

## Apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes

### Cyprus



This article on apprenticeship-type schemes and structured work-based learning programmes is part of a set of articles prepared within Cedefop's ReferNet network. It complements general information on VET systems available online at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>.

ReferNet is a European network of national partner institutions providing information and analysis on national VET to Cedefop and disseminating information on European VET and Cedefop work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Norway and Iceland.

The opinions expressed in this article are not necessarily those of Cedefop.

The article is based on a common template prepared by Cedefop for all ReferNet partners.

The preparation of this article has been co-financed by the European Union and the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus.

Prepared by

Ms Yianna Korelli, Human Resource Officer 1st grade

Supervision

Mr Yiannis Mourouzides, Acting Director Research and Planning

Contribution

Members of the Cyprus ReferNet Consortium

Overall responsibility

Mr George Panayides, Acting Director General

**Contents**

- A. Apprenticeship-type schemes and work-based learning structured programmes in Cyprus: definitions and statistics / basic information .....2
- B. Specific features of the above schemes/programmes in Cyprus in relation to the following policy challenges identified at the EU level .....5
  - B.1. Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering company placements .....5
  - B.2. Enhance programme attractiveness and career guidance .....5
  - B.3. National governance, regulatory framework and social partners' involvement .....6
  - B.4. Quality assurance in work-based learning and/or apprenticeship .....7
- C. Main strengths and weaknesses of the above schemes/programmes in Cyprus .....8
- D. Conclusions.....9
- Annex 1. Bibliography ..... 10
- Annex 2. Websites ..... 11
- Annex 3. Members of the Cyprus Consortium ..... 12

## **A. Apprenticeship-type schemes and work-based learning structured programmes in Cyprus: definitions and statistics / basic information**

The Apprenticeship System has been a two-year initial VET programme providing practical and theoretical training to young people who had not successfully completed their secondary compulsory education and wished to be trained and employed in technical occupations. This was terminated with the graduation of the last intake of students in June 2013 and was replaced by the New Modern Apprenticeship, NMA (νέα σύγχρονη μαθητεία) which started its operation in the school year 2012-2013.

The NMA is co-funded by the ESF and the government of Cyprus and it is being implemented by the Cyprus Productivity Centre, CPC in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture, MoEC. The NMA provides an alternative pathway for education, training and development for young people who withdraw from the formal education system and is geared towards meeting the needs of the labour market. The NMA embraces young people between 14 and 21 years of age at two apprenticeship levels (preparatory and core). Participation to the NMA is not part of compulsory education and it is free of charge.

The NMA is designed to target two distinct groups of students:

- (a) students who have not completed compulsory education (third grade of gymnasium) can enroll at the preparatory apprenticeship level. The preparatory apprenticeship has been introduced in order to provide support to early school leavers between the ages of 14 and 16, by gradually introducing them to the labour market, giving them a foretaste of VET, and helping them choose a specialisation when they proceed to the core level of apprenticeship;
- (b) students who have either successfully completed compulsory education or successfully completed preparatory apprenticeship can enroll at the core apprenticeship level. These are mandatory entry level requirements. Finding employment is not a prerequisite to start an apprenticeship and students may start attending school and find an employer later on. Finding employers for the apprentices is the responsibility of the school and of the CPC, although students may find an employer themselves, especially in cases where they work for the family business.

Preparatory apprenticeship does not involve employment but constitutes an alternative form of education and training for students between the ages of 14 and 16 who have the opportunity through this one-year programme to develop their numeracy and literacy skills, to become acquainted with the world of work, to explore their talents and abilities through creative arts, and to participate in workshops related to technical occupations.

Such workshops include carpentry, plumbing, mechanics and the curricula are developed by the trainers. Participation to the workshops is part of the programme and does not lead to individual qualifications. Students also receive individual counseling from psychologists according to their needs. Students who complete preparatory apprenticeship (EQF level 2) may proceed to the core apprenticeship level or, if they wish and provided they succeed at special examinations, they may re-enter the formal education system.

Core apprenticeship is of three years duration and involves both training at school and practical training in enterprises. In Cyprus only a limited number of technical occupations are regulated. At the end of school year 2014-2015, the first students of the NMA will graduate from the specialisation of car mechanics, which is not a regulated occupation. During 2014-2015, there will be a first intake of students in the specialisation of Hairdressing, which is a regulated occupation to which the NMA graduates will have access.

