
CEDEFOP OPINION SURVEY
ON VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

CYPRUS





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This thematic perspective was prepared based on data collected through the first Cedefop European public opinion survey on VET. The European report can be found at:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/5562_en.pdf

More information on the survey at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/opinion-survey-vocational-education-and-training-europe>

ReferNet is a network of institutions across Europe representing the 28 Member States, plus Iceland and Norway. The network provides Cedefop with information and analysis on national vocational education and training (VET). ReferNet also disseminates information on European VET and Cedefop's work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>

The thematic perspectives series complements the general information on vocational education and training (VET) systems provided in 'VET in Europe' reports. The themes presented in the series feature high on the European agenda.

Thematic perspectives provide national overviews of specific themes in a common format and offer comparative dimension across the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. They are available at: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet/thematic-perspectives>

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Introduction

Vocational education and training (VET) systems can contribute to combat unemployment, improve labour market integration and fight social exclusion. The VET system of Cyprus played a significant role in the recovery from the adverse effects of the economic crisis on the labour market during the period 2012-15.

At upper secondary level, general education programmes are offered by unified lyceums (*ενιαίο λύκειο*) and VET programmes by technical schools (*τεχνικές σχολές*). Participation in initial VET in Cyprus remains at low levels (16,7% in the school year 2015/16) compared to general education and is one of the lowest among European countries, even though it has increased during the last few years. A major challenge for the education and training system of Cyprus is to further encourage adult participation in lifelong learning activities and increase participation of young people in VET. Another challenge is to upgrade the quality and efficiency of VET at upper secondary level by upgrading the curricula and raising the quality and competences of teachers.

The Cedefop opinion survey on VET provides data on EU citizens' understanding of, and attitudes towards VET. The survey collected and analysed information on VET in four main topics: awareness and knowledge; attractiveness and access; experience and satisfaction; outcomes and effectiveness.

The survey covers the 28 Members of the EU and had a total of 35 646 respondents from different social and demographic groups, aged 15 and over.

In the case of Cyprus, the survey was conducted between the period 1-24/6/2016 and had a total of 753 respondents out of a population aged 15 and over of 741 308. Statistical error at the 95% level of confidence is 3%.

This article analyses the main results of the survey for Cyprus as compared to the EU average as well as among general education and vocational education graduates.

CHAPTER 1.

Awareness and knowledge

The following definition of VET at upper secondary level was read out to respondents: 'vocational education is designed to give participants the practical and technical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation or trade. In the following questions, we refer to vocational education which takes place at upper secondary education at 16 to 18 years old'. However, to obtain unbiased responses based solely on respondents' own understanding of VET, the first questions relating to VET awareness and conceptualisation were asked without providing a definition. Only subsequently respondents were given a definition of VET that would be used across the whole survey.

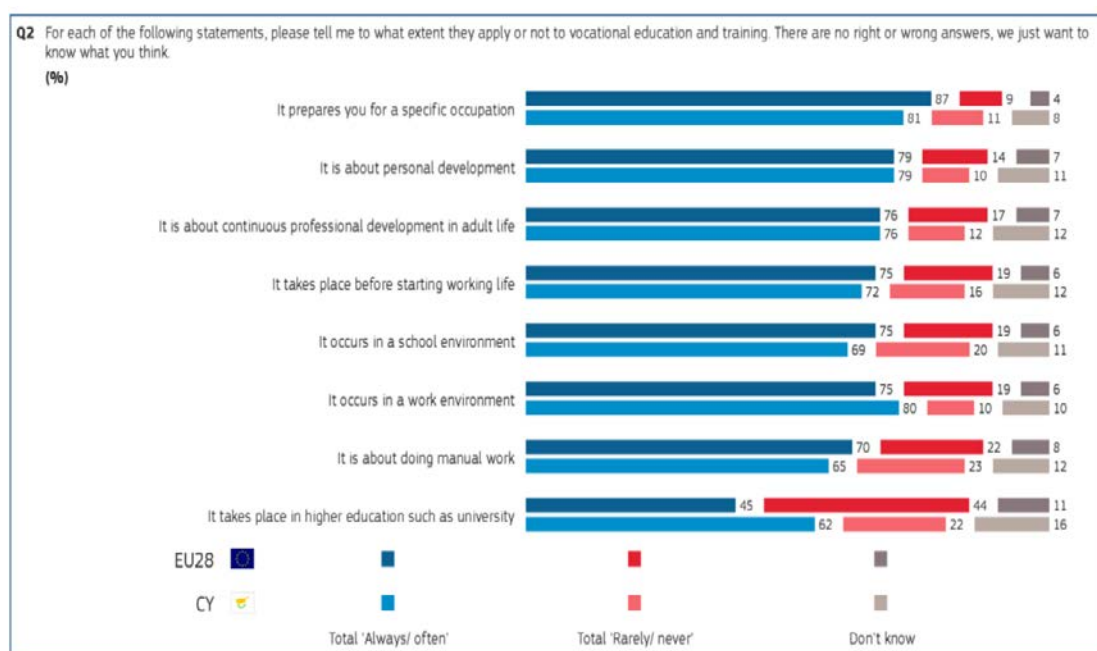
While the vast majority of European citizens (71%) say that they had heard about VET before the interview and know what VET is, in Cyprus less than half of the respondents (46%) say that they had heard about VET and know what VET is. Furthermore, in Cyprus, about one third (32%) say that they had not heard about VET and a significant proportion (21%) say that they had heard about it but do not really know what it was. Participation in VET in Cyprus is much lower than the EU average. The low participation in initial VET may be a reason for the fact that VET is not widely known or understood in Cyprus. Increasing participation in VET and making it a more attractive option requires that people are informed and aware of VET opportunities.

