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IMPLEMENTING THE 'EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010'

WORK PROGRAMME

2005 Progress Report

CYPRUS

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REPUBLIC  OF CYPRUS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

NATIONAL REPORT

ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
PROGRAMME

“EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010”

**Cyprus Contribution to the Preparation of the 2006 Joint
Council/Commission Report**

Nicosia, 2005

1. INTRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND THE LISBON AGENDA

1.1

The conclusions of the Heads of State in Lisbon in 2000 and their endorsement of the common objectives for education and training in Barcelona, 2002, followed by the adoption of five “reference levels of European average performance in education and training” (Benchmarks) in 2003, launched an agenda for reform and modernisation of the education and training systems of the Member States towards the 2010 common goals.

Cyprus is closely informed and actively involved in the relevant developments at EU level, mainly through its Permanent Representation to the EU, the European Council and Commission communication, and the Working Groups. The Lisbon Strategy has proved to be a challenge for reform and development in the education and training system of Cyprus, with new education policies and measures having been adopted since 2000. The Concrete Objectives of education and training systems and the priorities agreed under the Copenhagen and the Bologna processes have been a key factor in guiding change and development.

The efforts for restructuring and modernising the educational system culminated in 2003 with the appointment, by the Minister of Education and Culture, of an *Education Reform Committee* consisting of seven academics, in order to study the Cyprus Educational System and make suggestions for its improvement. In the framework of their terms of reference the Committee submitted, in August 2004, a Report indicating the main priority areas for reform (see 2.1) with suggestions for the restructure and the modernisation of the Cyprus Education System¹. A public dialogue, officially announced by the President of the Republic on 30 January 2005, is underway and a number of working groups, appointed by the Minister, have prepared suggestions on concrete measures to be implemented. In this context, major structural developments are in process in all sectors of education, from pre-primary through to higher education.

In the sectors of primary and secondary education the aim of enabling pupils to become active citizens is central in the framework of the Educational Reform. To this end the school curricula are reconsidered and procedures for their improvement are in the pipeline. A previous effort to improve the sectors of secondary general and secondary technical and vocational education took place in the school years 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 respectively and new curricula were developed based on a definition of the qualities of youths, stressing on learning mechanisms, research and initiative, knowledge of foreign languages, ability to make use of new technology, preparation for lifelong learning and autonomous learning, connecting theory with practice, the development of skills for flexibility, and a smooth and productive integration into the professional and social life². The European Training Foundation funded the Strategic Plan for the implementation of the new curricula of the technical schools.

A number of developments are, in addition, promoted in the sector of higher education in line with the Bologna process, concerning the adoption of the *European Credit Transfer*

¹ The Report is found on the MoEC's web site : www.moec.gov.cy

² *The Cyprus Educational System*. Ministry of Education and Culture, Nicosia, 2003 (Official publication).

System (ECTS) and the *Diploma Supplement*, and the establishment of a *National Quality Assurance Agency*. In parallel, the area of higher education has been expanded by new faculties established within the University of Cyprus, the establishment of two new universities – the Technological University and the Open University - and a recent legislation adopted providing for the establishment of private universities.

In line with the requirement set out in Lisbon for increasing overall levels of investment in human capital, the government expenditure on education has risen considerably and stands now at 6.8 % of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Public expenditure on all levels of education has increased from £370.7 million in 2001 to £487.4 million in 2004³.

The five European reference levels of European average performance in education and training (Benchmarks) are seriously taken into account and an Action Plan is in the process of being developed by officials of the Ministry of Education and Culture in order to accelerate progress as to their achievement. As regards the target set by the European Council of 85% of 22 year olds completing upper secondary education in 2010, Cyprus seems to be on the right track with a percentage of 80.1% in 2004, which is higher than the corresponding EU average of 76.4%⁴. It must also be noted that a considerable gap exists between the completion rates of nationals and non-nationals (84.4% and 57.3% respectively). Furthermore it is important to note that the actual upper secondary completion rate of nationals exceeds 85%, considering that about 55% of the Cypriot students are not covered by the survey, since they study abroad⁵.

The latter is also true for the percentage of early school leavers - 13%, according to the data kept by the Ministry of Education and Culture- which is overestimated at 18.4%⁶ by the Eurostat Labour Force Survey (LFS), due to the fact that the Cypriot students abroad are not covered by the survey.

Participation rates in lifelong learning have increased from 7.9% in 2003 to 9.3% in 2004 (the EU average being 9.4% in 2004). However, the European Benchmark of 12.5% by 2010 is far from being reached. The case is similar as regards the target of increasing the number of tertiary graduates in mathematics, science and technology.

Considering the Benchmark adopted by the European Council, that the percentage of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading literacy in the European Union should have decreased by at least 20% compared to the year 2000, no comparable PISA data exists for Cyprus, due to the fact that Cyprus does not participate in the PISA study. However, Cyprus participates in many other international studies. Quantitative, international, comparative data, such as EURYDICE studies, the TIMSS study and other studies have an influence on educational policies, as a result of the public dialogue, which these studies usually raise in Cyprus.

With a view to coordinate the implementation of the education and training elements of the Lisbon strategy, inter-ministerial or other structures are at times established.

³ *Statistics of Education 2003/2004*. Republic of Cyprus, Printing Office. Nicosia.

⁴ *Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training*. 2005 Report. Commission Staff Working Paper SEC(2005) 419. Commission of the European Communities.

⁵ *Statistics of Education 2003/2004*. Republic of Cyprus, Printing Office. Nicosia.

⁶ *Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training*. 2005 Report. Commission Staff Working Paper SEC(2005) 419. Commission of the European Communities.

Accordingly, there is a close cooperation with the Authority of Human Resource Development (HRDA) and the Planning Bureau, Ministry of Finance, as regards the development of comprehensive Lifelong Learning policies, as well as with the Productivity Centre of Cyprus, a Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, under the responsibility of which the establishment of a *National Europass Centre* has been assigned. There is also a close cooperation of the Ministry of Education and Culture with the Planning Bureau, which coordinates the preparation of the *National Lisbon Programme of Cyprus (2005-2008)*.

