



REPUBLIC
OF CYPRUS



MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION
SPORT
AND YOUTH



ANNUAL REPORT

2023



Annual Report

2023

Ministry of Education,
Sport and Youth

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PART A: EDUCATION



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH

ANNUAL REPORT

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1.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH

1.1 DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

Primary Education is the first stage of education, laying the foundations for children's cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development. For this reason, the Administration of the Department of Primary Education persists in the continuous improvement and advancement of Primary Education. Furthermore, it aims at updating teaching methods and approaches, designing and implementing contemporary developmental programmes, improving the support programmes applied in Special Needs Education and expanding, improving and constructing new school buildings. Overall, it aims at creating the infrastructure that will ensure high quality education.

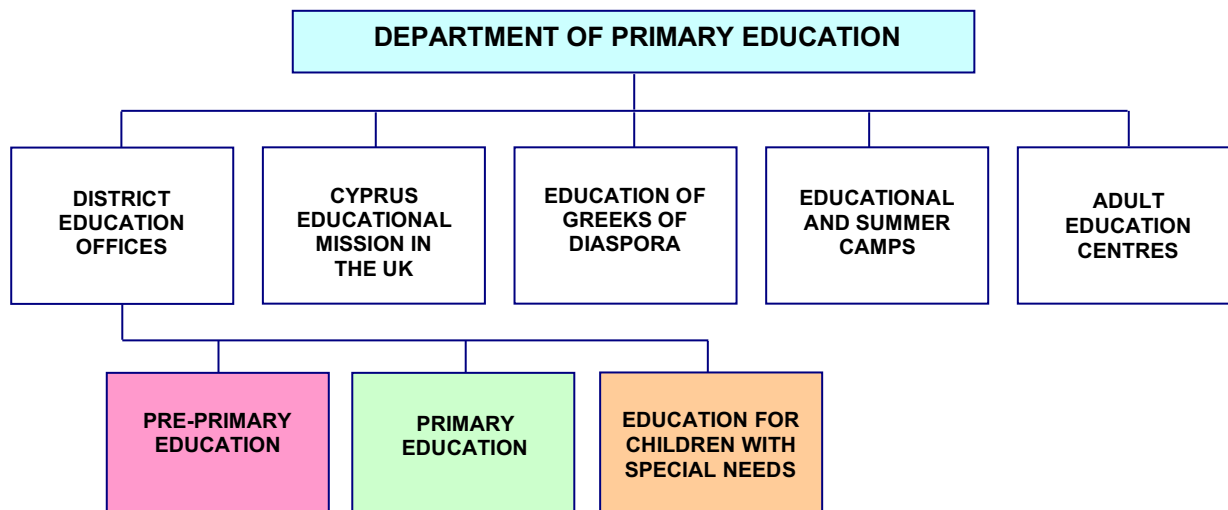
Primary Education works towards the continuous improvement and quality upgrading of education through systematic and responsible planning, with the cooperation of all stakeholders. During the school year 2022 - 2023, the provision of in-service training to teachers and the development of new teaching materials continued. Furthermore, the:

- provision of intensive and differentiated programmes for Greek as a second language targeted towards foreign or repatriated children so as to enable their smooth integration in the public educational system continued and expanded,
- implementation of the All-Day Compulsory Schools, in 14 different Primary Schools continued and expanded and the implementation of the All-Day Optional Schools expanded in 139 Primary Schools, in eight Special Schools and in 72 Pre-primary Schools,
- function of the European co-funded programme DRASE+ was extended from 92 to 109 primary schools and from 52 to 65 Pre-primary Schools, with emphasis on social inclusion actions and reduction of school failure.

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, despite the fact that the operation of the school units continued to be determined by the COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, the schools managed to remain open. This had a positive impact on both teachers and children and their parents / guardians in all areas: emotional, social, cognitive.

The various sectors of the Department of Primary Education include the:

- District Education Offices, which are responsible for the administration of Public, Community and Private Pre-primary Schools (Pre-primary Education), Public and Private Primary Schools (Primary Education) and Special Schools as well as the provision of assistance to children with special needs who are attending Special Units in Pre-Primary and Primary Education (Education for Children with Special Needs),
- Cyprus Educational Mission in the U.K.,
- Education of the Greeks of Diaspora,
- Educational and Summer Camps, and
- Adult Education Centres.



1.1.1 PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Pre-primary Education includes the education of children aged three to six years old attending public, community and private Pre-primary schools. Pre-primary Education complements the family's role, provides ample support for the development of the children, fulfils their basic needs and creates supportive and constructive learning experiences. Consequently, this enables children to become aware of their capabilities and overall potential and enhances their self-image.

The Pre-primary Schools' educational programme encourages creative activities through child-centred approaches in an environment which promotes cooperative learning, experimentation and group work. Emphasis is also placed on offering love, support, trust, acceptance, safety and respect of individuality.

1.1.2 PRIMARY EDUCATION

Primary Education, which lasts for six years, is responsible for the education of children attending public and private primary schools. After the Decision of the Council of Ministers (No. 84.078/ 09.01.2018) and the amendment of the Law on Compulsory Education, from the school year 2021 - 2022 onwards, children attend primary schools at the age of 6 years old (before September 1st of the school year they will attend school) instead of 5 ⁹/₁₂ years that was in force before.

The fundamental principle defining the objectives of Primary Education has always been the balanced development of the children's personality. The Primary Education Curriculum is, therefore, based on three central pillars that function together to achieve this goal. In particular, the first pillar refers to the comprehensive set of knowledge and competences that pupils are expected to master in each school subject. The second pillar focuses on the values, attitudes and behaviours that pupils should develop as democratic citizens, while the third pillar is related to the development of qualities, skills and key competences required *by* and *for* the 21st century society, so that children can become able to take on responsibilities and be active in the contemporary, sociocultural context.

1.1.3 THE SCHOOLS IN THE OCCUPIED AREA OF CYPRUS

Despite the restrictions imposed by the Turkish occupying regime, three primary schools had initially managed to operate in the occupied areas – one at Rizokarpaso, one at Agia Trias and one at Kormakitis. However, two of them are not currently operating. During the school year 1996 -1997, the primary school at Agia Trias was forced to close down due to the refusal of the Turkish occupying forces to allow the school teacher Mrs. Eleni Foka, to return to her village, regardless of the intense efforts

made by the Republic of Cyprus. During the school year 1999 - 2000, the Kormakitis Primary School also had to close down due to lack of pupils (the last and only pupil of the school had graduated the previous year).

During the school year 2004 - 2005, following continuous, persistent and intensive efforts by the Republic of Cyprus, the Rizokarpaso Gymnasium operated again for the first time since the Turkish invasion in 1974. By the end of the same year, on 11th April 2005, children between the ages of three to 5⁸/₁₂ years old were given the opportunity to attend the newly established Pre-primary School that began operating in the building of the Rizokarpaso Primary School.

Since 2003, the Rizokarpaso Primary School is also operating as an “All-day Optional School” and the attendance of children is extended until 15:05 or until 16:00, according to the timetable selected by their parents. In January 2006, the Rizokarpaso Pre-primary School was also included in the above institution. Since 2018, the Rizokarpaso Pre-primary School operates as a distinctive “All-day Optional School”. In addition to the morning school teachers, services were purchased from one Primary Education teacher.

During the school year 2022 - 2023, three Primary Education teachers and one Pre-primary Education teacher worked at Rizokarpaso schools. Six children attended the Rizokarpaso Pre-primary School and fifteen children attended the Rizokarpaso Primary School, the only Greek-Cypriot School that has been in continuous operation since the Turkish Occupation in 1974.

From September 2023, all the Greek Cypriot schools of Rizokarpaso joined the “DRASE +” educational action programme. Additional time was granted for creative theatre, while the Primary School was also granted education time for computer studies.

A number of difficulties occurred during the school year 2022 - 2023 due to the interference of the occupying regime in the regular operation of the Greek Cypriot schools, such as censorship, refusal to accept certain teachers as teaching staff and attempts to obstruct the educational work carried out at the schools.

Despite these difficulties, the education provided by the Rizokarpaso schools, is considered satisfactory. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth ensures that all necessary teaching materials and textbooks are sent to these schools, while the Educational Service Commission provides the educational staff required for the operation of the schools.

1.1.4 THE CYPRUS EDUCATIONAL MISSION IN THE UK

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has included the Cyprus Educational Mission in the U.K. in its strategic planning and is allocating a separate fund in its yearly budget, in order to support Greek schools in their efforts to teach the Greek language and foster the children’s national, religious, cultural and linguistic identity in several ways.

For this purpose, every year a number of teachers are placed by the Educational Service Commission in Greek schools in London and other cities, such as Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, and so on, aiming at teaching the Greek language to children of Greek descent abroad. These teachers work closely with the local school committees responsible for the schools, as well as with other hourly paid local teachers. During the school year 2022 - 2023, 23 full-time primary education teachers from Cyprus and about 128 hourly-paid local teachers worked in 60 Greek schools in the U.K.

The teaching of the Greek language at schools is based on the curriculum that was designed and developed by a committee of experts in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), in Cyprus. The new Curriculum includes Attainment and Adequacy Targets regarding the four major language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), for pre-primary education, as well as for grades one to six (pre-primary, A1 and A2 CEFR levels). Teachers, also utilise teaching textbooks and other teaching materials that are sent every year to Greek schools by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in Cyprus in order to support and facilitate the learning process. At the same time, teachers plan frequently other activities such as educational theatrical shows and visits to exhibitions and museums, giving to pupils' unique opportunities to learn and acknowledge the richness of the Greek culture and civilization.

1.1.5 THE EDUCATIONAL AND SUMMER CAMPS

The Educational and Summer Camps are situated at the highest village of Cyprus, Prodromos, inside a forest area. The aim of the Educational and Summer Camp Programme is to offer pupils, of the 5th and 6th grade of Primary Schools in Cyprus and other countries, the opportunity to get to know and love the natural environment of the countryside, develop positive attitudes and behaviours towards the environment, make friends with children of their own age, and learn about the culture and history of Cyprus and about the island, in general. Children from abroad, who participate in educational camps in Cyprus, have the opportunity to learn the Greek language and visit some of the most interesting attractions in Cyprus.

Furthermore, the Educational and Summer Camping Programme offers children the prospect to spend a few days away from their families, in an organised community, enabling them to socialise with their peers and develop their self-awareness and self-respect, improve their collaboration skills and develop their sense of responsibility as well as their ability for self-organisation and self-support. Moreover, the programme helps to improve children's health and offers organised entertainment activities, thus, supporting current trends in education through experiential environmental education and organising their social life in educational camps.

The Educational Programmes and the overall function of the camps largely serves the Primary Education Curriculum, since aspects of various school subjects are implemented in the Camps' Programme.

During the school year 2022 - 2023, Educational Camps operated six, five-day sessions, from October to November 2022 and from April to June 2023, seven, five-day sessions. A total of 1 116 children from 36 Primary Schools accompanied by their teachers, from all over Cyprus attended the programme.

During the period June - August 2023, two programmes took place:

- The "summer camp" hosted a total of 555 children from 172 primary schools in Cyprus for seven, seven-day periods.
- The "Hosting pupils from the abroad" programme, during which 68 children accompanied by seven adults from the United Kingdom, Ukraine and Jerusalem were accommodated at the camp for nine days.

1.1.6 THE ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES

The Adult Education Centres is a significant programme which offers general adult education in Cyprus within the framework of providing lifelong learning opportunities. The main objective of the Adult Education Centres is the general development of each adult's personality as well as the social, financial

and cultural development of citizens and society, in general. The objectives of this programme express the State's developmental policy and the wider aims of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth regarding the provision of "Lifelong Learning" opportunities for all the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus as well as the combating of educational inequalities so that citizens may successfully be integrated and enabled to act effectively within the European community.

The Adult Education Centres are recognised by the citizens of the Republic of Cyprus as the most important programme of general adult education providing a variety of quality courses. The success of the institution is proven through the massive participation of citizens. During the school year 2022 - 2023, 1 400 teams operated in 300 training centres with 398 trainers and the participation of 13 295 members.

1.1.7 SCHOOLS - TEACHERS - PUPILS

The statistics below provide information concerning all sectors of the Department of Primary Education, for the last three years.

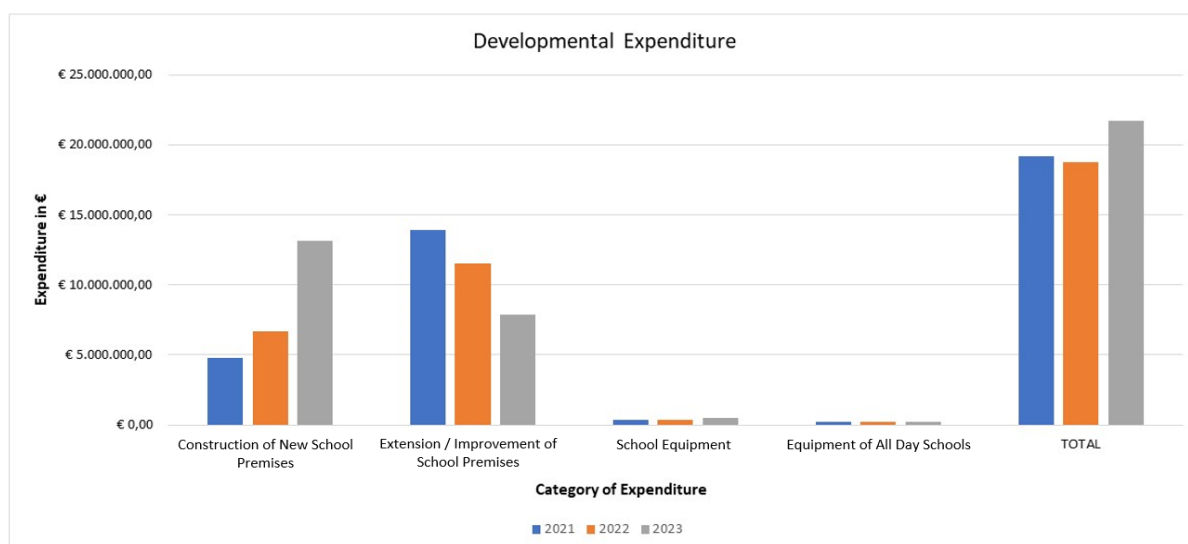
SCHOOLS	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023
PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS			
<i>Public Pre-primary Schools:</i>			
a) Number of Schools (*)	273	271	272
b) Number of Pupils (*)	12146	12804	13139
c) Number of Teachers (*)	814	839	875
<i>Community Pre-primary Schools:</i>			
a) Number of Schools	78	77	75
b) Number of Pupils	2077	2082	1971
c) Number of Teachers	114	116	111
PRIMARY SCHOOLS			
a) Number of Schools (*)	331	329	329
b) Number of Pupils (*)	51541	49951	50492
c) Number of Teachers (*)	4367	4409	4453
PRE-PRIMARY & PRIMARY SCHOOLS			
Number of Special Teachers	703	748	790
SPECIAL SCHOOLS			
a) Number of Schools	9	9	9
b) Number of Pupils (3- 21 years old)	498	521	524
c) Number of Teachers (Special Teachers)	258	258	271
GREEK COMMUNITY SCHOOLS AT THE UK			
a) Number of Schools	62	64	60
b) Number of Pupils	5020	5258	5714
c) Number of Teachers: permanent	25	23	23
part time	119	125	128
ADULT EDUCATION CENTRES			
a) Number of Centres	The Adult Education Centres courses were suspended due to the COVID 19 pandemic	254	300
b) Number of Members		10125	13295
c) Number of Instructors		357	398

* Schools in the areas occupied by the Turkish troops are also included. These are:

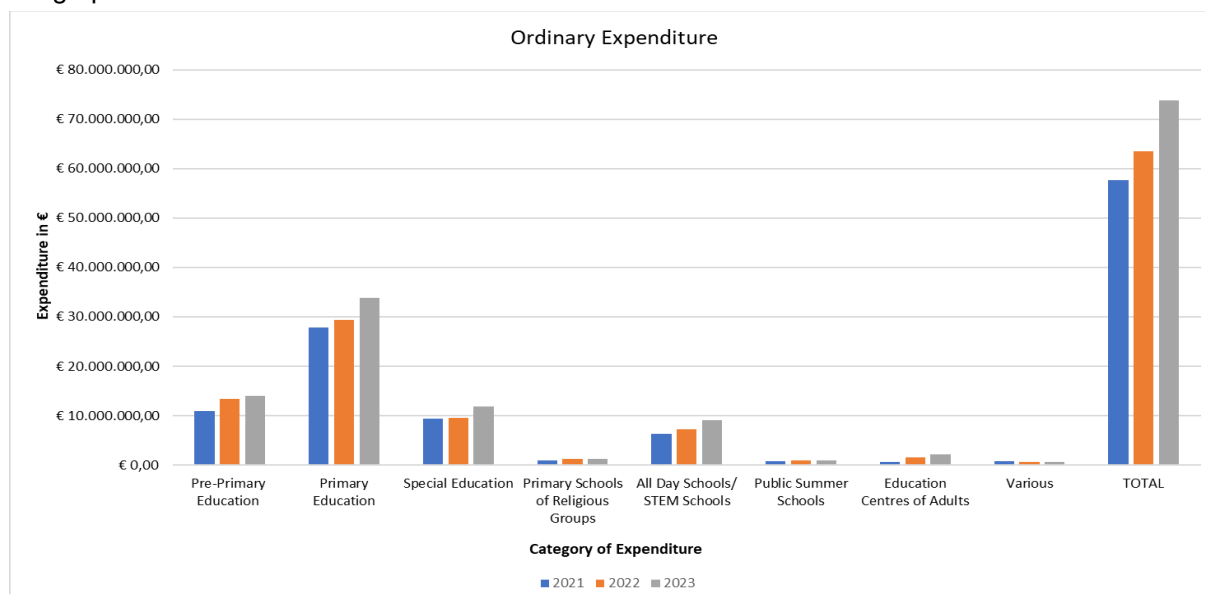
SCHOOLS IN OCCUPIED AREAS	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023
PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS			
a) Number of Schools	1	1	1
b) Number of Pupils	13	7	6
c) Number of Teachers	1	2	1
PRIMARY SCHOOLS			
a) Number of Schools	1	1	1
b) Number of Pupils	16	16	15
c) Number of Teachers	3	3	3

1.1.8 FINANCIAL STATUS

The developmental expenditure for the financial years 2021, 2022 and 2023 in Primary Education is shown in the graph below:



The ordinary expenditure for the financial years 2021, 2022 and 2023 in Primary Education is shown in the graph below:



1.1.9 SCHOOL PREMISES

The current school building programme aims at meeting the most urgent needs throughout Cyprus. Within this framework, construction of schools, extension and improvement works are carried out in several Pre-primary and Primary School premises.

1.2 DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION

Secondary General Education, Public and Private, covers a huge sector of the Cyprus Educational System. Based on the socioeconomic, cultural, and national needs of Cyprus, Public Secondary General Education offers equal opportunities for education and aims at promoting knowledge focusing on general education and gradual specialisation. Thus, it prepares pupils for their academic and professional pursuits. It also aims at the promotion and development of healthy, spiritual, and moral personalities, as well as the creation of competent, democratic, and law-abiding citizens. Furthermore, it pursues the strengthening of national identity, cultural values and universal ideals for freedom, justice, peace and the fostering of love and respect among people with a view to promoting mutual understanding and cooperation among people. All of these, within the framework of the new multicultural conditions existing both in Cyprus and worldwide during the 21st century.

Public Secondary General Education is offered to pupils between the ages of 12 - 18, through two, three-year cycles of study - the Gymnasium and the Lyceum. The curriculum includes common core subjects, such as Modern Greek, Mathematics and Optional Subjects. Some subjects are interdisciplinary such as Health Education and Environmental Studies. Moreover, there are various extracurricular activities, such as clubs, excursions, and field trips, in order to attain a more comprehensive and balanced development of the pupils' personality. Education is compulsory up to the age of 15 and offered free of charge for both cycles.

The Directorate of Secondary General Education (DSGE) has a wide range of responsibilities in areas such as the supervision and evaluation of public schools, supervision of private schools and institutes, the State Institutes for Further Education, and the Counseling and Career Guidance Services. Furthermore, the DSGE is responsible for monitoring the implementation of school regulations, inspecting the teaching staff, educational planning, and school staffing, offering further education to pupils and adults and providing information to the public.

1.2.1 THE GYMNASIUM

The Gymnasium is a three-year cycle of lower secondary general education. It is compulsory for all pupils and complements the general education offered in Primary Education. Furthermore, it prepares pupils to enter the upper secondary General Education Cycle, the Lyceum, or the Technical / Vocational Education path.

The "Activities of the School and Social Inclusion" (DRA.S.E.) programme is offered aiming at preventing school failure and functional illiteracy by creating positive attitudes towards school and improving learning outcomes. Furthermore, the Literacy Programme is implemented in all Gymnasias in an effort to address functional illiteracy and prevent school and social exclusion. Measures are also taken for the education and training of pupils with special needs by offering special assistance that enables their school development in all areas, and especially in the psychological, social, and educational domain.





1.2.2 THE LYCEUM

The implementation of the curriculum at the Lyceum aims at strengthening the validity of the School Leaving Certificate (Apolyterion) of the public school and ensuring a more reliable system of access to Public Higher Education Institutions in both Cyprus and abroad.

Class A' Lyceum mainly comprises of core subjects, taught for 31 periods per week and four periods of deepening in two courses which belong to one of the four Orientation Group (OG) Courses, as shown below:

- 1st OG: Ancient Greek / Classical Studies - History
- 2nd OG: Mathematics - Physics
- 3rd OG: Mathematics - Economics
- 4th OG: Economics – English

These choices help pupils to follow one of the six respective Directions of study in Class B' and C' of the Lyceum as shown below:

1st OG Ancient Greek / Classical Studies - History 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classical and Humanity Studies • Foreign Languages and European Studies • Fine Arts
2nd OG Mathematics and Physics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sciences / Life Sciences / Computer Science / Design and Technology • Fine Arts
3rd OG Mathematics and Economics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economics • Fine Arts
4th OG Economics and English 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commerce and Services • Fine Arts

In 2022 - 2023 pupils in all classes of upper secondary education (Lyceum) took evaluating exams at the end of every semester, that is in January for the 1st semester and May for the 2nd one.

1.2.3 EVENING SCHOOLS

Evening Schools are second chance schools, which can be attended by people who have reached the age of 18. Five Evening Schools operate across Cyprus, one in each of the provinces of Lefkosia, Larnaka, Ammochostos, Lemesos and Pafos.

The new Evening School model combines physical presence teaching, distance learning and blended learning. Students can obtain Secondary Education Apolyterion, which is equivalent to the one awarded by the General Secondary Schools operating in the morning, and, if they wish, they can apply for a place at a university.

In September 2023, kindergarten teachers were hired to look after the students' children in the Evening Schools in Larnaka, Ammochostos, Lemesos and Pafos.

1.2.4 THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION IN SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION

Throughout the years, one of the main goals of the Educational System in Cyprus has been, the cultivation and promotion of the European Dimension in Education, as it is considered an integral part of the education of the European Citizens. More specifically, the European Dimension is promoted interdisciplinary, through the curricula of various courses, as well as through a variety of other school activities, which aim, both at providing information, cultivating and fostering the "European identity" while simultaneously reinforcing and promoting positive attitudes towards the European community. In their quest to respond and promote the goal of the European Dimension, the Gymnasia and Lycea of Cyprus, have developed comprehensive initiatives and overall activities, such as, and not limited to, the

celebration of the 'Europe Day' and the 'European Day of Languages', the provision of European Clubs within the school community, the implementation of European related school projects, the active involvement and participation in the EU programmes, such as the Erasmus+ Programme and so on, that promote and enhance the exchange of good practices and ideas, the organisation of learning mobility activities for pupils and staff and the overall participation in school partnerships and cooperation with other EU institutions. Furthermore, the European Dimension is also reinforced through the participation of Lyceum and Technical School pupils in the European Competition, where key issues of the European policy are raised for reflection and discussion.

However, knowledge and experience, are lifelong processes that do not end at graduation. Following the European context, the Department of Secondary General Education seeks to redefine itself in order to successfully meet the emerging challenges of a changing world and further ensure that all pupils will have the opportunity to successfully evolve and meet the complex challenges of tomorrow.

The Directorate of Secondary General Education operates the Sector of European Programmes and Research. The purpose of this Sector is to cultivate and strengthen a research culture, as well as improve the quality of teaching and learning in school education through the planning and implementation of mobility activities of the Directorate's (educational) staff. The Sector's responsibilities include, among others: (a) organising seminars and professional development activities, (b) establishing procedures and providing support regarding the preparation and monitoring of proposals, and (c) writing proposals for competitive European and international programmes. A significant number of funds related to competitive European programmes have already been secured with the participation of the supervisory staff of the Directorate, as well as the administrative staff of Secondary Education schools.

1.2.5 PRIVATE EDUCATION

1.2.5.1 General Information

The Private Education Department (P.E.D.) concerns the recognition and assurance of the quality of the educational services provided by Private Schools (P.S.) of Secondary Education as well as Private Institutes / Private Educational Centres (P.I. / P.E.C.). The percentage of the pupil population of our country that attends recognised private Primary and Secondary Schools is approximately 22%.

1.2.5.1 Laws

- Private Primary (Pre-primary and Primary Schools) and Secondary schools are established and operate in accordance with the provisions of the "Private Schools Law of 2019" and its amendments (2020).
- Private Institutes / Private Educational Centers are established and operate in accordance with the provisions of the "On the establishment and operation of Private Institutes and other Related Matters Law of 2018".

1.2.5.2 School Types

Depending on the detailed and timetabled curricula that they apply, the Private Schools are classified into three types as follows:

- Schools of the same type: Private Schools of the same type are those schools which strictly follow the existing curricula of Public Schools.
- Schools of similar type: Private Schools of a similar type are those schools in which 2/3 of the major and common core subjects offered in Public schools, are taught in relation to time and subject content.
- Schools of a different type: Private Schools of a different type are those schools which do not belong to any of the above two categories.

1.2.5.3 Private Primary Education

The Department of Primary Education handles all matters related to the establishment and operation of Private Primary Education Schools. Among its objectives are the support of the private initiative to establish Private Schools, the assurance of the orderly operation of existing Private Schools and the control of compliance with the relevant legislation.

1.2.5.4 The Private Secondary Education Department

The Private Secondary Education Department handles all matters related to the establishment and operation of Private Schools and Private Institutes / Private Educational Centres. The aim of the Department is to strengthen and improve the quality monitoring mechanisms, as well as the procedures applied by the P.S. and P.I. / P.E.C.

1.2.5.5 Records Data

Private Primary Schools:

- 35 approved Private Primary Schools
- 183 approved Private Pre-primary Schools
- 900 (approx.) teaching staff members

Private Secondary Schools:

- 39 approved Private Secondary Schools
- 2000 (approx.) teaching staff members

Private Institutes / Private Educational Centres (P.I. / P.E.C.):

- 200 pending applications
- 520 approved
- 3500 (approx.) teaching staff members.

1.2.6 STATE INSTITUTES FOR FURTHER EDUCATION

The State Institutes for Further Education (SIFE) function under the auspices of the DSGE. Through their courses, they offer equal opportunities for education to pupils and adults. 46 SIFE operate in Cyprus, both in urban and rural areas. In this way, the SIFE promote lifelong learning according to the educational aims of the European Union. In addition, the SIFE actively promote social justice, through the offering of allowances and scholarships, approved by the Council of Ministers, based on socioeconomic and academic achievement.

During 2022 - 2023, the SIFE offered their services to 6921 adults and pupils and employed 391 teachers.

1.2.7 THE CAREER COUNSELLING AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES (CCES)

The Career Counselling and Educational Services (CCES), operate under the administration of Secondary General Education of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth providing support and information to pupils in order to better understand and utilise their inclinations, abilities, and interests in order to adapt to the school environment and take informed personal, educational and professional decisions.

Vision - Mission

The Career Counselling and Educational Services' (CCES) main objective is the personal, social, educational, and professional development of pupils and other individuals. Under the basic principle of the uniqueness of each person, the possibilities and the freedom of their will, School Counsellors' main goals focus on helping pupils and other young people to:

- a) gain self-acceptance and form healthy life attitudes,
- b) develop a positive self-image and acquire the appropriate resources to manage life's personal, family and / or social challenges,
- c) adapt to the school environment aiming at educational and social progress and development,
- d) recognize their individual potentials, interests, skills, and values, to get to know the nature and requirements of various professions, as well as modern socio-economic and cultural developments, so as to be led to appropriate educational choices, and
- e) develop the necessary skills that will allow them to make rational and generally appropriate decisions, whether they concern educational, professional, or personal matters.

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, the Career Counselling and Educational Services, in order to achieve the above goals, carried out the following activities:

- Counseling on matters of Personal and Professional Education in Schools, in the Central and District Offices of CCES through Established Procedures and Interdepartmental Protocols.
- Administration of Psychometric Tools.
- Review of Publications.
- Organisation of informative seminars, lectures, educational training, and conferences for School Counsellors.
- Information meetings for parents / guardians mainly on professional, educational, and other issues.
- Implementation of school programmes.

1.2.8 NUMBER OF EDUCATORS

The number of educators in Secondary Education during the school year 2022 - 2023 was 6629.

	HEAD MASTERS	DEPUTY HEADS A'	DEPUTY HEADS	PERMANENT	ON CONTRACT	TOTAL NUMBER OF EDUCATORS	INSPEC	C.E.O.
THEOLOGIANS	11	8	32	178	29	258	2	
PHILOLOGISTS	38	66	265	1297	174	1840	10	4
MATHEMATICIANS	13	29	112	562	148	864	4	3
PHYSICISTS	10	14	54	275	51	404	2	
BIOLOGISTS	4	7	32	159	35	237	1	1
CHEMISTS	2	7	22	131	22	184	1	
GEOGRAPHERS	0	0	2	24	8	34		
ENGLISH	3	10	37	275	95	420	2	
FRENCH	3	7	22	112	81	225	1	
ITALIANS	0	0	0	22	0	22		
SPANISH	0	0	0	10	9	19		
GERMAN	0	0	0	2	1	3		
RUSSIAN	0	0	0	15	10	25		
TURKISH	0	0	0	7	0	7		
ECONOMICS	1	7	17	115	54	194	1	
PHYSICAL EDUCATION	1	13	45	288	59	406	2	
MUSIC	7	7	28	143	36	221	1	
ART	6	6	22	117	22	173	1	
PHOTOGRAPHERS	0	0	0	5	0	5		
HOME ECONOMICS	0	4	20	132	28	184	1	

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	9	16	60	326	63	474	3	1
TECHNOLOGY	4	7	29	163	28	231	1	1
COUNCELORS	3	6	23	122	25	179	1	
THEATRE	0	0	0	11	9	20		
TOTAL	115	214	822	4491	987	6629	34	10

1.2.9 SCHOOLS IN OPERATION

During the school year 2022 - 2023 the following schools operated:

Gymnasium	62
Lyceum	36
Gymnasium and Lyceum joined	10
Evening Schools	5
Total	113

1.2.10 EXPENDITURE IN SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION

Expenditure in Secondary General Education aims at promoting activities, measures and projects which reinforce the effort for qualitative upgrading of Secondary Education.

Developmental expenditure in Secondary Education for the year 2022 – 2023, among other things, aimed at:

- reinforcing technological subjects,
- equipping labs, and
- training the personnel.

During the year 2022 - 2023, regular expenditure, in Secondary Education, apart from the educators' salaries, aimed at covering functional expenses as follows:

- Operating Expenses
- School athletics
- State Institutes for Further Education
- Maintenance and Repairs
- Consultancy Services
- Publications and Publicity
- Social Transfers

1.2.11 ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW SECONDARY EDUCATION SCHOOLS

The MESY considers the qualitative upgrading of the infrastructure of Gymnasia and Lycea as of great importance.

Expansions and improvements of Gymnasia and Lycea

In the 2023 annual budget, extensions and improvements to school buildings were included to address various problems. Additionally, in accordance with the building programme, the seismic upgrading of school buildings is proceeding on a nationwide scale.

At the same time, a study and analysis of data concerning the pupil population, capacity and occupancy of school units is carried out, on the basis of which recommendations are made for the extension or construction of new school units.

1.3 DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

1.3.1 STRUCTURE AND PROSPECTS OF SECONDARY TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training offers a wide range of technical and vocational education, initial training and lifelong training programmes to eligible gymnasium leavers and adults. It is responsible for the design, supervision and coordination of all the educational and administrative issues related to public initial and continuing Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes in Cyprus.

The Department offers the following VET pathways to eligible gymnasium leavers and adults:

- Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (morning classes)
- Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education (second chance schools)
- Lifelong Learning Programmes of Vocational Education and Training (Afternoon and Evening Classes)
- Apprenticeship System of Vocational Education and Training
- Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (MIEEK) (Public Schools of Higher VET).

1.3.1.1 Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE)

Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education programmes are offered at Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training free of charge. They are offered in two directions, the Theoretical and the Practical direction. The duration of studies is three years for each direction.

The programmes are offered at eleven public Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training and five public Lycea / Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training. There are three Schools in Lefkosia, three in Lemesos, two in Larnaka, two in the free area of Ammochostos district, and three in Pafos. There is also a Hotel and Catering Department operating at Apeitio Gymnasium in Agros, an Agriculture Department at Solea Lyceum and a Viticulture – Oenology Department operating at Omodos School.

Upon completion of upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education, graduates receive a school-leaving certificate (apolyterion), which is equivalent to that awarded by Lycea (Secondary General Education Schools), providing access to the world of work or to Institutions of Higher Education in Cyprus or abroad.

1.3.1.2 Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training also offers formal secondary education programmes through the five Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education operating in Lefkosia, Lemesos, Larnaka, Pafos and the free area of Ammochostos district. The objective of the Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education is to further promote participation in Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and support the integration of school dropouts in the workplace and society, in general.

The programmes offered at the Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education are equivalent to the upper secondary technical and vocational education programmes that are offered in the morning. The material taught in each field of study and specialisation is the same as the material taught in the respective field of study / specialisation offered in the morning, adapted, however, to the particular characteristics and needs of the pupils who attend the evening classes. The duration of studies varies from one to three years, depending on the educational level of those interested in attending the Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education.

Attendance at the Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education is free of charge and leads to the acquisition of a school leaving certificate (apolyterion), which is equivalent to that awarded to graduates of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Secondary General Education. This means that the school leaving certificate awarded by the Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education entitles graduates either to pursue further studies at Institutions of Higher Education in Cyprus or abroad, provided that they meet the entry requirements, or access directly the labour market as skilled workers.

1.3.1.3 Lifelong Learning Programmes of Vocational Education and Training (afternoon and evening classes)

Lifelong Learning Vocational Education and Training, one-year and three-year programmes, as well as preparatory classes for various examinations, are offered by the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training during the afternoon and evening on the premises of Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training in all major towns. Individuals attending Lifelong Learning Programmes of Vocational Education and Training pay limited fees approved by the Council of Ministers.

- **Lifelong Learning Vocational Education and Training: One-Year and Three-Year Programmes**

The objective of these programmes is to offer continuing vocational education and training to adults working in industry, in order to be able to respond more efficiently to the contemporary demands of the labour market, as well as training aiming at the re-integration of unemployed individuals into the labour market, in areas where there is a shortage of skilled workers.

Successful completion of the three-year programmes leads to the acquisition of a school leaving certificate (Apolyterion) equivalent to that awarded to graduates of upper secondary technical and vocational education, as far as the technical component is concerned. This means that individuals who already hold an upper secondary education school leaving certificate are given the opportunity to obtain a second school-leaving certificate in their chosen vocational education and training field of study / specialisation.

- **Afternoon and Evening Preparatory Classes**

Preparatory classes for various examinations are offered to pupils of secondary technical and vocational education, as well as to adults. They cover a wide range of subjects and aim at preparing pupils:

- or graduates of secondary technical and vocational education for the entrance examinations to Institutions of Tertiary Education in Cyprus and abroad,
- and adults for various examinations required by governmental and semi-governmental organisations, for the recognition of vocational qualifications or for the issue of a professional licence.

1.3.1.4 The Apprenticeship System of Vocational Education and Training

The Apprenticeship System of Vocational Education and Training provides an alternative pathway of education, training and development for young people who drop out from the formal education system and is geared towards meeting the needs of the labour market. It embraces young people between 14 - 18 years of age at two apprenticeship levels (preparatory and core). Participation is not compulsory and is free of charge.

The Apprenticeship System of Vocational Education and Training is designed to target two distinct groups of pupils who have:

- (a) not completed compulsory education (third year of Gymnasium) and can enroll at the preparatory apprenticeship level;
- (b) successfully completed either compulsory education or preparatory apprenticeship and can enroll at the core apprenticeship level. Pupils who complete preparatory apprenticeship may proceed to the core apprenticeship level or, if they wish, and provided they succeed in a special set of exams, may re-enter the formal education system.

Preparatory apprenticeship does not involve employment but constitutes an alternative form of education and training for pupils between the ages of 14 - 16, who have the opportunity, through this one-year programme, to develop their numeracy, literacy and digital skills, and explore their talents and abilities through creative arts. Preparatory apprenticeship leads to the acquisition of a certificate that corresponds to level 2 of EQF / CyQF.

Core apprenticeship is of three-year duration course and involves both training at school and practical training in enterprises. Apprentices follow practical training in enterprises for three days per week where they are remunerated for their work, and receive theoretical education and workshop training for two days a week at Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training. Successful completion of the core apprenticeship leads to the acquisition of the Apprenticeship Certificate that corresponds to level Three of EQF / CyQF.

Apprentices are trained to become car mechanics, electricians, carpenters, cooks, hairdressers, graphic designers and so on. The Apprenticeship Certificate allows access to several regulated occupations, provided that all other requirements of the relevant legislation are observed. The operation of the Apprenticeship System is co-funded by the European Union and the Government of Cyprus.

