

VET in Cyprus



The vocational education and training (VET) system of Cyprus is constantly developed to respond better to the needs of the labour market.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth has overall responsibility for developing and implementing education policy. The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance has overall responsibility for labour and social policy and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) plays an important role in vocational training.

VET is available at secondary and tertiary education levels.

At upper secondary level, general education programmes (83.3% of enrolments in 2017/18) are with lyceums, including evening lyceums; VET programmes (16.7% of enrolments in 2017/18) are with technical schools, including evening technical schools. Horizontal and vertical movement across upper secondary education is possible upon successful completion of specific examinations. Technical schools offer two types of three-year programmes, theoretical and practical, leading to EQF 4 school-leaving certificates, equivalent to those of secondary general education schools. Specialisations are selected in the first year. Graduates are eligible for admission to universities and other tertiary education institutions in Cyprus and abroad. Both streams are mainly school-based: they combine general education subjects with VET subjects and integrate practical training in enterprises at the end of the first and second years. The theoretical stream is for those who want to continue to higher education and the practical one is for those oriented more towards entering the labour market.

VET is also available through the apprenticeship system, which addresses young people between the ages of 14 and 18. 'Preparatory apprenticeship' (EQF 2) can last up to two school years, depending on the level and age of the apprentice. Young people aged between 14 and 16, who have not completed lower secondary programmes, may participate. After completing 'preparatory apprenticeship', graduates can either continue to 'core apprenticeship' or upper secondary programmes, provided they succeed in entrance examinations.

'Core apprenticeship' lasts for three years. Eligible candidates must be less than 18 years old to apply and must have either completed a lower secondary programme (EQF 2) or 'preparatory apprenticeship' or dropped out of upper secondary programmes. On successful completion, participants may continue with evening technical school programmes, which lead to an EQF 4 certificate, and receive an upper secondary education qualification (school leaving certificate) in two years instead of three. The apprenticeship certificate (EQF 3) allows access to several regulated occupations, provided all other requirements of relevant legislation are met.

VET at tertiary, non-university level is provided at public and private institutes/colleges, offering an opportunity to acquire, improve, or upgrade qualifications and skills. Successful completion of these accredited programmes, which may last from two to three years, leads to a diploma or higher diploma awarded by the institution (EQF 5). The public post-secondary institutes of VET were accredited in 2017 by the Cyprus Agency

for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education as public schools of higher vocational education and training; they offer accredited two-year programmes leading to a diploma.

Vocational training for adults is extensively available in Cyprus for the employed, the unemployed, vulnerable groups and adults in general, through a mixture of public and private provision: colleges, training institutions, consultancy firms and enterprises. The employed usually participate in training programmes for job-specific skills to meet company needs. The unemployed and vulnerable groups acquire both horizontal and job-specific skills to improve their employability. Training schemes targeted at these groups combine training with either employment in an enterprise or job placement to acquire work experience. The HRDA provides subsidies through several relevant schemes for employed and unemployed training.

Distinctive features of VET

Cyprus has a long-standing tradition of tripartite consultation (government, trade unions and employers' organisations) and social dialogue. The social partners are involved in:

- planning in an advisory and consultative capacity;
- supporting education reform;
- governance (in boards of directors of institutions dealing with human resource issues);
- identifying education and training needs and setting priorities.

VET is mainly public. Secondary VET – including evening technical schools and the apprenticeship system – and post-secondary VET are free of charge, while various adult vocational programmes are offered for a limited fee.

Financial incentives for participation in adult vocational training are provided by HRDA, a semi-government organisation under the remit of the labour minister.

HRDA funding has encouraged enterprises and employees to participate in training activities.

Cyprus has a high level of educational attainment. There is a cultural trend to favour general secondary education followed by higher education. However, the economic crisis of 2012-15, combined with efforts to increase VET attractiveness, have resulted in an increase of upper secondary VET enrolments (by four percentage points from 2011 to 2017).