1.2

According to our national priorities we are trying to associate the “Education and Training 2010” priorities with national education and training policies development. To better promote the work programme, two committees have been established in December 2004, in the Ministry of Education and Culture, namely the *Official Committee on the Lisbon Strategy*, which is responsible for advising on policies and measures as to the Lisbon agenda, and the *Coordinating Committee on the Lisbon Strategy*, which is responsible for the coordination of the Cyprus representatives in the Lisbon Working Groups.

1.3

A last, but not least, important issue is that of making the “Education and Training 2010” programme visible in Cyprus. A number of conferences have been organised by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) with EU financial support, in 2003, 2004 and 2005⁷. Representatives of Cyprus and other European countries in the Lisbon Working Groups have been invited to these conferences to inform about their work. Moreover, the Pedagogical Institute offers seminars to the teachers on the subject. In addition, information on the Bologna process is available by the “group of the Bologna promoters” on the MoEC web site⁸.

2. INVESTING MORE AND MORE EFFICIENTLY: FOCUSING REFORM ON THE KEY AREAS

2.1 Identification of national priorities for reform and investment

2.1.1 Top priority areas

As stated in 1.1, the Cyprus Government has indicated its commitment and political determination to reform the education system by commissioning a study on an overall Educational Reform providing for developments at all levels of education. The main priorities identified for a structured nationwide consultation to promote the educational reform are the following:

1. Reorientation and reform of the Cyprus education for an open, democratic and multicultural society of knowledge.

⁷ Information is available on the MoEC’s web site: <http://www.moec.gov.cy>

⁸ <http://www.moec.gov.cy>

2. Reform of the institutional framework of administration and decision-making with emphasis on decentralisation.
3. Reform of the structure of the education system from pre-primary education through to tertiary education, with a view of extending the school day in primary education and possibly to lower secondary education; eliminating the gap between primary and secondary education; and, establishing Post-secondary Vocational Training Institutions.
4. Updating the content of education – curricula and teaching methods - with a focus on the development of a unified curriculum for a ten-year compulsory education from pre-primary to lower secondary education.
5. Further development of higher education, both public and private, aiming at turning Cyprus into a regional centre of education.
6. Development of a new scheme for the evaluation of the work of the school unit, the school task and the educators, and establishment of a Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation.
7. Improving and restructuring the system of the pre-service and the in-service education and training of educators.

A public dialogue is well underway on the proposed areas of reform and a number of measures are being promoted to this direction. The Lisbon Agenda is at the heart of this process.

A study on the development of a new scheme for the evaluation of the school unit, the school task and the educators has already been assigned to a Private Enterprise and it is expected to be submitted to the Minister of Education and Culture by December of 2005.

Provisions for the necessary funds to be available are taken and a first amount of £1.0 million has been included in the proposal budget of 2006 for the materialization of the reforms.

In general, since the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy a great effort has been made on accelerating action and development in education, in certain priority areas, which can be identified as the following:

- Expanding pre-primary education and extending the school day in primary education;
- Integrating ICT in education at all levels;
- Supporting and consolidating structural changes in the sector of upper secondary general education and the upper secondary technical and vocational education;
- Expanding the sector of higher education.

The rationale behind extending the school day in primary education is to ensure that more help is offered to children who need it and extensive learning opportunities are made available to all the children regardless of socio-economic background.

Developing ICT skills and the embedding of ICT within the curriculum is a focal point for reform and development in both the primary and the secondary sector of education. At the secondary level of education, ICT is used both as a subject in the school curriculum, aiming at computer literacy, and as a teaching aid. At the level of primary education, ICT is only used as a dynamic tool in the teaching and learning process.

Structural changes in the sector of upper secondary general education entailed the introduction of a new institution offering pupils more flexibility in deciding on their optional subjects, while in the sector of secondary technical and vocational education structural changes were connected with the reorganisation of the system of directions offered. In both cases changes were coupled with the development of new curricula and the promotion of new teaching methods.

As regards the sector of higher education, a number of developments indicate a consistent effort on the part of the Government to enhance higher education. Such developments are the expansion of the University of Cyprus by the establishment of new faculties and departments; the establishment of two new public universities – the Open University and the Technological University; and, the promotion of the legislation governing the establishment and operation of private universities.

2.1.2 Investment and Reform

The nature of the priority areas for Educational Reform mentioned above makes clear that increasingly more efficient investment is a central factor to their success. According to official data of the Ministry of Education and Culture⁹, investment has been directed with an increasing focus to all the reform areas. Indicatively we mention the following:

- Expenditure on the extension of the school day in primary education and the extension of pre-primary education has increased from £1,654,372 in 2002 to £2,245,049 in 2004 and from £576,045 in 2002 to £670,010 in 2004 respectively.
- As regards ICT, an ambitious programme is funded by the Government (budget of about €65,000,000), aiming at the integration of ICT in all areas of the curriculum in primary and secondary education and it includes improving ICT infrastructure and software and training of elementary school teachers in ICT and its utilisation in teaching and learning.

The total number of computers in schools of primary and secondary education has increased from 4,470 in 2002 to 15,365 in 2004, while every public school has got access to the World Wide Web. In September 2004 the ratios of pupils per computer in the primary and secondary level of education were as follows:

- 12.84, in primary education;
 - 6.73, in lower secondary education;
 - 4.57, in upper secondary general education; and
 - 3.35, in secondary technical and vocational education.
- The above mentioned major developments were paralleled by a consistent effort for improving the school buildings and infrastructure. The construction, extension and improvement of the school buildings, from pre-primary through to secondary

⁹ *Annual Report 2004*. Ministry of Education and Culture. Printing Office of the Republic of Cyprus. (in Greek).

education, constitutes another major area of reform and development marked by a considerable increase of expenditure, from £13,893,176 in 2002 to £24,934,100 in 2004.

As a result of reform and development the expenditure in the sectors of secondary and higher education has increased considerably (15.8%) in the period 2002 to 2004.

