



REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

INTERIM REPORT

**ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC
FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN
EDUCATION AND TRAINING (ET2020)**

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CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL REFORM PROGRAMMES (approx. 2 PAGES)

QUESTION 1

Please provide a summary of the main education and training elements in your National Reform Programme (NRP):

CURRENT SITUATION

Cyprus has a good performance in educational attainment resulting into a very highly qualified labour force. Public expenditure on education, at about 7,8% of GDP is very high by international standards with an additional private expenditure estimated at about 3% of GDP.

Even though education is not compulsory for children over the age of 15, the rate of enrolment of children in the 15-18 age groups is about 95%. People who have dropped out of school have a second chance to complete their schooling and obtain a High School Leaving Certificate (Apolytirion) by attending an evening gymnasium or technical school.

Demand for higher education is high: 82% of the students completing their upper secondary education seek placements at Institutions of Higher Education. The Cyprus Government covers the cost of tuition fees for European Union students studying at Public Institutions of Higher Education in Cyprus, at both university and non-university level. Due to the rather limited supply of places in Cyprus, about 55% of Cypriot students study in other countries, with the most popular destinations being Greece, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Currently three public Universities are operating in Cyprus: The University of Cyprus, The Open University of Cyprus and The Cyprus University of Technology, as well as four private Universities, absorbing 45% of tertiary education students.

Great importance is also placed on the promotion of lifelong education by the implementation of several measures for enhancing adult education and providing opportunities for access to programmes of lifelong learning for all citizens.

The comprehensive Lifelong Learning Strategy for Cyprus, covering the period 2007–2013, is steadily implemented with the Lifelong Learning (LLL) rate having improved from 5,6% in 2005 to 7,7% in 2010. The national target is for the LLL rate to reach 12% in 2020.

The ongoing Educational Reform is an effort for a comprehensive introduction of changes and innovations at all levels and all aspects of the educational system. The aim is to turn into reality the vision of a better educational system that would meet pupils' future needs and society's challenges in the 21st century. This will be done by improving the equity of the educational system, by encouraging lifelong learning throughout the stages of the educational system, by reinforcing the content of education and training and upgrading the infrastructure with an emphasis on the cultivation of lifelong learning competences from the early years of compulsory education. Furthermore, the increased demographic changes, as a result of the current influx of both EU and third-country nationals constitute a challenge for the education system, which needs to adapt to new realities.

KEY MEASURES TO REACH TARGETS

Reduce the rate of early school leavers to 10%

In order to meet the national target of reducing the rate of early school leavers by 2020, focus will be placed on the following priority areas: (i) Restructuring the education system and modernizing the content of education by modernizing and upgrading the curriculum for all public schools (from Pre-Primary to Upper Secondary Education) (ii) Upgrading vocational education and training (iii) Adopting measures for facilitating the integration of students at risk to the school system.

Increase participation in Higher Education to 46%

In order to improve participation in Higher Education the following priority areas have been defined: (i) Strengthening the links between technical vocational education training and the labor market (ii) Expanding and modernizing of the higher education system (iii) Promoting transnational mobility.

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING (approx. 3 PAGES)

QUESTION 2

What measures has your country taken to reduce early school leaving?

2.1 Measures to analyse current situation and monitor developments in early school leaving (e.g. data collection, surveys and research):

Measures to analyse current situation and monitor developments in early school leaving have been undertaken by various departments of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC).

Firstly, the Department of Primary Education through the District Education Offices keeps records of annual data with regards to the pupils whom their attendance at school is suspended or repeated so as to have a clear picture of the pupil population who is at risk for school dropout. The Secondary Education Department carries out formative and summative evaluations in order to assess the number of students who leave school. This evaluation covers the ages of 11 to 18.

In addition, several surveys are in progress in order to find out the effectiveness of on-going programmes or to monitor the development of others. The Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation of the Ministry of Education and Culture implements the ‘Functional Illiteracy Programme’ which is a large-scale test development programme aiming at identifying pupils at risk of functional illiteracy by the end of compulsory education (i.e. by the age of 15). The tests provided aim at assessing knowledge and skills which function as key indicators of what children should possess by the end of compulsory education in order to become responsible and contributing members of the contemporary society. The skills include among others: locating, reading, and understanding information in short and extended texts, making simple and complex inferences, recognizing author’s purpose, performing simple calculations, solving simple one-step and multi-step problems, interpreting graphs and tables etc. Test development is based on: (i) assessment research literature (ii) the Syllabi for Mathematics and Greek language and (iii) literature on functional illiteracy.

Within the framework of the above research programme, assessment material has been developed for pupils at Year 3 (age 8), Year 6 (age 11) and Year 9 (age 15) that will be administered at specific periods, beginning with summer 2011. Assessment material for Year 3 will be administered for the first time in autumn 2011. The purpose of the test is to evaluate the progress of the pupils' performance and to find out the success of the above-mentioned programme. Pupils that participate in the programme are those identified as high risk during the Year 6 functional illiteracy test. The early identification of literacy problems through specifically designed diagnostic assessment tests aim at reducing early school leaving.

The Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation has also undertaken a research project in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the intensive training programme¹ for bilingual students (children of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers), which is currently implemented in Secondary Education schools across Cyprus. One of the main objectives of the project is to evaluate the learning outcomes of the programme through the use of a series of pre- and post-tests. The result of this research project is expected to impact the Ministry's decision for further improvement and expansion of the programme.

The assessment of the Zone of Educational Priority (ZEP) programme which was conducted by an External Committee appointed by the MOEC, indicated that the operation of the ZEP had positive results, such as reduction of student drop-outs, reduction of school failure (referrals and repetitions) and minimization of referrals to the Educational Psychology Service. Overall, in school units where the ZEP programme was implemented, improvement was noted in all operational areas. (For more information please see previous report, p.7).

The establishment of an "Observatory for Violent Behavior in the School Environment" since May 2010 helps towards the goal of reducing the number of early school leavers. The mandate of the Observatory includes: (a) The collection, documentation, codification and analysis of all forms of violence expressed in school units. The data collection focuses both in qualitative as well as in quantitative data including best practices regarding preventing and addressing the problem of antisocial behavior, national and international research as to the school environment, violence at school, youth delinquency and school failure. (b) Close and direct contact with the European as well as the International Observatory for School Violence. It must be noted that Cyprus has been included in the countries that will take part in the codification of the phenomenon of antisocial behavior according to the modern methodology and theoretical documentation and (c) The establishment of a systematic cooperation with the education stakeholders and the Media. Since its establishment the Observatory has managed to design and develop the methodology and the tools regarding information collection in relation to school climate and victimization. It must be mentioned that the codification and collection of data on the above issue was launched in March 2011 and the final conclusions will be ready at the end of June. Research results will indicate the future measures and steps to be taken by all stakeholders with regards to the above issue.