The survey also explores how respondents conceptualise VET, without being given any specific definition of VET. Respondents were given eight statements and were asked to indicate to what extent they thought they applied to VET. The statements were developed to address the following aspects of VET: school- versus work-based VET; continuous VET versus initial VET; its relationship to higher education; its relationship to occupations; its connection to personal development; its connection to doing manual work.

As shown in Figure 1, when asked about several aspects of VET, respondents in Cyprus are most likely to associate it with 'preparing you for a specific occupation'; eight in 10 respondents (81%) say that this always or often applies to VET, close to the EU average (87%). Respondents also associate it with personal development (79%) and with continuous professional development (76%), same as the EU average.

Eight in 10 respondents (80%) believe that it always/often occurs in a work environment and approximately seven in 10 (72%) believe that VET always/often takes place before starting working life and that VET occurs in a school environment (69%). These results suggest that VET has a fairly strong image as an education pathway that combines school-based education and employment or work-based training and includes both initial and continuing education and training.

Figure 1. Factors associated with VET



More than half respondents (62%), higher than in the EU (45%) also believe that it always/often takes place in higher education such as university and that VET is about doing manual work (65%).

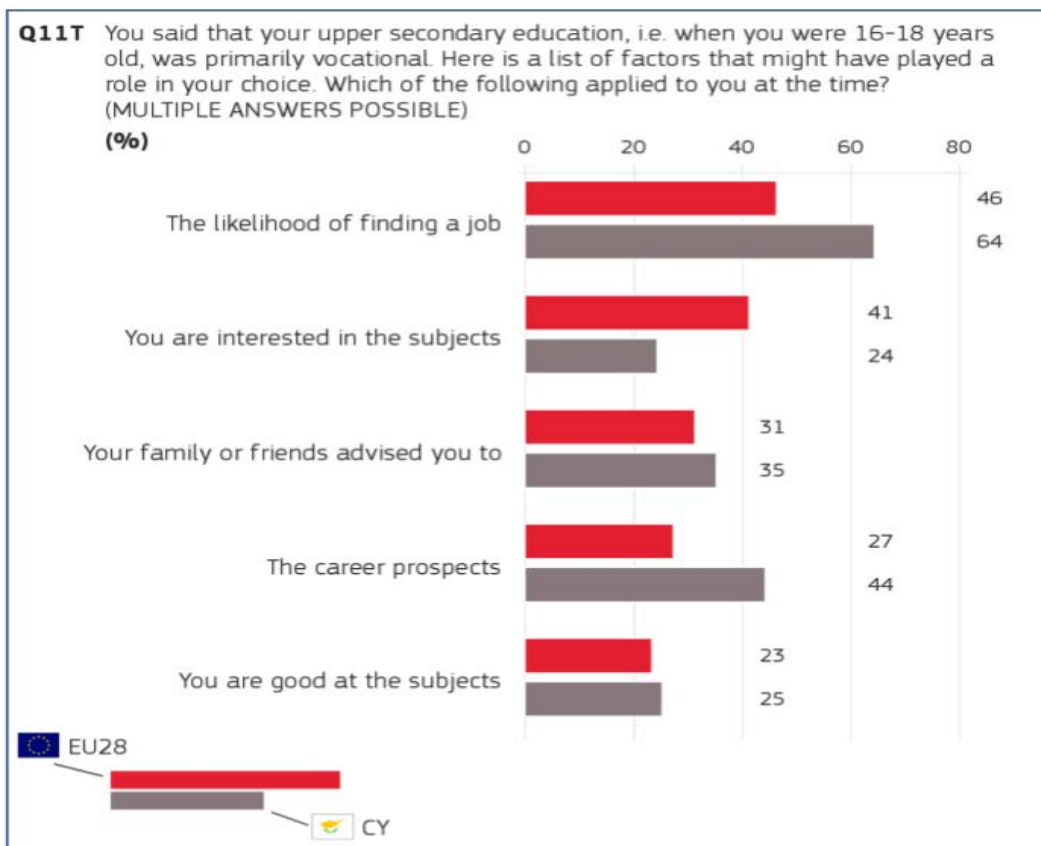
At the time they were making a decision about their education at upper secondary education, half of the respondents in Cyprus (50%) who went to upper secondary education received information about VET, which is lower than in the EU (57%). However, there is a marked difference between those who opted for general education and those who chose VET. Importantly, among those whose upper secondary education was primarily vocational, seven in 10 (72%) say that they were given information about VET when making a decision, while those whose upper secondary education was primarily general have been less informed about VET (45%).