Accordingly, it is important to be mentioned that Cyprus has been ranked among the first Member States of the EU as to the increase of the overall expenditure on education in the period 2000 to 2002 (from 5.60% of GDP in 2000 to 6.83% of GDP in 2002)¹⁰. The rate of 6.83% has approximately been retained to date.

2.1.3 EU Funding

The reforms and developments described in 2.1.2 were mainly financed through state funds. However, EU funds contribute significantly to the implementation of reforms. A major project was signed in October 2003, which concerned two main areas:

- a) the construction, extension and improvement of school infrastructure at pre-primary, primary, secondary general and secondary technical and vocational education; and
- b) the introduction of ICT in public schools, including the re-adjustment of classrooms and purchase of hardware and software; curriculum reform; and the training of educators in basic and/or advanced computer skills.

90% of the cost of the project is funded by loans, which amount to 400 million Euros, provided by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEDB).

Furthermore, another project is currently running (overall budget of €20,000,000), 50% of which are state funds, while the rest is provided by the European Social Fund (ESF). The works planned fall under two measures:

- The first measure (budget of €9,600,000) mainly concerns the training of educators at the level of secondary general and secondary technical and vocational education. The implementation of the project has begun and the first 550 teachers have already completed their training in July 2005.
- The second measure (budget of €10,400,000) concerns the introduction of e-learning and e-training in secondary general education and secondary technical and vocational education. A strategic plan has been prepared for its successful materialization.

2.2 Extent of correlation between Member States priority areas, and the common European objectives

¹⁰ *Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training*. 2005 Report. Commission Staff Working Paper SEC(2005) 419. Commission of the European Communities.

2.2.1 Reforms in the structure of education / training institutions

Since the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus in 1960 its educational system has been centralised, with no serious reforms as to the administrative structure having taken place as yet. However, decentralisation is one of the recommendations of the Education Reform Committee (mentioned in 2.1), which forms part of the Government reform priorities.

Private provision of services in education is not very common in Cyprus. However, steps are taken to promote private initiatives in this domain. Such is the case with the following:

- a new policy established since the current year for the production of textbooks, providing that private agents will write the textbooks following a competition based on the EU legislations for tenders;
- the architectural plans of school buildings, which are often adopted following a competition;
- a number of research contracts, which have been signed between the Ministry of Education and Culture and private organisations, e.g. the contract signed some months ago with a Private Enterprise to provide a plan for teacher appraisal; and
- a number of projects in education that have received private sponsorship and support, e.g. 'Europe at School'.

Nevertheless, the picture is still that of an ad hoc approach that needs to be more fully structured and planned.

2.2.2 Development of incentives

There is no organised system for providing incentives to invest in education and training, e.g. using tax and benefit systems. However, in the area of the formal education, the Cyprus Government has developed and implemented several measures for providing incentives at all levels of the educational system.

Such is the case with the institution of financial support, which students studying at public institutions or accredited programmes of study in tertiary education have the right to.

Occasionally, financial incentives for in-service training may be given to teachers. Such was the case with the training of primary school teachers on basic ICT skills, in the school-year 2003-2004 (see 2.1.2), when a small training grant was given. Another incentive for teachers to upgrade their professional qualifications is the system of credits given for promotion purposes to them upon completing a postgraduate course leading to a recognised degree, e.g. Master or Ph.D. This incentive seems to be working particularly well in primary education, where large numbers of teachers are involved in postgraduate studies.

Full support provided through leave and full pay and other financial aids for those involved in international training programmes or student projects has also been proved to be a useful incentive in broadening horizons and perspectives on education.

In the area of training, the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) supports non-formal learning by providing incentives to employers, training institutions and persons in employment to promote initial and continuous training.

2.2.3 Funding mechanisms to increase private investment from enterprises, households and individuals

There is still no completely developed funding mechanism to increase private investment from enterprises, households and individuals. There is, however, provision in the law for subsidies of the workers' training.

The HRDA's (Human Resource Development Authority) policy and schemes for funding non-formal learning provide added motivation to engage private investment by following a policy of co-financing training activities and projects initiated by enterprises and private training institutions. This policy has contributed to rapid increase of training provision, in terms of number and training facilities.

HRDA will continue to stimulate private investment with the active support of the social partners. Investment should not only relate to money, but also to time and effort devoted to learning. To this end, HRDA gives emphasis on creating awareness in young people and adults about the benefits of lifelong learning and on improving access to learning.

It should be also noted that a levy, currently set at 0.5% of the payroll of all private enterprises and semi-government organisations, is channelled to the fund from which HRDA finances its activities.

Government policies to encourage family investment in education involve tax subsidies / exemptions. A loosely structured funding mechanism is from households through the school-home relationships and the Parent-Teacher Associations. This funding process is very important for the running of schools, as parents help in the running of the schools in various ways, such as employing caretakers for children who stay at school after teaching hours, or helping the school with new equipment or upgrading school libraries. In secondary education there are instances where households financially supplement the schools' efforts for international cooperation and student exchanges.

2.3 Monitoring and evaluation of educational policies

Educational policies are continuously subjected to public scrutiny in Cyprus, either through public dialogue raised by the political parties and the social partners, or through the Parliament. Extended discussions usually precede the implementation of new policies / measures, thus serving as an ex-ante evaluation.

The Ministry of Education and Culture pursues on-going evaluation and monitoring of new educational policies implemented through the system of Inspectorate, as the inspectors of the Ministry, of all levels of education, are entitled, amongst others, with the monitoring and evaluation of new institutions as they apply to the school level.

The Research and Evaluation Department of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, Ministry of Education and Culture, is also responsible for on-going, formative evaluation of several reforms and programmes in the Cyprus educational system.

In several cases the Minister of Education and Culture has appointed ad hoc committees consisting of officials of the Ministry and external experts in order to evaluate new

educational policies implemented. Such an ad hoc committee has evaluated the structural changes implemented in the system of upper secondary general education in 2000 and submitted a report to the Minister of Education and Culture¹¹.