¹ This programme involves placing bilingual pupils in a separate class for some hours of the week, for intensive learning of the Greek language and specialized assistance according to their specific needs.

2.2 Please indicate the areas of priority areas your country is focusing on (e.g. target groups, educational sectors):

The areas of priority Cyprus is focusing on are the following:

-Introduction of new curricula at all levels, which focus on the development of new skills and key competences and of new timetables in line with the new curricula that provide for individualized instruction and consolidation time

-Continuous professional development of teachers in relation to the new curricula

-Measures to facilitate school enrolment and school success through schemes such as the Zone's of Educational Priority (ZEP) and special induction programmes for non-native students

-Establishment of Post Secondary Institutes for Vocational Education and Training

-Increase the number of people attending Higher Education

-Establishment of a strong student welfare system so as to enhance equity and widen access to higher education

-Early childhood education and care. To this end pre-primary education is compulsory and free for all children for one year prior to attending the primary school. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus is planning to extend this measure to cover the age of three years and eight months. The aims are to maximize the children's development, to create the optimal learning environment to enhance their achievement, to identify early and cope with learning difficulties and disabilities and involve parents in the educational process to alleviate the effects of socioeconomic and cultural differences on children's educational success.

2.3 Measures to prevent early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken at system level, at school level and in support of individual pupils/learners:

Several support measures are currently being in practice in order to meet the national target of reducing the rate of early school leavers to 10% by 2020.

The Educational Reform is in progress aiming at restructuring the education system and modernizing the content of education by modernizing and upgrading the curriculum for all public schools (from Pre-Primary to Upper Secondary Education). The new curricula focus on the development of new skills and key competences with the aim to improve the openness and relevance of education and training systems. Within this framework new timetables for primary and secondary education are under formation in line with the new curricula that provide for individualized instruction and consolidation time. In addition, the production of new educational materials (books, multimedia etc.) is in process. The development of a new curriculum for Upper Secondary and Technical Vocational Education in order to facilitate the transfer of students between general education and VET is in process. It must be noted that the continuous professional development of teachers in relation to the new curricula is also in line with the new curriculum.

Provision of extra teaching support in a separate class for some hours of the week for pupils with learning difficulties (2nd-6th grades in primary schools) as well as intensive teaching of

the Greek language to all foreign pupils in parallel classes for fast acquisition of the language, are being provided. In addition, an induction guide in eight languages for the new coming non-native speaking pupils, with basic information for the pupils and their parents about the educational system of Cyprus has been prepared.

Furthermore, the operation of a significant number of pre-primary (42) and primary schools (122) as all-day schools gives pupils the opportunity to remain at school until 4 p.m. four days per week. It must be noted that the number of pre-primary schools that operate as all-day schools has increased from 20 to 42 as of the school year 2009-10.

The provision of free breakfast to all pupils who attend schools which fall under the Educational Priority Zones and to Turkish speaking students who attend public primary schools around the island. In addition, free lunch is provided to all Turkish speaking students and students with low socio-economic status who attend all-day public primary schools around the island. These measures address the issue of child poverty, promote child well-being and reduce the possibility of early school leaving.

The expansion of the ZEP programme facilitates the integration of students at risk to the school system. The number of ZEP has been increased from 4 in 2009 to 5 during the school year 2010-11, covering 6 Gymnasiums, 12 Primary Schools and 9 Pre-Primary Schools. The Ministry of Education and Culture is planning to promote the progressive increase of the number of ZEPs up to eight (8) until 2013. The Ministry of Education and Culture, taking into consideration the positive effects of the ZEP programme, is planning to enrich the services offered in ZEPs with the implementation of afternoon activities covering, among others, remedial teaching and creative employment of children in various thematic areas (Languages, Theatre, Music, PE, Arts etc), according to their needs and interests. Finally, psychosocial services by professional scientists will be offered to students, parents and teachers of ZEPs.

The cooperation with the Primary Education Directorate and more specifically with the primary schools feeding each Gymnasium falls within the above measures. Primary school pupils visit their regional Gymnasium, take part in National celebrations, attend classes etc. Visits to Secondary schools are organized by the administration of the school (Assistant Head) with the cooperation of the School Counsellor who meets with children and parents before pupils start Secondary Education. For the same reason visits are carried out by Gymnasium students and their parents to Technical Schools before choosing direction for Upper Secondary Education. High risk students are carefully observed by all members of the school and if needed referrals are done in time. School Counselors work closely with the teachers and along with all stakeholders they develop and implement an action plan towards helping the student. School Counselors interview high-risk students more thoroughly, comprehensively and systematically than the rest of the students and cooperate with their parents, teachers and other professionals. They combine forces, work as a team and in class they emphasize on the importance of education where they encourage students to set academic goals and acquire additional skills needed for new jobs.

Additionally, the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus provides a significant number of training and support programmes to teachers such as the intensive programme offered to philologists (teachers of the Greek language) for teaching Greek as a second language to children of immigrant background. The Pedagogical Institute participates also in the EU "Progress" Programme against Discrimination: through organising a conference addressed to teachers, by publishing a guide for teachers and by conducting a relevant research.

Finally, an Expert Committee for early identification of literacy problems has been set up, aiming at contributing to the reduction of school failure and dropout rates.

2.4 Measures to compensate early school leaving. Please mention the most effective measures taken:

Operating second chance schools in all main towns across Cyprus, which offer early school leavers the opportunity to re-enter the school system, obtain a qualification at secondary level, move on to tertiary education if they so wish and/or re-enter the labour market, is one major measure towards compensating early school leaving. These second chance schools include the Secondary General Education Evening Schools (Esperina Gymnasia), Evening Technical Schools (Esperines Technikes Scholes), afternoon and evening classes of Technical Education (Ekpaideftika Programmata Apogevmatinon kai Vradinon Tmimatou Technikis Ekpaidefsis) and the Post Secondary Institutes for Vocational Education and Training (Metalykiaka Instituta Epaggelmatikis Ekpaidefsis kai Katartisis) which are due to be established in the near future.

Secondary General Education Evening Schools are a type of second chance school, within the formal education system, which are administered by the Directorate of Secondary General Education within the Ministry of Education and Culture. They provide adults with the opportunity to acquire key competences and skills in free general education, which lead to secondary level qualifications i.e. Students that complete the programme are awarded a leaving certificate which allows them to compete for a place in higher education in Cyprus and abroad. It should be also stressed that, within the development of the New Curriculum, the development of a new curriculum for Evening Schools is under consideration.

The Evening Technical and Vocational Education School operates within the formal education system, which is administered by the Directorate of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture. It provides adults with the opportunity to acquire key competences and skills in free secondary technical and vocational education, which lead to secondary level qualifications. Upon completion of the four-year programme, a leaving certificate is awarded which is equivalent to that awarded to graduates of Technical and Vocational Education Schools. Adult graduates then have the opportunity to compete for a place in higher education in Cyprus and abroad.