Apprentices sign a contract with their employer which mainly regulates their terms of employment. During the first two years of the apprenticeship, apprentices follow practical training in enterprises for three days per week where they are remunerated for their work, and they receive theoretical training for two days a week where they attend classes at technical schools. In their third and final year they attend school only once a week and work the remaining four days. The content of the training programme is agreed by the employer and the school and both parties are responsible for the implementation of the programme.

New curricula have been developed for car mechanics, plumbing/central heating, welding/metal constructions, bakery/confectionery, carpentry/furniture making, electrical installations, and home appliances technicians by trainers chosen through a competitive process. The curricula have been developed for the theoretical subjects of the core apprenticeship, such as Greek, Maths, Physics, English, Information Technology, and technical specialisations.

Upon successful completion of the core apprenticeship, graduates may enroll, through a process to be specified, at the Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training operated by the MoEC. These Institutes offer two year courses which are designed to facilitate the entry into the labour market of young people who do not wish to progress to tertiary education.

During the school year 2012-2013, the Apprenticeship System and the NMA coexisted. The Apprenticeship System operated only at second (final) year level since there was no intake of new students. Of the 53 students who enrolled at the second year, 41 graduated (22 car mechanics, 7 plumbers, 5 car electricians and 7 carpenters).

In the school year 2012-2013, 87 students enrolled at the preparatory level of the NMA. Of those enrolled, 46 successfully graduated from the programme and were entitled to enroll at the core apprenticeship level, while seven who completed the programme but did not take the required exams, were only awarded a certificate of attendance. There is no real progression route for these students, but in exceptional cases they may be allowed to repeat the year. Of the 46 students who completed the programme successfully, four took the special examinations for re-entry to the formal education system and three were successful. In the school year 2013-2014, 60 students enrolled in preparatory apprenticeship.

In the school year 2012-13 there was no intake of students from the preparatory apprenticeship to core apprenticeship since both levels started to operate at the same time. A small group of gymnasium graduates however, chose to enroll at the core apprenticeship level to become car mechanics. Of the group of 13 students who enrolled last year, 9 are now in their second year. In the school year 2013-2014, 35 students enrolled in the first year of the apprenticeship, all following the specialisation of car mechanics. Table 1 shows the number of students enrolled in apprenticeship by level.

Table 1. **Number of students enrolled in apprenticeship by level**

	<b>2012-2013</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>
<b>Preparatory</b>	87	60
<b>Core 1<sup>st</sup> year</b>	13	35
<b>Core 2<sup>nd</sup> year</b>	-	9

## **B. Specific features of the above schemes/programmes in Cyprus in relation to the following policy challenges identified at the EU level**

### **B.1. Support for companies, in particular SMEs, offering company placements**

The problem of securing employment for apprentices became even more severe following the economic crisis. The decrease in the job positions offered, concerned all sectors of economic activity but was more evident in Construction and other related sectors. In order to alleviate the problem of securing employment for apprentices, the CPC implements a subsidy scheme that aims to facilitate the recruitment of apprenticeship students by employers who have available jobs in the specialisations which the apprentices have chosen, and the provision to them of satisfactory in-company training. The scheme is co-funded by the ESF and it encourages employers to recruit and train apprentices by subsidising eligible employers with a percentage of around 10% of the monthly salary of the in-company trainer in charge of the apprentice, and also compensates employers for wages paid to apprentices while attending classes at technical schools. The scheme also covers the total of the social insurance contributions of the employer for the apprentice.

The setting up of joint training centres in support of groups of SMEs that would work together is a possibility that has not yet been explored.

In Cyprus, companies are very small in size and those most likely to recruit apprentices are often family owned companies employing less than five persons, including the owner. Thus CPC staff provides them with administrative support regarding their application and participation in the subsidy scheme.

### **B.2. Enhance programme attractiveness and career guidance**

In order to improve awareness of the apprenticeship benefits, the CPC organises meetings with the Counselling and career education service of the MoEC in order to inform, discuss and exchange views on the benefits of apprenticeship, so that they can guide and counsel students in lower secondary education on the possibility and benefits of choosing to enroll in the NMA.

The employers are not very positive towards apprenticeships because for many years the apprenticeship system has been associated with low academic and work performance of the apprentices. This problem is one of the reasons why the NMA has been developed and is gradually being implemented. However, there is still a supply side issue of attractiveness which the CPC is trying to overcome by taking measures to improve the level of skills and work related attitudes of apprentices themselves as well as through the operation of a subsidy scheme for employers who recruit and train apprentices.

The CPC has initiated discussions with the MoEC on the criteria for accepting NMA graduates in the Post Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training, as a step towards improving the status of the NMA and providing a pathway for the NMA graduates.