The survey also looks into discouragement from participating in VET. Respondents who did not participate in VET at upper secondary level were asked

whether anyone advised them against participating in vocational education about the time when they were aged 16 to 18 and were deciding on their orientation of upper secondary education. One in four respondents (25%), same percentage as the EU average, who participated in general education say that someone, mostly someone in their family (18%), or someone from their school (9%) or a friend (5%), advised them against participating in VET. These results suggest that there still exists prejudice against VET in Cyprus and may contribute to explain the low participation rates in IVET recorded in the country.

The survey also asked respondents to indicate from a list of 13 factors which ones might have played a role when choosing to follow either vocational or general when they were at upper secondary education. Figure 2 and 3 show the main factors associated with VET given by vocational and general education participants respectively.

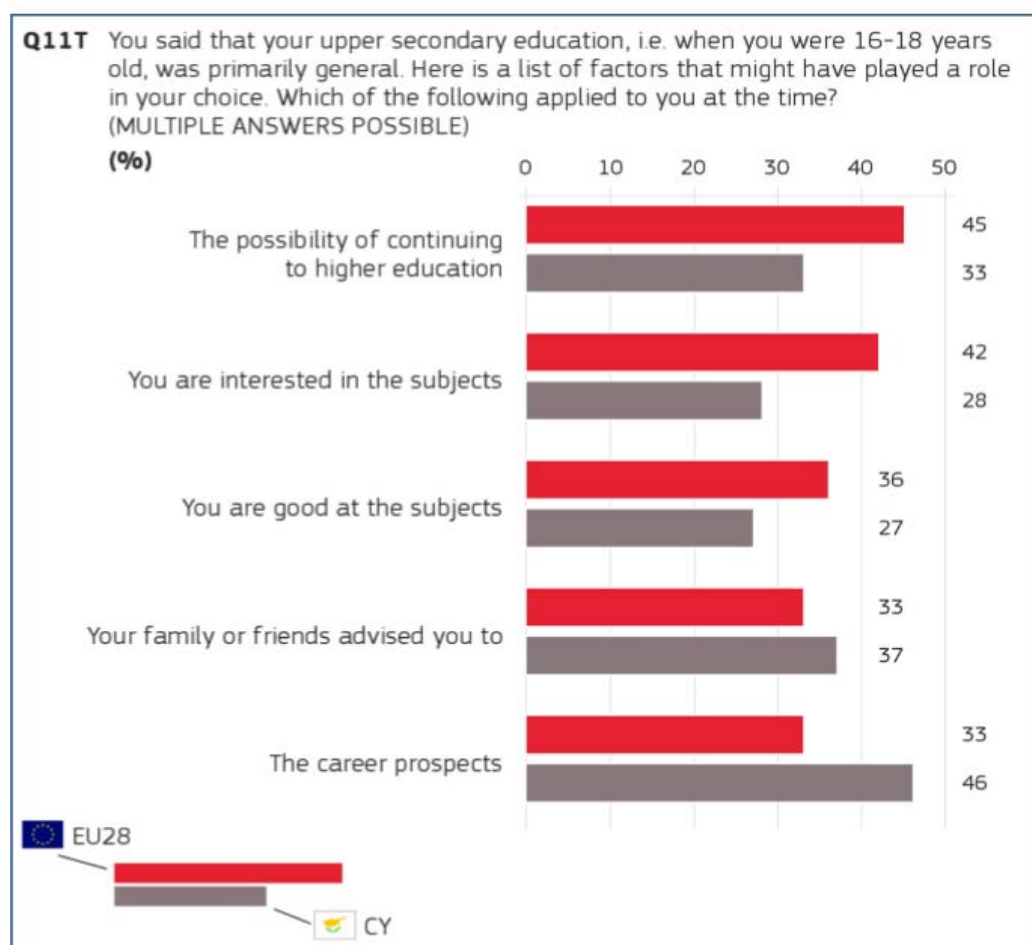
Figure 2. Main factors associated with VET given by vocational education participants



The main factors given by respondents in Cyprus who participated in vocational education was the likelihood of finding a job (64%) and career

prospects (44%), while the advice from friends and family was also important (35%). The most common factor among respondents in Cyprus who participated in general education was career prospects (46%) and then the advice from friends and family (37%). This shows the high level of influence of the close environment to student choices. Another important factor was the possibility of continuing to higher education (33%).

Figure 3. Main factors associated with VET given by general education participants



Among EU respondents who participated in vocational education, the primary factor that played a role in their choice was the likelihood of finding a job (46%) followed by interest in the subjects (41%) For EU respondents who participated in general education, the main factor was the possibility of continuing to higher education (45%) followed by interest in the subjects (42%)

CHAPTER 2.