Another second chance education measure is the Afternoon and Evening Classes of Technical and Vocational Education Schools, which are also administered by the Directorate of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture. All programmes focus on providing on-going training for technical staff in order to meet the constantly changing needs of the labour market, as well as on providing specialised preparation for taking the Pancyprian and other external examinations for entry into higher education institutions and other organisations. The Afternoon and Evening Classes of Technical and Vocational Education Schools are offered in the form of either one-year or three-year programmes: three-year programmes lead to secondary level qualifications i.e. a leaving certificate is awarded, equivalent to that awarded to graduates of Technical and Vocational Education Schools as far as the technical component is concerned; whilst the one-year programme leads to the acquisition of a certificate. In this way, adults are able to respond more efficiently to the contemporary demands of the labour market and to achieve re-integration into the labour market in areas where there is shortage of skilled workers.

Finally, the New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA), which provides an alternative pathway for education, training and development for young persons who withdraw from the formal education system, is geared towards the development of eight key competences as well as towards meeting the needs of the labour market. As the implementation of the NMA proceeds, general education students who have left school early without graduating will be encouraged to enroll in the NMA, which is designed to offer them a viable, alternative path of education, training and development. The implementation of the NMA has begun and the first intake of students is planned for February 2012. In order to support both the existing Apprenticeship System as well as the NMA, a subsidy Scheme to promote the employment and in-company training of apprenticeship students in the private sector was launched in July 2010. The Scheme is implemented by the Cyprus Productivity Center with co-funding from the national budget and the European Social Fund. The Scheme is designed to encourage employers to recruit apprenticeship students and to provide them with quality in-company training based on an agreed training plan.

TERTIARY EDUCATION ATTAINMENT (approx. 3 PAGES)

QUESTION 3

What measures has your country taken to increase tertiary (or equivalent) education attainment?

3.1 Measures to increase entry rates to higher education, including widening access to under-represented groups:

It must be noted that Cyprus has already achieved the goal of “at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education” set by the EU 2020 strategy. Thus, the whole effort is to sustain the achieved percentage and, if possible, increase entry rates to higher education as much as possible. The Cyprus Government continues to support the public Universities in the introduction of new schools and programmes of study and encourages the establishment of private Universities, in order to give the opportunity to Cypriot students to study in their own country. Recently a fourth private University, “Neapolis University – Cyprus”, was given initial license of operation in the city of Paphos, as for the academic year 2010-2011. The Council of Ministers took the decision for the foundation of the Medical School at the University of Cyprus and of the Department of Sciences of Rehabilitation at the Cyprus University of Technology.

Moreover, in 2010 the Ministry of Education and Culture, in order to establish a strong student welfare system so as to enhance equity and widen access to higher education, has widened its financial support to Cypriot students by creating a special “student financial support package”, which aims to support students of low socioeconomic status. Targeted grants are given, through this “package”, to eligible Cypriot students to cover living expenses, and expenses for books and computers. The eligibility is based on socioeconomic criteria, and the amounts given are over and above the (1700 euro) financial support, which is provided to every Cypriot student.

Furthermore, according to a new law, the Minister of Education and Culture can regulate the increase of the fees for Private Universities. There is no high rate of drop-out students in higher education in Cyprus, however, all financial incentives described above, minimize the possibility of having dropouts because of financial obstacles. Public Universities have a long tradition of Student Welfare Services that support students which are likely to drop out of their studies. The Ministry of Education and Culture always supports the creation of Student Welfare Offices in Private Universities as well. It must be mentioned that fees for attending undergraduate courses of Public Universities are paid fully by the government.

As far as Vocational Education and Training is concerned, it should be noted that Cyprus is taking measures aiming at upgrading this area mainly through improving the quality and attractiveness of the system, establishing mechanisms of lifelong guidance and validation of acquired skills and finally providing alternative pathways to young persons and upgrading the Apprenticeships System.

The policy measures presented in the VET Policy Report pertinent to higher level qualifications in VET are the following:

(a) Establishment of the Post Secondary Institutes for Technical and Vocational Education and Training: The Ministry of Education and Culture is preparing a proposal for the foundation and operation of Post-Secondary Institutes for Technical and Vocational Education. The Post Secondary Institutes for Technical and Vocational Education will offer opportunities to graduates of secondary and higher education for acquisition, improvement or upgrade of their professional qualifications and skills, so that they are rendered more capable of employment and participation in the labour market. Objectives of the establishment of Post Secondary Institutes for Technical and Vocational Education, the operation of which is programmed to begin from the academic year 2012-2013, are inter alia: (a) The provision of programmes of Professional Education and Training that would be addressed to graduates of secondary and higher education, (b) The provision of programmes for the facilitation of access and integration in the labour market, (c) The provision of programmes for further promotion of lifelong learning.

(b) Establishment and operation of a New Modern Apprenticeship: (please refer to p.7, 2.4)

(c) Under-represented groups: As far as higher education is concerned, under-represented groups are not the main focus of the Cyprus Universities. Nevertheless, some underrepresented groups, such as adult learners, are accepted by public Universities on the basis of special criteria (eg. lower marks in entry exams). Besides, extra points are awarded to the applicants of the Open University of Cyprus during the assessment of their application according to their age.

3.2 Measures to improve completion rates of students in higher education:

Please refer to answer to Question 3.1

MOBILITY (approx. 2.5 PAGES)

QUESTION 4

What measures has your country taken to promote learning mobility?

4.1 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of students in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults):

All departments within the Ministry of Education and Culture strongly encourage the participation of students of different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults) in various mobility programmes, such as the LLP Programme and the Council of Europe.

The main responsible organization of outgoing and incoming learning mobility is the Foundation for the Management of Lifelong Learning Programme which promotes the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), the European action Programme in the field of Education and Training. The main scope of the Programme is to financially support learning mobility. The Republic of Cyprus, by establishing in 2007 the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes, the Cyprus National Agency for the Programme (CY LLP NA) and by financially supporting its operation, showed its commitment towards the promotion of Learning mobility and its appreciation of the value attached to this kind mobility.

The CY LLP NA, since its establishment, has been managing successfully the Programme, offering mobility opportunities to a great number of Cyprus residents (students, teachers and other education professionals) involved in school Education, Tertiary Education, Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, as well as to the general public. Through a successful promotion campaign, the CY LLP NA has managed to fully absorb the allocated by the EU budget, while achieving high quality in applications received. The interest of Cypriots in participating to the European Education and Training Programmes is on the rise during the recent years, thus allowing the NA to fund high quality applications. Also, a great number of other European Citizens have come to Cyprus for education/training purposes through the programme. Furthermore, the Team of Bologna Experts, coordinated and supported by the CY LLP NA contributes to the process for the establishment of National Qualification Framework, which will further facilitate mobility.

4.2 Measures to promote outgoing/incoming learning mobility of teachers and other education professionals in different education sectors (schools, VET, higher education, adults)?