1.3.1.5 Public School of Higher Vocational Education and Training - MIEEK

In April 2017, the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Higher Education accredited the Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (MIEEK in the Greek language) as a Public School of Higher Vocational Education and Training and classified their programmes at level Five of EQF / CyQF and ISCED. Successful completion of the programmes leads to the acquisition of a Diploma of Higher Vocational Education and Training.

The objective of the Institutes is to offer higher vocational education and training and provide students with the necessary qualifications required by the labour market, as well as professional and practical skills that will enable them to adapt to the changing needs of industry.

For the establishment and smooth operation of the Public School of Higher VET, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth cooperates with the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Ministry of Finance, the Human Resource Development Authority, Organisations of Employers and Manufacturers, Associations of Employees, and other stakeholders relevant to the world of work. Representatives of the above-mentioned organisations participate in the Council of the School.

The programmes have been especially designed to be relevant to labour market needs. During the academic year 2022 - 2023, the following **accredited** two-year programmes were offered:

- Pastry - Bakery
- Computer and Communication Networks
- Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Installations
- Organic Horticultural Crops
- Supply Chain Management and Maritime Studies
- Design and CNC Technology – Woodworking Industry
- Dairy Technology – Cheese Making
- Electrical Installations and Automation Systems
- Culinary Arts
- Catering Services
- Industrial Technician
- Automotive Technician.

Attendance at the Public School of Higher VET is free of charge. The duration of the programmes offered is two years, on a 5-day basis. The premises and facilities / equipment of Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training, as well as the premises and facilities / equipment of the Absolute Institute of Technical Education (AITE) are used for this purpose.

Attendance includes practical training in industry and businesses / enterprises. A student placement system with selection criteria (favouring young unemployed individuals in particular) is applied every year, since the number of applicants exceeds the number of the available places.

OPENING OF THE ABSOLUTE INSTITUTE OF TECHNICAL EDUCATION (AITE)

On 27th March 2023, the opening ceremony of the new Branch of the Public School of Higher Vocational Education and Training – MIEEK, under the name Absolute Institute of Technical Education (AITE), was held. The AITE building is a donation of the Absolute Charitable Trust Organisation to the Republic of Cyprus. The AITE Branch is the fifth Branch of Public School of Higher VET and the second one in Lemesos.

It is a state-of-the-art building with an innovative architectural design, modern logistical infrastructure, new technology equipment, appropriately configured laboratories, functional spaces and a unique environment, which can serve the needs of all the Study Programmes offered by the School of Higher VET. For the academic year 2022 - 2023, the AITE Branch operated with the transfer of some departments from the Branch of Lemesos.

It is worth noting that AITE was designed with sustainability in mind, meeting the most modern energy efficiency criteria for building facilities. Characteristically, its energy consumption is almost zero (Nearly Zero Energy Building), as it has, among other things, a passive design system and sustainable building functions.

1.3.2 TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN OPERATION

There are 11 Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training and five Lycea / Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training. There are three Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training in Lefkosia, three in Lemesos, two in Larnaka, two in the free area of Ammochostos district, three in Pafos, as well as a Hotel and Catering Department at Apeitio Gymnasium of Agros, a Viticulture – Oenology Department at Omodos School and an Agriculture Department at Solea Lyceum.

Furthermore, there are five Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education operating in Lefkosia, Lemesos, Larnaka, Pafos and the free area of Ammochostos district.

About 5 348 pupils attended Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (including Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education) during the school year 2022 - 2023, distributed as shown on the Table below:

School	Number of Pupils
A' Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Lefkosia	500
B' Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Lefkosia	135
Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training Makarios C' in Lefkosia	731
Evening School of Technical and Vocational Education in Lefkosia	103
Agriculture Department at Solea Lyceum	10
A' Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Lemesos	454
B' Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Lemesos	344
C' Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Lemesos	390
Evening School of Technical and Vocational Education in Lemesos	139
Hotel and Catering Department at Apeitio Gymnasium in Agros	19
Viticulture – Winery Department at Omodos School	14
Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Larnaka	484
Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training at Agios Lazaros in Larnaka	248
Evening School of Technical and Vocational Education in Larnaka	122
Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Paralimni	227
Peripheral Agricultural, Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Ammochostos / Avgorou	382
Evening School of Technical and Vocational Education in Ammochostos	96
Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Pafos	620
Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Polis Chrysochou	89
Technical and Vocational School of Education and Training in Empa	111
Evening School of Technical and Vocational Education in Pafos	130
TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS	5 348

1.3.3 TEACHING PERSONNEL

The number of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education Teachers (including Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers) employed at Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training for the school year 2022 - 2023 was 700.

1.3.4 NUMBER OF PUPILS / STUDENTS / APPRENTICES

During the school year 2022 - 2023, the number of pupils / students / apprentices studying in the various pathways offered by the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training was as follows:

VET Pathway	Number of Pupils
Upper Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (morning tuition)	4 758
Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education	590
Apprenticeship System (core apprenticeship)	135
Lifelong Learning Programmes of Vocational Education and Training (Afternoon and Evening Classes)	520
Public School of Higher Vocational Education and Training - MIEEK	406
TOTAL	6 409

1.3.5 EXPENDITURE

During the fiscal year of 2023, the foreseen development expenditure for Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training was €413.800, while the foreseen current expenditure was €3.095.669.

1.4 DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

1.4 DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MESY) is responsible for the policy, promotion, development, internationalisation and modernisation of Higher Education (HE) in Cyprus and the creation of the right conditions for equal opportunities of access to Higher Education to all citizens.

In the past fifteen years, the Cyprus Higher Education System has grown significantly. Both foreign and Cypriot investors have chosen Cyprus Higher Education. Remarkably, since the founding of the first University in 1989, the University of Cyprus, there are now twelve universities operating in the Republic of Cyprus, three Public and nine Private Universities. Additionally, applications have been received for the establishment of new Universities. At the same time, there are more than 40 Public and Private Institutions of Tertiary Education. Private Institutions of Tertiary Education are subjected to the supervision of the DHE regarding their registration and inspection. According to the most recent data of the Mapping of the Field of Higher Education in Cyprus, which is conducted annually by the DHE, in the academic year 2022 - 2023, the total number of students in Cyprus was more than 55.000 attending more than 1000 Programmes of Study at all levels.

Higher Education plays an important role in realising the Europe 2030 vision for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The strategic planning of the DHE for Higher Education in Cyprus is based precisely on this context of preparing citizens through multifaceted and innovative education, in order to contribute towards the social, cultural and economic development of our country.

1.4.1 ENHANCEMENT OF QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A key priority of the DHE is to ensure and improve the quality of Higher Education in Cyprus. In addition to the work done by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) regarding Institutional, Departmental and Programme Evaluation of all Cyprus Institutions of Higher Education, the DHE promotes the adoption of policies, based on European and International Standards, in order to ensure the quality of Higher Education in Cyprus.

1.4.2 MODERNISATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Another priority of the DHE is the modernisation of the legal framework governing Higher Education. The objective is for Institutions of Higher Education in Cyprus to operate on the basis of simple, flexible and decentralised procedures ensuring at the same time that quality of Higher Education is safeguarded and promoted.

1.4.3 PROMOTION OF THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCES

The DHE attaches particular importance to the promotion of the European University Alliances, which is the future of the European Universities. For this reason, the Government, following a relevant proposal by the DHE, financially supports the Institutions of Higher Education in Cyprus, Public and Private, which participate as full Members in the European University Alliances. Synergies, exchanges of professors, researchers, students and the joint development of university programmes in a European framework are processes that will enhance university education in Cyprus and the contribution of Universities towards the development of knowledge, research and innovation.

After the 4th Open Call in 2023, Cyprus is represented in the European University Alliances by the University of Cyprus, the Cyprus University of Technology, Frederick University, and the University of Nicosia. Following a recommendation by the European Committee, and through a Council of Ministers decision, the DHE promoted and succeeded in amending the National Qualifications Framework so that Cyprus HEIs which become Members of the European University Alliances, would be able to offer joint first-degree programmes of study (Level Six) of a duration of three years and 180 ECTS.

1.4.4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS IN CYPRUS

The Bologna Process was put in action, on June 19th, 1999, when 29 European Ministers responsible for Higher Education signed the Bologna Declaration. Currently, 49 countries participate in the Bologna Process, including Cyprus, which has become a full member in 2001. In March 2010, the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was launched.

During these last twenty-four years, the members of the EHEA have succeeded in building a sustainable European Higher Education Area through the implementation of reforms in Higher Education (HE) on the basis of common key values such as freedom of expression, institutional autonomy, independent students' unions, academic freedom and mobility of students and staff. Through this process, countries, Institutions and stakeholders of the EHEA, continuously adapt their Higher Education Systems, making them more compatible and strengthening their quality assurance mechanisms.

The Department of Higher Education actively participates in the following Thematic Peer Groups established by the Bologna follow up Group:

- **Qualifications Framework**
The Thematic Peer Group A on Qualifications Framework (TPG A on QF)
- **Quality Assurance**
The Thematic Peer Group C on Quality Assurance (**TPG C** on QA)
- **Social Dimension**
- **Lisbon Convention**
The Thematic Peer Group B on Lisbon Recognition Convention (TPG B on LRC).

1.4.5 PROGRAMMES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AND STUDENT MOBILITY

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) places great emphasis on promoting learning mobility in Higher Education (HE) for students, teaching staff and researchers. Thus, they contribute towards the

enrichment of human capital and the strengthening of employability through the acquisition and exchange of knowledge and intercultural competences.

Considering that international cooperation programmes not only contribute towards enhancing the quality and international visibility of HE but also foster mobility and intercultural dialogue, the DHE encourages and supports Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) of Cyprus to actively participate in European and international cooperation programmes, such as Erasmus+, Marie Curie, DUO Korea.

1.4.6 SCHOLARSHIPS TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Cyprus HEIs offer a number of short-term and long-term scholarships to European and international students. European and international students studying at Private Universities are eligible to receive grants based on their academic performance. Furthermore, the DHE as a coordinator of the Working Group for the provision of scholarships to international students along with the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is currently working on the promotion of a scholarship scheme for international students based on certain academic criteria.

1.4.7 REGIONAL CO-OPERATION PROGRAMMES

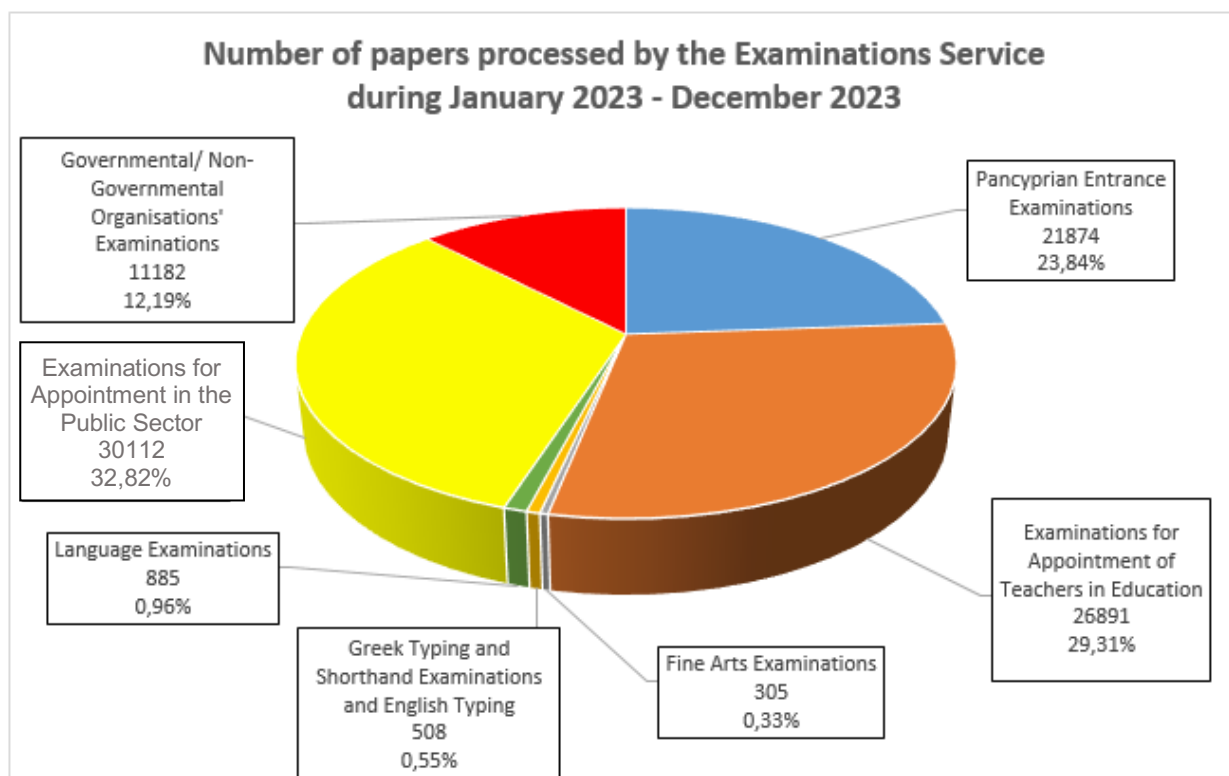
The Department of Higher Education participates in Regional Co-operation Programmes such as Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Euromed), and the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

1.4.8 FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO DEPARTMENTS OF GREEK AND CYPRIOT STUDIES AT UNIVERSITIES ABROAD

The Department of Higher Education has the responsibility for the financial support of the Departments of Greek and Cypriot Studies at different Universities abroad, based on predefined criteria. An Advisory Committee, headed by the Director of the Department of Higher Education, evaluates all applications submitted annually and decides on the amount of the grant that will be offered, taking into consideration the approved amount of the state budget. In 2023, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth subsidized seventeen Departments of Greek and Cypriot Studies in ten countries with €151,000.

1.4.9 THE EXAMINATIONS SERVICE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH

The Examinations Service has as its mission the organisation of various examinations, with the main goal of ensuring the validity, transparency and reliability of the examinations conducted. For the period of January to December 2023, the Examinations Service organised a significant number of examinations and processed a total of **91.757** examination papers, as presented in the following graph:



1.4.10 PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Public Universities are established by a national regulation and they are autonomous and self-governing Institutions. The DHE is the competent authority to provide governmental funding for the Public Universities through the annual budget. There are currently three Public Universities operating in Cyprus:

1. The University of Cyprus (www.ucy.ac.cy)
2. The Cyprus University of Technology (www.cut.ac.cy)
3. The Open University of Cyprus (www.ouc.ac.cy)

It is noted that the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus University of Technology are conventional Universities, while the Open University of Cyprus is a distance learning institution that seeks to include adult learners in continuing education and encourage lifelong learning.

Admissions

The majority of undergraduate students are admitted to the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus University of Technology on the basis of their results in the Pancyprian Examinations, the competitive entrance examinations organised centrally by the Examinations Service, which is under the Department of Higher Education. A number of postgraduate students are also admitted to Public Universities on the basis of other criteria set by the Universities themselves.

1.4.11 PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES OPERATING IN CYPRUS

- Frederick University (www.frederick.ac.cy)
- European University of Cyprus (EUC) (www.euc.ac.cy)
- University of Nicosia (www.unic.ac.cy)
- Neapolis University – Pafos (www.nup.ac.cy)
- University of Central Lancashire - Cyprus (UCLan-Cyprus) (www.uclancyprus.ac.cy)
- Philips University (<https://philipsuni.ac.cy/>)

- American University of Cyprus (AUCY) (<https://aucy.ac.cy/>)
- University of Limassol (<https://www.uol.ac.cy/>)
- American University of Beirut Mediterraneo (AUB Mediterraneo) (<https://www.aubmed.ac.cy/>)

Admissions

Each Private University in Cyprus has its own admission criteria, which can be found on their websites.

1.4.12 PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION OPERATING IN CYPRUS

The Public Institutions of Tertiary Education, which currently operate in Cyprus are:

1. The Cyprus Police Academy (https://www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/policeacademy_en/policeacademy_en?opendocumenty)
2. The Mediterranean Institute of Management (www.mlsi.gov.cy/kepa)
3. The Post-Secondary Institute of Vocational Education and Training (Lefkosia) (www.mieek.ac.cy/index.php/el/)
4. The Post-Secondary Institute of Vocational Education and Training (Larnaka) (www.mieek.ac.cy/index.php/el/)
5. The Post-Secondary Institute of Vocational Education and Training (Lemesos) (www.mieek.ac.cy/index.php/el/)
6. The Post-Secondary Institute of Vocational Education and Training (Lemesos) (Absolute Institute of Technical Education) (www.mieek.ac.cy/index.php/el/)
7. The Post-Secondary Institute of Vocational Education and Training (Pafos) (www.mieek.ac.cy/index.php/el/)

1.4.13 PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

The Private Institutions of Tertiary Education (PITE) were established during the last three decades. They offer a wide range of academic and professional programmes of study and various levels of degrees as listed below:

- Certificate (One Year)
- Diploma (Two Years)
- Higher Diploma (Three Years)
- Bachelor's Degree (Four Years)
- Master's Degree (One to Two Years)
- PhD Degree (Three to Eight Years) – offered only by two Institutions of Tertiary Education which focus mainly on research.

The language of instruction at the PITE, for most of the programmes of study offered, is English. The establishment and operation of the PITE are regulated by the relevant law, according to which all such Institutions should be registered in the Register of Private Institutions of Tertiary Education of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

The programmes of study offered by the Institutions of Tertiary Education are evaluated and accredited by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), with the same criteria as the Universities are evaluated depending on the level of the programme(s) offered.

Below is a list of the 43 Private Institutions of Higher Education which operated in Cyprus during the academic year 2022 – 2023:

1. AIGAIA SCHOOL OF ART AND DESIGN (Lefkosia) (www.aigaia.com.cy)
2. A.C. AMERICAN COLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.ac.ac.cy)
3. ACC AKADEMIA COLLEGE (Deryneia- Ammochostos) (www.akc.ac.cy)
4. ALEXANDER COLLEGE (Larnaka) (www.alexander.ac.cy)
5. ALEXANDER COLLEGE (Pafos) (www.alexander.ac.cy)
6. ATLANTIS COLLEGE (Liopetri-Ammochostos) (www.atlantiscollege.com)
7. CASA COLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.casacollege.com)
8. CBS - COLLEGE OF BUSINESS STUDIES (Lefkosia) (www.cbscy.ac.cy)
9. C.D.A. COLLEGE (Lemesos) (www.cdacollege.ac.cy)
10. C.D.A. COLLEGE (Larnaka) (www.cdacollege.ac.cy)
11. C.D.A. COLLEGE (Lemesos) (www.cdacollege.ac.cy)
12. C.D.A. COLLEGE (Pafos) (www.cdacollege.ac.cy)
13. CIM-CYPRUS BUSINESS SCHOOL (Lefkosia) (www.cima.com.cy)
14. CIM-CYPRUS BUSINESS SCHOOL (Lemesos) (www.cima.com.cy)
15. CITY UNITY COLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.cityu.ac.cy)
16. COLLEGE OF TOURISM AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT(Lefkosia) (www.cothm.ac.cy)
17. C.T.L. EUROCOLLEGE (Lemesos) (www.ctleuro.ac.cy)
18. CYPRUS COLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.cycollege.ac.cy)
19. CYPRUS COLLEGE (Lemesos) (www.cycollege.ac.cy)
20. CYPRUS INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT (Lefkosia) (www.ciim.ac.cy)
21. CYPRUS INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT (Lemesos) (www.ciim.ac.cy)
22. VLADIMIROK KAFKARIDES SCHOOL OF DRAMA (Lefkosia) (www.satiriko.com)
23. EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT AND FINANCE (EIMF) (Lefkosia) (www.eimf.eu)
24. FREDERICK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (Lefkosia) (www.fit.ac.cy)
25. FREDERICK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (Lemesos) (www.fit.ac.cy)
26. FRESHART COLLEGE (Pafos) (www.freshart.ac.cy)
27. GLOBAL COLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.globalcollege.com.cy)
28. THE CYPRUS INSTITUTE OF NEUROLOGY AND GENETICS (Lefkosia) (www.cing.ac.cy)
29. INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES AT UCLAN CYPRUS (Pyla-Larnaka) (www.uclancyprus.ac.cy)
30. INTERCOLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.intercollege.ac.cy)
31. INTERNAPA COLLEGE (Sotira-Ammochostos) (www.internapa.ac.cy)
32. KES COLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.kes.ac.cy)
33. LARNAKA COLLEGE (Larnaka) (www.larnacacollege.com)
34. LEDRA COLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.ledra.ac.cy)
35. MESOYIOS COLLEGE (Lemesos) (www.mesoyios.ac.cy)
36. MUSIC ACADEMY ARTE (Lefkosia) (www.artemusic.org)
37. P.A. COLLEGE (Larnaka) (www.pacollege.ac.cy)
38. SUSINI COLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.susini.ac.cy)
39. THE CYPRUS ACADEMY OF ART (www.caa.ac.cy)
40. THE CYPRUS INSTITUTE (Lefkosia) (www.cyi.ac.cy)
41. THE LEMESOS COLLEGE-T.L.C. (Lemesos) (www.reacollege.ac.cy)
42. THE PHILIPS COLLEGE (Lefkosia) (www.philips.ac.cy)
43. THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF THE CHURCH OF CYPRUS (Lefkosia) (www.theo.ac.cy)

1.4.14 CYPRUS PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

Below you can find more information about the Cyprus Public Universities.

1.4.14.1 University of Cyprus

Counting over 7 000 students, 172 research laboratories and approximately 835 members of academic and administrative staff, the University of Cyprus (UCY) continues to record significant achievements and international distinctions for the work it produces, its extroverted actions, its contribution to sustainable economic and social development of Cyprus and the connection between the university research and society, the labour market and entrepreneurship. It is worth noting the trust of local employers in the organisation's graduates, while the university is a key source of employment in Cyprus.

In 2023, the UCY counted eight Faculties and 22 Departments, offering 41 undergraduate degrees and 62 postgraduate programmes, of which 30 are offered in English, and 49 PhDs (14 in English).

The University of Cyprus is the only Cypriot university included in the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), known as the Shanghai list, and specifically among the 701 - 800 top universities. It is also among the top 401 - 500 universities according to the international ranking of the Times Higher Education World University Rankings for 2023 and among the best 368 universities worldwide according to the QS ranking for 2024.

The Economic Research Centre of the Faculty of Economics and Management was commissioned by the Cypriot Ministry of Finance to study the modernisation of the tax system and tax reform. What is more, 2023 was a milestone for the Centre of Excellence for Research and Innovation "Koios", as it celebrated 15 years of operation and successful research activity. During this year, a team of "Koios" researchers won the First Prize in an International Competition in Singapore, within the framework of the world-renowned conference entitled "62nd IEEE Conference on Decision and Control" for the development of an innovative solution, which effectively coordinates the operation drones during the infrastructure inspection.

Another important distinction has been added to the resume of Koios Director Dr Marios Polykarpou, who has been awarded the 2023 IEEE Frank Rosenblatt Technical Field Award for his continuous and significant research contributions towards the theory and use of neural networks and machine learning in intelligent monitoring and control systems. Professor Polykarpou is the first researcher from Cyprus to win this important distinction.

IRIDA Wireless Telecommunications and Networks Laboratory, headed by the Associate Professor Ioannis Krikidis, received funding from the European Research Council. The new project will be funded under the ERC Proof of Concept package and is entitled "Enabling Wireless Information and Power Transfer through Low-Complexity Waveform Techniques".

The University of Cyprus is the first in the country to secure competitive funding from the EU Research and Innovation Programme "Horizon 2020" with over €75 million since the beginning of the Programme. It is noted that the UCY has managed to obtain a significant number of research projects from the European Research Council, since its establishment in 2007, and is the first to secure competitive funding from the "RESTART 2016 - 2020" Programme of the IEDEK among all organisations, with approximately €40 million from the beginning of the Programme.

An international honorary distinction was awarded to Professor Fofi Constantinidou of the Department of Psychology by the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine. Dr Constantinidou was awarded the 2023 Women in Rehabilitation Sciences Award for her significant contribution to rehabilitation research.

The Faculty of Economics and Management has recently joined the MENA Business Schools Alliance for Sustainability, an alliance of universities in the Middle East and North Africa, aiming at promoting sustainability and sustainable development by Schools of Economics and Business Administration.

In 2023 the Cyprus Cancer Research Institute "Nicola David – Pinedo" was inaugurated. The building was built with a donation from the George and Kaity David Foundation to house the Institute and promote innovative cancer research. Focused on people and research in the field of oncology, it is a strategic collaboration between the University of Cyprus, the Karaiskakio Foundation, and the Bank of Cyprus Oncology Centre.

The University of Cyprus continued to promote culture and support society through lectures, conferences, and events, providing easy access to all. Responding to current challenges, the people of the University of Cyprus work tirelessly to ensure the a) quality of education provided, b) unhindered conduct of research and timely completion of the organisation's research obligations as well as c) cohesion of the academic community while they remain committed to the achievement of the UCY's creative mission.

1.4.14.2 Cyprus University of Technology

In 2023, the Cyprus University of Technology (CUT) faced numerous challenges but also demonstrated creativity, resulting in significant achievements across various areas.

Education

The CUT witnessed its most substantial expansion since its inception with the establishment of the new Faculty of Tourism Management, Hospitality, and Entrepreneurship in Pafos. Additionally, new academic departments were established, including the Department of Management, Entrepreneurship, and Digital Business in Pafos, and the Department of Shipping in Lemesos. Furthermore, initiatives have been launched to introduce new undergraduate programmes by the existing departments.

Emphasis on scientific research and academic excellence

The University made significant investments to enhance the research capabilities of its academic staff by introducing new institutions and programmes. Through internally funded initiatives such as Pump Priming, METADIDACTORS, and Interdisciplinary Programmes, the objective is to bolster research innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration, support young academics, and attract outstanding new scientists.

Furthermore, the CUT has obtained certification from the European Commission for its adherence to the "HR Excellence in Research" quality standard. The university is actively aligning its internal processes with the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R) and the European Charter for Researchers. This commitment is demonstrated through the submission of an action plan for the biennium spanning April 2023 to April 2025.

New infrastructure

In 2023, the foundation stone was laid for the laboratories building of the Department of Fine Arts, scheduled for completion by November 2024. Construction has also commenced for the housing of the Faculty of Communication and Media. Additionally, work has begun on student dormitories and other facilities in the former settlement of Vereggaria, located in the Kato Polemidia area of Lemesos.

Participation in the alliance for the creation of the European University of Technology (EUt+)

A notable development is the ongoing effort within the EUt+ alliance, in which the University participates, to offer an English-language undergraduate programme on sustainable development. This initiative is currently in an advanced stage of planning. Furthermore, the European Commission has approved funding for the alliance for the next 4 + 2 years starting from November 2023, providing crucial support

and resources to advance its goal of establishing the European University of Technology. Additionally, the alliance welcomed a new member, the University of Cassino (Italy) (UNICAS), in November 2023.

Encouragement for the establishment of new Research Centres or Research Units

The establishment of a Research Unit on Public Health and the establishment of the Research Unit on Digital Cultural Heritage, known as MEMOSYNE, have been approved by the University.

E-Governance

The CUT is the first public organisation in Cyprus to fully adopt electronic signatures, laying the groundwork for the widespread use of electronic signatures across all its activities. In March 2023, the travel reimbursement system for foreign trips was implemented. The system is available as a web application and aims at assisting users, both academic and administrative staff, in claiming the reimbursements they are entitled to for official trips they undertake abroad. Furthermore, the goal of creating an intranet page for all University Services has been achieved. These pages include a range of innovative tools, as well as an electronic format of all relative forms.

1.4.14.3 Open University of Cyprus

A pioneer in distance education in Cyprus, with significant expertise and know-how in the effective use of new technologies in educational processes, the Open University of Cyprus (OUC), the only university in the country that offers studies exclusively online, provides everyone the flexibility to study online and obtain a recognised degree, from their personal space, at their own time and pace of learning. Established in 2002, the OUC welcomed its first students back in 2006. It has since grown in academic stature and achieved recognition in the higher education area. The OUC effectively supports the "opening of education" by offering all people the opportunity to access higher education regardless of age, social profile, professional status, place of residence and / or other circumstances. In this context, the OUC attracts students from all over the world, with particular demographic characteristics compared to students of conventional universities: working people, often in a turning point in their careers, parents, people with disabilities, people from 18 till 70+ years of age. In the evolving landscape of higher education, the OUC is already present in the new digital age and continues to offer valuable education and training opportunities to all population groups. The OUC moves on the one hand towards excellence and continuous improvement of its operation and on the other hand towards development, extroversion and internationalisation, in order to evolve into the Entrepreneurial University that the 21st century needs.

Main Achievements in 2023

1. New Programmes of Study

As part of its strategic planning and aiming at excellence in education, the OUC designed two New Postgraduate Programmes of Study, which were accredited in 2023 by the Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education. The following two Programmes will be offered for the first time in the academic year 2024 - 2025: MA in "Criminal Justice" and MSc in "Accounting and Finance".

2. Establishment of a Commonwealth of Learning Chair

Michalinos Zembylas, Professor of the Programme "Educational Studies" at the Open University of Cyprus, was awarded in 2023 for a three-year term a prestigious Commonwealth of Learning (COL) Chair. The COL Programme appoints distinguished experts to help advance research, innovation and thought leadership, and strengthen regional cooperation, thus providing visibility for the Commonwealth of Learning.

3. Operation of the Centre for Professional and Lifelong Learning

The OUC, responding to its role and mission to provide lifelong learning and training opportunities for personal and professional development to all interested parties, inaugurated in 2023 the operation of

the Centre for Professional and Lifelong Learning (CPLL). Leveraging its extensive experience in open and distance education, as well as the expertise and specialisation of its staff in the implementation of innovative interactive educational methods, the OUC, through CPLL, aims at contributing towards the professional training of human resources, and offering pioneering and flexible learning experiences. Specifically, the CPLL offers lifelong learning programmes open to the public and multi-enterprise training programmes. At the same time, it can design and offer personalised programmes tailored to the educational needs of organisations and enterprises. The programmes can be subsidised by the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), given the certification received by the CPLL as a Centre for Professional Training.

1.5 CYPRUS PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE

The vision of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute is to offer continuous professional development to educators, at all levels of education. Moreover, to substantially contribute towards the planning and implementation of the educational policy, taking into consideration literature, research and the priorities set by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, in order to improve the quality of the educational system.

The mission of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute is the design and implementation of continuous professional development of the educators at all levels of education, the setting of a framework for the educators' competences and the promotion of horizontal issues of educational priority. Thus, it improves the content and effectiveness of the education provided in accordance with the wider international, European and local context.

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute comprises of the Departments of Training, Educational Documentation, Educational Technology, the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation and the Curriculum Development Unit. Additionally, the Unit of Education for Environment and Sustainable Development operates within the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute.

1.5.1 DEPARTMENT OF TRAINING

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute is the Directorate of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, which officially runs teachers' professional development, through the Department of Training. A variety of training programmes are offered every year, in compliance with the education law and service plans, alongside programmes that are developed with reference to current needs, priorities and the school context. Among the many training activities organised by the Department of Training are the annual Training Days for Teachers, the Optional Series of Training Seminars, the School-Based Seminars and the Seminars for Parents.

1.5.2 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTATION

The Department of Educational Documentation has as a main goal the promotion of teachers' professional development, by providing continuous information on new trends in the field of education, publishing books to serve the objectives set in the Curriculum and creating supportive educational material. The Library of the Pedagogical Institute, that operates within the Department of Educational Documentation, is constantly enriched with new books and scientific journals, as well as supportive educational material in electronic form.

1.5.3 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

The Department of Educational Technology promotes the use of digital technologies for teaching, learning and assessment, in line with national and EU digital strategies. Specifically, the Department

implements Continuous Professional Learning Programmes, advances digital skills in education, explores and recommends new implementations through European, research and intervention programmes, maintains online and onsite learning environments, produces audio-visual and other material for the needs of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and provides training and technical support to the staff of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. The Department of Educational Technology also contributes towards national and European policy papers and guidelines on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and implements projects that support the work of the Ministry's Information and Communication Technology Unit.

1.5.4 CENTRE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

The Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation undertakes and coordinates a range of activities in three directions: a) implementation of international and national research studies on pedagogical and educational issues, b) evaluation studies on educational innovations, interventions and programmes of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, implemented in the Cyprus schools, and c) the development of a research-oriented culture within the educational system of Cyprus.

1.5.5 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT UNIT

The Curriculum Development Unit is responsible for the provision of all the teaching textbooks used in public schools in Cyprus and the design and production of supportive educational material or other publications, for teachers and pupils, at all levels of education. The Curriculum Development Unit is also coordinating procedures for the issuance and revision of the national Curricula.

1.5.6 UNIT OF EDUCATION FOR ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Unit of Education for Environment and Sustainable Development is responsible for planning, implementing, monitoring and upgrading the National Strategy for Environmental Education (EE) / Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in formal, non-formal and in-formal education in Cyprus.

1.6 CYPRUS RESEARCH CENTRE

1.6.1 OBJECTIVES AND MEANS TO REALISE THEM

The Cyprus Research Centre (C.R.C.) was founded in 1964 aiming at enabling Cypriot and overseas scholars to research the history and civilisation of Cyprus and have the conclusions of the relevant research published on a systematic basis. Research programmes relevant to the fundamental disciplines of the culture of Cyprus, namely its history, folklore, language, literature, ethnography, and social sciences are initiated and implemented by the C.R.C. as well as those concerning related disciplines, according to the country's requirements at any given time and within a broader regional context.

In order to realise the above aims the C.R.C. employs permanent research staff as well as outside collaborators on a contractual basis, both within Cyprus and abroad. It promotes co-operation in the field of scholarship with universities, research centres and other academic institutions both within and outside Cyprus, and members of its permanent research staff take part in academic conferences related to their field of specialisation and undertake research missions overseas. The C.R.C. also organises conferences in Cyprus and abroad in co-operation with other academic institutions.

1.6.2 LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

The C.R.C. has a specialised library for the furtherance of its various research programmes, containing over 20 000 volumes, chiefly specialised encyclopaedias, academic journals, monographs, publications of archival material and other reference works, covering the history and civilisation not only of Cyprus but also that of Greece, Europe, and the Middle East, in general. The classification on computer of the volumes in this library is presently nearing completion. The C.R.C. also houses important archival collections of primary source material, consisting of manuscripts, photocopies, and photographic copies (offsets) of historical source material and documents, microfilms, and cassettes. These have been placed in various archives, such as the Historical, the War Veterans', the Folklore, and the Oral Tradition Archive. The updating of materials in the last three archival collections was undertaken by the Cyprus Research Centre in co-operation with the Library of the University of Cyprus. The transcription of the oral testimonies of the cassettes to digital CDs for the Folklore and the Oral Tradition Archive was accomplished with the long-term aim of creating a Unitary Data Base for Oral History. In 2021 a programme began for the transfer of the digital archives of the CRC from the obsolescent ABEKT Programme to a more up to date programme, following the signing of a contract between the University of Western Attica and the CRC. In June 2022 the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth decided to establish an Archive of the History of Greek Education in Cyprus. This archive, constituted in digital form, is progressing rapidly and much material has been collected from various educational establishments in Cyprus, from the State Archives, the archives of the Holy Archbishopric of Cyprus, the Library of the House of Representatives, and from several private archives.

1.6.3 PUBLICATIONS

Since 1965 until present the C.R.C. has published important works covering a broad range of academic subjects, including scholarly monographs, editions of documents and historical source materials, translations of historical sources, reprints, conference proceedings and an annual academic journal. At present, these publications number over 200 scholarly works, including 39 Annual Reviews, eight Conference Proceedings, four Collected Studies volumes and a digital CD containing traditional Cypriot music. The above publications consist of works undertaken by the permanent research staff and the outside collaborators of the C.R.C. in Greek and in the major European languages (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish). These works are placed in the following series:

- i) Texts and Studies in the History of Cyprus
- ii) Publications of the C.R.C.
- iii) *Epeteris* (Annual Journal) of the C.R.C.
- iv) Conference Proceedings of the C.R.C.
- v) Publications of the Social Research Centre
- vi) Digital Disks (CDs)
- vii) Collected studies

These publications are available for sale at the C.R.C. offices as well as from booksellers in Cyprus and overseas.

1.6.4 ACTIVITIES FOR 2023

In the year 2023, the Cyprus Research Centre published the following seven books:

1. *Ottoman Documents from the Archives of the Venetian Consulate of Cyprus 1765 - 1797*, ed. Theocharis Stavrides
2. Svetlana Bliznyuk, *Το βασίλειο της Κύπρου και οι ιταλικές θαλάσσιες δημοκρατίες, 13^{ος} – 15^{ος} αιώνας*
3. *Η ίδρυση του Κέντρου Επιστημονικών Ερευνών, Οι θεμελιωτές και οι πρώτοι διευθυντές του*, ed. Marina Tymviou
4. *Ανέκδοτα έγγραφα εκ των αρχείων του Βατικανού (1625-1667)*, ed. Zacharias Tsirpanlis (reprint)

5. Rolandos Katsiaounis, *Labour, Politics and Society in Cyprus during the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century* (reprint)
6. Petros Paparolygiou, *Η Κύπρος και η βαλκανικοί πόλεμοι. Συμβολή στην ιστορία του κυπριακού εθελοντισμού* (reprint)
7. Kalliope Protopara, *Έθιμα του παραδοσιακού γάμου στην Κύπρο, τόμοι Α΄ και Β΄* (reprint)

In addition, within the context of upgrading the facilities of the Cyprus Research Centre, major maintenance and repair works were continued in 2023 on the central buildings and main warehouse of the Cyprus Research Centre and major new purchases of electronic equipment and stationery were inaugurated.

For additional information on the Cyprus Research Centre please visit the C.R.C. website.: www.moec.gov.cy/kee

1.7 TECHNICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The Technical Services Department of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, is located in Lefkosia. Three district offices are also based in Lemesos, Larnaka and Pafos. The activities of the department are related to school building developments, supporting all the different levels of education, taking into consideration the children's educational and technical requirements.

The projects undertaken are:

- Architectural, structural, electrical and mechanical studies.
- Implementation and supervision of construction projects and material control.
- Upgrading of School building structures.
- Contract management.
- Local authority support on Private School Projects.
- Technical and economic support to School Boards Committees and Parents Associations.
- Surveys.
- Sports facility studies.
- Cultural projects.