Attractiveness and access

The survey also looks into the attractiveness of VET in comparison to general education. Most respondents believe that VET has a positive impact on providing the skills that employers need, helping in finding a job quickly and providing access to well-paid jobs.

Around two thirds (67%), about the same proportion as in the EU, believe that vocational education at the upper secondary education level has a positive image in the country, while about a quarter believe that it has a negative image. The proportion of respondents with a positive image is slightly higher among those that participated in VET (69%) than among general education participants (66%).

When asked whether they would recommend general education or vocational education to a young person about to decide on their education at upper secondary education, a higher proportion of respondents in Cyprus (40%) answered that it depends on the person. European citizens would mainly recommend vocational education to a young person (40%). In Cyprus, about half of the respondents that participated in VET would mainly recommend vocational education to a young person (53%), while a smaller percentage would recommend general education to a young person (12%). Respondents that participated in general education would mainly recommend general education (33%) while a smaller percentage would recommend vocational education to a young person (24%).

Most respondents consider that VET has a positive image in the country. However, when compared to general education, the proportion of respondents that consider VET as having a better image than general education is considerably lower. More than eight in 10 (83%) agree that general education has a more positive image than vocational education. However, as expected, agreement is lower for vocational education participants (77%) compared to general education participants (85%).

People tend to agree (63%), same as in the EU, that it is easier to get a qualification in vocational education than in general education. The majority also agree (79%) that students with low grades are directed towards vocational education. However, the respective proportion is lower (72%) among respondents who participated in vocational education compared to that of the respondents who participated in general education (81%).

The survey also looks into the perceived labour market outcomes associated with VET. The vast majority (94%), more than in the EU (86%), agree that people in vocational education acquire skills that are needed by employers in the country and 8 in 10 (81%), more than in the EU (67%), agree that vocational education allows you to find a job quickly after obtaining a qualification or diploma. However, a lower proportion of respondents believe that vocational education leads to jobs highly regarded in the country (69%), but still higher than in the EU (60%), or to well paid jobs (65%), still somewhat higher than the EU (61%). A higher proportion of participants in vocational than general education agree with the above.

The survey also asked respondents if they thought that national governments should prioritise investment in VET over general education at the upper secondary stage. More than half of the respondents (58%), higher than in the EU (49%), agree that the government should prioritise investment in vocational education, however, as expected, this percentage is significantly higher among participants in vocational (81%) compared to general education (51%).

About 7 in 10 respondents (71%), much higher than in the EU (54%) agree that it is easy to continue into higher education such as university after vocational education at upper secondary education, not surprising given that a higher percentage of respondents in Cyprus (62%) than in the EU (45%) believe that vocational education and training takes place in higher education such as university. Additionally, most participants stated that that vocational education at upper secondary education provides opportunities to study or work abroad (76%), higher than in the EU (61%). There are no significant differences between general and vocational education participants.

The survey also asked if it was easy for someone aged 16-18 who has started taking vocational education at upper secondary education to switch to general education. About one third (35%) think it would be easy for this person to switch from vocational education to general education. This percentage is slightly lower compared to EU (41%) and among participants in general (36%) compared to vocational education (39%).

CHAPTER 3.

Experience and satisfaction

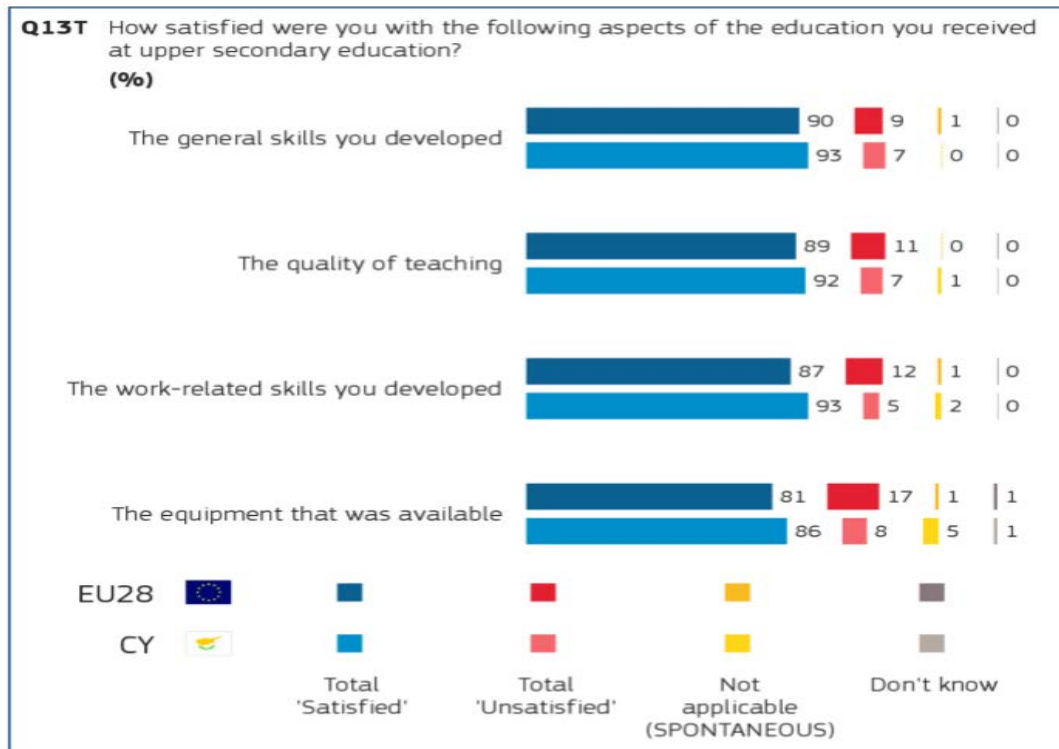
VET programmes at upper secondary level in Cyprus are offered at technical schools. Technical schools offer two types of three-year programme, the theoretical and practical stream programmes. Programmes are mainly school-based and combine general education subjects with technological and workshop subjects and offer practical training in enterprises (four weeks in the practical and two in the theoretical) at the end of the first and second year.

