strategies that also serve the social inclusion of young people. There are those that include all age groups (e.g. the [Strategy for Social Policy 2014-2020](#), which is the primary strategy dealing with social inclusion in the country) and those directed at children and youth (e.g. [National Youth Strategy](#)). The cross-sectoral cooperation is a key element of the strategy and many of its actions are organized in order to support the social inclusion of groups at risk.

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 [Poverty and Social Exclusion Survey](#) conducted by the Statistical Service in 2020 in Cyprus, the risk-of-poverty is 21.3, while the risk-of-poverty rate for children 0-17 years old is 16.1. [Risk-of-poverty rate is the share of persons with an equivalent disposable income (after social transfer) below the risk-of-poverty threshold. It measures relative poverty and not absolute poverty]. Also, it has to be underlined the fact that girls are more likely (22.2%) to be in a situation of poverty and social exclusion compared to boys (20.2%). The percentage of the population living in households with very low work intensity is in total 6.8%. At the same time, the percentage of population which cannot afford to pay at least 4 out of the 9 material deprivation items (having thus severe material deprivation) is 9.1%. Last, the same study reveals that the Risk-of-poverty or social exclusion rate for adults is for Nationals at 19.8%, for EU28 Foreigners at 26.7% and for non-EU28 Foreigners at 36.9%.

Moreover, the [Demographic Statistics 2019](#) of the Statistical Service counts that in 2014, 9.212 immigrants arrived to Cyprus, 15.183 immigrants in 2015, 17.391 in 2016, 21.306 in 2017, 23.442 in 2018 and 26.710 in 2019. Also, it is important to state that the [Census of Population and Housing 2021](#) is still running (October 2021 – April 2022) and the first results are expected to be announced in January 2022.

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. In 2019, the country also received 13,259 applications while in 2020 there were 7,094 new applications for asylum as described by the Cyprus Refugee Council in the report "[Overview of statistical practice](#)". In addition to that, according to the [Education and Training MONITOR 2019- Cyprus Report](#), 7765 new asylum applications were lodged, among them 1090 applications by people under 18 years old.

Lastly, according to the UNHCR report regarding "[The Integration of Refugees in Cyprus: Social Inclusion and Discrimination](#)", "*discrimination is inextricably linked to lack of acceptance of diversity, which was acknowledged as a major obstacle to social inclusion...in incidents occurred at work and school*".

#### 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 and 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](#) ([Υπουργείο Εργασίας, Πρόνοιας και Κοινωνικών Ασφαλίσεων](#)). 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.

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 new Secretary of State for Social Welfare ([Υφυπουργείο Κοινωνικής Πρόνοιας](#)) was established at the end of 2021. Some of the responsibilities of the new authority are the creation of programs towards social inclusion and improved level of living for all.

Apart from the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, the following public actors are also involved in policy making regarding young people's social inclusion:

The **Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment** ([Υπουργείο Γεωργίας, Αγροτικής Ανάπτυξης και Περιβάλλοντος](#)), 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. It has to be stressed that the Ministry organizes many consultation meetings with young people in rural areas regarding the development of their daily life (e.g. [Υπουργείο Γεωργίας και Οργανισμός Νεολαίας σε ανοιχτή διαβούλευση με τους νέους της υπαίθρου](#)).

The **Ministry of Justice and Public Order** ([Υπουργείο Δικαιοσύνης και Δημόσιας Τάξεως](#)), 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. Prevention and/or intervention policies and practices aiming at juvenile delinquency cases are being adopted by the Ministry, in an attempt to promote youngster social inclusion in the local society.

In addition to this, another important actor in policy making in the field is the Department for Women issues – Gender Equality ([Τομέας Διοίκησης και Ισότητας των Φύλων](#)) 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.

The **Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry** ([Υπουργείο Ενέργειας, Εμπορίου και Βιομηχανίας](#)) 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** ([Υπουργείο Εσωτερικών](#)) 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) A qualitative upgrading of the services provided to the citizen, b) Answer to the new housing plans put into effect on 1.1.2007, c) Upgrading the role and restructuring of local government, d) 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 [Civil Registry and Migration Department \(Τμήμα Αρχείου Πληθυσμού και Μετανάστευσης\)](#) is responsible to promote social cohesion policies and practices through the adoption of various methodologies and mechanisms, including children and youngsters regardless of their cultural and/or religious background.

The [Ministry of Finance \(Υπουργείο Οικονομικών\)](#), 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, Culture, Sport and Youth \(Υπουργείο Παιδείας, Πολιτισμού, Αθλητισμού και Νεολαίας\)](#), which is responsible for the fields of education, youth, sports and culture. Also, the Youth Board of Cyprus runs under the Ministry and is responsible for advising the Minister and the Council of Ministers on youth issues; in addition, the Cyprus Sports Organization which is connected to the Ministry and takes care of the sports culture in the country. Students' social inclusion is considered one of the Ministry's main aims in all levels of education, through the adoption of various methods and practices.

The [Ministry of Health \(Υπουργείο Υγείας\)](#) 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 Transport, Communications and Works \(Υπουργείο Μεταφορών, Επικοινωνιών και Έργων\)](#) 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.

The **Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality** ([Γραφείο Επιτρόπου για την Ισότητα των Φύλων](#)), which is the institution responsible for designing Gender Equality Policies, implementing and monitoring the implementation of these policies. The [National Action Plan for Gender Equality between Men and Women 2019-2023](#) (Εθνικό Σχέδιο Δράσης για την Ισότητα μεταξύ Ανδρών και Γυναικών 2019-2023) stresses the need to support vulnerable groups of people such as children and youngsters, in order to gain access in education and life-long learning, which will enable them to develop necessary knowledge and skills for a full participation in society.

The [Office of the Commissioner for Children's Rights \(Επιτροπός Προστασίας των Δικαιωμάτων του Παιδιού\)](#), whose mission is to protect and promote the rights of the child. The Commissioner's role is to a) represent children and their interests at all levels, b) promote public awareness and sensitivity so that children's rights in the family, at school, in the community are safeguarded, c) identify and promote the views of children where they themselves cannot be heard, d) monitor legislation relating to children and to submit

proposals aiming at their harmonization with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, e) carry out public awareness campaigns, f) appoint a representative of the child in judicial proceedings affecting him/her and finally g) represent children in procedures affecting them.

The **Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (Ombudsman)** ([Επίτροπος Διοικήσεως και & Προστασίας Ανθρωπίνων Δικαιωμάτων](#)), 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.

The **Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development** ([Γενική Διεύθυνση Ευρωπαϊκών Προγραμμάτων, Συντονισμού και Ανάπτυξης](#)), 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.

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** ([Ένωση Δήμων Κύπρου](#)), 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-à-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** ([Ένωση Κοινοτήτων Κύπρου](#)), whose aims are:

1. The defense 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 Bodies of Local Self-Government and its representation at Local and International Congresses.

The **Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus** ([Δημοκρατική Εργατική Ομοσπονδία Κύπρου](#)), 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** ([Παγκύπρια Εργατική Ομοσπονδία](#)), which is a labour union.

The **Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council** ([Παγκύπριο Συντονιστικό Συμβούλιο Εθελοντισμού](#)), which 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. At the same time, all the stakeholders involved in this Strategy were represented by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance at the Cross-sectorial Working Group on Youth working for the National Youth Strategy (Εθνική Στρατηγική για τη Νεολαία).

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.

## **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.

Moreover, one of the 8 action fields of the National Youth Strategy ([Εθνική Στρατηγική για τη Νεολαία](#)) is Social Inclusion. The National Youth Strategy was adopted in May 2017 by the Council of Ministers and it covers the period from 2017 until 2022. The Strategy is cross – sectorial hence it incorporates all the policies that concern young people.

### **Scope and contents**

The focus of the State's effort through the Strategy for Social Policy is to 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:

1. Promote child welfare: This goal is geared to improve public investment,
2. Reform of the Welfare System,
3. Active inclusion, with ensuring adequate income, integration into the labor market and access to quality and affordable services,
4. Long-term care,
5. 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 and immigrants.

What's more, a main priority of the [National Youth Strategy](#) (NYS) is to promote equality and the respect of human rights so as to eliminate social discrimination against young



people. In order to achieve this aim, a culture that encourages social inclusion should be created.

Social inclusion allows all young people to enjoy their social rights freely, regardless of their background. At the same time, it is a dynamic process, which allows all social groups to participate in a dialogue that aims at social peace.

Goal 1 of the NYS: Ensure equality and respect of human rights.

Goal 2 of the NYS: Create a mindset that promotes social inclusion.

The top priorities of the National Youth Strategy for achieving the above goals are the following ones:

1. Provide constant information to young people on the rights of groups with fewer opportunities or groups of people who might be threatened with social exclusion.
2. Develop actions that contribute to social inclusion and to the participation of young people with fewer opportunities or who are threatened with social exclusion.
3. Develop actions that contribute to reducing discrimination among G/C and T/C youth.
4. Promote actions for social inclusion and against social exclusion in the school environment.
5. Promote actions and programs that will encourage and develop social participation for groups that are threatened with social exclusion (i.e. through special equipment, structured environment guidelines, etc.).
6. Develop creative expression, arts and foreign language learning as means of diversity, tolerance and respect.
7. Encourage the participation of people with fewer opportunities in mobility programs for skills and abilities development.

## 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 \(Υπηρεσίες Κοινωνικής Ευημερίας\)](#). 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.

The national coordinator for the drafting, and monitoring of the implementation of the National Youth Strategy is the Youth Board of Cyprus. For the implementation of the Strategy a Cross-sectorial Working Group on Youth is established in order to ensure constant coordination and close cooperation among all governmental institutions that deal with youth issues. The Cross-sectorial Working Group has developed the first 3-year Action Plan (2017-2019) which was monitored via regular progress reports coordinated by the Youth Board of Cyprus. The first Progress Report for the period 2017-2019 revealed that more than 26 actions have been implemented or are still in action, aiming at young people's social inclusion. Briefly, some of the actions can be summarized to the following ones: programs to empower employment of disabled youth, creation of a new center to host unaccompanied minors, teaching of social skills, foster care programs for minors, programs for empowering inclusion of young people coming from Third Countries, etc.

## Revisions/Updates

The strategies have 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. [National Drug Strategy 2021-2028](#) and the [Action Plan 2021-2024](#) are the newest policy documents published by the Cyprus National Addictions Authority. Both documents focus on the provision of a) prevention policies, b) health-related services, and c) social support to young people and all citizens of the Republic of Cyprus. Also, both documents stress the need for young people to adopt healthy lifestyle, in order not to be excluded by the Cypriot society. The [Cyprus National Addictions Authority](#) ([Αρχή Αντιμετώπισης Εξαρτήσεων Κύπρου](#)) is also the coordinating body in the field of legal and illegal dependency substances and has been the evolution of the Anti-Drug Council since November 2017. In November 2020 the new National Drugs Policy and Alcohol Policy 2021-2028 was presented to the public; also, an Action Plan for the period of 2021-2024 was designed. The main aim of the new Policy is to safeguard young people's right to have access in prevention, therapy and social support services. There are more than 30 public and other actors involved in the proposed programmes of the Cyprus National Addictions Authority, such as ministries, the Cyprus Police, the Youth Board of Cyprus, associations, trade unions, NGOs. Their role is to implement collectively the strategy. Also, the Cyprus National Addiction Authority has published a [Guide on Social Reintegration Services](#) ([Οδηγός Υπηρεσιών Κοινωνικής Επανεένταξης](#) – available only in Greek).
3. The [Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities](#) ([Τμήμα Κοινωνικής Ενσωμάτωσης Ατόμων με Αναπηρίες](#)) was established in 2009 and 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 no other actors involved and the level and trends of participation of young people in these programmes are not available, although an [annual report](#) is drafted (2020 is the latest report).

4. The "[Actions for social and school inclusion \(DR.A.S.E.\)](#)" («[Δράσεις Σχολικής και Κοινωνικής Ένταξης \(ΔΡΑ.Σ.Ε.\)](#)») 2015-2023 run by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth. Key actors involved are the schools, which 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) are 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.

According to the [Minister's announcement on 24/5/2019](#), the programme expands to cover 102 schools during the school years 2019-2023, targeting thus the 15,6% of the schools population. The trends of participation of young people in this programme are not available.

5. 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.
6. "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 τρίμηνη 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 6/7/2017 to 31/12/2020; however, due to the current conditions caused by the pandemic, the duration of the programme has been extended until 30/6/21. 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. The National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography ([Η Εθνική Στρατηγική και το Σχέδιο Δράσης για την Καταπολέμηση της Σεξουαλικής Κακοποίησης και Εκμετάλλευσης Παιδιών και της Παιδικής Πορνογραφίας](#)) was based on the "Implementation of the National Strategy to Combat Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law (N. 112(I)/2017) ([Ο περί της Εφαρμογής της Εθνικής Στρατηγικής για την Καταπολέμηση της Σεξουαλικής Κακοποίησης και Εκμετάλλευσης Παιδιών και της Παιδικής Πορνογραφίας Νόμος του 2017 \(N. 112\(I\)/2017\)](#)); currently, there is in effect the second Action Plan for the years 2021-2023. The responsible authority for the implementation and coordination of the Strategy is the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. At the same time, the following actors are involved:

- The Ministry of Health
- The Ministry of Justice and Public Order
- The Ministry of Education and Culture
- The Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
- The Law Office
- The Police
- The Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence
- Actors from the private sector who are selected either in their personal capacity because of their involvement and training in child protection issues or from members of Organisations or Associations or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in the protection of children's rights and / or education and training on children's rights.

The main fields of activity of the Strategy include:

- Primary Prevention (Reducing abuse and exploitation incidents through prevention, strengthening, informing and educating children, including internet security),
- Secondary Prevention (Responding swiftly and timely to the initial problems before they get worse),
- Tertiary Prevention (Tackling incidents after they have occurred),
- Research (Implementing a system to record incidents, Scientific Research),
- Evaluation (Quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the effectiveness and the attainment of the objectives of specific actions).

The level and trends of participation are not yet recorded. It's not clear if any targets for the level of participation are established.

Lastly, it has to be underlined that a Board being responsible for monitoring the implementation of the above law was established; this Board is called/named "Foni" ([Φωνή](#)).

## 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. The programme is financed 90% by the European Social Fund. The remaining 10% is financed by the Republic of Cyprus.
2. The budget of the National Addictions Strategy 2021-2028 ([Εθνική Στρατηγική για Αντιμετώπιση των Εξαρτήσεων 2021-2028](#)) is not available, however there are some budget indications in the Action Plan 2021-2024 ([Σχέδιο Δράσης 2021-2024](#)).
3. 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.
4. The total budget for the DRASE programme until 2023 reaches €29.000.000 Euro and it is co-financed by the European Social Fund (85%) and the Republic of Cyprus (15%).
5. 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.

## 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. Their main outcomes of quality assurance process are not published.
2. Regarding the National Addictions Strategy 2021-2028, many indicators are set in order to check the implementation of the strategy, as well as several deliverables for each action. The Cyprus National Addictions Authority monitors the assessment of the strategy; however, there are currently not any new Reports regarding the implementation of the Strategy or the first Action Plan 2021-2024.
3. 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. However, the department releases an [annual report](#).
4. No specific quality assurance criteria are mentioned for the “Actions for social and school inclusion (DR.A.S.E.)”.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. A monitoring committee was established in order to monitor and control the implementation of the National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography.

## 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, Culture, Sport and Youth](#). Through the adoption of the intercultural model, the Ministry has in recent years promoted a series of actions in the context of [Intercultural Education and Training](#) (Διαπολιτισμική Αγωγή και Εκπαίδευση) 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 effective communication by providing education through the provision of enhanced and diversified Greek language learning programs.

Thus, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth offers a website dedicated solely on Intercultural Education and Training. The website targets school teachers and offers educational material in order to enable them to respond more effectively to migrant students' needs studying in public schools. The provided material includes books in other languages, guideline books and activity books for pupils, which can foster intercultural awareness. Also, professionals are encouraged to share good practices with other stakeholders, aiming at creating a wider school community.

The website remains constantly available to teachers and its core aim is a democratic school which promotes intercultural awareness in the school environment and minimize social exclusion. The outcome would be the creation of means equal opportunities for access, participation, success, respecting the diversity and multiculturalism of the student population and their individual needs. The overall vision is a school system that fully recognizes and accepts diversity, pluralism (cultural, linguistic, religious) and multiple intelligence. In addition to that, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth encourage the development of inter-cultural activities and programs within the frame of school activities. At the same time, the Youth Board of Cyprus which runs under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth encourages young people and organised groups to take action enhancing intercultural awareness and respect through its main funding programme, the «[Youth Initiatives Programme](#)». The Programme gives incentives to young people to develop an active role in cultural, sport, political and social activities in Cyprus. It aims at encouraging non-formal learning and active citizenship through volunteerism. One of the fields it covers under «Social Intervention Action» is «Social Discriminations». The objective of the field is to promote social cohesion, acceptance, tolerance, diversity, respect for human rights, as well as in fighting discrimination in general.

### Young people's rights

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

1. The activities of the [Office of the Commissioner for Children's Rights](#) (Επίτροπος Προστασίας των Δικαιωμάτων του Παιδιού): 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 so that the society will be mobilized and safeguard in practice children's rights in the family, the school, the wider community and the society in general. In order to achieve the above aims, the Commissioner visits and discusses with children in schools, child care institutions, youth centres, etc. Also, additional information regarding children's rights are provided through the Commissioner's webpage, official publications, focused seminars, etc. The main target groups addressed are children (until the age of 18 years old), as well as the wider society.



2. [No hate speech movement](#): This is an online youth campaign of the Council of Europe for human rights aiming at reducing the levels of acceptance of hate speech and developing online youth participation and citizenship, taking into account available resources offered by e-governance. Youth Board of Cyprus is the official representative of the Republic of Cyprus in this campaign. The main target group is young people.
3. The [National Human Rights Institution](#) of the [Office of the Commissioner of Administration and Human Rights](#) (Ombudsman) ([Επίτροπος Διοικήσεως & Προστασίας Ανθρωπίνων Δικαιωμάτων](#)). The National Human Rights Institution takes action when violation or inadequate protection of human rights occurs or when it is deemed necessary to promote a culture of respect for the rights of vulnerable groups of population to the wider society. Within the framework of its competencies, the National Human Rights Institution can take the following actions:
  - Investigate – either on its own initiative or following a complaint – any case that violate, restrict or adversely affect the human rights of individuals; each case concludes to a report and recommendations.
  - Meet and deliberate regularly with non-Governmental Organizations, human rights advocates and other concerned groups.
  - Participate and play an active role in meetings and other events organized by European, National and International human rights groups.
  - Take any other action to promote and reinforce the care and respect for human rights.
4. [“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 recording 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 group is school students.

#### 5. The [“AWARE”](#) campaign

This campaign is co-funded by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Republic of Cyprus, with the contracting authority of the European Funds Unit of the Ministry of Interior. The campaign seeks to highlight the lives of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Cyprus.

The goal is to get to know each other. With knowledge, information, contact, interaction, respect for identity and diversity, the campaign supports the efforts of the Cypriot state to realize their rights without discrimination. It also supports the effort to smoothly integrate into the host society within the broader European Union policy. The Aware campaign includes systematic and multi-level activities such as:

- Promotion of public debate through the media (news, articles, analyzes, reports)

- Cooperation through synergies with stakeholders

- Dissemination of information through social media
- Illustration the actual data, about the rights and obligations
- Organization of seminars and experiential workshops, conferences, events and informative days
- Provision of experiential experiences with audiovisual productions
- Establishment of a network of co-operation with organizations, associations and journalists.

#### 6. LifeStories

The initiative #LifeStories was implemented in 2020 for a second consecutive year under the European Erasmus+ framework, which is directed by the Youth Board of Cyprus. LifeStories aims to share good initiatives and best practices to youth in order to energise them to create similar initiatives in their own communities, based on social solidarity and communal well-being.

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

The Ministry of Justice and Public Order of Cyprus an announcement on 11/03/2016 stated that Cyprus has adopted a National Strategy for dealing with Terrorism, ([National Counterterrorism Strategy – Εθνική Στρατηγική για την Αντιμετώπιση της Τρομοκρατίας](#)), 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.

In addition, the Cyprus Police, operates the [Counter Office Terrorism](#) under Crime Combating Department. One of the basic responsibilities of the Office is to contribute to the [Radicalisation Awareness Network](#). Similar to this, the Cyprus Police released the Radicalization and Terrorism – a manual for police officers, which helps them track and prevent radicalization.

## **4.6 Access to quality services**

### **Housing**

Since May 2019, Cyprus has a new Housing Policy Framework ([Νέο Πλαίσιο Στεγαστικής Πολιτικής](#)). This policy framework is run by the [Ministry of Interior](#) together with the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#), the Housing Finance Corporation ([Οργανισμός Χρηματοδότησεως Στέγης](#)) and the [Cyprus Land Development Corporation](#) ([Κυπριακός Οργανισμός Αναπτύξεως Γης](#)). The policy includes financial support (from €20.000 to €65.000) in order to buy, build or renovate a house directed at single persons, couples, families, single parent families, people with disabilities, low-income people/families and displaced people.

In addition, the policy offers financial support for the monthly rent of the displaced people and the people who are recipients of the Guaranteed Minimum Income.

### **Social services**

The [Social Welfare Services](#) ([Υπηρεσίες Κοινωνικής Ευμερίας](#)) of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance offer a number of State Institutions which provide social services to the whole population, including young people. More specifically, state Institutions provide shelter, protection and care to children, the elderly and the disabled as their permanent home or as a place to stay for a few hours during the day. Below the main institutions are presented:



- Nicosia Youth Hostel (boys): The Nicosia Youth Hostel operates since 1957. It accommodates boys between 13 – 21 years of age, who can not stay elsewhere due to various reasons.
- Youth Hostel for teenage girls: The Youth Hostel for teenage girls started its operation on 3.3.1998. It is the only pan Cyprian State Institution that provides care and protection to teenage girls who can not stay elsewhere due to various reasons.
- Special State Institution for teenagers: Since November 1997, the Larnaca Youth Hostel has been refurbished upgraded and converted to the Special State Institution for teenagers. It accommodates teenagers who can not live elsewhere.
- "[The Children's House](#)": Since January 2018, "The Children's House" provides a range of services to children who have been victims of sexual abuse and exploitation under the one roof. The Children's House seeks to serve justice in a child-friendly manner while ensuring children's safety, security, protection and well-being through a multidisciplinary approach. The management and operation of "The Children's House" is entrusted to the "[Hope For Children](#)" CRC Policy Center by the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Insurance, and the overall oversight of the Ombudsman is carried out by the Social Welfare Services in co-operation with competent services. The Children's House operates with the direct and systematic cooperation of the Cyprus Police, the Social Welfare Services, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth. Also, the same organization runs a Foster Care program, through which foster families are linked to children and/or youth which are looking for a safe family environment.

## 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](#). The Help Line and the e-counseling are offered by the Youth Board of Cyprus. The Help Line was introduced in 1990 and it offers its services up to now. It is the first Help Line to operate in Cyprus. The Help Line and the e-counseling service 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 others. The Help Line and the e-counseling service 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, and
  - 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, and
  - 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 (e.g. 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 \(Υπουργείο Υγείας\)](#). Health visitors, among others offer School Health Services. Currently the following Health Visitors’ Services are available in Cyprus:
    - Maternity and Child Health Care clinics
    - School Health Care Services
    - Vaccinations and Prevention of Communicable Diseases
    - Health Education
    - Epidemiological Studies
    - Services for parents and pregnant women

The role of the Health Visitor at school can be summarized to the following:

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

Health education is handled by the Health visitors during their daily contacts with students or other school personnel and via applied health education programs, which aim at giving knowledge and/or promoting the adaptation of healthy behavior or even changing an unhealthy behavior. 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 \(Φοιτητική Χορηγία\)](#) or [Allowances \(Φοιτητικά Επιδόματα\)](#) 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, Culture, Sport and Youth.

2. [Family benefits](#). Family benefits of the Republic of Cyprus 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 ([Ελάχιστο Εγγυημένο Εισόδημα](#)). 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 are 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 conditions should be fulfilled.
  - Asset conditions: The recipient's assets should not exceed a certain amount of money.
5. The Unemployment Benefit ([Επίδομα Ανεργίας](#)) is provided to insured employees or optionally insured persons who are employed under any Cypriot employer and are aged between 16 and 63 years old. The benefit is provided for a period of 156 dates and various requirements apply (e.g. days of insured employment, etc.).

### 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

### 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 “Youth Initiatives Project” for 2021 was €844.805 ([Youth Board of Cyprus](#)).

Youth work takes place in many different forms and settings by various organisations, the majority of which are NGOs. There are numerous NGOs in Youth Work. Information could be found in the following websites: 1) [Erasmus+ CY](#), and 2) [Erasmus+ Project Results](#).

In addition, reference has to be made to some EU-funded projects, which aimed at social inclusion of youth by empowering youth workers. In first place, the “[VR for Autists – by Autists](#)” project was a project, which focused on identifying 10 everyday situations where autists between the ages of 15-25 struggle and identify if it is possible to develop VR training simulations for practicing those situations. The project was implemented under the Erasmus+ scheme. Also, the “[Changing YOUTHstories](#)” project aimed to foster personal growth, to increase social inclusion and to facilitate professional insertion of young people coming from vulnerable groups, by designing and piloting a framework for case-based diagnosis and multimodal intervention. Finally, the “[Game Changing](#)” project aims to link the “worlds” of youth work and football, so as to foster constructive and mutually beneficial cooperation between them, with a specific interest in supporting youth participation, social inclusion and women’s empowerment.

## 4.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

There are no forthcoming policy developments.

National Youth Strategy of Cyprus (2017-22) is getting closer to its finalization. The National Youth Strategy did not undergo any revisions. The preparations for drafting a new Strategy for 2023-2030 have started taking place.

The [National Programme for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund](#) (AMIF) ([Εθνικό Πρόγραμμα Ταμείου Ασύλου, Μετανάστευσης και Ένταξης](#)) had a time frame between 2014-2020. The new programme for the period 2021-2027 is currently under review by the responsible authority and its launch is expected during 2021.

### Ongoing debates

There are not any ongoing debates in the public or political sphere.

## 5. PARTICIPATION

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There is not a standalone strategy targeting youth participation in the country, although the topic is underpinned in the [National Youth Strategy](#), as one of the eight thematic areas. The number and structure of youth representation bodies in the country underlines that youth participation becomes gradually a priority. A highlight is the existence of legal provisions in Youth Board’s Law on youth consultation. However, 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. Governmental authorities and especially the

[Youth Board of Cyprus](#), as the competent public body for youth policy affairs, 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 2023. Ministers, who are appointed by the President, may not be members of the parliament. In the Republic of Cyprus currently there are 11 Ministries and 3 Deputy Ministries. These are:

- Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment
- Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry
- Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works
- Ministry of Defence
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth
- 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
- Deputy Ministry of Shipping
- Deputy Ministry of Tourism
- Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy

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. On December 6, 2019, the House of Representatives, voted unanimously in law the amendment of the age limit for claiming a parliamentary seat, from 26 years to 22 (complete the age of 21). This regulation gave to youngest people the opportunity to have an active role and say in the political events of the place and strengthened their participation in the public.

## 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 [announcements](#) of the Ministry, in the [2021 Parliamentary](#) elections, the overall turnout was 65,72%, while in the previous Parliamentary elections of 2016 was 66,74%. According to the [third Youth Barometer](#), 61% of young people aged 18-35 reported that they voted in the last Parliamentary elections of 2021 but as mentioned above, there is no official data on the exact turnout of the youth population. 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. In the 2019 European elections, the overall turnout was 44,99%. 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 the age of 21. According to the [Local elections law](#), any candidate should have completed 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 2016 parliamentary elections 75 young people were candidates, 5 of which were elected. In the most recent Local Elections (2016) young people were the 21.1% of the candidates. Eventually, 19.4% of the people elected were young people. In the European elections 2014, young people were the 8.2% of the candidates and none of them was elected. In the last parliamentary elections of 2021, 5 out of 56 people elected (9%) fell within the age range 21-35 at the time of their election.

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

## 5.3 Youth representation bodies

The youth representation bodies in Cyprus are:

### Youth parliament

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

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 defence 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** ([Η Βουλή των Εφήβων](#))

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 programme is addressed to students of grades A and B of Lyceum (Upper Secondary Education) of the schools of Greece, Cyprus, and Greek diaspora. 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 21st 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 2020-2021 "Youth Parliament", one of the main topics under discussion was the environment in relation to education, culture, new technologies, mobility and social discrimination. 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"** ([Η Βουλή των Νέων Αντιπροσώπων](#))

The House of Young Representatives is an annual 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 [initiative's 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 discusses 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 programme is funded by the Youth Board of Cyprus.