The annual budget contains:

- a. New construction projects of School units.
- b. Upgrading of existing buildings & sport facilities.
- c. Extensions of existing School units.

All construction projects include:

- Structural upgrading.
- Functional redesigning according to approved building standards.
- Additional teaching classrooms and laboratories / workshops.
- Construction of multifunctional halls.
- Additional classrooms / ramps / lifts for children with special needs.
- Additional rooms for secondary uses (canteens, nurseries, toilets).
- Redesigning and upgrading of electrical and mechanical services.

1.8 THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE (EPS)

1.8.1 OVERVIEW AND STRUCTURE

The Educational Psychology Services is an interdepartmental service of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in Cyprus, answerable to the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. Its mission is to protect and promote mental health and facilitate learning and development by empowering all pupils within the educational system, from pre-primary to the end of secondary education. The Educational Psychology Service has three district offices in the towns of Larnaka, Lemesos and Lefkosia. Additionally, two sub-offices are operating in Ammochostos and Pafos to fulfil the needs of the local area.

During the school year, 2022 - 2023 the structure of the Service was as follows:

- One Principal EP
- Four Senior Educational Psychologists (one of the position was inactive)
- Sixty-six Educational Psychologists

All Psychologists working within the EPS hold a first degree in Psychology and a Masters' Degree in Clinical or Educational or School Psychology. Some also hold Doctorate degrees.

1.8.2 MAIN AREAS OF WORK

The work of the EPS is organised around five main areas:

- (1) Individual Casework.
- (2) Prevention programmes, Interventions, Psychoeducation, Training of pupils, educators and parents
- (3) Crisis Intervention.
- (4) Participation in a number of permanent and ad-hoc interdisciplinary committees for designing, implementing and monitoring policies and programmes.
- (5) Supervision of Educational Psychologists in Training at the University of Cyprus during their placement at the Service.

1.8.3 INDIVIDUAL CASEWORK

Children are referred to the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) by their school, families and sometimes themselves when they face difficulties in their school setting, such as learning, social and emotional, behavioural difficulties, sensory problems, syndromes and disorders, and so on. Referrals are accepted at the Service provided that the school has already put in place strategies to deal with these difficulties but did not achieve the expected outcome. Educational psychologists will use a number of psychological assessment tools that include cognitive abilities testing, assessment of educational attainment, developmental history, clinical interviews with parents, teachers, children and other professionals, questionnaires, clinical observations, theories and procedures to support the wellbeing and learning of young people. They also provide consultation to schools and families and recommend, develop and administer, in collaboration with schools and families, appropriate therapies and strategies.

Educational Psychologists also respond to referrals from the District Committees on Special Education and Training (according to Law 113(I)/1999 concerning the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs), for psychological evaluation and recommendations. During the school year 2022 - 2023, the EPS worked with 9 316 children, the number increased in comparison to the school year 2021 - 2022.

Prevention programmes, Interventions, Psychoeducation, Training of pupils, educators and parents

During the school year 2022 - 2023, a number of support programmes, interventions and psychoeducation trainings were developed and delivered to prevent school failure of learners and deal with psychological health issues. Examples include discipline and setting boundaries to children, internet addiction, transition to primary or secondary education, management of difficult behaviour, diversity, anger management, conflict resolution and developing resilience.

Crisis Intervention

Educational Psychologists are trained to respond to crisis within the school and community by the International School Psychology Association (ISPA). This year educational Psychologists had to deal with several crises including death or severe violence in a school setting.

1.8.4 PARTICIPATION IN COMMITTEES FOR DESIGNING, IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES

The EPS has participated in the District Committees of Special Education (E.E.E.A.E.) In addition, it has expanded its involvement with Educational Psychologists in several important Standing and Ad Hoc Committees, with the main objective of strengthening the planning, implementation and coordination of policies and programmes. Finally, they participate in various inter-ministerial and interdepartmental committees.

Supervision of Educational Psychologists in Training

As part of initial professional training, educational psychologists during training at the university of Cyprus undertake substantial periods of practice placement, within which the role of supervision by the EPs within the Service is instrumental to their professional development and effectiveness. The placement aims at providing, EPs in training, the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the educational system and receive training on dealing with individual caseworks as well as prevention and intervention programmes.

2.

HORIZONTAL THEMATIC AND POLICY

2.1 PREVENTION OF VIOLENCE AT SCHOOL

2.1.1 THE CYPRUS OBSERVATORY ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE (COSV)

The Cyprus Observatory on School Violence (COSV) is part of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. The main purpose of the COSV is the implementation of a safe and friendly school environment for all members of the school community.

The goals of the COSV are to:

- Conduct scientific research to measure the phenomenon of violence in school and the parameters associated with it.
- Develop specific recommendations to define a policy for the prevention and management of violence as a result of scientific research.
- Inform teachers and social partners about the phenomenon of bullying in Cyprus and internationally.
- Empower parents, pupils, teachers and other professionals involved.
- Promote the active involvement of children in the prevention and treatment of violence in school.

In order to achieve its goals, in 2023, the COSV has been active in many areas of prevention and response to school violence. More specifically, the COSV:

- Implemented actions that arise from The National Strategy for the Prevention and Treatment of Violence in School, 2018 – 2022 (Extension until August 2024). The National Strategy that was approved by the Council of Ministers on 17/01/2018, employs legal, administrative, social and educational measures at all levels of prevention (primary, secondary and tertiary education).
- Provided support to school units for the implementation of actions and programmes aiming at improving the school climate, with the ultimate goal of reducing violence in schools. These programmes, which are school-based and have a one-year duration, are the “Conflict Resolution - School Mediation” and the “Recognition and Management of School Bullying”. The COSV supports schools in the implementation of anti-bullying programmes, which deal with recognising, preventing and combating bullying. With the “Conflict Resolution - School Mediation” schools are encouraged to find effective ways of resolving pupil conflicts as well as alternative ways of managing conflict situations in school. Moreover, the COSV launched a school network and conducted seminars and workshops to support teachers, parents and pupils in order to be able to prevent and respond to school violence. In 2023, 99 schools were supported and 6 935 teachers, 235 pupils and 385 parents were trained by the COSV.
- Monitored a national-level research that investigates the phenomenon of violence in schools. The research aimed at collecting data about violence in education, from all schools, at all levels, in Cyprus, for three consecutive years, with the participation of teachers, parents and pupils (10years+).

- Organised, in collaboration with the Council for the Prevention and Response to Crime of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, a competition, for schools, at all levels, that implemented good practices against school violence and promoted active citizenship.
- Cooperated with all stakeholders involved in preventing and responding to school violence.
- Developed synergy with the European Anti-bullying Network (EAN) and cooperated with other European partners in the implementation of European projects under Erasmus+ funding.
- Mapped, through an electronic platform, the existing programmes that are implemented or can be implemented in schools, related to the Prevention and Management of Violence in School.
- Enriched its Website with material and useful links, in order to provide information on issues related to School Violence and Delinquency.
- Requested from schools to record bullying incidents online in a specific platform that has been created for this purpose.

A. Cyprus Pedagogical Institute – Cyprus Observatory on School Violence

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI), through various forms of training activities, aims at preventing and managing violence in schools. In 2023, it has developed partnerships with Non-Governmental Organisations and has collaborated with entities and Services from various Ministries. Additionally, in 2023, beyond 40 Parent Associations, 7 900 educators, and 220 schools, from all levels of education have been supported through training sessions, conferences, optional seminars, specialised seminars, a support network to implement the anti-racism policy of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, a network to manage behaviour issues, seminars at School Level, seminars for parents, and structured programmes.

The Cyprus Observatory on School Violence (COSV), through the structures of the CPI, monitors and coordinates actions to implement the National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Violence in Schools (2018 - 2024). In this framework, it offers training activities focusing on individual and collective level. Moreover, in 2023, data has been collected from pupils, educators, and parents / guardians, from public and private schools at all levels of education in Cyprus, regarding the forms and extent of violence in schools, as part of establishing a system for collecting, encoding, and analysing data and reporting key findings on forms and extent of violence in the school unit and nationwide.

Additionally, the CPI - COSV, in collaboration with the Council for the Prevention and Handling of Criminality of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, organised a competition among schools to promote, disseminate, and implement the policy for the prevention and management of school bullying in the context of preventing violence and youth delinquency at school and promoting active citizenship.

At European level, the COSV actively participates in all actions of the European Anti-bullying Network (EAN) aiming at preventing and managing school bullying. Furthermore, it participates in the European Erasmus+ KA3 programme "SAFER," during which, along with partners, it developed and piloted an innovative method to prevent school violence and bullying, aiming at promoting inclusive education.

B. Educational Psychology Service

The daily practice of the Educational Psychology Service has changed in recent years in relation to issues handled by the Educational Psychologists. It became increasingly complex, qualitatively differentiated, more serious and dangerous. As a result, the Educational Psychology Service systematically trains all Psychologists in dealing with crises in the school settings aiming at preventing

and dealing with serious issues that may happen unexpectedly and might affect the smooth functioning of the school and the psychological wellbeing of teachers and pupils.

At the level of individual case management, the Educational Psychologist evaluates individual pupils following school referrals, conducts consultations with parents and teachers, writes up reports and submits recommendations for the management of violent behaviour. It also cooperates with other state services (Child Welfare, Children and Adolescents Mental Health Services, and so on.) for the management of these referrals.

Within the framework of the prevention strategy, following requests from and working closely with the schools, Educational Psychologists develop preventive programmes and interventions in the school setting that are related to:

- School violence, juvenile delinquency and bullying.
- Crisis management at school.
- The early detection and treatment of learning difficulties.
- Emotional cultivation and development of social skills.
- Prevention of child abuse.
- Inclusion and integration of children with special needs and their active participation in every school activity.

It also actively participates in the training of teachers and parents in matters that are either directly or indirectly related to the prevention and treatment of violence.

C. Career Counselling and Educational Services

The Career Counselling and Educational Services (CCES) participate in the Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of School Violence where they discuss with other bodies involved and contribute towards their competences.

D. The Committee of Health Education and Citizenship

1. «SCHOOL AND SOCIAL INCLUSION ACTIONS» DRA.S.E.+

General Information

- The project is co-funded by the European Union Social Fund (ESF) and the Republic of Cyprus (€60 million for 2021 - 2027),
- aims at promoting social inclusion, mitigating the negative impact of economic crisis on education, eliminating discrimination in education,
- educates and supports effectively pupils with immigrant background,
- is implemented in all school units at all levels (Public Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary, and Technical and Vocational Education and Training Schools).

Objectives are to:

- Support pupil population living below poverty line or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.
- Strengthen social cohesion, by limiting the risk of social marginalisation and exclusion.
- Ensure social welfare and support the economically weaker groups of the population.
- Reinforce pupils with an immigrant background, and particularly pupils affected by the economic crisis.

- Improve learning outcomes.
- Reduce school failure and delinquency.
- Decrease early school leaving.
- Encourage pupil participation in alternative forms of education.
- Enhance employment prospects.

Programme Actions

- Provision of morning and afternoon programmes to reinforce pupils and their families learning and creativity.
- Organisation of Greek language courses for immigrant pupils and families.
- Psychosocial support and intercultural mediation to pupils and / or their parents / guardians by counseling and clinical psychologists.
- Continuous training and professional developmental programmes for teachers involved.
- Supply of technological equipment and educational materials to schools.
- Alternative education programmes for the participating schools in order to enrich the experiences of the pupils.
- Funding activities through the programme “EAYP” that aims at promoting the physical, mental and social wellbeing of pupils, thus, enhancing their social skills and critical thinking and upgrading their social and natural environment.

2.1.2. School Violence Intervention Team (SVIT)

The school Violence Intervention Team (SVIT) of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth is an important partner towards the National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Violence in Schools. According to its terms of service, and while maintaining close cooperation with other relevant services and institutions (e.g. Educational Psychology Service, Social Welfare Service and so on), it provides direct cooperation and support to school units that request its intervention on issues related to the management and dealing of phenomena of intra school violence and extreme delinquency.

In this context, and when deemed necessary, the Team proceeds to the employment of an external collaborator (School Partner) who provides auxiliary pedagogical support to pupils with behavioural difficulties within the framework of an Alternative Schooling Programme.

►Funding

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, SVIT utilised a budget of €1.116.000 for the implementation of actions to support the school units that requested the Team’s intervention.

►Number of interventions

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, SVIT responded to 232 requests for intervention, received from Primary Education and 206 from Secondary Education. A number of 146 Alternative Schooling Programmes were implemented for the support of 210 Primary Education and 85 were implemented for the support of 471 Secondary Education pupils.

The long-term aim of the Alternative Schooling Programme is to support and empower the pupils for whom the school unit has requested their intervention and thus, improve the undesirable attitudes and behaviour that they exhibit. The Team supervises, guides and coordinates the implementation of the Programme and contributes towards its readjustment, where deemed necessary.

E. Interdepartmental Committee of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth to Prevent and Combat Child Sexual Abused Cases

The Interdepartmental Committee of the Ministry of Education Sport and Youth, to Prevent and Combat Child Sexual Abuse, proceeded to implement the obligations of the Ministry deriving from the National Strategy of the *Preventing and Combating of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children - of the FONI Council - 2021-2023*. The actions mainly concern the primary pillar of the National Strategy, which has a preventive and informative character.

The Committee's actions were mainly focused on the implementation of sex education in all classes, based on the relevant legislation of 2022. Each educational level proceeded with the required changes so that the curriculum was addressed to all school-age children.

At the same time, teacher training continued, in collaboration with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and the Educational Psychology Service in three main fields:

- I. Application of sex education.
- II. Recognition and Management of incidents of child sexual abuse, based on the Teacher's Manual.
- III. Internet safety for all Children.

In addition, the action to inform pupils and teachers, with workshops on the phenomenon of Sexting, was implemented for the second school year, with funding from FONI. Finally, the update of the Teacher's Handbook was completed and re-distributed to all schools.

It is also important to mention that the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth participates in secondary and tertiary prevention and intervention actions, with its participation in the multidisciplinary team at the Children's House - (Spiti tou Paidiou, based on the Scandinavian model – Barna Haus). The Educational Psychology Service represents the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in the multidisciplinary management of child sexual abuse cases since 2018. There are four scientific multidisciplinary groups, one in each town, which they meet every week for the past six years in order to handle, in a holistic approach, these cases, with a primary concern to protect children's rights.

2.1.3 THE COMMITTEE OF HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The Committee of Health Education and Citizenship whose constitution and operation was institutionalised through the first National Strategy for Drugs 2004 – 2008 of the Cyprus National Addictions Authority, coordinates the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth policy related to Health Education and Citizenship, both at the level of the Ministry and the school units at all levels.

The Committee of Health Education and Citizenship:

- constitutes the connecting link between the Ministry of Health and other bodies (Ministries, Non-Governmental Organisations, Police, Cyprus Addiction Treatment Authority and so on), which deal with actions that fall under Health Education and Citizenship issues,
- implements the Policy and Actions included in the National Addiction Strategy 2021 – 2028, and
- puts Health Education into practice in schools through the development of policies, actions and programmes that promote the physical, mental and social well-being of pupils.

Actions - Programmes supported by the Committee of Health Education and Citizenship (CHEC):

1. Grant of non-school-related actions to support pupils and pupils belonging to vulnerable population groups

The Programme has been operating since 2012 and is part of the commitments of the Ministry of Interior regarding the National Strategy to Address Addictions (2021 - 2028). The CHEC identifies and supports

pupils who belong to vulnerable population groups (i.e. delinquent behaviour, use of alcohol or illegal substances, smoking, families with extremely difficult economic conditions or with severe dysfunction - violence in the family, serious health problems of another member or of the child himself, residence in the Children's Home, a family member in prison, unemployment, alcoholism and so on.), to be engaged in creative employment activities which they choose themselves in the community, in non-school settings every year.

The actions aim at contributing towards the essential support (learning, emotional, self- and social self-empowerment, highlighting and fostering talent, developing a safe life and so on.) of pupils who belong to vulnerable population groups. A possible risk faced by the action is the social exclusion and marginalisation of pupils of the specific categories due to their possible inability to participate in activities utilising their free time and highlighting their special abilities / talents.

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, 787 actions, outside school time, were offered, which related to the support of pupils belonging to vulnerable population groups.

2. «European Network of Schools for the Promotion of Health» (ENHPS)

Cyprus has been a member of the European Network of Schools for the Promotion of Health (ENHPS) since 1995. This Network operates under the auspices of three International Organisations: the World Health Organisation, the European Union and the Council of Europe. According to these organisations, the development of Health Education programmes, not only in the school environment, but also within the community, in general, is the modern and effective method for the prevention and improvement of health, not only for people, but also for the environment.

The European Network of Health Promotion Schools is the result of a collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the Ministry of Health. The purpose of the programme is to improve and promote the physical, mental, and social health of pupils, teachers, other members of the school staff and consequently the wider community by integrating health promotion programmes in all schools. In order to achieve the most effective goals of the programme, the programme coordination team in each school consists of teachers, members of the School Services, pupils and parents, as well as members of the community.

Each cycle of the Programme lasts two years, which enables the coordinating team of each school to set long-term goals, in order to implement the programme with various and creative activities and at the same time evaluate its implementation and effectiveness. The policy of the programme is the selection of a common topic, for the whole country, which each school studies through its own point of view. The individual topic that will be developed by each school, is selected after an initial investigation of the main issues identified by the school unit and are related to health (physical, mental, emotional, social). Once the individual issue has been identified, its possible causes should be recognised and an action plan drawn up to address them. At the beginning of each school year, each school participating in the programme prepares the action plan, which includes the objectives related to the selected topic, as well as the activities that will be implemented.

The study of a common theme by all schools is an advantage in case of conducting a nationwide survey. The main study topic of the EDSPY programme for the two years 2022 - 2024 is: "Internet Addiction among Cypriot Adolescents". The ENHPS programme, in collaboration with other organisations, such as the Department of Psychology at the University of Cyprus, the Nursing Services of the Ministry of Health, the Cyprus Youth Board and others, aims to:

- help pupils realize if they are suffering from internet addiction, either themselves or others close to them,
- enable pupils to help themselves or help each other to overcome their internet addiction,
- create awareness among pupils of the existence of support structures and programmes that operate

in the Cyprus state and provide support and assistance to pupils with internet addiction.

The programme, in Secondary Education of Cyprus, is supervised by the Inspectorate of Biology and is allocated to 11 Gymnasias and 12 Lycea.

3. " Preventive programme "EXELIXIS"

In addition, for the school year 2023 - 2024, in some of secondary education schools that participate in the ENHPS programme, the preventive programme "EXELIXIS" was piloted for the fourth time. The programme is the result of cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and specifically the Committee on Health and Citizenship Education (EAYP), the Directorate of Nursing Services and the Cyprus National Addiction Authority (NAAC). Thirteen pilot secondary education schools from all towns will participate in the programme this year.

The "School System Mental Health Preventive Nursing" programme is provided by registered Mental Health Nurses, specialised and experienced in the subject, who are certified Prevention or Addiction Counsellors. The purpose of the programme is to prevent or stop the use of substances and other harmful behaviours. Upon completion of the programme pupils should:

- be able to identify psychoactive and risk factors for substance use,
- recognise and express emotions,
- develop and use communication and self-affirming skills,
- understand myths and truths about substances, and
- be aware of the sources for help in the community.

4. «Health Education Pupil Seminars for Drug Use Prevention»

The aim of the National School of Education is to promote the national preventive drug policy in the educational system, contributing towards the reduction of the percentage of pupils who smoke or are about to try tobacco products and other addictive substances. The Programme follows the National Legislation on the Prevention of the Use and Spread of Drugs and Other Addictive Substances (Cyprus Addiction Treatment Authority - AAEC) Law of 2017 which defines both the concept of "Prevention" and "Intervention". The Health Education Pupil Seminars have been held every year for thirty years with great success.

All secondary education schools in Cyprus participate in the seminars every two years. These are two-day experiential workshops for pupils. The programme takes place in a hotel during the school year. In each two-day seminar, thirty B' Class secondary education pupils from five different secondary education schools participate, accompanied by two teachers. The Programme is supervised by the Biology Inspectorate. As an extension of the two-day programme, The Health Education Pupil Seminars support the creation of a working group, in collaboration with the Committee for Health Education and Prevention of School Violence for the complete ban on smoking in school.

The action that the pupils are expected to develop, in collaboration with the Commission, includes lectures, experiential workshops and communication with the community, aiming at informing the pupils about the phenomenon of smoking addiction and the consequences of the use of addictive substances, the fostering of healthy attitudes among pupils and teachers and, in general, the promotion of anti-drug treatment. In addition to a targeted activity against addictive substances, the Health Education Pupil Seminars are an interdisciplinary support and strengthening mechanism for the Analytical Biology Programmes, in which Health Education issues are overarching.

Due to the pandemic, the Biology Inspectorate suggested restructuring of the programme so that each pupil group participates in a full-day programme without overnight stay at a hotel. The proposal was accepted by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and its implementation was successful during the school years 2021 - 2022 and 2022 - 2023.

During the school year 2022 - 2023, five full-day pupil seminars were successfully held at the SUN HALL Hotel in Larnaka (December 2022 - March 2023).

For the 2023 - 2024 school year, the Biology Inspectorate aimed at upgrading the Health Education Pupil Seminars. For this purpose, in collaboration with the Directorate of Nursing Services (DNS) of the Ministry of Health, the programme was adjusted and license was secured from the AEEK for the next four years.

In the context of the upgrading the pupil seminars, the educational material "I know what I'm asking for" is applied in the form of experiential workshops. On October 27th, 2023, a training day was held for a group of Biology teachers, who are responsible for the coordination and implementation of the EMS. During the conference the Biologists received special training by the DNS team regarding the application of the educational material "I know what I'm asking for", so that after securing the relevant license from the AAEK, it was possible to immediately apply the two-day pupil seminars.

For the school year 2023 - 2024, five two-day seminars were successfully completed at the Semeli Hotel in Lefkosia (from February 2024 to April 2024). The Biology Inspectorate, and specifically the group of Biology teachers which coordinates the seminars, is in regular communication and cooperates excellently with the DNS of the Ministry of Health, with the ultimate goal of the full success of the programme.

5. Health Education Programme "Well-Being"

The "EV ZHN" Health Education programme, translated in English "Well-Being", in Secondary Education is coordinated and supervised by the Biology Inspectorate and 13 Gymnasia participated in it. This school year, 2023 - 2024, the new 12th, two-year implementation of the programme started.

Each school unit creates the programme implementation team in which pupils participate and identify their special needs in the field of health education through the Health Education and Delinquency Prevention committee in which the responsible teacher for each school also participates. Based on these needs, the "EV ZHN" team discusses, co-decides, prepares, implements and monitors the Action Plan for two consecutive years. The activities aim at specific groups of pupils, or even the whole school, and are materialised in the two-years planning scope, in order to have the best possible results.

The planned actions of the programme focus on improving the quality of life and health of the pupils in the school unit and respond to the dominant issues – challenges faced by the school unit, such as smoking, alcohol, drug addiction, nutrition, internet addiction, road safety, delinquency, emotional and social education, and so on. The Action Plan is part of both the school's Health Education Action Plan and the School Unit's Improvement Action Plan. At the beginning of the school year, an informative webinar is organised by the Biology Inspectorate to inform and organise the teachers responsible for the programme. Additionally, in the middle of the school year, an intermediate webinar is organised for feedback and reflection on the progress of the Action Plan of each school that participates in the programme. At the end of the school year, a report of the Action Plan is drawn up by each school which is shared through the website of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth to all schools aiming at exchanging good practices.

6. "Web" programme (providing afternoon support services to vulnerable pupils, in Gymnasia and Lycea), in the framework of the cooperation of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the AAEK

The Programme aims at providing individualised multi-level support to pupils who face serious difficulties in their personal, family or school life and which may be related to the use of addictive substances. The provision of support is offered in particular through healthy afternoon activities, psycho-education, learning support or other services depending on the needs assessment of each case, with the ultimate

goal to strengthen their personality, highlight their skills, change their behaviour and prevent the use of addictive substances or other harmful behaviours by creating a deterrent environment. The support is provided by social workers to pupils who are referred by the school administration, through healthy afternoon activities. The implementation of the Programme is the responsibility of the Cyprus National Addictions Authority, which after an open tender procedure assigned the Programme to the University of Nicosia. The programme is fully funded by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

7. «Hesperides» Preventive Programme

The Programme concerns the provision of psychological, social and educational support to pupils attending Evening Schools and Evening Technical Schools. The target groups are twenty pupils of the Evening Gymnasium, Lyceum and Technical and Vocational Education School, members of the pupils' families, as well as the teachers of the schools. The implementation of the Programme is the responsibility of the Cyprus National Addictions Authority, which after an open tender procedure assigned the Programme to the Association for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence (SPAVO). The programme is fully funded by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

8. Preventive Preparatory Apprenticeship (PA) Intervention Programme in the Districts of Lefkosia, Larnaka, Lemesos and Pafos

The programme is an action dealing with early school dropouts and the marginalisation of the 14 - 16 years old pupils. The main objective of the programme is to provide a safe reintegration of Preparatory Apprentice teenagers into the school environment through the framing and support of themselves and their families with the ultimate goal of providing a safety net against various social risks and marginalisation. The PA provides a safe and supportive framework to upgrade the basic learning and soft skills of the learners, strengthens the goal-setting mechanism, and supports them to believe in themselves and their skills, as well as improves their self-esteem by choosing and implementing correct and healthy choices in their life. PA's target groups are:

- a) Pupils of the Preparatory Apprenticeship
- b) Family members of the pupils
- c) Teachers of the Preparatory Apprenticeship
- d) Special social scientists of the Preparatory Apprenticeship.

The programme provides training of instructors and specialists, organisation of afternoon / summer activities for the learners, organisation of creativity workshops, sport and educational activities for the learners as well as psychosocial support and coverage of basic material needs of the learners and their families. Responsible for the implementation of the Programme is the "National Addictions Authority Cyprus", which after an open tender process assigned the Programme to the "Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family" (SPAVO). The project was implemented during the years 2022 - 2023 and is currently in the process of completion and renewal. The programme is entirely financed by the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

9. Supply of sport equipment to pupils belonging to vulnerable groups

The Action is included in the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Cyprus Addiction Treatment Authority and the Cyprus Sport Organization, through the "Tackling Addiction to Legal and Illegal Substances" Plan. For the 2022 - 2023 school year, thirty athletes were supported who belong to: (a) vulnerable population groups and (b) sport clubs, which take part in the World Championships of the Cyprus Sport Federation, recognised by the CMO.

2.2 EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION OF PUPILS WITH MIGRANT BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth implements the policy for the educational integration of children with migrant background in Cyprus, through the operation of an Interdepartmental Committee, which consists of representatives of all the Directorates of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and which is coordinated by the CPI. The main actions implemented during the school year 2022 - 2023 are:

2.2.1 MIGRANT PUPIL POPULATION MAPPING

Primary Education

The number of pupils who attended the programmes for teaching Greek as a second language, in the school year 2022 - 2023, is shown on Table 1 below:

Table 1: Number of pupils who attended programmes for teaching Greek as a second language, in the school year 2022 - 2023

District	No of migrant pupils 1 st year	No of migrant pupils 2 nd year	Total
Lefkosia	579	396	975
Lemesos	630	446	1076
Larnaka – Ammochostos	510	365	875
Pafos	575	362	937
Total	2294	1569	3863

Secondary Education

During the school year 2022 - 2023, four different programmes for learning Greek as a second language operated in 44 schools, as shown on Table 2. In total, 952 pupils with migrant biography attended the Greek as a second language programme. The programmes of “transitional classes” operated in 28 schools all over Cyprus and 782 pupils with immigrant biography (82% of the total) joined it. In addition, 39 pupils attended the short-term programme and 131 the programme for unaccompanied minors in Gymnasia, Lycea and Technical Schools. For the school year 2022 - 2023, programmes for Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Seekers operated in Lycea and Technical and Vocational Schools.

Table 2: Number of pupils who attended the programme of learning Greek as a second language, in the school year 2022 - 2023

Districts	No of migrant pupils- Transitory A1 (=A1+A2)	No of migrant pupils- Transitory A2 (=B1)	No of migrant pupils- Short-term A1+A2	No of migrant pupils- Unaccompanied	No of migrant pupils- Transitory Lyceum A1+A2	TOTAL
Lefkosia	105	34	13	28	40	192
Lemesos	101	44	2	67	40	187
Larnaka – Ammochostos	167	11	21	36	36	235
Pafos	123	43	3	--	38	207
Total	496	132	39	131	154	821

Reception and integration of newly arrived pupils. Schools were expected to use available tools for the reception of **newly arrived** pupils, for example, Guide for school cooperation with parents - mediators, Guide with practical applications to manage sociocultural diversity, Ready-made communication cards for the first days of reception at school, Reception and integration Guides for Preprimary / Primary and Secondary Education and brochures for school - family communication translated into many languages. Translations into French, Ukrainian and Chinese were added in the 2022 - 2023 school year. All tools are posted on the website of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and on the website of Intercultural Education of the Directorate of Primary Education.

Teaching Greek as a second language: During the school year 2022 - 2023, the actions focused on the development of programmes for learning Greek as a second language, providing extra hours and various courses for the enhancement of attainment in Greek. The Decision of the Council of Ministers (no. 91.354 dated 9.6.2021) contributed towards this, according to which increased teaching time was granted to schools participating in the DRA.S.E. + programme, as well as in other schools. Schools participating in the DRA.S.E.+ programme were given 10 or 15 periods per week for each group of six to 15 pupils (first grade group, first year support group, 2nd - 6th form and second year pupils). The time provided to other primary schools also increased, compared to the previous school year 2022 - 2023.

Furthermore, the Curriculum for Greek as a second language (Pre-primary, Primary, Secondary General, Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training) was fully implemented (Mitsiaki, 2020). At the same time, the textbook "Greek for children, easy and simple!" was revised. (Issue A + B) for level A1 in primary school and work for a new manual for level A2 has started. The monitoring of the children's learning progress and the decision making for the allocation of hours are promoted through the use of formative assessment tools and with the implementation of the "Programme of Attainment in the Greek Language" by the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation. In the final evaluation of the Attainment in the Greek Language Programme (2022 - 2023), 1 579 pupils completed Issue B of the test. Based on the results (Table 1), 46,9% of pupils who completed the language programme achieved B1 level of attainment in Greek. However, the majority of pupils (53,1%) were found to have a level of attainment in Greek lower than B1. Specifically, 34,5% of pupils were found to complete the programme with A2 level and 18,6% with A1 level, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Final evaluation results (2022-2023) on the CER scale

		N	%	% valid answers
Language Level	A1	293	16,2	18,6
	A2	545	30,0	34,5
	B1	741	40,8	46,9
	Total	1579	87,0	100,0
	absentees	235	13,0	
Total			1814	100,0

Teacher training: A variety of teacher professional learning activities was offered by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (School-based or Optional Seminars, Participation of schools in the Professional Learning Support Programme) and issues of intercultural and antiracist education were covered. Particular emphasis was placed on the operation of networks of teachers who teach Greek as a second language, in the context of which online - synchronous and asynchronous - seminars and meetings were organised. The online learning environment Moodle of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute was used for this purpose. A total of 535, pre-primary, primary and secondary school teachers participated.

Regarding the support of teachers, online trainings were conducted for DRASE+ teachers and trainers, who taught children with migrant background. Good practices and basic principles of teaching methodology as well as classroom management issues, were presented. Additionally, trainings were

carried out for the Coordinators of Assistant Directors on how the programmes operate. In November 2022, the Second Pancyprian Competition XENIOS ZEUS against racism and xenophobia was addressed to schools.

Intercultural dimension - Code against racism: The implementation of the antiracist policy of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth is promoted through specific indicators in the Curricula of various disciplines and through the implementation of the "Code of Conduct against Racism & Guide for the Management and Recording of Racist Incidents".

2.3 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

2.3.1 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES UNIT (ICT UNIT)

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MESY) has set high priority on the integration and exploitation of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning and facilitate school administration and school communication with the MESY. The ICT Unit aims at better managing and coordinating ICT-related projects and modernising the administrative structures, procedures and services of the MESY. It is also responsible for equipping public schools with the technology infrastructure and tools needed to support teaching and learning and school administration.

The ICT Unit is coordinated by a Head and is divided into three sectors:

1. Web Services and Communication
2. Technology Infrastructure and Equipment
3. Contracts, Tenders and Financial Management

2.3.1.1 Sector of Web Services and Communication

The Sector of Web Services and Communication is responsible for the organisation and presentation on the web of all information related to the directorates, services, units, departments and programmes of the MESY, as well as of all the educational material for Primary and Secondary General Education. Specifically, it maintains and updates on a daily basis the 80 websites of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (www.moec.gov.cy), the websites of educational material (www.schools.ac.cy, 46 websites of educational material) and the websites of independent services (i.e. www.dipae.ac.cy, www.kysats.ac.cy, www.geonoma.gov.cy, vepoiisis.schools.ac.cy, mikrasia.moec.gov.cy, elearning.schools.ac.cy and so on.).

Additionally, the Sector is responsible for the administration and dissemination of information on the MESY's social media accounts:

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ypourgeiopaideias> (36.000 followers)
- YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cymoec> (1.089.000 views)
- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/cymoec> (6.000 followers)

Moreover, the Sector provides web hosting for all public school websites and supports public schools with web services (800 websites). Specifically, it provides customised ready-to-use website templates for use by public schools and offers training to educators (i.e. on a one-to-one basis, group training, video tutorials and electronic guides and manuals). Furthermore, the Service provides ongoing technical support to teachers of all public schools. The Sector also provides hosting services for the administration systems of Secondary Education schools and is responsible for the management of all email accounts under the domain www.schools.ac.cy (4.000 accounts).

During the year 2023 the following projects were implemented:

- Launch of the design and development of eight new responsive template websites (accessible on mobile devices) using the Get Simple (CMS), to be used as public schools' websites.
- Technical support to schools and teachers regarding the design, development and management of school websites (Content Management Systems: Joomla, Get Simple).
- Design, development and update of new websites (i.e. vepoiisis.schools.ac.cy).
- Design, development and management of Educational TV: Organisation and presentation of audiovisual material (800 videos).
- Web platform, applications and forms:
 - Update, maintenance and support for the web application to upload and distribute circulars of the MESY:
 - Back end system for management.
 - Front end system for presentation.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application for the presentation of announcements and circulars of the MESY (mobile responsive).
 - Design, development, maintenance and support of the web platform for the creation of management of Office365 accounts of all public school pupils.
 - Support of the web application to upload and distribute Internal Circulars (General Archive) of the MESY.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application to recruit examiners and assessors for the Pancyprian Exams.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application for data management and presentation of examination marks and results for the Pancyprian Exams (mobile responsive).
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web platform for data management of applications, payments through JCC, candidate participation reports and presentation of reports for the Exams for Public Sector Recruitment.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application to recruit examiners and assessors for the Exams for Public Sector Recruitment.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application for the management of applications to recruit the Exam Centres for the Exams of the Public Sector Recruitment.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web platform for data management of applications, payments through JCC, candidate participation reports and presentation of reports for the Exams of Prospective Candidate Teachers.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application to recruit examiners and assessors for the Exams of Prospective Candidate Teachers.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application for the management of applications to recruit Exam Centres for the Exams of Prospective Candidate Teachers.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support for the web application for seconded posts, subject counsellors and liaison officers at the MESY (teachers).
 - Redesign, development, maintenance and support of the web form for data management and the submission of online applications for participation in the Adult Education Centres and integration of online payment through JCC Smart.
 - Update, maintenance and support of the web application for submission of online applications to study at the Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application for the management of music files (Primary and Secondary Education).
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application to submit online applications for participation in the ECDL exams.
 - Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application for staffing summer camps of the MESY at Prodromos.

- Analysis, design and development of the web platform to collect data from Higher Education Institutes.
- Upgrade, maintenance and support of the web application used by the Sector for the purposes of organisation and management of the MESY files.
- Upgrade, maintenance and support of a web application for viewing and downloading the Curricula, Scheme of Work, Scheme of Curricula for Secondary Technical and Vocational Education.
- Upgrade, maintenance and support of a web platform for the safe sending of files to specified recipients.
- Design, development and upgrade of a web application for access to a world atlas for teacher use.
- Design, development and upgrade of a web application to send files to specified recipients.
- Design and development of a web application to view regulations, circulars and guidelines concerning the operation of primary schools.

Educational Management System (SEP)

The Educational Management System (SEP) is an information system that has been developed in the context of automating the administrative procedures of school units and the Ministry of Education, Sport and youth. The system includes a number of functions, such as the submission and management of teacher leaves (sick leaves and absence leaves), the submission of various applications by the teachers and the management of these applications by the respective District Offices, Directorates, Units and Services of the Ministry. It is used by all teachers and school units at all levels of public education and by ministry officers.

The SEP development team is responsible for the design and implementation of new functionalities based on the Ministry's needs, to upgrade existing functions in order to meet current user requirements and ensure the smooth operation, development and management of the system.

During 2023, the functions of the system were upgraded and expanded to meet the needs of the Ministry.

2.3.1.2 The sector of Technology Infrastructure and Equipment

The sector of Technology Infrastructure and Equipment is responsible for the implementation of the ICT Unit's policy regarding the infrastructure of schools and includes the support of schools on technical issues and the assessment of new technologies in education.

During 2023, in the framework of digital transformation, the ICT Unit through the Framework Agreement of the Treasury of the Republic of Cyprus, purchased 800 Normal Desktops and 250 printers which have been delivered to public schools of all educational levels. The sector was responsible for the management of orders, the receipt and delivery of equipment to schools, including the preparation of the computers before the delivery (images).

The sector also proceeded with the operation of the new Equipment Management System, in which there are various functions, such as monitoring digital equipment by the school Unit and the Ministry, allocating equipment in schools' classrooms and also the process of withdrawal and proper environmental management of obsolete computer equipment, which was renewed and simplified. The new System allows the Ministry to better plan and organise the purchase of technological equipment.