Nevertheless it is in the scope of the Government to establish, in the framework of the Educational Reform which is underway, an independent Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation.

3. PUTTING IN PLACE TRULY COHERENT AND COMPREHENSIVE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES

3.1. Main policy/measures

3.1.1 The state of development

Cyprus closely follows lifelong learning (LLL) developments taking place at EU level taking into consideration EU policies and recommendations and participating in lifelong learning committees established by the European Commission. A wide system of lifelong learning has long been established in Cyprus with a number of institutions offering LLL courses today. Some of these are stated below with the respective Ministries indicated in a parenthesis:

- The University of Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture);
- The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (Ministry of Education and Culture);
- The Adult Education Centres (Ministry of Education and Culture);
- The State Institutes for Further Education (Ministry of Education and Culture);
- The Evening Classes of high-schools (Ministry of Education and Culture);
- Public and private institutes of higher education (Ministry of Education or other Ministries);
- The Apprenticeship Scheme (Ministry of Education and Culture, and Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, in collaboration);
- The Human Resource Development Authority (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance);
- The Cyprus Productivity Centre (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance);
- The Cyprus Public Administration Academy (Ministry of Finance);

Moreover, ministries and governmental or semi-governmental organisations occasionally offer internal seminars for training their personnel and other citizens.

3.1.2 General approach and policy

Although a large number of institutions are involved in lifelong learning, there is need for a National LLL Agency to be established, in order to coordinate their priorities. The Government is in the process of establishing this Agency and the first steps have already been taken to this direction. A Committee has been established, consisting of representatives from various sectors - public and private - involved in LLL programmes

¹¹ *Formative Evaluation of the Eniaio Lykeio*. Report of the Committee on the Evaluation of the institution of the Eniaio Lykeio, submitted to the Minister of Education and Culture, in May 2003. (in Greek)

and strategies, the role of which will be to study the various parameters of LLL in Cyprus and make recommendations for the establishment and the operation of a National LLL Agency. The Planning Bureau, Ministry of Finance, coordinates the works of the Committee.

It has also to be said that the Ministry of Education and Culture, following the latest policy initiated by the EU Commission for the establishment of 'clusters', has appointed a representative to the cluster for the promotion of LLL policies. It is envisaged that the knowledge and experiences gained through the participation in this cluster will help for an effective National LLL Agency to be soon established.

3.1.3 Priority reforms

In the report submitted by the *Education Reform Committee* the need for the adoption of LLL strategies across the education system is emphasized. However, various steps are currently being taken towards the implementation of lifelong learning strategies across the system, especially regarding investment in crucial dimensions of LLL policies, as described below:

- *Developing partnerships - Promoting LLL through national or regional economic and social partnerships:* Sharing the EU view that developing partnerships with key actors and stakeholders is essential for the implementation of LLL policies, the Cyprus Government has adopted the policy of establishing a continuous dialogue with public authorities and economic and social partners for the purpose of identifying labour shortages, as well as local specific needs for further training and retraining of individuals in order to support employment and enterprise development in local communities.

The economic and social partners are involved in policy making including human resource development, through various bodies such as the *Economic Consultative Committee* and the *Advisory Labour Body*. Moreover they are represented in the Governing Board of the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), which is the national agency responsible for vocational training. Employers' and Workers' organisations that are represented on the HRDA's Board of Directors are consulted on all major issues and participate in the formulation of its policies.

Social Partners bring HRDA's activities to the attention of the members. They also participate in the implementation of lifelong learning activities for their members within the framework and priorities set by HRDA. It should be noted that HRDA does not organise programmes itself, but leaves the task to the social partners, the public and private training institutions, and companies themselves. Courses organised by the social partners aim at upgrading the skills and knowledge of their members in new areas, such as strategic and quality management, networking activities and harmonisation with the *Acquis Communautaire* on labour, business and other issues.

- *Developing the foundations for further learning at the earliest possible stage in the education system:* Developing the foundations for further learning at the earliest possible stage in the educational system is considered very important. To this end reform has been directed towards certain key areas, such as the extension of the school day in primary education and the extension of pre-primary education (see 2.1.2). Furthermore the Government has invested in important LLL skills, like ICT and foreign languages in all levels of formal education. More specifically ICT

teaching has been introduced in pre-primary, primary and secondary education, while the teaching of a foreign language has been introduced from the fourth year of primary education and continues throughout the formal education. A second foreign language is obligatory in all forms of secondary schools¹².

- *Redefinition of the objectives of education systems and curricula from preschool to upper-secondary education in terms of the attainment of key competences:* As mentioned in 1.1 and 2.1.1, major structural changes were initiated since 2000 in the system of the upper secondary education. In this context the school curricula were reformed as well, focussing on a redefinition of the qualities of youths and the attainment of key competences for the knowledge based society (see 1.1). Based on the same grounds new series of textbooks were produced in the primary sector of education in the decade of 1990s. However, in the framework of the comprehensive Educational Reform, which is now underway, measures for the modernisation of the whole educational system are discussed.
- *Recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning:* The need for establishing common guiding principles for validation of non-formal and informal learning has been emphasised in the conclusions of the European conference on validation of non-formal and informal learning in Oslo, May 2002, and by the Copenhagen declaration in November 2002. In this framework measures are being taken in Cyprus for the establishment of a *National Europass* Centre and the development of a *Competence-Based System of Vocational Qualifications*. The former has been assigned to the Productivity Centre of Cyprus, a Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, while the latter has been assigned to the Human Resource Development Authority, which is a semi-governmental organisation responsible for the planning and the coordination of the training/development of human resources beyond formal education. Cyprus also supports the initiative for establishing a *European Qualifications Framework*.
- *Development of widely accessible LLL guidance policies:* The Government and semi-government organisations contribute to the guidance and counselling of young people at school, as well as of those looking for learning pathways after completing education or want to start a new career. The *Guidance and Counselling Service* of the Ministry of Education and Culture disseminates locally accessible information to interested citizens, and organises informative seminars and meetings for target groups in order to enhance their interest and access to continuing education, learning and training opportunities. Counselling advisors in all schools of secondary education offer help and guidance to all students.
- *Developing diverse learning pathways and open learning environments:* To facilitate access to further education for all citizens it is necessary to develop diverse learning pathways and open learning environments. The establishment of the Open University of Cyprus was based on this premise. Providing diverse and flexible methods of education, the new university is expected to assist citizens to participate in lifelong learning, study on their own pace, and obtain higher education qualifications; it will also offer short term and further education programmes. The only entry requirement