The CPC and the MoEC are also in dialogue regarding the level of recognition of apprenticeship qualifications since at present apprenticeship in Cyprus is not part of the formal education system.

A publicity campaign is planned for early 2015 for the promotion of a positive image of apprenticeship towards parents and students.

In order to expand the choices for apprenticeship programmes, new curricula are being developed.

The next steps include the extension of the range of specialisations beyond traditional craft occupations to include new innovative sectors on the basis of forecasts of labour market needs. The use of new and advanced technology in training will also facilitate learning.

### **B.3. National governance, regulatory framework and social partners' involvement**

The Apprenticeship Board (Συμβούλιο Μαθητείας), which supervises the operation of the apprenticeship system, has a tripartite character with a consultative role to the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance. A technical committee of a tripartite nature was set up to design the NMA, which is the outcome of long and detailed deliberations with the social partners.

Once discussions that are taking place regarding various aspects of the NMA are concluded, the legislation governing the apprenticeship will be modified to reflect the agreed changes.

New curricula have been developed by trainers chosen through a competitive process. The companies have not been directly involved in curriculum design and review but there is an intention to involve them in reviewing new curricula through their employers' organisations.

The curricula of technical specialisations incorporate the standards of vocational qualifications developed by the HRDA, which are developed by technical sectoral committees consisting of representatives of the social partners (government, employers' and employees' organisations) and other professionals.



The Standards are finally approved by the Board of Governors of the HRDA, which has a tripartite character. Furthermore, the composition of the Cyprus National Qualifications Framework Council, fosters cooperation between the Government, social partners and stakeholders since it includes representatives from various departments and services of the Government that are involved, the HRDA, the employers' and employees' organisations, parents' and students' associations as well as the academic community.

Reference qualifications from apprenticeship to NQF are not yet finalised, but apprenticeship qualifications will be included at EQF level 3 and ISCED 2C.

The apprenticeship certificate allows access to several regulated occupations (e.g. building contractor and electrician), provided that all other requirements of the relevant legislation are observed.

#### **B.4. Quality assurance in work-based learning and/or apprenticeship**

The content of training in enterprises is based on a training plan developed by the school trainer and the enterprise trainer working together and agreed by the employer. The enterprise training of the apprentice is monitored by regular visits of the school trainer to the enterprise and a monthly report prepared and submitted to the Apprenticeship Officer, a staff member of the CPC.

Assessment of apprentices in technical schools follows the rules of the education system with regular tests and final examinations. During the practical training, apprentices are assessed by their supervisors and their grades appear on the apprenticeship certificate issued by the CPC to apprentices who successfully complete the course. Assessment of preparatory apprenticeship students is a combination of their attendance and conduct record throughout the year, their individual project work throughout the year and their performance at final exams in Greek language and mathematics.

### **C. Main strengths and weaknesses of the above schemes/programmes in Cyprus**

For decades, apprenticeship in Cyprus has been associated with school failure and low achievement. The NMA aims to raise the image, status and quality of apprenticeship and to make it a viable alternative form of training and development for young people. Information on labour market outcomes of students of the old system is not available.

Apprenticeship, however, is still considered to be the only pathway available for school dropouts leading to opportunities for educational and professional advancement. Preparatory apprenticeship is proving to be a positive intervention for students who need a bridge between school and apprenticeship. Preparatory apprenticeship gives the opportunity to disadvantaged youth to develop their skills and knowledge and proceed to the core apprenticeship level.

The most significant weakness of the NMA is the fact that its operation has not been based on the ex-ante cooperation and agreements with the industry and employers' organisations, which are the key stakeholders. As a result, it is difficult for apprentices to secure appropriate training places in order to complete the programme.

Another weakness of the system is that apprenticeship is not part of the formal education system. In Cyprus, academic qualifications are highly valued and most students prefer to follow general education due to the prejudice against technical occupations. However, the severe economic crisis and the deterioration of the disposable income of households might adversely affect the tendency of Cypriots to continue their studies in tertiary education.

Furthermore, the expected increase in demand in jobs requiring middle level qualifications due to the exploitation of natural gas reserves in the Exclusive Economic Zone of Cyprus is expected to contribute to the increase in supply of persons with middle-level qualifications.

## **D. Conclusions**

The operation of the New Modern Apprenticeship is still at an initial stage. However, the major challenge remains, as the young people that traditionally choose apprenticeships still come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and as most of them are early school leavers they lack basic core skills. The inclusion of the preparatory apprenticeship is a necessary step, even though at this level students are not exposed to the work environment directly.