Thinking of the education they received at upper secondary education, the vast majority of respondents (82%), higher than in the EU (70%) stated that all of this took place at school. This proportion, as expected, is much lower among participants in vocational education (43%) compared to participants in general education (92%).

Aside respondents' experience of VET or general education at upper secondary level, the survey examines also their levels of satisfaction, in terms of quality of teaching, the skills developed and the equipment available.

The vast majority of respondents (86%), about the same as in the EU, were satisfied with the general skills they developed at upper secondary education, as well as with the quality of teaching they received (87%). Six in ten, less than in the EU (75%) were satisfied with the equipment that was available and with the work-related skills they developed (66%), less than in the EU (72%).

Figure 4. Satisfaction with aspects of education given by vocational education participants

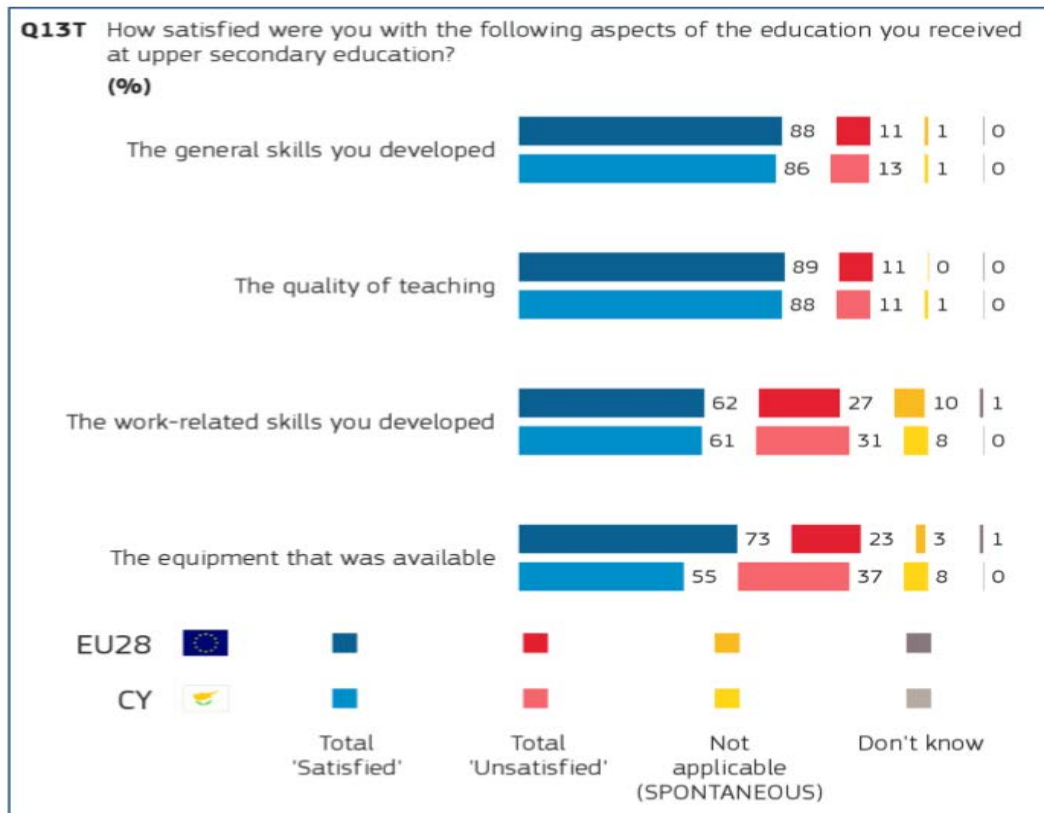


As shown in Figure 4, across the four items covered in the survey, participants in vocational education in Cyprus have consistently high levels of satisfaction.