## **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 the Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC). There are 28 Municipal and 10 Community Youth Councils established . The role of the YBC is to support and help the Municipal/Community 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, General Treasurer, and seven 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, the annual membership fees which vary for each member-organization and funding from the Youth Board of Cyprus. 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, Culture, Sports and Youth](#). 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 receives funding from the Youth Board of Cyprus.

## **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:

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 Youth Board's 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, Culture, Sports & Youth - 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 addition, Youth Board of Cyprus, in the framework of the implementation of the National Youth Strategy, carries out consultations with youth people, in order to ensure their participation in matters that directly concern them. More information on the Strategy and the consultations can be found in [section 1.3](#).

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.

The Municipal/Community Youth Councils is another mechanism of consultation, through which young people are consulted on local level (advise [section 5.3](#) for further information on the Municipal/Community Youth Councils).

## **Actors**

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

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 which is, the 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.

Regarding the Municipal/Community Youth Councils, the main actors are mentioned in the [section 5.3](#).

### **Information on the extent of youth participation**

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

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.

### **Outcomes**

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 Youth Strategy of Cyprus](#).

The type of input requested from the Municipal/Community 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.

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

The biggest top-level and 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 regularly 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 take place under the auspices of the President of the Republic of Cyprus. The aim of the Conference is to hear young people's thoughts, views, expectations and concerns about tomorrow and bring together both young people and state officials/stakeholders. 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.

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 a standalone national strategy on youth participation in Cyprus however, the **National Youth Strategy 2017-2022** ([Εθνική Στρατηγική Νεολαίας](#)) includes a whole action field dedicated to youth participation. More information on the Strategy can be found in [section 1.3](#).

#### 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

The Youth Board of Cyprus is responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the National Youth Strategy. However, all public services dealing with youth are responsible for implementing actions under the National Youth Strategy according to their field of competence. For more details on the mechanism of the Strategy can be found in [Chapter 1](#).

#### Revisions/Updates

There has not been any revision of the Strategy yet.

## 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"](#). It's 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 administered by the Youth Board of Cyprus and provides funding to activities organised by young people and youth organisations. The source of Youth Initiatives Project is solely national and it is part of the Youth Board's budget.

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.

Due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the program ["ReCOVer20"](#) was announced and implemented within 2020 by the Youth Board of Cyprus. The program provides funding for pilot actions or programs / activities aimed at addressing the local effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the sense of solidarity and practical support to individuals, groups of individuals and communities that have affected by the pandemic crisis. The main goal of the Program is to mobilize young people themselves to plan and implement actions in the fields of culture, prevention, information, dealing with psychosocial and other



problems that arose through the pandemic. In total, 86 applications were funded under this scheme, with the grant amounting to €266,151 according to the [2020 infographics](#) published by the [Youth Board](#).

### **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 (1st, 2nd and 3rd class of upper secondary education) and History (2nd and 3rd 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 behaviours 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.

Also, The [CitiZEN! Program](#) of the Network of Corporate Schools UNESCO Cyprus, was presented on 4/10/19, at the Laniteio Lyceum in Limassol, for the school year 2019-2020. The main aim of the program is to provide students with the necessary supplies both for their personal development and for the cultivation of the skills required so that they, as integrated personalities and active citizens, can bring about positive changes in the society in which they live.

Moreover, within the framework of the program, a training seminar was organized for Primary and Secondary General Education teachers who participate in the Network of Corporate Schools of UNESCO Cyprus (ASPnet), on "Sustainable Cities-Sustainable Communities". The seminar took place on 28/11/2019, at Athalassa Environmental Education Center in Nicosia. The purpose of the seminar was to familiarize teachers with the concept of sustainable cities and communities and to emergence the role of active citizenship to improve the quality of life in cities. The 43rd Pancyprian Symposium did not take place due to the pandemic and was postponed for next school year 2020-2021.

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

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

The [“Regulations for the operation of upper secondary schools”](#) 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**

The [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) and the [National Betting Authority](#) launched in 2020 the “[Young Cities](#)” program. Young Cities is a holistic approach that aims to empower young men and women to become agents of positive change in their city. The aim of the program is to create youth-friendly cities, through an innovative and highly participatory process, which focuses on the creativity and dynamism of young people. The first Young Cities programme run with the participation of the Municipalities of Athienou, Aglantzia and Deryneia participate.

Following the success of the programme and the enthusiastic response of young people, the two organizing bodies, the Youth Board of Cyprus and the National Betting Authority, decided to re-launch the programme in 2021. The communities that participate in the second phase of the programme are the community of Agios Theodoros in the province of Larnaka, the community of Pachna in the province of Limassol and the community of Evrychou in the province of Nicosia.

### **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 “[Teacher’s manual for cultivating volunteering and active citizenship in schools](#)” supports the educators training to the development of social and civic competences. 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**

The main public authority responsible for disseminating information about democratic rights and democratic values for young people is the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#). Young people can have access to information via the [Youth Information Centres](#) and their social media pages, as well as the [European Youth Portal](#) of the European Commission which is powered by [Eurodesk](#).

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

The Youth Board of Cyprus encourages young people to participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of the National Youth Strategy through e-consultation processes that take place via the platform [Opin](#). The platform resulted from a European-wide research project, the EUth that was funded by the European Commission (Horizon 2020). Eleven project partners from eight different countries have developed an open and easy-to-use online participation platform along with different mobile tools and apps for smartphones and tablets. This way, young people can get involved whenever and wherever they wish with minimum effort. The aim of the project and thus the platform, is to get more young people involved in political decision-making and increase youth trust in political institutions.

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

## 5.10 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

The discussions on the drafting of the National Youth Strategy 2023-2030 have been initiated. The outcomes of the 4th National Youth Conference, which has been scheduled for April 2022, will serve as the basis for the priorities of the new National Strategy for Youth, including participation.

### Ongoing debates

There are not any ongoing debates concerning the field.

## 6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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Education in Cyprus is compulsory up to the age of 15 and free of charge. The country remains below the EU average (10.20 %) and the Europe 2020 national target of 10 % regarding early school leaving and there are several initiatives to downsize the phenomenon (see [section 6.3](#)).

The [National Youth Strategy 2017-2022](#) is a very important policy paper on youth related topics which includes measures and policies in relation to Education and Training, validation of non-formal education, social inclusion of young people to education and many more (see [section 6.4](#) and [section 6.5](#)). There are also several ongoing initiatives/programmes to boost innovation skills and media literacy of young people both on formal and non-formal settings, but there is not a specific strategy/action plan for these topics ([section 6.7](#) and [section 6.8](#)).

## 6.1 General context

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

Based on the [Education and Training Monitor 2021](#) Report for Cyprus, since 2015, early school leaving rates have increased, largely due to more foreign-born young people leaving school early. In 2020, 11.5% of 18-24 year-olds had not completed upper secondary education, compared to 9.2% in 2019 (an increase of 2.3 pps) and above the EU average of 9.9% and the EU-level target (<9% by 2030). The proportion of early leavers from education and training among foreign-born young people in particular continues to increase: 26.8% in 2020 compared to 23.3% in 2019. The proportion of native-born early school leavers has remained almost at the same level as the previous year, 4.9% in 2020 (4.8% in 2019). In addition, the Report states that the proportion of boys leaving education early (15%) is considerably higher than that of girls (8.4%). In Cyprus, the highest proportion of early leavers was reported in rural areas (12.4%).

Concerning students' mobility, the [Cyprus Statistical Service](#) has published on 31/03/2021 that 25 016 mobile Cypriot students were studying in other European countries during the academic year 2017/2018. In addition, 4 332 mobile Cypriot graduates have graduated from other European countries in 2018. No data available for students studying or graduating from countries outside European Union.

In addition, the official data ([Στοιχεία για τα προγράμματα και τις υπηρεσίες του Οργανισμού Νεολαίας για το 2020](#)), provided by the Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC), reported that 4.056 young people participated in the Erasmus+ Youth programme in 2020, out of which 2.178 young people participated in trainings for youth workers and youth exchanges. Moreover, based on similar national statistics of the YBC ([Στοιχεία για το πρόγραμμα Erasmus+: Νεολαία](#)), for the period 2014-2018, 21 948 young people participated in the various activities of the Erasmus+ programme, of which 8 279 participated in youth mobilities and trainings for youth workers, 9 756 participated in transnational cooperation, 3 316 participated in the process of structured dialogue for youth and 597 participated in volunteering activities.

Based on the [Education and Training Monitor 2019 Cyprus Report](#) and the [Education and Training Monitor 2020 Cyprus Report](#), the main challenges in young people's participation in education and training in Cyprus are:

- Tertiary education attainment has risen further, but underutilisation of skills remains a challenge given the specific features of the Cypriot labour market. Measures have been taken to upgrade vocational education and training and adult learning, but the attractiveness of both sectors and participation in them remain low.
- Several initiatives in vocational education and training (VET) aim to improve labour market links, yet participation in upper secondary VET remains low.
- Almost 2 out of 3 students (58.9%) from the lowest socio-economic quartile are low achievers in reading (EU average: 36.4%). In the top socio-economic quartile, 29.7% are low achievers, the highest share in the EU (where the average is 9.5%). These findings underline the need for policies that tackle underachievement across the socio-economic spectrum while maintaining and strengthening specific support for disadvantaged groups. Digital skills need to be further strengthened. Individuals with above-basic digital skills are fewer in Cyprus (22%) than across the EU (36%).
- Digital education is clearly a policy focus, but implementation needs to be improved. Distance learning highlighted several gaps.
- No policy guidance exists for providing post-secondary education for young migrant adults, even though the proportion of recently arrived refugees aged 18-34 is especially high at 62%, in 2018.

The Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MOECSY) and the Youth Board of Cyprus are in the process of developing a mechanism for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (including volunteerism and youth work). For more information, please read the forthcoming policy developments under [section 6.10](#).

Last, a major topic in the Cyprus Education is the integration of children with a migrant background. The [2019 Annual Report](#) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth mentions that the Ministry has recently developed and implemented an upgraded educational policy pertaining to Multicultural Education, aiming at the smooth integration of pupils with migrant background into the educational system of Cyprus. For more information, please consult [section 6.6](#).

## Organisation of the education and training system

The [Education system in Cyprus](#) consists of the following stages:

**Pre-Primary education** is compulsory for all children between 4 8/12 – 5 8/12 years old. Children are also accepted over the age of 3.

**Primary Education** is compulsory for all children over the age of 5 8/12 and has a duration of 6 years.

**Secondary Education** offers two three-year cycles of education – Gymnasio (lower secondary education which is mandatory) and Lykeio (upper secondary general education which is optional) – to pupils between the ages of 12 and 18. The curriculum includes core lessons, interdisciplinary subjects and a variety of extracurricular activities. Education is compulsory up to the age of 15 and free of charge for both cycles. Upon completion of Lykeio, pupils receive a school leaving certificate (apolyterion), providing access to Institutions of Higher and Tertiary Education in Cyprus or abroad.

Instead of the Lykeio, pupils may choose to attend Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education.

**Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education** offers a wide range of technical and vocational initial training and lifelong training programmes to eligible gymnasium leavers and adults. Formal mainstream upper secondary initial technical and vocational education programmes are offered at technical schools free of charge. They are offered in two directions, the theoretical and the practical direction. Upon completion of secondary technical and vocational education, pupils receive a school leaving certificate (apolyterion), which is equivalent to that awarded by lykeio, providing access to the world of work or to Institutions of Higher and Tertiary Education in Cyprus or abroad.

**Post- secondary non-tertiary education** is offered to graduates of secondary education (18+ years old) at the Post- Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training.

**Adult Education.** The institution of [Adult Education Centres](#) (AEC) was initially established in 1952, mainly in rural areas. Today it operates in all non-occupied areas of the Republic of Cyprus, offering learning opportunities for further personal, professional and social development to thousands of adults aged 15 and over. The AEC offer a variety of interdisciplinary courses, which focus mainly on the teaching of foreign languages, arts and crafts, cultural programmes, health, and other issues of general interest, as well as on the teaching of professional and vocational skills. Furthermore, every year the AEC organise free of charge learning activities for various target groups, such as people with literacy difficulties, people with special needs, enclaved Cypriots, prisoners, soldiers, mentally ill and elderly people. They also offer free of charge Greek language courses to the children of repatriated Cypriots, political refugees, and Turkish Cypriots. Moreover, Turkish language courses are offered free of charge to Greek Cypriots.

For more information about the Cypriot educational system, please visit the [Eurydice website](#) or read the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth "[A Guide To Education in Cyprus](#)" (which is published in several languages) or the Ministry's [2020 Annual Report](#).

## Main concepts

The definition of Special Need Education (SNE) in Cyprus has been specified in the Special Education Law 113(1) of 1999 ([Περί Αγωγής και Εκπαίδευσης Παιδιών με Ειδικές Ανάγκες Νόμος του 1999](#)) and in its relevant updated versions ([Ο περί Αγωγής και Εκπαίδευσης Παιδιών με Ειδικές Ανάγκες \(Τροποποιητικός\) Νόμος του 2001, 2014 και 2020](#)).

In addition, there is no official definition of non-formal education in Cyprus. However, the Council of Europe's [definition](#) in the Recommendation CM/Rec(2017)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on youth work, is used.

## 6.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

According to the World of Bank 2014 Report "[Analysis of the Function and Structure of the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus](#)", education governance in Cyprus is largely centralized with only a limited amount of decentralization. The main authorities responsible for education are the [Council of Ministers](#), the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#) (MOECSY), the Educational Service Commission (ESC) ([Επιτροπή Εκπαιδευτικής Υπηρεσίας](#)), and the Local school boards ([Σχολικές Εφορίες](#)).

The Council of Ministers sets the educational policy in Cyprus. The overall responsibility for policy implementation, educational planning and service delivery rests with the MOECSY, except for some cases. The ESC manages the appointment, promotion, secondment, and retirement of educators as well as the appointment of head teachers and inspectors.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and Culture is organized into 14 departments. The most important structures that are under the Ministry or work closely with it are:

- The [Department of Primary Education](#) administers pre-primary and primary education.
- The [Department of Secondary General Education](#) administers general secondary education.
- The [Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education](#) has the responsibility of technical and vocational education.
- The [Higher Education Department](#) administers tertiary and higher education.
- The [Cyprus Pedagogical Institute](#) is responsible for the in-service training of teachers and for curriculum support.
- The [Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation](#) is responsible for the promotion and establishment of research in education related issues (educational policy, curricula, textbooks, training).

For more information, you can also visit the relevant Eurydice website under the section [Cyprus Education Organisation and Governance](#).

In addition, the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) (YBC) is an important entity regarding the identification and promotion of youth policies in the field of Education and Training as well as other youth related issues. The YBC, as an advisory body, submits through the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth to the Council of Ministers suggestions regarding the development of a comprehensive and specialized youth policy for the promotion of the progress and prosperity of all young people in Cyprus and for providing opportunities to all young people.

As regards to regional/local authorities, Cyprus is divided into six administrative districts, Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Ammochostos, Pafos and Kyrenia. District authorities have no

responsibility either in policymaking in education, educational planning or the establishment and operation of schools. However, some administrative authority is exercised at local level by the Local School Boards which are established in municipalities, villages or neighbouring communities where schools operate. Local school boards are public entities charged with some financial management and infrastructure management of school buildings, including recruitment and management of teacher assistants to help with special needs children, hiring school support staff (such as cleaners and guards), purchasing and delivering stationery, distributing learning materials, and liaising with the Ministry's Technical Services for larger repairs and school maintenance. Therefore, they act as an intermediary administrative and supply station between the Ministry and the schools.

For more information, please visit the Eurydice website under the section [Administration and Governance at Local and/or Institutional Level](#) in Cyprus.

The Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) ([Αρχή Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού](#)) plays also an important role in vocational training not only for young people, but for the general population in Cyprus. The HRDA is a semi-government organisation whose mission is to create the necessary prerequisites for the planned and systematic training and development of the human resources of Cyprus. For more information, please read the [2020 Annual Report](#) of the organisation.

Concerning the role of non-public actors in the field of education and training in Cyprus, the trade unions are powerful and have an active role in the development and implementation of policies. They always participate in negotiations about teachers' working conditions, remuneration, evaluation and any kind of educational reform at all levels. There are three teachers' unions in Cyprus that are key stakeholders in education:

- POED – Pancyprian Greek Teachers Organisation ([Παγκύπρια Οργάνωση Ελλήνων Δασκάλων](#)) is the union for pre-primary and primary teachers.
- OELMEK – Association of Greek Secondary Education Teachers ([Οργάνωση Ελλήνων Λειτουργών Μέσης Εκπαίδευσης Κύπρου](#)) is the union for secondary general teachers.
- OLTEK – Association of Teachers of Technical Education in Cyprus ([Οργάνωση Λειτουργών Τεχνικής Εκπαίδευσης Κύπρου](#)) is the union for secondary technical and vocational education teachers.
- P.S.E.M – Pancyprian Student Coordination Committee ([Παγκύπρια Συντονιστική Επιτροπή Μαθητών](#)) is the body responsible for safeguarding the rights of school students in Education as well as their representation in decision-making processes. For more info about this actor, please visit the section [5.3 Youth representation bodies](#).

In the field of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education, the relevant Ministry's Department co-operates on European level with [CEDEFOP](#) and the [European Training Foundation](#) (ETF) and on national level with stakeholders and social partners, including:

- The Committee for the Upgrading of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education;
- The [Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation](#);
- Various trade unions

## **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

There is not a specific mechanism of cross-sectorial cooperation between Ministries, Departments, Agencies involved in defining policies and measures on education and training for young people. However, the [2020 Annual Report](#) of the MOECSY states that the European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Office (GEDY) promotes the implementation of the EU and International policies in Cyprus in line with national priorities through coordination of educational committees, technical working groups and other groups of experts. It collaborates closely with all the Departments of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, the Cyprus Sports Organization, the Youth



Board of Cyprus, and other Governmental Departments and non-governmental organisations, the Permanent Representation of Cyprus in Brussels, Strasbourg, Geneva and elsewhere, and with the embassies of the Republic of Cyprus abroad.

As for the field of youth, in the [National Youth Strategy 2017-2022](#), there is an action field devoted in Education and Training where the coordination of youth priorities and initiatives of all public bodies will be under the responsibility of the Youth Board of Cyprus. The cross-sectoral cooperation that takes places in the frame of the National Youth Strategy is described in Section [1.4 Youth policy decision-making](#).

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

### National strategy

There is no special national strategy tackling ELET in Cyprus. However, a special mention of the topic was made in the [National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020](#) of the Republic of Cyprus. The National LLL Strategy was developed by the [Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development](#) (DG EPCD) in cooperation with the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#) (MOECSY), the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) (MLWSI), the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) ([Αρχή Ανάπτυξης Ανθρώπινου Δυναμικού](#)) and the [Cyprus Productivity Centre](#) (CPC) and was approved by the [Council of Ministers](#) in June 2014. The Strategy targets all age groups of the Cypriot population.

More specifically, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> priority axis of the Strategy named "Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training", it is stated, among others, that "*the measures to be implemented under this axis will aim, inter alia, to ensure the acquisition of basic skills and competencies by all citizens and reducing early school leaving*". In addition, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> priority axis, there is also a reference to the conduct of surveys and studies for i) evaluating the effectiveness of actions related to early school leaving (ESL), and for ii) identifying positive actions related to ESL in order to upgrade and expand them to more schools.

The responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the LLL Strategy is delegated to: a) the National LLL Committee which has an enlarged composition, comprised of the services and organizations with major involvement in the provision of LLL and the social partners, and b) the Technical LLL Committee which assists the National LLL Committee and is comprised of the representatives of the DG EPCD, the MOECSY, the MLWSI, the CPC and the HRDA.

In the 2014 Eurydice report "[Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe:- Strategies, Policies and Measures](#)" (see pp. 174-175), a number of other measures and individual policies are also presented and concern different levels of education (e.g. pre-primary, VET, etc.).

Evaluation and indicators of the implementation of the specific measure on ELET of the LLL Strategy is available in the following section.

### Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

The most important initiative implemented at top-level for preventing early school leaving is the "Activities of School and Social Inclusion (DRA.S.E.)" ([Δράσεις Σχολικής και Κοινωνικής Ένταξης](#)). The project aims to support, expand and improve the outcomes of the previous programme against "[Early School Leaving, School Failure and Delinquency in Zones of Educational Priority](#)" (p. 514), which was implemented during the 2007-2013 programming period. Based on the [2020 Annual Report](#) of the MOECSY for the school year 2019/2020, the project ran in 102 school units and 15% of the total pupil population has been benefited by actions provided through the project. It is implemented in all levels of education, from pre-primary and primary to lower and upper-secondary education as well

as technical schools. The project is 85 % funded by the European Social Fund and it will be into force from 2014 until 2023.

- In the DRA.S.E. project, the following programme actions are being implemented, as they were described in the [Ministry's 2020 Annual Report](#). Morning and afternoon free programmes to reinforce learning and creativity of pupils;
- Free programmes to reinforce learning in Greek language for parents and guardians;
- Additional psychosocial support services by clinical and consulting psychologists through the establishment and operation of Information and Psychosocial Support Centres:
  - Individual support for pupils and parents / guardians
  - Experiential workshops for groups of pupils, teachers and parents / guardians.
- Supply of supportive equipment and educational materials to schools;
- Continuous training and professional development programmes to involved teachers;
- Management Services from Psychosocial Support Centres and Afternoon Programmes.

Based on the ongoing monitoring of the indicators of the DRA.S.E. programme, the programme has already met its objective, which was to support 15% of the total pupil population in Cyprus. The programme will be monitored annually until its expected completion by the end of 2023.

In addition, the upgraded educational policy related to Multicultural Education supports both the inclusion of all youngsters and contributes, in the long-term, to the prevention of early school leaving. The policy aims particularly at the smooth integration of pupils with migrant background into the Cypriot educational system, through a variety of actions, such as intensive teaching of the Greek Language in secondary education public schools, teachers' training, etc. For more information, please read the [section 6.6](#).

As for ELVET-specific measures, there is not a specific strategy, but the most important measures that are still in progress are mentioned in the [Eurydice report of 2014](#) (p. 174). Indicatively, the most important are:

- The [New Modern Apprenticeship](#) (NMA) Programme which started its operation in the school year 2012/2013. The NMA provides an alternative pathway for education, training and development for young people who drop out from the formal education system and is geared towards meeting the needs of the labour market. The NMA embraces young people between 14 and 21 years of age at two apprenticeship levels (preparatory and core). Participation is not compulsory and is free of charge.
- The Evening Technical Schools ([Εσπερινά Σχολεία](#)) are second chance schools that have been established to promote participation in secondary technical and vocational education and to combat early leaving. The Evening Technical schools target any person above 18 years old who, for any reason, has dropout school.

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

There is no policy, programme, project and initiative – either directly organised or funded – by top level authorities aiming at preventing and reducing ELET through non-formal and informal learning.

However, the first 3-year Action Plan for the implementation of the [National Youth Strategy 2017-2022](#) states that non-formal educational activities, workshops, seminars and classes (such as theatre, sports and arts) are offered to children and teenagers of migrant background in the Reception and Accommodation Centers for Applicants of International Protection so as to support their social skills and educational background. Based on the evaluation of the first Action Plan 2017-2019 of the National Youth Strategy (NYS), the indicator of this action was met (at least 113 participants in the educational

activities). However, the action will not last until the second phase of the NYS (2020-2022).

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

In regards to the existence of policies/programmes/projects/initiatives supporting multi-agency partnerships between the main categories of professionals working to address early leaving at school and community level, the [Eurydice report of 2014](#) (p. 174) mentions that in Cyprus “the policy areas of employment, social affairs and health are involved in the cooperation on tackling early leaving, but cooperation mechanisms have not yet been established. Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established and involve both psychologists and guidance specialists. School heads, teachers, social workers, therapists, speech and language specialists, as well as other necessary specialised staff to help students with specific problems may also be associated within projects. Youth workers may also be involved”.

The [2019 Annual Report](#) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MOECSY) also mentions that the [Coordinating Committee for Health Education and Citizenship \(Συντονιστική Επιτροπή Αγωγής Υγείας και Πολιτότητας\)](#) undertakes the coordination of all health and citizenship-related policies, actions and programmes in collaboration with all departments and other responsible units of the Ministry that promote the physical, mental and social well-being of students, such as the DRA.S.E. Programme. The Committee also coordinates the collaboration with other external bodies and actors, such as the [Cyprus National Addictions Authority](#), the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) as well as the [Ministry of Health](#).

Official monitoring reports and evaluations undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the measures implemented and the level of cooperation between stakeholders, have not been published by the MOECSY.

In an attempt to safeguard young people’s continuous participation in education and training, the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#) also launched between 2014-2017 the [National Action Plan for Youth Employment](#) which implements the Youth Guarantee Recommendation in Cyprus. It endorses a wide range of actions that aim to reinforce youth employment and activate young people (especially NEETs) as regards available employment schemes, encourage them to register at the [Public Employment Service](#) and provide substantial help in job search, education or training opportunities. Development, monitoring and evaluation is overseen by a cross-sectoral [Working Group](#) which was established for the preparation of the National Action Plan for Youth Employment. This working group includes representatives from all implementing bodies, social partners, and youth organisations.

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

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

There is no official validation system of youth work and non-formal learning in Cyprus, yet. Several of the objectives of the [National Youth Strategy 2017-2022 \(Εθνική στρατηγική για τη νεολαία 2017-2022\)](#) focus on youth work and non-formal and informal learning (NFL).

In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth is co-ordinating the establishment of a validation mechanism on non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus. As this is an ongoing reform, for more information please see [section 6.10](#).

## Information and guidance

Since there is no official validation system of youth work and non-formal learning in Cyprus, there are not any awareness-raising activities by top-level authorities to inform and guide on the topic.

## Quality assurance

There is no existing system of quality assurance of the arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal competences in Cyprus. As this is part of an ongoing reform, for more information please see [section 6.10](#).

## 6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

### Policy framework

According to [EU Mobility Scoreboard - Higher education background Report](#), there is no policy framework that defines and sets guiding principles for cross-border learning mobility in Cyprus. Cross-border learning mobility in Higher Education, but also in all levels of education in Cyprus, takes place mainly through the [Erasmus+ Programme](#) and for this reason, mobilities under this framework follow the Erasmus+ Guide.

In regards to [Initial education and training \(IVET\)](#) mobility policy in Cyprus, the relevant [CEDEFOP website](#) mentions that there is a process for setting up policy targets, but it is limited in coverage and not planned to be expanded. There is a target to involve all technical schools and IVET institutions in Cyprus, in IVET mobility and as many students for long term mobility as possible, but a specific target number has not been set yet.

The responsible national agencies in Cyprus that promote and manage international mobility activities within the Erasmus+ Programme are two. That is, the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes ([Ίδρυμα Διαχείρισης Ευρωπαϊκών Προγραμμάτων Δια Βίου Μάθησης](#)) responsible for funding opportunities in the field of Education and Training and the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#), responsible for opportunities in the field of non-formal learning and youth work.

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

As mentioned above, the main programme for cross-border mobility of students is the [Erasmus+ Programme](#). In both school (primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary) and vocational education as well as higher education, the various mobility opportunities under each sector follow the guidelines, rules and obligations set by the annual Erasmus+ Programme Guide, including aspects of language learning, type of mobility and its respective duration.

As regards information and guidance on cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education, the official [Erasmus+ website](#) in Cyprus is a space for all people in Cyprus to explore all available information about different opportunities and calls on School Education, Vocational Education and Training, Higher Education and Adult Education.

Apart from the Erasmus+ mobility opportunities, there are some additional cross-border mobility programmes in Cyprus. For the years 2019-2021, the programme "Chrisoprasino Fillo" ([Χρυσοπράσινο Φύλλο](#)) runs between the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs ([Υπουργείο Παιδείας και Θρησκευμάτων](#)) and the [Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#). It is a transnational cooperation in the field of environmental education which encourages the cooperation of primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary schools from Cyprus and Greece. Each programme, as well as the partnerships between the Greek and Cypriot Schools, last for two years. In the first year, exchanges of teachers from the partner schools take place while in the second year, exchanges of students take place.