Apart from what is has been indicated in Question 4.1, it should be mentioned that as far as higher education is concerned, the Government's policy regarding mobility issues is in line with the goals set by the Bologna Process. Thus Cyprus applies the following measures to enhance and promote mobility of students and staff in higher education:

The Department of Higher and Tertiary Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture promotes the Erasmus Mundus Exchange Programme, the Tempus Programme and is actively involved in Erasmus Mundus Active Participation Programme (EMAP 1 and 2) which is promoted to all Universities in Cyprus, private and public. Public and Private Universities have implemented the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and measures are being taken for its gradual implementation in private Universities, public and private institutions of

higher and tertiary education. Institutions of higher education at university and non-university level issue the Diploma Supplement (DS) free of charge, to their graduates. The University of Cyprus and The University of Nicosia were granted the DS Label. Cyprus offers a number of short-term and long-term scholarships to international students: a) Firstly through bilateral programmes of Cultural, Scientific and Educational Collaborations, signed with various countries. These programmes provide the opportunity for short-term visits for students, scholars and researchers, b) Secondly through the “Financial Support Programme for the Development of third-party countries” of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Planning Bureau. This programme provides for long-term scholarships at the higher education level at public and private institutions of higher education in Cyprus. Finally, the Ministry of Education and Culture encourages the public Universities in Cyprus to give courses in English in order for them to be accessible to international students.

It should be also mentioned that the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute supports the online learning environment (i.e. Moodle: www.elearn.pi.ac.cy, www.e-epimorfosi.ac.cy). The Institution encouraged staff mobility and established new co-operations through participating in the Erasmus Teacher assignments (STA) and the Erasmus Staff training (STT). Besides, members of the staff participated as trainers and trainees in the Council of Europe Pestalozzi Training Modules.

4.3 Steps to identify and reduce the obstacles to learning mobility?

The obstacles to outgoing mobility are identified as being related to (a) recognition of studies/training received during the mobility period, (b) foreign language skills for communication and sufficient understanding of the content of training/studies, (c) leave of absence from work, both for teachers/trainers and for people working in other sectors of the labour market (d) finding suitable placement positions for training. The above obstacles are valid in some cases for incoming mobility, but the following are identified as obstacles to incoming mobility also: (e) expensive housing in Cyprus, (f) until recently lack of public transportation, while things are improving concerning this aspect.

Regarding recognition the CY LLP NA advises participants and everybody involved in mobility to sign learning/training agreements before the mobility takes place, so that there is adequate assurance that the study/training period will be recognized from the sending institution/organization. Also the Europass mobility certificate is also promoted, so that the mobility realized will be considered for the participant’s professional advancement.

As for foreign language skills, the CY NA offers language preparation grants for many actions of the Lifelong Learning Programme in order to facilitate the participation of Cypriot beneficiaries.

Concerning leave of absence from work, the CY LLP NA explains to the potential beneficiary institutions/organizations the benefits of mobility, so that they allow the participation of their employees. In general there is no problem in the public sector, but this is indeed a problem for the small-medium size private organizations.

Finding suitable placement positions for training is difficult for organizations without any international connections. The NA publishes on its website any information received concerning this matter, but this is an issue that has to be resolved at European level.

Regarding affordable housing for incoming mobility participants, receiving organization are encouraged by the CY LLP NA, to make group housing arrangement in order to get better prices.

Morover, the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) is proceeding with the development and implementation of the System of Vocational Qualifications. This System will constitute an integral part of the planned National Qualifications Framework and is expected to contribute towards the reduction of obstacles to mobility. The System is designed for the assessment of the knowledge, skills and competences of a person to perform competently in a working environment or under simulated conditions. The System is based on Standards of Vocational Qualifications, which are developed by technical Sectoral Committees of Vocational Qualifications. These consist of representatives of the social partners (government, employers' and employees' organisations) and other professionals. Each Standard is finally approved by the Board of Governors of the HRDA, which has a tripartite character where representatives of the Government, the Employers' organisations and the Trade Unions participate. The System is being established and implemented in 2 phases (1st phase: 2006 – 2008 and 2nd phase, co-financed by the ESF: 2007-2013). It is expected that 6.000 persons will be assessed through the system against 77 standards of vocational qualifications.

The design of the National Qualification Framework is another measure that is expected to reduce obstacles to learning mobility. The European Qualification Framework initiative was presented, analyzed and discussed in early January 2006 and the participants were then asked to prepare and submit their proposals, on the basis of which, Cyprus developed and submitted its position to the EU, thus contributing to the shaping and introduction of the EQF. At the same time, the stakeholders have started discussing and debating about the development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The development of a NQF for promoting the recognition of academic and vocational qualifications that have been acquired in Cyprus is a priority of the government. As a result, the Council of Ministers has set up a high level national committee comprising of the Director Generals of the Ministry of Education and Culture, MoEC (Ypourgeio Paideias kai Politismou, YPP), the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, MLSI (Ypourgeio Ergasias kai Koinonikon Asfaliseon, YEKA) and the Human Resource Development Authority, HRDA (Archi Anaptyxis Anthropinou Dynamikou, AnAD), to formulate the general framework and the policies for the design and implementation of a NQF. In February 2009, the National Committee appointed a Technical Committee in order to facilitate and coordinate the process. The Technical Committee, after studying the examples and good practices of other European countries, prepared an Interim Report on the State of the Development of a NQF in Cyprus. The Report, named "Establishment of a NQF in Cyprus and its relation with the EQF" was submitted in January 2010 to the members of the National Committee for comments and feedback and will form the basis for further consultation with stakeholders and other parties involved. The project for the establishment of a NQF in Cyprus is expected to be completed by the end of 2011. The System of Vocational Qualifications in Cyprus whose implementation has begun by the HRDA will constitute an integral part of a future NQF.

Finally, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute has initiated the process of recording educational objectives, actions and ways of evaluating programmes in order to claim the acquisition of ECTS label. However obstacles are identified regarding mobility due to the fact that the Pedagogical Institute is a training institution with specific programmes offered and the medium of instruction is Greek.

NEW SKILLS AND JOBS (approx. 2.5 PAGES)

QUESTION 5

What measures has your country taken to improve the assessment of future skills requirements matching since 2009?

5.1 Recent measure to improve skills forecasting (in addition to information provided through Eurydice in June 2010):

The continuous anticipation of skill needs in the labour market is a policy issue which is considered a priority in Cyprus. This includes mainly, the provision of employment forecasts in occupations and sectors of economic activity, as well as the identification of educational, training and special skill needs. The main formal mechanism in place for the assessment of skill needs is operated by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) which, for the systematic employment forecasting and the identification of skills gaps, it conducts the following research studies:

- Long term employment forecasts

The HRDA provides 10-year employment forecasts on a regular basis every 2 to 3 years. The latest set of employment forecasts for Cyprus have been completed in 2010 and cover the period 2010-2020. Thus, forecasts of employment, expansion and replacement demand are provided for 46 sectors of economic activity and for around 200 occupations, which cover the whole spectrum of the Cyprus labour market.