Further, comparing with Figure 5, it is seen that participants in vocational education are consistently more satisfied with all the aspects of education they received than participants in general education. Participants in vocational education are more satisfied with the work-related skills they developed (93%) compared to participants in general education (61%) and with the equipment that was available (86%) compared to participants in general education (55%). The difference is smaller for the general skills developed and the quality of teaching. Specifically, participants in vocational education are somewhat more satisfied with the general skills developed (93%) than participants in general education (86%) and with the quality of teaching (93%) compared with participants in general education (88%).

The results are quite interesting, considering that VET participants report a positive image and experience of VET in Cyprus, while at the same time, participation rates in VET are still low. Further actions can be promoted to increase awareness and attractiveness of VET.

Figure 5. Satisfaction with aspects of education given by general education participants



The survey also looked in detail into the development of different types of skills during upper secondary education. It explores the self-perceived acquisition of the eight key competences as well as aspects such as the ability to be creative, to think critically and to work with others.

As regards the skills they developed, more than seven in ten (76%), same as in the EU, are satisfied with the communication skills they developed and with the ability to think critically (75%), about the same as in the EU. More than seven in ten (76%), but less than in the EU (83%), are also satisfied with the ability to work with others and with the mathematical skills they developed (73%), same as in the EU.

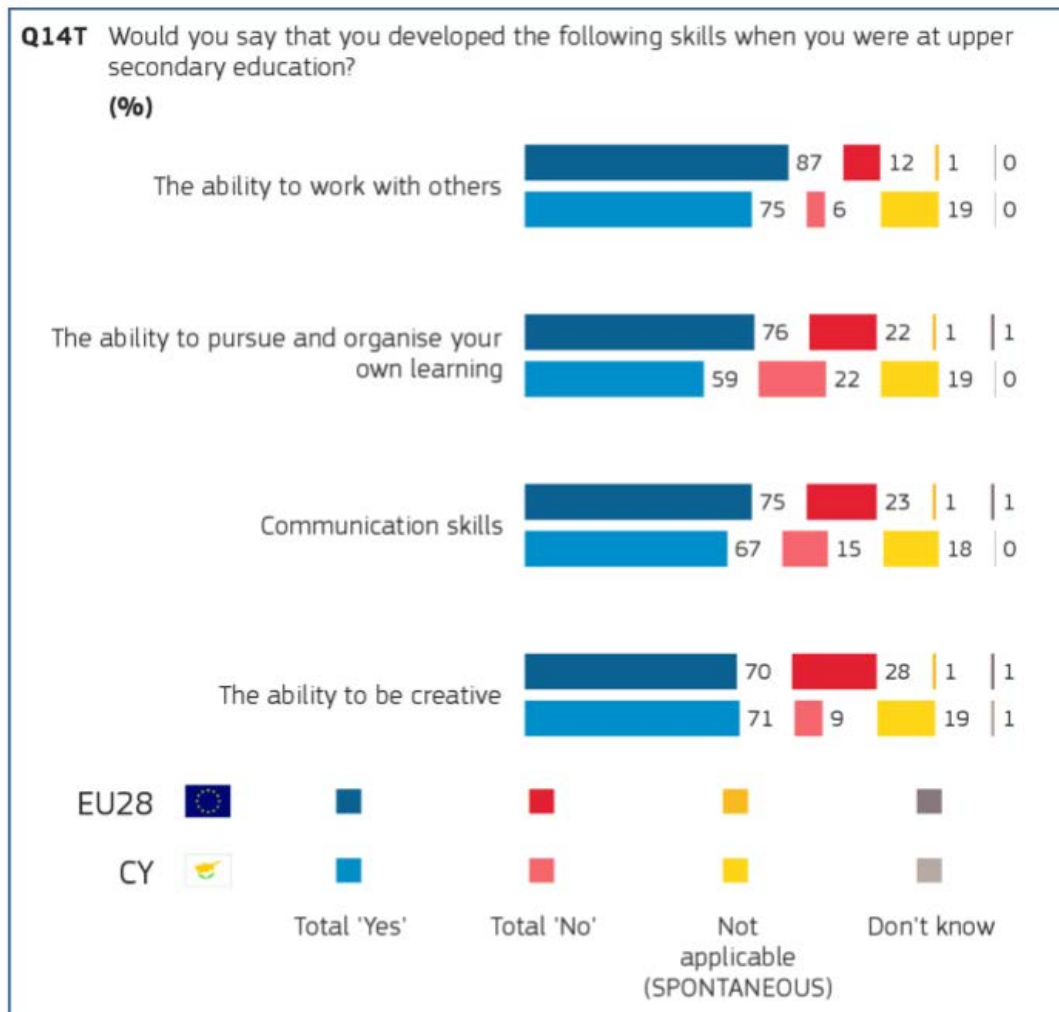
More than seven in ten respondents in Cyprus are also satisfied with speaking a foreign language (75%), but this proportion is much higher than in the EU (58%). In Cyprus, English is taught as a foreign language from the first grade of primary school. Foreign languages are a mandatory part of curricula in secondary education. Students must learn at least two European languages other than Greek. A second foreign language, French, is introduced in lower secondary education.