In addition, the [United States Embassy in Cyprus](#) offers a variety of cross-border mobility programmes for students of various educational levels, from upper-secondary to post-doctoral. More specifically:

- The [Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Programme](#) accepts applications for upper secondary school students. The Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellowship is a fully funded intensive short-term exchange programme, created to foster relationships among young Europeans and Americans to build strong linkages and awareness of shared values. The four-week program enables teenagers, ages 16-18, to explore U.S. foreign policy priorities such as youth engagement, support for democracy and civil society, and economic prosperity. The programs are funded by the U.S. Government and provide a full scholarship for participants, which covers visa, travel, lodging, educational materials, ground transportation expenses and travel insurance.
- The [Fulbright Visiting Scholar Programme](#) provides an opportunity for Cypriot doctoral or equivalent degree holders to lecture, conduct advanced research, or pursue a combined program of lecturing and research at U.S. universities or non-academic institutions. The programme provides to its beneficiaries the round-trip airfare, monthly stipend, health insurance and other various allowances. Grants are awarded for one academic semester, a maximum of 4 months.
- The [Fulbright-Schuman Programme](#) is administered by the Commission for Educational Exchange between the United States and Belgium and is jointly financed by the U.S. State Department and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. The program funds graduate and post-graduate study, research, and lecture proposals in the field of US-EU relations, EU policy, or EU institutions for interested American and EU citizens. Cypriot citizens living and working in Cyprus or within the wider EU are eligible to apply. The awards vary from round-trip travel to grants covering all expenses for an academic year.

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

Cross-border mobility of young learners engaged in non-formal education and youth work is not promoted under a unified policy or initiative. The Youth Board of Cyprus organizes several information days per year targeting schools, young people, youth organisations and other beneficiaries interested in participating in the [Erasmus+](#) and the [European Solidarity Corps](#) EU Programmes. The [Youth Information Centres](#) and the [Eurodesk Cyprus](#), administered by the Youth Board, also provide information on mobility opportunities for young learners.

Information about the different mobility opportunities in the context of non-formal learning and youth work are available in the Cyprus official [Erasmus+ website](#) but there is not a specific platform or web portal that gathers all mobility opportunities in the field. The use of the [SALTO-YOUTH platform](#) is very common in Cyprus.

## **Quality assurance**

The only existing system for quality assurance for evaluating cross-border mobility is set under the [Erasmus+ programme](#), both for formal and informal learning.

All cross-border mobility programmes, which are funded under the Erasmus+, are required to provide the National Agency with the participants' feedback through the standard reporting procedures of the Programme. The relevant feedback is provided in the form of the so-called "Participants' Reports", which are filled by the participants after the completion of their mobility activities and they are submitted through the reporting IT tool of the Programme.

As regards evaluation of institutions involved in cross-border mobility programmes, this is mainly based on the information provided through their Final Reports (submitted through the reporting IT Tool of the Programme and including the Participants' Reports) and on



the data gathered during primary checks, implemented by the National Agency on a random sample. These checks can take the form of desk checks, on-the spot checks during implementation of the Action and on-the spot checks after completion of the action. Monitoring visits are complementary to the above and are only conducted whenever necessary.

The ten principles responding to the European Quality Charter for Mobility, which basically consist the guidance for education and training stays abroad, are clearly reflected in the Programme Documentation: The Grant Agreement, the Staff Mobility Agreement for teaching and training, the Learning Agreement and the Quality Commitment. These documents must be signed by all parties involved in a mobility activity, taking place in the context of a cross-border mobility programme. They are signed before the actual mobility takes place and are complementary to the Grant Agreement signed between the beneficiary organisation and the National Agency.

Beneficiary organisations always receive feedback and recommendations on the quality assurance processes they put in place, as a result of the evaluation of their Final Report or the evaluation of evidence provided during primary checks, in the form of official letters. In the case that - after the completion of the Final Report evaluation - the overall management of a project (including quality management) is considered as weak, resulting in low scoring (anything below 50 points out of 100), the National Agency is allowed to reduce the final grant amount, according to pre-defined rules. The main criteria/indicators to assess the overall management, based on the [Guide for experts on quality assessment of Erasmus+ actions](#), are relevance of the project, quality of the project design and implementation, quality of the project team and the cooperation arrangements and impact and dissemination.

## 6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

### Educational support

#### Special Education

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth [2020 Annual Report](#) states that the inclusion of children with special needs is a matter of major policy for the Ministry. Children with special needs are educated in public schools equipped with suitable infrastructure, according to the Laws for Special Education. The majority of children with special educational needs are educated within mainstream classrooms. However, children with severe difficulties are educated in the nine [Special Schools](#), which are staffed with appropriate personnel (teachers for learning, intellectual, functional and adjustment difficulties, psychologists, speech therapists, nurses, physiotherapists and other specialists, as well as auxiliary staff), in order to provide high quality therapy, education and support. Based on the 2020 Annual Report of the Ministry ([Ετήσια Έκθεση 2020](#)), the approved public budget of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth for Special Education in 2020 was €10 139 000 and includes expenses, such as the employment of teaching, therapeutic and auxiliary personnel, training and professional development of staff, the provision of specialised equipment for classrooms and individual children, the modification of buildings to provide accessibility, the transportation of children with special needs to and from school and to out-of-school activities, the running expenses of Special Schools, etc.

A series of seminars regarding special education is being developed to assist all teachers support children with special needs during their classes. All teachers are encouraged to attend courses of professional development ([Προγράμματα – Σεμινάρια](#)) run by [the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute](#). Attendance at in-service seminars is compulsory whilst attendance at local seminars is encouraged. A series of pedagogical discussions - meetings are being held in order to help teachers, counsellors and liaison officers in each school to deal with



pupils with special needs in the best possible way. Educational psychologists, university teachers and other specialists are called to carry out these professional meetings.

As the majority of children with special needs attend mainstream schools, those in the special education schools present the greatest learning difficulties. Hence, the curricula ([Ειδική Εκπαίδευσης – Εκπαιδευτικό Υλικό](#)) of such schools contain a major element of skills development in the areas of self-help and independence skills, social and emotional interaction, recreation and communication as well as vocational training. Where a child is able to follow elements of the mainstream curriculum, this is provided for. The content of the curriculum, the subjects taught, and the period of provision are decided by the individual school. There is no element of compulsory or optional curriculum. A pupil will study what he/she is able to.

For more information regarding Special Education in Cyprus, please visit the relevant section in the [Eurydice website \(Chapter 12\)](#) and the [European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education](#).

### **Support measures for integrating migrant (including refugee) children**

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth has recently developed and implemented an upgraded educational policy pertaining to Multicultural Education, aiming at the smooth integration of pupils with migrant background into the educational system of Cyprus. The Ministry departments of all educational levels along with the Pedagogical Institute have developed an action plan with a variety of targeted actions, through the prism of an intercultural approach, anti-racist education, and the methodology of teaching Greek as a second language. The policy focuses on five priorities which guide actions and programmes in this field: 1. learning the Greek language 2. reception of newly arrived children with a migrant background 3. Teachers' education and continuing professional development 4. collection and analysis of data on the needs of pupils with migrant background 5. an intercultural approach in the new curricula. Based on the 2020 Annual Report of the Ministry, under the 2<sup>nd</sup> priority of the above-mentioned policy, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute supported the creation of school networks in all school districts in Cyprus, in order to organize training and promote cooperation between schools on teaching Greek as a second language. The operation of the Networks began in January 2021 for schools of secondary education, where 61 teachers applied for participating. The design of the meetings was based on a blended learning approach (online and offline meetings) where teachers discuss about issues of intercultural education, bilingualism, etc.

In addition, most refugee children follow general education. Support for their educational integration has come in particular from the DRA.S.E. programme ([Δράσεις Σχολικής και Κοινωνικής Ένταξης](#)) that, among others, aims to support non-Greek speaking families to learn Greek and improve their social skills. For more information about the DRA.S.E. programme, see also [section 6.3](#).

## **Social cohesion and equal opportunities**

### **School subjects - Curriculum**

Topics related to social cohesion and equal opportunities are included in the subject of Home Economics ([Οικιακή Οικονομία](#)) at lower and upper-secondary education level. Based on the Ministry's 2020 Annual Report, activities that took place during the instruction included, among others, the organisation of workshops and activities for pupils regarding topics, such as:

- ways to deal with emotional issues, such as emotions of "anger" and "stress";
- conflict resolution;
- emotional health status and life values, such as responsibility, offer and respect;
- bullying;

- promotion of acceptance;
- management of diversity and multiculturalism.

In addition, the continuing professional development (CPD) seminars ([Προγράμματα – Σεμινάρια](#)) for secondary education teachers offered by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute address issues, such as cultivating empathy, social and emotional intelligence, applying anti-racist policies in schools, human relations and crisis management, human rights education, integration of migrant students in schools, developing empathy skills and respect for diversity, conflict resolution, fighting prejudice and racism while accepting diversity, etc. Specific information about seminars related only to diversity, intercultural education and the anti-racism policy that are organised by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute can be found on the [website](#) of the Institute.

### **Programmes/projects/initiatives**

From the school year 2015/2016, all schools at all levels of education were required to implement the anti-racist policy of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth named "Code of Conduct against Racism and Guide for Managing and Recording Racist Incidents" ([Κώδικας Συμπεριφοράς κατά του Ρατσισμού & Οδηγός Διαχείρισης και Καταγραφής Ρατσιστικών Περιστατικών](#)). Based on the Ministry's 2020 Annual Report, the policy conceptualizes racism in a broad manner, including all sorts of discrimination. It includes definitions of basic concepts which form the theoretical background (e.g., racism, racist incident, discrimination, stereotypes, diversity, etc.), outlines the responsibilities and commitments expected by each member of the school community, and provides the steps to be followed by schools in order to deal with racist incidents in a practical manner. It provides schools and teachers with a detailed plan on how to deal with and prevent racist incidents. The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute conducts several actions (e.g., workshops, conferences, seminars) every school year to support teachers and schools implementing the anti-racist policy. At the same time, the anti-racist policy website ([Αντιρατσιστική Πολιτική – Οικοσελίδα](#)) is continually updated with information on the implementation as well as additional educational material.

One of the most important initiatives in Cyprus which promote equal opportunities for everyone in the island are also the [State Institutes for Further Education](#) launched by the Ministry. The State Institutes function under the auspices of Secondary Education all over Cyprus and they aim at offering equal opportunities of education to thousands of pupils of all ages and adults and promoting lifelong learning. They help low-income families and offer scholarships to pupils who excel in their examinations. They employ mostly young unemployed teachers and very few experienced teachers, if necessary. There are 41 State Institutes all over Cyprus with more than 12 500 pupils every year, and they are addressed not only to young people, but to the whole population in Cyprus. In an attempt to provide equal opportunities through education to all citizens, a wide variety of lessons is offered at the State Institutes for Further Education, such as:

- Foreign Languages (English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Turkish) up to level B1 or B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
- Greek to non-native Greek speakers
- Accounting at all levels
- Remedial lessons for lower and upper-secondary pupils
- Preparatory lessons for the Pancyprian Exams
- ICT classes

Since 2003, the State Institutes for Further Education have been offering free Greek lessons for the Turkish Cypriots and free Turkish lessons for the Greek Cypriots in an attempt to create communication bridges between the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots.

Furthermore, the Ministry's 2020 Annual Report states that the Committee of Health Education and Citizenship – as an expert actor/stakeholder of the Ministry - funds non-school-related actions to support pupils belonging to vulnerable groups. The Programme operates since 2012 and is part of the Ministry's commitments to the National Strategy of the [Cyprus National Addictions Authority](#) to address the Dependence on Illegal Substances and the Harmful Use of Alcohol (2013-2020). In the context of promoting this policy, the Committee of Health Education and Citizenship favours the development of actions by schools aiming at involving these children in non-school activities, to make creative use of their free time. The actions aim at learning, emotional and social support, self-empowerment, highlighting and fostering talent as well as developing a safe life for pupils who belong to vulnerable groups. During the school year 2019/2020, 834 actions were funded under this Programme.

In addition, as mentioned in [section 6.3](#), another programme which aims to support the Cypriot population living below the poverty line or being at risk of poverty and social exclusion and it aims to strengthen social cohesion by reducing the risk of social marginalization and exclusion, is the D.R.A.S.E. programme ([Δράσεις Σχολικής και Κοινωνικής Ένταξης](#)) offered by the Ministry of Education. The total budget of the Programme, which expires in 2023, is €35 962 700.

In regards to programmes, projects and initiatives in the field of the vocational education and training, relevant information can be found in the [section 4.4](#) of the Youth Wiki related to inclusive programmes for vulnerable youth.

As for other initiatives organised in the context of non-formal and informal learning, the Youth Board of Cyprus organises the Erasmus+ "[Role Model Network](#)" European initiative, which aims to promote common European values, such as democracy, solidarity and respect for human rights, by promoting the life and action of specific human models (Role Models) that help in the promotion of an inclusive society. The "Network of Role Models" initiative is implemented in Cyprus through the [#LifeStories initiative](#), which aims to inspire and empower young people by presenting the lives of people who have succeeded in their lives, despite the discrimination or challenges they have faced, or people whose work has animated people of immigrant background. In 2020, due to the pandemic, the initiative focused on sharing stories on social initiatives related to culture, technology, volunteerism, sciences, and aspects of solidarity that can inspire youth to take initiatives for their own communities.

In addition, another inclusive programme in Cyprus in the context of non-formal, informal learning and youth work is the "[Youth Initiatives Project](#)" of the Youth Board of Cyprus aiming to grant activities organised by young people and youth organisations so that young people can have an active role in cultural, sport, political and social activities in Cyprus. For more information, please also visit [section 4.7](#).

## 6.7 Skills for innovation

### Innovation in formal education

#### Formal education

The curriculum of the school subject Design and Technology ([Σχεδιασμός και Τεχνολογία Μέσης Γενικής Εκπαίδευσης](#)) adheres to the principle that technology literate and competent pupils ought to possess a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The [subject is taught at upper-secondary level](#) and its curriculum was designed so that students acquire core skills of the 21st-century, such as problem solving, innovation, project management, creativity, critical thinking, etc.

The Design and Technology Advisors offer several training courses to in-service teachers (Εκπαιδευτικοί [Μέσης Γενικής](#)) and to potential teachers ([Πρόγραμμα Επιμόρφωσης Υποψήφιων Καθηγητών Σχεδιασμού και Τεχνολογίας](#)), they provide on-site support at schools and have developed relevant supportive teaching material that can be found in

the following links - secondary education supportive materials ([Διδακτικό Υλικό](#) & [Υποστηρικτικό Υλικό](#)).

In addition, the Information and Communication Technologies Unit of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth organises every year workshops, presentations and seminars in schools for pupils, teachers and parents, in the topics of:

- Use of ICT in teaching and learning
- Seminars for ICT teachers
- Workshops on robotics and programming
- Safe internet use

As it is reported in the [Innovation in VET - Cyprus Report 2014](#), the [Smart Specialisation Strategy for Cyprus](#) was approved by the Council of Ministers in March 2015. Its goal is to boost innovation with the aim to achieve economic growth and prosperity. The strategy identifies priority sectors (e.g., Energy, Tourism, the Structured Environment/Construction Industry, Transport/Marine, etc.) that are expected to contribute significantly to economic growth, while it refers to the value of VET and includes it in several actions.

For this reason, from the school year 2016/2017, there has been a revision in the existing curricula and development of new ones as well as a review of the fields of study and specialisations offered by Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE) in order to become more attractive and relevant to labour market needs. All fields of study and specialisations in STVE ([Κλάδοι και Ειδικότητες – Μέση Τεχνική και Επαγγελματική Εκπαίδευση](#)) aim to support learners' creativity and innovation by acquiring skills, such as critical thinking, idea generation, entrepreneurial mindset and problem-solving. Such skills will be enhanced by practical training in industry.

As for the pedagogical tools and support that STVE teachers are provided with, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute offers seminars, trainings and conferences ([Προγράμματα – Σεμινάρια](#)) to all secondary vocational education teachers, just like the general secondary education teachers. In addition, there is an educational portal ([Εκπαιδευτική Πύλη](#)) which supports educators in various educational issues, such as internet, web tools, etc.

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

### **National contests**

Since the school year 2010/2011, the [Research and Innovation Foundation \(RIF\)](#) and the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) run on an annual basis [two pupils' competitions](#) for all (both public and private) primary and secondary schools (general and, technical and vocational education schools):

- "Pupils in Research – MERA": The scope is to bring pupils and their teachers, close to the scientific research process. The competition enables students to have a first experience with research and innovation activities, whilst stimulating their creativity and ingenuity.
- "Technology and Innovation in Education – TEKE": Main goal is to familiarise pupils with innovative technological processes. The competition's goal is also to bring pupils in contact with research, innovation and technology, stimulate their creativity and inventiveness. Working groups of pupils and their teachers can take part in the Competition, to come up with innovative ideas through creating a technological design/structure.

The Competitions are part of the "Nurturing an RTDI Culture" Programme of the "RESTART 2016-2020" Programmes for Research, Technological Development and Innovation (RTDI). Groups of pupils and teachers are invited to express their interest to carry out research studies or technical studies, along with a mock-up. They have the opportunity to

win monetary prizes and an educational trip to the London International Youth Science Forum.

### **Projects/Programmes/Initiatives**

The promotion of innovation is of major importance in the [National Youth Strategy 2017-2022](#) of the Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC). Under the action field of Education and Training, two priorities are devoted to the development of innovation, creativity, and innovative methods of teaching for young people. In addition, the YBC has introduced over the last years a number of initiatives for boosting innovation and related skills to all young people in the island. The most important are:

#### **Youth Leadership Academy** ([Καλοκαιρινή Σχολή Ηγεσίας και Δημιουργικότητας](#))

Since 2016, the YBC organised for 5 years the Summer Youth Leadership Academy with the attendance of young people aged 19-30 from all over Cyprus. The Academy's aim is to empower young people who have a vision in positive change and social progress. Young participants are introduced to creative ways of thinking and to ways to develop and exhibit leadership skills in order to put their innovative ideas in action. Experienced trainers and facilitators help the participants develop their skills and acquire new knowledge and experiences. [The 2021 budget for the Youth Leadership Academy is under the budget of the STEAMers programme, which is €249 000, based on the Cyprus Government Gazette \(Ο περί Προϋπολογισμού του Οργανισμού Νεολαίας του 2021 Νόμος του 2021\)](#).

#### **Youth Makerspace**

Youth Makerspace Larnaca has been created following the standards of Makerspaces formed by university institutions and communities abroad, and it provides young people with access to high quality and high-tech equipment for the development of prototypes and for the implementation of their business ideas. This project is implemented in cooperation with Larnaca Municipality. It was introduced to public in October 2017 at the Arts and Literature House in Larnaca and since 2018, it is hosted in a renovated building which used to be the residence of the British Commander in the colonial era. In this place, young people can learn about technology developments, crafts, creative production processes, they can share knowledge and skills and put them in action. A vast range of creative production is supported. Among others, the equipment consists of 3D printers, laser cutters, drones, virtual reality, robotics, Arduino, raspberry pi. At Makerspace one may attend various workshops on how to use the equipment provided, idea and project development workshops, etc. This place also operates as a Youth Entrepreneurship Development Centre, within the framework of YBC programme. Youth Makerspace Larnaca welcomes young people of 6-35 years old, as well as organised youth groups, schools, educational institutions, etc.

In addition, [Mobile Makerspace](#) is a specially designed mobile unit which carries similar equipment with Youth Makerspace Larnaca. Mobile Makerspace is built on the same principles as Youth Makerspace Larnaca and has similar objectives. Yet, it focuses more on young people with fewer opportunities, who live in isolated or remote areas and do not have the chance to visit Youth Makerspace Larnaca. Mobile Makerspace visits schools and organisations in rural or distant areas and offers workshops using their technological equipment.

The 2021 budget for the Youth Makerspace is €181 000, [based on the Cyprus Government Gazette \(Ο περί Προϋπολογισμού του Οργανισμού Νεολαίας του 2021 Νόμος του 2021\)](#).

#### **The STEAMers** ([Πρόγραμμα «The STEAMers»](#))

The STEAMers programme is based on the standards of S.T.E.A.M. Centres abroad. The initials S.T.E.A.M. refer to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics. The programme offers workshops in Robotics, Programming, Film Making, Photography, Graphic Design, Creative Writing, Music, Theatre and Art. The aim of the workshops is entertainment and learning, cultivation of expressiveness and creativity, as well as psycho-emotional empowerment and personal development of the participants. Participants can

experiment and become familiar with new projects, but also to increase their imagination, create, acquire skills and cultivate their interests. The workshops target children and young people aged 6-35 years and are provided by professional trainers. [The 2021 budget of the STEAMers programme is €249 000, based on the Cyprus Government Gazette \(Ο περί Προϋπολογισμού του Οργανισμού Νεολαίας του 2021 Νόμος του 2021\)](#).

### **Youth Initiatives**

The Youth Initiatives project grants activities organised by young people and youth organisations so that young people can have an active role in cultural, sport, political and social activities in Cyprus. (For more information, please also visit [section 4.7](#) [section 4.7](#)). Under this project, there is a specific action (Action 7) targeting initiatives which foster innovation and creativity. The 2021 budget of the Youth Initiatives project is €600 000, based on the Cyprus Government Gazette ([Ο περί Προϋπολογισμού του Οργανισμού Νεολαίας του 2021 Νόμος του 2021](#)). No specific mention is made for the allocated budget of Action 7.

## **6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media**

### **National strategy**

The “National Strategy for a better Internet for children in Cyprus” ([Εθνική στρατηγική για ένα καλύτερο διαδίκτυο για τα παιδιά στην Κύπρο](#)) is the official document addressing media literacy and the safe use of new media for young people in the island. The document was approved by the Cyprus [Council of Ministers](#) in 19 December 2017 and it covers the period 2018-2023.

The purpose of the national strategy for safe use of the Internet by children is to provide children with the opportunities and conditions for using the Internet creatively, safely, morally, and responsibly. The strategy is aimed at all stakeholders that contribute to the existence and development of the Internet, its content and services – and not just to the recipients and users of the Internet – in order to provide policy guidelines through priorities, conditions and incentives for developing measures and actions that promote a better internet for children. Some of the aims of the National Strategy include:

- the provision of opportunities for Internet users to develop the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to use the Internet (e.g., through educational programs).
- raising awareness of internet providers on the creative and secure internet
- educating children and all those involved in children’s development on the safe use of the Internet
- exploiting all opportunities through formal, informal, and non-formal learning to create a culture of safe use of the Internet by all stakeholders.

Based on the above-mentioned aims, the National Strategy focuses on four priorities of action. These are:

- raising awareness, training and utilization
- high quality online material for children and young people
- ensuring secure internet infrastructure and environment
- to combat racism and xenophobia and sexual exploitation of children

Each of the priorities is analysed into measures, actions and tasks as well as the institution/authority responsible for their implementation.

As stated in the document, the priorities address all population groups while also targeting specific groups such as minorities, immigrants and refugees, parents, and very young children. At the same time, emphasis will be placed on content related to the treatment of



racist behaviour, intimidation, sexual exploitation of minors, digital identity, and personal data.

For the purposes of the implementation, coordination, and monitoring of the “National Strategy for a better Internet for children in Cyprus”, an inter-ministerial committee has been set up consisting of the:

- [Minister of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth](#)
- [Minister of Justice and Public Order](#)
- [Minister of Energy, Commerce and Industry](#)
- [Minister of Transport, Communications and Works](#)
- Commissioner of Electronic communications and Postal Regulation ([Γραφείο Επιτρόπου Ρυθμίσεως Ηλεκτρονικών Επικοινωνιών και Ταχυδρομείων](#)).

The official document mentions that the committee will meet quarterly to prepare quarterly progress reports and suggestions for improvement. However, the outcomes/monitoring results of the reports are not available online and to the public. The document also states that upon completion of the National Strategy, the committee will prepare a final report on the implementation of the Strategy.

### **Media literacy and online safety through formal education**

Media literacy and online safety education are both included in the curriculum of several obligatory and optional school subjects of secondary education, such as in Modern Greek through topics of critical text editing, dangers of using the internet; in Civic Education through topics of active citizenship via Internet and responsible online behaviour; in Computer Science through internet security.

The European project “CyberSafety – A better internet for Children” ([CyberSafety – Καλύτερο Διαδίκτυο για τα Παιδιά](#)), run by the [Cyprus Pedagogical Institute](#), aims to create a safe internet culture by empowering creative, innovative and critical citizens in the digital society. The project consists of four main pillars:

- The [awareness platform](#) where actors (teachers, parents and students aged 5-18) can find pedagogical resources and tools, share experiences, expertise and good practices.
- The operation of the Helpline 1480 ([Γραμμή Βοήθειας Helpline 1480](#)) where all actors get advice and support by trained supporters/helpers in real time on issues related to their use of online technologies.
- The operation of the Hotline 1480 ([Γραμμή Καταγγελιών Hotline 1480](#)) where all actors can report illegal content or actions related to illegal child sexual abuse material, racism and xenophobia.
- The establishment of the CYberSafety Youth Panel ([Ομάδα Νέων](#)) that expresses views and exchanges knowledge and experiences on the creative and safe use of the Internet and digital technologies.

For the last three bullet points, please read more information at the [section 7.7](#).

Under the CYberSafety project, two main actions/programmes are running in schools of all educational levels. These are:

- Young coaches for Internet 2.0 ([Μικροί Εκπαιδευτές στο Διαδίκτυο 2.0](#))
- E-Safe schools ([Ασφαλές Σχολείο για το Διαδίκτυο](#))

Detailed information about the various seminars, workshops, conferences and lectures organised by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and various stakeholders under the CyberSafety project for students, parents and teachers can be found below:

- [Workshops at schools 2021/2022](#) ([Εκπαιδεύσεις στα σχολεία 2021/2022](#))

- [Calendar of Conferences and events](#), such as:
  - [Safer Internet Day \(Ημέρα Ασφαλούς Διαδικτύου\)](#)
  - [ICT in the learning process \(Ημερίδα “Ενσωμάτωση των Τεχνολογιών Πληροφορίας και Επικοινωνίας στη Μαθησιακή Διαδικασία”\)](#)
  - [Seminar about the importance of Digital Citizenship \(Διημερίδα «Η καλλιέργεια της Ψηφιακής Πολιτότητας μέσω της Παιδείας για τα Μέσα»\)](#)

In addition, the [Department of Educational Technology \(DET\)](#) of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute implements activities and seminars ([Προγράμματα – Σεμινάρια](#)) of continuing professional learning in topics, such as safe and responsible use of the internet.

## **Promoting media literacy and online safety through non-formal and informal learning**

There is not a specific policy, programme, project or initiative – either directly organised or funded – by top level authorities in Cyprus aiming at enhancing young people's media literacy and awareness about online safety issues in the context of non-formal and informal learning.

### **Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media**

As mentioned in the sub-section about [“Media literacy and online safety through formal education”](#), the main awareness-raising programme about the risks posted by new media is the “CyberSafety – A better internet for Children” ([CyberSafety – Καλύτερο Διαδίκτυο για τα Παιδιά](#)) run by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute.

The CyberSafety project aims to create a safe internet culture by empowering creative, innovative and critical citizens in the digital society. One of the project's four pillars is the development of the [awareness platform](#) where actors (teachers, parents and students) can find resources and tools, share experiences, expertise and good practices. In addition, under the CYberSafety project, there are various actions/programmes that are running in schools of all educational levels:

- “Young coaches for Internet 2.0” ([Μικροί Εκπαιδευτές στο Διαδίκτυο 2.0](#)) that aims at engaging students to educate others on the creative use and safe use of the Internet. With the guidance of their teachers and experts, junior educators are invited to develop an action plan for their school unit as well as to design and implement actions.
- “E-Safe schools” ([Ασφαλές Σχολείο για το Διαδίκτυο](#)) that aims to provide information about the use of internet and its risks to both students and teachers as well as parents and the wider school community.
- Annual school competition for the production of an awareness-raising video on the safe use of internet ([Παραγωγή σύντομου βίντεο από μαθητές](#))

In addition, the [Youth Information Centres](#) (YIC) of the Youth Board of Cyprus organise information days and lectures on topics of cyber-bullying, cyber-ethics and other risks in the use of Internet.

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

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

One of the aims of the [Youth Information Centres](#) (YIC) of the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) is to provide one stop-shop services to young people, such as:

1. Information on employment, education, training and European programmes;
2. Information on youth policies and opportunities throughout Europe, as YICs operate as [Eurodesk Cyprus contact points](#).

The YICs frequently organise events and participate in festivals, education fairs, school events and presentations on topics such as Employment, Mobility, Skills Development, Entrepreneurship, Education, social media, and European Programmes. The YICs are placed in 6 different districts (Nicosia, Larnaca, Limassol, Agros, Paphos, Ammochostos) across Cyprus. All the activities organised by all YICs around Cyprus are available on their official website ([Ιστοσελίδα Κέντρων Πληροφόρησης Νέων](#)) and Facebook page ([Κέντρα Πληροφόρησης Νέων Κύπρου](#)).