- Annual investigations for the identification of skill needs with the involvement of the Social Partners

The HRDA provides annual estimates for the number of persons required for specific occupations by district, by collecting and analysing the views of Employers' organisations, Trade Unions, District Labour Offices and the Cyprus Tourism Organisation. On the basis of these estimates suggestions are put forward for the implementation of Multicompany Initial Training Programmes.

- Identification of Green Skill Needs

The HRDA conducted a study on the anticipation of green skill needs in 2010. The study "Identification of Green Skill Needs in the Cyprus Economy 2010-2013" outlines the green economy of Cyprus, provides employment needs forecasts for sectors of economic activity and occupations of the green economy and identifies green skill needs for the period 2010-2013.

The Ministry of Education and Culture, MoEC (Ypourgeio Paideias kai Politismou, YPP) is on the other hand, responsible for the identification of educational and special skill needs. The Directorate of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education, STVE (Dieuythinsi Defterovathmias, Technikis kai Epaggelmatikis Ekpaideysis, DTEE) in order to be able to examine and adapt the content of its curricula according to the needs of the Cyprus economy and industry, and taking into account the latest scientific and technological advances, has developed close cooperation with all major stakeholders, such as Ministries and the PB, the Social Partners (Employers and Employees Organisations), teachers and their associations, the University of Cyprus, UCY (Panepisthmio Kyprou, PK) the Pedagogical Institute, PI (Pedagogiko Institutouto) and the HRDA.

What is more, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute is participating in the PISA 2012 research programme. Through Cyprus participation in PISA, a valid and reliable assessment will be ensured on the basic skills (i.e. concerned with the use of native language, maths and science and the problem solving skills developed) acquired by pupils having completed their compulsory education. This assessment will serve as a valuable basis for better planning and a rationalised approach in promoting the aforesaid basic skills in the future. It should be also mentioned that the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute has a Memorandum of Understanding with Microsoft (partners in learning) for issues concerned with ICT. It is also collaborating with stakeholders (i.e. Center Neuroscience and Technology Institute, the Electricity Authority of Cyprus, the Cyprus Police, universities) to ensure safe use of the Internet. Parallel to that, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute has offered to all teachers (about 10,000) training courses for acquiring basic ICT skills.

In addition, Cyprus participates in PIAAC (the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) a survey organized by OECD and delivered by ETS. PIAAC assess the level and distribution of adult skills in a coherent and consistent way across countries. It focuses on the key cognitive and workplace skills that are required for successful participation in the economy and society of the 21st century. In Cyprus, the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies is being monitored by the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE) of the Ministry of Education and Culture. During the second half of 2010, CERE successfully participated in the pilot phase of the survey. The main study is to take place in 2011-2012.

5.2 Recent measures to take the results on board in education and training planning processes, information and guidance:

The Pedagogical Institute is actively involved in the process of introducing the new Curriculum in a twofold way: (a) it is responsible for setting up a database of teaching material for each subject of the curriculum (taught currently at schools), accessible to all teachers so as to facilitate them in their effort to implement the new syllabus in their class, and (b) it offers training to executives of the Ministry of Education and Culture (Chief Officers, Inspectors, supporters, etc) and actively engaged teachers.

The training of the executives from the Ministry of Education and Culture as well as that of the teaching staff of primary and lower secondary schools is undertaken by the Directorate of the Ministry and the Office for the New Curriculum in collaboration with the Pedagogical Institute. Academics, inspectors, and teachers who had been involved in the scientific committees responsible for the shaping of the new curricula are participating in the training process.

During the training, emphasis is given on: (a) the characteristic features of the New Curriculum (i.e. philosophy, aims, content, methodology and assessment), (b) the new elements introduced in the curricula and their subject content, and (c) the way the subject courses covered by the curricula and their content are linked with the principles of the New Curriculum (ie the establishment of a humane and democratic school, the acquisition of adequate and coherent body of knowledge, the development of attitudes and behaviours that comply with democratic citizenship, and the development of key competencies, abilities and skills required in the society of the 21st century).

By the end of the training, the trainees should be in position to understand the principles and the philosophy of the New Curriculum, to realise which elements are new (i.e. principles, content, methods), to identify the differences between the old and the new Curriculum as far as the different subjects are concerned, to embrace the new elements and adopt them directly in their teaching practice. In addition, the trainees should be able to implement the relative methodological approaches around which their teaching practice should be moulded (e.g. differentiation strategies, active learning techniques). Above all, trainees should realise that the successful implementation of the New Curriculum depends mainly on the abandon of some traditional teaching approaches and the adoption of others consistent with the philosophy and principles of the new curriculum, while, at the same time, be equipped with teaching suggestions for classroom application.

What is more, in order to improve the assessment of future skills requirements, the Career Counseling and Education Services provides guidance and inform the general public on various issues one of which is how they can acquire occupational skills and what kind of educational/occupational programmes exist. One of the main goals of Career Counseling and Education Service is that of Widening Access to Guidance which it has been further enhanced by the participation in Programme Two of the European Lifelong Guidance and Policy Network. As a consequence, Regional Offices have been developed so that more people could be reached through extended services. In addition partnerships with the Youth Organization have been created, where counseling services are offered to students and other interested individuals. Furthermore, Cyprus is in the process of developing a National Forum on Career Guidance with partners from the Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance, etc. while the Ministerial Council is in the process of approving the Forum.

It should be mentioned that the HRDA studies on anticipation of skill needs are utilised by policy makers in order to develop appropriate policy responses for adapting to the forecasted situation in the labour market, public and private organisations involved in human resource planning, people involved in counselling such as secondary education vocational guidance teachers and employment counsellors and by the general public (more specifically parents and students wishing to choose an occupation or to pursue further studies). For this purpose, research studies, upon completion are disseminated to a wide audience of prominent stakeholders. Special presentations are organised for secondary school guidance counsellors and employment counsellors, students and parents. Additionally, the HRDA maintains a website (www.hrdauth.org.cy) which contains the latest available occupational employment forecasts and all its research studies.

The HRDA studies on employment forecasts are an important tool for the planning of HRDA activities. The findings of the research studies are also taken into account by the HRDA for choosing the Standards of Vocational Qualifications to be developed in the System which is

being established and implemented and will be incorporated into the National Qualifications Framework.

The HRDA prepares on an annual basis a document that contains the thematic priorities for multi-company programmes. This document is communicated to all training providers, which on the basis of these thematic priorities submit multi-company continuing training programmes to the HRDA every six months. The HRDA examines various programmes submitted by public and private training providers, which follow the thematic priorities, approves the submitted programmes and subsidises the provision of continuing training.