¹² *The Cyprus Educational System*. Ministry of Education and Culture. Nicosia, 2003. Official publication.

for undergraduate studies will be the school-leaving certificate. Tutors will be available to offer help and guidance to students throughout the learning process. The Open University of Cyprus is expected to operate in September 2006 with an Undergraduate Programme in Greek civilisation, a Postgraduate Programme in Education, and a Postgraduate Programme in Management of Health Services.

- *Investing in teachers' and trainers' training to enable them to play their new role in the knowledge society:* There is a well organised policy for the training of teachers in Cyprus, which dates back at least to 1972, when the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus (CPI) was established. Through the CPI the Ministry of Education and Culture provides various opportunities for the teachers' professional development. The CPI organises a series of courses and seminars based on the needs identified annually by the MoEC. These courses are either compulsory or optional. The compulsory courses comprise a pre-service training course for secondary school teachers as well as in-service training courses for newly appointed heads of secondary schools, deputy heads of secondary schools, and deputy heads of primary schools. All these series of courses include sessions dealing with EU priority issues as, for example, new technologies in education, intercultural education, the European dimension in education and action research.

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

The SOCRATES programme, in which Cyprus has been participating since 1997, constitutes another source of training for the teachers through their participation in its sub-programmes (Comenius, Grundtvig, Arion, etc.).

- *Integrated use of ICT in education and training systems:* As stated in 2.1.1, the integration of ICT in education was among the top priority areas for investment in the last years. ICT teaching has been introduced in all levels of education from pre-primary through to further education centres, aiming at helping students and citizens to develop basic ICT skills. The number of computers in schools of primary and secondary education has increased considerably and, consequently, the ratios of pupils per computer have also been improved (see 2.1.2). Moreover emphasis is given on the training of teachers in basic ICT skills. A number of teachers have already been trained at the Pedagogical Institute as part of a large programme of training of teachers in ICT (see 2.1.3).
- *Focusing on disadvantaged groups:* There is a structured Government policy towards promoting LLL amongst disadvantaged groups. Some expressions of this policy are found in the following:
 - The Ministry of Education and Culture provides opportunities for education to people over the age of 15 through the *Adult Education Centres*. The courses are based on specific targets and follow a flexible curriculum, which corresponds to the people's interests and needs. In particular, in order to promote multicultural education and give opportunities to immigrants or immigrants' children, the Adult Education Centres offer courses on Greek as a second language; Greek language for Turkish Cypriots; Turkish language for Greek Cypriots; and

dancing and singing (for the preservation of the cultural background of minority groups).

- Special attention is given to people with disabilities. A Law of 1979 provided for the establishment of “special schools” for children 5-18 years old. In the 1980s Cyprus followed the trend of the full integration with support measures, such as support teaching and teaching assistance. However, the practice of the full integration lacked any legal framework until the enactment of the Law 113(I)/1999 on *The Education and Training of Children with Special Needs*. The Law makes the principle of integration a priority and provides for every child to be trained in the “least restrictive environment”. As a result, programmes for providing students with special needs with the necessary individualized education and support have been intensified, with special classes functioning within the ordinary educational system, at the primary and the secondary level of education.
- Other measures to combat social and educational exclusion of children with disabilities include the creation of “Zones of Educational Priority”, drug prevention education, programmes for the development of self-esteem, and programmes for functional literacy. The programmes are developed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and are applied within the school system.
- Following an “equal opportunity” policy the University of Cyprus offers admission to a number of disabled students and students from specific minority groups. Private institutions of higher education in Cyprus also apply specific regulations and policies offering equal opportunities of study to all Cypriot citizens as well as people from overseas.
- The Cyprus Telecommunication Authority (CYTA), which is a semi-governmental organisation, as part of its social contribution, facilitates communication for deaf people through the "telephone service for the Deaf, 1408/1409". This service is offered on a 24-hour basis to people, both in Cyprus and abroad, who have access to a fax machine. Moreover, CYTA offers free connection (wire phone, mobile and Internet) to persons with disabilities (deaf, blind and persons with severe motor disabilities).
- Persons with disabilities are funded to buy their own new technology related equipment (e.g. PCs, mobiles, fax machines etc) through the *Self Employment Scheme*, which is part of the effort towards the vocational rehabilitation of the disabled and the Scheme for special financial assistance to the disabled persons for the provision of technical aids and equipment for facilitating their life and employment.
- *Prolonging the habit of learning throughout life and enhancing learning access and opportunities for older citizens and workers:* The Cyprus government is aiming at a knowledge-based society which needs active citizens, able to meet the challenges of the new world. For this purpose a number of initiatives are taking place aiming at giving learning opportunities to older citizens and workers. The Adult Education Centres of the Ministry of Education and Culture offer learning opportunities to adults and especially to the ageing population and older workers, to adults living in rural areas and especially to women who do not

have the basic school education. Furthermore, the establishment of an Open University will give the opportunity to the ageing population to upgrade their learning.

3.2 Obstacles and areas of further progress

The implementation of a coherent and comprehensive LLL policy is not easy. The high cost that such an initiative implies for the public budget is a major obstacle. The need for coordination amongst the various ministries, organisations and other stakeholders involved in LLL is a further obstacle.

However, the promotion of lifelong learning through the development of a coherent and comprehensive national strategy is recognised as a *sine qua non* for a knowledge-based society. In this respect the establishment of a National LLL Agency is considered a priority and actions are being directed towards this end.

4. REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION

4.1 Main Policies / measures

4.1.1 Enhancing the European compatibility in the structure and organisation of degrees (changes in degree system, ECTS credits, Diploma Supplement)

Cyprus has signed the Bologna Process as early as 1999 and has ever since worked for its implementation.

As regards the system of degrees, Cyprus found itself in a privileged position, as traditionally the system was based on two cycles. The third cycle of degrees (Ph.D.) is also offered by the University of Cyprus. Higher education short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle degrees) is offered by public and private institutions.

The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement (DS) are already being applied to a number of courses at the University of Cyprus as well as some public and private institutions of higher education. The ECTS will be made obligatory for all courses at the University of Cyprus in the academic year 2005-2006, while a proposed amendment of “The Institutions of Higher Education Laws of 1996 to 2004” is at present under discussion providing, amongst others, for the adoption of the ECTS and the DS by all public and private institutions of higher education.

4.1.2. Enhancing competitiveness and attractiveness

The ultimate objective, as far as higher education is concerned, is to offer high quality education in a number of fields of study to local and international students, thus turning Cyprus into a regional educational and research centre. Along these lines higher education of Cyprus, and in particular the private institutions of higher education, show a significant increase in the number of international students attracted, as their number has

increased from 2,472 (26.13%) in 2001 to 5,482 (35.8%) in 2004. These students originate from countries like India, China, Bangladesh, as well as from the Eastern European and other countries¹³. The increased number of international students is attributed to the increased number of validated and accredited programmes of studies offered by the private colleges of higher education operating in Cyprus.

4.1.3 Promoting advanced learning and innovation

The promotion of innovation and research is realised by the *Research Promotion Foundation*, which was established, in 1996, as an institute responsible for the coordination and support of research activities. It constitutes, therefore, an important step towards the promotion of R&D in Cyprus.

Advanced learning is provided only by the University of Cyprus, which offers postgraduate programmes at the level of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). The studies are based on course work and dissertation.

Due to the limited number of institutions and academia, the promotion of poles of excellence has also been limited. However, a recent proposal is under discussion, providing for the establishment of a Science and Arts Academia, in which distinguished Cypriot Scientists and Researchers, locally or abroad, will be eligible for membership. This is expected to create brain gain opportunities.

4.1.4 Promoting structural change in universities

A recent agreement reached between the University of Cyprus and the government funding departments on a simplified approach on the evaluation of the budget of the university, with a further flexibility on behalf of the university on the internal handling of the available funds, is a step towards enhancing its internal management capacity. This approach has been applied for the government funding for the last two financial years (2004 and 2005).

Continuous structural change is promoted in the University of Cyprus through its expansion, as an Engineering faculty has been established, since September 2003, and plans are set for the Departments of Biology and Law.

The adoption of the *European Credit Transfer System* and the *Diploma Supplement* by the University of Cyprus are also considered as structural changes promoting quality of learning.

Major changes are also taking place in the whole structure of the higher education sector in Cyprus and these relate to:

- The establishment, by Law 198(I)/2003, of the Technological University of Cyprus, which will include the public institutions currently operating, and possibly add new disciplines. The Technological University of Cyprus is expected to commence operation in September 2007 with the following faculties:

¹³ *Annual Report 2004*. Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Nicosia.

Technological Applications; Health Services; Administration and Finance; Earth Technologies and Science; Applied Arts; and, Communication.

- The establishment, by Law 234(I)/2002, of the Open University of Cyprus, which is expected to commence operation in September 2006 with three programmes of study: Undergraduate Programme in Greek civilization; Postgraduate Programme in Education; and, Post-graduate Programme in Management of Health Services.
- The upgrading of the private institutions of higher and tertiary education through the legislation governing the establishment and operation of Private Universities in Cyprus, which has been approved by the House of Representatives in July 2005.

4.1.5 Quality Assurance

The Government of Cyprus has set up its accreditation body, as early as 1987, by a series of laws governing the establishment, operation and evaluation of public and private schools of higher education. At present, two bodies are in operation:

- The *Council for Educational Evaluation-Accreditation (Simvoulio Ekpedeftikis Axiologisis kai Pistopiisis-SEKAP)*, which is the competent authority responsible for the educational evaluation-accreditation of the programmes of study offered by private institutions of higher education. The Council is an autonomous body appointed for this purpose by the Council of Ministers upon the recommendation of the Minister of Education and Culture and consists of seven members of academia from Cyprus and abroad.
- The *Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KY.S.A.T.S)*, which is the competent authority responsible for the recognition of titles or degrees awarded by institutions of higher education, recognised in the country they operate. It serves the role of the National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) for Cyprus.

Further to the above, the Ministry of Education and Culture, in close cooperation with the public universities and institutions, as well as the private institutions of higher education and the other stakeholders, is formulating the necessary framework for the establishment of a *National Quality Assurance Agency*. The aim of this agency is to promote quality assurance in both the public and the private institutions of higher education through various measures which include external accreditation and development of internal quality culture. These efforts are in line with the Berlin Communiqué, the ENQA Standards and Guidelines on QA, as accepted by the Bergen Communiqué, and the Agreement on Quality Assurance under discussion in EU.

4.1.6 Making higher education more responsive to the needs of LLL learners and non-traditional students

In section 3.1.1 the Government's policy on LLL is explained in detail. In this section the focus is limited to the response of higher education to the needs of LLL learners and non-

traditional students. Higher education in Cyprus continuously becomes more responsive to these demands.

The expansion of the University of Cyprus, the establishment of two new universities - the Technological University and the Open University – and the promotion of the legislation governing the establishment and operation of private universities are in line with the broad vision of the Bologna Declaration to reform the education systems in order to create an educational environment which will enhance and promote lifelong learning. The establishment of the Open University, in particular, has come as a response of the Government to the needs of the LLL learners and non-traditional students.