The [Eurodesk Cyprus](#) also provides information to young people on a variety of opportunities across Europe, such as mobility, volunteering, exchanges, work, internships and non-formal learning. The network consists of several multipliers around Cyprus, including YIC and NGOs.

### **Awareness raising initiatives**

Different awareness-raising activities have taken place in order to inform young people on the benefits of participating in the Erasmus+ programme, and as an extension, reference to non-formal education was made indirectly.

More specifically, the Youth Board of Cyprus as the national [Eurodesk office](#) in Cyprus organises each year since 2013 the informational campaign “Time to Move” ([Time to Move 2021: Ανακάλυψε τρόπους να εξερευνήσεις την Ευρώπη](#)) which aims at informing young people about European programmes, volunteering opportunities and schemes as well as general mobility opportunities abroad. Each year several workshops, events and activities are organized in schools, youth information centers and other central points in various cities in Cyprus. For more information about the events, visit the [website](#) (available only in Greek).

## **6.10 Current debates and reforms**

### **Forthcoming policy developments**

#### **Continuation of the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022**

The second action plan of the [National Youth Strategy 2017-2022](#) (NYS) for the period 2020-2022 is currently being implemented. Upon the completion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> action plan, a new National Youth Strategy is expected to be implemented for the period 2023-2030. For this reason, discussions and consultations among relevant stakeholders and the Youth Board of Cyprus in relation to its development are expected to start within 2022.

#### **Validation of non-formal learning**

The project in regards to the “Establishment of mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and pilot implementation” is also under development, based on [the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth Annual Report 2020](#) ([Ετήσια Έκθεση 2020](#), pp. 350-351) The Project aims at: a) mapping the current situation in Cyprus regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning; b) elaborating a National Action Plan for the creation of validation mechanisms, and c) piloting mechanisms which will focus on adult education, youth and volunteering.

A draft Action Plan was created for the purpose of conducting open consultations with young people and relevant stakeholders from all over Cyprus in regards to the topic, and following their recommendations the document was finally approved by the Council of Ministers in October 2018 ([Απόσπασμα από τα Πρακτικά της Συνεδρίας του Υπουργικού Συμβουλίου Ημερομηνίας 16/10/2018](#)). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth has assigned, under the process of open government tender, the project “Establishment of Validation Mechanisms for non-formal and informal Learning - Pilot Implementation” ([Θέσπιση Μηχανισμών Επικύρωσης Μη-Τυπικής και Άτυπης Μάθησης – Πιλοτική Εφαρμογή](#)) to two private organisations in Cyprus, lasting from November 2021 until August 2022. Within the framework of the project, between February-April 2022, public consultations will be conducted with the participation of governmental and private

organisations and bodies, educational and research institutions that provide non-formal or informal learning and/or specialising in youth, education and adult education.

### **New bill for inclusive education in Cyprus**

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth is planning to reform and upgrade the current legislative framework and practices of Special Education to make it more inclusive and coincide with other European and national policy models. The initiative is funded by the European Union through the Structural Reform Support Programme. For this reason, as it is mentioned in the European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education official [website](#), the process is currently on a second round of working groups with several stakeholders (such as education professionals, parent and student groups, representatives from universities, ministry officials) where a specific thematic area of inclusive education was discussed in each of them. Following a series of discussions and procedures, the recommendations will be used to develop the draft regulations. The draft regulations will define in more detail the operational set-up of the topics included in the new draft bill on inclusive education. It is expected that the preparation of the new bill will be completed with 2021. For more information on the phases of the process, please read the [Agency's news section](#) or the Ministry's official website of Special Education available only in Greek ([Μεταρρύθμιση της Ειδικής Εκπαίδευσης](#)).

### **Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021-2027**

Following the successful implementation of the [Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2014-2020](#), the New Strategy for the period 2021-2027 is currently under development and ongoing discussions. The New Strategy is expected to: a) face challenges, such as the low participation of adults in lifelong learning and the quite high percentage of unemployment among young people; b) enhance the efforts of upskilling and re-skilling of low-qualified and low-skilled adults; c) benefit other groups, such as early school leavers, NEETS and migrants/refugees; d) enrich knowledge, skills and competences; e) better respond to the challenges related to the promotion of lifelong learning and adult education at the Republic of Cyprus.

### **Ongoing debates**

The major current debates that are taking place in the public sphere regarding the above-mentioned topics concern the implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022, the validation of non-formal learning and the development of youth work in Cyprus.

The mapping of the current situation in Cyprus regarding the validation of non-formal and informal learning was presented in the "[Recommendations for development of youth work in Cyprus](#)" by the youth policy advisory mission of the [Council of Europe](#) which took place in April 2019. Within 2020, the Youth Board of Cyprus established a dedicated Working Group on Youth Work, consisted of Youth Board officers and representatives of umbrella youth organisations, with the mandate to work on the development of an action plan for the holistic and quality development of youth work in Cyprus. As previously mentioned in the forthcoming policy developments, the Ministry is also in the process of developing a mechanism for validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning (including the sectors of volunteerism and youth).

#### Other debates

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth each year discusses several initiatives and programmes to enhance formal education (curriculum, evaluation, enhancement of special education and education of vulnerable groups, etc.). The latest educational reform for upgrading the curriculum of several subjects as well as the school timetable of primary and secondary education is under ongoing progress and evaluation. However, there are still a lot of sectors and policies to be further developed and discussed especially in relation to recognition of non-formal learning.

## 7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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The policy topic of health and well-being bridges together the efforts of several governmental organizations such as the Ministry of Health, the Cyprus Sports Organization, the Youth Board of Cyprus, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth. A number of strategies showcased below, are implemented, targeting specific topics within the field of health and well-being.

### 7.1 General context

#### Main trends in the health conditions of young people

This section gives the context for recent trends in the health condition of young people in Cyprus, as given from national and international research data:

According to the 2019 European Health Survey ([Ευρωπαϊκή Έρευνα Υγείας 2019](#)) that was conducted by the Statistical Service of Cyprus for the period September to December 2019, the personal perception of the Cypriot citizens regarding their state of health is very good. More specifically, 97 % of the males and 96.90 % of the female population between 15-34 years old stated that their state of health is very good or good. In addition, 16.20 % of the respondents aged 15-24 and 22.20 % aged 25-34 report suffering from a long-term health problem or condition.

**Alcohol consumption:** Based on the [European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs \(ESPAD 2019\)](#), a decreasing trend has been observed between 2015 and 2019 in Cyprus in regards to heavy episodic drinking, with a substantial reduction of 14 percentage points. However, prevalence rates of lifetime use as well as alcohol use during the 30 days prior to the survey were respectively 4 and 10 percentage points above average, with an increasing estimate among young boys.

**Drugs addiction:** According to the [Country Drug Report 2019](#) for Cyprus, released by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs addiction, cannabis remains the most commonly used illicit drug among the general population in Cyprus, with approximately 1 in 10 adults aged 15-64 years reporting cannabis use at least once during their lifetime. Cannabis use remains concentrated among young adults aged 15-34 years. The long-term analysis indicates a decrease in last year prevalence of cannabis use among this group from 2009, with possible stabilisation in the most recent years. Use of other illicit substances is less common.

A strong link between gender and illicit drug use is reported, with prevalence rates for all drugs being higher among males. The mean age at cannabis experimentation is 18-20 years. Use of new psychoactive substances is also concentrated among 15 to 34-year-olds, with synthetic cannabinoids being the most frequent substances reported.

Similar findings were reported in the ESPAD 2019 where noticeable gender differences were reported, that is 17 % of boys versus 7 % of girls used illicit drugs at least once during their lifetime. The most marked gender differences were also reported for the use of methamphetamine (5.20 % for boys and 0.40 % for girls), cocaine (6.30 % for boys versus 1.80 % for girls) and heroin (5.60 % for boys versus 0.30 % for girls). In addition, the study mentions that 3.60 % of the students in Cyprus (from the government-controlled areas) reported having used cannabis for the first time at age 13 or younger, a percentage which is among the highest ones in the participating countries of the survey.

**Tobacco smoking:** The 2019 European Health Survey reports that there is a slight improvement in the smoking habit in the Cypriot population (from the government-controlled areas), since the percentage of the population aged 15 and over who declare that they do not smoke at all has been increased from 70.90 % in 2014 to 74.50 % in 2019. In addition, the highest percentage of people who smoke on a daily basis (30.70 %) is observed for the ages 25-34.



In addition, based on the [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\) Report on the "Cyprus: Country Health Profile 2021"](#), tobacco consumption remains a major public health concern in Cyprus. More than one fifth (23 %) of Cypriot adults reported that they smoked daily in 2019, a proportion higher than the EU average of 20 %. This is mainly due to high smoking rates among men (33 %) compared to 14 % of women. However, the proportion of 15-year-olds who reported smoking cigarettes was lower than in most EU countries in 2019, but e-cigarettes have become more popular. One in ten 15-year-olds in Cyprus reported smoking e-cigarettes in 2019, although this proportion was also slightly lower than the EU average.

The [World Health Organisation's \(WHO\) global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco use 2000-2025, fourth edition \(2020\)](#) estimates that in 2020 in Cyprus there have been 344 000 smokers (one fourth being female and three fourths being male). Moreover, the current tobacco use prevalence trends among people aged 15 years and older indicates a decreasing rate of smokers in the overall population (41.50 % in 2000, 39.50 % in 2005, 37.40 % in 2010, 35.80 % in 2015, 34.20 % in 2020 and 32.90 % in 2025)

**Sexual Abuse:** Based on a publication entitled [Situation Analysis: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights \(SRHR\) of Adolescents in Cyprus](#) released by the Cyprus Family Planning Association in 2015, on date rape cases among young women in tertiary education in Cyprus aged 18-24 years old, data reveals that although the attempts of date rape (1.30 %) and date rape cases (1.90 %) seem to be small in number, 12.20 % of women who answered the questionnaire claimed to have had an 'unwanted sexual experience'. On this number, the majority claimed to have given in to sexual acts due to overwhelming pressure by their partners and fear of their partners leaving them if they did not consent.

In addition to that, as indicated in the [National Strategy and Action Plan to Combat Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography 2016-2019](#), in the context of carrying out the campaign "One in Five" in Cyprus, the University of Cyprus embarked on a scientific survey to record the Cypriot reality. This research showed that the picture in Cyprus is the same or even worse than the rest of the world, as in our country the rate of sexual abuse or exploitation of children is closer to one in four.

**Obesity:** Based on the results of the 2019 European Health Survey, 47.70 % of the population aged 15 and over in Cyprus has a normal body mass index (BMI), compared to 3.90 % of people who are underweight, 33.80 % who is overweight and 14.60 % who is extremely overweight. Compared to the results of the 2014 survey, it appears that the body mass index of the population aged 15 and over is at worse levels in 2019, as the percentages of the population who are obese and overweight have been increased while the percentage of people with a normal BMI has been decreased.

In addition, only 16.3% of the population aged 15 and over stated that they exercise 1-3 times a week for sports, health, or leisure purposes, while 18.9% stated that they exercise 4 or more times a week. As far as healthy eating is concerned, 58.0 % and 44.70 % of the population reported eating fruits and vegetables respectively, at least once a day.

When it comes to childhood obesity, the report "[State of Health in the EU – Cyprus - Country Health Profile 2019](#)" illustrates very high overweight and obesity levels among Cypriot children, with data showing that among six- to nine-year-olds about 20 % of children were obese in 2015-2017, and 43 % were obese or overweight.

Similarly, the latest data (2015–2017) from the [WHO Childhood Obesity Surveillance Initiative \(COSI\)](#) show that southern European countries have the highest rate of child obesity. In Cyprus, 1 in 5 children aged 6-9 years old (ranging from 18 % to 21 %) are obese.

## Main concepts

The main concepts which are used in the Cypriot context to promote distinctive understandings on the topic of Health and Well-being are aligned primarily with the



definitions given by the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) agenda](#) as well as the national legislation in Cyprus.

**Health:** is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

**Mental health:** is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

**Prevention of diseases:** Prevention of diseases does not only cover measures aiming to prevent the emerging of diseases such as mitigating the risk factors, but also measures to stop the progress of a disease and to reduce its results once it occurs.

**Public health:** Public health is the science and art of promoting and improving health, preventing diseases, and extending life through the organized efforts of governmental action.

**Mental disorder:** behavioural disorder that is caused by a mental disease, that is incompatible with the place, time and age of the person it is affecting (Psychiatric Care Law Num.77(i) of 1997 - [Ο Περί Ψυχιατρικής Νοσηλείας Νόμος του 1997 \(77\(I\)/1997\)](#)).

**Sexual health** is a state of physical, emotional and mental wellbeing related to sexuality, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or disability.

**Sexual rights:** The application of existing human rights to sexuality and sexual health constitute sexual rights. Sexual rights protect all people's rights to fulfil and express their sexuality and enjoy sexual health, with due regard for the rights of others and within a framework of protection against discrimination.

**Reproductive health:** is a state of complete physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system, its functions and operations and not just the absence of disease, dysfunction or disability.

## 7.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

The Council of Ministers bears overall responsibility for the state's role in the broader social protection and health care sector in Cyprus. It exercises this authority primarily through the Ministry of Health and, to a lesser extent, the [Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance](#), the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#), the [Ministry of Justice and Public Order](#) and, finally, the Ministry of Interior ([Υπουργείο Εσωτερικών](#)). Along with them, some other public actors involved are the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#), the [Cyprus Sports Organization](#), the [Office of the Commissioner of Children's Rights](#) and the [National Addictions Authority Cyprus](#).

The roles of these actors are described below:

[The Ministry of Health's](#) 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's 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 Education, Culture, Sport and Youth is responsible for the administration of public and the supervision of private schools of pre-primary, primary and secondary level as well as the educational institutions of Post-Secondary and Tertiary level and the Universities. It prepares the educational budget, drafts new laws regarding education and

sees to the implementation of existing ones. In addition, through its relevant departments and units (e.g., the Educational Psychology Service, the Committee of Health Education and Citizenship), the Ministry aims to promote the physical, mental and social well-being of the pupils of all educational levels by organising and supporting various educational programmes, initiatives and activities.

The Ministry of Justice and Public Order is responsible for the close review and consideration of the need to reform existing legislation in the 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 others. 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 **Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC)** as the responsible national body for youth affairs in Cyprus, it contributes significantly to the provision of [prevention services](#), the organization of information and public awareness actions on the physical and psychosocial development, health and well-being of youth. At a policy-making level, the Youth Board coordinates the development and implementation of the **National Youth Strategy** who sets Health and Well-being as one of its eight fields of actions. The YBC, as an advisory body, submits through the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth to the Council of Ministers, suggestions regarding the development of a comprehensive and specialized youth policy for the promotion of the progress and prosperity of all young people in Cyprus.

**The Commissioner for Children's Rights** is an independent institution which exclusively deals with the well-being of children (up to the age of 18 years old) and the duties of this agency are being regulated by Cyprus' law regulations.

The **Cyprus National Addictions Authority (NAAC)** which is the supreme coordinating body in the field of licit and illicit addictive substances and pathological gambling in Cyprus. The NAAC is responsible for – among others – the planning, implementation, supervision and monitoring of the National Strategy on Illicit Substances Dependence and the Harmful Use of Alcohol 2013-2020 as well as the National Strategy for Addressing Addictions 2021-2028.

### **Cross-sectoral cooperation**

The existing mechanisms of cross-sectoral cooperation between the responsible Ministries and other public and independent actors are underlined in the respective national strategies and are customized based on the thematic area covered.

As for the field of youth on Health and Well-being in the National Youth Strategy (NYS) 2017-2022, the coordination of the [cross-sectoral cooperation](#) for the implementation of the youth priorities falls under the responsibility of the Youth Board of Cyprus. In addition, the Youth Board of Cyprus in its relevant analysis of the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Action Plan of the National Youth Strategy for the period 2020-2022 reports that under the thematic area "Health and Well-being", a total of 51 measures are/will be implemented, out of which 32 measures implement cross-sectoral cooperation at national level.

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

### **National strategy(ies)**

The [Cyprus Sports Organisation](#) (CSO), as the supreme Sports Authority in Cyprus, provides services through its National Schemes to sports federations, sports clubs and

citizens, aiming to promote extra-curricular physical education and healthy living through sports in Cyprus.

The [Strategy of CSO 2020](#) entitled 'Right to Exercise- Citizens in action' (Δικαίωμα στην άθληση- Πολίτες εν δράση) comprises the official action plan released by the CSO for the period 2010-2020 on the topic of Sport, youth fitness and physical activity which promotes the following strategic goals for Cyprus:

1. Maintaining a competitive level of action in International Sporting Competitions both at the level of performance and at the level of managerial positions.
2. Developing enlarged Sporting Programmes of physical activity for the promotion of citizens' health regardless of age or gender.

The Strategy is developed through 8 Key Performance Indicators (KPI), each of which is being broken down and analysed for all the years covering the period 2010-2020. These KIP cover the following areas:

- Improvement of Sport Infrastructure
- Support of Competitive Sporting Programmes
- Development of Non-Competitive Sporting Programmes
- Social role of Sports
- CSO and the European Union
- Funding
- Administration and Management
- Communication

In its entirety the "Strategy of CSO-2020" makes no explicit reference in its agenda to Cyprus' youth. However, this target group is integrated into the respective goals which are directly targeting the citizens' involvement. Further on, in terms of the current monitoring process or evaluation of the strategy as well as any reforms proposed, no available information is provided for the time being. At the same time, the strategy makes no clear reference to the EU Physical Activity Guidelines, however monitoring and implementation of the EU Guidelines is highlighted through the KPI on 'CSO and the European Union'.

CSO's Strategy is incorporated in the Action Plan of the [National Youth Strategy](#) who sets Health and Well-being as one of its eight fields of actions, as well. Specifically, the priorities of the National Youth Strategy that concern sport and physical activity are:

1. Develop and promote further programmes of recreational activities and sports and
2. Encourage a culture of physical activity and positive attitude towards sports.

### **Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people**

The main programmes of the CSO agenda that promote sport and physical activity among young people in Cyprus, and which subsequently support the Strategy of CSO 2020, are the following:

**Sports for All** (Αθλητισμός Για Όλους): The "Sports For All" Mass Sports Programme, which operates since 1985, aims towards encouraging citizens to practise healthy sports and offers fitness, health, happiness, and entertainment to the general public. As stated in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth [Annual Report 2019](#), the Programme focuses on achieving its sport, social, cultural, educational, and recreational mission. In the context of this programme, the participants may develop consciously a variety of motor skills while practising physical activity not in the spirit of rivalry or competition, but in the spirit of doing exercise for fitness, with others, enjoying human contact and improving

their psychosomatic health. The Programme is applied in various target groups, from pre-school children to third age persons, people with special skills and minority groups.

This programme's vision is to help the great majority of the population in Cyprus to get involved in sports, benefit from physical activity and provide all the citizens no matter of their ethnicity, sex, age, social position, mental or physical status, education, body integrity, economic standing and social stratum with equal sport-practising opportunities

The main objectives of the Programme are:

1. Life-long physical activity and exercise.
2. Improvement of the physical and mental health of a person.
3. Forming a character and developing a personality in the spirit of fair play and sportsmanship.
4. Sport education of people and mainly of children aiming at eliminating violence in sports.
5. Encouraging a healthy hobby for youth, helping young people to avoid bad habits, reducing crime rate, avoiding the use of drugs and other social problems.
6. Social cohesion, tolerance and understanding among citizens in the context of physical activity Programmes.

There are more than 550 sports centres that operate in the government-controlled areas of Cyprus (urban and rural), 15 000 members of all ages (children and adults) that participate in the programme and 94 Trainers and Administrative Staff who provide their services. . The overall cost of the Programme amounts approximately to €2 000 000 per year while the income from the Programme amounts to €1 300 000 which comes from the annual subscriptions that the participants pay. No available information is provided in regard to the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the programme. The 'Sports for All' Programme involves the following:

### Programmes for Children

1. **The "General Physical Activity" Programme:** This programme addresses all children attending Elementary Education and has as a key aim to help them turn to physical activity and experience it. It includes basketball, football, handball, volleyball and athletics.
2. **The Specialized Programmes:** These programmes run the sports that cannot operate in terms of the "General Physical Activity" programme and they are conducted in specially designed sports areas. They are addressed to children wishing to be constantly involved in their favourite sport practising, which becomes eventually the choice of children who are gifted with special sport skills. This Programme provides the participants with the opportunity to take part in regional, district and Cyprus-scale organized games. The programmes operate sports, such as Gymnastics, Tennis, Taekwondo, Dancing, Judo, Karate, Child and Swimming, Football, Volleyball, Basketball, Futsal, Beach Volley, Archery, Badminton.
3. **Swimming courses:** The "Child and Swimming" Programme is operational during summertime and all children are given the opportunity to learn how to swim properly. The courses are expanded in all the cities and in the countryside.
4. **The "Early Childhood Education" Programme:** It addresses pre-school children aiming at helping them to get involved in physical activity while playing.
5. **Sports Events:** These aim to enhance the competitive activity of the children that participate in the Programme, to cultivate the sentiment of fair play and to support and promote youngsters with special athletic skills through the organization of local regional and local championship (Handball, Basketball, Football, Cross-country race, Athletics, Volleyball).

## Programmes for Adults

The citizens can choose the programme that meets their expectations and the most convenient place to attend the sessions. The following Programmes are operational: Aerobics, Pilates, Yoga, Zumba, Pound, Adapted Gymnastics, Basketball, Volleyball, Swimming, Tennis, Futsal, Hapkido.

### Social Sports Programme

Implementing the philosophy of the "Sports for All" Programme for providing equal opportunities to sports for all people, regardless of sex, age, origin, body constitution, economic strength and physical integrity, specialised programmes are provided for either students who attend the Special Schools around Cyprus or persons (children or adults) with various disabilities like physical, motor or sensory. In addition, the programmes address third age people, persons with psychological problems, chronic diseases, persons who undergo drug rehabilitation or children belonging to these families. The above stated vulnerable groups may participate in these programmes free.

**Programme "Support for Vulnerable Populations" ([Σχεδιασμός "Στήριξη Ευάλωτων Ομάδων Πληθυσμού"](#)):** The purpose is to provide customised physical activity services or the supply of sports equipment for the needs of organized bodies of people with disabilities and people with chronic diseases who are exercising. The programme is run by the CSO and the Cyprus Confederation of Organizations of the Disabled ([Κυπριακής Συνομοσπονδίας Οργανώσεων Αναπήρων](#)). The annual budget of the programme is €20 000 and it runs on a permanent basis.

**Support Scheme for Young Champions of Individual Olympic Sports :** CSO has initiated since 2005 a National Support Scheme for Young Athletes of Individual Olympic Sports in order to become the cornerstone for a successful and long-lasting course for professional young athletes. The direct purpose of the Support Scheme is to reinforce young champions by offering every possible technical, scientific, psychological and financial support. In 2018, the Scheme was operational for eleven months (January – September) with an approved budget amounting to €221 500. However, the amount spent was eventually €214 230. No available information is provided in regard to the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

The National Programme of Support for Developmental Sports (N.P.S.D.S.) ([Εθνικό Σχέδιο Υποστήριξης Αναπτυξιακού Αθλητισμού](#)): This programme was established by the CSO in 1998. The N.P.S.D.S. supports the bottom-line sports, and more specifically, organized groups which practice sports through all the stages of growth and development by supporting their Clubs/Associations/Groups in specific sectors. In 2018, two sectors were supported in the context of this programme for competitive sports in a technocratic approach: The SPORTS through DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES to support children until the age of 16 and the SPORTS for TEENAGERS to support children from 16 - 18 years old. This Programme covers also additional sectors like training, scientific support, evaluation, better use and incentives. The budget of the N.P.S.D.S. for 2018 was €1 239 021 and the final expenditure reached €1 245 153, as it is stated in the MOECSY Annual Report 2019. In addition, the 'Operational Guide' of the programme mentions that the monitoring and evaluation of the programme is conducted by the responsible officer of the CSO as well as the regional inspectors who conduct visits to the Clubs/Associations/Groups in the island using specific templates that are provided in the relevant operational guide.

**Programme of Physical Training at the National Guard and Security Corps ([Σχέδιο κριτηρίων αξιολόγησης στρατεύσιμων αθλητών ατομικών και ομαδικών αθλημάτων](#)):** This programme runs by the CSO since 1999 and covered a budget of €580 000 for the years 2017-2019 as well as €640 000 for 2020 as an additional training scheme for the armed guards of Cyprus' National Guard and Security Corps. The purposes of this programme are the combination of soldiers' entertainment exercises and sports practising, the continuation of the athletic soldiers' racing activity and the promotion of fair play



behaviour. No available information is provided in regard to the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

**Physical education in the Central Prison:** This programme is integrated within the physical education programme for the Security Bodies and focuses particularly on the social role played by sports. This programme has been set up and is further enhanced in the context of the Strategic Partnership signed between the CSO and the Prison Departments since 2016. Specialized sport training is provided through this programme to all the prisoners detained in all the Central Prison Wards. The programme addresses prisoners of all age groups, including young people. No available information is provided in regard to the mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

**European Sports Week:** The European Sports Week has been established by the European Commission as the largest annual European sporting campaign, with 35 European countries participating in it. This initiative aims to promote participation in sport and physical activity and raise awareness of the benefits of this participation. The Week is for everyone – particularly young people. The implementation of the week across Europe is largely decentralized and is being carried out in close cooperation with different individuals, public authorities and representatives of the sporting movement, civil society organizations and the private sector.

In Cyprus, this initiative is being implemented since 2015 by a number of stakeholders and CSO enacts as the coordinating authority providing extensive information and information delivery for the planning of the actions that are about to take place before and during the campaign. According to the [2019 Annual report](#) of the Ministry of Education, during the 2019 European Sports Week, the total number of activities and sport events that took place all over Cyprus was 242, in which approximately 224 000 citizens participated for free. In addition, schools and students from all educational levels (both general and vocational education) participated in the different activities. The European Sports Week programme mainly focused on five thematic units: Education, Workplace, Outdoor Physical Activities, Sport Clubs and Gym Centres, Third Age Persons, Persons with Special Needs / Persons with Disabilities. As regards the types of activities, sport events, information days and lectures were organised. The CSO submitted a proposal with a budget reaching the overall amount of €227 338.89 (80% funded by the EU and 20% by the CSO) for 2019.

## Physical education in schools

Within the scope of the Cypriot Education System, Physical Education (PE) is a compulsory subject that provides regular opportunities for physical activity among students inside the school setting. The Physical Education Curriculum ([Αναλυτικό Πρόγραμμα Φυσικής Αγωγής](#)) both for the Primary and Secondary Level Education is organized on the basis of the following six purposes, covering a spectrum of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours intended to be acquired by the students:

1. Development of kinesthetic skills and exemplary performance of some of these.
2. Acquisition of knowledge from sports science (how and why) and their parallel implementation for effective participation in current and future physical activity conditions.
3. Knowledge and achievement of a fitness level of health.
4. Acquisition of positive experiences from physical activity and the development of self-expression and sociability.
5. Understanding and respecting the diversity of individuals and groups while working with everyone.
6. Demonstration of responsible athletic and social behaviour, as the result of participation in physical activities.

Focusing on the time allocated for Physical Education in schools at upper secondary level (Lyceum) of General Education, out of the total 35 periods (1period=45 minutes) per week



comprising the courses' timetable, the 1<sup>st</sup> grade Lyceum students attend P.E. for 1,5 periods/week ([Ωρολόγιο Πρόγραμμα Α΄ Λυκείου](#)), the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade Lyceum students attend P.E. for 2,5 hours/week ([Ωρολόγιο Πρόγραμμα Β΄ Λυκείου](#)), and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Lyceum students attend P.E. for 2 hours/week ([Ωρολόγιο Πρόγραμμα Γ΄ Λυκείου](#)). A note needs to be made that the differentiation of the taught time for P.E. for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Lyceum timetable is due to the introduction of the First Aid Course which is offered for an extra period per week as part of the P.E. Curriculum. As for the Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training (STVET), out of the total 35 periods (1period=45 minutes) per week comprising the courses' timetable, P.E. is compulsory and its taught time is 1 period/week for all three grades of STVET ([Ωρολόγιο Πρόγραμμα Μέσης Τεχνικής και Επαγγελματικής Εκπαίδευσης](#)).

The P.E. Curriculum, which was introduced since 2010, is also supported by the official teaching materials and textbooks offered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MOECSY). Furthermore, additional pedagogical tools, lesson plans, educational resources from seminars, conferences and lectures as well as other relevant announcements are shared through the official website of the "[Physical Education Course – Secondary General Education](#)" ([Μάθημα Φυσικής Αγωγής Μέσης Γενικής Εκπαίδευσης](#)) which is run by the MOECSY to support the course instruction of the P.E. teachers.