Furthermore, the Sector continued with the implementation of the last phase of the co-funded by the European Regional Development Fund project "A.K.E.M.E.", regarding structured cabling for the remaining fourteen schools of Secondary General and Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

The Sector is also managing the Project of Digital Transformation of school units aiming at enhancing digital skills and skills related to STEM education that is included in the Cyprus Recovery and Resilience

Plan 2021 - 2026 of the European Union. During 2023 the schools were digitally equipped with laptops, projectors, speakers, microphones and digital graphic boards for the creation of 700 e-classes. The delivery of the equipment is estimated to be completed in April 2024. Following this, a Technical Support Centre (helpdesk) will be created for schools.

The sector is in continuous communication with the school units and provides technical support to schools related to computer and network equipment. It also participates in tender preparation, including the defining of the specifications and the evaluation of tenders for the procurement of hardware and software related to the educational process. Additionally, it participates in the Evaluation Committees for Electronic Catalogs of the General Treasury for printers.

2.3.1.3 Contracts and Tenders Sector

The Sector is responsible for the preparation of the budget and planning of actions related to the ICT Unit. Furthermore, the Sector is responsible for conducting competitions (preparation of tender documents, defining specifications, announcement and evaluation of competitions) related to the work of the ICT Unit and for monitoring the implementation of contracts resulting from the conduct of competitions. Moreover, the Sector monitors the payments regarding the contracts of the ICT Unit in collaboration with the MESY's accounting department. In order to implement the above, the Sector is in constant communication with all the Sectors of the Unit.

What is more, the Sector is responsible for the administrative work of the Unit, including the internal and external communication, the completion of questionnaires and the placement of orders for technological equipment through the Electronic Catalogs of the General Treasury for all the departments of the ministry.

Current Contracts & Services:

- Purchase of IT equipment to support the Web Infrastructure of the MESY (servers, licences for Firewall, and so on.).
- Purchase of internet access services to meet the needs of the MESY and its buildings in Latsia (the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and Data Centre) and digital wildcards certificate services of their servers for all domains and subdomains managed by the MESY.
- Preventive maintenance of Electrical, Mechanical and Electronic Systems in the Data Centre of the MESY.
- Provision of Software Engineering / Consultant Services for the expansion, upgrade and maintenance of the Educational Management System (SEP) of the MESY.

Software and Hardware:

- Purchase of Software Licences for Microsoft Software for all PCs in Public Education and Microsoft products (Office365) for pupils and teachers.
- Purchase of Software Licences (Oracle Database) και services for the support and upgrade of the MESY database and migration to upgraded servers.
- Supply of a laptop with upgraded graphics for the needs of the Web Services and Communication Unit.

2.3.2 THE CYPRUS PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE (CPI)

The various programmes of the CPI on digital transformation in education focus on the priorities of Education and Training 2020 and the Digital Strategy for Cyprus and are based on the principles set out in [the European Commission Action Plan for digital Education \(2021 - 2027\)](#). They are also based on European digital competence frameworks such as: 1) [DigComp 2.2](#), which provides a common language and understanding at a EU level to identify and describe the key areas of citizens' digital competence, 2) [DigCompEdu](#), which aims at providing a general reference framework to promote the

digital competence of teachers, and 3) [DigCompOrg](#), which aspires to encourage and support educational organisations for an effective use of digital technologies in teaching and learning. The CPI offers many actions that aim at strengthening and developing the digital competences of teachers and pupils.

2.3.3 DIGITALISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Furthermore, the DHE promotes digital reforms through the following axes: a) digitalisation of its work, b) promotion of digital education in Higher Education Institutions of Cyprus, c) enhancement of students' digital skills, and d) adoption of digital tools in teaching and learning in Higher Education. Regarding the first axis, in 2023 the DHE has secured an allocation in its budget for the digitalisation of its work. For this purpose, the DHE will draw on the experience of other countries (e.g. Malta, Hungary) that have already developed and implemented similar digitalisation systems. Also, in 2023, the DHE proceeded with the creation of an electronic platform (as part of the DHE's work in the Recovery and Resilience Plan) for the creation of electronic research tools. This platform is already used for the collection of data in the context of three surveys: the National Graduate Tracking Survey, the European Graduate Tracking Survey and the National Employers' Skills Survey. In addition, the DHE has developed an electronic database in collaboration with the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Unit for the collection of data from all Cyprus HEIs in relation to the student population, teaching / research staff and programmes of study. These data are presented in the report of the survey "Mapping of the field of Higher Education in Cyprus" published on the DHE's website every academic year. The data is additionally used to provide valid information on various aspects of Higher Education in Cyprus and consequently facilitate relevant decision-making, e.g. social dimension-fairer access and participation in Higher Education, promotion of Higher Education in Cyprus at regional and international level, but also provide information to various national and European services / organisations e.g. Statistical Service of the Cyprus European Commission, Eurydice, BFUG, ASEM.

In relation to the second and third axes, in the context of the project "Development of a National Graduate Tracking Mechanism and Design and Implementation of an Employers' Skills Survey", the DHE in the Cyprus Recovery and Resilience Plan, collects data on the existence of mismatches between the level of digital skills possessed by higher education graduates and what is required by their work through the National Graduate Tracking Survey. This data will be used to make decisions and design appropriate policies to enhance students' digital skills.

2.4 EDUCATION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The Unit of Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development is the responsible (EESD) body of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MESY) for planning, implementing, monitoring and upgrading the National Strategy for Environmental Education (EE) / Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) not only in formal education, but also in non-formal and in-formal education. For that reason as a horizontal structure is in close cooperation with the Departments of Education and with other Ministries and governmental bodies, as well as with other interested parties in EE and ESD (NGOs, Universities, Research Centres, Commissioners of Environment, Voluntarism, National Youth Council and so on.). The actions of the Unit of EESD are multifaceted and are developed in many levels. Indicatively the Unit is responsible for the: a) operation of the Governmental Network of Environmental Education Centres, which offers more than 150 environmental education programmes, b) implementation of the ESD curricula in pre-primary and primary education, c) planning and integrating environmental education programmes, d) authoring of various educational tools for the environment and

sustainable development, e) conducting research in the field, f) teachers professional development on ESD, g) networking, collaboration and regional collaboration on ESD.

Additionally, the Unit is the national focal point for EE / ESD and is representing Cyprus in various regional and international fora for EE / ESD. Through the Unit Cyprus is chairing the UNECE ESD Steering Committee as well as the Mediterranean Strategy for integrating Med ESD Action Plan in the Med Region. Moreover, the Unit is participating in various international expert Groups and Organisations on ESD such as UNESCO, MIO-Medies and so on.

The Unit for EESD is participating in various European projects which are funded by various European funding mechanisms. At the moment it is participating in a number of European Projects such as SUSEDI, PEDIA, PARCCE, Digital Education for Sustainable Development across Europe, AELIA and provides expertise in various international and national committees for ESD.

It is preparing national and international reports about ESD and participating in various National Committees and policies for the Environment and Sustainable Development, such as the National Strategy for Biodiversity, Climate Change, Blue Growth, Youth Strategy and so on.

Note: Details for all activities and actions of the Unit of EESD can be found at the website of the UNIT <https://mepaa.moec.gov.cy/index.php/el/>

2.5 SPECIAL EDUCATION

According to the Special Education Legislation, the District Committees for Special Education decide on provisions and / or any other accommodations in order to assist children with special needs who attend public schools. During the school year 2022 - 2023, 7 418 children with special needs attended public pre-primary and primary schools. 691 children studied in 119 Special Units. Additionally, 524 children attended nine Special Schools that operate throughout Cyprus. 6 698 pupils with special needs studied in classes of Secondary General Education. 5 183 pupils studied in Secondary General Education and 1 515 in Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

During the school year 2022 - 2023, pupils with special needs in Secondary Education were supported by a total of 9 985 extra teaching periods. In Primary Education a total of 1 061 teachers were employed to support all children with special needs who studied in classes of pre-primary and primary schools, Special Units and Special Schools. Moreover, 85 teachers from Secondary Education were employed to support children who attended Special Schools.

2.5.1 SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

The following special education programmes operate in Primary and Secondary Education:

A. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING, EMOTIONAL AND / OR ANY OTHER DIFFICULTIES

Children with special needs, who attend mainstream class in public schools, attend supportive teaching classes based on the curriculum. The curriculum is adjusted to their individual learning needs.

In public pre-primary and primary schools, special education and / or speech therapy are provided by Special Education Teachers for learning, intellectual, functional and adjustment problems, or Special Education Teachers for the Deaf and / or Speech Therapy. In Secondary Education, support is provided by teachers of the mainstream class. Additionally, pupils with special needs receive modifications, such as extra completion time, exemption from spelling mistakes, and so on.

B. SPECIAL UNITS

Children who attend Special Units are enrolled on the school's registry. Pupils who attend Special Units in Primary and Secondary Education, participate in activities and lessons of the mainstream class, based on their capabilities and individual needs. Pupils who attend the Lycea Special Units, have a three-day class programme in their school unit and a two-day pre-vocational training programme at selected workplaces. A special programme on Hotel and Catering runs in Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training. In Secondary Education, pupils who attend Special Units receive a "Certificate of Attendance".

C. SPECIAL SCHOOLS

Children with severe difficulties are educated in the nine Special Schools, which are staffed with qualified personnel (teachers for learning, intellectual, functional and adjustment difficulties, speech therapists, nurses, physiotherapists and other specialists, auxiliary staff, as well as teachers from Secondary Education), in order to provide high quality therapy, education and support. The educational and other needs of children in Special Schools are met through individualised programmes of Special Education. The educational policy of the Special Schools includes a programme of continuous contact with the neighbouring mainstream schools and the organisation of common activities.

D. INTEGRATION PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN OF SPECIAL SCHOOLS OR SPECIAL UNITS IN NEIGHBOURING SECONDARY EDUCATION SCHOOLS

During the school year 2022 - 2023, two integration programmes were in operation for children in Special Schools with neighbouring Secondary Education schools. Children in Special Schools joined the class of Home Economics in Secondary General Education. Children also joined the classes of Hotel and Catering, Applied Arts and Hairdressing in Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training.

E. PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN WITH HEARING DISABILITY

The following inclusive programmes aimed at children with hearing disability and operated in 65 Secondary Education School units:

Study in the mainstream class:

- without any extra support.
- with supportive teaching classes.

Sign Language Educational Interpreters are provided where needed.

F. PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN WITH VISUAL DISABILITY

The following inclusive programmes for children with visual disability operated in 70 Secondary Education School units:

Study in the mainstream class:

- without any extra support,
- with supportive teaching classes.

G. EDUCATION OUTSIDE SCHOOLS' PREMISES (EDUCATION AT HOME)

Under the provisions of the Law, children with special needs in primary and secondary education, who due to health reasons cannot attend the regular school programme for an extended period of time, can attend lessons outside the school premises. This kind of provision is considered as part of the regular educational programme. During 2022 - 2023 school year, 59 children from Primary Education, 225 children from Secondary General Education and 19 children from Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training attended the Education at Home programme, following an official decision by the District Committee for Special Education. Education outside the school premises in Secondary Education is provided by teachers with the purchase of services. The total cost for this programme during 2022 - 2023 was €833 089.

2.5.2 ASSESSMENT – REASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

In the school year 2022 - 2023, groups for the assessment-reassessment of children with special needs in Primary Education operated in each district. These groups consisted of a Special Education Teacher for learning, intellectual, functional and adjustment problems and a Speech-Language Pathologist, who are members of the multidisciplinary assessment-reassessment team, as defined by the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Laws of 1999 to 2020. For this purpose, a total of 16 Special Education Teachers and Speech-Language Pathologists were employed full-time or part-time. The operation of these groups aims at fixed criteria and methodology for the assessment and reassessment of the needs of children referred to the District Committees for Special Education in order to ensure uniformity and minimise subjectivity in decision-making.

2.5.3 SPECIAL EDUCATION - EXAMINATION SERVICE

In 2023, the Examinations Service of the Department of Higher Education, in collaboration with the University of Cyprus, organised Special Pancyprian Access Examinations involving differentiated tests, that were modified to cater for the needs of one pupil who had no written or verbal communication abilities. Differentiated assessment was deemed necessary for the pupil, since standard adjustments on the actual test would not be adequate and could not have granted the pupil fair and equal participation in the Pancyprian Access Examinations 2023.

2.5.4 TEACHERS' TRAINING

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth aims at reinforcing the awareness and sensitivity of School Inspectors, head teachers, class teachers and teachers of special education to the provisions of the Law and their obligations towards children with special needs attending their schools. This objective is achieved through in-service training seminars. During 2022 - 2023 school year, in Primary Education training seminars were held for care assistants, teachers, as well as head teachers. At the same time, in Secondary Education, a special training programme for care assistants and teachers who teach pupils with autism spectrum disorder was implemented in two schools.

2.5.5 BUDGET

The budget of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth for the year 2023 provides for the employment of teaching, therapeutic and ancillary personnel, training and professional development of staff, the provision of specialised equipment for classrooms and individual children, the modification of buildings to provide accessibility, the transportation of children with special needs to and from school and to out-of-school activities as well as the running expenses of Special Schools and the economic support of the Parents Associations of Special Schools.

2.6 LIFELONG LEARNING

Elaboration, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021 - 2027

The main responsibility of the European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Bureau (EIALLAEB) is the monitoring and implementation of the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (CyLLLS) for the years 2021 - 2027, in cooperation with other ministries and competent authorities. The CyLLLS was approved by the Council of Ministers on 30th September 2022 (*Decision no.:* 93.682).

In order to achieve the vision of the CyLLLS 2021 - 2027, the following four strategic priorities have been set as key objectives to be achieved by 2027. To:

- Establish the governance, monitoring and evaluation framework comprising policy arrangements and action plans with clear stakeholder roles and sound financial management.

- Reduce youth unemployment and upskill / reskill young people and the workforce by providing learning opportunities that reflect labour market needs and take into account the digital and green transitions.
- Increase adult participation in lifelong learning by improving the quality of the adult learning sector, motivating individuals and businesses, removing barriers, as well as raising the profile and strengthening of information and communication.
- Improve the professional practice of adult educators and support trainers at all levels of education in developing lifelong learning skills.

These priorities are necessary to provide the long-term strategic framework for lifelong learning towards the development of a knowledge-based and inclusive society and guide future actions. These priorities have taken into account the current national needs, together with European priorities and objectives deriving from relevant programmes, initiatives and mechanisms (e.g. Erasmus+, European Pillar of Social Rights, Digital Education Action Plan 2021 - 2027, European Education Area, European Skills Agenda, European Green Deal, Recovery and Resilience Facility).

For the carrying out, monitoring and evaluation of the CyLLLS, for the years 2021 - 2027, collaborations were developed with directorates / services / departments of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, as well as with members of National and Technical Committees for Lifelong Learning. The members of the two committees were approved by a Decision of the Council of Ministers in May 2020 (*Decision no.: 89.482, 27/5/2020*). It is noted that the preparation and monitoring of the CyLLLS 2021 - 2027 received support from the Directorate General for Structural Reform Support of the European Commission (DG REFORM).

3.

INNOVATIONS, REFORMS AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN EDUCATION

3.1 PRIMARY EDUCATION

3.1.1 IMPLEMENTING THE REVISED CURRICULUM AND SCHOOL TIMETABLES IN PRIMARY AND PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

During the school year 2022 - 2023 the revised Curricula and Timetable continued to be implemented.

3.1.1.1 Modern Greek Language Teaching

The teaching of the Greek language in Primary Education aims at developing citizens able to respond successfully to the demands of a modern literate society. To that end, instruction is based on a broad and scientifically substantiated view of what language is, approached and implemented by combining various language-learning approaches and synthesising elements, drawn from various linguistic theories and practices in a collaborative and balanced way. Language is considered, firstly, as a system of elements governed by rules and normalities (language as structure), and as a dynamic means of communication and social action, operating within a specific communication framework and fulfilling a specific objective (language as function). Additionally, language is considered as a mean of constructing social reality (language as a system of ideas and values).

Within this context, the Attainment and Adequacy Targets for Greek Language work supportively towards the planning, implementation and evaluation of Language Teaching as well as, towards the organisation of various training initiatives for teachers' professional development (taking place both centrally or on a school-by-school basis). Therefore, teachers' training has focused on promoting strategies for independent reading comprehension, in an attempt to further enhance children's ability to respond effectively and individually to the demands of an ever-evolving society.

In detail, during the school year 2022 - 2023, the members of the Greek Language Working Group took over and realised several training sessions, for teachers, head teachers, and school inspectors on the following themes / topics:

- Good practices in Greek Language Lessons.
- Strategic, independent reading comprehension about the International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).
- Support scheme for scaffolding pupils with added risk of operational illiteracy.
- Differentiation in Greek Language Teaching.
- Integration of digital and online technologies in the Greek Language Lesson.

Based on the above, along with the multilayered work of the Literacy Advisors and with the contribution of all members of the Greek Language Working Group:

- Supportive material was developed, based on the needs that emerged in education.

- A new test was designed and developed as a final assessment tool in Greek Language for all 1st Grade pupils.
- Supportive teaching material was developed as an aid to all teachers and children who participated in the Programme of Supportive Teaching for Operational Literacy.
- Supportive material was developed, with indicative ideas and practices, for the 1st Grade teachers who teach Reading and Writing, in the context of facilitating their smoother transition from Pre-Primary to Primary school.
- Educational and teaching material was developed for Greek Teaching and Learning, in the context of facilitating pupils' transition from Primary to Secondary School.
- Digital and online teaching material was developed, to teach Greek to all primary school grades.
- Several online teacher training conferences for different groups of schools took place, on a variety of subjects related to Greek teaching-learning.

In addition, the Greek Language Working Group was actively involved in various training and information actions of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Department of Primary Education, and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute.

3.1.1.2 Mathematics

The main focus of the Mathematics Curriculum is to prepare pupils to acquire essential mathematical knowledge and competencies, in ways that meet the needs of an individual's life as a constructive, concerned and reflective citizen. Moreover, the Mathematics Curriculum focuses on the development of pupils' mathematical reasoning, conceptual understanding, problem solving skills, procedural knowledge and positive attitudes towards Mathematics.

During the school year 2022 - 2023:

- Online meetings were organised for all teachers who taught 4th Grade Mathematics.
- Visits to schools from the Mathematics Advisors who focused on providing assistance at school unit level, to teachers who were teaching the 4th Grade Mathematics as well as to teachers who were teaching Mathematics for the first time in a particular classroom.
- Online training was conducted to teachers of a private primary school in Greece from the academic advisors of the Mathematics Team (University of Cyprus) and members of the Mathematics Writing Team.
- Reviewing was implemented of the Literacy tests, administered to pupils in Grades One to Six, aiming at diagnosing pupils at risk, for the Remedial Teaching Programme of Illiteracy in Mathematics and providing to them with formative and final assessment.
- A final assessment essay was prepared in cooperation with the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation for the pupils of the 1st Grade.
- Training for all teachers who participated in the Remedial Teaching Programme for Pupils at Risk of Illiteracy and taught Mathematics (in collaboration with the Pedagogical Institute).
- Formative assessment projects were prepared, related to the teaching of Mathematics in Grades 3 and 4.
- Revision of the 2nd Grade textbook has started, which will undergo extensive corrections / changes.
- Academic advisors of the Mathematics Team (University of Cyprus) and members of the Mathematics Writing Team trained teachers who teach Grade 1 and 2 in identifying and supporting children at risk for functional illiteracy in mathematics.
- A pilot project for the implementation of digital courses in Mathematics was implemented, as part of the effort for digital transformation of education. The aim of the project was to use e-books in the Mathematics course and investigate the (a) impact of the use of e-books on learning outcomes and (b) views of teachers and pupils on the benefits and difficulties of using e-books. The teachers and

pupils of two 6th Grade classes from five different primary schools located in different districts, participated in the project. The total number of participants was 10 teachers and 147 pupils. The teachers attended a three-hour training, by the academic advisors in collaboration with the members of the Primary Education Mathematics Team. The results of the pilot project showed that the use of the e-book enhanced learning outcomes. The digital environment enhanced teachers' efforts to coordinate the teaching process, monitor pupils' work and provide immediate feedback. Familiarisation of both teachers and pupils with the functions of the digital environment was easy and quick. The digital lessons were enjoyable for all pupils and stimulated their interest and active participation in the lesson. The difficulties encountered mainly focused on technical issues related to the speed of the internet and the capabilities of the available touch screens.

3.1.1.3 English

As of 2011 - 2012, English is taught in Primary School from Grade 1 (first year of primary school). In 2015 - 2016, after the recommendations of a Special Scientific Committee, a revised school timetable was implemented in Primary Education which increased the teaching time for English in the early years of Primary Education.

The newly revised school timetable provides for English to be taught twice a week (two 40-minute teaching periods) in all Primary School grades. This move, to increase the teaching periods for English, was extended to the All-Day Compulsory Schools, which implement an intensive English programme. They, therefore, teach English three periods a week in all Grades (1 - 6).

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, three-day seminars were held (Lefkosia, Lemesos-Pafos, Larnaka-Ammochostos) on the topic "Basic Principles of Teaching English in Primary Schools - Elements of a Successful Lesson" and were attended by teachers teaching English in all districts. In addition, school-based support was offered to teachers by subject advisors and numerous demonstration lessons were offered.

During the school year, various activities were carried out to inform parents about the teaching of English in primary education. The activities included open-days where parents were invited to observe English lessons and discuss with the teacher and the Inspector or a subject advisor. Other activities included plays, and performances of songs or poems in English.

Regarding the teaching of English in Pre-primary Education, this continues to be implemented through CLIL. The implementation of CLIL is supported and monitored by the Cyprus CLIL Coordinating Centre.

3.1.1.4 Health Education

During the school year 2022 - 2023, emphasis was placed on the issues of sexual education in all classes, through the following educational activities:

- Presentation of teachers, during the Two-Day Teacher's Day, about the Guide "Say NO" in Lefkosia, Pafos, Ammochostos.
- Online training of teachers on the subject: Sexual Education: WHAT and HOW in the Health Education Curriculum.
- Guidance and support of teachers through advisory work and staff sessions in schools.
- A variety of lessons were organised in School Networks on Health Education subjects (a total of 120 schools).
- Online training of teachers for pilot implementation of FOOD MISSION lesson plans by volunteer teachers and creation of educational material.

- Presentation of the Health Education Curriculum and issues of sexual education to the students of the European University.
- Presentation of the Guide “We say NO” during a television show.
- Training of teachers on the subject of “Health Education through CLIL”.
- Health Education Committee meeting of the Medical Service with the Health Education team of the Ministry of Health.
- Supporting material for Health Education topics was developed and the Health Education website was redesigned, so that it is now easily accessible by teachers.
- Active involvement in various educational and informative actions of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, the Directorate of Primary Education and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute.

3.1.1.5 Geography

During the school year 2022 - 2023, the revised / reconstructed Curriculum of Geography was implemented all over public primary schools. Teachers had available teaching material that was based on modern learning approaches and Adequate and Attainment Targets for Grades 1 - 3 and for part of Grades 4 and 5. In order to support teachers' implementation of the Geography Adequacy and Attainment Targets, relevant training programmes and activities took place.

Additionally, in collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the Deputy Ministry of Tourism, the annual competition about Tourism in Cyprus was designed and announced for the third consecutive year. The competition titled “Kopiaste stin Koinotita mas”, which will be annually announced among the pupils of 3rd and 4th Grade, aims at getting to know Cyprus, promoting local authentic touristic experiences, and developing sustainable touristic consciousness. On behalf of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, the competition is supported and coordinated by the Primary Geography Curriculum team.

Geographic Education in primary schools, ultimately aims at improving people's quality of life in their living environment (natural and man-made). Therefore, it seeks to:

- a) equip pupils with a sufficient body of knowledge that:
 - includes useful knowledge, necessary for critically evaluating the real world in order to form the basis for pupils, as future citizens, to live in quality and happiness and successfully participate in the new globalised political-social and economic environment,
 - is a prerequisite for creative and efficient design of their living space so that as future citizens live in harmony with it,
- b) help pupils develop the appropriate spatial analysis skills in combination with geographic tools and sufficient knowledge, so as future citizens to be able to think and make well informed and rational decisions at a personal level and through active community participation at a collective level,
- c) form citizens that exhibit attitudes and behaviours which show acceptance and respect for human and environmental diversity and rational management of resources and space on local, regional and global scales.

The actions of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth seek to effectively develop and support Geographic Education. Within this context, modern school geography teaching is organised around geographic inquiry, a methodology that includes the development of spatial thinking skills, the attainment of concepts and their linking with spatial representations, through a variety of geographic representation tools, along with thinking processes. Therefore, learning activities during the teaching process are based on Geographic Analytical Skills. Geographic Analytical Skills are a set of spatial thinking skills specially adjusted for use in Geography Teaching.

The need to develop pupil's spatial thinking skills is crucial in modern days, as contemporary life increasingly requires spatial knowledge, judgment and decision making. The democratisation of access to multiple sources of Geographic Information (internet, spatial globes) on one hand and the challenges of modern life on the other, highlight the necessity to develop spatial thinking skills in order to organise analyse and evaluate spatial decisions as means to human, social and environmental harmony.

The need to further develop Geographic Education continues with the development and production of educational material, the training and support of teachers on a school basis and with the pilot integration of Geographic Information Systems in teaching practice.

3.1.1.6 Religious Education

Pupils' religious literacy is a goal of the Religious Education. The pupils in our schools learn about both the Christian Orthodox Tradition and the universal phenomenon of Religion. Pupils are expected to develop / acquire knowledge, values, attitudes, behaviour and skills necessary for our modern society.

In 2022 - 2023, the Religious Education Team continued the revision of the curriculum and the production of new educational materials / books, especially for the 3rd and 4th Grade. The Religious Education Team additionally provided in-service training for primary school teachers through seminars, meetings, and conferences. Finally, assistance continued to be provided for the production of new educational material based on the Maronite Christian Tradition for the St. Maronas Primary School.

3.1.1.7 History

According to the History Curriculum for Primary Education, the main purpose of the subject is the development of historical thinking and historical consciousness in order to contribute towards the education of critically thinking and active democratic citizens. This is pursued through the development of historical literacy, the parallel development of substantive knowledge and disciplinary understanding in history. In this context, emphasis is given to both the development of factual knowledge of the past and the process of cultivating conceptual understanding and abilities related to historical inquiry (disciplinary understanding). Teachers are supported in their efforts to implement the above through the introduction of a constructivist inquiry-based approach to the teaching of History. This support takes place both in terms of in-service training and the development of teaching materials.

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, the Primary History Group continued with the development of teaching material for the teaching of the Cyprus History topics (for Grades 5 and 6). This material was presented in an online seminar in March 2023, attended by 200 educators.

As part of the training of educators, the Primary History Group offered seminars on a School Basis with visits to schools. Advisory work was also provided to schools and teachers who had requested it.

During the Teachers' Training Days, the Primary History Group offered a seminar titled "Teaching History with Conflicting Sources." The purpose of the seminar was to propose practical suggestions to educators for teaching History using sources that often describe historical periods, events, personalities, and phenomena through conflicting perspectives and interpretations of the past. During the seminar, participants had the opportunity to discuss the role of sources in teaching History and engage experientially in activities aiming at developing children's ability to manage sources. Particular emphasis was given to the construction of historical knowledge through the study of conflicting sources.

Finally, the Primary History Group participated in the assessment of educational programmes, submitted by different organisations, curricula, and private schools, in order to be approved by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

3.1.1.8 Music Education

During the school year 2022 - 2023, Primary Education music courses experienced a revitalisation following the imposition of restrictive measures during the pandemic. They transitioned back to an experiential approach, with a focus on actively involving children in creative learning, interpretation, and appreciation of music.

The following activities took place in 2022 - 2023:

- The 2nd Primary Education Concert, “Kites and Dreams, Children and Mandolins” held on May 23rd, at Lemesos Laniteio Theatre, marked the culmination of mandolin teaching efforts during the pandemic in Lemesos district schools. Notably, one hundred children from three Lemesos primary schools performed orchestrations by esteemed Greek composers and accompanied two professional singers in songs by Greek and Cypriot artists.
- Educators teaching music participated in training sessions on new technologies, focusing on learning and utilising the Musescore software in music lessons. Three sessions were held in Lefkosia, Larnaka, and Lemesos in February and March 2023. These sessions provided educators with valuable insights into using Musescore as a beneficial tool for lesson planning and educational practice.
- During the school year 2022 - 2023, music educational material for the 5th Grade was created and posted for teachers to implement it. The new units include guidelines for teachers, PowerPoint presentations with listening activities and music material.

3.1.1.9 Environmental Education - Education for Sustainable Development (E.E. - E.S.D.)

The Environmental Education (EE) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) curriculum is integrated in an interdisciplinary manner, serving as a fundamental pillar for green transition and sustainability within schools. This curriculum fosters a continuous dynamic interaction process between children and, by extension, the school environment. Each school is developing and implementing its Sustainable Environmental Education Policy which focuses on its specific environmental characteristics, aiming at its sustainable transformation gradually and in a long-term.

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, experiential learning programmes were implemented in schools, nurturing essential environmental qualities in children while engaging parents / guardians and communities / groups in environmental actions. These efforts target the adoption of pro-environmental measures and, more broadly, a cultural shift among participants.

Furthermore, the 2022 - 2023 school year witnessed a notable increase in schools' demand to participate in educational programmes offered by the State Network of Environmental Education Centres (EECs), which is under the responsibility of the Unit of Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development within the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. These specific Environmental Education Programmes, offer unique opportunities for children to engage in on-site environmental studies.

Additionally, extra support was extended to Pre-primary and Primary education educators to enhance their capacity in effectively implementing the EE / ESD curricula across formal and non-formal education settings. The training seminars aspire to shape sustainable schools, functioning as learning communities

that promote sustainability and integrate it into school life. This comprehensive transformation occurs at three basic levels of school functioning, the:

- a) pedagogical (learning and teaching processes),
- b) social / organisational (culture, social climate, educational policy), and
- c) technical / economic (infrastructure, equipment, management practices).

3.1.1.10 Design and Technology - Digital Technologies

The Design and Technology - Digital Technologies course is considered as a primary course in our educational system, because it not only applies the principles and methods of modern pedagogy but it also connects school to modern society, workplace and the wider environment.

The general purpose of the course is the active involvement of pupils in a creative and innovative process, through which they are expected to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to design and develop various products which can be used to solve various problems. The curriculum of the course provides technological knowledge from various thematic units (e.g. Structures, Electricity, Mechanisms, Control Systems and Robotics) and develops practical skills in using materials, tools and digital media to create products. Moreover, it promotes attitudes and values regarding the relationship between technology, society and environment, as well as the safe and critical use of communication and information technologies. Through investigation, a problem-solving process and experiential learning, pupils cultivate computational and critical thinking and they are also introduced into the world of programming and robotics.

In 2022 - 2023, the course was enriched with new teaching materials, tools and means that facilitate the safe and creative work of children. In addition, two ground robots were provided to each Primary School, as a simple and pleasant introduction to the world of programming. All pupils' textbooks were revised, and the course official website was enriched with interactive and other digital supporting material for all modules of the Subject Curriculum. Finally, the course advisors offered in-service training seminars for all teachers of the course, while optional afternoon seminars were also offered for teachers with a particular interest in teaching the course.

In conclusion, the Design and Technology - Digital Technologies course is considered to be or has become a living part of children's education and is constantly evolving to ensure continuity with later secondary and higher education, but also with today's changing society.

3.1.1.11 Art (Visual Arts Education)

Visual Arts Education contribute towards the overall human development, with an emphasis on the social, cognitive and emotional areas. At the same time, they foster respect and understanding among human beings and develop positive attitudes towards the environment, society and culture. In this context, learning and teaching the Visual Arts is experiential, and the design and delivery of visual arts activities focuses on viewing - observing and making - creating.

In order to promote and support the implementation of the Visual Arts Curriculum the Inspectors and Art Advisors focused on the following areas of action:

- Organisation and implementation of three art educator seminars within the framework of the Two-Day Educational seminar for teachers entitled "Creative Partnerships of Primary Schools with Visual Artists". Cooperation with five educators for the presentation of art units implemented at their schools with the guidance of the Inspectors and Advisors. Delivery of five parallel art workshops by the artists who cooperated with the educators.

- Collaboration with educators on a national basis for the development and implementation of sixteen art units within the framework of the “Creative Collaboration of Primary Schools with Visual Artists”. Publication of the art units on the website of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth
- Research and production of ten short films dedicated to ten contemporary Cypriot visual artists and implementation of four units based on the artwork of four artists in Primary School. Publication of the films and units on the website of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.
- Research and production of five short films dedicated to five contemporary Cypriot visual artists with recommendations for educational visual practices in Primary School. Publication of the films on the website of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.
- Research, selection and printing of the first part of a series of A2 size posters with artworks by Cypriot visual artists of the first and second generation. The posters will be sent to Primary Schools as educational material.
- Guidance and support to teachers through e-mail and telephone communication throughout the school year.
- Development of supporting materials regarding various aspects of the Visual Arts Curriculum.
- Re-publication of the exercise book “Visual Diary” for pupils, to be distributed to all primary schools in September 2023.
- Enriching the libraries of all schools with a new visual book for pupils so that the teachers can use it properly during the lesson.

3.1.1.12 Science

In November 2023 in-service training for science teachers of Grade 4 was organised in the different districts. These training sessions presented various effective strategies for utilising the curriculum and additional materials in science, which also contributed towards the familiarisation of pupils with the content and the structure of TIMSS tests.

As far as school-level training is concerned, Science Advisors visited schools in order to provide teachers with support about science teaching and familiarise pupils with TIMSS items.

3.1.1.13 Physical Education

The school year 2022 - 2023 began with the initial daily in-service training which gave the opportunity to teachers to take part in two workshops on the thematic area of Lifetime Activities (Drastiriotes Zois), Orienteering, Aerobic and Anaerobic Activities. The initial in-service training aimed at teachers to actively participate in orienteering games in the school field and in nature as well as in planning and evaluating aerobic and anaerobic activities. In this way teachers understand the importance of orienteering in life and of exercise in health, reflect on quality activities and good teaching practices in order to implement them in practice and enhance children to develop knowledge, positive attitudes towards lifetime activities and promote mental health. Orienteering days were organised in parks by the Ministry of Education as a follow up of the initial training.

During the school year, special emphasis was given on in-school training and support. Inspectors and advisors of Physical Education visited schools and provided support to teachers on the thematic areas of the physical education curriculum. At the same time, they planned, implemented and evaluated new lesson plans helping teachers to understand the implementation of the Adequacy and Attainment Targets.

At the end of the school year, training sessions, in the frame of Cooperative Learning Communities, were organised in the thematic area of Games. The focus was on Volleyball in primary school,

introducing and improving game skills and strategies through a variety of methodological and organisational approaches. Teachers also participated actively in a workshop of Volleyball in Primary School which aimed at making them understand volleyball as an easy sport to learn and play for fun.

Cooperation with the Cyprus CLIL Coordinating Centre also continued this school year. A small group of teachers, guided by the Physical Education advisor who specialized in CLIL in Physical Education, planned, implemented and evaluated lessons based on CLIL approach in Physical Education. At the end of the school year, two training sessions in the framework of school networks took place in Lefkosia and Lemesos, where Head Teachers, teachers, advisors, inspectors and the CLIL manager observed a CLIL Physical Education lesson, focusing on volleyball, and then participated in a discussion to highlight good practices in implementing the CLIL approach in Physical Education.

A dance day was organised at the Lemesos Medieval Castle Square as a result of the full implementation of the Physical Education curriculum, especially on the thematic area of traditional dance. About eight hundred children, danced in groups, Greek traditional dances.

3.1.1.14 Pre-primary Education

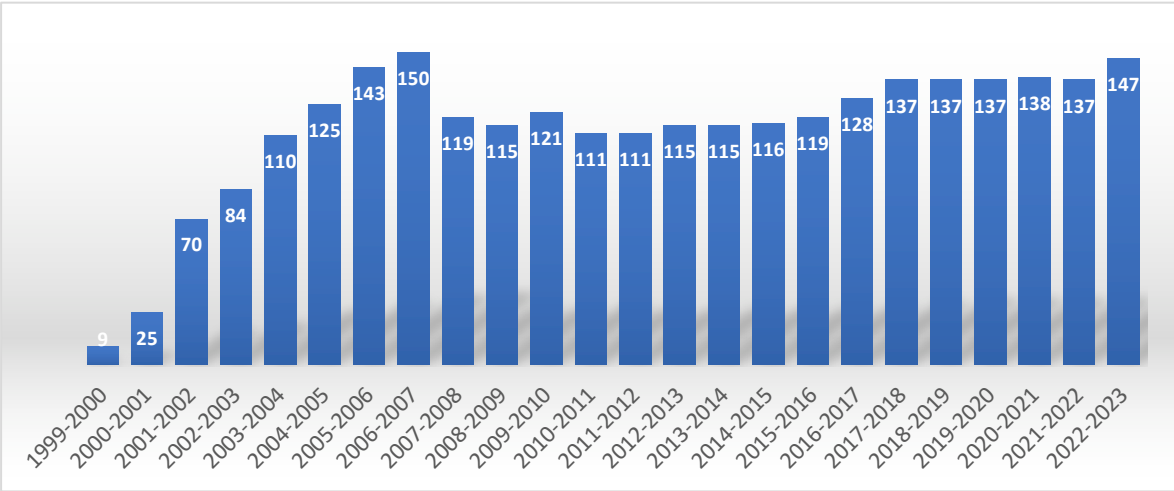
In October 2022 provincial networks were held and dealt with administrative issues. The programme for the training of Pre-primary teachers in the Pre-primary Education Curriculum continued in November 2022. Furthermore, classroom teachers and teachers of the DRA.S.E. programme were offered online training concerning methods of reinforcing teaching during Free and / or Guided Play, as well as on teaching issues of Greek as a second language.