In addition, a number of courses, including foundation courses and non-degree courses, are offered by other higher education institutions, such as:

- *Private Schools of Higher Education:* Twenty-three private higher education institutions, colleges and institutes are registered with the Ministry of Education and Culture and offer a wide range of programmes of study some of which are tailored specifically for adults holding a school leaving certificate from a six-year secondary school or its equivalent. Programmes include Business Studies, Engineering, Social Sciences, Languages, Education, Hotel and Tourism, Administration, Management, Graphic Design, Computer Science and others. Some of these institutions offer programmes of study at non-degree level.
- *The Mediterranean Institute of Management:* It offers a year-long programme, at the postgraduate level, that leads to the acquisition of a qualification in the field of management.

4.1.7 Technological partnerships

Cyprus is far from reaching the Barcelona European Council goal of increasing the overall spending on research and development (R&D) to the level of 3% of GDP by 2010. This is due to a number of factors that constrain R&D activities.

However, a considerable increase has been observed over the last decade, from 0.18% in 1992 to 0.35% in 2003. This is attributed to a number of developments, such as¹⁴:

- the operation of the University of Cyprus as from 1992;
- the participation of Cyprus in the EU Research Framework Programmes;
- the establishment of the Research Promotion Foundation – a non profit organisation entitled with the development, implementation and management of all national research programmes;
- the expansion of the research activities of some research institutions of Cyprus; and
- the creation of the business incubators initiative of the Government.

¹⁴ *National Lisbon Programme of Cyprus (2005-2008).*

The Government's policy is to increase substantially R&D expenditure. In this respect, a target has been set for R&D expenditure to reach 0.65% of GDP by 2008 and a number of measures are underway or planned towards the achievement of this target.

Higher education institutions account for about 30% of the total R&D expenditure. However, research activity in the sector of higher education is expected to improve significantly with the efforts of the Government to increase R&D expenditure. Along these lines a new research institution, namely the *Cyprus International Institute* has been set up with government funding and is in the process of engaging actively in research and education activities.

4.2 Obstacles and areas of further progress

The percentage of Cypriot tertiary students enrolled outside Cyprus (56.3%) is the second highest among the Member States¹⁵. This is due to the fact that only one university – the University of Cyprus - is currently in operation in Cyprus.

What is needed is a momentum towards completing the procedures for the operation of the two new universities and the establishment of private universities. Main obstacles to the latter are high expenditure needed as well as the time consuming procedures of modification of the existing legislation.

5. INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VET

5.1 Main policies / measures

5.1.1 The implementation at national level of the tools developed under the Copenhagen process

The implementation at national level of the tools developed under the Copenhagen process constitutes a major policy of the Cyprus Government. In this framework, the following policies / measures are underway:

- *National Europass Centre*: The responsibility for the National Europass Centre (NEC) has been assigned to the Productivity Centre of Cyprus, a Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. A proposal for the official establishment of the NEC has been recently submitted to the Council of Ministers of the Republic.
- *Competence-Based System of Vocational Qualifications*: The development of a Competence-Based System of Vocational Qualifications, a priority first identified within the Joint Assessment Paper as part of a system of lifelong learning, remains one of the Cyprus strategic issues, as well as a priority of the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA). The HRDA has recently proceeded with the preparation of a feasibility study and discussions continue at the level of the Board of Governors for the formulation and development of a National System of Vocational Qualifications.

¹⁵ *Progress Towards the Lisbon Objectives in Education and Training*. 2005 Report. Commission Staff Working Paper SEC(2005) 419. Commission of the European Communities.

5.1.2 The needs of low-skilled and disadvantaged groups

In section 3.1.3 a number of measures taken in the framework of a Government's policy towards promoting lifelong learning amongst disadvantaged groups were described, all of which apply to people in Vocational Education and Training (VET) as well. A very recent development has been the introduction of a special training programme, jointly designed by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Justice, for juveniles in prisons as part of their rehabilitation.

5.1.3 The image and attractiveness of the vocational route

The reform of the Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE) has recently been concluded and ongoing internal evaluation of the New Curriculum in STVE is underway. Two studies are also underway in the framework of the Single Programming Document for Objective 3 of the European Social Fund:

- An evaluation study, aiming to measure the appropriateness and the attractiveness of the provision of VET by STVE; and
- A short study on the Apprenticeship Scheme, aiming at examining the training opportunities provided and recommending reforms of the existing programmes of training and/or the introduction of new programmes that will increase the attractiveness of the scheme, especially to girls.

Apart from the teacher training programme in ICT, there is another ambitious programme (budget of around €130 million) aiming to integrate ICT in all areas of the curriculum in primary and secondary education (secondary general and secondary technical and vocational education). The programme for upper secondary education is funded by the *European Social Fund*, in the context of the SPD for Objective 3, while the programme for primary and lower secondary education is funded by the Cyprus Government.

5.1.4 Linking VET with the requirements of the labour market

The need to reduce the skills gap in the labour market and to empower young secondary school leavers to join the world of work, by providing them with opportunities to acquire vocational skills, is seriously taken into account by the Government. In this respect, the idea of establishing Post Secondary Vocational Institutions is under consideration.

5.1.5 Competence development of older workers

As stated in 3.1.3, the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) is the national agency, which sets the framework and the priorities for lifelong learning activities. In this framework, older workers have the opportunity to develop new competencies.

5.1.6 Reduction of barriers between VET and general education and increased progression into higher education

A part of the Report submitted by the Education Reform Committee is devoted to VET, including suggestions concerning the alleviation of barriers between VET and general secondary education, which are seriously taken into consideration by the Government. There are, however, regulations, which facilitate pupils to move from VET to secondary general education and vice versa.

The school leaving certificate of the schools of secondary technical and vocational education is recognised as equivalent to the school leaving certificate of the schools of secondary general education. Consequently, the pupils in VET have the same opportunities as the pupils in secondary general education for progression into higher education, provided that they pass the universities entrance examinations.

5.1.7 The specific learning needs and changing role of vocational teachers and trainers

An ambitious teacher training programme (budget of around €7 million), which aims to empower teachers to integrate ICT in teaching and learning, is underway. The European Social Fund supports the programme for teachers in Secondary Education (in the context of the SPD for objective 3) and the Government funds teachers of Primary Education. The programme aims at covering the entire population of teachers in Primary and Secondary Education.