In addition to the above-mentioned, a large-scale initiative on the inclusion of physical activities outside the curriculum but within the school day is the "European School Sport Day" ([Ευρωπαϊκή Ημέρα Σχολικού Αθλητισμού](#)) which is organised each year under the European Sports Week. During this day, various sports activities are organised in schools of all educational levels of both secondary general and vocational education. As for the initiatives on extracurricular sports activities in schools, a new initiative is the Pancyprian school run "Running for my health" ([Παγκύπριος Σχολικός «Δρόμος Υγείας 2020»](#)) which is organised by the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth for the first time in 2020 with the aim to raise awareness of students on health lifestyle through sports.

## Collaboration and partnerships

There are no official top-level guidelines to support collaboration and the formation of partnerships between schools, youth workers, health professionals and other sport organisations.

## 7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

### National strategy(ies)

The elaboration of the **Strategy on the Rights of the Child in health (2017-2025)** ([Εθνική Στρατηγική για τα Δικαιώματα του Παιδιού στην Υγεία](#)) is part of the Ministry of Health's priorities included in its Strategic Plan for the years 2017-2025, and is specifically targeting young people up to the age of 18 years old. This National Strategy aims to be a "guide" emphasizing the promotion and protection of the health rights of children residing in Cyprus, providing a clear framework for action to improve the current structures and, through interdisciplinary collaboration methods, provide holistic health care to the child, with their own active involvement. The content of the strategy sets the guidelines for all stakeholders on their issues of competence. It also includes specific objectives and defined actions to be promoted by those involved.

The Strategy is founded on eight pillars as follows:

1. Health Services for the Child
2. Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)
3. Nutrition and Maternal Breastfeeding
4. Infectious Diseases - Vaccinations
5. Prevention of violence and accidents

6. Alcohol, Substances, Tobacco
7. Environment
8. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

**The National Strategy on the Sexual and Reproductive Health of the Youth (2018-2025)** ([Εθνική Στρατηγική για τη σεξουαλική και αναπαραγωγική υγεία των Νέων](#)) is also part of the Ministry of Health's priorities included in its Strategic Plan and was prepared with the assistance of executives from various ministries and other public and private sector bodies, non-governmental organizations and representatives of the young people themselves who participated in a two-day workshop of the Ministry of Health, which was organized on 13-14 June 2017 in Nicosia, in cooperation and with the participation of a WHO representative for the Region of Europe. The Strategy targets young people from 15-29 years old, who amount to 188 375 people representing 22% of the total population in the government-controlled areas of Cyprus. The Key Action Pillars of the Strategy are the following:

1. Parental Health
2. Family Planning - Infertility - Birth Control, Adverse Pregnancy - Abortion
3. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs) - HIV / AIDS - Reproductive System Infections
4. Prevention of Cancer of the Reproductive System
5. Preventing and Managing Cases of Sexual Violence

**The National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Violence in Schools** ([Εθνική Στρατηγική για την Πρόληψη και Διαχείριση της Βίας στο Σχολείο](#)) runs between 2018-2022 under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, and specifically the Cyprus Observatory on School Violence. It is envisioned that through the implementation of the National Strategy, schools are safe, democratic and child-friendly spaces where all children are actively involved, enjoy their rights, co-opt, acquire knowledge and skills, cultivate values and attitudes that lead them to develop their full potential.

The key action pillars of the strategy are:

1. Creation of information systems
2. Legal and administrative measures to prevent and manage violence at school
3. Strengthening structures
4. Enriching knowledge and enhancing skills for developing peaceful attitudes and behaviours by students
5. Involvement of children
6. Empowering parents / guardians, teachers, management teams

A Monitoring Committee ([Επιτροπή Παρακολούθησης](#)) has been appointed on the decision of the Council of Ministers to monitor the implementation of the Strategy. The Committee consists of representatives from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, the Ministry of Health, the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, and any actor undertaking actions in the field. Responsibilities of the Monitoring Committee are: a. Monitoring the implementation of the actions of the National Strategy; b. The dissemination of valid and timely information to the public through various means; c. The approval of material which will be used during the actions of the National Strategy. So far, no monitoring results have been made publicly available.

**The National Strategy for Addressing Addictions 2021-2028** ([Εθνική Στρατηγική για την Αντιμετώπιση των Εξαρτήσεων 2021- 2028](#)) succeeds the [National Strategy for Addressing Dependence on Illicit Substances and the Harmful Use of Alcohol 2013-2020](#) which was produced by the Cyprus [National Addictions Authority](#) (NAAC). The purpose of the Strategy is for children, young people, and all citizens of the Cypriot society to have access to prevention, treatment, reduction of harm, and social support services in a protective environment from all kinds of addictions. The Strategy will be implemented/divided in two Action Plans: 2021-2024 and 2025-2028. The first Action Plan

2021-2024 ([Σχέδιο Δράσης 2021-2024](#)) is already available in Greek and it is based on six pillars:

1. Prevention
2. Treatment
3. Social Support
4. Reduction of harm
5. Reduction of supply
6. Research – Evaluation – Education
7. International Cooperation

The NAAC is responsible for the overall coordination, implementation, supervision and monitoring of the national strategy and its action plans. It is important to mention that the previous National Strategy 2013-2020 received an external evaluation in September 2020. The outcomes of the evaluation are presented in an extensive report named "[Evaluation of the National Strategy on Illicit Substance Dependence and the Harmful Use of Alcohol 2013 - 2020 of the Republic of Cyprus](#)". Some of its main outcomes reveal that there is a need for more targeted prevention for minors and early school leavers, there is little provision of objective information about the effects and risks of different drugs and alcohol in Cyprus, the collaboration between stakeholders appears to be limited, there is a need for targeted treatment programs for migrants and stimulant users, and there are few structures for social reintegration. For extensive information about the evaluation of the previous National Strategy, please read the detailed report.

**Action Plan for Childhood Injuries and poisoning (2016-2020)** ([Εθνικό Σχέδιο Δράσης για τα Ατυχήματα και τις Δηλητηριάσεις στα Παιδιά 2016-2020](#)): The Ministry of Health, recognizing the need for a coordinated approach for addressing the problem of childhood injuries and poisonings, began in 2002 the first coordinated actions with the establishment of the Advisory Committee for the Prevention of Childhood Injuries and Poisonings, with a key mandate to develop an action plan on childhood injuries and poisoning. Cyprus was the first country on a European level to develop and adopt a Strategic Action Plan to Prevent Accidents and Poisoning in Children.

The Action Plan aims to substantially reduce morbidity and mortality from unintentional injuries (road crashes, drowning and suffocation, falls, poisoning and burns and scalds) by setting realistic goals and taking advantage of the good practices of other countries. For each type of accident, the basic principles of prevention that have been repeatedly tested in many countries with a great success have been also adopted in this action plan. These principles are as follows:

- programming and educational intervention to ensure greater safety for children
- enforcement /legislation
- environmental and product modification

The **National Strategy for the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breast feeding** ([Στρατηγική Προστασίας, Προαγωγής και Υποστήριξης του Μητρικού Θηλασμού στην Κύπρο](#)) (2011) seeks to increase both the initiation of breastfeeding rates at hospital discharge and its exclusive continuation for the first six months. Based on the [demographic statistics of 2019](#), the mean age of women at the birth of their first child was 29,6 years in 2019, while the mean age at birth irrespective of the order of the child was 31,2 years. Therefore, this strategy is particularly relevant for young mothers. The Strategy is based on four main pillars: 1) Policy, Planning, Management and Funding; 2) Information, Training, Education; 3) Data Recording and Monitoring System, and 4) Research. Each of the pillars is analysed in objectives that constitute the basis for the development of concrete actions. The overall coordination of the Strategy is under the Ministry of Health.

The **National Strategy on Diabetes (2016-2020)** ([Εθνική Στρατηγική για τον Σακχαρώδη Διαβήτη](#)) is the result of the consultations conducted among representatives of the International Diabetes Federation, patients' organizations, universities, scientific

societies and ministerial departments with the Ministry of Health. The Strategy is based on five pillars: 1) Prevention and health promotion; 2) Diagnosis and treatment; 3) Rehabilitation services; 4) Research; 5) Documentation/diabetes registry. The key objectives of the strategy are to prevent diabetes and its complications, to ensure the quality of services at low cost, and provide effective care according to the needs of each individual (vulnerable groups) through a holistic approach. The strategy is particularly relevant for youth, because as noted in the strategy, research data shows an increasing rate of Type 1 and 2 diabetes among young people and children.

Finally, the **National Strategy for a better Internet for Children (2018-2023)** ([Εθνική στρατηγική για ένα καλύτερο διαδίκτυο για τα παιδιά στην Κύπρο](#)) prioritises sensible and responsible use of the internet by young people. For more information about this Strategy, please read the [section 6.8](#).

## Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

### Smoking Cessation Programmes ([Προγράμματα Διακοπής του Καπνίσματος](#))

The Mental Health Services of the Ministry of Health provide free smoking cessation programmes that incorporate a combination of interventions, counselling (evidence-based protocol that supports cognitive behavioural interventions) and pharmaceutical use (implementation of nicotine patches step 1: 25mg, step2: 15mg, step3: 10mg). These programmes are free of charge and are provided throughout the country in all the cities (Nicosia, Limassol, Paphos, Larnaca, and the Famagusta area). Individuals who are interested in quitting smoking can contact the Smoking Cessation Programmes (SCP) on a toll-free number (1431), available throughout the country. Then, their information is recorded, such as their name, phone number and town where they live, and they are contacted by officers of the SCP to arrange a group or individual meeting or just become informed about the programme. The programmes are usually short-term and include one hour long weekly meeting for about 6 to 8 weeks. The counsellors assist the individuals to be motivated for a smoking cessation, to choose when to quit, form a rationale behind quitting, to become psycho-educated in regards to the physical and psychological addiction from nicotine and guidance towards the steps for maintaining the cessation. Throughout this process, the individuals are supported during their attempts to quit, and are encouraged to discuss difficulties and positive consequences from smoking cessation with their counsellors. Their relapses are addressed, and assistance is provided on how to face them. Individuals have their carbon monoxide calculated with smokelyzers (breath carbon monoxide monitors intended for multi-patient use), a method which appears to be a useful tool for motivation and increases goal engagement. The SCP, however, does not assist young people under the age of 18.

Pharmaceutical aids - each person receives counselling intervention as well as free nicotine patches based on each individual's personalized needs, so that the smoking cessation process is more effective.

### Treatment programmes in Cyprus ([Θεραπευτικά προγράμματα στην Κύπρο](#))

There is a number of Treatment Services for illicit substances, alcohol and gambling that are available in Cyprus and approved by the Cyprus National Addictions Authority. The treatment services address to minors and their families, but also adults above the age of 18, and they include – among others – counselling, individual and group therapeutic interventions, detoxification and psychological support. The relevant guide of the provided services is available only in Greek ([Οδηγός Υπηρεσιών Θεραπείας για τις Παράνομες Ουσίες, το Αλκοόλ και την παθολογική ενασχόληση με τυχερά παιχνίδια](#)).

### Health Education Programmes organised in schools of all educational levels

- **Funding school unit actions.** The funded actions are designed to strengthen the factors that serve the goals of Health Education as they have emerged both for the Cypriot and international reality: Development of personal and social skills, effective

management of emotions and development of communication skills, promotion of self-esteem, improvement of the psychosocial climate at school, support of the family self-sufficiency. The request for a grant is made to the Health Education and Citizenship Coordinating Committee.

- **Supporting schools for the holistic treatment of serious delinquency cases.** The School Violence Intervention Team (SVIT) supports schools in Secondary General, and Secondary Technical and Vocational Education to deal with serious incidents and/or phenomena of extreme delinquency. The main role of SVIT is to support schools in the development and implementation of action plans based on a holistic and systemic approach. This process involves the collaboration between the school and several government and community services and organisations, and other key players, based on the needs of each case.
- **Grant of non-school-related actions to support pupils belonging to vulnerable groups.** The Programme is operational since 2012 and is part of the MOECSY's commitments to the National Strategy of the Cyprus National Addictions Authority to address the Dependence on Illegal Substances and the Harmful Use of Alcohol (2013-2020). The MOECSY with the Committee of Health Education and Citizenship favour the development of actions by schools aiming at involving these children in non-school activities, to make creative use of their free time. The actions aim at offering substantial support (learning, emotional, social, self-empowerment, highlighting and fostering talent, developing a safe lifestyle) to pupils who belong to vulnerable groups.
- **“Well-being” Health Education Programme (Πρόγραμμα ΕΥ ΖΗΝ):** the programme is the result of an inter-state agreement between Greece and Cyprus. Within the framework of this programme, each participating school from Cyprus cooperates with a school from Greece for two years and explores an issue related to health (smoking, alcohol, drugs, food, etc.).
- **Sex education Programme:** This programme is the result of collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and the Medical Association. It deals with the sexuality of the individual and aims to develop interpersonal relations, respect, and mutual understanding between the two sexes.
- **School without tobacco:** All schools from all levels of education are expected to implement actions against smoking for pupils, teachers, parents and guardians. An outline of a policy that can be adopted by the schools as well as activities that can be carried out both at school and in the classroom are attached with the circulars. Moreover, information is given about the negative effects of smoking on a person's health and statistics about teenage smokers in Cyprus. Details about private and state stakeholders that can support anti-smoking plans of action are supplied.
- The **Anti-HIV/AIDS educational programme** course for Lyceum students is being applied by the School Health Service of the Ministry of Health. The scope of this course, which is carried out by means of dialogue, games and through role-playing, offers the students some knowledge on AIDS and the sexually transmitted diseases, and aims at the development of a healthy attitude and behaviour and the acquisition of ways of resistance through various exercises as well as to increase children's sensitivity to the consequences of AIDS.

## Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

**Health Education:** Based on the [MOECSY official website](#), within the context of the implementation of the New Curricula in the Cypriot Education System, Health Education has been introduced since 2011 in the syllabuses of Upper Secondary General Education Schools as a cross-curricular programme. The students not only have the chance to get informed about the physical consequences of certain behaviours but also to consider the factors that affect their behaviour, to practice communication and cooperation skills, to manage conflicts and cope with peer pressure, to deal with social stereotypes, to manage issues such as security, education consumer rights and responsibilities, road safety,



obesity, etc. The purpose of the Health Education Curriculum ([Αναλυτικό Πρόγραμμα Αγωγής Υγείας](#)) is to promote the mental, physical and social well-being of students as a means of life through the development of personal and social skills and through collective action that will upgrade their social and physical environment. There are four main topics addressed through Health Education: 1) Development and empowerment of self; 2) Develop a safe and healthy lifestyle; 3) Creating and improving the social self, and 4) Formation of an active citizen.

The Health Education Programme does not seek to cover only the teaching process within the classroom but also ensure that students can live and operate in an environment that promotes the adoption of healthy lifestyle choices. Within this framework, all schools are encouraged, starting in 2009 on an annual basis, to develop a Health Education and Crime Prevention Action Plan aiming at taking initiatives and actions locally in the school unit for addressing timely social problems and in particular delinquency and security environment, tolerance, cooperation. The Health Education Course supports schools in the holistic approach to serious offending incidents through the Rapid Response Team. There is a large number of pedagogical tools and resources provided to teachers responsible for health education, including seminars for teachers, access to printed and online material as well as promotion of good practices on Health Education. Some of the available resources and seminars for the educators can be found on the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute website ([Αγωγή Υγείας – Εγχειρίδια, Υλικό](#)).

**Sex education and personal relationships education:** Issues related to sexual education are mainly integrated into the curriculum of Health Education in the thematic sub-section “Family Programming, Sexual and Reproductive Health”. The sub-section contains topics that are directly related to a holistic understanding of sexual and reproductive health such as national and European legal framework, stereotypes, domestic violence, dangerous sexual behaviour, homophobia, the role of religion and the media, etc. These themes are approached in relation to the role of pressure friends, values of life, sex stereotypes, self-confidence, her security, rights and obligations as well as abuse substances. The topic of sexual education is also embedded in the school subjects of Physics and Biology as a cross-curricular programme.

**Grant of non-school-related actions to support pupils belonging to vulnerable groups.** The Programme is operational since 2012 and is part of the MOECSY’s commitments to the National Strategy of the Cyprus National Addictions Authority to address the Dependence on Illegal Substances and the Harmful Use of Alcohol (2013-2020). The MOECSY with the Committee of Health Education and Citizenship favour the development of actions by schools aiming at involving these children in non-school activities, to make creative use of their free time. The actions aim at offering substantial support (learning, emotional, social, self-empowerment, highlighting and fostering talent, developing a safe lifestyle) to pupils who belong to vulnerable groups.

## Peer-to-peer education approaches

Currently, there are no top-level guidelines, programmes projects or initiatives facilitating or relying on peer-to-peer education.

## Collaboration and partnerships

At the end of 2021, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MOECSY) in collaboration with the Cyprus National Addictions Authority signed a cooperation agreement ([Συνεργασία μεταξύ Αρχής Αντιμετώπισης Εξαρτήσεων Κύπρου και Υπουργείου Παιδείας, Πολιτισμού, Αθλητισμού και Νεολαίας για την πρόληψη και αντιμετώπιση παράνομων ουσιών εξάρτησης στο σχολείο](#)), which consists of 3 annexes:

- The “Cooperation Protocol for the Prevention and Treatment of Illicit Substance Abuse in Schools” ([Πρωτόκολλο Συνεργασίας για την πρόληψη και αντιμετώπιση των παράνομων ουσιών εξάρτησης στο σχολείο μεταξύ Υπουργείου Δικαιοσύνης και Δημοσίας Τάξεως \(Αστυνομία Κύπρου – Υπηρεσία Καταπολέμησης Ναρκωτικών\), του Υπουργείου Παιδείας, Πολιτισμού, Αθλητισμού και Νεολαίας – Διευθύνσεις Σχολείων και της Αρχής](#)



[Αντιμετώπισης Εξαρτήσεων Κύπρου](#)). The Cooperation Protocol sets the objectives of the collaboration, the various actors who participate in the Protocol, the framework and guidelines under which they collaborate for the prevention and treatment of illicit substances abuse in schools as well as other important parameters.

- New Protocol for referring students who display addictive behaviours in treatment programs (Νέο Πρωτόκολλο για Παραπομπή Μαθητών/ Μαθητριών που παρουσιάζουν/εμφανίζουν εξαρτητικές συμπεριφορές σε θεραπευτικά προγράμματα). The Protocol refers to students of Secondary General and Secondary Technical Education who display addictive behaviours in the school environment.
- A list of programmes funded and approved by the Cyprus National Addictions Authority ([Επιχορηγημένα και Αδειοδοτημένα Προγράμματα της Αρχής Αντιμετώπισης Εξαρτήσεων Κύπρου](#)) in which students can participate after they have followed the referral procedure.

The collaboration between the MOECSY and the Health Professionals-Visitors is vital for promoting healthy lifestyles to students of all ages in schools. Their operation began with a Ministerial Decision in 1976. In particular, [School Health Services](#) (SHS) are provided to all children attending Primary, Secondary and Secondary-Technical Education schools. School health services staff is comprised by health professionals that can help all students within the school environment. As the contribution of the health professionals for encouraging healthy lifestyles and health nutrition falls largely into the category of information and counselling structures, it will be discussed in the following section.

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

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

- [Lectures for future parents and pregnant women](#) are provided by [the Health Visitors of the Ministry of Health](#). These lectures are targeting future parents and pregnant women for informing, educating and preparing them for their new role. Contact points are the respective general hospitals of the districts of Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca and Paphos.
- Lectures on the implications of smoking again by the Health Visitors of the Ministry of Health for young people to be informed on the implications of smoking in their life.
- [Lectures on the Prevention of HIV/AIDS](#) and sexually transmitted diseases aim at providing students the necessary knowledge and competencies for the development of healthy lifestyles of students. These programmes are provided by Health Visitors, in cooperation with the administration and teaching personnel of the public schools.
- The [programme "TARGET" for Drug Harm Reduction](#) coordinated by the Nursing Service Administration of the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Cyprus Anti-Drug Association contributes to a multidimensional field in Drug Addiction ranging from measures to protect vulnerable populations with difficulties in accessing health services to measures of broader beneficial public health interventions to society as a whole. Contact point of the programme is the Cyprus Anti-Drug Association.
- [Protection and Health Promotion Programs for special groups](#) - Health Visitors in collaboration with other agencies and services provide preventive health care services (ex. immunizations, tuberculosis tests, health promotion programs) to special groups of people, such as enslaved persons, prisoners, immigrants, asylum seekers.
- [1410 Help Line](#), offered by the Youth Board of Cyprus since 1990. It is dialled by people in search for responsible answers on daily life matters, but also on more complex issues such as addictive substances, sexuality issues, eating disorders, etc. Among the services offered are: raising awareness on various psychosocial and social issues, giving a referral to other experts and services for further examination and intervention, if necessary, counselling, enabling callers to share their concerns, providing advice and encouragement on their next step.

- [E-Counselling](#) is the website of 1410 Service. It handles the same issues and follows the same principles and deontology. What differs is the counselling process. Instead of talking on the phone, youth can chat with a counsellor through their pc or smartphone.
- Information and awareness-raising campaigns on reducing the exposure of children to second-hand smoke ([Εκστρατείες Ενημέρωσης και Ευαισθητοποίησης για τη μείωση της έκθεσης των παιδιών στο παθητικό κάπνισμα](#)) – The campaigns are organised since 2005 by the Cyprus National Committee "Environment and Child's Health" and they include lectures, pilot surveys, development of audio-visual materials and participation in radio and television broadcasts as well as in other media channels. Each year, the Committee also organises a one-day conference on different topics on children's health. Information material can be found also on the [official website of the organisation](#).

### Youth-targeted information campaigns:

The "HIV/AIDS Supporting Center K.Y.F.A" organizes information campaigns ([Πρόγραμμα ενημέρωσης μαθητών δευτεροβάθμιας και τριτοβάθμιας εκπαίδευσης](#)) to secondary and tertiary education students on the topic of HIV and its prevention. The Centre has also a mobile check-point ([Κ.Υ.Φ.Α. CheckPoint](#)) that provides information and on-spot free anonymous HIV test to the public. The mobile check-point visits several universities – especially during the HIV International Day – in order to sensitise young people on the topic of HIV. In addition, the Ministry of Health organises several informational campaigns about smoking targeting young people of the island. However, there are no major, large-scale, youth-targeted information campaigns on healthy lifestyles and factors affecting the health and well-being of young people in Cyprus. Informational campaigns normally target the general population of the island.

## 7.5 Mental health

### National strategy(ies)

There are no top-level strategies and other policy measures addressing the mental health of young people in Cyprus, including suicide prevention measures. In Cyprus in 1997, the "Psychiatric Care Law" ([Ο περί Ψυχιατρικής Νοσηλείας Νόμος του 1997](#)) was passed, which was subsequently amended in 2003 and 2007. This law provides for the establishment and operation of Psychiatric Centres for the care of mentally ill individuals, the safeguarding of the rights of these individuals and the definition of the duties and responsibilities of their relatives. The approval by the House of Representatives of this law has been a major advance in psychiatric reform, particularly with regard to the protection of patients' rights, the implementation of de-institutionalization and the promotion of community psychiatry in Cyprus.

There is not a suicide prevention strategy in Cyprus, either as a standalone document or as an integrated element of another national policy/plan.

### Improving the mental health of young people

Available top-level policies, programmes, projects or initiatives addressing the mental health of young people in Cyprus are the following:

**Mental Health Services of the Cyprus Ministry of Health:** The Mental Health Services offer a number of services for young adults, adolescents and children in all districts of Cyprus. These are:

#### For adults:

- Psychiatric Clinic
- Community Services
- Vocational Rehabilitation Unit
- Day Centre

- Psychotherapy Department
- Mental Health Services in Central Prison Department

For adolescents and children:

- Inpatient Unit for Adolescent's hospitalization: hospitalization of teenagers with serious psychiatric and psychosocial problems
- Services Consultation – liaison child and adolescent psychiatry: psychiatric and psychological assessments, management and treatment to children and young people (up to 17 years). The liaison child and adolescent psychiatry deals with cases where mental health issues / emotional and family distress result from acute, chronic or life-threatening illness and disability as well as when mental health and emotional problems present as physical symptoms.
- Child and Adolescent Eating Disorders Centre: outpatient assessment, treatment and care for children and young people, up to the age of 18, with severe physical and psychological problems relating to eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge-eating, and food refusal.
- Prevention and psycho-social intervention centre: services for diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation to children, adolescents, and their families. Interventions include the family environment and the school context.
- Inpatient Unit for Adolescent's in Addiction: adolescents with addiction problems that present delinquent behaviour, severe mental disorder and a court order is pending for their obligatory examination, can be hospitalized.

For more information about each of the above services, please visit the Mental Health Services official website available in Greek and English.

The Youth Board of Cyprus (national authority), recognizing the importance of safeguarding mental health especially for young people, is leading a range of services that openly respond to all young people. The aim of the services is not only to help people with mental disorders, but also to empower all young people to be able to secure their own welfare on their own. The relevant services are listed below:

The **1410 Help Line**: This line is addressed to all those who want to get responses on issues related to their everyday life, family and social relationships, school issues, isolation, antisocial behaviour, anxiety, depression, mourning, but also for more complex issues such as addiction, sexuality issues, eating disorders, etc. The same service is also available over the internet by using the [E-counselling link](#) and it deals with the same issues and follows the same principles and deontology as the Help Line 1410. The Help Line is a permanent measure without a specific timeframe of implementation.

**Counselling Services 'Protasi'**: The purpose of these advisory services is to provide support and personalized counselling to young people, couples and families facing challenges in their lives. The services are addressed to children, teenagers and young people who want to share confidentially their personal concerns with a qualified advisor on issues such as relationship problems (friendships, sexual relationships or marriages), substances addiction problems, domestic violence, antisocial/ delinquent behaviour, any other issue of concern. In addition, they are aimed at couples and parents who have difficulties in their relationships and / or their families. The services are provided by registered psychologists, without any charge to the public. 'Protasi' is a permanent measure without a specific timeframe of implementation.

**The Psychosocial Empowerment Programme "Micri Arktos"**: This programme aims at personality development and improvement of social skills, as well as confidence boosting and personal empowerment that will enable individuals to deal successfully with daily challenges. Interventions are done through experiential workshops and psycho-educational groups and aim at personal development and empowerment through the growth of individual skills and competences such as self-awareness, problem-solving and

decision-making, managing emotions, such as anxiety and anger, communication skills, etc. The programme addresses young people, aged 16 - 35 years old, who wish to participate individually, as well as groups and organisations that wish to offer their members the opportunity to participate in personal development and empowerment programs (e.g., Youth Organizations, Sports and Cultural Unions, Municipal and Community Authorities, etc.)

**The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) preventive programmes:** According to the Ministry's [2020 Annual Report](#), the EPS's mission is to protect and promote mental health and facilitate learning and development by empowering all pupils within the educational system, from preschool to the end of secondary education. The provided supportive programmes, interventions and psychoeducation trainings were developed and delivered to prevent school failure and enhance psychological health issues. Examples include stress management, dealing with difficult behaviour, anger management, prevention of school violence and bullying, emotional literacy, promotion of self - confidence and many more.

**PERSEAS and PROMETHEAS Counselling centres** ([Κέντρο Συμβουλευτικής Εφήβων και Οικογένειας ΠΕΡΣΕΑΣ και ΠΡΟΜΗΘΕΑΣ](#)) belong to the Mental Health Services of the Ministry of Health and exclusively specialise in providing counseling and treatment interventions for substance addiction as well as addictive behaviors to adolescents and young adults. The centres respond to the specific needs of every adolescent / young adult from the age of 13 until the age of 22, and their family, through systematic group, individualized, family, intensive or short-term interventions. The main goal is that every family member will be able to develop and acquire more efficient ways of communication and relationships as well as useful coping skills for a dependence-free meaningful life. Therapeutic programmes target early intervention so that the adolescents' / young adults' course towards addiction from illicit (drugs), legal (alcohol) substances, or other addictive behaviours (gambling, internet) is blocked, and addiction is prevented. The services provided are free of charge and fully confidential.

At the same time, multiple NGOs specialise in providing support on particular mental thematic areas in Cyprus and offer their services independently.

There is not a top-level policy, programme, project or initiative for suicide prevention in Cyprus. Advice counselling and support to schools and communities following tragic and traumatic events are offered by the [Educational Psychology Service of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#), and the relevant educational psychologists are involved in crisis intervention on suicide of children, death of children, etc. However, prevention programmes organised by top-level authorities are not available.