Apprenticeship in Cyprus has not reached its full potential as a viable alternative form of training and development for young people in line with the needs of the labour market, but it is gradually moving towards this direction.

## Annex 1. Bibliography

Cedefop ReferNet Cyprus (2012). *Vocational Education and Training System of Cyprus: Short Description*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Available from Internet: <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/publications/20281.aspx>.

Cedefop ReferNet Cyprus (2012). *VET in Europe – Country report 2012*. Thessaloniki: Cedefop. Available from Internet: [http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2010/vetpolicy/2010\\_NPR\\_CY.pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2010/vetpolicy/2010_NPR_CY.pdf)

Eurydice (2011). *National system overview on education systems in Europe*. Brussels: EACEA. Available from Internet: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national\\_summary\\_sheets/047\\_CY\\_EN.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national_summary_sheets/047_CY_EN.pdf).

Ministry of Education and Culture (2004). *Εκπαιδευτική Μεταρρύθμιση. Education Reform*. Nicosia: Ministry of Education and Culture. Available from Internet: [http://www.paideia.org.cy/upload/ekthesi\\_epitropis.pdf](http://www.paideia.org.cy/upload/ekthesi_epitropis.pdf)

Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development (2013). *Cyprus National Reform Programme 2013*. Nicosia: Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development. Available from Internet: [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nd/nrp2013\\_cyprus\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nd/nrp2013_cyprus_en.pdf)

Statistical Service of Cyprus. *Statistics of Education 2010/11*. Nicosia: Printing office of the Republic of Cyprus. Available from Internet: [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/4A240F088B34155BC22577E4002C70CD/\\$file/EDUCATION-1011-281212.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/4A240F088B34155BC22577E4002C70CD/$file/EDUCATION-1011-281212.pdf?OpenElement)

## **Annex 2. Websites**

Cyprus Productivity Centre [www.kepa.gov.cy](http://www.kepa.gov.cy)

Europa [www.ec.europa.eu](http://www.ec.europa.eu)

Eurydice [eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php)

Human Resource Development Authority [www.anad.org.cy](http://www.anad.org.cy)

Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus [www.moec.gov.cy](http://www.moec.gov.cy)

Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance [www.mlsi.gov.cy](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy)

Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development  
[www.planning.gov.cy](http://www.planning.gov.cy)

Statistical Service of Cyprus [www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat)

ReferNet Cyprus [www.refernet.org.cy](http://www.refernet.org.cy)

## **Annex 3. Members of the Cyprus Consortium**

### **National coordinator**

Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus ([www.anad.org.cy](http://www.anad.org.cy))

### **Ministries/government departments**

Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development  
([www.planning.gov.cy](http://www.planning.gov.cy))

Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance/Department of Labour ([www.mlsi.gov.cy/dl](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/dl))

Ministry of Education and Culture ([www.moec.gov.cy](http://www.moec.gov.cy))

Statistical Service of Cyprus ([www.mof.gov.cy/cystat](http://www.mof.gov.cy/cystat))

Cyprus Academy of Public Administration (CAPA) ([www.mof.gov.cy](http://www.mof.gov.cy))

Pedagogical Institute ([www.pi.ac.cy](http://www.pi.ac.cy))

Cyprus Productivity Centre ([www.mlsi.gov.cy/kepa](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/kepa))

### **Social partners: employer and trade union organisations**

Cyprus Employers and Industrialists Federation ([www.oeb-eif.org](http://www.oeb-eif.org))

Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry ([www.ccci.org.cy](http://www.ccci.org.cy))

Cyprus Confederation of Professional Craftsmen and Shopkeepers ([www.povek.com](http://www.povek.com))

Cyprus Workers' Confederation ([www.sek.org.cy](http://www.sek.org.cy))

Pancyprian Federation of Labour ([www.peo.org.cy](http://www.peo.org.cy))

Democratic Labour Federation of Cyprus ([www.deok.org.cy](http://www.deok.org.cy))

Cyprus Union of Bank Employees ([www.etyk.org](http://www.etyk.org))

**Other organisations/non-profit making organisations**

University of Cyprus ([www.ucy.ac.cy](http://www.ucy.ac.cy))

Research Promotion Foundation ([www.research.org.cy](http://www.research.org.cy))

**National agencies/units for managing european programmes/initiatives**

Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes ([www.llp.org.cy](http://www.llp.org.cy))

National Eurydice Unit ([www.eurydice.org](http://www.eurydice.org))