A high proportion of respondents in Cyprus (69%), higher than in the EU (60%) were satisfied with the social and civic competences to engage in active democratic participation. They were also satisfied with the ability to be creative (69%) and with the sense of initiative and entrepreneurship they developed (62%). These proportions are about the same as in the EU.

On the other hand, respondents in Cyprus are less satisfied with the ability to pursue and organise their own learning, as well as with cultural awareness. More than half of the respondents (58%), but much less than in the EU (76%), were fairly satisfied with the ability to pursue and organise their own learning, as well as with cultural awareness (appreciation of music, performing arts, literature and visual arts) they developed (58%), close to the EU (54%). Moreover, less than half were satisfied (45%), much less than in the EU (62%), with the science and technology skills and with the digital and computer skills they developed (37%), less than the EU (43%).

Figure 6 and 7 show the main answers relating to personal views on development of key competences in education expressed by vocational and general education participants respectively.

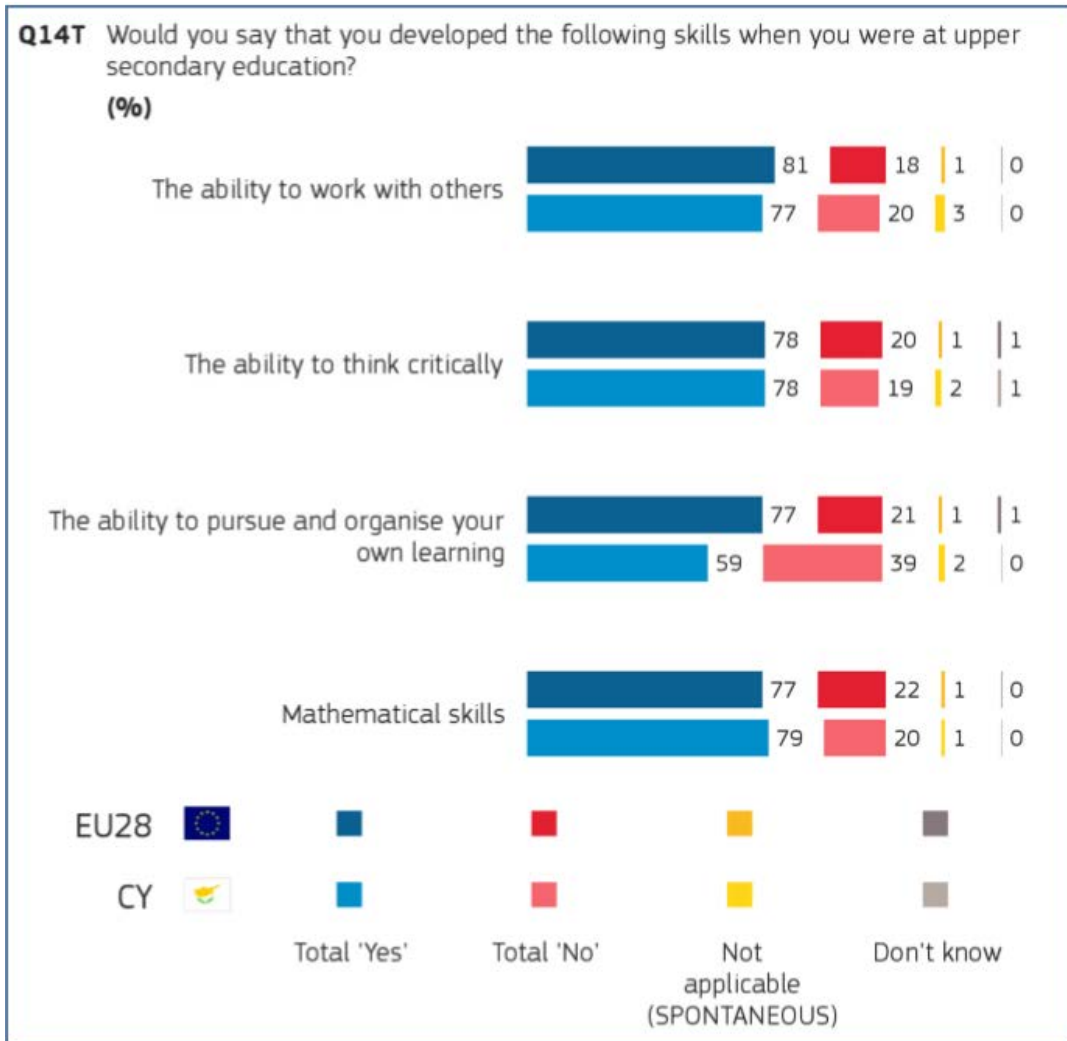
Figure 6. Personal views on development of key competences in education given by vocational education participants



Participants in general education in Cyprus seem to be more satisfied in all of these areas compared to participants in vocational education, with the exception of science and technology skills where they seem to be less satisfied.