3.1.2 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALL-DAY SCHOOL

3.1.2.1 All-Day Optional Primary Schools and All-Day Optional Special Schools

Since the school year 1999 - 2000 and upon request of many schools the institution of the All-Day Optional Primary and Special School has been extended and implemented as follows:

Number of All-Day Optional Primary and Special Schools



The All-Day Optional Primary and Special School function from October to May, five days a week – based on two types of time schedules – until 3:05 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. That is, they have three or four

additional afternoon teaching periods. The five-day school week was adopted from the school year 2016 - 2017 onwards.

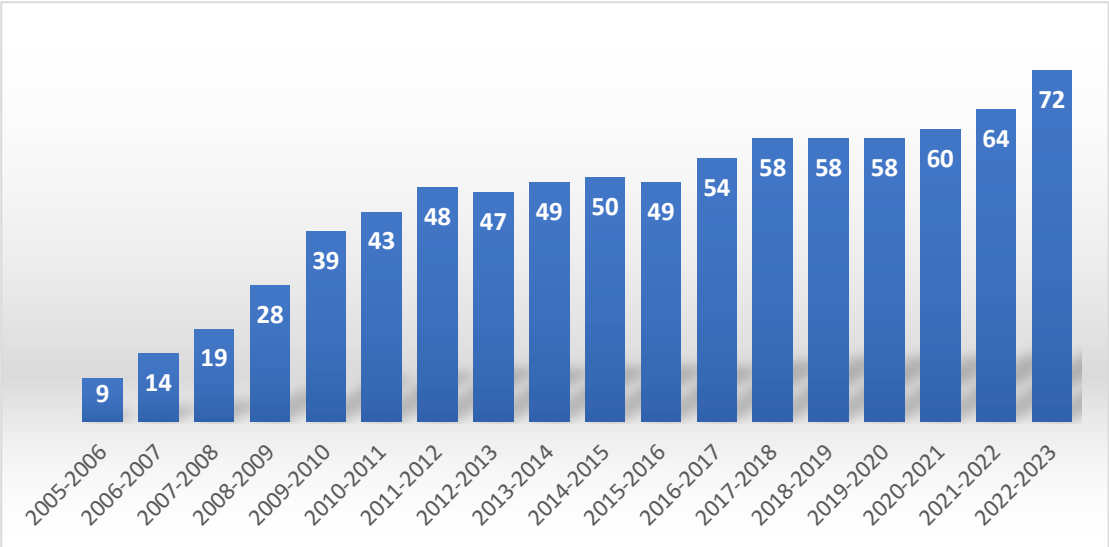
The number of pupils per class ranges from 8 to 25, according to the needs of each school unit. During the school years 2020 - 2021 and 2021 - 2022, due to the pandemic COVID-19 measures, the maximum number of pupils per class was 20 instead of 25. The formation of classes and groups is done according to the pupils’ interests. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth provides all schools which function as All-Day Schools with the necessary equipment.

Pupils have lunch under the supervision of teachers. Catering expenses are borne by the children's parents. The necessary arrangements for the provision / preparation of meals are undertaken by the relevant Parents’ Associations. The type of food and the specific menu is agreed and arranged by parents in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth finances part of the cost by funding the meals for a number of pupils in need.

3.1.2.2 All-Day Optional Pre-primary Schools

The All-Day School in Pre-primary Education was experimentally implemented during the school year 2005 - 2006 in ten classes of nine rural Pre-primary Schools. Since then, upon the request of many schools, the institution of All-Day Optional Pre-primary School was extended and implemented as follows:

Number of All-Day Optional Pre-primary Schools



These Pre-primary Schools operate as All-Day Schools on an optional basis. They function from October to May, five days a week – based on two types of time schedules – until 3:05 p.m. or 4:00 p.m. That is, they have three or four additional afternoon periods. The five-day school week was adopted from the school year 2016 - 2017 onwards.

The afternoon programme includes lunch at school, five teaching periods per week for resting and relaxing and ten teaching periods for creative activities on the following subjects: Language, Maths, Information Technology, Drama, Music, Dance, Art, Physical Education and Group Games. The maximum number of pupils per class is 25. During the school years 2020 - 2021 and 2021 - 2022, due to the pandemic COVID-19 measures, the maximum number of pupils per class was 20 instead of 25.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth provided all schools already operating as All-Day Schools with the necessary equipment.

Pupils have lunch under the supervision of teachers. Catering expenses are borne by the children's parents. The necessary arrangements for the provision / preparation of meals are undertaken by the relevant Parents' Associations. The type of food and the specific menu is agreed and arranged by the parents in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth finances part of the cost by funding the meals for a number of pupils in need.

3.1.2.3 All-Day Compulsory Schools in Primary Education

Rapid societal changes create the need to reform the Cyprus Educational System in terms of improved conditions for school life, modern ways of learning, new school subjects, upgraded infrastructure and a revised Curriculum and School Timetable. Therefore, in 2006 - 2007, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth introduced the All-Day Compulsory School in Primary Education on a pilot basis in nine Primary Schools throughout Cyprus.

At the end of the school year 2009 - 2010, the four-year pilot programme was completed. The final framework of the All-Day Compulsory Schools was implemented during the school year 2010 - 2011. As of that year the institution of All-Day Compulsory Schools continues to operate in 14 Primary Schools. After the completion of the pilot programme and the formal establishment of the All-Day Compulsory Schools that was approved by the Council of Ministers on 16th February, 2011, the All-Day Compulsory School is officially considered to be a type of Public School.

The All-Day Compulsory Schools' educational programme and mode of operation is very different from the All-Day Optional Schools. The All-Day Compulsory Schools operate with a unified Curriculum, unified school management and staff and also with an upgraded educational programme.

The All-Day Compulsory Schools operate four days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday) from 7:45 am to 3:05 pm or 4:00 pm and one day a week (Wednesday) from 7:45 am to 1:05 pm. They have a total of 43 teaching periods (for schools functioning until 3:05 pm) or 47 teaching periods (for schools functioning until 4:00 pm) that is, eight or 12 teaching periods more than the mainstream (non-All-Day) Primary Schools. These eight or 12 additional teaching periods are used for the teaching of French (Grade 5 and 6), English and Information Technology, and for the introduction of elective subjects which the pupils choose based on their interests (e.g., dancing, chess, ballet, drama, and so on). For the teaching of English, French and the elective subjects there is a special arrangement for hiring specialised teaching staff (i.e. dance teachers, drama teachers, and so on.).

When the schools operate in the afternoon, lunch is provided to pupils. The overall responsibility for feeding the pupils of each All-Day Compulsory School rests with the school's Advisory Committee, which includes representatives of the teaching staff, the Parents' Association and the School Committee. The costs for feeding the children are borne by their parents / guardians. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth subsidises the feeding of a certain number of children based on specific criteria.

3.1.3 SUMMER SCHOOLS

The introduction of Public Summer Schools by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth was based on a social need and public demand which was evidenced in the last few years. The Summer Schools were first introduced in the summer of 2015 to 22 primary schools. During the summer of 2023, the

programme was implemented in 37 Primary Schools, 21 Pre-primary Schools and two Special Schools on a pilot basis. The Summer School's programme offers creative activities and caters especially for children of disadvantaged socioeconomic origin.

The value of the Summer School programme is widely accepted and embraced, since, among other things, it:

- helps to reduce the gap between opportunities in terms of creative experiences during summer holidays,
- promotes the general development of children through various creative activities,
- reduces working parents' problems regarding the children's supervision during the summer period when schools are closed,
- prevents and diminishes juvenile delinquency,
- lessens excessive time devoted to watching television,
- provides a healthy breakfast and lunch,
- maximises the use of school buildings and equipment, and
- offers unemployed educators the chance to work.

All 60 Summer Schools (37 Primary Schools, 21 Pre-primary and two Special Schools), which functioned during the summer of 2023, operated for five weeks, from June 26th to July 28th 2023. Both experienced and novice or unemployed teachers were employed to work during the Summer Schools. During 2023, Summer Schools extended their schedule from 1:05 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. according to the needs of their pupils (optional schedule extension for some classes), apart from the two Special Schools that their schedule remained till 1:05 p.m.

Each Summer School follows a well-designed and flexible programme of creative activities, suitable for the children's needs, abilities and interests. The programme usually includes Artistic Expression, Design and Technology, Music, Theatre, Dancing, Computers, Home Economics, Indoor and Outdoor Group Games, Storytelling activities, Puppet Theatre and so on.

3.1.4 SCHOOL UNIT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Department of Primary Education sets as a perennial pursuit the maximisation of the learning outcomes through quality teaching and learning. Within the framework of the policy of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth each school is called to operate more autonomously, responsibly and democratically and define its own main goals / priorities, which will be adapted to the particular needs and requirements of pupils, teachers and the school, in general.

Each school develops a School Unit Improvement Plan (S.U.I.P.), which is focused on the real needs and particularities of the school's pupils and teachers. At the same time based on the needs of its teachers a plan is designed for professional development as part of the S.U.I.P. during which the main objectives to be met are stated as well as the actions to be undertaken.

A key part of the S.U.I.P. is the Action Plan for the Teachers' Professional Development, through which the school unit organises all the professional learning actions that are planned. It is recommended that the Action Plan for Professional Development has common goals with the wider S.U.I.P., of which it is a constituent part. The schools participating in the intensive Professional Development Support Programme receive support from officers of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, while the rest of the schools rely on their own resources for the planning and implementation of the programme.

3.1.5 CLASS TUTOR

The Class Tutor facilitates the inclusion of all the pupils in the classroom. At the same time, he / she seeks to develop and consolidate a positive relationship between the teacher and the pupil, creating the necessary condition for the learning process. The Class Tutor acts as an adult model, who with his / her behaviour and the positive relationship he / she develops with the pupils, can guide them, influence and differentiate their negative attitudes and dysfunctional behaviours.

The duties and responsibilities of class tutors have been updated in 2021 - 2022 school year and the duties and responsibilities of the Class Tutor in Pre-primary and Special Units have been determined. Class Tutors collaborate with the teachers who teach other subjects in their class, as well as with the head teacher, undertake and carry out administrative responsibilities related to his / her class and inform parents about the progress and behaviour of their children.

3.1.6 “SCHOOL COUNSELLOR” IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

In the 2021 - 2022 school year, the Department of Primary Education introduced school counselling, as part of a “National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of School Violence 2018 - 2022”. For that purpose, an action plan was developed and the pilot implementation was initiated.

The role of the School Counsellor is to provide counselling support to primary education pupils, identify and support children who face serious personal, family and social difficulties, always in collaboration with their parents / guardians and other related services. The main goal is to strengthen children in the development of a positive self-image, attitudes and skills, improve their well-being and, consequently, achieve better learning outcomes, in a safe, humane and pleasant school environment.

During the school year 2022 - 2023, school counselling continued to be implemented in two Primary schools, one in Lefkosia and one in Lemosos. Two permanent teachers were placed as school counsellors and each one devoted part of their teaching time in individual or group counselling and through different intervention activities and appropriate approaches they guided, supported, and monitored pupils in dealing with the various problems they might face. At the same time, they collaborated with pupils’ parents and guardians as well as with their colleagues and together they worked on issues related to personal, social and communication skills, effective management of emotions, promotion of self-esteem and, in general, the improvement of the psychosocial climate at school.

3.1.7 ASSESSMENT OF PUPILS IN PRE-PRIMARY AND PRIMARY EDUCATION

Pupil assessment is one of the main policies which are systematically promoted by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, that aims at offering regular feedback and support to pupils with the ultimate goal being the improvement of the learning outcomes.

For that purpose, a new system has been developed and was implemented during the school year 2019 - 2020, giving teachers a more systematic way to monitor pupils’ progress and complete for each pupil the School Progress Report. This report indicates the pupils’ level of achievement as regards the expected learning outcomes. It is completed for all Pre-primary and Primary School pupils, twice a year (in January and June). The report is kept at the schools and forms the base of teacher-parent meetings which take place twice a year, after the reports are completed, and focuses on the pupils’ progress.

3.1.8 EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AND ACTIONS IN PRIMARY EDUCATION

3.1.8.1 School and Social Inclusion Actions + (DRA.S.E.+)

The Programme DRA.S.E.+ is co-funded by the European Union Social Fund and the Republic of Cyprus (€60 million for 2021 - 2027). It is considered the flagship project for the Cyprus 2021 - 2022 planning. It aims at promoting social inclusion, mitigating the negative impact of the economic crisis on education, and eliminating discrimination. During the school year 2022 - 2023, it was implemented in all levels of education (65 Pre-primary and 109 Primary Schools, 26 Gymnasia, five Lycea and three Technical and Vocational Education and Training schools). It effectively educates and supports pupils with immigrant background and covered the 31,38% of the pupil population for the school year 2022 - 2023. School selection was based on objectively measurable social and economic criteria.

At the beginning of the school year 2022 - 2023, Operation Guides for the DRA.S.E.+ Programme for both Primary and Secondary Education were sent to schools. These Guides clearly stated the benefits of the Programme as well as the duties of all involved (Head teachers, Central Coordinators, Local Coordinators, DRA.S.E.+ Teachers). Since the year 2021 - 2022, time has been given to Primary Head Teachers for Local Coordination.

Objectives:

- Direct support for pupils (and their families) who are at risk of discrimination or have been particularly affected by the consequences of the financial crisis.
- Promote equality in opportunities.
- Secure social welfare and social integration of pupils at risk of exclusion (immigrants & of low- or no-income population).
- Support psychologically vulnerable pupils and their families.
- Decrease early school leaving.
- Improve learning outcomes.
- Reduce school failure and delinquency.
- Enhance social cohesion, by preventing social marginalisation and social exclusion of vulnerable groups of pupils.
- Improve employment prospects.
- Strengthen the possibility of pupils participation in alternative forms of education.

Programme Actions:

- Provision of morning and afternoon programmes to reinforce learning and creativity of pupils and their families.
- Greek language courses for immigrant pupils and families.
- Providing Additional Psychosocial support for pupils and their families (personal support, wellbeing workshops and so on).
- Psychosocial support for pupils and their families through the establishment of "Information and Social-Emotional Support Centres".
- Supply technological school equipment and educational tools / material.
- Funding pupils' activities through the programme "EAYP" that aims at promoting the physical, mental and social wellbeing of pupils, enhancing their social skills and critical thinking, upgrading their social and natural environment.
- Seminars and training for teachers.

Expected Outcomes:

- Improvement of Learning Outcomes.
- Provision for vulnerable groups of the pupil population who are particularly affected by the effects of the economic crisis.
- Enhancement of counseling and career guidance for pupils.
- Psychological support of pupils in their transition to different school environments.
- Support pupils on issues of self-determination, autonomy, individuality, moral principles, moral dilemmas, social justice, equality and social acceptance.
- Support of pupils who face the danger to remain functionally illiterate or graduate from school without the essential competencies for living and life-long learning.
- Prevention and treatment of delinquency issues, school failure and early abandonment.
- Enhancement of consulting services and vocational guidance.
- Reinforcement of pupils with low social competencies in order to ensure their inclusion in the wider society.
- Backing of migrant pupils and their families in learning Greek and improving their social skills.
- 1115 new employment positions for young professionals.
- Make good use of the available Community funds due to its high degree of maturity.

3.1.8.2 School Violence Intervention Team (SVIT)

School Violence Intervention Team (SVIT) of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth is an important partner of the National Strategy for the Prevention and Management of Violence in Schools. According to its terms of service, and while maintaining close cooperation with other relevant services and institutions (e.g. Educational Psychology Service, Social Welfare Services and so on.), it provides direct cooperation and support to school units that request its intervention on issues related to the management and dealing of phenomena of intra school violence and extreme delinquency.

In this context, and when deemed necessary, the Team proceeds to the employment of an external collaborator (School Partner) who provides auxiliary pedagogical support to pupils with behavioural difficulties within the framework of an Alternative Schooling Programme.

► Funding

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, SVIT utilised a budget of €1 116 000 for the implementation of actions of support to school units that requested the Team's intervention.

► Number of interventions

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, SVIT responded to 232 requests for intervention, received from Primary Education and 206 from Secondary Education. A number of 146 Alternative Schooling Programmes were implemented for the support of 210 Primary Education pupils and 85 were implemented for the support of 471 Secondary Education pupils.

The long-term aim of the Alternative Schooling Programme is to support and empower the pupils for whom the school unit has requested the intervention of the Team and thus, improve the undesirable attitudes and behaviour that they exhibit. The Team supervises, guides and coordinates the implementation of the Programme and contributes towards its readjustment, where deemed necessary.

3.1.8.3 Feeding pupils in need

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth continued to provide breakfast during the school year 2022 - 2023 to public school pupils in need from all levels of education.

The aim of the Programme is to secure that children from disadvantaged families are offered a nutritious breakfast so as to minimise the possibility of detrimental consequences from possible malnutrition which can affect not only the pupils' school performance but also their overall physical and mental health and can potentially lead to social exclusion and increase the risk of early school leaving.

The children eligible to participate in the programme were selected based on financial and social criteria, such as the following:

- Families who receive the Guaranteed Minimum Income.
- Unemployed parents.
- Orphans.
- Single parent families.
- Multi-child families (families over 3 children).
- Families with an especially inadequate income due to other reasons.

The number of the beneficiary pupils in Pre-primary and Primary Education amounted to an average of about 7 750 (approximately 12% of the pupil population). The programme which was co-funded by European and National Social Funds was implemented from the very first school day of the 2022 - 2023 school year.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, in partnership with the canteen administrators, the schools' principals and staff, implemented the above programme successfully, so that pupils in need would receive their daily breakfast with the highest possible level of discretion, confidentiality and respect to their dignity.

3.1.8.4 Support to primary schools with a large number / percentage of children with increased risk for functional illiteracy

The prevention of functional illiteracy, the early detection and support of children with increased risk for language and mathematical illiteracy are priorities for the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, at all three levels of education. Supporting pupils with increased risk for functional illiteracy, especially in primary school, is of particular importance.

Each year, all the pupils of Grade 3 are assessed on their basic knowledge and skills in Greek and Mathematics through tests developed by the Educational Research and Evaluation Centre and the results are sent to each school, informing them of pupils who show increased risk of functional illiteracy. At the same time, parents of these children are informed by the school head teacher about the results as well as about the support practices that teachers implement during their lessons based on the guidelines provided by the Department of Primary Education.

In addition to the above, the Department of Primary Education has proceeded with the pilot implementation of a support programme, in a specific number of schools that have over time, a large number / percentage of children with increased chances of linguistic and mathematical illiteracy, based on the results of the Educational Research and Evaluation Centre. Thus, in the 2022 - 2023 school year, the programme was implemented in 50 primary schools, all over Cyprus, time was allocated (15, 20 or 24 periods per week) for remedial teaching in the lessons of Greek, Mathematics or both. For this purpose, the "Functional Illiteracy Remedial Teaching Programme Implementation Guide" has been prepared, which includes instructions and recommendations that facilitate the implementation of the programme at the school level.

3.1.8.5 Promotion of Reading for Pleasure

Cultivating reading for pleasure in primary school pupils is considered an important axis for the achievement of the long-term goal of education, which is to improve learning outcomes. Therefore, the development of love to read literary or non-literary books is, over time, an important pursuit of the Department of Primary Education.

A systematic effort has been made by primary schools to promote reading for pleasure. A decisive factor in this change was the introduction of the Curriculum for Literature in Primary Education, which is implemented during the teaching of Modern Greek, through thematic units of literature. 5% - 10% of Modern Greek time is devoted to the Literature course, with an emphasis on literary literacy. By implementing various strategies, primary schools can cultivate a reading culture that celebrates and encourages reading for pleasure, ultimately helping pupils develop into enthusiastic and proficient readers.

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, teachers participated in professional development activities, organised in collaboration with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. Specifically:

- Second Children's Literature and Reading Conference, entitled: "What if we break the world a little?" Children's worlds, stories and ideas.
- Children's Literature Day "Alma Awards and IBBY List, Literary Reading: Poetry-Fiction-Images".
- Specialised Online Seminar on: "Children's and Young People's Literature at School".
- Two-day Scientific Conference on: "Modern trends and developments in Cypriot Children's and Youth Literature (1960 - 2022)".
- Laboratory courses on writing children's and young adults' literature.

Furthermore, the reading for pleasure activity "School Book III - Journey to the Monsters of the World" has started, in collaboration with 'Public' Cyprus and the participation of thirteen schools all over Cyprus.

In the context of the unitary improvement plan of the school unit, schools developed actions to cultivate a culture of reading for pleasure. Examples include:

- Enrichment of classroom libraries – Operation of a lending library
- Creation of reading spaces - Book presentations
- Collaborations with authors and illustrators
- "Reading Buddy" (upper class pupils read literary texts to children of 1st grade)
- Free Voluntary Reading (7:45 - 8:00)
- Mobile library operation during break time
- Taking advantage of World Children's Book Day (April 2)
- Visual creations based on a literary book - Exhibition of works
- Visits to city libraries and participation in relevant educational programmes
- Book fairs with a specific theme
- Code generation of the good reader
- Utilisation of the school's official website
- Family and Community Involvement: Engaging families and the local community in promoting reading. Encouraging parents to read with their children at home, being involved in discussions about the books their children are reading.

3.1.8.6 Programme for the smooth transition of pupils from Primary to Secondary Education

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth has set as an important priority, the smooth transition of pupils from Primary to Secondary Education. This is because the transition from Primary to Secondary Education constitutes an important change in the learning path of children, in the context of which they are called, not only to adapt to a new school environment, but also manage a series of emotional, social and educational issues that arise. The Ministry, during the previous years, has made significant efforts to help children during this difficult phase of their life and also provided support to parents / guardians who are anxious about this significant change in their children's life.

In this context the Ministry, proceeded to establish an Interdepartmental Committee for the Smooth Transition of pupils from Primary to Secondary Education, thus, aiming at revising the policy for the smooth transition from Primary to Secondary Education and the coordination of actions. The Interdepartmental Committee has developed a detailed Action Plan, which began to be implemented from the school year 2020 - 2021.

Various actions were undertaken to promote the smooth transition policy. The "Guide to Smooth Transition from Primary to Secondary School" has been revised and is available for use from the school year 2021 - 2022 in all Primary and Secondary Schools, both in electronic and printed form. The revised Guide promotes more effectively the fostering of the necessary skills, both in the social / emotional as well as in the learning / cognitive field and responds to the needs of distance education. As part of the ongoing support to schools to implement the smooth transition policy, a website has also been created, which contains important information that can support the planning and implementation of a smooth transition programme for children. In this context, every year, targeted training is offered to the teachers of the 6th Grade of Primary and the 1st Class of Secondary School, for the head teachers and the inspectors of Primary and Secondary General Education.

3.1.8.7 Learning Greek at Pre-primary school: Support for Pre-primary school teachers and third country nationals

The project is coordinated by the Department of Primary Education and is co-funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Republic of Cyprus. Its duration is two years (October 2022 - September 2024). The project is implemented at two levels.

On the first level, the aim is to facilitate the communication of the Pre-primary teachers with the parents / guardians and the children, during the first period of their reception at school. The second level aims at supporting the Pre-primary teachers who teach the Greek language to children of third country nationals, through trainings and supporting material production.

The deliverables of the project are expected to support all Pre-primary schools and their pupils throughout Cyprus, while during its implementation, the Department of Primary Education works more closely with 15 Pre-primary schools, which do not participate in the DRA.SE+ programme, for the pilot implementation of the deliverables.

The deliverables of the project include the creation of: (1) supporting material for the plenary teaching (illustrated stories, animated videos, songs, narratives in podcast format), (2) supporting material for individual activities / individual play (for children who do not have Greek as their mother tongue: interactive vocabulary cards, vocabulary application) and (3) translated audio files, parent / guardian guide and daily communication letters, which will support children's reception, as well as teaching all subjects in the mainstream classroom.

3.1.8.8 Support for the Expansion and Strategic Development of Pre-primary Education (0 – 6 years) and Care in Cyprus

In the context of the actions of the Recovery and Resilience Plan, Cyprus has requested technical support from the European Union, through the “Technical Support Instrument (TSI)” to enhance the quality, affordability, accessibility and inclusiveness of Early Childhood Education and Care for children aged 0 - 6 years. The Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare (Social Welfare Services) and the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth are committed to this project by leading this innovative intervention. This two-year project entitled “*Supporting the Expansion and Strategic Development of Early Childhood Education and Care in Cyprus*” includes a mapping to existing services, including supply and demand, a complete full sector analysis, diagnosis study that identifies strengths, weaknesses and needs of the sector, the development of a National Quality Framework and the collection of information and data, in order to inform the development of National Strategy and Action Plan for Early Childhood Education and Care which is expected to be approved by the Council of Ministers by the end of 2024.

3.1.8.9 Art Education Programmes

The Department of Primary Education, in collaboration with the Byzantine Museum of the Archbishop Makarios III Foundation, the Municipality of Lemesos and the Municipality of Pafos, continued the implementation of the Art Educational Programmes in art galleries and museums in Lefkosia, Lemesos and Pafos addressed to primary education pupils.

These educational programmes offer teachers the opportunity to develop creative and educational activities through structured theme units and rich supporting materials, which are published online on the web portal of the MESY:

<http://eikad.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/programmata/ekpaideftika-programmata-mouseia-pinakothikes>

On the occasion of the World Museum Day (May 18th) and the International Arts Education Week (22 - 28 May 2023), the MESY declared “Museum Education Week”, from May 15th – 21st, 2023, to promote the objectives of Museum Education and invited schools to organise events inspired by the Educational Programmes of Museum Education of the MESY from May 15th to May 21st, 2023, aiming at familiarising pupils with the museum space and cultivating positive attitudes towards our cultural heritage.

3.1.8.10 Museum Education Programmes

The MESY has been promoting the goals of Museum Education through the implementation of Educational Programmes since 1996. The programmes are offered in the museums of the non-occupied areas of Cyprus. The design of the Museum Education Programmes is developed through the cooperation of qualified seconded educators - advisors and the Art Inspectors of Primary Education. The programmes are addressed to primary education pupils. These educational programmes offer teachers the opportunity to develop creative and educational activities through structured theme units and rich supporting material, which is published online on the web portal of the MESY:

<http://mousagd.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/programmata/ekpaideftika-programmata-2>

The MESY declared the week 15 - 21 May 2023, as the Week of Museum Education on the occasion of the World Museum Day (May 18th) and invited parents together with their children to Educational Programmes in all towns of Cyprus, aiming at the dissemination of Museum Education within the community.

3.1.8.11 Environmental Programmes

The following Environmental Education Programmes were implemented, during the school year 2022 - 2023, through the Curriculum for E.E.- E.S.D., on an optional basis:

- “Eco Schools Programme”.
- “Learning about Forests”.
- “Tiganokinisi” (management of oil waste).

3.1.8.12 Physical Education Programmes

The following programmes ran during the school year 2022 - 2023:

- “Olympic Programme - Sport Days / Events of summer and winter sport”: The Department of Primary Education in cooperation with the Cyprus Sport Organization, the Cyprus Olympic Committee and the Sport Federations established the Olympic Programme “Sport Days / Events of summer and winter sport” that included a variety of sports such as gymnastics, ping-pong, Taekwondo, archery, ski, water sports, and athletics. The aim of this programme was the participation of children in as many sports as possible aiming at promoting positive attitudes towards physical activity and developing lifelong exercise habits. Orientation days were also held in natural parks with many schools participating, recognising the benefits of orienteering in our daily lives.
- “Athletes role models”: Athletes from different sports are invited to deliver to pupils an inspirational speech referring to success (dreams, goals, effort), to the positive role of exercise in life, the importance of healthy living as well as values such as faith, patient and persistent.
- “Swimming Pilot Programme”: A course of four swimming lessons (45 minutes each) took place in an indoor swimming pool, in an urban area. The swimming programme was held in collaboration with Sports for All of the Cyprus Sport Organization.
- “Olympic Education Programme”: This programme was under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the Cyprus Olympic Committee. It promoted the Olympic values and ideas.
- “Active School Breaks”: Programmes ran in schools encouraging pupils to take part in a variety of physical activities during break time. The aim was to promote healthy engagement with exercise, cooperation and appropriate social behaviour.
- “European Sport Week”: The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in cooperation with the National Programme Coordinator, the Cyprus Sport Organisation, organises various activities, on a national level, aiming at promoting sport and physical activity as well as raising awareness of the benefits of exercise. The activities targeted all pupils in primary education, all teachers and school staff as well as a large number of parents.

3.1.8.13 STEM Programme in Primary Education

During the school year 2022 - 2023, the implementation of the STEM Programme continued on a pilot basis in seven primary schools in all the districts of Cyprus, after the suspension of the previous school year due to the pandemic.

The term STEM (acronym of the words Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) describes the educational policy and direction, which promotes an integrated interdisciplinary teaching process involving pupils in activities that provide them with opportunities to exploit knowledge, processes and practices from the four constituent fields in order to encounter real world problems and situations. It also promotes the development of coding skills, the acclimation with programming and cross paradigm approach of Information Technology.

STEM activities took place in two continuous (forty minutes teaching periods) per week, after the end of the morning lessons (1:05 pm), and were attended by pupils of Grade 6 that opted to participate in the programme.

The teaching staff, consisted of teachers with advanced knowledge and skills in Science, Technology, Engineering και Mathematics, attended online training sessions.

3.1.8.14 Cyprus CLIL Coordinating Centre - Content and Language Integrated Learning

The Cyprus CLIL Coordinating Centre was established in 2015 with the main goal of promoting and implementing the CLIL approach in Pre-primary and Primary Education. CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) is a dual focus approach, according to which the teaching of a school subject is implemented through a foreign language (in the case of Cyprus, English). It has been included in the New Curricula as an alternative teaching approach since 2011.

During the school year 2022 - 2023, 76 Primary Schools (139 teachers / 5 141 Primary School pupils) and 135 Pre-primary schools (300 Pre-primary School teachers / 7 876 Pre-primary School pupils) cooperated with the Centre for the implementation of the CLIL approach.

The CLIL Coordinating Centre carried out the following activities during 2022 - 2023:

- Teacher training and support to teachers and schools implementing the CLIL approach:
 - 76 visits to Primary and 64 visits to Pre-primary Schools for school-based teacher support, (co-teaching, reflection sessions and presentations during staff meetings).
 - Continuous online and / or telephone communication between CLIL advisors and CLIL teachers.
 - In-service training for head teachers from the Lefkosia and Lemesos Educational Districts carried out within the School Inspectors' networks. (February 2023, April 2023 and May 2023.)
 - Two in-service training days for Pre-primary teachers in Lefkosia and Pafos Educational Districts with 69 participants.
 - Intensive 20-hour in-service training course for Pre-primary teachers in Pafos, with 12 participants.
 - Optional 15-hour afternoon course for Primary teachers offered in collaboration with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (November - December 2022), with 42 participants.
 - Optional 15-hour afternoon course, for Pre-primary teachers, offered in collaboration with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (January - February 2023), with 27 participants.
 - Three online afternoon meetings with Pre-primary teachers, with 100 participants.
 - Conference titled "Ahead with CLIL" with keynote speakers Dr. Ana Isabel Otto Canton, Universidad Complutense de Madrid and Keith Kelly, Consultant in Education and CLIL - 100 participants from Primary and Pre-primary schools. (May 2023).
- Six in-service training workshops for Pre-primary teachers within the project "Learning Greek in Pre-primary school: Support for Pre-primary teachers who teach Greek to third country pupils" titled "Using CLIL Techniques in teaching Greek as a second language in Pre-primary school".
- Provision of educational materials (set of five English storybooks) for all CLIL Pre-primary schools registered with the Centre in 2022 - 2023.
- Development of educational materials in collaboration with teachers who implement the approach and subject advisors.
- Informed teachers, parents and the general public through:
 - informative flyers delivered to 9 000 families.
 - renewing and updating the Centre's website <http://clil.schools.ac.cy>
 - social media networks
- CLIL Awards: Through the award scheme the Cyprus CLIL Coordinating Centre celebrates schools that implement good CLIL practices. The awards ceremony is held biannually, and schools are evaluated based on specific criteria. A total of 84 schools received awards in 2023. Five Primary and

14 Pre-primary schools received the Gold Award, 12 Primary and 14 Pre-primary schools received the Silver Award and 32 Primary and 5 Pre-primary schools received the Bronze Award.

- European projects:
-2nd Accredited Project: 2022-1-CY01-KA121-SCH-000057226
Within the framework of this project the Centre promoted further training of CLIL teachers and subject advisors. In particular, four Primary school teachers and a Primary school CLIL advisor participated in trainings in Malta, Prague, Spain and Ireland and three Pre-primary teachers in Malta and Spain.
- Cooperation with similar Centres and Institutions abroad:
 - Within the framework of cooperation between the Cyprus CLIL Coordinating Centre and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Centre presented an invited plenary at a conference of the EAN project which focused on the introduction of a foreign language in preprimary education in Greece.
 - The CLIL Centre hosted and offered training to groups of Italian and French teachers.

3.2 SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION

3.2.1 NEW PROGRAMMES IN SECONDARY GENERAL EDUCATION

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, the following new programmes were implemented in Secondary General Education schools:

- Implementation of the policy for the teaching of two foreign languages in every Secondary Education School in accordance with the EU guidelines with the introduction of compulsory teaching of the French language in all classes of the Lyceum in all secondary education schools in Cyprus.
- Operation of the All-Day School of Interdisciplinary Learning Programme with an emphasis on the Greek Language, Culture and Sciences - STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) in two schools: the Laniteio Gymnasium in Lemesos and the Pancyprian Gymnasium, Lefkosia, where it was initially implemented in 2021 - 2022.

3.2.2 HOME ECONOMICS IN THE GYMNASIUM AND LYCEUM

The content of the Health Education (Home Economics) lesson is based on the Health Education Curriculum (HEC) (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2010) and aims at "defending and promoting the mental and physical health of pupils and their social well-being and at the same time developing their social skills and critical thinking by improving their social and physical environment" (HEC, 2010).

The HEC promotes a process based on scientific principles and uses planned learning opportunities that enable people, when acting as individuals or as a whole, to make informed and conscious decisions and actions on issues that affect their health.

Health Education (Home Economics) teachers provide varied, interrelated, learning activities based on pupils' pre-existing knowledge and skills, thus adapting, and adjusting the content of their teaching according to the diversity and differentiated needs of pupils.

The general objectives of the Health Education (Home Economics) lesson are broken down by grouping the classes into three levels in order to achieve unification from primary school to the last class of the Lyceum. The education provided in Secondary General Education aims at promoting the all-round development of pupils based on their potential at this age and the demands they have to face in life. In particular, through the lesson of Health Education (Home Economics), pupils are given the opportunity

to broaden their value system, complement and combine the acquisition of knowledge with relevant social concerns, adopt healthy behaviours in their daily lives and realise their potential, aptitudes, skills and interests.

The main teaching approaches applied in the Health Education (Home Economics) lesson are: Action-oriented research work, Investigation, Problem solving, Case study of real or imaginary cases, Review through interviews or questionnaires, Educational visits, Discussion - Debate, Discussion Circle, Educational Games, Role-playing, Simulation, Improvisation, Use of a Health Education (Home Economics) workshop (development of active learning skills), Use of audio-visual multimedia. (<https://agogym.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/>).

ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN THE CONTEXT OF THE HEALTH EDUCATION (HOME ECONOMICS) LESSON:

- Programmes for the utilisation of recyclable and reusable materials (e.g., tank making), thus transforming schools into laboratories for the development of environmental awareness, critical and creative thinking, cooperation and volunteering.
- Participation in pupil competitions e.g. a) "School Examples of Good Practice in Safety and Health in the Cyprus Educational System", b) FAO World Food Day Poster Competition, c) MindResettlers of the Year 2023 and d) "Food Waste" Competition.
- Organisation of experiential workshops on nutrition, sex education, emotional education, conflict resolution, prevention of violence and delinquency, prevention of bullying, life values, strengthening self-image and self-esteem.
- Activities relating to the prevention and management of bullying.
- Implementation of traffic education and road safety programmes.
- Activities fostering the acceptance and management of diversity-cross-culturalism, e.g. social and biological gender, combating xenophobia and intolerance.
- Activities that foster the cultivation of active citizenship, e.g. joint workshops between pupils and people with disabilities to create functional objects.
- Participation in European Programmes (Erasmus+, GEAR, ΕΔΣΠΥ, EV ZHN) aiming at promoting issues related to Health Education (Home Economics).
- Cooperation with non-profit organisations such as the Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies and the Cyprus Addiction Treatment Authority.
- Collaboration with Lidl Food Academy and Lidl Food Academy on the Go (LFA on the Go) - conducting cooking workshops for pupils.
- Decentralised teacher training based on the Attainment and Adequacy Targets.
- Participation in digital projects in the different thematic units of Health Education.
- Participation of pupils and teachers in the Cultural Creation Foundation's programme on: "The Lefkaritiko Embroidery - Source of Inspiration" 2022 - 2023.

3.2.2.1 Actions / Committees for Coordination, Participation, and Implementation by the Health Education (Home Economics) Sector

- Programme for providing free breakfast to pupils in need of assistance.
- Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the Strategy for the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People in Cyprus.
- National Committee for the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding / National Strategy.
- National Committee on Diabetes.
- Central Committee for School Canteens and Scientific Committee.
- Committee aiming at improving the quality of life of the population through healthy diet and exercise.

- Road Safety Committee.
- Karaiskakio Foundation (strengthening the Karaiskakio Foundation's volunteer bone marrow donor bank and informing all pupil).
- Health Education and Citizenship Committee.
- Committee for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse.

3.2.2.2 Nutrition Education Programmes in Health Education (Home Economics)

Healthy eating is important and crucial for everyone at all age stages of life. The remarkable role of healthy eating affects the physical, mental and cognitive growth and development of the individual. The ultimate goal of the Health Education (Home Economics) lesson is to cultivate the nutritional education of Secondary Education pupils to adopt and ensure healthy, adequate and safe nutrition through their daily lifestyle. In addition, through teaching, pupils are required to recognise the importance of a balanced diet during adolescence, critically process the factors that influence their eating behaviour, plan and prepare balanced meals, contribute through individual and collective actions to enhance their healthy eating potential and use knowledge, skills and strategies related to nutrition in order to promote health.