As a response to the study on the anticipation of green skills needs, the HRDA, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, has put forward a Special Scheme for Promoting Green Skills in the Cyprus economy, which includes a variety of targeted measures that are directed towards enterprises, employees and the unemployed.

Furthermore, the HRDA has declared the year 2011 as the Year of Green Skills with the aim to effectively promote and publicise the importance of the acquisition of green knowledge and skills.

EDUCATION BUDGETS (approx. 2 PAGES)

QUESTION 6

How has the economic and financial crisis affected education and training budgets in your country (please refer to developments in particular education sectors, if appropriate)?

In a period of severe economic and financial crisis there has been an increase in the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture of 12,5% during 2009, of 3,5% during 2010 and 2,4% for 2011. For achieving the major goals of the education reform the GDP % of the expenditure in education has raised from 7,1% in 2007 to 7,8% in 2009. In this respect we can claim that planned reforms are being implemented in a relatively slower but steady pace.

However, in order to mitigate the effects of the economic crisis on employment, a training scheme for the unemployed was launched in May 2009. The budget allocated to training programmes organized by the Cyprus Productivity Center under this scheme was €407.206,00 (up until December 2010).

In view of the intensifying world economic recession and with the aim of minimising its effects on the local labour market the HRDA, in close partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, put forward a Special Prevention - Action Plan.

The Special Prevention - Action Plan includes a variety of measures aimed at both prevention and reduction of unemployment that are targeted towards the unemployed, economically inactive and employees. The measures are classified under the three pillars of Prevention of unemployment, Enhancement of employability and Employment and training.

Implementation of the measures required increases in the HRDA budget. Specifically, the HRDA budget for training subsidies increased from €12.642.261 in 2009 to €18.715.326 in

2010, showing an increase of about 40%. This increase is mainly attributed to the measures put forward by the HRDA as a consequence of the crisis.

LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES (approx. 2 PAGES)

QUESTION 7

What progress has your country made in the development and implementation of a coherent and comprehensive lifelong learning strategy?

7.1 Does your country have such a strategy (please indicate where it is laid down):

Cyprus has a Lifelong Learning Strategy 2007-2013 (CyLLS) which was formally adopted by the Council of Ministers Decision in November 2007, as a response to a commitment undertaken in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy and the National Programme for Education and Training 2010. The practical importance of adopting the CyLLS is the implementation of a unified and coordinated policy of lifelong learning (LLL) i.e. education and training measures for the achievement of common strategic objectives, in a way that ensures complementarity of actions and high effectiveness and efficiency in resource management (please refer to previous Report, Question 9).

The monitoring, coordination and formative evaluation tasks for the implementation of the CyLLS was designated, by another Council of Ministers Decision (April 2008), to the following committees, chaired by the Planning Bureau, which is the National Authority for the implementation of the European LLL Programme 2007-2013, in Cyprus:

- The National LLL Committee, which has a broad synthesis, comprised of the main, services, organizations and social partners involved in the provision of education and training and,
- The Technical LLL Committee, which assists the National LLL Committee and is comprised of the Planning Bureau, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (MLSI), the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) and the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC).

The general aim of the CyLLS is to promote the formal, non formal and informal education and training of all citizens, throughout their lifetime, as a vital contributor to their personal attainment and fulfillment, as well as for their adaptation to the continual changes. These changes are mainly derived, nowadays from the rapid replacement of old knowledge and technology with new, the demographic changes resulted to a bigger share of old ages in the labour market, the need to acquire new skills for new jobs created in response to global economic crisis and emerged changes like the climate change and the urgent need for energy conservation.

The changes above rendered LLL, in our era more than ever before, a critical determinant of people potential to work, integrate, operate and prosper in the society as well as a defining parameter of the countries' capacity for social and economic sustainability and growth.

The CyLLS is structured around the following four priority axes and strategic objectives:

1st Priority Axis /Strategic Objective: Promoting Access and Participation in Lifelong Learning for All

2nd Priority Axis /Strategic Objective: Strengthening of Lifelong Learning Infrastructures and Systems

3rd Priority Axis /Strategic Objective: Research and Development for the Support of Lifelong Learning

4th Priority Axis /Strategic Objective: Effective Governance of Lifelong Learning.

Lifelong learning policy in the short to medium run

The future actions in the field of LLL, are being formed on the basis of the results of the 2007-2009 CyLLS Progress Report and in line with the objectives of the ET 2020 strategic framework and EU 2020 strategy. Emphasis is to be attached to promoting LLL actions under the EU flagship initiatives “Youth on the move” and “New Skills for New Jobs”. In this context, the LLL policy, in the short to medium run, will focus on strengthening the CyLLS implementation mechanism and the promotion of high added value LLL measures enhancing CyLLS strategic axis and objectives, as follows:

(a) Broadening access and encouraging people to remain in education (CyLLS, 1st axis):

Action is under process especially for,

-Improving Cyprus performance so as to comply with the five benchmarks set by ET2020 out of which two are included in the EU2020 as well. Special attention will be paid to the increase of the adults participation in LLL Programmes from 7.7% in 2010 to at least 12% by 2020, (the ET 2020 benchmark is 15%) as well as to the reduction of the school drop outs from 11,7 % in 2009 to less than 10% by 2020 in line with the Cyprus commitment set in the National Reform Programme broadening access and encouraging people to remain in education (CyLLS, 1st axis).

-Increase of the positive impact that the “EU Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) 2007-2013” has on the local society and economy. In this context, there is a need for encouraging all Technical and Vocational Schools and adults to actively participate in Leonardo da Vinci mobility action for initial and continued training and placements in enterprises abroad (currently only 50% of the technical schools are participating). Furthermore, targeted action is needed for contributing to the implementation in Cyprus of the EU modernization agenda for universities.

-Providing young persons alternative pathways via the New Modern Apprenticeship that is going to replace the existing Apprenticeship scheme (co-financed by the ESF).

-Further supporting of the Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP) that include schools accepting big number of pupils having learning weaknesses as a measure against school dropouts (co-financed by ESF). Special induction programmes for migrants in primary and secondary education (the yearly cost is around €2 mln).

-The establishment of Post Secondary Institutes for Technical and Vocational Education and Training which could offer to learners, at affordable cost, programmes at an intermediate level, between upper secondary and higher education, complementary to the programmes offered by the private colleges.

(b) Facilitating Integration and re-integration in the labour market (CyLLS, 1st and 2nd axis)

Action is under way especially for the,

-Design and apply, in the context of school curricula reforms, competence based learning programmes, particularly in technical and vocational education and in adult learning, in order to ensure the desired outcomes of learning i.e. the acquisition of skills needed for employment and generally for personal attainment and fulfillment.

-Upgrading of the MOEC vocational guidance and professional orientation services for students, so as to also offer lifelong career guidance services to people of all ages as well as enhancement of the efficiency of the MLSI public employment services in matching, via LLL, the demand and supply of skills in the labour market.