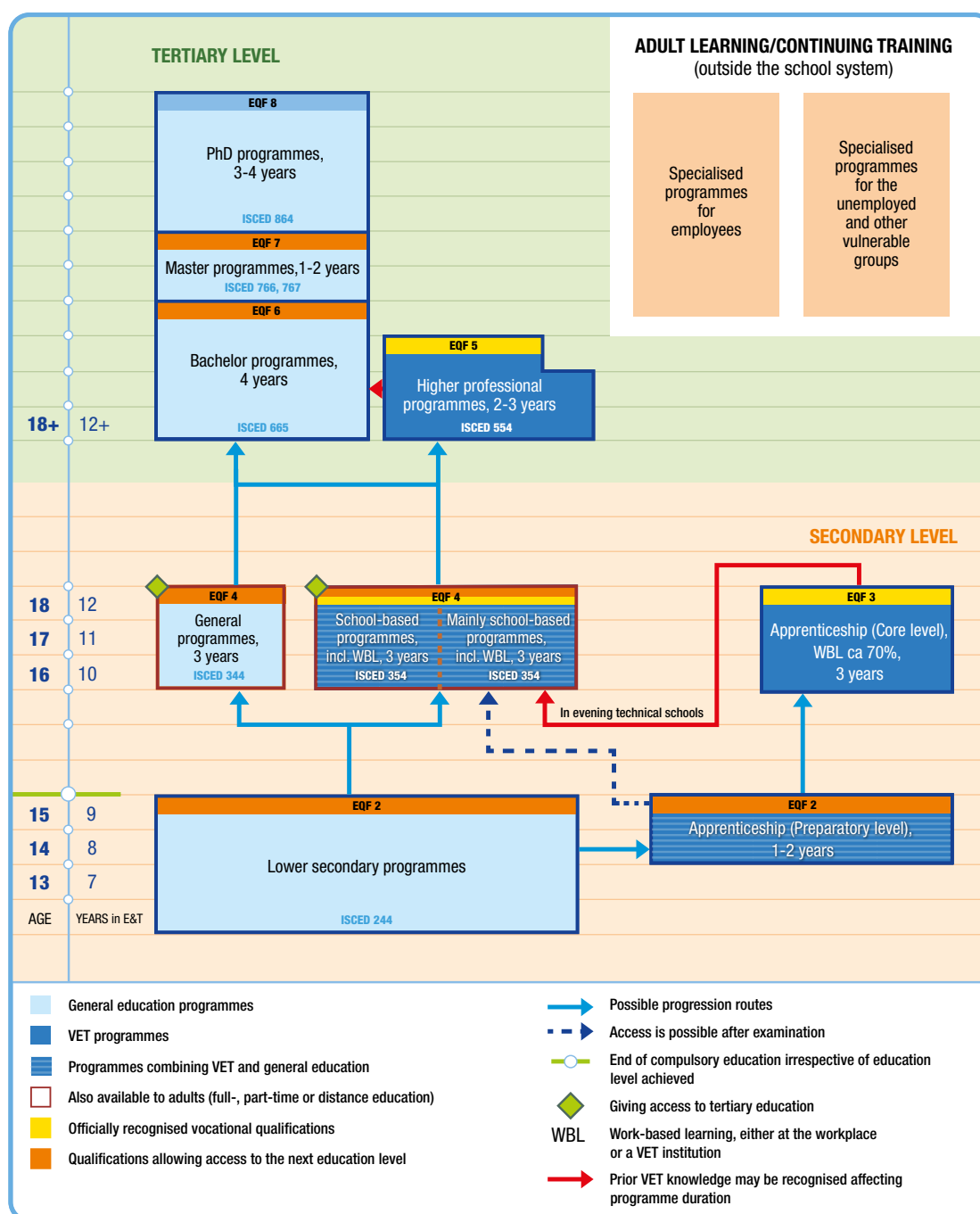
Challenges and policy responses

The 2012-15 economic crisis, and its adverse effects on the labour market, has challenged the VET system.

In response, training has been redirected, targeting mainly the unemployed, economically inactive, and the employed.

A major challenge is to address youth and long-term unemployment. Actions are being taken to promote the employability of young people and the long-term unemployed, through individualised guidance, training and work placements.

Another challenge is to encourage adult participation in lifelong learning (6.7% in 2018, 12% national target for 2020) and



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

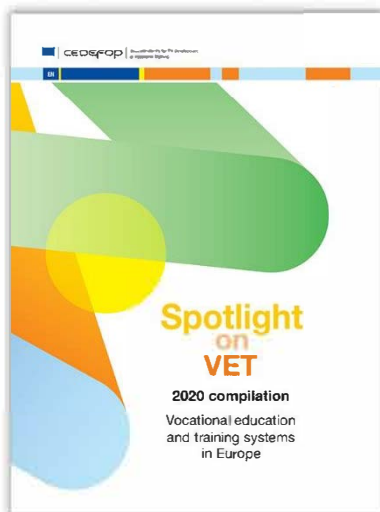
Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Cyprus, 2020.

to increase VET participation among the young (16.7% at upper secondary level). Core measures include:

- promoting tertiary non-university VET programmes;
- upgrading secondary technical and vocational education curricula;
- improving the competences of VET teaching staff. There are also actions-included in the 2015-20 strategic plan for technical and vocational education, to upgrade apprenticeship, making it an attractive form of training for young people.

The Cyprus qualifications framework (CyQF) supports the validation of non-formal and informal learning and is expected to improve horizontal and vertical permeability. The development of a competence-based system of vocational qualifications by HRDA, is expected to improve the skillset of young people and adults.

The Covid-19 outbreak has challenged the VET system. In response, distance learning was implemented and, in March 2020, HRDA allowed CVET providers of subsidised training programmes to utilise e-learning methods.



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