In addition to the activities carried out during the course, the following actions are also implemented to reinforce adolescents' nutrition education:

- Promotion of the International Campaign for Good Nutrition and Good Health Practices (Five A Day) by the World Health Organisation: "Five fruits and vegetables, up to two hours a day in front of a screen, at least one hour a day of physical activity, zero consumption of sugar-rich beverages".
- Promotion of a Healthy and Balanced Diet, through educational tools such as the "My Plate" model, the "Mediterranean Diet Pyramid" and the "Healthy Eating Pyramid" (USDA).
- Collaboration with Lidl Food Academy and "Lidl Food Academy on the Go" where pupils have the opportunity to work in kitchens on food handling skills, utilisation and combination of materials, adherence to health and safety rules, as well as evaluation of their work and preparations.
- Preparation of traditional dishes by all pupils, with special participation of pupils with a migrant biography.

3.2.2.3 Traffic Education Programme in Health Education (Home Economics)

Traffic Education, is the main part of the Road Safety Education Programme, which was established by the Ministry of Health in 1997. The whole Programme aims at developing attitudes and skills and cultivating road awareness and desirable behaviour on the part of pupils, aiming at reducing road traffic collisions.

In order to cultivate road awareness among pupils during the Health Education (Home Economics) lesson, various events and activities are implemented to raise awareness and reflection, and cultivate attitudes, so that they can act as responsible individuals in traffic / road behaviour. At the same time, actions are developed in schools and / or in the community by pupils in order to contribute change towards positive behaviour. In this way, the fragmented reference to traffic education issues is eliminated, the methodological approach to the subject is renovated and pupils are led to adopt positive behaviours.

In the context of the many activities developed, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in cooperation with the Cyprus Police and other bodies, developed traffic education training activities in schools that requested cooperation. In addition, the experiential traffic education programme with musical intervention by African percussionists was implemented in cooperation with the Cyprus Police, aiming at identifying risks of road collisions and improving their behaviour as pedestrians, cyclists and passengers.

3.2.2.4 Sex Education Programme in Health Education (Home Economics)

The content of Sex Education (SE) is approached through the axes of the curriculum of the lesson, adapted to the different developmental stages of the pupils and addresses the following:

- Human development: changes in adolescence, personal hygiene.
- Interpersonal relationships: family, friendship, romance / romantic relationships.
- Personal skills: negotiation, positive assertiveness, effective communication, setting personal boundaries, caring for oneself and others, conflict resolution skills, decision making skills, identifying - managing - expressing emotions, empathy, finding help.
- Sexual health and behaviour: unintended pregnancy, contraception, termination of pregnancy, STDs, sexual abuse, reproductive health, relevant structures and services in Cyprus.
- Society and culture: gender roles, uniqueness, media and their impact, inclusion.

The topic of SE is taught in all the first three classes of secondary school (Gymnasium - compulsory) and in the second and third class of the Lyceum (as a selective course) in the Health Education (Home Economics) lesson. Additionally, during the 2023 - 2024 school year, the Health Education - Sex Education Programme (HE-SE) will be implemented in all Lyceum classes (compulsory) and Technical schools with the implementation of six teaching periods for each class:

<https://agogym.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/agogi-ygeias/analytiko-programma>).

3.2.3 COMPUTER SCIENCE LESSONS IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Curricula of Computer Science lessons have been upgraded to European levels in recent years. The teaching of Computer Science in the Gymnasium and in the first class of the Lyceum, as well as the lessons of Computer Science and Computer Applications in the second and third class of Lyceum, aim at offering pupils the necessary knowledge and skills to use computers as tools to solve problems in their school and pupil life, but also in their future work and everyday life. At the same time, they provide them with the necessary background for further in-depth study of the lesson.

In order to achieve the above objectives, 130 ICT laboratories are operating in Lycea and 181 ICT laboratories in Gymnasia to meet the needs and choices of the pupil population. Each of these laboratories is equipped with at least 18 computers in Lycea and at least 13 computers in Gymnasia. In addition, all ICT laboratories are equipped with a projector, which is connected to the teacher's computer, and a printer. The equipment in these laboratories is connected to a local area network as well as to the Internet via ADSL lines (in most schools via fibre optic cables, where this service is available).

In all the Gymnasia, Computer Science is a compulsory lesson, taught for two periods per week in each of the three classes, covering a wide range of knowledge and skills. Part of the curriculum covers four core modules of the European / International Computer Driving Licence (ECDL/ICDL). In addition, from the 2016 - 2017 school year and by decision of the Council of Ministers, pupils are offered the opportunity to take, on a voluntary basis, the relevant examinations and certify their ICT skills according to this international standard.

In the first class of the Lyceum, the lesson of Computer Science is compulsory and is taught for two periods per week. In the second and third class of the Lyceum, the three elective modules (Computer Science, Computer Applications and Networks/CISCO) are taught four periods per week each.

In one school per district, an afternoon Computer Science Academy operates, offering the opportunity to pupils from secondary schools, public and private, who have a special interest or aptitude in Computer Science, to be prepared for participation in the Cyprus Olympiad in Informatics. Through this process, the official delegations of Cyprus for the International Olympiad of Informatics (IOI), the Balkan Olympiad

of Informatics (BOI), the Junior Balkan Olympiad of Informatics (JBOI) and the European Junior Olympiad of Informatics (EJOI) are selected.

During the school year 2022 - 2023, the following actions were held in cooperation with various institutions such as the University of Cyprus (UCY), the Cyprus Computer Society, the Society of Computer Science Teachers in Secondary Education, the Cyprus Telecommunication Authority, and so on:

- Cyprus Olympiad in Informatics.
- Computer Science seminar for Lyceum pupils.
- Computational / algorithmic thinking competition - BEBRAS.
- Cybersecurity competition (CCSC - Cyprus Cyber Security Challenge).
- Robotics Competition – Robotex.

3.2.4 MUSIC EDUCATION

Actions in the field of music cover a wide range of activities and are diverse in content. Every effort is made to promote the activities of General Education Schools and Music Schools, with great success. The Sector promotes collaborations with cultural and other organisations that can help to promote these activities. Selected activities organised by the Music Department of Secondary Education, during the school year 2022 - 2023, are listed below:

Music Schools

The Cyprus Music Schools were established in 2009 and in 2016 and were expanded to cover both Gymnasium and Lyceum level. The revised and expanded Music School curriculum offers a more balanced music programme, thus, creating favorable conditions for learning. The Music School programme is offered to successful applicants on a full scholarship basis. All sixth class Primary School pupils are eligible to apply for the entrance examination.

Based on an all-day school format, music schools are integrated in the state educational system. In addition to the official school curriculum, the music school programme includes additional music lessons in all classes, offered as afternoon classes. All Music Schools are hosted in selected Gymnasias and Lycea and are provided with music specific facilities and equipment.

Selected Activities of the Cyprus Music Schools

The following annual activities and programmes of the Cyprus Music Schools were carried out:

Participation of the Cyprus Clarinet Ensemble in the World Clarinet Festival in Krakow (Poland) - September 7 - 9, 2022

The participation in this prestigious event showcasing leading clarinet teachers, aims at promoting Cyprus through the membership in this World Organisation and the presentation of Cypriot cultural creation. Our pupils had the opportunity to present their work while attending workshops, seminars, individual masterclasses, and concerts.

"Cyprus Concert - Zypriotisches Galakonzert" in Vienna Austria - November 20, 2022

Participation of the Vocal Ensemble of the Lefkosia Music School in the annual musical event "Cyprus Concert - Zypriotisches Galakonzert" in collaboration with the Cyprus Youth Symphony Orchestra. The event was organised by the Cyprus Cultural Centre of Vienna and presented at the Musikverein in Vienna, Austria, under the artistic direction of the renowned Cypriot baritone and President of the Cyprus Cultural Centre of Vienna, Mr. Kyros Patsalides.

Second Cyprus Competition for Instrumental and Vocal Performance - February 18 - 19, 2023

The competition offers a unique musical experience for pupils to showcase their talent and provides opportunities for artistic exchange as a motivation for personal improvement. At the same time, the opportunity is given to promote both the institution and the activities of the Cyprus Music Schools. More than fifty pupils took part in this year's Competition in the following categories: Guitar, Piano, Flute, Clarinet, Saxophone and Singing.

Musical activities in cooperation with other cultural organisations

The following annual actions and programmes of the Music Department were organised:

Free pupil tickets for concerts in collaboration with the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra (CySO) Foundation

The cooperation with the CySO Foundation aims at promoting the lifelong active participation of young people in society and culture and enriching the music curriculum. Since September 2022, a significant number of free tickets for the evening concerts of the CySO is offered to secondary school pupils.

Educational Concerts in collaboration with the "Faros" Arts Foundation

The collaboration with the "Faros" Arts Foundation aims at offering educational programmes and concerts with renowned soloists and musical ensembles from Cyprus and abroad. During the school year 2022 - 2023, eight educational concerts were offered reaching more than 800 pupils.

13th Pancyprrian Pupil Song Composition Festival "Marios Tokas - Kostas Montis" in collaboration with the "Fotos Fotiadis" Foundation - March 7, 2023 at the Laniteio Theatre in Lemesos

The Festival featured three categories: Gymnasium, Lyceum and Music Schools and was open to participation to secondary education pupils from all over Cyprus. The Festival aims at promoting cultural heritage awareness and enhancing pupil creativity and new cultural production. This year's event included more than 150 pupils. The festival includes a series of educational sessions, during which pupils work with selected lyricists and composers to further develop their compositional skills. In the context of this year's educational programme, the Music Department invited the renowned music composer George Theofanous and the lyricist Polis Kyriakou to offer a series of songwriting seminars reaching more than 600 pupils.

Choir Parade - April 9, 2023 in Lefkosia

This action aims at promoting Music Education and contributing towards the cultural activity of the community. The Choir Parade was organised in collaboration with the Lefkosia Municipality, and choir ensembles were invited from all Cyprus schools, municipalities and other cultural institutions. This year, more than 30 choral ensembles were showcased, including more than 1000 choristers.

Wind Ensemble Programme

The Wind Ensemble Programme continues to provide children and young people the opportunity to develop their skills in performing wind instruments, while cultivating team spirit through their participation in musical ensembles. The programme is carried out with the contribution of the Strovolos Open School, Lefkosia Open School, Lefkosia Municipalities and School Departments of Lefkosia.

Other Musical Activities

Erasmus+ Programme IN-VOICE4MPowerment

The Erasmus+ KA2 project "IN-VOICE4MPowerment: fostering social inclusion in youth through the development of innovative choral pedagogies and digital technologies and practices" 2021-1-CY01-KA220-SCH-000029442, coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, continued its activities during the school year 2022 - 2023. In February 2023, the second Transnational Meeting of the project was organised by the MESY and was attended by nine collaborators representing the six project partners. A parallel five-day training programme was organised, which was attended by 30 music

teachers from six European countries. Specific parts of the training programme were open for attendance by Cypriot teachers, music pupils, choral leaders and so on. Additionally, the renowned a cappella group Latvian Voices took part in the concert

Vienna Boys' Choir in collaboration with Cyprus choir Vox Venus - April 1st, 2023 at the Lefkosia Municipal Theatre

A significant collaboration between the Cyprus Music Schools and an internationally renowned Music Ensemble from abroad took place in April 2023. The Vienna Children's Choir was joined by the Cyprus Music Schools' Girls' Choir VOX VENUS in a sold-out concert at the Lefkosia Municipal Theatre. A significant number of primary and secondary music teachers had the opportunity to attend a training seminar on the development of the children's voice by the internationally renowned artistic director of the Vienna Boys' Choir, Prof. Gerald Wirth on April 2nd, 2023.

MusEdX2023 - April 26th, 2023, at Pallas Theatre in Lefkosia

This year, MusEdX was organised for the third time, inspired by contemporary successful international, high-profile events such as TEDx, Ignite, IdeaCity, and so on. For this particular action, young people from 12 to 23 years old are invited to present live on stage an original and particularly interesting idea, directly or indirectly connected to music, aiming at moving and raising awareness among the public. The action seeks to offer the younger generation a contemporary platform to make their voices heard, the opportunity to showcase their imagination and creativity and the chance to develop 21st century skills.

The actions described promote culture in schools, showcase the excellent work of the Cyprus Music Schools and receive wide media coverage. At the same time, they offer young people the opportunity to enhance their creativity and develop their musical skills, aiming at life-long cultural participation.

3.2.5 THE LITERACY PROGRAMME IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Literacy Programme operates for all the Gymnasium classes and consists of Morning and Afternoon Programmes. Pupils of Class A' and B' attend the Programme during the morning school hours, whilst the pupils of Class C' attend the Programme in the afternoon. The morning programme runs under the responsibility of the Special Education Office, whilst the Afternoon Programme runs under the responsibility of the State Institutes for Further Education, which operates under the auspices of the Department of Secondary General Education. 1 182 pupils were enrolled in the morning Literacy Programme during the school year 2022 - 2023, being taught for a total of up to 500 periods.

3.2.6 ACTIVITIES IN PHYSICS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022 – 2023

A research paper competition for the Science of Meteorology

The MESY in collaboration with the Cyprus Meteorological Association announced the annual writing research paper competition on a voluntary basis. The competition was held in memory of Poyiadji Maria daughter of Mr. Andreas Poyiadjis, former member of the Cyprus Meteorological Association and Mrs. Anthi Poyiadjis, a chemistry teacher who lost her life during the tragic plane crash in August 2005. The special theme of the competition for the school year 2022 – 2023 was: "Photography, description and scientific explanation of an impressive meteorological phenomenon" (storm cloud (CB), lightning, rainbow, hail, fog and low cloud, rain, dust, tornado, and so on).

The aim of the competition was to bring together pupils attending secondary schools in the public and private sector. This was done with the use of the scientific / research methods and aimed at promoting the establishment of environmental consciousness and the development of environmental culture in collaboration with partners from the community. Additionally, the aim was to make pupils and their teachers aware of issues related to current environmental problems.

Meanwhile, pupils were involved in all the stages of the research process. Those were the design of methodology, the formulation of hypotheses, the collection and analysis of the existing data using scientific research methods, data processing and interpretation of results, conclusions, hypothesis testing, practical and theoretical applications. The research went through an evaluation and the two best in each category: (a) Gymnasium, (b) Lyceum / Technical School were awarded cash prizes, while the third-place teams received a commendation. Honorary certificates were awarded to all the groups that were distinguished, to the supervised teachers and the schools whose pupils were awarded or were distinguished.

Training Seminars for Physics and Science teachers

The Physics Inspectorate of the Directorate of Secondary General Education of the MESY in collaboration with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute organised training seminars for teachers on issues related to the exploitation of experiments in physics lessons and the use of innovative teaching approaches in Science lessons. The seminars were conducted in five online meetings and the participants were over sixty teachers, who teach in public and private secondary schools.

3.2.7 THE CHEMISTRY COURSE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

The Chemistry curriculum in secondary education institutions is founded upon a humanistic philosophy, with a central focus on the holistic development of pupils and their specialisation in secondary education. The curriculum design takes into account orientation groups and course selection, while drawing upon theoretical frameworks and international expertise in programme development. This approach ensures that the curriculum prioritises continuous improvement and yields optimal outcomes.

The curriculum content places equal emphasis on various types of learning, including the acquisition of information that has the inherent potential to generate new knowledge, the development of cognitive and practical skills, the cultivation of strategic and critical thinking abilities, and the nurturing of positive attitudes and values. It encompasses all the competencies recommended in the European education systems, with a particular emphasis on fostering active citizenship within a modern multicultural society. Furthermore, it aims at cultivating awareness against racism and intolerance, fostering respect for human rights, promoting environmental protection, and encouraging sustainable development.

The teacher assumes a pivotal role as a catalyst for educational success, particularly in terms of ensuring the quality of school life and the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Therefore, the primary goal and priority lie on the training and professional development of teachers, facilitated through flexible training opportunities within the school unit, classroom settings, and through distance and live seminars. Moreover, in order to achieve the lesson objectives, priority is given to the continuous enhancement and enrichment of Chemistry teaching materials, digital upgrades to the lesson, and the monitoring and improvement of the infrastructure in Chemistry laboratories. In Secondary education, in Cyprus, schools are equipped with at least one fully equipped Chemistry laboratory, operating in compliance with the current legislation on Safety and Health at Work, as well as guidelines and regulations regarding the safe use and storage of chemical substances in laboratories.

Actions taken during the 2022 - 2023 academic year:

Procurement of Chemistry Laboratory Equipment for Secondary Education

Compilation of a comprehensive list specifying the necessary instruments and reagents, followed by diligent monitoring of the contract implementation resulting from the tender process. Collaboration with schools, overseeing and approving the final allocation of equipment sent to each one.

Acquisition of ChemDraw Programme Software Licences

Acquisition of licences for teachers in secondary education to utilise the ChemDraw programme software, accompanied by systematic training on its operation and usage.

Pupil Competition on "Chemistry for Humanity and the Environment" in secondary education

The competition aims at facilitating pupil engagement in scientific and research methodologies, while concurrently promoting environmental awareness. Additionally, it highlights the significant role of Chemistry in everyday human life.

Chemistry Olympiads

The Pancyprrian Union of Chemical Scientists (PEEX), with the support of the Directorate of Secondary General Education, organises Chemistry Olympiads for pupils in the first, second, and third year of the Lyceum. Outstanding pupils have the opportunity to participate in international Olympiads, as well as Pan-European Chemistry and Science Competitions.

Teacher Training

Chemistry in Education Conference

The 7th Annual Chemistry in Education Conference, themed "Authentic Learning and Sustainability," was jointly organised by the Directorate of Secondary General Education, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, the Department of Communication and Internet Studies at the Cyprus University of Technology (TEPAK), the Department of Chemistry at the University of Cyprus (PC), the Pancyprrian Union of Chemical Scientists (PEEX), and the Association of Chemistry Teachers O.E.L.M.E.K. (SYHIKA).

Seminars via MS Teams

In addition to training programmes organised by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, a series of seminars and meetings were conducted to enhance the preparation of Chemistry teachers. These initiatives aim at improving the quality of learning experiences and achieving higher levels of learning outcomes.

3.2.8 ACTIVITIES IN BIOLOGY IN THE YEAR 2023

Integration of Extended Virtual (VR) and Augmented (AR) Reality Technologies in Biology lessons

The use of digital technologies in Biology lessons enhances in an interactive and multimedia way the understanding of concepts, as well as the cultivation and development of various skills during the learning process, thus improving learning outcomes.

The goal of the Inspectorate of Biology is the integration of new and advanced digital technologies (including virtual and augmented reality technologies) into the Biology syllabus of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. This will ensure the active involvement of our pupils in the learning process, utilising interactive and immersive media and technologies, with the ultimate goal of improving their learning outcomes.

In this context, the following activities were carried out:

- Pilot / trial lessons using Virtual and Augmented Reality technologies (AR & VR) in Biology lessons in Gymnasia and Lycea.
- The Biology Inspectorate in collaboration and with the support of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute planned a series of pilot / test lessons in order to integrate virtual and augmented reality technologies into Biology lessons at all levels,

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, the first two pilot / test lessons were successfully held at the Xylotymvou and Drosia Gymnasia in Larnaka. For the next school year, pilot / trial lessons are being planned in Gymnasia and Lycea in various schools, so that a significant number of Biology teachers from different schools will have the opportunity to attend them.

- Specialised Biology training course for the use of Virtual and Augmented Reality technologies (AR & VR)

The Inspectorate of Biology and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute co-organised successfully a specialised optional seminar, which was attended by a great number of Biology teachers. The aim of this seminar was to train Biology teachers in the use and implementation of these technologies in Biology lessons.

3.2.9 ACTIVITIES FOR ECONOMIC EDUCATION

Financial and Entrepreneurship Education

Implementation of lectures and presentations in secondary education, in cooperation with the Cyprus Association of Chartered Financial Analysts, aiming at combating financial illiteracy. Improving financial literacy by organising the annual Global Money Week in cooperation with the Central Bank of Cyprus. Global Money Week is organised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Global Money Week is an annual global campaign that aims at equipping young people with the financial knowledge, skills, and attitudes they need to achieve economic well-being. Activities are carried out in and out of school, including training for pupils, games, competitions, presentations by relevant institutions and visits to organisations.

The Economic Inspectorate represents the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth as a member of the Board of the Cyprus Financial Literacy and Education Committee, which is responsible for the implementation of the National Strategy for the Promotion of Financial Literacy in Cyprus.

Entrepreneurship Education

In February 2023, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth signed a cooperation agreement with the non-profit organisation Junior Achievement (JA) Cyprus. The JA's programmes are offered on an optional basis and have been implemented in Cypriot education for 10 years. Through various workshops and activities, experiential learning is promoted in the areas of entrepreneurship, financial education, and work readiness. The Economic Inspectorate represents the Ministry of Education as a member of the working group established to promote the National Strategy for Entrepreneurship Education in Cyprus.

In Secondary Education, the following programmes are implemented:

Gymnasium

Mind Reset

The Mind Reset programme is a fun and interactive programme that offers a series of five lessons to pupils in primary and secondary education (Gymnasia). The programme aims at introducing pupils to the field of environmental entrepreneurship.

Economics for Success

It is an interactive educational programme aiming at C' Gymnasium Class pupils, that provides practical information on personal finance and the importance of setting educational and career goals based on their skills, interests, and values.

Lyceum / Technical Education

Entrepreneurship in Preparatory Apprenticeship

The Entrepreneurship in Preparatory Apprenticeship programme is tailored to the interests of pupils aged 14 - 17 who are leaving compulsory education early. The aim is to encourage them to develop skills that could improve their employability.

Pupil Company

The Pupil Company Programme provides an entrepreneurial learning experience for pupils aged 15 to 18. Participants learn how to turn a business idea into reality and gain practical experience in managing

a real business, from team formation and capital raising to business plan development, product development, marketing, sales, and company liquidation.

Sci-Tech

The Sci-Tech Challenge aims at encouraging pupils aged 15 - 18 to consider careers in science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM).

Girls Go Circular

The online programme "Girls Go Circular" focuses on informing and training on circular economy issues.

Digital Skills - Accounting Software

As part of the promotion of digital skills, accounting software has been included in the accounting curriculum of B' Class Lyceum.

Other activities

- Informing C' Class Gymnasium pupils about the content of the economics lesson and the options available to them.
- Economics classrooms have been equipped with modern computer equipment to support the Accounting Software course for secondary education pupils.

Economic Commercial School of Special Interest, Mitsi School in Lemithou

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth in collaboration with the School's Board of Directors, has upgraded the programmes to provide pupils with a high level of education, preparing them for further academic and professional training in the economic and commercial sectors. Pupils enrolled in the new programme will have access to the benefits offered by the School's Board of Directors. The philosophy of the programme is to develop the professional skills of graduates and promote excellence and entrepreneurship in the Economic and Commercial direction at a national level. The new curriculum provides for compulsory afternoon attendance and the main difference and innovation of the new programme is the introduction of the Entrepreneurship lesson.

3.3 SECONDARY TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.3.1 UPGRADING OF LABORATORIES / WORKSHOPS OF TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

During the 2022 - 2023 school year, significant upgrades were made to special rooms and laboratories of Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training, through the co-financed Project "Improving the Quality, Attractiveness and Efficiency of Vocational Education and Training and New Modern Apprenticeship". In particular, in order to keep up with the modern trends in the area of Vocational Education and Training, and aiming at implementing the objective included in the Strategic Planning of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth to adapt to the new industry requirements through the suitable training of human resources, robotic arm systems were purchased in order to improve learning outcomes. Moreover, the workshops of Electrical Engineering and Electronic Applications, Hotel and Catering Professions, Building Works and Constructions, Refrigeration, CNC, Mechanical Engineering and Vehicle Technology were upgraded.

3.3.2 DEVELOPMENT OF NEW CURRICULA AND TEXTBOOKS

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training, aiming at the development of quality textbooks as a necessary condition for quality teaching and learning, implemented, through a broad collaboration of educational staff, inspectors and academics, the

production of quality textbooks for pupils of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education. Specifically, new textbooks were developed for the fields “Hotel and Catering Professions”, “Electrical Engineering and Electronic Applications”, “Architecture and Civil Engineering” and “Mechanical Engineering”.

Moreover, the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training carried out an evaluation of the timetable and curriculum of the specialisation “Vehicle Technology”, developed new curricula for the fields of “Maritime Professions” and “Hairdressing”, and proceeded to update the curricula of all other fields of study / specialisations.

3.3.3 ELECTRONIC PLATFORM FOR ADULT LEARNING IN EUROPE - EPALE

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training is the coordinator of the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) in Cyprus. EPALE is a multilingual online space aiming at exchanging, showcasing and promoting methods of good practices in adult education. Individuals involved in organising and delivering adult education can access this online adult learning platform to share the latest developments and learn from each other. EPALE also includes a library of resources, a calendar of courses and events of interest for adult education professionals, as well as a partner-search tool.

EPALE supports the following goals:

- make lifelong learning and exchange of experience a reality,
- improve the quality and efficiency of adult learning, and
- promote equality, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning.

Anyone involved in providing and organising adult education, including teaching and administrative staff, policymakers, researchers and media, can take part by registering on the platform.

During 2023, the following actions were implemented:

- Participation in Europe Day events organised by the Permanent Representation of the European Union in Cyprus.
- Involvement in events that aim at strengthening synergies and coordination between the various bodies inside and outside the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth that offer education and training for adults.
- Promotion of the EPALE platform by the EPALE Ambassador, as an online information and interaction tool between individuals and organisations active in the field of adult education and assistance in the implementation of the goals of the EPALE Cyprus National Support Service.
- Co-organisation with the EPALE Ambassador of a webinar entitled "Investing in Skills for the Green and Digital Transition".
- Enriching the content of the platform with blogs, articles, news and educational resources promoting and strengthening the adult education sector in Cyprus.

3.3.4 NATIONAL COORDINATION POINT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CYPRUS NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training is the National Coordination Point (NCP) for the implementation of the Cyprus Qualifications Framework (CyQF). The National Qualifications Framework of Cyprus includes the development and implementation of institutional arrangements and procedures related to quality assurance, evaluation and awarding of qualifications. Additionally, it is the "tool" for the categorisation of qualifications, according to a set of criteria in order to achieve defined levels of learning.

The Cyprus National Qualifications Framework (CyQF) aims at bringing together and coordinating national qualifications subsystems, as well as improving the transparency, access, development and quality of qualifications in relation to the labour market.

3.3.5 COORDINATION OF THE EUROPEAN ReferNet NETWORK IN CYPRUS

During the second semester of 2023, the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training prepared and submitted the application in order to assume the role of the National Coordinator of the European ReferNet Network in Cyprus for the period 2024 - 2027 at the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP). As a result, the Department has been designated as the National Coordinator of the European ReferNet Network in Cyprus for the period 2024 - 2027.

ReferNet was created by CEDEFOP in 2002 as the European reference and expertise network for vocational education and training, providing information on national Vocational Education and Training (VET) systems and policies in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. It is worth noting that each national Coordinator is a key organisation involved in VET in the country it represents. All Coordinators are, therefore, able to offer first-hand information on the role, purpose, governance and structure of VET in their country, information on developments and trends of VET policies, as well as in-depth analysis of how each country implements the common European policy.

The coordination, management and promotion of the European ReferNet Network in Cyprus includes the preparation of reports on VET policies in Cyprus, the preparation of a monograph on the national VET system, the dissemination and promotion of ReferNet activities in Cyprus and the management of the ReferNet Cyprus Consortium.

3.3.6 REPRESENTATION IN THE EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (EQAVET)

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training actively participates, as a member and as a national representative, in the European Network for Quality Assurance (EQAVET). EQAVET is a reference tool designed to help European Union countries promote and monitor the continuous improvement of their vocational education and training systems, based on specific, mutually agreed terms of reference. It provides a framework of common principles, indicative descriptors and indicators that can help to assess and improve the quality of VET systems and provision.

The Network not only contributes towards improving the quality of Vocational Education and Training, but also building mutual trust between the various systems, so that it is easier for a country to accept and recognise the skills and competences acquired by the trainees educated in other countries and learning environments.

Work programme 2021 - 2023

The European Commission and the EQAVET Network have jointly developed a multi-annual EQAVET work programme. The 2021 - 2023 work programme outlines key activities, as well as thematic priorities for discussion and cooperation at EU level.

The thematic priorities for the period 2021 - 2023 include:

- Strengthening quality assurance for all areas of Vocational Education and Training (initial vocational education and training, continuing vocational education and training, apprenticeships, and so on.).
- Reinforcing quality assurance for all forms of Vocational Education and Training provision, including work-based learning, personalised and digital learning (e-based / blended learning) and assessment / recognition / certification.
- Fortifying quality assurance for non-formal forms of learning outside the formal education system, such as the validation of non-formal and informal learning and micro credentials.

- Vigorously supporting the development and integration of indicative descriptors to promote flexibility and mobility in Vocational Education and Training.
- Actively maintaining the process of capacity development and knowledge regarding the monitoring standards of Vocational Education and Training graduates, at national and European level.

3.3.7 OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Pupil and parent guidance, aiming at informing pupils and their parents about the fields of study and career prospects offered by Secondary Technical and Vocational Education.
- Co-operation with CEDEFOP.
- Collaboration with the European Training Foundation (ETF).
- Co-operation with stakeholders and social partners, including Organisations of Employers and Manufacturers, Organisations of Employees (Trade Unions), the Council of the Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training and so on.

3.4 HIGHER EDUCATION

3.4.1 CONNECTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION WITH THE LABOUR MARKET

The interconnection of Higher Education with the labour market remains a main priority and strategic goal of the DHE. To this end, the DHE proposed a project entitled "Development of a National Graduate Tracking Mechanism and Design and Implementation of an Employers' Skills Survey" and received funding from the Recovery and Resilience Plan for its implementation. The project falls within the framework of the broader project "Addressing skills mismatch between Education and the labour market", which is part of the proposal of the Republic of Cyprus in the Recovery and Resilience Plan. This project aims at establishing a National Graduate Tracking Mechanism of Higher Education Graduates and at the same time at designing and implementing a National Employers' Skill Survey in relation to the needs of the labour market regarding skills. In the context of this project, Cyprus' participation in the European Graduate Tracking Survey, "Eurograduate", is also funded.

In 2023, the first data collection cycle of the National Graduate Tracking Mechanism and the European survey EUROGRADUATE 2022 was conducted. The data collection took place between February – March 2023 through an online questionnaire which was available in two languages, Greek and English. The questionnaire included questions in six thematic areas: "Education Experiences", "Labour Market Participation and Labour Market Outcome Experiences", "Skills / Competencies", "International Mobility of graduates after graduation", "Career Guidance and Counselling during Upper Secondary and Higher Education" and "Upskilling and Reskilling during Employment".

The first four thematic areas were also part of the EUROGRADUATE 2022 survey questionnaire, while the last two were national thematic units added by the DHE. The first cycle of the graduates' research covered the graduates of the years 2016 - 2017 (five years after graduation) and the graduates of the years 2020 - 2021 (one year after graduation).

The preliminary results report has been published on the DHE website:

(https://archeia.moec.gov.cy/mc/895/2023_10_06_report_preliminary_results_first_cycle_cyprus_national_graduate_tracking_survey.pdf/ and on the project's websiteQ;
(<https://skilltracking.highereducation.ac.cy/el/reports/>).

The DHE has also sent the Cyprus data to the consortium of the European Graduate Tracking Survey, EUROGRADUATE 2022 and the report of comparative results among 17 European countries is expected to be published in summer 2024.

At the same time, in 2023, preparations began for the first cycle of the National Employers' Skill Survey. Specifically, a representative sample of enterprises from the private sector that will be invited to participate was selected in collaboration with the Cyprus Statistical Service. The DHE also collected the e-mail addresses of managers of the public and wider public sector. The online questionnaire has also been developed in collaboration with the University of Warwick and specifically with the Institute for Employment Research.

3.4.2 INTERNATIONALISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Another main objective of the DHE is the Internationalisation of Higher Education in Cyprus. To this end, the DHE organises Information Days in target countries and participates in International Educational Exhibitions to promote Cyprus as an ideal destination for studies. In addition, there is cooperation with the embassies of the Republic of Cyprus abroad for meetings between government officials, stakeholders, and / or representatives of Higher Education Institutions, in Cyprus or abroad, aiming at signing Memoranda of Understanding in the field of Higher Education and / or Mutual Recognition Agreements with other countries.

Following the government's instructions for the promotion and further development of Cyprus HE, the DHE took a leading role as a coordinator of two newly established Working Groups with the participation of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Namely, the Working Group for the Branding of Cyprus Higher Education, and the Working Group for the provision of scholarships to attract international students. At the same time the DHE continues its efforts for the internationalisation of HE as described below:

- **Cross-border collaborations**

The MESY supports and promotes the signing of Bilateral Agreements with other countries for mutual recognition of academic qualifications offered by HE as well as Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) for further collaboration and cooperation in the areas of Science, Research and Higher Education.

In 2023 the following bilateral agreements were signed between Cyprus and third-party countries:

- Agreement between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs on behalf of the Government of the Hellenic Republic regarding the Mutual Academic Recognition of University Degrees of Higher Education Institutions and other Accredited Institutions, signed on 1st February 2023.

- Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation in the field of Higher Education and Scientific Research between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the State of Qatar, signed on 24th November 2023.

Participation in International Educational Fairs

In 2023, the DHE participated in the following Educational Fairs for the promotion of the Cyprus HE in Europe, Asia and the Arab World.

- Academia Lebanon International Education Fair, Beirut, 21 - 22 February 2023
- «BeSt³ – The Job and Information Fair», Vienna, Austria, 2 - 5 March 2023
- Cyprus HEIs in Greece in cooperation with the Commerce Center of the Embassy of Cyprus in Athens and the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Heracleum, Chania and Athens, 4, 5 and 8 April 2023
- GHEDEX, Muscat, Oman, 30 April - 2 May 2023
- Q8Eduex – GHEDEX Kuwait, 10 - 11 May 2023
- Najah Dubai, Dubai, UAE, 8 - 10 October 2023
- EduTrac, Muscat, Oman, 22 - 24 October 2023

- 24th China Annual Conference and Expo for International Education (CACIE 2023), Beijing 27 - 28 October 2023
- Cyprus HEIs in Greece in cooperation with the Commerce Centre of the Embassy of Cyprus in Athens and the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Athens – Thessaloniki 25 - 27 November 2023
- 8th European Higher Education Virtual Fair (EHEVEF 2023, India), 23 - 24 November 2023.

3.4.3 MAPPING OF THE EDUCATIONAL FIELD FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN CYPRUS FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2022 - 2023

The DHE has proceeded with the annual research study entitled “Mapping of the Educational Field for Higher Education in Cyprus” for the academic year 2022 - 2023. The collection of data concerns the entire academic year 2022 - 2023 and data collection is conducted through standardised Excel files, which are completed by all Cyprus’ Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). For the academic year 2022 - 2023, data was collected from ten Universities (three Public and seven Private) and 48 Institutions of Tertiary Education (six Public and 42 Private). The report of the Mapping survey presenting detailed results for the student population, academic / teaching staff and Programmes of Study will be published on the DHE’s website at the following link:

<https://www.highereducation.ac.cy/index.php/en/dae/statistika-stoicheia>.

3.5 CYPRUS PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE

3.5.1 DEPARTMENT OF TRAINING

According to the Council of Minister’s Decisions (August 2015, July 2017), the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) is the Directorate of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, which officially runs teachers’ professional development. It offers a variety of training programmes that are repetitive and compulsory for teachers, mainly because they are either offered according to education laws and service plans, or because these programmes are developed with reference to the current needs and context of schools.

According to the Council of Ministers’ decision, the aim of the Professional Development Strategy is the quality improvement of teachers’ and pupils’ education. Therefore, all schools are expected to prepare a Professional Development Action Plan (PDAP), which would consist an integral part of the School Improvement Action Plan. The PDAP should be focused on a specific issue that would be set as a priority to be improved, according to teachers’ and pupils’ needs assessment at each school. It should include focused school-based training as well as a number of school-based activities, according to teachers’ decisions. Activities should be internally evaluated, so as further decision-making to be made. For the preparation and implementation of the PDAP described above, schools have at their disposal the Electronic Base for Professional Development, which offers supporting material (e.g. needs assessment specimens, suggestions for actions), suggestions for cooperating opportunities with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth or other institutions (e.g. universities), as well as additional instructions.

3.5.1.1 Implementation of Teachers’ Professional Learning Strategy - Professional Learning Support Programme

In order to implement the policy for teachers' professional development described above, an opportunity was offered to a small number of schools, on a voluntary basis, to follow a more systematic procedure with annual systematic support from the CPI, by participating in the "Professional Learning Support Programme (PLSP)". The PLSP is one of the ways that schools could choose in order to implement their teachers' professional development, and follows a similar procedure as that described above, but in a more systematic way, with the support of a facilitator from the CPI. Each school follows a methodology or a combination of methodologies (e.g. action research, lesson study, quality teaching rounds approach, case study), which is considered suitable according to the specific issue set as priority and the teachers' specific needs. The CPI supports teachers of the participating schools in order to decide, plan and implement a variety of actions and practices that are consistent with the educational reality in their school and reflect on them, aiming at critical awareness, always in order to meet the professional and developmental needs of each school teacher. During the school year 2022 - 2023, a total of forty-three schools participated in the PLS Programme: five pre-primary, twenty-four primary, twelve secondary education schools (gymnasias, lycea, evening schools), one vocational and one special education school.

3.5.1.2 School-Based Seminars and Seminars for Parents

In the school year 2022 - 2023, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute continued to organise and run school-based seminars and seminars for parents in schools across Cyprus.

School-Based Seminars aim at providing information and support concerning the specific subject chosen by the school. These seminars take place within school hours; either integrated within the weekly staff briefings or as a separate activity for those who have expressed interest. During the seminars, particular emphasis is given towards teaching techniques and methods, covering a vast range of the curriculum. Additionally, the seminars address the immediate needs of the school, whilst combining theory and practice.