-Promotion of the ECTS and development of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for the transparency/recognition/comparability of qualifications acquired via LLL and for facilitating the individuals mobility in the several levels of education and their mobility in the unified European labour market. Towards this direction there is a need to accelerate procedures for the establishment and operation of the NQF so as to catch up with the deadline set by the EU Council and Parliament for linking the NQF with the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Also there is a need to accelerate procedures for the completion of the national ECVET system and the System of Vocational Qualifications with the ultimate goal to constitute an integral part of the NQF. The adoption of ECTS by all higher education institutions is another significant measure to be applied.

-Upgrading the skills and development of new skills (including those for new jobs) of the unemployed, inactive females, newcomers to the labour market, young secondary and tertiary education graduates and persons belonging to vulnerable groups in accordance to identified labour market needs, via on-going programmes (some of these programmes are co-financed by the ESF), including, amongst others: Schemes for the improvement of the employability of economically inactive women, Job placement and training of unemployed tertiary education young graduates (through incentives to enterprises) In-company/On-the-job training programmes that help the employers in the sectors of the economy mostly affected by the crisis to design and implement training programmes in their enterprises.

(c) Improvement and strengthening of the infrastructure and content of education and training systems (CyLLS, 2nd axis):

Action is under way especially as part of the implementation of the educational reform as well as for the strengthening the training infrastructure of enterprises and training institutions and the introduction of an assessment and certification system of training providers.

(d) Increase of the Impact of LLL on improving productivity and competitiveness of the Cyprus Economy (CyLLS, 3rd and 1st axis):

Action is under way, via several schemes (co-financed by ESF) in the private and public sector like the subsidy scheme (provided by Cyprus Productivity Centre) to facilitate the shift from low productivity jobs to high productivity jobs and the scheme of the Academy of Public Administration for strengthening the strategic approach and the administrative and managerial capacity of the senior staff and directors of the public service.

(e) Effective Governance of the Educational System and Training System (CyLLS, 4th axis):

Action is under way especially via the educational reform regarding MoEC, and in parallel as regards the HRDA, by carrying out studies evaluating its impact on the human resources, the enterprises and the Cyprus economy and taking appropriate decisions based on the results of these studies

(f) Promoting of the “knowledge triangle”, which combines education, research and innovation, as a driving force for growth:

Action is under way especially for the development of closer relations and partnerships between universities (public and private) and enterprises for the best use of research outcomes in the production of innovative products and services. Moreover a systematic development of the pupils’ and higher education students’ research skills and creativity, should take place.

Finally, it should be noted that the Centre for Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE) of the Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the design and delivery of evaluations and research projects related to the field of education. In particular, CERE is responsible for evaluating a number of innovative educational projects. CERE also evaluates the mandatory in-service training programmes offered by the Ministry of Education and Culture and its in-service training provider. CERE evaluations have been the foci for the improvement and development of programmes, i.e. the in-service training of newly appointed school leaders, the programme for the training of Greek origin teachers in teaching Greek in the countries of the Black Sea, the in-service training programmes for newly qualified teachers, the pre-service training for secondary education training teacher.

7.2 Please briefly refer to the main measures addressing the principles of shared responsibility, effective financial mechanisms, flexible pathways and quality initial and targeted continuing training:

(a) Principles of shared responsibility

The principle of shared responsibility in the implementation of the CyLLS is guaranteed by,

-the direct involvement of key stakeholders i.e. the main departments and organizations involved in the provision of LLL, in the preparation of the CyLLS 2007-2013 and the 2007-2009 CyLLS Progress Report.

-the approval by the Council of Ministers of the CyLLS 2007-2013 and the terms of reference of the two committees who shared the responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the strategy and preparation of a regular progress report

-the synthesis of the two LLL committees so as to represent the key stakeholders and main social partners

-the commitment, set in the Strategy for the submission to the Council of Ministers of the CyLLS Progress Reports.

(b) Principles of effective financial mechanisms

The principles of effective financial mechanisms are safeguarded by the National and EU regulatory framework as follows:

(i) Cyprus regulatory framework:

Cyprus education and training is mainly financed by the state budget. More specifically, there has been an increase in the budget of the Ministry of Education and Culture of 12,5% during 2009, of 3,5% during 2010 and 2,4% for 2011. For achieving the major goals of the education reform the GDP % of the expenditure in education has raised from 7,1% in 2007 to 7,8% in 2009. Moreover, there has been a rising private expenditure on private education and training, that reached 1,9% of the GDP in 2008 and is expected to be further increased as a result of the establishment of three private universities in 2007 and a fourth one in 2011. The Government's financial contribution to private education is currently expressed in the provision of students grants. Furthermore, the HRDA, through its various training subsidy Schemes, plays a major role towards the systematic training and development of human resources in Cyprus. The HRDA's main source of income originates from the Human Resource Development Levy paid by all enterprises in the private sector and semi-government organizations (currently set at 0,5% of their payroll). Civil servants and the self-employed are excluded from the HRDA's sphere of competence.

The official adoption and implementation of the yearly state budgets is regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus. The budget proposals are submitted, through their competent authorities, to the Minister of Finance and after being discussed with him, a consolidated budget proposal, in the form of a draft Law is submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval. The approved draft Budget Law is then placed before the House of Representatives for voting it as the Budget Law for the year of reference.

The management efficiency and accountability of the public financing is expected to be increased as a result of the effected upgrading of the accounting software system (FIMAS) as well as the permanent application of the Medium-Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF), and the Programme and Performance Budgeting (PPB) methods in the preparation of annual state budgets. These reforms have been introduced progressively as from the financial year 2007, and are expected to become the official (and only) budget method from Financial year 2014 onwards.

(ii) EU regulatory framework:

It is important to note that the application of the EU regulatory framework in the management of EU funding (through structural and other funds), has a favourable impact to the efficiency and equity of financial mechanisms of the recipient countries.

The EU provides funding on LLL, complementary to the above, through the European Social Fund. The ESF share for co-financing Education and training programmes in Cyprus, is

approximately 75% of the available total ESF funds (€ 149,71 mln out of which 20% state grant and 80% EU grant) for the programming period 2007-2013. In addition to this amount, Cyprus receives a yearly grant of €4 mln from the European Commission for financing actions of the European Lifelong Learning Programme 2007-2013. In the case of Cyprus, we are exploring the possibility of using extra funding for the LLL Programme from ESF.

(c)The Principle of Flexible pathways

The principle of flexible pathways in LLL is guaranteed by the 1st Priority Axis /Strategic Objective and action guidelines of the formally adopted CyLLS 2007-2013 which aim, amongst others, at promoting flexible education and training methods in order to facilitate the accessibility and mobility of people between (i) the various levels and types of education and (ii) the various specializations.

Specific indicative measures of significant importance that are currently under development or implementation with a view to directly offering alternative flexible pathways in the field of LLL and increase, via LLL, of individuals' employability are mentioned under part 3 (a)-(b) above.