As regards the ability to pursue and organise their own learning, to be creative and to work with others, the proportions do not differ between participants in general or vocational education.

Figure 7. Personal views on development of key competences in education given by general education participants



CHAPTER 4.

Outcomes and effectiveness

More than eight in ten (88%) believe that vocational education and training strengthens the economy, that it plays an important role in reducing unemployment (81%) and that it helps to tackle social exclusion (83%). There are not many differences between participants in general and vocational education, but a higher proportion of participants in general (92%) than vocational (84%) education believe that vocational education and training strengthens the economy.

After completing their highest level of education, the majority of respondents (63%) say that they didn't have any difficulties in finding a job and that overall they are satisfied with their professional career (82%). There are not many differences with the EU or between participants in general and vocational education.

After finishing upper secondary education, more than half (55%), close to the EU average (58%), say that they continued studying at a higher level of education however, as expected, this percentage is much lower for participants in vocational education (27%) than for participants in general education (61%).

The vast majority (78%) have not participated in any work-related training during the last 12 months. This percentage does not differ significantly between participants in general and participants in vocational education. According to the Labour Force Survey, LFS (*Έρευνα Εργατικού Δυναμικού*), the percentage of the population 25-64 years participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey was 6.9% in 2016 (and 7.1% in 2015, lower than the EU average which was 10.7% in 2015). Therefore, as already mentioned, a major challenge for the education and training system of Cyprus is to further encourage adult participation in lifelong learning activities.

CHAPTER 5.

Main conclusions and further research needs

The survey showed that the majority of citizens of Cyprus believe that vocational education at the upper secondary education level for those aged 16-18 has a positive image, although lower than general education, strengthens the economy and that plays an important role in reducing unemployment.

Participants in vocational education are overall more satisfied than participants in general education regarding the skills they acquired, in particular work-related skills, and they believe that vocational education allows them to find a job quickly after obtaining a qualification.

Participation in VET still remains low in Cyprus compared to EU, even though the number of students who opt to attend technical schools has increased during the last few years due to the recent economic crisis that Cyprus has faced, together with the government's efforts to increase VET attractiveness.

Despite having a positive image and despite its participants tend to report a positive experience and satisfaction, VET at upper secondary level still suffers from a bias compared to general education. The majority of people tend to agree that it is easier to get a qualification in vocational education than in general education and they also agree that students with low grades are directed towards vocational education. Strategies need to be pursued more systematically in order to have the desired impact in changing perceptions in society and assist young persons in making choices that best suit them.

Upgrading the quality and efficiency of secondary technical and vocational education (STVE) through modernising the curricula and raising the quality and competences of STVE teachers, is an important step which would increase VET attractiveness, especially among students with higher academic achievements.

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Websites

Europa www.ec.europa.eu

Eurydice eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php

Human Resource Development Authority www.anad.org.cy

Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus www.moec.gov.cy

Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance www.mlsi.gov.cy

Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development
www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf

Presidency Unit for Administrative Reform <http://www.reform.gov.cy>

ReferNet Cyprus www.refernet.org.cy

Statistical Service of Cyprus www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf

ANNEX

Members of the Cyprus consortium

1. National coordinator

- 1.1. Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus www.anad.org.cy

2. Ministries/government departments

- 2.1. Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf
- 2.2. Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance/Department of Labour www.mlsi.gov.cy/dl
- 2.3. Ministry of Education and Culture www.moec.gov.cy
- 2.4. Statistical Service of Cyprus www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf
- 2.5. Cyprus Academy of Public Administration (CAPA) www.mof.gov.cy
- 2.6. Pedagogical Institute www.pi.ac.cy
- 2.7. Cyprus Productivity Centre www.mlsi.gov.cy/kepa

3. Social partners: employer and trade union organisations

- 3.1. Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation www.oeb-eif.org
- 3.2. Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry www.ccci.org.cy
- 3.3. Cyprus Confederation of Professional Craftsmen and Shopkeepers www.povek.com
- 3.4. Cyprus Workers' Confederation www.sek.org.cy
- 3.5. Pancyprian Federation of Labour www.peo.org.cy

3.6. Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus www.deok.org.cy

3.7. Cyprus Union of Bank Employees www.etyk.org.cy

4. Other organisations/non-profit making organisations

4.1. University of Cyprus www.ucy.ac.cy

4.2. Research Promotion Foundation www.research.org.cy

4.3. Open University of Cyprus www.ouc.ac.cy

4.4. Cyprus University of Technology www.cut.ac.cy

5. National agencies/units for managing European programmes/initiatives

5.1. Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes www.erasmusplus.cy

5.2. National Eurydice Unit www.moec.gov.cy/eurydice

5.3. Youth Board of Cyprus www.onek.org.cy