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

### Policy framework

There are currently no top-level legal and/or policy frameworks establishing mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks. Early detection mechanisms are widespread to various stakeholders at national level and are described in the Strategy on the Rights of the Child in health (2017-2025) ([Εθνική Στρατηγική για τα Δικαιώματα του Παιδιού στην Υγεία](#)). The main stakeholders involved in early detection mechanisms are described in the following section.

### Stakeholders

#### School Health Services (SHS) (Σχολιατρική Υπηρεσία)

The School Health Services operate under the Ministry of Health. The services provided by SHS are performed by Professional Health Visitors and School Doctors. The main objectives of these free-of-charge services are the prevention of illness as well as the promotion of

health and well-being of the students in public and private primary and secondary schools through:

1. Early detection and care of students with health problems
2. Development of healthy attitudes and healthy behaviours by students
3. Ensure a healthy and hygienic environment for children at school
4. Prevention of communicable diseases at school.

In doing so, in terms of the early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks, the SHS is conducting medical examinations and screening tests on vision acuity, hearing tests, normal developmental physical growth, colour vision tests, scoliometres for early detection of deformities of the spinal cord, particularly scoliosis. In addition, the SHS is responsible for the prevention and investigation of communicable diseases, such as viral meningitis and tuberculosis as well as for the provision of vaccinations. The prevention includes finally the provision of medication, information on the necessary vaccinations, evaluation of vaccination coverage as well as participation in continuing education programmes of School Administration.

### **Dental Care Services** ([Οδοντιατρικές Υπηρεσίες](#))

The Dental Care Services of the Cyprus Ministry of Health run the early detection programme for dental problems which is provided to pre-primary, primary and secondary education students (more specifically, children aged 5, 6, 11, 15 years old). The Dental Care Services have mobile units that visit schools located in remote areas or areas of low socio-economic level and offer to children free preventive and curative treatment. Students not only have the chance to be informed about oral diseases but also, they are instructed and practiced how to perform adequate oral hygiene. For that purpose, toothpastes and toothbrushes are distributed to the students. In addition, educational material related with oral health has been created and has been distributed to school-teachers, along with seminars on oral health for teachers organized by the Public Dental Services in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports and Youth. With the help of this material teachers can enrich the lesson of health education and incorporate oral health in it.

### **Educational Psychology Service (EPS)**

The mission of the EPS is to protect and promote mental health and facilitate learning and development by empowering all pupils within the educational system, from preschool to the end of secondary education. Among its duties, the Service with its educational psychologists is responsible for offering supportive programmes, interventions and psychoeducation trainings that aim to prevent school failure and enhance psychological health issues. Examples include stress management, dealing with difficult behaviour, anger management, prevention of school violence and bullying, emotional literacy, promotion of self-confidence, dealing with loss and bereavement and identifying and acting on sexual abuse.

### **Guidance to stakeholders**

The provision of services of the Educational Psychology Service is regulated by the "Crisis prevention and management at the school environment – A Guide for educational psychologists" ([«Πρόληψη και διαχείριση κρίσεων στο χώρο του σχολείου – Οδηγός για εκπαιδευτικούς ψυχολόγους»](#)) and the "Crisis Management – Handbook for Educators" ([«Διαχείριση κρίσεων στα σχολεία – Εγχειρίδιο για Εκπαιδευτικούς»](#)). As for the rest of the stakeholders, the guidelines which regulate the provision of their services are not documented in available data.

### **Target groups**

There is no specific differentiation when referring to the target groups by the programmes addressed.

## Funding

The funding in all cases is part of the state budget allocated to the respective stakeholders for the provision of their services.

## 7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

The guidelines of [the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for the Development of Child friendly Health Services](#) underline that the fundamental principles that should characterize "Child Friendly" (up to 16 years old) health services include the following:

1. Respect for fundamental human rights and the specific rights of the child
2. Dignity
3. Participation
4. Equal access to quality health services
5. The best interests of the child.

Taking into consideration the previously mentioned principles, a helpline and a hotline are provided through the [Cyprus Safer Internet Centre](#), for addressing the issue of cyberbullying. The helpline 1480 ([Γραμμή Βοήθειας Helpline 1480](#)) and hotline 1480 ([Γραμμή Καταγγελιών Hotline 1480](#)) operate within the framework of the European project "CyberSafety II – Better Internet for Kids in Cyprus" ([CyberSafety II- Ένα καλύτερο Διαδίκτυο για τα παιδιά στην Κύπρο](#)), aiming to ensure that all users can receive expert advice and support from qualified operators, in real time, on topics related to the use of the internet and digital technologies as well as offer a direct, easily accessible and responsible point of contact for users to report illegal content or actions on the internet. The CyberSafety II project succeeds the previous European project CyberSafety I that was successfully implemented between 2016-2018.

The helpline services are intended for children, adolescents, parents, teachers, and other professionals, providing advice and support on issues related to the safe, responsible and ethical use of the internet and other digital media. The helpline operators provide, among other aspects, advice and support on issues such as cyberbullying, excessive use of the Internet, data privacy, social media problems (e.g., fake profiles, account violations, inappropriate and harmful content), sexting. The hotline services address the same target groups and handle public information related to content of child sexual abuse (e.g., photos), racist and xenophobic material that violates the law as well as anything that is considered illegal. The relevant services are provided on the basis of the guidelines and legislations of the national law and follow the "[INHOPE – Association of Internet Hotline Providers Code of Practice](#)", a public document with guidelines, rules, regulations and technical specifications for the proper operation of hotlines whose work is to eradicate illegal content on the Internet. Both services are based on the principles of free-of-charge provision, anonymity, and confidentiality to make the services more attractive to young people. Communication with relevant bodies in Cyprus, such as the [Cyber Crime Unit](#), the [Digital Security Authority](#) is being established to ensure the right procedures. To monitor the operation of the helpline 1480, quarterly statistics ([Στατιστικά Στοιχεία Γραμμής Βοήθειας Helpline 1480](#)) are published on the project website.

At the same time on the basis of youth participation for creating a more youth friendly environment for tackling internet safety issues, the "CYberSafety Youth Panel" ([Ομάδα Νέων](#)) is an initiative under the CyberSafety II project, which encourages children and young people from different demographic groups in Cyprus in an interactive participation and active contribution on the creative and responsible use of the internet. Computer Science university students act as mentors for the younger ones by providing a role model, while members of the Cyprus Children's Parliament ([Κυπριακή Παιδοβουλή](#)), the Commissioner for Children's Rights Young Advisors ([Ομάδα Εφήβων Συμβούλων της Επιτροπής Προστασίας των Δικαιωμάτων του Παιδιού](#)) and the Young Coaches for the



Internet ([Μικροί Εκπαιδευτές για το Διαδίκτυο](#)) are part of the Youth Panel. The activities in which the Youth Panel is involved are being monitored through its annual action plans. The latest one available is for the school year 2018/19 ([Σχέδιο δράσης Ομάδας Νέων για τη σχολική χρονιά 2018-2019](#)).

“School-based health services” supervised by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, which are intended to offer health services within the school environment (for more information, read [section 7.6](#)), as well as other [services](#) offered by the Ministry of Health, which provide guidance and services inside the home/family environment, are services which help to promote a youth friendly healthcare for Cyprus’ youth.

In addition, the newly established [National Health Insurance Scheme](#) (GESY) is an E-health services system, which makes the provision of health facilities more youth-friendly. The first stage of GESY implementation, which began in June 2019, provides for the introduction of outpatient healthcare, i.e., the provision of healthcare services by personal doctors and outpatient specialists, pharmacists, and laboratories. The second stage, which began in 2020, includes the introduction of all the remaining healthcare services, i.e., inpatient healthcare and services, services offered by allied health professionals, nurses and midwives, the accident and emergency departments, ambulance services, dentists, palliative healthcare services and medical rehabilitation services. The electronic platform of GESY allows its users to register in the system and have access to their digitised health records as well as search for medical providers around Cyprus in the relevant database of providers.

## 7.8 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

As illustrated in the [Cyprus News Agency on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019](#), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth announced the preparation of the National Strategy for Sports. The preparation begins by conducting research, and this is the first step towards modernizing Cypriot sports.

### Ongoing debates

In the public sphere, the topic of young people’s mental health is of primary importance, especially among stakeholders who influence youth policies. In an attempt to identify the current situation in the emotional state of youth in Cyprus, the Youth Board of Cyprus has published on January 2022 the results of a quantitative survey which involved 500 young people aged 18-35. The survey ([Παρουσίαση Αποτελεσμάτων Ποσοτικής Έρευνας «Η Ψυχική υγεία των νέων»](#)) also aimed to investigate the degree of knowledge and satisfaction of young people from the existing structures/support services of the State, the effects of the pandemic as well as to identify the needs of young people so as to offer them more targeted support in mental health issues. Therefore, the results of the survey can be a great tool for improving State’s services and policies on youth’s emotional and mental health.

## 8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

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The [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#) is the main actor involved in policy-making and the main governmental authority responsible for preserving and promoting culture and creativity in the country and abroad. Although there is not a youth culture and creativity strategy in the country, the field is covered through the [National Youth Strategy](#) and the policies of the Ministry as described in the following sub-chapters. One of the major forthcoming developments in the field is the proposal for the creation of a Deputy

Ministry for Culture, which has been approved by the Council of Ministers and is subject to the final approval of the House of Representatives for its implementation.

## 8.1 General context

### Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

Following a series of consultations with young people in 2015-2016 where creativity and culture was highlighted as the main form of expression of young people, one of the action fields of the National Youth Strategy - as mentioned in [chapter 1 on Youth Policy](#) - was dedicated to Creativity and Culture.

Music festivals, modern music concerts, photographic exhibitions, theatre performances, solo art exhibitions, youth festivals, local folk culture and philanthropic events are the main and the most popular activities funded through the national "Youth Initiatives Funding" scheme.

However, the main challenge to the activity of young people in forms of arts, such as painting, classical music, dance and movies, is the lack of proper education as stated by the young people themselves throughout the consultation process that took place for the purposes of drafting the National Youth Strategy.

In the Cypriot formal educational system, children with special talent in music have the opportunity to attend [public musical schools](#) while the rest who are interested in other forms of arts can choose the specific sector (Fine Arts) during their upper secondary school attendance.

Local authorities and the Youth Board of Cyprus offer to youngsters and young people up to the age of 35, the opportunity to participate in art classes on a very low cost, either through the Open Schools of each Municipality in Cyprus or through "The [Steamers' programme of the Youth Board of Cyprus](#). The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth also provides such classes to young people over 15 (and to the rest of the public), through the Adult Education Centres which offer lifelong learning opportunities at every community and/or youth club that is interested in forming small groups of participants (similarly, the tuition fees are very low).

According to the [Labour Force Survey 1999 - 2020](#), of the Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 7 114 people have been working at the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation sector of the economy in 2020, rather than 4 290 in 2008. The Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus does not keep records on the participation of young people aged 14-35 (which is the target group of the National Youth Strategy) in the creative and cultural industry on a paid or voluntary basis.

In addition, a decreasing trend in young people's participation in cultural clubs has been observed in the Youth Barometer 2020 and 2021 results ([Αποτελέσματα Ερευνών](#)). The Youth Barometer is a quantitative study conducted by the Youth Board of Cyprus in cooperation with a research centre, twice a year, with the aim to investigate the needs, interests and views of young people aged 14-35 years old. According to the 2020 and 2021 results, only 15% and 8% of young people respectively, take part in cultural clubs.

### Main concepts

The history and culture of Cyprus date back 9000 years to the 7th millennium BC. At the crossroads of three continents - Europe, Asia and Africa - and with a turbulent history with various conquerors, Cyprus has developed and for centuries maintained, its own civilization. It remained a centre of Greek culture with Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, French, Venetian, Ottoman and British influences. The maintenance, protection and preservation of the rich archaeological heritage of the island is high on the governments' priorities list. At the same time, the government prioritizes the preservation of customs and the promotion of literature, music, dance, the visual arts and the cinema amongst

Cypriot citizens and abroad in order to highlight Cyprus' cultural richness and links with the international community.

All the above showcase the richness of culture in the country. Nevertheless, the national legislation does not conceptualize "access to culture" nor "cultural heritage". In 1975 Cyprus signed the **UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage**, therefore Cyprus considers as "cultural heritage" the following: • monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science; • groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science; • sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view. Regarding creativity as a concept, the official documents and policies strictly connect it with entrepreneurship rather than creative expression.

## 8.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

The [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#) (MOECSY) is the main governmental authority responsible for Creativity and Culture and specifically, the Ministry's Department of Cultural Services ([Τμήμα Πολιτιστικών Υπηρεσιών](#)). As mentioned in the MOEC's 2020 Annual Report, the Department of Cultural Services is the main actor in developing the cultural policy of the state in the field of contemporary culture. Its area of focus includes the development of Arts and Letters in Cyprus, the public's awareness of and participation in cultural events and the promotion of the country's cultural achievements abroad.

The Minister of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth is also the liaison between the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) (state's authority on youth issues), the rest of the Ministries and other relevant stakeholders. Therefore, regarding the policies affecting young people's participation and involvement in culture, the Youth Board of Cyprus' structures and mechanisms are involved. More information on how policies for youth are decided can be found on the Youth Wiki's [Chapter 1.4 Youth Policy Decision-making](#) and [1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries](#).

At the same time, policies taken at the national level are enforced centrally since the responsibility of decision-making is under the central government and not the local authorities. The local authorities are in charge of the implementation of programmes through funding they receive from the government. Moreover, youth NGO's, such as [Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation \(KOKEN\)](#), are also funded to organise cultural events locally.

Also, there are some non-public actors, such as the [Cyprus Architectural Heritage Organization](#) and the [Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation](#), which aim to promote and highlight the island's cultural heritage, both internally and abroad.

In 2017, the [Cyprus Academy of Sciences, Letters and Arts](#) was founded. The academy is the uppermost spiritual institution of Cyprus, and its goal – among others – is the promotion and cultivation of science, letters and arts within Cyprus and globally.

### Cross-sectorial cooperation

The Department of Cultural Services cooperates with the rest of the MOECSY Departments when it comes to cultural issues, and also with other Departments of the public administration, such as the [Cyprus Department of Antiquities](#) of the [Ministry of Transport, Communications and Works](#), the [Cyprus Theatre Organisation](#), the [Cyprus](#)

**Deputy Ministry of Tourism**, the **Cyprus Youth Symphony Orchestra** and the **Presidential Commissioner** whose responsibilities include the management, coordination, support and resolution of matters related to the missing persons, the enclaved persons in the occupied areas and humanitarian issues, expatriate Cypriots, religious groups and the destruction of the religious and cultural heritage in the occupied areas.

Under the National Youth Strategy though, a new cross-sectorial partnership is being developed especially on culture and creativity-related policies for youth (see also **1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries**).

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

### Existence of a national strategy

One of the eight fields of action of the [National Youth Strategy](#) is Creativity and Culture. The National Youth Strategy was adopted in May 2017 by the Council of Ministers and it covers the period from 2017 until 2022.

### Scope and contents

The Strategy states that, Culture is recognised as a major contributor to the advancement of creativeness in young people, which is considered tremendously beneficial for the whole of the society both on economic and social aspects.

The development of arts and cultural activities is one of the most important means of expression for young people in Cyprus. Therefore, the Strategy targets to the promotion of the following goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Creation of opportunities for easy access and equal participation in arts and culture;

Goal 2: Creation of opportunities for the development of artistic creativity.

The priorities of the National Youth Strategy for achieving the above targets are the following:

1. Ensure equal access to cultural institutions (e.g., theatres, museums a.o.) and programmes for all young people;
2. Promote and support the professional development of young artists;
3. Encourage the development of new methods of cultural expression and artistic creation;
4. Create more places where young people can develop their talent and express themselves creatively (accessible to people with disabilities);
5. Enhance education and training for young professionals in culture;
6. Promote youth interaction on cultural issues with other countries;
7. Develop cooperation with youth, sports and culture institutions from other countries in order to exchange good practices in dealing with youth issues;
8. Give young people opportunities for participation in local, regional or national actions.

### Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The national coordinator for the drafting, implementation and monitoring of the National Youth Strategy is [the Youth Board of Cyprus](#). For the implementation of the Strategy, a Cross-sectorial Working Group on Youth is established to ensure constant coordination and close cooperation among all governmental institutions that deal with youth issues. The Cross-sectorial Working Group has developed two 3-year Action Plans (2017-2019 & 2020-2022) and the first Progress Report 2017-2019 of the National Youth Strategy.

## Revisions/updates

The National Youth Strategy for 2017-2022 is the newest policy document and the first in its kind at national level. Before the National Youth Strategy, there was no other policy document concerning youth in culture and creativity nor the broader sector of culture. The Strategy has not undergone any revisions since 2017.

## 8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

### Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

The Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC) runs the "**Youth Initiatives**" funding scheme which subsidizes young people and youth NGO's, youth clubs and local youth councils to organise their own projects on different action fields. Three of those action fields are related to Cultural Interventions; Innovation and Creativity Projects; Youth and Books. According to the YBC's 2021 infographics of the Scheme's funded projects, cultural events seem to prevail in young people's activities. Specifically, almost 32% of the actions funded in 2021 concerned cultural activities (111 funded projects out of 351 successful applications). Moreover, in an effort to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Youth Board announced a new funding scheme for young people and youth organisations entitled "ReCOVer20". Around 30% of the funded projects concerned cultural activities (26 out of 86 approved projects). The above data is available on the YBC website ([ΣΤΑΤΙΣΤΙΚΑ ΣΤΟΙΧΕΙΑ](#)).

Also, one foundation promoting specifically the access of young people to culture is the Larnaca Cultural Foundation for Children and Youth ([Ίδρυμα Πολιτιστικής Δημιουργίας για Παιδιά και Νέους](#)) established by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth in 2010, and hosted by the Municipality of Larnaca. The key objectives of the Foundation are to provide equal opportunities to children and youth to participate in creativity through cultural and artistic experiences. Also, it aims to strengthen interculturalism, to promote our cultural identity and participate in cultural and artistic projects by focusing on children, teenagers and the youth. The Foundation organises on an annual basis a number of activities and programmes (e.g., creative workshops on theatre, music, personal development, creative writing, workshops with emphasis on architecture as well as script writing and film making) which enhance cultural participation of young people regardless of their nationality or financial background, in the broader region of Larnaca.

The [Cyprus Theatre Organisation](#) (THOC) during the year 2020/2021 organised two-day scenography and theatrical play workshops, named "Valitsa" ([Εργαστήρια Βαλίτσα](#)), in which minors who live in juvenile facilities can participate. For young people under 25 years, THOC also offers reduced ticket price (for THOC's productions), as well as organized visits to their buildings with an educational program for theatre evaluation..

Furthermore, the [Department of Cultural Services](#) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth offers various funding opportunities to either professionals in the field, NGO's, local authorities or general public, such as:

- TRANSIT SCHEME 2020: Enhancing mobility in the field of visual arts: Participation to Hospitality Programs of Artists Abroad
- CULTURE PROGRAMME II 2021-2025, Sub-programmes:
  - "Popular Culture", Scheme for supporting Activities for the conservation of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Traditional Tourism
  - "Visual Arts" Scheme for supporting Visual Arts and Development
  - "Cinema" Scheme for supporting Cinema Activities, Cinema Education and Training
  - "Music" Scheme for supporting Activities for Music Development
  - "Literature" Scheme for supporting Literary and writing Activities

- "Dance" Scheme for supporting Activities in the field of Dancing
- "Theatre" Scheme for supporting of the Theatre Creation and Development
- "Support for Cultural Activities of Religious Groups" Scheme
- Support of Cultural Bodies for the Coverage of the Promotion, Communication and International Networking Needs
- Annual Grants Program for Natural Persons for their participation in cultural events/programs/activities
- Enhancement of periodical Cultural Publications
- "Terpsichore" (Τερψιχόρη) - Programme for the enhancement of Creation and Research in the field of Modern Dance
- Cultural Decentralization Program (The program aims to promote cultural decentralization through a series of quality activities taking place in rural communities)

The programme guides of the above-mentioned funding schemes are available only in Greek and can be found in the Ministry's official website ([ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΤΙΚΕΣ ΥΠΗΡΕΣΙΕΣ - Προγράμματα και Σχέδια Επιχορηγήσεων "Πολιτισμός II" \(2021-2025\) - Τα Σχέδια του Προγράμματος για το 2022](#)). Since the guides are updated every year, the respective links to each programme may also change.

The [Department of Theatre Development of the Cyprus Theatre Organisation](#), has been engaged since its establishment in 1979 in ways and projects that broaden and promote theatre activity in Cyprus, in cooperation with other bodies and social groups.

The [main activities](#) of the Department of Theatre Development are the following:

- Subsidisation of performances by theatre companies which are active in Cyprus;
- School theatre – Organisation of the Pancyprian Theatre School Games and workshops for teachers;
- Amateur theatre – Organisation of the Pancyprian Festival of Amateur Theatre;
- Organisation of Masterclasses for various theatre disciplines;
- Collaboration with non-governmental organisations and groups for the promotion of activities for theatre;
- Financial support of organised groups that have among their objectives the development of theatre (Cyprus Centre of the International Theatre Institute, Actors Union of Cyprus, Cyprus Playwrights Society, etc.);
- Provision of information to prospective students, parents, professionals, organisations interested in the theatre in Cyprus, educational institutions, organised groups, etc.

It should be noted that due to the lockdown and the restrictive measures for the Covid-19 pandemic, several festivals and cultural activities had to be postponed or cancelled. In an effort to support art workers and the cultural sector in general, the Council of Ministers decided the following measures:

- Artists (including young ones) were supported by a lump sum amounting to €1.500 ([Καταβολή έκτακτης χορηγίας σε επαγγελματίες των Τεχνών και του Πολιτισμού](#)).
- Cultural NGOs received a subsidy based on certain criteria of up to €20.000.
- Further support was allocated to the programme "Culture".

### **Disseminating information on cultural opportunities**

The main information provider to young people in Cyprus are the **Youth Information Centres** (YIC) operated by the Youth Board of Cyprus. Therefore, information on cultural opportunities is disseminated through the Centres who are located in every city of the



non-occupied part of the island. To reach out to all young persons, the Centres collaborate with the local schools, clubs and authorities who also run cultural services departments. Moreover, the YIC act as multipliers of the [Eurodesk Cyprus](#) (also run by the Youth Board of Cyprus) which is responsible for the **European Youth Portal**, thus disseminating youth targeted information on cultural opportunities and initiatives online.

The Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth have also initiated the **Portal of Cultural Information** programme which is incorporated in the creation of a national network of cultural information. The Portal presents artists' profile, their creative works and covers the areas of Visual Arts, Cinematography, Music, Writing and Performing Arts.

There is also the **Cyprus Music Information Centre** (CyMIC) established in 2008 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth and the [Cyprus Symphony Orchestra Foundation](#) with the aim to become the primary provider of specialized information, publications and music scores about the whole range of Cyprus music

### **Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people**

As mentioned in the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (MOECSY) [2020 Annual Report](#), the MOECSY either through the educational system or through the Cultural Services Department promotes awareness of the national and European cultural heritage. As of 1st January 2011, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth participates in the Cultural Routes programme of the Council of Europe. The Cultural Routes Programme considers that cultural routes are significant tools for the development of intercultural dialogue, cultural rapprochement, sustainable cultural development, and the promotion of cultural tourism.

In 2017, Cyprus and Denmark held the title of the European Capital of Culture. Aarhus was the city in Denmark that shared the title with Pafos. The Programme of Events of Pafos2017 was built around three basic theme lines: Myth and Religion, World Travellers and Stages of the Future. The Cultural Services promoted a large number of activities in the domain of Popular Culture.

Several actions for raising awareness on cultural heritage take place in the context of formal education as well. The UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet) was established in Cyprus since the school year 1969/1970, under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth. It aims at promoting UNESCO's goals for young people. The ASPnet includes public and private primary and secondary schools, which engage in a variety of ways, such as by organizing conferences and participating in events hosted by other schools abroad. For the school year 2018 /2019, the general theme around which the ASPnet schools in Cyprus were active was: "World Citizenship and Education for Cultural Heritage". In the context of its implementation, the [42th Pancyprrian Symposium ASPnet](#) took place between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of April, 2019 at Omodos, with the participation of about 300 students and teachers of Primary and Secondary Education from schools in Cyprus and Greece. The subject of the symposium was "Cultural Heritage: knowledge, development, evolution". During the workshops, students had the opportunity to broaden their knowledge of lesser-known aspects of cultural heritage, to develop skills for its preservation and to experience alternative methods of learning, personal development and active participation in the community.

The **Cyprus National Commission for UNESCO** operates under the supervision of the State as exercised by the Minister of Education and Culture through the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth provides the Commission with funding for its organizational needs and the promotion of its programmes. The Commission actively promotes the implementation of the UNESCO Conventions and Programmes in Cyprus in conjunction with all Ministries and Government Services, as well as with Non-Governmental Organisations the activities of which are related to those of UNESCO, in other words, education, culture, social studies and humanities, natural studies and communication and information.

The **Cyprus Research Centre** (C.R.C.) was founded in 1964 with the aim of enabling Cypriot and overseas scholars to research the history and civilisation of Cyprus and to have the conclusions of the relevant research published on a systematic basis. Research programmes are connected with the most fundamental aspects of Cypriot studies, that is on the history, folklore, linguistics, literature, ethnography and sociology of Cyprus. The C.R.C. has a specialised library covering the history and civilisation not only of Cyprus but also that of Greece, Europe and the Middle East in general.

There is also a **Creative Europe Desk in Cyprus** aiming at providing assistance to cultural and creative agencies regarding the Creative Europe Programme. The Desks are designed to: - Provide information about and promote the Creative Europe programme in their country; - Assist the cultural and creative sectors in relation to the programme and provide basic information on other support opportunities; - Stimulate cross-border cooperation within the cultural and creative sectors; - Provide assistance regarding the cultural and creative sectors in participating countries; - Support the Commission in ensuring proper communication and dissemination of the results and impacts of the programme; - Ensure the communication and dissemination of information concerning funding awarded to and results in a participating country.

## 8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

### Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training.

Young people's talents and creative skills are supported through the educational system since cultural topics are offered as obligatory subjects throughout the curriculum in the lower and upper secondary level of education. Arts, music, design and technology as well as literature are taught as separate obligatory subjects. Dance, theatre, photography etc. are either included in other subjects or they are performed through the realisation of cultural events and the participation in relevant programmes.

At the secondary education, there are specialised schools for students with a talent in music ([Μουσικά Σχολεία](#)). There is only one music school in every city.. Based on an all-day school format, music schools are integrated in the state educational system. In addition to the official school curriculum, the music school programme includes additional music subjects in all grades, offered as afternoon classes.

The [Pharos Arts Foundation](#), in the context of its [Music Education Programme](#), presents educational concerts, master-classes and music workshops for the benefit of pupils of state and private schools from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.

Adult Education Centres operate in all non-occupied areas of the Republic of Cyprus (rural and urban), offering learning opportunities for further personal, professional, cultural and social development to thousands of adults aged 15 and over. They offer a variety of interdisciplinary courses, which focus mainly on the teaching of foreign languages, arts and crafts, cultural programmes, health and other issues of general interest, as well as on the teaching of professional and vocational skills.

As for non-formal learning and youth work opportunities, targeting at stimulating cultural and creative skills through funding or relevant courses, you can find information at the sub-chapter 8.4 "[Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture](#)" and "[Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work](#)" of sub-chapter 6.7 (Education and Training) on Youth Wiki.

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

The [Cyprus Pedagogical Institute \(CPI\)](#) is the official department of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth which runs teachers' professional learning. It offers a variety of training programmes that are repetitive and compulsory for teachers, mainly because they are provided by the education laws or their service plans, or because these programmes are developed with reference to the current needs and the context of schools.

All schools of Cyprus are expected to proceed to a needs assessment procedure in order to define their specific needs. Then, according to their needs, each school organises its own training programme for the teachers, making use of a plethora of training programmes offered by the Institute or elsewhere.

Such training programmes are:

- Music teachers' in-service training programme that includes amongst others: music counselling seminars, the annual inspectors' seminars, one-day choir conference, school networks, visits, music technology seminar, teaching resources development and implementation based on Adequacy and Attainment Targets.
- Each year, the CPI also offers a list of seminars/workshops to teachers of all disciplines in various topics, such as Museology, technologies useful in music education, creative thinking in the learning process, etc.). The list for the school year 2020/2021 is available only in Greek ([Κατάλογος Προαιρετικών Σεμιναρίων 2020-2021](#)).