(d)Principles of Quality initial and targeted continuing training

This principle is guaranteed by the 2nd Priority Axis /Strategic Objective and action guidelines of the formally adopted CyLLS 2007-2013 which aim at the improvement and strengthening of the infrastructure and content of education and training. The measures stated under part 3(a) above could have a direct favourable effect on initial education and training and those under part 3(b) -3(f) above a continued education and training.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT REFORMS IN THE PRIORITY AREAS (approx. 2 PAGES)

QUESTION 8

What progress has your country made in making reforms in the priority areas not directly addressed in questions 2 – 7? (Please indicate relevant priority area and give a short description)

The ongoing Educational Reform is an effort for a comprehensive introduction of changes and innovations at all levels and all aspects of the educational system. The main objective of this effort is to create a democratic and student-focused educational system, which includes all students irrespective of social, racial or ethnic background, gender, or physical or mental ability and offers high quality education to each student, thus assisting them to maximize their potential and acquire skills and knowledge which will enable them to become active and democratic citizens. For the materialization of the aforementioned the Government has appointed a Committee of Experts which designed the new curricula based on the recommendations that were openly discussed during the structured dialogue with all

interested stakeholders (political parties, teachers' unions, parents' associations, associations of students, and the Government, represented by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Planning Bureau). Within the above framework, special emphasis has been given to defining the aims and key contents of the different subjects and thematic entities in order to form a more unified educational approach. According to the Theoretical Framework of the new Curriculum, which was prepared by the Committee of Experts, 'the mission of education in the 21st century is the establishment of a humanistic and democratic school, which will lead to people with a cohesive and sufficient body of knowledge, able to understand and define the world around them, communicate creatively with the people around them and shape their life with the support of the scientific and cultural accomplishments of humanity' (Theoretical Framework, 2008). This mission is realized through the shaping of a democratic and humanistic school in Cyprus. These fundamental pedagogical principles comprise the basis for the designing of the curriculum and penetrate through all its aspects. Following the above guidelines, the different Subject Committees delivered the Syllabi and the new Curricula for all school subjects in August 2010. In September 2010, the in-service training of primary and secondary school teachers began. Gradual implementation of the new curricula has also begun and the introduction of the new Curriculum in all school units will take place in due course.

The new curricula pays great attention on the knowledge that students should acquire, the competences and skills they will develop, the values they will shape, attitudes they will adopt, knowledge they will acquire and behaviours they will demonstrate. The key attributes, competences and skills required in the 21st century society, that should students possess are creativity, critical thinking and reflective administration of knowledge, theoretical thinking and the ability to transform theory into practice, analyzing and planning competences and skills, eagerness and ability for collective work and exchange of information, problem solving competence, and at the same time, readiness for searching alternative solutions and ability for the development of alternative theories, excellent and wise use of the Information and Communication Technology, empathy and skills for interpersonal communication.

What is more, the Ministry of Education and Culture, taking under consideration the positive impact of the Open School Programme, decided to expand it to ten Municipalities, in comparison to four that are operating today. (For more information about the Open School Programme please refer to previous Report, Question 2, p.6).

Furthermore, the proposal for the appraisal scheme of teachers has been completed, after an extended dialogue with all stakeholders involved. The final proposal of the Ministry of Education and Culture for the new appraisal scheme will be submitted to the Educational Council of Primary and Secondary Education within this school year. It should be also mentioned that the proposal for the modernization and the improvement of the appointed system of teachers into Public Education Service is being prepared.

In addition, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus is currently working towards the creation of a new legislation, which will lead to the establishment of the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation (CyAQAAE) in Education. The Agency will, after its establishment and operation, undertake all the responsibilities of the existing bodies responsible for Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Recognition. The Agency aims at enhancing Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Cyprus and simplifying all evaluation and accreditation procedures and the whole Quality Assurance system. Moreover, the Agency aspires to establish consistency of Quality Assurance practices for all Cypriot Higher

Education Institutions and to create a culture of internal Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Cyprus. Finally, the Agency will ensure that Higher Education of high quality is offered through Higher Education Institutions in Cyprus.

As far as counteracting violence and delinquency, the Ministry of Education and Culture supports schools through the Committee of Direct intervention. The “Committee of Direct intervention” consists of representatives from various Departments and Services of the Ministry such as teachers of primary and secondary level, educational psychologists. The purpose of this committee is the development, promotion and follow-up of an action plan which will provide a holistic approach to a specific problem. The teachers of each school, educational psychologists, the social support workers, the parents and the local community are encouraged to get involved in this process. The committee has the authority to support each school by accelerating the processes and promoting economic subsidies where needed, in order to confront the problems and activate the action plan. Finally, the team promotes the application of prevention programmes, with the objective to minimize juvenile delinquency in schools.

Moreover, new structures within the Ministry of Education and Culture have been created with most important the setting up of the European and International Affairs Office, the appointment of a Scientific Council of the Pedagogical Institute and the Center of Educational Research and Evaluation, so that the educational policy would be formed based on data of contemporary science.

Finally, within the measures of establishing a strong student welfare system so as to enhance equity among students, the Ministry of Education and Culture finances all students attending the 2nd grade of Gymnasium with a certain amount in order to buy a personal lap top, while since school year 2010-11 the grant has been also allocated to 2nd grade students attending approved private schools of Secondary Education and students attending the preparatory class of Evening Schools.

PROPOSALS FOR THE PRIORITY AREAS OF THE SUBSEQUENT PERIOD (approx. 1 page)

QUESTION 9

Under the 4 broad strategic objectives, described below, the Council also defined mid-term priority areas for the period 2009-11. Which mid-term priority areas would your country wish to cooperate on during the next cycle (please indicate order of priority – high, medium, low)?

9.1 Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality:

- High priority: This priority is considered to be of high importance since it falls within

the spectrum of cultivation of lifelong learning competences, skills and knowledge covering all types of education and training (formal, informal, non-formal), and all

levels and from pre-primary education to adult and continuing education and training

compulsory education. Lifelong learning competences are considered are considered to be of high importance within the framework of the new Curriculum.

9.2 Improving quality and efficiency of education and training:

- High priority: Improving quality and efficiency of education and training remains a fundamental goal of the Cyprus Educational System. This aim will be enhanced and further promoted during the implementation of the new Curriculum.

9.3 Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship:

- High priority: The area was and is the main priority of Cyprus educational system and that is why, a great number of actions taken during the previous years or are to be taken within the Educational Reform Framework aim at promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. It should be also stressed that the creation of a Democratic and Humanistic School, which is the main aim of our educational system, covers all above aspects.

9.4 Enhancing innovation and creativity, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training:

- High priority: Innovation and creativity are considered to be key competences required in the society of the 21st century. According to the theoretical framework of the new Curriculum, these competences serve the mission of contemporary education.

9.5 Other comments: N/A