5.1.8 Early identification of skill needs and planning of VET provision

- The Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) operates the main formal mechanism for the assessment of skill needs through analyses of changes in the labour market.
- The Planning Bureau makes projections for the growth of the economy, which include forecasts for different sectors.
- The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the identification of educational and special skill needs.

The HRDA conducts research studies and surveys in issues of strategic importance which examine human resource development issues at the level of the economy, the level of economic sectors and occupational categories, as well as other specialised issues within its sphere of competence. These constitute a useful guide for the formulation of the training and human resource development strategy and for planning the organisation's activities through the annual priority setting.

The research activity places particular emphasis on employment forecasting, on analysing the trends in the labour market - with emphasis on human resource development issues - and on the functioning of the training market in Cyprus.

5.2 Obstacles and areas for further progress

The relatively small number of pupils choosing the route of Technical and Vocational Education, as compared to the number of pupils in secondary general education, is considered as an area that progress remains to be made. Despite the efforts of the Government for a more attractive VET system, a prejudice still seems to exist.

6. CONSOLIDATING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

6.1 Increase mobility through removing obstacles and active promotion

Mobility in Cyprus, including the exchange of students, teachers and trainers, is promoted within the framework of the SOCRATES programme. According to data

obtained from the Cyprus National Coordination Unit, a large number of students participated in the student exchange programme ERASMUS, school groups went abroad on the COMENIUS school exchange, while school twinning is very popular, especially in the primary school sector. Cyprus is also becoming more attractive to students from other countries, under ERASMUS / SOCRATES.

6.1.1 Removing administrative and legal obstacles to mobility

Several measures are promoted in order to remove administrative and legal obstacles to mobility, especially in relation to the transparency of competences and qualifications, which are summarised in the following:

- Cyprus is in the process of establishing a National Europass Centre (see 5.1.1).
- A competence-based System of Vocational Qualifications is in the process of being established (see 5.1.1).
- The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the Diploma Supplement (DS) are being applied to a number of courses at the University of Cyprus and some private institutes, while an amendment in the Law is under discussion, providing for the adoption of the ECTS and the DS to be made obligatory for all public and private institutions of higher education (see 4.1.1).
- A Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KY.S.A.T.S) is operating in Cyprus, which is the competent authority responsible for the recognition of titles or degrees awarded by higher education institutions recognised in the country they operate (see 4.1.5).

6.1.2 Improving the quality of mobility and increasing the mobility of teachers and trainers as part of their career development

The Socrates National Coordination Unit within the Ministry of Education and Culture manages and encourages mobility. The expenditure of the budget is achieved through regular calls that are put in the Socrates web site and are published in the National Press. Additionally, every effort is made through Conferences and Information Days in all regions of Cyprus to reach all potential applicants. Teachers from the public sector also get a paid leave when they are on EU mobility within the Socrates programme; this particularly results in high demand.

6.1.3 Policies aiming at increasing the mobility of teachers and trainers as part of their career development

Increasing the mobility of teachers and trainers at all levels of education has been a main policy of the Ministry of Education and Culture, in the framework of which measures have been adopted as incentives for teachers and trainers, e.g. giving them leave and full pay in order to be involved in international training programmes. As a result, the number of teachers and trainers involved in Comenius-2 has increased from 16 in the school year 2001-2002 to 26 in 2003-2004¹⁶.

¹⁶ *Europe of Knowledge-Socrates Programme*. Ministry of Education and Culture, the Socrates National Coordination Unit, 2004. (in Greek)

6.1.4 The promotion of mobility of people in vocational education and training

Similar measures and policies, as those described for teachers and trainers, exist for people in vocational education too, in order to facilitate and increase their mobility.

6.1.5 Main obstacles in implementing decisions on the above subjects

The following obstacles have been identified so far:

1. *The scepticism of students as regards mobility*, which is probably due to inadequate implementation of the ECTS by the Member States on the one hand and the lack of adequate accommodation facilities on the other hand. The full implementation of the ECTS is recommended. It is also suggested that an agency should be established to be responsible for the orientation and the accommodation of students within the Erasmus programme.
2. *Low budgets for teacher mobility*. Although a significant increase in the budget for years 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 resulted in increased numbers of participants, there is still a feeling that the EU budget is low compared to the high demand.
3. *Language barriers*. The mobility of the Cypriot students is often hampered by inadequate knowledge of foreign languages. In the same way international students are hampered to study in the University of Cyprus, as lectures and classes are only delivered in Greek. A recent decision that some courses will be offered in English, too, is expected to increase student mobility.

6.2 Consolidate the European dimension of education

6.2.1 Encouraging a European dimension of learning

The Ministry of Education and Culture exhibits particular sensitivity as regards the *European Dimension of Education* and takes measures to ensure that students will have by the end of their secondary education the knowledge and competences they need to play their role as active citizens of their country, as well as of Europe and the rest of the world. In this framework the European Dimension of Education was set as a major target subject in the school years 1996-97 and 2003-2004 and education packages were sent to all schools on issues of the European Union, its history and its features.

Beyond the school participation in the SOCRATES programme, and essentially the Comenius-1, the European dimension is promoted at school level through an interdisciplinary approach, by a series of activities, such as¹⁷:

- establishing European clubs;
- encouraging activities with regard to the *Europe Day*;

¹⁷ *The Cyprus Educational System*. Ministry of Education and Culture. Nicosia, 2003. Official publication

- connecting Cyprus schools with schools abroad; or
- encouraging pupils to undertake interdisciplinary projects.

6.2.2 The inter-cultural dimension in the school curriculum

A major development towards the promotion of the European dimension of education in the formal school curriculum is the re-writing of the textbooks of Civics with new sections on EU themes being included.

6.2.3 Obstacles met in the implementation of policies

No considerable obstacles have been met in the implementation of the European dimension in education. Quite the opposite, the related activities are welcomed by teachers and pupils alike, as well as the Mass Media and the political parties.