Educational programmes are also offered by the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra for pupils and their teachers on a yearly basis. Educational concerts, open rehearsals and school specific educational projects are designed to promote musical knowledge, musical skills and creativity, aiming to connect school music education with community music, foster a diverse and comprehensive education for future artists, and increase public participation in arts. The [Department of Educational Technology \(DET\)](#) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth implements programmes of continuing professional learning in the areas of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), designs research and practice, proposes new educational implementations and promotes innovations related to the use of new technologies in education. At the same time, it provides pedagogical and technical support facilitating the effective use of ICT, including online learning, communication and management. In addition, DET implements projects that support the work of the Ministry's ICT Unit and more specifically the Use of ICT in teaching and learning sub-unit. The focus of the activities planned and implemented is on the Education and Training 2020 European priorities as well as the Cyprus Digital Agenda. Under this scope, a lot of actions on Opening up Education through digital technologies have been taking place, with an emphasis on transversal skills needed for the digital society, as well as effective teaching and learning.

More information can be found in the [2019 Annual Report of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#).

Lastly, Cyprus Theatre Organisation organises separate workshops specifically for primary or secondary school teachers ([Εργαστήρια για εκπαιδευτικούς σε σχέση με τις παραγωγές της Σκηνης 018 του ΘΟΚ](#)). Two weeks before a theatre premiere, the production team meets with teachers and students during a rehearsal. The visitors are invited to watch how the director works with actors and then engage in a creative dialogue with them and other theatre professionals involved in the particular production. Participants are given printed material with information regarding the actors and other theatre contributors, the performance and its preparation. They also receive certificates of participation.

There is no specialised training, directly organised or funded by top-level authorities, for educators and youth workers.

## Providing quality access to creative environments

The Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC) has introduced over the last years a number of initiatives for boosting innovation and creative skills to all young people in the island as mentioned in chapter 6 (Education and Culture) sub chapter **6.7 Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work**. The most important are:

The Youth Leadership Academy ([Καλοκαιρινή Σχολή Ηγεσίας και Δημιουργικότητας](#)) which introduces young participants to creative ways of thinking and to ways to develop and exhibit leadership skills in order to put their innovative ideas in action.

The Youth Festival is organized every year from Youth Board of Cyprus. The aim of the Festival is to promote the programs and services of the Youth Board, but mainly to highlight the action that the young people themselves develop. This is achieved through the participation of youth organizations and organizations who are active in issues related to young people, the presentation of innovative actions developed by groups of young people or individuals, the presentation of artistic expression and creation and finally the presentation of actions related to human rights, social discrimination, environmental actions etc. It includes many activities such as NGO Fair, open discussions, workshops, presentations, art installations, concert, dance, and more.

The **Youth Makerspace** provides access to high quality and high-tech equipment for the development of prototypes and for the implementation of business ideas. Makerspaces around the world have democratized the fields of design, engineering, construction, creation and education.

The **The STEAMers** program is based on the standards of S.T.E.A.M. Centres abroad. Initially, they refer to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics. The program offers workshops in Robotics, Programming, Film Making, Photography, Graphic Design, Creative Writing, Music, Theatre and Art. The workshops target children and young people aged 6 - 35 years old.

## 8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

### Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

In accordance to the National Policy Statement for the Enhancement of the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Cyprus (2015) the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth aims at promoting entrepreneurial mindset through the educational system, as mentioned in **Chapter 3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence**. In the same chapter, information can be obtained on the enhancement of entrepreneurial activities in the public universities. There is no strategic focus to the development of entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities. This is rather acquired experientially through the cultural activities of the schools and universities.

### Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

Support to young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors is provided through the funding schemes of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (sub-chapter **8.4 Promoting Culture and cultural participation**) and the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry (*sub-chapter 3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs*).

## 8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

### New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth has set high priority on the integration and exploitation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in the educational process as well as on the development of those technologies that will advance school administrative procedures.

The ICT in the Learning Process sector of the newly established ICT Unit aims at the use of digital technologies to support teaching and learning. To pursue this goal, it maintains the promotion of continuous professional learning programmes, online portals with open educational resources, e-learning and blended learning supported by learning management systems, online communities of practice, school-based programmes and competitions, participation in European and research programmes, coordination of the safer internet programme, and the promotion, in general, of innovations related to the use of new technologies in education.

The Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) excels in the promotion of new technologies. Recent successes include two ERC strategic projects totalling 3.3 million Euros, two “Teaming for Excellence” research proposals led by the CUT, which ensured the highest pan-European rating and participation in the creation of a RISE Excellence Centre for technological and business innovation. CUT University operates the **CUTing Edge: An American Space** which aims to provide an inspirational place where people can relax and embrace technology, become innovators and present their work to the worldwide community.

In addition, **Youth Makerspace Larnaka** is a venue of innovation, built upon the example similar successful venues that operate in various cities around the world, following the international standards of Makerspaces that are developed by academic institutions and communities globally. It offers young people the opportunity to have access to high-end technological equipment that will enable them to develop their business ideas and put them in practice. The equipment includes 3D printers, laser cutters, drones, virtual reality, robots, Arduino, and raspberry pi, among others.

Makerspace venues contribute to the democratization of design, construction, engineering and education. Through their distinct learning philosophy, they empower young people on multiple levels: technology, handcrafts, creativity, construction, etc. In Makerspaces, young people have the chance to share and implement their skills and knowledge, boosting their vast potential of creativity.

It is worth mentioning that in 2020, Youth Makerspace Larnaka created its own educational material, aiming at youth empowerment. The material addresses pupils of primary and secondary education, encouraging them to engage with STEAM-related creative activities. The curriculum is based on problem-solving and design-thinking methodologies, while it enhances 21st century skills. Through the workshop, pupils develop their critical thinking, problem-solving skills, creative thinking, communication, cooperation skills, and so on.

In 2019, Youth Board of Cyprus created the mobile unit of Makerspace. The mobile unit aims to reach young people who live in rural areas, away from urban centres, and who therefore do not have access to programs and technologies, such as Youth Makerspace. It is specially designed for this purpose and houses high tech technological equipment.

## **Facilitating access to culture through new technologies**

There are limited initiatives that facilitate access to culture through new technologies such as:

- The Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth have created the [Portal of Cultural Information](#) programme which is incorporated in the creation of a national network of cultural information. The Portal presents artists’ profile, their creative works and covers the areas of Visual Arts, Cinematography, Music, Writing and Performing Arts.
- In November 2017, UNESCO approved the application submitted by the Cyprus Technological University/ Digital Heritage Workshop for the creation of a third [UNESCO Chair in Limassol](#) on “Digital Cultural Heritage/Cultural Informatics”. The main scope of the Chair is to extend the successful work of the Digital Heritage Research Lab ([www.digitalheritagelab.eu](http://www.digitalheritagelab.eu)) and address a full range of key aspects of novel research and innovative developments, such as: technical areas, including 3D virtual



environments, archives and collections management systems, web and museum based interactive applications and language technologies; non-technical areas, including testing, economic and social impact evaluation in support of the development of the cultural heritage sector and its opportunities in tourism, entertainment and education.

- In 2020, an innovative application called "Larnaka Storytelling Statues" ([Larnaka Storytelling Statues: Τα αγάλματα της Λάρνακας απέκτησαν φωνή](#)) was launched, through which foreign and local visitors can be informed about the history of significant personalities or symbols of the past. In the first phase of the initiative, signs with QR codes (QR - Quick Response Code) were placed in five statues around the city of Larnaca. When visitors scan the QR code with their mobile phone and having connected to the internet, will receive a "phone call" from the statue, narrating its fascinating story and how it is connected to the city. The interactive application is an initiative of the Larnaca Tourism Board and the Youth Board of Cyprus, and was supported by the Deputy Ministry of Tourism and the Municipality of Larnaca.
- The [Youth Makerspace Larnaka](#) aims at helping children and young people to develop their skills in the fields of science, technology, engineering, arts, design and critical thinking, through the use of advanced technological equipment which is available to young people free of charge. For more information, please read the previous section.

## 8.8 Synergies and partnerships

### Synergies between public policies and programmes

National Youth Strategy is a product of cross-sectoral cooperation, based on the active and direct involvement of Ministries, government agencies dealing with young people, youth organizations and, above all, young people themselves. With the existence of the National Strategy, coordinated actions in the field of creativity and culture can be taken at national level. More information about the National Youth Strategy, as well as the cross-sectoral approach with other ministries can be found in the first chapter (sub chapters [1.3](#) and [1.5](#)).

In addition, the Cyprus Theatre Organisation (THOC) has collaborations with various actors, such as the [collaboration with non-governmental organisations and groups](#) for the promotion of activities for theatre (Theatricalon Katafygio/[Θεατρικό Καταφύγιο](#)) and collaboration with the University of Cyprus ([Στρατηγική συμφωνία συνεργασίας Πανεπιστήμιο Κύπρου – ΘΟΚ](#)) and the [Cyprus National Addictions Authority \(Υπογραφή Μνημονίου Συνεργασίας\)](#) to promote cooperation in the field of culture and education.

On February 2020, the Youth Board of Cyprus has also signed a memorandum of cooperation ([Μνημόνιο Συνεργασίας υπέγραψαν το Μουσείο Πιερίδη- Πολιτιστικό Ίδρυμα Τράπεζας Κύπρου και ο Οργανισμός Νεολαίας Κύπρου](#)) with Pierides Museum-Bank of Cyprus Cultural Foundation, thus undertaking the joint organization of information and engagement activities for young people on issues of artistic, historical, research and educational content in order to bring young people closer to culture and make culture more accessible to them. The Memorandum also provides for joint participation in European and other programs aimed at the cultural development of young people.

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

There are no national policies or programmes fostering partnerships between the stakeholders of the culture and creative sector with youth NGO's and youth workers.



## 8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

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

The special education schools for children with special needs offer a variety of artistic opportunities to their students, such as music therapy and art classes, but also training opportunities in arts professions. They also organise events where the general public participate, thus fostering social integration and building their self-confidence.

The [Cyprus National Addictions Authority](#) (NAAC) in collaboration with the [Cyprus Theatre Organisation](#) (THOK) in a joint effort to address addictions through culture, and with the aim of raising public awareness on the issue of addictions in a broader context, have signed a Memorandum of Cooperation. The Memorandum includes – among others – actions, such as:

- Carrying out theatrical visits by people belonging to vulnerable populations;
- THOK will be offering free or reduced tickets for specific theatrical performances that take place within the framework of providing alternative healthy employment to children and young people belonging to vulnerable groups, as well as those who are in the process of treatment;
- Free workshops and/or discussions;
- Promotion of the actions of THOK through the communication network of NAAC, as well as the mutual availability of the two bodies' infrastructures and networks of collaborators, for the achievement of THOK and NAAC's common goals.

In addition, THOK offers various programmes that facilitate access to young people to cultural activities, such as:

- Annual Pancyprian school theatre competition: Within the context of the Pancyprian School Theatre Games, co-organized with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, THOC presents training workshops for educators assigned to stage productions, and also provides schools with financial support;
- "Valitsa": two-day scenography and theatrical play workshops ([Εργαστήρια Βαλίτσα](#)), in which minors (regardless of origin) who live in juvenile facilities can participate. It concerns exclusively young people under 18;
- "Scene 0-18" (Σκηνή 0-18): The programme offers performances specifically for this age group in schools and communities which are located in rural/remoted areas,.
- "Theatrical Shelter" ([Θεατρικό Καταφύγιο](#)): Since 2013, the activities of the Theatrical Shelter are considered as actions of support, creative solidarity and theatrical development. The activities, with minimum or no charges in order to be accessible to the public, aim to strengthen the audience's relationship with the theatre, but also to give the opportunity of using the knowledge and experience of people involved in theatre, for the benefit of the general public. The motivation behind the planning of these activities is solidarity, mutual help, support of as many groups as possible from the culture and theatre sector. The people from the Theatrical Shelter offer, among others, workshops, guided tours, educational programmes, organised visits to schools or other ensembles.

### Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

The "Activities of School and Social Inclusion (DRA.S.E.)" is a top-level programme that contributes to preventing and reducing poverty and overcoming cultural diversity and discrimination amongst the general population – including young people. The activities of the Programme include art and music classes and other relevant activities. For more information on the Programme, read the "[Chapter 6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training - Formal education: main policy measures on ELET](#)".

Moreover, as already mentioned in the sub-chapter **8.5 Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training**, the Adult Education Centres offered in rural and urban areas is a basic programme that facilitates young people's (over 15 years old) participation in cultural activities and lifelong learning opportunities. A lot of youth clubs, which are mainly organised in small villages, take advantage of the programme thus offering it, in this way, especially to young people.

Meanwhile, the Youth Initiatives programme of the Youth Board of Cyprus (mentioned also in sub-chapter **8.4 Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture**) gives access to young people and youth NGO's to funding in order to realise their own cultural activities and offer them to other young people either for free or on a very low cost.

## 8.10 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

The [Council of Ministers of Cyprus approved in March 2021](#) the creation of a Deputy Ministry for Culture. The actions for the creation of the deputy ministry had already started a few years ago. An advisory committee was initially set up, various bodies were consulted, and after the basic plan with the responsibilities and the structure of the deputy ministry was formulated, it was submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval. After its approval, it is expected to be voted by the parliament, in order to proceed with the creation of the autonomous state ministry. The deputy ministry will be solely responsible for matters of cultural heritage, such as antiquities, and cultural activities in general.

### Ongoing debates

Due to the lockdown and the restrictive measures for the Covid-19 pandemic, several festivals and cultural activities had to be postponed or cancelled. As a result, a lot of discussions have been taking place since 2020 concerning the support of art workers and the cultural sector in general which is suffering the consequences of Covid-19.

## 9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

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One of the main targets of the [National Youth Strategy 2017-2022 \(Εθνική στρατηγική για τη νεολαία 2017-2022\)](#), is to reinforce the role of young people in the democratic process in Cyprus. One of its main action fields is "Youth and the world" where specific priorities are set and several topics from the global agenda, such as the climate change, the human rights and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are being addressed.

There are several campaigns or initiatives taking place in Cyprus over the last years for different age groups. However, there is a need for top-level policies, initiatives and/or programmes addressed especially to young people with the aim to engage and inform them about global issues that concern them, and to encourage them to participate in international exchanges with other young people and relevant stakeholders.

### 9.1 General context

#### Main concepts

The National Youth Strategy ([Εθνική στρατηγική για τη νεολαία 2017-2022](#)), developed and published by the [Youth Board of Cyprus \(YBC\)](#), has as main target to reinforce the role of young people in the democratic process in Cyprus. Therefore, some of the main action fields of the National Strategy are participation, representation and social inclusion of young people. The policy document in its relevant chapter "Youth and the world" sets as priorities key topics from the global agenda, such as the climate change, the human rights and the [UN Millennium Development Goals](#). More specifically the goals of the field of action are:

Target 1: Creation and exploitation of mobility opportunities.

Target 2: Development of a global and ecological consciousness and culture.

The National Youth Strategy priorities for achieving the above targets are the following:

1. Increase youth participation in international networks and improve the cooperation among organisations within the EU and beyond.
2. Make the most out of exchange programmes (education, training, exchange of ideas).
3. Enhance access to information and empowerment for capitalising on youth mobility programmes (e.g., Erasmus+).
4. Facilitate youth participation in mobility programmes.
5. Create more opportunities for education and training on issues related to modern societies (e.g., human rights, refugee issue, environmental topics, climate change, sustainable development).
6. Create opportunities for coexistence and cooperation among different nationalities, communities and religions.
7. Implement further measures for enhancing sustainable development in the country.

## Youth interest in global issues

The recent findings of the quantitative survey report '[Youth Barometer 3](#)' ([Νέο-Βαρόμετρο](#)), which were released in September 2021 by the IMR/University of Nicosia on behalf of the YBC, show that 32% of the participants are seriously concerned about social inequality in society, such as the existence of social stereotypes and prejudices. However, no concerns were expressed in topics related to the environment, sustainable development, climate change, green patterns of consumption and production since most of their concerns were related to the consequences of the pandemic. In addition, only 3% of the participants mentioned that the state should develop environmental activities/events which aim at young people's development. Last, an established perception among the vast majority of youth (97% of the participants), is that people should continue to be educated throughout their lives, and take advantage of opportunities given to them for furthering their education.

Since 2017, the Youth Board of Cyprus funds annually the implementation of the programme "Parliament of Young Representatives" ([Βουλή των Νέων Αντιπροσώπων](#)) that provides opportunities to young people's active participation in national, European and global-related issues, by involving young people in the policy making process. During the first, second, third and fourth Parliament of young representatives in 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019-2021 respectively, some of the main topics in the young people's final policy proposals ([Υπομνήματα & Εκθέσεις Κοινοβουλευτικών Επιτροπών](#)) included recommendations for global related issues like education's improvements and employment, gender equality in the workplace, environmental and green policies, etc.

## 9.2 Administration and governance

### Governance

On governmental level, the most important body for defining policies on youth and other related issues is the [Cyprus Council of Ministers](#) which approves all important decisions. However, the development and implementation of policies concerning youth and the world is under the jurisdiction of the [European and International Issues Office](#) of the [Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#) (MOECSY) which is the main responsible department of the Ministry for the implementation of the EU and International policies for youth in Cyprus, in collaboration with the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) (YBC), which is also the main advisory body for the promotion and identification of youth related policies and measures.

In addition, different public authorities are involved in international cooperation and activities for young people according to the topic of interest, such as the Office of the [Commissioner for the Environment \(Γραφείο Επιτρόπου Περιβάλλοντος\)](#) and the [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#)

### **Cross-sectorial cooperation**

The National Youth Strategy incorporates the mechanism for [cross-sectorial cooperation](#) between Ministries, Departments, Agencies involved in defining policies and measures regarding youth's contribution to global processes of policy-making, implementation and follow-up, including youth cooperation at the global level.

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

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

The [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) 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 (YBC) shall advise, through the Minister of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth 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. For more info, please read the [section 5.4 “Young people's participation in policy-making”](#).

Regarding the exchanges on global issues between young people and policy-makers at domestic level, youth consultations were held on a regular basis towards the end of 2018 for monitoring [the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022](#) which dedicates a field of action on Youth and the World. Based on the [YBC's 2019 Annual Report](#), the outcomes were compiled in a Conclusions Report which presents 64 proposals by young people on new measures and 35 suggestions for improving current measures. The Report was the outcome of structured dialogue procedures, which were attended by 150 young people and representatives of Youth Clubs, Municipal and Community Youth Councils, the Cyprus Youth Council and the Cyprus Children's Parliament. The consultations took place all over Cyprus.

In addition, according to the [YBC's 2020 Annual Report](#), following the adoption of the “[Next Generation EU](#)” [Recovery Fund](#) by the EU member state leaders on 21 July 2020, the YBC organised an online consultation with young people on 18 September 2020 in order to collect suggestions on reforms and actions that need to be taken, which the YBC will submit to decision-making bodies. The online consultation was attended by 30 young people from across Cyprus, who had the opportunity to discuss and submit their proposals and suggestions for the creation of a national plan on the following four topic areas:

1. Job market, social policy, education and human capital
2. A digital era of efficiency and productivity
3. Acceleration in forming a green economy
4. New development model and economic diversification.

The outcomes of the above consultations are available on the Policy Department website ([Απορρέοντα ηλεκτρονικής διαβούλευσης του ΟΝΕΚ με τη νεολαία για το εθνικό πλάνο ανάκαμψης στο πλαίσιο του “Next Generation EU”](#)).

However, among the society of active citizens, there are various exchanges of youth workers, young people and policymakers under the [Erasmus+ Programme](#) (e.g. through the method of [structured dialogue/EU Youth Dialogue](#)) for exchanging views and recommendations on key topics that concern young people on global level.

More specifically, the YBC's 2020 Annual Report mentions that in 2020, the thematic priority of the [EU Youth Dialogue](#) was decided by the Trio [Presidency Romania-Finland-Croatia](#). All EU member states which have a National Working Group for EU Youth Dialogue are involved in this process. In Cyprus, the National Working Group consists of representatives of the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#), the Youth Board of Cyprus and the [Cyprus Youth Council](#), which holds the coordinating role. . In the context of this process, ten consultation meetings took place in 2020 (one with physical presence and nine online), attended by 130 people in total. In addition, various events were organised, aiming to promote Dialogue, as well as meetings among the National Working Group members to plan actions and analyse the consultations' outcomes.

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

The [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) is run by a seven-member Administrative Board which consists of youth representatives. As the competent national authority on youth issues (a) it participates in international youth organizations' meetings and develops bilateral contacts with respective youth bodies of other countries in order to be informed regarding the international development youth matters; (b) It stipulates protocols/programmes of cooperation with corresponding youth bodies of other countries for the achievement of the Board's aims and (c) it funds the participation of young people and youth representatives such as members of the National Youth Council for their participation in international forums through the '[Youth Initiatives Project](#)'.

Moreover, the National Youth Strategy, under the priority "International cooperation in the field of youth", sets the following objectives: (a) Active involvement in shaping advances and processes which take place at international youth policy-making centres; (b) Developing and maintaining Youth Board of Cyprus' relations with the international community and promoting the Organization abroad; with a view to enhancing cooperation in the youth field. In this way, participation in international seminars and workshops, representation in international forums and conferences as well as memberships in international organisations is considered important.

Based on the [2018, 2019 and 2020 Annual Reports](#) of the Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC), the Board members and staff of the YBC participated in several important European and international meetings, conferences and activities on youth related issues. These are:

1. Participation in Working Groups on Youth Related Issues: The YBC participates in the Working Groups on youth-related issues during each Presidency of the European Council, as well as in European Youth Summits that are hosted by each Presidency.
2. Participation in the [European Steering Committee for Youth](#) (CDEJ): The YBC participates at the meetings of the Steering Committee for Youth of the Council of Europe twice a year, where policies and other youth related issues are discussed and strategies are put forward in the member states. The Executive Director of the YBC is one of the members of the Bureau of the CDEJ. In 2020, the meetings focused on: 1) The New Youth Strategy by the Youth Department of the Council of Europe, 2) Revitalising Democracy, 3) Human Rights Accessible to Youth, 4) Youth Work, 5) Youth and Climate Change, 6) Youth and Artificial Intelligence, 7) Minority Rights.
3. The [European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy](#) (EKCY) of the Council of Europe: The YBC contributed to the work of the European Knowledge Centre through collecting and disseminating data and exchanging good practices on youth-related policies. In 2020, the YBC prepared a revised country sheet, which outlines the youth policies in Cyprus. Due to the pandemic, the EKCY's work focused on data collection, study and analysis as regards the pandemic's effects on youth, youth organisations, and youth work development.



4. The [United Nations](#) (UN): The YBC participates in the international conventions and forums organized by the UN, as the UN youth policies and initiatives are taken into serious consideration by the YBC in its National Youth Strategy. In 2018 and 2019, the YBC and Cypriot youth representatives participated in the following UN events: a) The UN Winter Youth Assembly, b) the 7<sup>th</sup> [Youth Forum of ECOSOC](#) (United Nations Economic and Social Council), which took place in New York, c) the Youth Summit on Youth Dialogue and d) The [World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth 2019 and Youth Forum Lisboa+21](#). In 2020, no seminars or forums were organised by the UN, due to the pandemic.
5. [Commonwealth](#): The YBC encourages young people's participation in the Commonwealth Youth Forum by providing financial and other kinds of support. In 2018, the YBC participated in two Commonwealth youth events that aimed at drafting a road map for a holistic development and promotion of employment for young people in Cyprus. The events were the Commonwealth Higher Education Youth Work Consortium Workshop and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Conference on Youth Work. However, in 2020, the pandemic had a significant impact on the Commonwealth Programme for Youth, and neither the Commonwealth Youth Forum nor other events were held.

In addition, in 2017 the YBC organised the international conference "[Youth Cooperation for Peace \(You Coop\): Building Bridges to counter radicalization and extremism](#)" which was held in Nicosia with 30 participants aged 18-35 years old on 13-14 December 2017. The conference was organised with the cooperation of the Cyprus [Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) and the [Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#) and it was attended by young people from Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar and Slovakia, who exchanged ideas on finding new ways to promote tolerance, understanding and the fight against stereotypes. The conference focused on two main topics: 1) recognition / exposure of youth policies' contribution towards extremism and radicalisation; 2) creation of tolerant societies that promote a peace culture.

On 27 January 2022, the [informal meeting of EU ministers responsible for education and youth took place in Strasbourg](#). The meeting brought the ministers together with European youth delegates for the first time, to discuss European best practices for sustainable development, whether in schools or through youth engagement. The aim of these discussions is to further develop the European strategy in this area, in anticipation of the Council meeting of ministers for education and youth on 5 April 2022. On behalf of Cyprus, the youth delegate who represented youth in the informal meeting, was the President of the [Cyprus Youth Council](#) ([Γραφείο Τύπου και Πληροφοριών – Ανακοίνωση](#)).

The Office of European and International Affairs in cooperation with the Office of the European Parliament in Cyprus also organises educational visits to the European Parliament in Brussels and Strasbourg with the participation of students.

## 9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

### Formal, non-formal and informal learning

#### Formal learning

In the Cypriot upper-secondary schools, general aspects of global issues are included in the school subject of Modern Greek ([Νέα Ελληνική Γλώσσα Μέσης Γενικής Εκπαίδευσης](#)) where students discuss about cross-thematic topics while they develop their critical thinking and argumentation skills. In addition, topics such as sustainable development, recycling and environmental protection, as well as consumer education, are also covered through the subject of Home Economics ([Μάθημα Οικιακής Οικονομίας Μέσης Γενικής Εκπαίδευσης](#)).



Additionally, the 2020 Annual Report ([Ετήσια Έκθεση 2020](#); pp. 127-128) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth mentions that the Council of Europe Programme “[Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights](#)” (EDC/HR) is being implemented since the school year 2015/16 in Secondary General schools. The programme is included in the Council of Europe framework of activities and covers all the activities and actions that have been planned to help both the young and adults to participate actively in a democratic life, demanding all their rights but also undertaking all the responsibilities allocated to them. The objective of the programme is to reinforce the democratic institutions by adopting an intense democratic culture, by emphasizing the feeling for participation, and commitment but in addition also the acceptance of basic essential values for the creation of a free, tolerant and fair society at a national as well as European level. In Cypriot schools, EDC is offered together with History and Greek Language lessons, but it is also integrated into the entire curriculum and activities of Cypriot schools. It includes concepts such as peace education, universal (or global) education, intercultural education, democratization and participation in public affairs.

Another initiative of the Council of Europe in which students from all educational levels participate is the ‘Global Education Week’ ([Εβδομάδα Παγκόσμιας Εκπαίδευσης](#)). Every year during this week, various activities are being organized in schools or other venues that aim to raise awareness about global issues (e.g. human rights, climate change, hunger, peace, democracy, etc.), develop attitudes of respect for diversity and intercultural communication as well as take action and personal responsibility for a more sustainable planet.

Based on the 2020 Annual Report ([Ετήσια Έκθεση 2020](#); pp. 125-127), the UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPnet) was established in 1953, aiming to encourage communication and strengthen cooperation between the pupil communities of the organisation's Member States to promote UNESCO's goals more effectively to young people. The network has been active in Cyprus since the school year 1969/70, under the supervision of the [MOECSY](#). It includes 37 public and private secondary schools, which operate in a variety of ways, such as organizing conferences and participating in events organized by other schools abroad. For the school year 2019/20, the general theme around which the ASPnet schools in Cyprus were active was “CITIZEN! Active citizens and sustainable cities”. Under this thematic, activities aimed at students’ personal development and the acquisition of skills necessary for becoming active citizens who can bring about positive changes in their society. In this context, students participated in workshops on psychosocial empowerment, building empathy and consciousness as well as taking action on issues of sustainable development.

In addition, upper-secondary schools of General and Technical Education participate in the following Environmental Education Programmes:

- The SEMEP ([South-Eastern Mediterranean sea Project](#)) is an interdisciplinary environmental education project focusing primarily on the South Eastern Mediterranean sea region and coordinated by UNESCO. Member countries include Croatia, Cyprus, Egypt, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Palestinian Authority, Romania, Slovenia, and Turkey. The project promotes environmental education through science and intercultural dialogue in the region and involves students at the upper primary and secondary levels in both formal and non-formal sectors. It provides an opportunity to consider environmental issues that are of common concern to countries in the South Eastern Mediterranean region. Within the framework of existing school curricula, the project encourages a multitude of science and technology educational approaches in favour of sustainable development, such as problem identification and problem solving, hands-on activities, and determining decision making parameters.
- The programme “Chrisoprasino Fillo” which runs between the Greek Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, and the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth (For more information, see section “[6.5 Cross-border learning mobility](#) - Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education)

- The “[Eco Schools Programme](#)” is an international programme run by the Foundation for Environmental Education (FEE) in Denmark. It encourages young people to engage in their environment by allowing them the opportunity to actively protect it. It starts in the classroom where it expands to the school and eventually fosters change in the community at large. Through this programme, young people experience a sense of achievement at being able to have a say in the environmental management policies of their schools, ultimately steering them towards certification and the prestige which comes with being awarded a Green Flag. The National Operator in Cyprus is the [Cyprus Marine Environment Protection Association](#). More than 15 upper-secondary schools around Cyprus are currently participating in the programme.
- The programme “[Young Reporters for the Environment](#)” (YRE) is an award-winning programme coordinated also by the FEE. The programme empowers young people to take an educated stand on environmental issues they feel strongly about and gives them a platform to articulate these issues through the media of writing, photography or video. The YRE programme is run by National Operators in more than 40 countries around the world and they are the ones implementing the programme on a national level. Youth between the age of 11-25 can join the programme in these countries through their school, youth group or as individuals by contacting the relevant National Operator. The National Operator in Cyprus is again the Cyprus Marine Environment Protection Association. 17 upper-secondary schools are currently participating in the YRE programme.