Seminars for Parents aim at supporting parents' / guardians' needs within an educational setting and play a vital role in the home-school collaboration. Seminars take place after school hours and after consultation with the relevant school authorities.

The seminars are conducted by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute officers and external collaborators, selected via an evaluation process and then included in the CPI's official record of collaborators. Seminars conducted in 2022 - 2023 covered different areas of interest and thoroughly addressed the issues confronted by parents and educators. Five hundred thirty nine applications were submitted for school-based seminars and eighty-seven applications for parents' seminars.

3.5.1.3 Training Days for Teachers

During the school year 2022 - 2023, the "Teacher's Days" of Secondary General and Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training, were held on 15th December 2022 and 17th February 2023. The "Teacher's Days" aimed at encouraging school training that would meet training needs of teachers. The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute offered one hundred and ten different topics through the online platform and schools were able to choose the topic that interested them. In addition, several schools requested specific topics / presenters through letters and all their requests were satisfied.

3.5.1.4 In-Service Training Programmes for School Leaders

In-Service Training Programmes for School Leaders mainly focus on enhancing Newly Promoted Head Teachers (Primary and Secondary Education), and Deputy Head Teachers' (Secondary Education) Professional Development in order to become effective leaders and change agents for their school units. In-Service Training Programmes are included in a comprehensive content of school leadership, based

both on the European Union for School Leadership policy and on recent national and international literature review and research results on effective leadership. The main priority of the In-Service Training Programmes for School Leaders is to put theory into practice, so that to enhance participants effectiveness in their leading roles. Therefore, in the specific Programmes, expert practitioners presented practical implications concerning leadership practice. Additionally, in the case of the Newly Promoted Head Teachers, experienced Mentor Head Teachers provided them with guidance and support. Furthermore, in the case of the In-Service Training Programme for Deputy Head Teachers, experienced practitioners also presented practical implications from their leadership experience.

In May 2023, fifty two Newly Promoted Head Teachers of Primary, Secondary and Technical Schools successfully completed the Programme. Additionally, one hundred thirty five Deputy Head Teachers successfully completed the Programme.

3.5.1.5 Optional Series of Training Seminars

The Optional Series of Training Seminars were offered successfully, aiming at the professional development of teachers on issues related to pedagogy, psychology, methodology, the teaching of specialised subjects of the curriculum and educational technology. Optional Training Seminars include seminars for teachers of each level of education separately and seminars which are addressed to teachers of all levels of Education. They are offered in the non-working hours and utilise both the methodologies of distance education as well the physical participation. They aim at promoting coherence, continuity and consistency of knowledge and methodology at each level of education and among the different educational levels and, consequently, encourage communication and cooperation among teachers of different educational levels. Additionally, they seek to connect theory with practical application in schools, and, therefore, enhance teachers' professional learning and development, in general. The topics of the seminars were decided on the basis of teachers' educational needs and arose through an investigation process implemented by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, as well as according to the proposals submitted by the Directorates of the different levels of Education.

During the school year 2022 - 2023, eighty-nine optional seminars were offered, to teachers of all levels of education. A total of one thousand five hundred and twenty-three teachers from all levels of education participated in the optional seminars, as follows (Table 1): Teachers had access to information and enrolment in the optional seminars through the electronic platform: www.pi-eggrafes.ac.cy.

Table 1: Participation in the Optional Seminars per level of education

Level of Education	Number of participants
Pre-primary	421
Primary	484
Special Education	31
Secondary General	407
Secondary Technical & Vocational	180
Total	1523

3.5.1.6 Primary teachers' two-day training seminars

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute in cooperation with the Department of Primary Education organised two-day training seminars from 5th to 8th September, 2023. The aim of the first day training seminars was teachers' professional development based on their current needs. During the second day of the

training, a specific programme was implemented, organised by the school itself and focused on the training needs, interests and priorities of each school unit, along with a needs assessment procedure on which the school action plan was based.

Thirty seminars were offered for pre-primary education, thirteen for Special Education and seventy-seven seminars for Primary Education teachers. Furthermore, sixty-one of the seminars were organised for teachers of all educational levels. Each Primary or Special Education teacher attended two different seminar topics, while pre-primary teachers participated in one eight-hours seminar that was split in the two-day training period. The seminars were attended by 5 785 teachers, of which 886 were pre-primary, 847 Special Education and 4 052 Primary Education teachers.

3.5.1.7 Seminars “Teachers present their work”

During 2023, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) offered teachers the opportunity to present their work within 1.5 hour seminars. These seminars aimed at disseminating teachers’ knowledge and experience on pedagogical issues and effective teaching approaches that were applied in their classroom. The Seminars covered seven broader thematic sections: Teaching / Learning, Evaluation, Educational Sociology, Educational Psychology, the use of digital Technology in the learning process, Educational Research, Pre-primary education, Prevention of Violence. Altogether, eleven seminars were offered by fourteen teachers / trainers from pre-primary, primary and secondary education. In total, 705 teachers attended these seminars. The seminars took place during February - May 2023, via on-line learning.

3.5.1.8 Training Programme for Substitute School Teachers

During the school year 2022 - 2023, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, in collaboration with the Departments of Primary and Secondary Education, offered a Training Programme for substitute teachers at all levels of education.

The purpose of the Programme was the enhancement of substitute teachers’ teaching and learning efficacy in aspects such as legal and administrative issues of the Cyprus Educational System, the National Curriculum, current teaching methodology trends, lesson organisation and preparation, as well as classroom organisation and administration. Moreover, the Programme aimed at informing the participants about everyday school life and supporting them in organising an effective substitute period in schools they are called to serve.

The Programme took place between January and March 2023 and consisted of five two-hour afternoon sessions, involving the following thematic units:

- Legal and administrative issues.
- Basic pedagogical principles and lesson planning.
- The National Curriculum and pupil assessment.
- Effective teaching.
- Classroom organisation and administration and effective classroom teacher substitution.

A total of seventy-three substitute teachers participated in the Programme, of which twenty-six were primary school teachers and forty-seven were secondary teachers (serving in both General Secondary as well as Secondary Technical & Vocational Education).

3.5.1.9 Seminar “Teaching practices in the course of Physics in Secondary Education”

The aim of the Seminar "Teaching Practices in Physics in Secondary Education" was to facilitate the exchange of views among physics teachers on effective physics teaching approaches that had already been applied in the classroom. In the Seminar, teachers presented teaching practices on specific subjects of physics teaching. During the 2022 - 2023 school year, seven sessions of the Seminar were

held, six at a distance and one hybrid. Thirteen teaching proposals were presented during these meetings by twelve teachers and academics. The Seminar team had two hundred and thirty-nine members. During the meetings, special emphasis was placed on the distance teaching of Physics and the utilisation of new technologies in Physics. The full Programme of the Seminar and the teaching materials used are posted on the Seminar's webpage on the website of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute.

3.5.1.10 Conferences - Seminars - Workshops

During the school year 2022 - 2023, the CPI organised seventy-nine seminars, conferences and workshops in collaboration with the Departments of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and / or other partners. The seminars and conferences included a theoretical part, followed by workshops offered by the CPI or the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth trainers and in some cases in collaboration with teachers and / or university associates. In total, seven thousand five hundred and fourteen participants registered for the seminars and conferences. All the above actions were uploaded on the websites of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute as well as on the CPI Facebook page.

3.5.1.11 Implementation of the Antiracist Policy: “Code of conduct against racism & Guide for managing and recording racist incidents”

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, during the 2022 - 2023 school year, continued to support schools and teachers for the implementation of the antiracist policy of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, for the eighth consecutive year. The antiracist policy, based on the whole school approach, utilises a broad understanding of racism in all its forms, so as to include all kinds of discrimination. It also provides schools and teachers with a detailed plan for dealing with and preventing racist incidents, which they can adapt to their specific needs before adopting and implementing it in practice, and which is part of the school unit's overall improvement plan.

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, in the context of supporting Teachers' Professional Learning, coordinates a support programme for the implementation of the anti-racist policy, through the creation of a Network of Schools at all levels. The purpose is to empower and support teachers and schools for the implementation of the anti-racist policy of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. Face to face and online training and reflection sessions focus on various aspects of racism and anti-racism in education. Academics and organisations with expertise and experience in the field also contribute towards these training sessions. Thirty-five schools and teachers of all classes and provinces participated in the seven network meetings during the 2022 - 2023 school year.

3.5.1.12 Teacher networks to support teaching Greek as a second language

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) supported the creation of teacher networks at all levels and school districts in Cyprus, in order to organise training and promote cooperation between teachers on teaching Greek as a second language. The CPI supported school and teacher networking in order to implement the Action Plan of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, for the inclusion of children with a migrant background in the Cyprus Educational System as well as one of the European Commission's Peer Counselling Report Recommendations (March 2019) on “facilitating networking between teachers and schools”. The operation of the three Networks continued for the school year 2022 - 2023 for teachers teaching Greek as a second language in all three levels of education. Ninety-nine teachers participated in the networking of pre-primary education, three hundred and sixteen for primary and one hundred and twenty for secondary education. The design of the meetings was based on a blended learning approach, which included the combination of face to face meetings, videoconferencing, and networking through discussions and activities on the Moodle platform, as well as synchronous and asynchronous communication.

3.5.1.13 The Love of Reading “Filanagnosia” school network (Pre-primary and Primary education)

The Love of Reading School Network was established in September 2021, involving schools from Pre-primary and Primary Education. The Network was designed in order to educate teachers on matters concerning the love of reading, children’s literature, and teaching methodology. The Network also aimed at creating reading and writing communities between children and teachers, strengthening collaboration between schools and teachers with relevant interests, offering training, opportunities for reflection, and exchanging of good practices. More specifically, the teachers of the Network:

- Participated in training seminars, focusing on literary genres, lesson design, and action and activity planning.
- Prepared an action plan aiming at promoting the love of reading (the action plan was in tune with the School Professional Learning Plan and the School Improvement Plan).
- Collaborated with other schools and with other organisations, e.g., the Cyprus IBBY (Cyprus Association on Books for Young People) and specialists, such as authors, academics, and so on.
- Exchanged good practices.
- Uploaded material, such as action plans and examples of good practices in an online learning environment, contributing thus towards the creation of an interactive space for the Network’s members and a depository of useful learning material.

In October 2023 the Network operated with thirty one schools, twenty eight primary schools and three pre-primary.

3.5.1.14 Online education programme to support teaching Greek as a second language – The Cyprus Educational Mission in the UK

During the school year 2022 - 2023, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, in collaboration with the Department of Primary Education, conducted a needs diagnosis, through a questionnaire (Google Form), for the teachers of the Cyprus Educational Mission in the United Kingdom. The Questionnaire was divided into three thematic sections: Demographics - Administrative Data, Language and Instructional Issues, Curriculum and Training Needs - Challenges. A total of seventy-six teachers (40 Teachers on secondment. and 36 Teachers) participated in the survey. The Programme was ultimately not conducted this school year, as the required number of participants was not met.

3.5.1.15 Online training programme for expatriate teachers of the Greek language

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, in order to disseminate the Greek language, History and Civilisation in countries with Greek Diaspora, offers the training programme “Greek Language and Greek Civilisation”, which is of interest to teachers of Greek abroad. After the Cabinet of Ministers’ decision (NO. 81.738 dated 2/12/2016) since 2017 - 2018 the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute has been offering teachers’ training extended to a period of three months to teachers of Greek as a second / foreign language. However, the programme was not offered in the 2022 - 2023 school year, as the required number of twelve participants was not met in order for the programme to take place.

3.5.1.16 In-service training for Entrepreneurial Education

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) implements programmes of continuing professional development in the areas of Entrepreneurial education. Following the guidelines set by the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union (2006), entrepreneurial education, is named as one of the eight key competences for lifelong learning, which is defined as ‘an individual’s ability to plan and translate ideas into action’, towards the achievement of objectives.

Programmes are also implemented in accordance with the National Policy Statement for the Enhancement of the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in Cyprus (2015), the new legislation for Social Entrepreneurship (2018), and the European Union's Policy on the new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020). The aim is to foster entrepreneurial mind-set and culture in education, in Cyprus, by providing training on the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to this competence; which is integrated to support different aspects of life.

3.5.1.17 European programmes

In 2023 the CPI Department of training participated in a series of European projects related to different aspects and priorities of the CPI:

ECO-MUSE “Network of Open Eco Museums for the Promotion and Gentle Enhancement of Areas with Environmental History” (1. 6. 2021 – 31. 10. 2023)

The programme aimed at contributing towards the achievement of the objectives set out in the cooperation programme Interreg V-A Greece-Cyprus and has been completed. The project was implemented in collaboration with partners from the Natural History Museum of Crete, the Municipality of Sitia, the University of Crete, the University of Thessaly, the Troodos Community Development Company, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute and the Cyprus Ministry of Tourism. The aim of the project was the creation of two Open Eco museums, in the area of Sitia Lassithi (Crete) and in the area of Marathasa Lemesos and the development of these areas, with the active participation of the local communities, based on a holistic sustainable approach. Within the framework of its obligations, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute produced the creation of audio-visual material aiming at the promotion of the intervention areas, (Marathasa), identification and evaluation of the natural and cultural heritage of the area and the possibility of their promotion and usability, development of a Museological Study (Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Heritage, Traditional Arts, Gastronomic Culture) and design and implementation of Educational Programmes and specifically in the production of educational material, through the three (3) museums on Byzantine - Post-Byzantine Heritage, Traditional Agricultural and Agro-food Products and Traditional Arts. The information and educational material produced in the framework of the project is available on the project's website <https://eco-muse.eu/>

LESSAM “Lesson Study as a vehicle for improving achievement in mathematics”, Erasmus Plus-Key Action 2 (1. 9. 2020 – 31. 8. 2023)

The project LESSAM (<https://www.ucy.ac.cy/lessam2/>) aims at investigating the impact of the model of Lesson Study on teacher learning and, consequently, on pupil learning outcomes. The core model involves to: a) plan lessons during planning meetings, b) teach / observe those lessons; c) reflect on the lessons during reflection meetings. Variations of the model include the presence of an LS facilitator during teachers' planning and reflection meetings, guiding teachers as they construct new knowledge.

The objectives of the project, therefore, are to examine the: 1. effects of teachers' participation in Lesson Study on their own learning and on pupils' mathematical reasoning; 2. potential impact of the role of an LS Advisor and LS Facilitators on dialogues and teacher learning; 3. relationship between teacher intentions and teaching practices. In order to examine the above, an experimental design is employed in the four participating countries. Forty-five mathematics teachers who teach in the first three years of secondary education will be recruited in each country. These teachers are randomly allocated to one of the three groups: 1) LS+Advisor group, 2) LS+Facilitator group, and 3) Control group. Teachers in the experimental groups (i.e. groups 1 and 2) will form LS teams and conduct three-cycles LSs (i.e. a total of nine lessons during the school year). Findings from this project will contribute towards important evidence in relation to the effects of LS. In addition, findings will shed light on the role, value and cost-effectiveness of the roles of an LS Advisor and LS Facilitators. Based on these findings, policy

recommendations will be made regarding the implementation of an LS as a teacher professional development model and the promotion of mathematical reasoning in teaching practices. The country partners of the project are Cyprus, Greece, Belgium and Netherlands.

PLCs for us - “Professional Learning Communities in the post-covid era: Collaboration between a University and a Public School System”, Research & Innovation Foundation - Excellence Hubs (1. 2. 2022 – 30. 4. 2024)

The Research Project “PLCs for us - Professional Learning Communities in the post-covid era: Collaboration between a University and a Public School System” (EXCELLENCE/0421/0333) focuses on the Professional Learning of teachers at all levels of education, from Pre-Primary to Higher Education, with an emphasis on the creation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), through the cooperation of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and the European University of Cyprus. The Research Project aims at exploring the characteristics of PLCs and supporting the PLCs of teachers and academics in Cyprus. In the framework of the project, following a review of relevant literature, data has been collected on teachers' expectations before the establishment of the PLCs (beginning of the school year), as well as data concerning teachers' and academics' evaluation of the operation of the PLCs in their schools or at the University (end of the school year). At the same time, a Toolkit of activities and tools has been developed that can be used for the training of teachers who work within schools / organisations and coordinate the functioning of the PLCs (Professional Learning Coordinators). The Toolbox is also a set of tools that can be used within schools / organisations for the creation and development of PLCs. Moreover, a Training Programme for PLC Coordinators has been developed in the form of a Guide, structured in modules (Modular Training) based on the key time-phases of the creation and development of a learning community. The Training Programme (Guide) includes information about the professional learning communities for teachers, suggestions and advice for each phase of the process of PLC development and integrates the tools and activities from the Toolkit. The Training Programme (Guide) is expected to be available digitally on a learning platform for teachers.

ProW – “Promoting Teachers Well-being through Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education», Support for policy reform, Erasmus Plus - Key Action 3 (28. 2. 2021 – 28. 2. 2024)

The project “Promoting Teachers Well-being through Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education (ProW), Key Action 3 - Support for policy reform” is a three-year project that focuses on the enhancement of the pre-primary school teachers' well-being, job satisfaction and prevention of burnout, through a number of Positive Psychology interventions based on the PERMA model. Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Portugal are the four participating countries in the project. The project has been completed in February 2024, with a closing European Conference in Thessaloniki and the establishment of the European Observatory for the Well-being of Teachers. Furthermore, writing up, dissemination of results and good practices, as well as discussion and presentation of potential applications at school level and at policy level are in progress. Further information can be found on the site of the project: [ProW – Promoting Teachers Well-being through Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education \(prowproject.eu\)](http://prowproject.eu)

TAP-TS - “Teaching Sustainability: Content, Competences & Approaches for Europe’s pre- and in-service teachers”, Erasmus+ Teacher Academies (1. 7. 2022 – 30. 6. 2025)

The TAP-TS project is one of the first eleven projects to receive funding in the innovative Erasmus+ Teacher Academies action, which started in 2022 and will be completed within three years. The consortium of project partners consists of Universities, Research Centres, Teacher Training Institutes, Private Organisations and schools from different European countries. It aims at developing teaching

materials and pedagogical practices for teaching sustainability, sustainability issues and professional learning for teachers through a variety of activities. Since the start of the project, educational materials have been developed and tested via various teaching and learning events: online workshops, hybrid programmes (Active Learning Events) and face-to-face five-day programmes (Spring and Summer Schools) for teachers' professional learning. The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) organised the first five-day Summer School entitled "Learning, Teaching, and Reflecting on Sustainability" in June 2013 (26 - 30 June 2023) at a hotel in Larnaka and 50 educators (project partners, primary and secondary school teachers, student-teachers) from all over Europe participated. The main objective of the Summer School was the pilot implementation of the educational material that had already been created, thus, experiential workshops were implemented in collaboration with project partners. Special emphasis was placed on teachers' reflection on the activities, the material and the interconnection within the context of the schools through reflective activities organised by teacher trainers of the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (In-Service Teachers' Training Department), in collaboration with three academics - members of the Pedagogical Advisory Group of the TAP-TS Project. In addition, the Unit for Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development presented the policies of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth regarding education for sustainability and organised activities at the Environmental Education Centre in Cape Greco and Malama Beach.

STEAME Teacher Academy – «STEAME Teacher Facilitators Academy», Erasmus+ Teacher Academies (1. 6. 2023 – 31. 5. 2026)

The project STEAME TEACHER FACILITATORS ACADEMY (STEAME-ACADEMY) aims at creating a Network of Teacher Academies focusing on improving education policies and practices for educators in Europe. By establishing networks and communities of practice, the project will connect providers of initial and continuing teacher education, as well as relevant stakeholders, to develop effective strategies and programmes for professional learning. Collaboration will also enhance European and international cooperation in teacher education through innovative partnerships between teacher and school educators, promoting blended training programmes and responding to key EU priorities. The project will test mobility models and establish the European Federation of STEAME Teacher Academies to promote sustainable collaboration and inform policy makers on teacher education. The project involves 14 different organisations from nine countries, with the project coordinator being the Pedagogical University of Krakow, Poland. The project started its activities in June 2023, and the first physical meeting of all partners took place in Krakow in October 2023, where the project's actions and progress were discussed in detail.

GEO Academy – «Innovative digital GEO-tools for enhancing teachers' digital, green and spatial skills towards an effective STEAM Education for Sustainability Development», Erasmus+ Teacher Academies (1. 6. 2023 – 31. 5. 2026)

The GEO-Academy project aims at creating a European network that will offer a comprehensive training and development programme for educators on Sustainable Development topics. Specifically, within the framework of the project, a network and a community of practice will be established to develop innovative strategies and learning practices for the professional development of educators in new innovative digital technologies based on educational pedagogical approaches. The purpose of the project is to establish a unified framework that promotes the development / improvement of pedagogical, digital, and spatial skills and competencies of educators through themes related to Sustainable Development. The project involves 11 different organisations from seven countries, with the project coordinator being the National Technical University of Athens, Greece. The project started its activities in June 2023, and the first physical meeting of all partners took place in Athens in September 2023, where the project's actions and progress were discussed in detail.

«ICSE Science Factory», Horizon Europe Framework Programme (1. 1. 2023 – 28. 2. 2026)

The ICSE Science Factory project aims at addressing the shortage of scientists and citizens experienced in topics related to physical sciences within the European Union. The main objective of the ICSE Science Factory is to support the EU's efforts to create new collaborations in local communities, such as collaborations between educators, pupils, scientists, researchers, and the business community, which will essentially provide effective learning environments for physical science topics. The specific objectives of the project include: (a) developing collaborative learning opportunities in the physical sciences for all citizens at local level, which demonstrate the relevance of science to real-world challenges and add value to lifelong learning, (b) increasing the interest of young people, especially girls / women, in studies and careers in the physical sciences, and (c) strengthening networking and the exchange and application of research findings among educators, researchers, and professionals in various businesses, as well as local communities, in order to create and utilise the physical sciences for the benefit of society. The project consortium consists of partners from Germany, Portugal, Croatia, Cyprus, and Turkey, and the project coordinator is the University of Freiburg, Germany. The consortium has progressed in developing short-term events and activities (lighthouse events and activities), as well as in training educators for the development and implementation of similar activities in their schools. The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute has organised such a seminar for educators of pre-primary, primary and secondary education. The seminar started in November 2023 and is expected to be completed by June 2024, when teachers will reflect and discuss about the implementation of their own activities.

3.5.2 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL DOCUMENTATION

The Department of Educational Documentation, in 2023, published The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Bulletin, Issue 25.

3.5.2.1 The Pedagogical Institute Library

The emphasis on the teachers' professional development, as well as the growing interest by educators of all levels of education for self-improvement and development, have enhanced the role of the Library at the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. The Library was enriched with new volumes of books and compact discs (CD, DVD). Overall, the Library has more than 55 220 volumes of printed material while subscription is also paid to printed titled scientific journals related to education and educational issues.

As part of an effort to upgrade the Library of the CPI, computerisation of the Library material and resources by the use of the Koha Library Software is continued. Additionally, it is noted that the Library of the CPI participates in the Library Consortium of the Cyprus University Libraries and has access to online sources such as Scopus Freedom Collection - Science Direct, SAGE Journals, Springer Link, PsychARTICLES, Taylor & Francis, Wiley Online Library (books and journals) and to the search engines Ebscohost databases and EBSCO, EDS.

3.5.3 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

The Department of Educational Technology (DET) promotes innovations related to the use of digital technologies for teaching, learning, and assessing, guided by national and EU digital strategies. Specifically, the Department implements Continuous Professional Learning Programmes, advances digital skills in education, explores and recommends new implementations through European, research and intervention programmes, maintains online and onsite learning environments, produces audio-visual and other material for the needs of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and provides training and technical support to the staff of the CPI (<https://tet.pi.ac.cy>). In addition, the DET contributes

towards national and European policy papers and guidelines on behalf of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth and implements projects that support the work of the Ministry's Information and Communication Technology Unit.

The various actions of the DET focus on the priorities of the Digital Strategy for Cyprus and are based on the principles set out in [the European Commission Action Plan for digital Education \(2021 - 2027\)](#). They are also based on European digital competence frameworks such as: 1) [DigComp 2.2](#), which provides a common language and understanding at a EU level to identify and describe the key areas of the citizens' digital competence, 2) [DigCompEdu](#), which aims at providing a general reference framework to promote the digital competence of teachers, and 3) [DigCompOrg](#), which aspires to encourage and support educational organisations for an effective use of digital technologies in teaching and learning.

Under this scope, the following actions on advancing education through digital technologies and open educational resources have been taking place during the year 2023, emphasising on the horizontal key skills of the 21st century. The actions aim at the effective teaching and learning at school, teacher, and pupil level (Diagram 1).

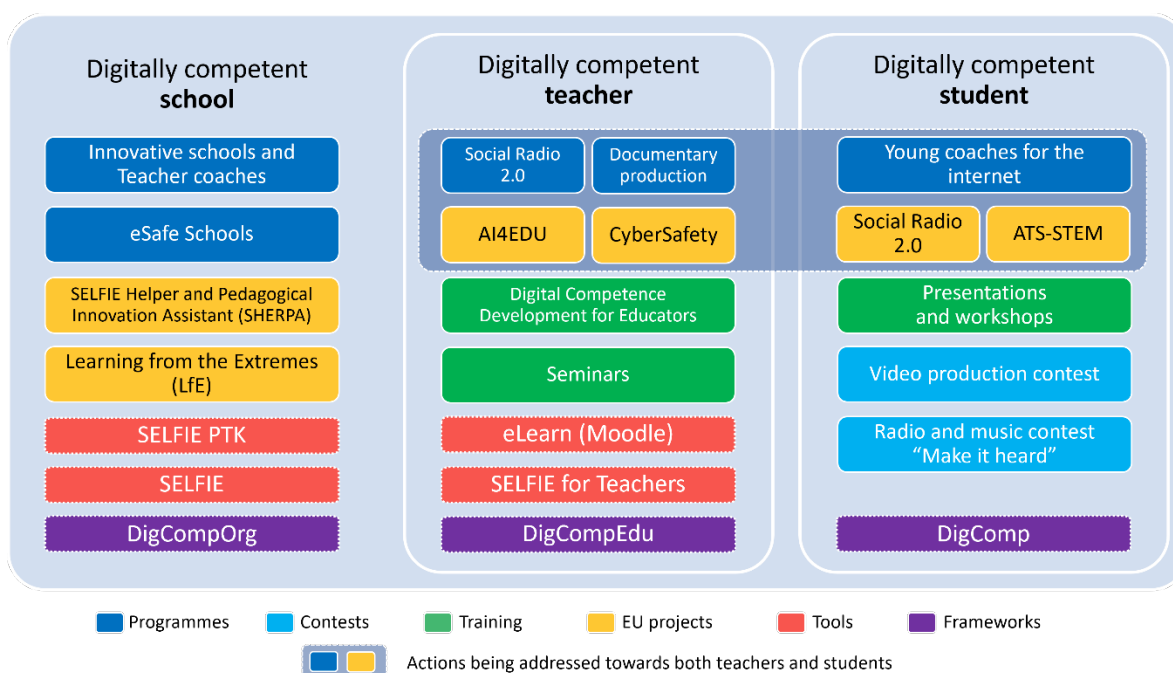


Diagram 1: Using digital technologies for effective teaching and learning.

● **3.5.3.1 DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN THE LEARNING PROCESS**

○ **Use of Digital Technologies in teaching and learning**

- **Innovative schools and teacher coaches** (<https://innovativeschools.pi.ac.cy>): The Innovative Schools and Teacher Coaches is an annual recurring programme for primary and secondary schools. It aims at helping schools gain a better understanding of their needs in terms of using digital technologies to support teaching and learning and develop their own digital action plan addressing the needs identified. Each school unit participating in the Programme is invited to engage in a process of reflection on the use of digital technologies in the school and teacher's digital competences through the SELFIE (<https://ec.europa.eu/education/schools-go-digital>) and SELFIE for TEACHERS (<https://ec.europa.eu/education/teachers-go-digital>) tools. It is then

invited to use the SELIFE PTK toolkit (<https://selfieptk.eu>) to interpret the results from SELFIE, set goals in terms of digital education and develop, implement, and evaluate an action plan based on SELFIE. This process is expected to contribute towards the development of the digital capacity of the personnel in the school unit. During the school year 2022 - 2023, a total of thirteen schools were chosen to take part in the Programme, in response to an open invitation.

- **Recording Memory** (<https://medialiteracy.pi.ac.cy/programs/documentary/>): An educational programme aiming at engaging pupils in an experiential play of embodying collective and individual memory through the audiovisual recording of personal experiences by members of the pupils' family or local community to create a short documentary film (10' - 45' max. duration). Teachers are trained and supported throughout the duration of the programme (usually a school year) in researching, filming, and editing, so that they can support and guide their pupils through research and production. All necessary audiovisual equipment to produce the documentaries is allocated to schools. Pupils decide on the concept they want to explore within several thematic areas: environment and sustainability, cultural heritage, liberation struggles, occupied land. Some of the pupils' films have been broadcasted by the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation and were screened during local and international film festivals. Most of the films are available online on the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute's platform of educational films (<https://paragoges.pi.ac.cy>). During the school year 2022 - 2023, six schools, 13 teachers and 93 pupils participated in the programme.
- **Student Web Radio** (<https://medialiteracy.pi.ac.cy/programs/radio/>): An educational programme aiming at involving pupils in the production of a web radio show or podcast (10' -180' max. duration) that will be broadcasted through the European Social Radio platform (<http://europeanschoolradio.eu>). The theme of the radio show / podcast may vary between school curricula to extra curricula subjects. Teachers are being trained and supported throughout the duration of the programme (usually a school year) on researching, audio recording, editing, and disseminating the audio work, so that they can support and guide their pupils through research and production. All necessary audio equipment to produce the works is allocated to schools. Depending on the theme of a radio show / podcast, each school may choose to collaborate with local community professionals (e.g., journalists, musicians, and human and environmental rights activists), NGOs, the Public Sector, and others. During the school year 2022 - 2023, 16 schools, 44 teachers and 433 pupils participated in the programme.
- **Radio and Music Pupil Contest "Make it Heard"** (<http://contest.europeanschoolradio.eu/>, www.pi.ac.cy/kantonakoustei): A contest organised by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, the European School Radio Scientific Society (Greece), the Educational Radio Television of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs (Greece), and the National Centre of Audiovisual Media and Communication (Greece). Pupils can submit radio messages of up to 90 seconds and songs up to three minutes, relevant to each year's contest theme. Evaluation committees consist of professional journalists, musicians, and teachers, while the pupils who participate in the contest evaluate the submissions as well. Awards are being given to the first three contestants of each category / age group. Additionally, the public votes for two audience awards. The theme of the contest changes every year. For the school year 2022 – 2023, with the theme "Youth for Peace", 391 radio messages were submitted from Cyprus, Greece and abroad schools. A total of 29 submissions, which received the highest scores in their category, were awarded, among them five schools from Cyprus.
- **Learning designs and educational material** (<http://photodentro.pi.ac.cy>): Photodentro Cyprus is a repository of user generated open educational content. Teachers can upload their educational scenarios and respective material or search for other users' educational scenarios and material.

Teachers register in the platform via the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute Portal.

- **Seminars, presentations, and workshops on digital technologies:** Throughout the year, a number of seminars, presentations and workshops on the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning, are offered to teachers.

- **Creative, safe, and responsible use of the Internet**

Cyprus Safer Internet Centre – CYberSafety (<https://www.cybersafety.cy>): Building on European funding, as part of the Better Internet for Kids project, the Cyprus Safer Internet Centre (SIC) aims at strengthening efforts for the creative and safe use of the Internet in Cyprus. Focusing on the new and increasing needs, which constantly rise, at national and European level, regarding Internet technology, the Centre enables cooperation between national stakeholders, and promotes the Cybersecurity strategy of the republic of Cyprus (<https://dsa.cy/strategy/cscc-2020>) and the European strategy for a better internet for kids (BIK+) (<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/strategy-better-internet-kids>). The work of the Cyprus SIC is focused on three main pillars: Awareness and information, Helpline and Hotline services.

- **Internet safety awareness platform** (<https://internetsafety.pi.ac.cy>): The Cyprus SIC develops rich educational / informational material, games, resources, and tools, all available through the internet safety awareness platform. At the same time, it organises campaigns to empower children, young people, parents, carers and teachers with skills and knowledge on how to be safe online and benefit from the advantages that the digital environment can offer.
- **CyberSafety Youth Panel** (www.cybersafety.cy/youth-panel): The Cyprus SIC works closely with children and young people allowing them to actively share their experiences, ideas, and views, reinforcing them to formulate suggestions and actions regarding the creative and safe use of digital technologies and the Internet. CYberSafety Youth Panel members act as ambassadors of best practices and actions, aiming at creating innovative resources and disseminating messages about the safe use of the Internet to their peers and other involved groups.
- **Helpline and Hotline services** (www.cybersafety.cy/helpline, www.cybersafety.cy/hotline): Both services support the work of the Safer Internet Centre of Cyprus – CYberSafety. The operation of the Helpline aims at ensuring that all users will receive expert advice and support on issues related to the use of digital technologies and the Internet. More specifically, Helpline provides information, advice and assistance to children, young people and / or parents, teachers and professionals, on how to deal with harmful content, contact (such as grooming) and conduct (such as cyberbullying or sexting). The operation of the Hotline offers a direct, easily accessible and responsible point of contact for users to report illegal content, or actions related to illegal child sexual abuse material.
- **Young coaches for the Internet** (<https://youngcoaches.pi.ac.cy>): Young Coaches is an educational programme aiming at engaging pupils in training others on the creative exploitation and safe use of the Internet. With the guidance of their schoolteachers and the support of specialists on the subject, young coaches are invited to develop an action plan for their school unit to design and implement activities to raise awareness about the safe and responsible use of the Internet in their school and community. Pupils are invited to think creatively and implement at least three activities, report on those activities in a reflective journal, participate in the Safer Internet Day activities, and organise an event at their school in order to receive a Young Coaches Certificate. Since 2013, when the programme first started, pupils have exceeded expectations and amazed everyone with their creativity. Among other activities, they have created and shared printed materials such as posters, leaflets, bookmarks and cartoons, digital material such as

videos, blogs and animations, have written and acted in theatrical activities, and written and performed songs, provided peer and parent training presentations, organised events and talent shows, created board and online games, completed questionnaires, and run research on Internet-related topics. During the 2022 - 2023 school year, a total of ninety pupils successfully completed the programme and obtained certification as “Young Coaches”, under the support of five teachers, spanning three schools.

- **Safe school for the Internet** (<https://esafeschools.pi.ac.cy/>): The programme aims at helping schools implement internet safety actions to enhance the digital skills of pupils and teachers, as well as raise awareness on the safe use of the internet. Moreover, the aim of the Programme is to help schools exploit the potential of the Internet, but also prevent or deal with problems that may arise in the use of modern technologies. Through the Programme, schools that wish to do so can be certified as Safe Schools for the Internet for one school year. Among the obligations of the schools are the implementation of learning activities on the safe and creative use of the Internet in all classes of the school unit, organising workshops for teachers and parents, and the pan-European certification with the eSafety Label. For the 2022 - 2023 school year, three schools - one Primary and two Secondary Schools - were chosen to participate, following an open invitation, and were certified.
- **Video production contest** (<https://internetsafety.pi.ac.cy/video-2022-2023/>): The Video production contest is an annual contest for pupils within the thematic area of safe Internet. Pupils' video production aims at developing children's skills in relation to Media Literacy as well as at constructing knowledge and shaping their attitudes regarding the safe and creative use of the internet. Through this creative learning process, pupils engage in activities related to the production of films, such as researching about the theme, writing the story and script related to the key messages and narrative they want to pass on to the audience, rehearsing, directing the camera, sometimes performing, editing and other production tasks. This process contributes, quite effectively, towards a deeper understanding of all the interconnected issues of adopting a safe, creative, and responsible use of the Internet. For the 2022 – 2023 school year, eleven pupil groups submitted ideas and illustrated scenarios. All entries (six from primary and five from secondary and technical schools) were then invited to present their creations in front of a committee during the Safer Internet Day conference on 7th February 2023. Six films received awards. All pupils' videos are hosted on the CPI's Educational Technology Department YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCi7UsCg5wW9IMWr8t7QxT3w>
- **Seminars, presentations, and workshops on the topic of safe and responsible use of the internet** (<https://workshops.internetsafety.pi.ac.cy/>): [CPI along with the rest of the partners of the Cyprus SIC, offer to teachers, students, and parents, seminars, presentations, and workshops](#) for the creative, safe, and responsible use of the Internet and Media Literacy. [During the 2022 – 2023 school year, a total of one hundred fourteen \(114\) activities were conducted, benefiting more than 4500 students, 250 teachers, and 350 parents.](#)
- **Transversal and digital skills for pupils and teachers**
- **Digital Competence Development for Educators Programme** (<https://elearn.pi.ac.cy/dcde/>): The Programme, implemented by the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute aims at strengthening and further developing teachers' digital competences in order to promote the effective use and integration of digital technologies in the teaching and learning process. The intended outcome of the Programme is that teachers should:
 - be able to use online learning environments, electronic learning tools, open digital

educational content and learning communities, in order to enhance their professional development and lifelong learning skills,

- develop the necessary digital skills to become effective in providing innovative learning environments in the Cyprus educational system, in order to support their pupils acquire knowledge, while cultivating values and attitudes, and developing the necessary horizontal skills essential for the 21st century.

The Programme is offered following a distance learning approach and methodology, utilising the CPI's eLearning Environment (<https://elearn.pi.ac.cy>). It consists of ten Learning Modules with content on thematic areas that have been defined through a process of diagnosing the needs of teachers but also following European and national directions. The Programme supports and contributes towards the implementation of educational policies of the MESY, mainly the Policy for Digital Education and the integration of digital technologies in the learning process, as well as the implementation of the Policy for Teachers' Professional Development.