The [Benjamin Franklin Transatlantic Fellows Programme](#) is a fully funded intensive short-term exchange programme for upper secondary school students, created to foster relationships among young Europeans and Americans to build strong linkages and awareness of shared values. The four-week program enables teenagers, ages 16-18, to explore U.S. foreign policy priorities such as youth engagement, support for democracy and civil society, and economic prosperity. The programme is funded by the U.S. Government and in Cyprus, it is coordinated by the U.S. Embassy in Cyprus.

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

The annual initiative “[Let’s Do it Cyprus](#)” is organized every year since 2012 by the non-governmental organisation [Together Cyprus](#) in close collaboration with the Commissioner for the Environment ([Γραφείου Επιτρόπου Περιβάλλοντος](#)). The purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness and active participation of the public in issues related to the protection, conservation and sustainable management of the terrestrial and marine environment in Cyprus. The campaign is part of the global initiative “[Let’s Do it World](#)” and in Cyprus, the volunteers are called to contribute in cleaning the island’s most important natural sights like beaches, city parks and natural forest and mountain parks. The initiative has as its main target group, among others, young people and it is co-funded by the Ombudsman on environmental issues and other public and private sponsors, including Youth Board of Cyprus.

The programme #LifeStories aims also to promote common European values, such as democracy, solidarity, and respect for human rights, through the work of Role Models. The Role Models, are young people that can serve as inspiring examples by making these common values part of their everyday life and thus, promote inclusive societies. Those people share their stories with others through inspiring speeches during events organized in the framework of the programme. The programme is organized by the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) and it is funded by the [Erasmus+ programme](#).

### **Educators' support**

There is no top-level programme or action for teachers, trainers, non-formal education workers and youth workers for continuous training and certification related to the promotion of global issues among young people in Cyprus, in general.

However, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth's special Unit called “[Δίκτυο Κέντρων Περιβαλλοντικής Εκπαίδευσης](#)” organises various educational programmes for

raising awareness specifically on topics related to environmental education and sustainable development in the framework of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The programmes are organised based on the students' age groups and on the website of the Unit (under the section 'Environmental Education Centres'), educators and parents can find detailed documents with the programmes' aim, objectives and schedule of activities for each age group.

## Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

There are not major information campaigns with the goal of promoting the knowledge and understanding of global issues among young people directly conducted or funded by top-level authorities. There are several individual campaigns on various issues addressing the whole population in the island, not just young people. The most important are mentioned in the previous section.

## Information providers

There are several public authorities and bodies that disseminate information on various global issues among young people in Cyprus. These are:

- The [Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth](#)
- The Youth Board of Cyprus which is publishing on its [official website](#) or social media (e.g. [Facebook page](#)) any important information on youth global issues.
- The Commissioner for the Environment ([Γραφείου Επιτρόπου Περιβάλλοντος](#))

## Key initiatives

Since 2010, the most important key initiatives organised by top-level authorities in Cyprus are the following:

The Office of the [Commissioner for Administration and Protection of human rights](#) ([Επιτρόπος Διοικήσεως και Προστασίας Ανθρωπίνων Δικαιωμάτων](#)) launched in December 2021 an awareness-raising campaign for the promotion of human rights ([Εκστρατεία Ενημέρωσης για τα Ανθρώπινα Δικαιώματα](#)) among the general population. The campaign included the production and promotion of a [video spot](#) that informs about the role of the Commissioner in the protection of human rights in Cyprus. In addition, the Commissioner hosted a press release and has participated in a conference and TV show, specifically devoted for sensitising the public.

The Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, the [Cyprus Pedagogical Institute](#), the [Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment](#) and many more actors took part in the initiative "Rethink (reduce, reuse, recycle)" ([Εκστρατεία ευαισθητοποίησης RETHINK – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle για τη μείωση, επαναχρησιμοποίηση και ανακύκλωση των αποβλήτων στην Κύπρο](#)). The initiative lasted from 2014 to 2017. Its main target was to train and sensitise people in changing their waste habits and promote a significant change on how the society manages its own waste. The programme's target group was the entire active population of the country, including young people and it was funded by the [LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance programme](#) of the EU.

In addition, between 2013-2017 the European initiative of the Council of Europe "No Hate Speech" took place also in Cyprus through various initiatives coordinated by the Youth Board of Cyprus. As part of the campaign, the Youth Board of Cyprus set up a National Coordination Committee with representatives from both NGOs and government departments. All partners in this effort have contributed to the implementation of an integrated information campaign that included the provision of information and awareness-raising through social media and traditional media with the release - among others - of videos featuring statements by famous people. The campaign included also trainings of ambassadors, educators and NGOs in the use of the Council of Europe manuals [Compass](#) and [Compassito](#) as well as the publication and distribution of the Handbook "Defining and Exorcising Hate" ([Εγχειρίδιο «Ορίζοντας κι εξορκίζοντας το μίσος»](#)) in all

schools, in collaboration with the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Protection of human rights.

As part of the campaign, the partners participated in numerous festivals and exhibitions and carried out many activities and events, such as the Student Forum on Diversity and Integration in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, the Cyprus Youth Council, the Youth Council of Cyprus and the Office of the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights. In addition, workshops called "Pieces of PEACE" were organized by the Peace Agent of the World Peace Initiative Foundation and a Summer School called "HIT – Hate Interrupter Teams" was organized in collaboration with the "Hope for Children" CRC Policy Centre where teens set up Hate-Stop Teams and were trained in Human Rights and hate speech.

## 9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

### Green volunteering

As mentioned in the [section 9.4](#), the initiative "[Let's Do it Cyprus](#)" promotes also green volunteering among young people. A similar campaign is the "WEGREEN CYPRUS" ([Πρασινίζουμε την Κύπρο](#)) which acts for the reforestation and recuperation of natural sights destroyed by the catastrophic forest fires during summer of 2016. The campaign is run by the Department of Forests, the Cyprus Forest Association, the Commissioner for the Environment and other relevant public authorities. The programme is financed by private and public donations and its operational needs are covered totally through voluntary work. The target group of the programme is the entire population in Cyprus, including young people.

### Green production and consumption

There are no main top-level policies, programmes, projects or initiatives that foster young people's participation in green production and consumption apart from the ones mentioned above and in section 9.4 on [Non-formal and informal learning](#).

## 9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

### Intercontinental youth work cooperation

There are no main top-level policies, programmes, projects or initiatives in Cyprus that promote cooperation, including exchanges, between individuals or organisations that are active in youth work in more than one continent. Some exchanges are taking place under the [Erasmus+ Programme](#) and more specifically, the [Capacity Building activities for youth](#).

### Development cooperation activities

There are no main programmes or actions that aim to encourage young people to participate in development cooperation activities in their own country or abroad.

## 9.7 Current debates and reforms

### Forthcoming policy developments

The [National Youth Strategy 2017-2022](#) ([Εθνική στρατηγική για τη νεολαία 2017-2022](#)) encourages the adoption of top-level measures by many public bodies that address key topics, such as active participation, non-formal learning, international mobility and youth global issues.

The first three-year Action Plan ([A' Σχέδιο Δράσης](#)) of the National Youth Strategy, covering the period 2017 – 2019, is completed and it has been discussed in open consultations with youth as mentioned in [chapter 1](#). The second Action Plan 2020-2022 ([B' Σχέδιο Δράσης](#)) includes all the programmes and actions that the governmental authorities should implement for the next three years in order to achieve the priorities and objectives of the National Youth Strategy. However, the Strategy, and as an extension the Action Plans, are based on the logic of participatory development and the co-formation model, both with the governmental services and with the young people themselves. Therefore, the dialogue between the various stakeholders is an ongoing process during the implementation phase of the Strategy and its evaluation, with the ultimate goal of jointly setting strategic goals and priorities for the new Youth Strategy after 2022.

In 2018, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order submitted to the Council of Ministers a proposal for the adoption of the first National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights ([Εθνική Στρατηγική και Εθνικό Σχέδιο Δράσης για την Προστασία και Προαγωγή των Ανθρωπίνων Δικαιωμάτων](#)). The first draft of the Strategy would have been then reviewed by an ad-hoc committee formed by representatives of various ministries. The committee would submit its views so as to form the final draft of the Strategy. The process is still ongoing.

### Ongoing debates

Towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, Cyprus is implementing a project in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) aiming towards a whole-of-government approach in implementing a sustainable Development Agenda and at a stronger partnership with all stakeholders. [Next steps](#) include among others:

- A broader awareness around the SDGs within the Cypriot society, involvement and commitment of all stakeholders. The Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen ([Γραφείο Επιτρόπου του Πολίτη](#)) already launched an online platform for this purpose – [www.initiative2030.gov.cy](http://www.initiative2030.gov.cy) (available only in Greek).
- The training of government employees to contribute to the implementation of the national SDG strategy.
- A pioneering educational program for children with activities for each of the 17 SDGs.

In an attempt to engage various stakeholders in Cyprus towards the achievement of the SDGs, the [Directorate General Growth of the Ministry of Finance](#), the Office of the Commissioner for the Citizen in collaboration with the Unit of Education of the Environment and Sustainable Development ([Μονάδα Εκπαίδευσης για το Περιβάλλον και την Αειφόρο Ανάπτυξη](#)) of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, organised also the conference “Citizens, Politicians, Policies: The power of cooperation to achieve the 2030 Agenda” ([Πολίτες, Πολιτικοί, Πολιτικές: Η δύναμη της συνεργασίας για επίτευξη της Ατζέντας 2030](#)) at the end of 2021.

## 10. YOUTH WORK

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Youth work is becoming a field highly appreciated in the field of youth. The Youth Board of Cyprus, as the competent government agency for youth in the country, implements a number of policies in order to reinforce it, increase its quality and raise awareness about it. All these policies are described in the chapter, showcasing the importance given by the Government. At the same time, the recognition of youth work is an emerging policy field in the country, as mentioned in [section 10.6](#). Although a formal recognition system does not yet exist in Cyprus, a lot of efforts are currently taking place in order to define and recognize youth work, the youth workers and the skills acquired through youth work.



## 10.1 General context

### Historical developments

In 1968, the first club of Cyprus Youth Clubs Associations ([Κυπριακός Οργανισμός Κέντρων Νεότητας](#)) appears. This creates a cascading effect of new clubs being established one after the other, especially between the years 1975-1985. Over the years, the Cyprus Youth Clubs organization grew into a wide network of more than 85 clubs all over Cyprus.

In 1994, the [Youth Board of Cyprus](#) is established. The Youth Board of Cyprus is the competent government agency for Youth affairs. It offers a variety of youth work programmes and funding schemes for youth work. The Youth Board of Cyprus is also the top-level authority responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022.

In 1996, the [Cyprus Youth Council \(CYC\)](#) was founded as a volunteer, non – governmental, non – profit organization. The CYC aims at promoting dialogue and cooperation between youth in Cyprus and also 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.

In the meantime, a lot of non-governmental organizations, either youth-led organisations or organisations targeting youth and dealing with youth matters- are established. Yet, until 2007, there is no clear understanding of the definition of youth work. On page 42, the document [Youth policy in Cyprus - Conclusions of the Council of Europe international review](#) prepared in 2007 mentions that “there appeared in Cyprus to be a rather limited theoretical understanding of the idea of ‘youth work’ and an empirical lack of space for its provision or development.” It seems that the understanding of youth work is highly blended with non-formal learning and leisure activities for youth.

However, the international review mentions that “the issues that are routinely addressed in ‘youth work’ practice are legion: sexuality, health, internationalism and multiculturalism, as well as debates around vocational pathways or opportunities for trips away from home. Many of these issues are already addressed within schools, at the Youth Information Centres or through school camping trips.”

In December 2016, the National Youth Council of Cyprus, organized the conference “Recognition of Youth Work(er)”. The Conference was funded by the Erasmus+ programme and aimed at empowering young people to discuss with policy makers about the recognition of the Youth Worker. They also analysed best practices implemented in other European countries making the institution of Youth Worker recognizable while understanding the significance of its role in the development of non-formal education skills. Following the seminar, in 2017 the Cyprus Youth Council releases a policy paper about the recognition of youth worker ([Έγγραφο πολιτικής](#)). The same year, the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) launches a consultation process for developing standards of vocational qualifications of the youth worker. This process of consultation includes the Youth Board of Cyprus and the Cyprus Youth Council.

### National definition or understanding of Youth Work

At this moment, there is still no official national definition of Youth Work. The only available definition of youth work in Cyprus is the one introduced by the Cyprus Youth Council in the [policy paper](#) about the recognition of youth worker. According to this, “youth work is defined as volunteering or working with young people for their empowerment (and not only). This work can cultivate skills and abilities to young people through non-formal and informal learning”. In addition to that, the same policy paper defines the youth worker as “the person who systematically empowers young people- on a professional or voluntary basis - using non-formal learning, in order to develop personally and socio-economically, taking into consideration their needs”.



Regarding the common understanding of youth work in Cyprus, as stated in the [Final Report](#) of the advisory mission delegation (pages 12-13), “there are numerous provisions of youth work by volunteers and youth leaders in Cyprus. Most of the volunteers, besides being driven by “meraki” have gained the competences needed for youth work, through European programmes, NGOs and practice of working with young people. Similar to the Council of Europe’s International Youth Policy Review in 2007, the consolidated and common understanding of youth work within the youth sector is still lacking, and there is little knowledge of it outside the youth sector in Cyprus.”

One could say that the two definitions – of youth work and youth worker- described above conceptualize well enough how youth work is perceived in Cyprus. Therefore, the overall understanding of youth work embeds the following elements:

- Youth work uses educational activities, recreational activities, volunteering activities, social and political actions to empower young people;
- Youth work is based on non-formal and informal learning and voluntary participation;
- The main providers of youth work are youth organisations and youth clubs;
- Young people is the target of youth work, but emphasis is given for young people with fewer opportunities.

## 10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

### Governance

The main actor involved in policy-making on youth work is the Youth Board of Cyprus. According to the [Youth Board’s Law](#) (available only in Greek), the Administrative Board of the Youth Board of Cyprus advises the Council of Ministers through the Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, for the development of a comprehensive and targeted youth policy that promotes the following aims:

- the progress and prosperity of all young people of Cyprus, regardless of ethnicity origin or religion;
- the provision of opportunities to all young people and their organizations for participation and for taking responsibility in the social, economic and cultural development;
- the creative engagement of young people in Cyprus;
- the immediate and effective encounter of the problems youth are facing.

The main non-public actors involved are the Cyprus Youth Council, the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization and the Municipal and Community Youth Councils:

- [Cyprus Youth Council](#): In a nutshell, the Cyprus Youth Council’s role is to voice the concerns of youth NGOs including lobbying to policy makers for a number of youth related issues.
- [Municipal and Community Youth Councils](#): The role of the Municipal and Community Youth Councils is to advice their local authorities and recommend solution-policies and actions in regard to problems that young people face in relation to the community.
- [Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation](#): This is the largest non-governmental youth non-profit organization in Cyprus. Youth Clubs are youth organizations that provide creative engagement, information and entertainment opportunities to young people and are open to all youth. They collaborate closely with the Youth Board of Cyprus in order to reach better the young people all over the country, especially in rural areas.

Regarding the general distribution of responsibilities between top-level and regional/local authorities, for every youth work programme, the Youth Board of Cyprus collaborates with the respective local authority for its implementation.

## Cross-sectoral cooperation

Cross-sectoral cooperation between the Youth Board of Cyprus, the Human Resource Development Agency, the local authorities, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports and the main non-public actors involved in youth work is ensured through the National Youth Strategy. The National Youth Strategy endorses a strong [cross-sectoral cooperation](#) between the above mentioned parties that stretches also in the field of youth work.

Moreover, in 2020, the Youth Board of Cyprus established a dedicated [Working Group on Youth Work](#), consisted of Youth Board officers and representatives of umbrella youth organisations, with the mandate to work on the development of an action plan for the holistic and quality development of youth work in Cyprus.

## 10.3 Support to youth work

### Policy legal framework

There are not any top-level policies and regulations on youth work, nor a specific strategy on youth work in Cyprus.

### Funding

The public funding is made available to support youth work through the ["Youth Initiatives" Funding Scheme](#), administered by the Youth Board of Cyprus.

The source of this funding is the government's budget. According to the [Youth Board of Cyprus Budget Law of 2021](#), the Youth Initiatives Project real expenses in 2018 were €1.041.031. The amount of funding earmarked for the Programme in 2021 is €600.000.

In order to benefit from the funding, youth work providers need to fill in an application form, explaining their project proposal. The Youth Initiatives Project offers direct financial support to Youth Coordination Bodies such as the Cyprus Youth Council and the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization. In order to benefit from the funding, the coordination bodies need to fill in a special application form which must be accompanied with the annual report and the current year's plan and budget.

The types of activities of the Youth Initiatives Project are identified in the chapter "Participation" of the Youth Wiki and specifically on [sub-chapter 5.6](#). There are not specific target groups to be supported. All youth are covered by the programme.

The funds used for the Youth Initiatives Project come directly from the government's budget. EU funds are used primarily within the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes, which offer opportunities for youth work on European and national level.

### Cooperation

The Youth Board of Cyprus, being the national authority for youth, has established a framework of cooperation with the following actors:

- Civil society organisations active in the field of youth work, in this case primarily the Cyprus Youth Council (CYC) and the Cyprus Youth Clubs Organisation (CYCO). As previously said in [section 10.2](#), the Youth Board of Cyprus has established a Working Group, with the participation of representatives from these two umbrella organisations in order to develop a road map for the holistic and quality development of youth work in Cyprus.
- Public services dedicated to young people. This cooperation is safeguarded in the framework of the National Youth Strategy which embeds a cross-sectoral committee and binds all actors involved to closely cooperate on youth related issues.
- Youth workers and practitioners in the youth field, as well as researchers and experts in the field of youth work. This cooperation was especially promoted in the framework

of the visit of the Council of Europe experts' team in 2019. During the meeting, youth workers were invited to share their point of view on the current needs of the youth work field in Cyprus. In addition to that, the experts had a meeting with professors from the University of Cyprus, discussing the possibility of offering new educational programmes on youth work.

- Private organisations and social enterprises. Employers and private sector representatives are part of the consultation process of developing standards of vocational qualifications of the youth worker.

## 10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

### Quality assurance

The main criteria used to evaluate the quality of projects' proposals submitted for funding under the "Youth Initiatives" Funding Scheme, described in [section 5.6](#), are the quality of the design and implementation, the relevance of the proposed activity with the priorities of the specific action, the expected impact and the level of participation of young people in the design and implementation phases of the project.

According to the Programme's Guide, the Youth Board reserves the right to carry out on-the-spot checks verifying that the activities are being carried out according to the approved proposal and request a refund of the entire funding or part of it, if the project does not meet the established criteria.

### Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

In order to support better knowledge and understanding of current situation and needs of young people, the Youth Board of Cyprus established in 2020 the large-scale quantitative survey [Youth-Barometer](#), described as well in [section 1.6](#). The Youth-Barometer collects, among others, the needs of young people and their satisfaction regarding specific aspects of their life. However, the first two editions of the Youth-Barometer, conducted within 2020, haven't looked at issues related to youth work per se.

There is no specific budget line in Youth Board's budget dedicated to youth work. The overall budget of research can be used for any kind of research in the field of youth, including youth work.

### Participative Youth Work

As described in [section 5.4](#), in the framework of the National Youth Strategy, the Youth Board organises consultations with young people, in which young people can take part and express their views and suggestions on several policy initiatives and youth work programmes.

A concrete example of young people's contribution to youth work design, is the [consultation/survey](#) run by the [Youth Information Centres of the Youth Board](#), inviting young people to submit their needs and preferences regarding actions that they would like to be implemented by the Centres, involving them thus in the design process.

### Smart youth work: youth work in the digital world

Some of the top-level policies and measures enabling and fostering the application of digital technologies to youth work in Cyprus are:

- [Help Line 1410](#) offered by the Youth Board of Cyprus. This is the first Help Line which has operated in Cyprus since 1990. It is dialled by people in search for responsible answers on daily life matters, but also on more complex issues such as addictive substances, family relationships, peer relationships, school bullying, stress, depression, grief etc.

- [E-Counselling](#) offered by the Youth Board of Cyprus. E-Counselling is the web-site of 1410 Service. It handles the same issues and follows the same principles and professional deontology. What differs is the counselling process. Instead of talking on the phone, youth can chat with a counsellor through their pc or smart phone. E-Counselling counsellors handle all the cases with confidentiality and professionalism, regardless of gender, origin, ethnicity, age or sexual orientation, as done on 1410 Help Line. The conversation with the counsellor through the software is confidential and no one else has access to it.
- [Youth Information Centres](#): The Youth Information Centres (YIC) operate along the standards of Youth Information Centres of Europe and the guidelines of the European Youth and Information Counselling Agency (ERYICA). The main purpose of the centres is to provide general information on a wide range of youth related issues in a comfortable, modern and friendly environment. YIC offer information and guidance on the Youth Board of Cyprus' programmes and services, information about workshops and other recreational, social and sports events and about European opportunities for young people. This information sharing takes the shape of an offline counselling which then leads to further online research and communication.
- [Eurodesk Cyprus](#): Eurodesk's main purpose is to provide information on European policies and opportunities that interest young people or youth workers, such as mobility, volunteering, exchanges, work, internships, non-formal learning and much more. Eurodesk, is the main source of youth information on European policies, mobility information and opportunities in the country. It answers enquiries and provides guidance for mobile young people across Europe. Eurodesk updates and manages digital content and also answers enquiries coming from youth.
- In addition to these, the top-level initiative to make digital infrastructure available to youth work projects is [OPIN](#). OPIN is an online tool which is used by the Youth Board of Cyprus in order to engage young people into a consultation.

As a response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the need for digitalization of youth work, the Youth Information Centres organized online youth counselling for career issues and a series of workshops "[Let's go digital](#)".

There are no top-level initiatives aiming at facilitating cooperation and partnerships between youth work providers and actors in the fields of education, innovation, research and development, and business, in order to support the transmission of digital practices and technology to youth work.

## 10.5 Youth workers

### Status in national legislation

Currently, there are no top-level policies, measures or guidelines regulating the status of youth workers in the country.

### Education, training and skills recognition

Currently, there are not any paths in formal education leading to a qualification as youth worker in Cyprus.

There is no training for continuous professional development, either directly organised or funded by public authorities, available to youth workers – volunteers and/or professionals – to reinforce and expand their competences. However, youth workers have the opportunity to continue their professional development and expand their competences by participating in Erasmus+ mobility of youth workers or Transnational Cooperation Activities organized by the Erasmus+ National Agency in the country.

With regard to skills recognition, the project "Establishment of mechanisms for the validation of non-formal and informal learning and pilot implementation" is under

development. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth has assigned, under the process of open government tender, the project "Establishment of Validation Mechanisms for non-formal and informal Learning - Pilot Implementation" (Θέσπιση Μηχανισμών Επικύρωσης Μη-Τυπικής και Άτυπης Μάθησης – Πιλοτική Εφαρμογή) to two private organisations in Cyprus, lasting from November 2021 until August 2022. Within the framework of the project, between February-April 2022, public consultations will be conducted with the participation of governmental and private organisations and bodies, educational and research institutions that provide non-formal or informal learning and/or specialising in youth, education and adult education.

### **Mobility of youth workers**

The [Youth Initiatives Programme](#) of the Youth Board of Cyprus offers the possibility for youth workers to take part in exchange opportunities on international level. According to the programme, youth workers can get funding to participate in a training activity, seminar or conference abroad, in Europe as well as beyond. The funding covers the travelling and accommodation expenses. The main objective is the professional development of youth workers.

## **10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work**

### **Existing arrangements**

So far, there are not any existing arrangements when it comes to the recognition of the skills and competences acquired by young people participating in youth work activities.

Following EU Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (2012/C 398/01), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports is co-ordinating the establishment of a validation mechanism on non-formal and informal learning in Cyprus, as described in [section 10.5](#).

In addition to that, young people who participate in youth work activities through the Erasmus+ programme, have the opportunity to use the Youthpass, as a tool to document and recognise learning outcomes.

There are not any existing arrangements when it comes to the accreditation towards a qualification (full or partial) within the system of formal education for young people participating in youth work activities. The project "Establishment of Validation Mechanisms for non-formal and informal Learning - Pilot Implementation" ([Θέσπιση Μηχανισμών Επικύρωσης Μη-Τυπικής και Άτυπης Μάθησης – Πιλοτική Εφαρμογή](#)) includes the development of a mechanism for the validation and recognition of competences acquired through the participation in volunteering activities.

### **Skills**

The Project "Establishment of Validation Mechanisms for non-formal and informal Learning - Pilot Implementation" ([Θέσπιση Μηχανισμών Επικύρωσης Μη-Τυπικής και Άτυπης Μάθησης – Πιλοτική Εφαρμογή](#)) administered by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, will result in the creation of a mechanism for the validation of non-formal and informal learning.

## **10.7 Raising awareness about youth work**

### **Information providers**

The main sources of information available to young people to know about youth work and opportunities for engagement are:

**Youth Information Centers:** The Youth Information Centres (YIC) operate along the standards of Youth Information Centres of Europe and the guidelines of the European Youth and Information Counselling Agency (ERYICA). The main purpose of the centres is to provide general information on a wide range of youth related issues in a comfortable, modern and friendly environment. A further YIC aim is to assist young people towards social inclusion as independent persons. YIC offer information and guidance on the Youth Board of Cyprus' programmes and services, information about workshops and other recreational, social and sports events and about European opportunities for young people.

**Eurodesk Cyprus:** Eurodesk' s main purpose is to provide information on European policies and opportunities that interest young people or youth workers, such as mobility, volunteering, exchanges, work, internships, non-formal learning and much more.

### **Key initiatives**

The main top-level authorities' initiative to raise public awareness about the value of youth work is the «Up to You(th)»- Annual Youth Festival. The festival is organized by the Youth Board of Cyprus on an annual basis. Young people themselves are the protagonists of the festival since they are one of the most vibrant and promising parts of the society. In particular, the Festival includes an NGO Fair with more than 70 youth non-governmental organizations (NGOs), active in the fields of volunteering, environment, social justice, culture, human rights and other. Through the NGO fair, youth organizations have the opportunity to disseminate their work and reach out to young people. The target group of the festival is the general public.

## **10.8 Current debates and reforms**

### **Forthcoming policy developments**

The major forthcoming policy development expected in the field of youth work is the implementation of the project "Establishment of Non-Formal / Informal Learning Validation Mechanisms - Pilot Implementation", coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth. One of the project's outcomes will be the establishment of the occupational standards of youth workers.

In addition to that and as already stated in [section 10.2](#), the Youth Board has already put into implementation one of the recommendations from the Council of Europe's advisory mission by establishing a dedicated working group on Youth Work.

Along with the preparation and implementation of the Bonn Process at national level, the Working Group will gradually develop a roadmap for the development of youth work in Cyprus, including raising awareness actions, recognition of youth work, validation mechanisms of competences and experience of practicing youth work and professionalisation of youth workers.

### **Ongoing debates**

Within the framework of the project "Establishment of Non-Formal / Informal Learning Validation Mechanisms - Pilot Implementation", public consultations will be conducted with the participation of governmental and private organisations and bodies, educational and research institutions that provide non-formal or informal learning and/or specialising in youth, education and adult education.



## GLOSSARY

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**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.

**Gross Enrolment Ratio:** the Gross Enrolment Ratio for a given level of education is derived by dividing the total number of pupils at this level regardless of age, by the population of the age group which according to national regulations should be enrolled at this level.

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## ARCHIVE

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Information from previous years can be accessed and freely downloaded through the PDF files below.

### 2020

[Cyprus 2020.pdf](#)

### 2019

[Cyprus 2019.pdf](#)

### 2018

[Cyprus2018.pdf](#)

### 2017

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