- **Learning environments and repositories**
- <https://photodentro.pi.ac.cy>
- <https://elearn.pi.ac.cy>
- www.pi-egrrafes.ac.cy

3.5.3.2 Audiovisual material production

The DET maintains a studio of audio and audio-visual production. It has in its collection several productions and co-productions, some of which were screened in local and international film festivals and were broadcasted through the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation and the National Greek TV. An online platform hosts these productions (<https://paragoges.pi.ac.cy/>) giving direct access to teachers, pupils and the public. The CPI collaborates with public and private organisations, production companies, scholars, researchers, and other professionals for the production of these films. The films are available through an online platform where one can also find educational films produced by the Educational Radio television of Greece and films produced by pupils under the programme "Recording Memory – Documentary production by pupils". More than 400 titles are available for screening on the platform.

3.5.3.3 Conferences

- "Safer Internet Day 2023", 7. 2. 2023 (<https://internetsafety.pi.ac.cy/SID2023>)
- "Video Production Contest 2023", 7. 2. 2023 (<https://internetsafety.pi.ac.cy/video-2022-2023>)
- "Digital Education: Developments and pedagogical practices", 8. 6. 2023 (<https://www.pi.ac.cy/digitaleducpi2023>)
- "Advancing Media Literacy in Education: Contemporary Approaches in Pedagogy", 3. 11. 2023 (<https://medialiteracy.pi.ac.cy/events/medialiteracy2023>)

3.5.3.4 European programmes

- **Augmented Assessment «Assessing Newly Arrived Migrants' Knowledge in Science and Maths using Augmented Teaching Material»** (Erasmus+ Key Action 3. 11. 2020 – 31.10. 2023)

The Augmented Assessment Project aiming at addressing the gap that exists in assessing newly arrived migrant pupils' prior knowledge in the fields of Science and Mathematics, by utilising augmented reality for assessment. This will be achieved by developing and piloting an innovative augmented toolkit in the form of an online library and a training course for teachers that will equip them with the necessary theoretical and practical knowledge for assessing newly arrived migrant pupils' prior knowledge. More information can be found on the project's website:

<https://augmented-assessment.eu>

- **Assessment and improvement of socioemotional competencies of pupils powered by a smart digital toolkit and targeted educational activities applied on physical and online classrooms – EduCardia, KA220-SCH - Cooperation partnerships in school education (28. 2. 2022 – 27. 2. 2025)**

EduCardia aims at developing an assessment methodology focusing on assessing and improving socioemotional competencies of pupils in primary and secondary education. EduCardia tackles both the development of the appropriate SEL material and the development of an online tool (software) that will enable teachers to efficiently apply assessment processes within their classrooms and track the evolution of socioemotional competencies of pupils. The main outcomes of Educardia include the developed methodology, the revised EI model, the online assessment psychometric tool, the SEL material and the results of the application of the methodology in a number of schools in Greece, Spain, Romania and Cyprus.

The consortium consists of the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering of the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), that coordinates the project, the Faculty of Education at the University of Barcelona (UB), the Faculty of Sciences of Education of the Stefan cel Mare University Suceava, Romania (USV), the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) and the International Network of Emotional Education and Wellbeing (RIEEB).

- **Cyprus Safer Internet Centre – CyberSafety IV (DIGITAL, SAFER INTERNET, (1.10. 2022 – 30. 9. 2024)**
The objective of CYberSafety IV is to enable the continuation and further develop the existing Safer Internet Centre (SIC) in Cyprus, by providing: a) An awareness-raising centre targeting children, parents and teachers, and other professionals working with children about a better and safer use of the internet, b) A helpline service that provides support to young people and their parents regarding harmful contact, offensive conduct (e.g. cyberbullying, hate speech, sexting) and undesirable or harmful content, c) A hotline to receive and manage reports from the public related to illegal online child sexual abuse material (CSAM). More information can be found on the project's website: <https://cybersafety.cy>
- **Learning from the Extremes – LfE (Pilot Projects & Preparation Actions, 1. 2. 2022 – 31.1. 2024)**
Learning from the Extremes will address inequalities of access to digital education by enhancing inclusion and reducing the digital gap suffered by school communities from remote areas with low connectivity, limited or no access to devices and digital educational tools and content. More information can be found on the project's website: <https://learningfromtheextremes.eu>
- **Social Radio 2.0 – The European School Radio and Podcasting Community for Active Citizenship Education (1.12. 2020 – 31. 8. 2023)**
The goal of the Social Radio 2.0 is to introduce a holistic educational approach that supports schools and educators in promoting education for active citizenship, combining innovative pedagogical methods (project-based learning, experiential learning, and design-based learning) with the extensive use of new media and technology, leveraging the power of radio and radio broadcasts. The project will deliver the following outcomes: A detailed programme for active citizenship / Social Radio, training programme for educators, Resource hub, Platform and online community of the Social Radio 2.0. More information can be found on the project's website: <https://socialradio.europeanschoolradio.eu>

- **Conversational AI assistant for teaching and learning – AI4EDU** (1. 2. 2023 – 31. 1. 2026)
The General Objectives of AI4EDU are to: a) investigate, develop, implement and evaluate next generation intelligent educational assistants, powered by leading edge AI and language technologies, designed to conversationally interact with pupils and support teachers and pupils in fulfilling their teaching and learning goals, in a way that makes them acceptable as engaging, flexible, effective, reliable and helpful partners, b) investigate the implications of the adoption of the developed AI applications for teaching and learning and the aspects of their ethical, transparent, inclusive, and equitable use in educational settings, and produce evidence-based recommendations for the educational community, as well as policy guidelines for the effective deployment of AI in education. More information can be found on the project's website: <https://ai4edu.eu>

3.5.4 THE CENTRE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND EVALUATION (CERE)

The Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE) was established in August 2008, following a decision by the Council of Ministers. The CERE undertakes and coordinates a range of activities in three different directions. Firstly, the CERE assumes responsibility for the implementation of international and national research studies on pedagogical and educational issues (e.g. educational policy, national curricula, and teacher training). Secondly, the CERE undertakes evaluation studies on educational innovations, interventions and programmes of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MESY), implemented in Cyprus schools. Thirdly, the CERE seeks to develop and sustain research-oriented culture within the educational system (schools, pupils, and teachers).

During 2023, in accordance with its annual action plan, the CERE engaged in various actions, as follows:

3.5.4.1 Participation in local and international research educational studies

3.5.4.1.1. International research

The CERE is involved in a number of research studies coordinated by international organisations (e.g. the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), some of which are co-funded by the European Commission. Specifically, the CERE represents the MESY in the following international studies:

- **Programme for the International Pupil Assessment (PISA)** – The study aims at developing reliable indicators for the learning outcomes of educational systems (knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds in Reading, Mathematics and Science) towards or upon the completion of compulsory education. The study is implemented every three years. More information is provided on: <http://keea-pisa.pi.ac.cy/pisa>.
 - **PISA 2022:** This is the fourth participation of our country in the study (previous participation was in 2012, 2015 and 2018) with the focus being placed on Mathematics (major domain) and Creative Thinking (innovative domain). During 2023, quality checks were carried out and the organisers (Educational Testing Service) were able to prepare the final database together with the corresponding data from other participating countries. Statistical analyses were carried out and the national report was prepared. The results of the study were announced in December 2023. The PISA 2022 database and the national report are available on the respective website.
 - **PISA 2025:** This is the fifth participation of our country in the study with the focus being placed on Science (major domain) and Learning in the Digital World (innovative domain). Additionally, Cyprus will be assessing English as a Foreign Language as an additional, optional, domain. During 2023, the preparations for the Field trial (spring 2024) of the study began. Adaptations

were made to the Science and Learning in the Digital World items, and the pupil, school and teacher questionnaires were translated. At the same time, the initial sampling forms were submitted, according to the timeline.

- **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)** – The study aims at assessing the performance of fourth grade in primary education and B' Class Gymnasium in Science and Mathematics, at an international level. In addition, TIMSS is intended to collect information about the implementation of the national curriculum, the teaching practices and school resources. The study is implemented every four years. More information is provided on: <http://keea-timss.pi.ac.cy/timss.110>
 - **TIMSS 2023:** This is the seventh participation of Cyprus in TIMSS. In this cycle, Cyprus made a transition in the case of Class B' Gymnasium, whereas Grade 4 in primary education used paper-based data collection. The Main study took place in spring 2023 with 4 842 fourth graders and 4 642 B' Class Gymnasium. The CERÉ has monitored both, the implementation of data collection in the participating schools and the coding of the data. The data were submitted in July 2023 and the International results will be announced by the organisers in December 2024.

- **Teaching and Learning International Study (TALIS)** – The study focuses on the learning environment and working conditions of teachers in schools. It offers an opportunity for teachers and school principals to provide data for education analyses and policy development. The study collects information from principals and teachers in the gymnasium at an international level, with respect to aspects, such as professional development, evaluation, teaching and pupils' learning. The study is implemented every six years. More information is provided on: <http://keea-talis.pi.ac.cy/talis>.
 - **TALIS 2024:** Cyprus participates in TALIS for the third time with co-funding by the European Commission. The fourth cycle of TALIS 2024 began in 2021. This cycle has an increased number of participants (around 55 countries) and offered more options for participation. Cyprus and the majority of participating countries take part in the Core Survey that focuses on lower Secondary Education (International Standard Classification of Education - ISCED Level 2). The Field trial took place in February 2023 and involved 200 teachers from ten secondary schools (Gymnasia). The pilot administration of the research instruments allowed the testing of reliability and validity of the Main study research instruments. The Main study will take place in 2024 and will engage all schools, private and public, and will involve about 100 school principals and 2000 teachers.

- **Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)** – This international study provides data on trends in comparative reading achievement for fourth graders, across participating countries. PIRLS collects considerable background information on how educational systems provide educational opportunities to their pupils, as well as the factors that influence how pupils use these opportunities. The study runs every five years. More information is provided on: <http://keea-pirls.pi.ac.cy/pirls>.
 - **PIRLS 2021:** This is the second participation of Cyprus in this study (previous participation was in 2001). The data were submitted to the organisers in autumn 2021 and the results were announced in May 2023.
 - **PIRLS 2026:** This is the third participation of Cyprus in this study. All countries will turn to electronic data collection. The Field study will take place in spring 2025 and the Main study in spring 2026.

- **International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS)** - This study investigates the ways in which young people are prepared to undertake their role as citizens in a world where contexts of democracy and civic participation continue to change. It focuses on pupils' knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards citizenship and seeks to explore factors that may come to influence their behavioral intentions with respect to participating in activities related to civics and citizenship. More information is provided on: <http://keea-iccs.pi.ac.cy/iccs>.
 - **ICCS 2022:** Cyprus participated in this study for the second time (previous participation was in 2009). During 2023, quality checks were carried out and the organisers (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) were able to prepare the final database together with the corresponding data from other participating countries. Statistical analyses were carried out and the national report was prepared. The results of the study were announced in November 2023. The ICCS 2022 database and the national report are available on the respective website.

- **Health Behaviour in School-aged Children (HBSC)** – This international study of the World Health Organisation (WHO) collects data on pupils' (11, 13 and 15-year-olds) health and well-being, social environments, health behaviours and so on. More information is provided on: <http://keea-hbsc.pi.ac.cy/hbsc>.
 - **HBSC 2022:** Cyprus participated in this study for the first time with 4 818 pupils from 276 classes and 208 schools. The national results of the study were announced in June 2023 followed by the international results. International results were announced in the form of waves (thematic reports). To date, the published international results include the “COVID-19” and “Mental Health and Wellbeing” and the remaining thematic reports (e.g., “Bullying and Peer Violence” and “Substance Use”) are expected to be announced in 2024.

- **International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS)** - This study investigates how well are Class B' Gymnasium pupils prepared to study, work, and live in a digital world. The study measures international differences in pupils' computer and information literacy knowledge and skills (ICILS). More information is provided on: <http://keea-icils.pi.ac.cy/icils>.
 - **ICILS 2023:** Cyprus participates in this study for the first time. During 2022 (March - May 2022) the Main study took place, with the participation of 3 488 pupils and 1 411 teachers from 95 public and private secondary education schools. In addition, eighty-nine schools participated in a supplemental data collection conducted in November 2023 for school awareness on ChatGPT. The CERE organised, coordinated, and supervised the process of data collection and coding and implemented quality control measures. The coded data were submitted to the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), according to the timeline, so that they could be processed, along with the respective data from the other participating countries. The results of the study are expected to be announced in November 2024.

3.5.4.1.2 National research

In addition to the above, the CERE implements three longitudinal large-scale national studies as follows:

- **Programme for Functional Literacy for Third and Sixth Graders** – At a local level, the CERE conducts the longitudinal ‘Programme for Functional Literacy’ (PFL) on a national scale for all primary school pupils of the third and sixth grade. The study aims at the identification of pupils ‘at

risk' for functional illiteracy. The results of the study are forwarded to schools and Directorates of Education of the MESY, so that these pupils receive the necessary support. During the school year 2022 - 2023, 6 835 pupils participated in the Greek language test and 6 903 pupils participated in the Mathematics test for the third grade. Additionally, 8 047 pupils participated in the Greek language test and 8 093 pupils participated in the Mathematics test for the sixth grade. The results were forwarded to schools and Directorates of Education of the MESY in May 2023. More information is provided on: <http://keea-literacy.pi.ac.cy/literacy>.

- **Learning Greek as an Additional Language** – This programme intends to diagnose the level of competence in Greek as an additional language for children with immigrant background, in public primary schools of Cyprus, so that they can receive targeted remedial instruction. Participants are pupils across the primary school grades (Grades 1 - 6), who currently attend (or will attend in the following school year) remedial instruction for learning Greek as an additional language. During 2022 - 2023, 3 030 pupils (initial assessment) and 1 814 (final assessment) should have participated in the programme. These numbers included the pupils who did not complete their initial or final assessment of the programme in the school year 2021 - 2022. In sum, 2 787 pupils out of 3 030 (92%) participated in the initial assessment and 1 579 pupils out of 1814 (87%) participated in the final assessment. More information is provided on the website: <http://keea-ellinomatheia.pi.ac.cy/ellinomatheia/>.
- **Programme Greek Language and Mathematics Tests for First Graders:** At a local level, the CERE conducts the “Programme Greek Language and Mathematics Tests for First Graders” on a national level for all primary school pupils attending first grade. The Programme aims at investigating the extent to which first year graders achieve basic curriculum goals in Greek Language and Mathematics, at the end of each school year. The programme was piloted in the school year 2021-2022 and applied only to Greek Language, while from the school year 2022 - 2023 the programme also applied to Mathematics. During the school year 2022 - 2023 the Greek Language and Mathematics tests were administered in 292 schools. The number of pupils who participated in the Greek Language test was 8 108, whereas the number of pupils who participated in the Mathematics test was 8 395. More information is provided on: <https://keea-pami-a.pi.ac.cy/pami-a/>.

3.5.4.2 Evaluation of innovations and programmes of the MESY

- **Functional Literacy Supporting a Teaching Programme in Primary School** – In the school year 2022 - 2023, this evaluation was conducted by the CERE. The aim was to investigate the views of stakeholders in relation to the structure and effectiveness of the programme as it was implemented in 50 primary schools across Cyprus. The research also investigated the learning outcomes of children at risk of illiteracy who were identified through the Programme for Functional Literacy (PFL) in the school year 2021 - 2022 and received remedial teaching under the programme. The evaluation included 50 elementary schools that participated in the programme and 50 that did not participate in the programme, from all districts of Cyprus. In total, 43 principals, 231 classroom teachers and 132 teachers of remedial teaching were included in the data collection. In addition, 74 pupils (1st – 6th grade) participated in group interviews. 183 pupils (4th grade) participated in the Greek Language test and 198 pupils in the Mathematics test. The results of the evaluation are presented in a report prepared by the CERE (December 2023).

3.5.4.3 Promotion of research culture within schools

The CERE assures that all individuals conducting research in Cyprus public schools use appropriate instruments and follow proper methodological approaches / ethical protocols. It reviews more than 200 research plans submitted by individual researchers per year. In addition, since 2016 the CERE employs

an electronic platform to submit and organise the research outcomes of the various research plans that were implemented. The systematic collection of these outcomes on an electronic database will contribute towards the development of a shared repository with research results.

3.5.5 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT UNIT (CDU)

The Curriculum Development Unit is responsible for:

- The coordination of procedures for the issuance and revision of national Curricula.
- Editing and updating of teaching textbooks and the production of educational material for teachers and pupils, at all levels of education.
- Purchasing of teaching textbooks published by the Computer Technology Institute and Press "Diophantus" in Greece, and arranging the process of transportation from Greece to Cyprus.
- Issuance of educational / promotional material (e.g. booklets, posters, cover art, flyers) for the purposes of:
 - the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MESY),
 - the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, and
 - other Services of the MESY.
- Preparing documents for printing tenders. Coordinating and monitoring all necessary administrative procedures (publication, evaluation and awarding of tenders), and supervising publications during the process of printing.
- Cooperating with the Departments of Primary, Secondary General and Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and the Store of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, for the operation of a database that facilitates ordering textbooks electronically.

In order to carry out the work effectively, the Curriculum Development Unit works closely with the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sport of Greece, the Institute of Educational Policy of Greece, the Computer Technology Institute and Press "Diophantus", the Departments of Education, the Tender Board of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, the Government Printing Office, private printing presses, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth Warehouse, the universities of Cyprus and the Trade Unions of teachers.

3.5.5.1 Books used in the Cyprus educational system

The books used in the Cyprus educational system include publications by the CDU, the Computer Technology Institute, Press "Diophantus" and by other sources. The table below shows in detail the number of books used, at each level of education, during the school year 2003 - 2004.

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	NUMBER OF BOOK TITLES			
	CDU	Computer Technology Institute and Press "Diophantus"	Other Sources	Total
Pre-primary / Primary	101	40	-	141
Secondary General	154	63	26	243
Technical and Vocational	180	144	9	333
Total	435 (60,7%)	247 (34,4%)	35 (4,9%)	717 (100%)

3.5.5.2 Curriculum Development Unit budget

The following table shows the expenditure for the financial year 2023:

	COST
Reprints / Revisions / First editions of CDU books and educational packages	€2.000.000
Purchase of textbooks from the CTI "Diophantus", books sent abroad / books received from abroad.	€1.300.000
Purchase of foreign language books (English, French, and so on) and literature books for Secondary General and Secondary Technical Education.	€1.630.000
Total cost	€4.930.000

4.

PARTICIPATION IN EUROPEAN PROGRAMMES

4.1 EURYDICE NETWORK

The Eurydice network supports and facilitates European cooperation in the field of lifelong learning by providing information on education systems and policies in 37 countries and by producing studies on issues common to European education systems. It consists of:

- [39 national units based in 37 countries](#) participating in the [Erasmus+ programme](#) (27 Member States, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The Republic of North Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland and Turkey), and
- a coordinating unit based on the [European Education and Culture Executive Agency](#) in Brussels.

Since 1980, the Eurydice network has been one of the strategic mechanisms established by the [European Commission](#) and Member States to support European cooperation in the field of education. Since 2014, Eurydice has been included in [Erasmus+](#), the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport. The Cyprus Eurydice Unit has been operating within the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth since June 2002. For more information on Eurydice, visit the following website: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice>.

4.2 ELECTRONIC PLATFORM FOR ADULT LEARNING IN EUROPE - EPALE

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training is the coordinator of the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) in Cyprus.

EPALE is a multilingual online space aiming at exchanging, showcasing and promoting methods of good practice in adult education. Individuals involved in organising and delivering adult education can access this online adult learning platform to share the latest developments and learn from each other. EPALE also includes a library of resources, a calendar of courses and events of interest for adult education professionals, as well as a partner-search tool.

EPALE supports the following goals:

- Make lifelong learning and exchange of experience a reality.
- Improve the quality and efficiency of adult learning.
- Promote equality, social cohesion and active citizenship through adult learning.

Anyone involved in providing and organising adult education, including teaching and administrative staff, policymakers, researchers and media can take part by registering on the platform.

During 2023, the following actions were implemented:

- Participation in Europe Day events organised by the Permanent Representation of the European Union in Cyprus.
- Participation in events that aim at strengthening synergies and coordination between the various bodies inside and outside the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, which offer education and training for adults.
- Promotion of the EPALE platform by the EPALE Ambassador, as an online information and interaction tool between individuals and organisations active in the field of adult education and assistance in the implementation of the goals of the EPALE Cyprus National Support Service.
- Co-organisation with the EPALE Ambassador of a webinar entitled "Investing in Skills for the Green and Digital Transition".
- Enriching the content of the platform with blogs, articles, news and educational resources promoting and strengthening the adult education sector in Cyprus.

4.3 CYPRUS PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute participates and coordinates a number of European competitive programmes for innovative learning projects:

PERIOD	PROJECT	CO-FUNDING
Information and Communication Technologies		
1/12/2020 - 31/08/2023	Social Radio 2.0: The European School Radio and Podcasting Community for Active Citizenship Education	Erasmus+ KA2-Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices KA201 - Strategic Partnerships for school Education
01/10/2022 - 30/09/2024	Safer Internet (CyberSafety IV)	DIGITAL Europe Programme (Call DIGITAL-2021-TRUST-01)
01/02/2022 - 31/01/2024	Learning from the Extremes (LfE)	PPPA-2021-RemoteDigEdu (Preparatory action - Increasing access to educational tools in areas and communities with low connectivity or access to technologies)
1/2/2023 - 31/1/2026	Conversational AI assistant for teaching and learning (AI4EDU)	ERASMUS-LS (Partnerships for Innovation - Forward Looking Projects)
Education for the Environment and Sustainable Development		
1/6/2021 - 31/10/2023	Network of Open EcoMuseums for the Promotion and Gentle Enhancement of Areas with Environmental History	Cooperation Programme INTERREG V-A Greece – Cyprus 2014-2020

Teaching methodology		
01/09/2020 - 31/08/2023	Lesson Study as a vehicle for improving achievement in mathematics (LESSAM)	Erasmus+ KA2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices KA201 - Strategic Partnerships for school education
Emotional enhancement		
28/02/2021 - 28/02/2024	Promoting Teachers Well-being through Positive Behaviour Support in Early Childhood Education-ProWell	Erasmus + KA3 - Support for policy reform Initiatives for policy innovation-European Policy Experimentations
28/02/2022 - 27/02/2025	Assessment and improvement of socioemotional competencies of pupils powered by a smart digital toolkit and targeted educational activities applied on physical and online classrooms– EduCardia	KA220-SCH - Cooperation partnerships in school education
Safe and friendly school environment		
1/12/2020 - 30/11/2023	SAFER: Social competences and Fundamental Rights for preventing bullying (including on-line bullying)	Erasmus+ KA3, Social Inclusion and common values: the contribution in the field of education and training
Multicultural education		
01/11/202 - 31/10/2023	Assessing Newly Arrived Migrants' Knowledge in Science and Math using Augmented Teaching Material - Augmented Assessment	Erasmus KA3- Support for policy reform - Social inclusion through education, training and youth
Professional and learning Communities		
01/06/2022 - 01/05/2025	PLCs for us "Professional Learning Communities in the post-covid era: Collaboration between University and Public School System»	Erasmus Plus - Key Action 3
01/07/2022 - 30/06/2025	Teaching Sustainability: Content, Competences & Approaches for	Erasmus+ Teacher Academies

	Europe's pre- and in-service teachers	
01/06/2023 - 31/05/2026	STEAME Teacher Facilitators Academy	Erasmus+ Teacher Academies
01/06/2023 - 31/05/2026	GEO Academy – Innovative digital GEO-tools for enhancing teachers' digital, green and spatial skills towards and effective STEAM Education for Sustainability Development	Erasmus+ Teacher Academies
1/1/2023 - 28/2/2026	ICSE Science Factory	Horizon Europe Framework Programme

5.

OTHER SERVICES OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH

5.1 EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, LIFELONG LEARNING AND ADULT EDUCATIONAL BUREAU (EIALLAEB)

Generally

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MESY) seeks to leverage relations and strengthen partnerships with institutions of the European Union (EU) and other Member States (MS), neighbouring and other third countries, as well as collaborations with international organisations. It develops a proactive approach and aims at maximising benefits in all areas of its competence, namely Education, Youth and Sport. The European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Bureau (heretofore referred to as “the bureau”) has contributed significantly towards the development and coordination of cooperation policies and international relations of the MESY, in addition to the implementation of beneficial policies that feature both a European and international dimension.

5.1.1 Coordination of European and international policies

The bureau has undertaken coordination and collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), as relates to the EU institutions, the competent bodies of the Council of Europe and other international organisations. With a network of partners from all the Directorates / Services of the MESY, the Youth Board of Cyprus (ONEK), the Cyprus Sport Organisation (KOA) and other government departments, the bureau has contributed towards the formulation of national contributions and the dissemination and implementation of European and international policies at national level. The bureau has worked closely with the General Secretariat for European Affairs of the MFA and the Permanent Representation to the EU for the timely, targeted and effective management of education, sport and youth issues. The bureau is responsible for meeting the obligations in these areas of competence, on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus, as an EU Member State.

In order to promote cooperation between the MESY and other countries, the bureau collaborates with embassies of the Republic of Cyprus abroad and embassies of foreign countries in Cyprus. In this context, the bureau coordinated the development and / or renewal of bilateral and trilateral agreements, Memoranda of Understanding and Executive Cooperation Programmes related to the competences of the MESY, as well as preparing detailed briefings for meetings between the minister and ambassadors of foreign countries in Cyprus.

Within the framework of its responsibilities, the bureau is responsible for the preparation of briefing papers related to the minister’s participation in the Council of Ministers of the EU, Informal Ministerial Meetings, as well as other official meetings that are carried out abroad.

5.1.1.1 Participation in the Council of the European Union

The bureau was responsible for coordinating the positions of Cyprus on the priorities of the Swedish Presidency (January - June 2023) and the Spanish Presidency (July - December 2023), which were discussed in the various committees and working groups of the Council of the European Union

(Education Committee, Working Group on Sport, Working Group on Youth), in cooperation with the Permanent Representation of Cyprus in Brussels.

One of the most important European, top-level actions is the participation of the minister in the Council of Ministers of Education, Youth and Sport of the European Union. The bureau is responsible for preparing the minister for active participation in the individual councils meetings, formal and informal, held within the framework of the Council of the European Union. The bureau also prepared the minister for participation in the 6th EU Education Summit entitled, "The European Educational Area: A reality for all".

5.1.1.2 Official missions abroad

With a view to contributing towards the consolidation of international relations in the ministry's areas of competence, the minister participated in the following events abroad:

- Celebration of the Greek Language Day based on the Memorandum of Understanding in the Field of Attainment in Greek (Athens, 9 - 11 February 2023) [*NB: undertaken by the former minister whose term ended on 28 February 2023*];
- Annual EOKA commemorative event. During the visit, the minister met with the following officials: Deputy Minister of Interior, responsible for Macedonia-Thrace; Deputy Regional Governor of Thessaloniki; Mayor of Thessaloniki, Rector of the Aristotle University, President of the Centre for the Greek Language; representatives of Cypriot student organisations. (Thessaloniki, 10 - 12 May 2023);
- Unveiling Ceremony of the Commemorative Plaque of the "Unaccompanied Children Hosted in Greece in 1974" (Athens, 6 June 2023);
- Commemorative Event to commemorate "49 Years Since the Coup, the Turkish Invasion and the Ongoing Occupation of the northern part of Cyprus", (Athens, 22 - 24 July 2023);
- Council of Europe Education Ministers meeting, (Brussels, 28 - 29 September 2023);
- First Supreme Council of Greece - Cyprus (Athens, 10 November 2023);
- UNESCO General Assembly, Address to the Plenary Session representing the Republic of Cyprus (Paris, 11 November 2023);
- Official meeting with the Deputy Director of Education of UNESCO, Mrs. Stefania Giannini (Paris, 11 November 2023);
- Cyprus - Serbia Cooperation Council (Belgrade, 22 - 24 November 2023);
- The annual "Cypriot Concert", organised by the Cyprus Cultural Centre in Vienna with the support of the Deputy Ministry of Culture (Vienna, 24 - 27 November 2023);
- Participation in COP28, (Dubai, 8 December 2023).

5.1.1.3 Official visits of delegations from foreign countries – Meetings with foreign officials

The bureau is responsible for the preparation of briefing papers and coordination of meetings between the minister and representatives from foreign countries. During 2023, bi-lateral meetings were held with the following ambassadors and high commissioners:

February: Japan

March: France, Israel,

April: Austria, Greece, Poland, Spain

May: India, Iraq, Germany

June: Ukraine, United Kingdom, the Netherlands

July: China, Japan, Hungary (Chargé d'Affaires), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United States of America

August: Italy

September: United Arab Emirates, Lebanon, Iran

October: Libya, Romania

November: Nepal, Sweden

The Minister also held the following meetings with counterparts and other senior officials:

- Director - General of the European Commission's Directorate - General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (23 March 2023);
- Official Delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of Francophonie (30 March 2023);
- Vice - President of the European Commission Mr. Margaritis Schinas (22 May 2023)
- Minister of Education of the Province of Alberta, Canada (22 August 2023)

5.1.1.4 Signing of Memoranda and Cooperation Programmes

The bureau, in cooperation with the relevant Directorates and Services of the MESY, undertakes the process of drafting / renewal of International Agreements, Executive Programmes and Memoranda, reviewing them with other governments' bodies, organising the signing ceremonies and following up on deliverables of the above agreements and programmes.

During 2023, the following documents were signed / renewed:

- Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of the Republic of Cyprus and the National Institute of Sport, Physical Education and Recreation of the Republic of Cuba for cooperation in the field of Sport.
- Cooperation Programme in the fields of Education, Scientific Research, Culture, Sport and Youth between the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the Government of the State of Israel for the years 2023 - 2026.
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of the Republic of Cyprus and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Paraguay in the field of Education.
- Cooperation Programme in the fields of Education and Culture between the Republic of Cyprus and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for the years 2023 - 2026.
- Agreement between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of the Republic of Cyprus and the Ministry of Education, Sport and Religious Affairs of the Hellenic Republic on the mutual academic recognition of university degrees, Higher Education Institutions and other approved Institutions.
- Cooperation Programme in the Field of Education between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of the Republic of Cyprus and the Ministry of Education, Religious Affairs and Sports of the Hellenic Republic for the years 2023 - 2027.
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of the Republic of Cyprus and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia on cooperation in the field of Education.

5.1.1.5 Coordination of the European Commission (EU) Expert Groups

The bureau is responsible for coordinating the representation of Cyprus in the seven Working Groups of the European Commission for the first cycle of the Strategic Framework of the European Cooperation in the field of Education and Training towards the European Education Area and beyond for the years 2021 - 2025. In addition, the bureau represents the Ministry of Education in the Committees of the ERASMUS+ Programme and the EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY CORPS.

5.1.1.6 Youth Issues

The bureau represented MESY in the National Working Group (NWG) for European Dialogue with Youth, about Youth and with Youth Organisations. The Cyprus Youth Board (ONEK) represented the MESY in the Working Group, chaired by the Youth Council. The topic of the consultations for the 18-month period that began in 2022 and ended in 2023 was the 10th Youth Goal on "Sustainable and Green Europe" and the 3rd Youth Goal "Inclusive societies". The final joint recommendations of this cycle were taken into account in the Council Resolution on the results of the 9th cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, adopted by the Council of the European Union.

The bureau, in cooperation with the competent officers of ONEK, contributed towards the best possible representation of the youth sector in the EU, the Commonwealth of Nations, the United Nations, and so on. In addition, the bureau was represented in the Steering Group to monitor the implementation of the National Youth Strategy, aiming of utilising European and international good practices in this field in the best possible way.

In 2023, preparations began to declare 2024 the National Year of Youth in Cyprus.

5.1.1.7 Sport Topics

The bureau, in cooperation with the Cyprus Sport Organisation (KOA) and other competent departments and services of the ministry, coordinates issues related to sport that arise from the work of the various working groups and committees of the EU, the Council of Europe and the Commonwealth.

The bureau is responsible for coordinating and contributing towards the preparation and representation of the MESY, in the context of collaboration with KOA, during the 7th International Conference of Sport Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Fitness and Sport (MINEPS VII) (Baku , Azerbaijan, 26 - 29 June 2023). The bureau also coordinated the minister's representation at the 17th Conference of Sport Ministers of the Council of Europe (Antalya, Turkey, 25 - 27 October 2023). Lastly, the bureau coordinated the participation of the minister in the First Informal Meeting of Ministers of Sport and the Priorities of the Trio of Presidencies.

5.1.1.8 Monitoring European and international policies in Lifelong Learning and Adult Education

An important focus is the monitoring and study of European and international policies in Adult Education, in order to utilise best practices and tools. The monitoring of these policies related to these areas, along with the use of relevant tools / publications / surveys (e.g. EU Education and Training Monitor, EPAL Platform, CEDEFOP Reports, validation mechanisms for non-formal / informal learning, the EU Working Group on Adult Education, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning), aim at strengthening and improving the existing policies while simultaneously contributing towards the development of new ones, based on national priorities, strategic objectives and needs. The bureau promotes the development of collaborations and networks with national, European and international organisations (in areas of shared competence) while simultaneously promoting the exchange of good practices with European organisations, such as the European Basic Skills Network, of which it is a member.

The National Lifelong Learning Strategy was approved by the Council of Ministers in September 2022 and in December of the same year a Pancyprian Conference was held to inform stakeholders about the vision and objectives of the Strategy. Additionally, following meetings of the members of the National and Technical Committee for Lifelong Learning who monitor the implementation of the Strategy, the National Action Plan has been completed and the recording of actions by the participating organisations will begin in order to determine the degree of implementation of the goals set.

5.1.1.9 Participation in the Council of Europe initiatives

An important focus of the bureau is the participation in initiatives of the Council of Europe. Specifically, the bureau participates in the Meetings of the Steering Committee for Education of the Council of Europe and also coordinates and participates in various other educational initiatives of the Council of Europe.

5.1.2 Promoting awareness of finding opportunities and participation in activities with a European and international dimension.

The implementation of programmes, the adoption of good practices and peer-to-peer learning is used by several EU Member States and other international organisations to improve their performance. Within this framework, the bureau contributes towards the implementation of programmes resulting from international and European collaborations and coordinates or participates in relevant interdepartmental

committees. Participation in relevant projects and actions aims at strengthening and improving national policies, strategic objectives and needs.

5.1.2.1 Improving the capacity of the ministry's officers to exploit funding opportunities from European and other programmes

The bureau organises actions aiming at enhancing the capacity of officers of the MESY to take advantage of funding opportunities from European and other programmes for policy implementation. The role of the bureau is, inter alia, to provide proper guidance for targeted submission of proposals, in accordance with the Strategic Planning and the priorities of the MESY. In this context, the bureau has established the Interdepartmental Working Group for the utilisation of European and other resources for the implementation of the MESY policies, with representatives of the relevant directorates and services, to whom the relevant information is transmitted. At the same time, the bureau provides information and administrative support, which is linked to funding opportunities, maps the current situation for feedback purposes, and maintains a significant network of potential partners.

In order to achieve the above, a process of participation in competitive EU programmes is in force, in order to follow the appropriate procedures and ensure that the requirements of the programmes are handled in the best possible way.

5.1.2.2 Operation of an interdepartmental committee for the examination of language proficiency in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of the Council of Europe

The committee was reconstituted in 2022 with the following terms of reference: to examine the existing lists of acceptable language certification documents of the Educational Service Commission and the Public Service Commission; the submission of recommendations for their implementation as it relates to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages of the Council of Europe; the creation of a single list. The submission of the committee's recommendations to the competent authorities was completed in November 2023. The Committee consists of senior officers of Education, Inspectors and Advisors of Languages (Greek, English, and French) of the MESY, language experts and academics. The committee's work is coordinated by the bureau.

5.1.2.3 Coordination of the participation of the ministry in Francophonie actions / events

In the context of the Cyprus' participation in the International Organisation of Francophonie, the bureau has taken all necessary steps to coordinate the actions / events during the Month of Francophonie. For the year 2023, the bureau undertook the responsibility to organise the press for the events surrounding "Francophonie 2023", as well as coordinate the Pancyprian Interschool Francophonie Competition.

5.1.2.4 Cooperation with the European Parliament Office and the European Commission Representation

The bureau serves as the link for communication between the MESY and the Office of the European Parliament and the Representation of the European Commission in Cyprus. It provides the necessary support and coordinates all necessary actions in order to promote, inform, implement and successfully carry out the EU educational actions. For the academic year 2022 - 2023, Euro-awareness activities were promoted in secondary general education and secondary technical and vocational education and training schools, such as providing information on the European Charlemagne Youth Prize 2023 and the European Youth Event (EYE). With the coordination of the bureau, the "European Parliament Ambassador School (EPAS)" programme was carried out and with its active involvement, the Pancyprian Interschool "Eurognosy" Competition for the B' Lyceum pupils was conducted.

5.1.2.5 Coordination of the participation of the ministry in the management committees of the European Schools and the Board of Governors

The bureau coordinates the participation of Cyprus in the relevant bodies of the European Schools, in cooperation with the relevant Inspectors of Primary and Secondary Education of the European Schools

and the Finance and Accounts Management Directorate of the ministry. In particular, the main responsibility is the participation of the bureau in the meetings of the Board of Governors of the European Schools, which concern financial and personnel issues, budget, curricula and other pedagogical issues. The bureau's main responsibility is also to coordinate, in cooperation with the Directorates of Primary and Secondary General Education, the secondments of teachers to the European Schools. As of September 2023, Cyprus is a member of the so-called "Presidency Trio" of the European School system along with Italy and Latvia. Specifically, the bureau participated in the following meetings: Board of Governors (Dublin, 12 - 14 April 2023); Handover Ceremony of the Presidency of the European Schools (Rome, 23 June 2023); Anniversary Conference for the 70th anniversary of the European Schools (Luxembourg, 19 - 20 October 2023); Extraordinary Meeting of the Board of Governors (Brussels, 5 - 8 December 2023). Preparations began in the second half of 2023 to organise the events and determine the priorities of the Cyprus Presidency (2024 - 2025).

5.1.2.6 Coordination of actions of the directorates of the ministry in support of Ukrainian nationals fleeing to Cyprus due to the war in Ukraine

Since the beginning of the war in Ukraine and within the framework of the Renewed Decision of the Council of the European Union on the provision of temporary protection to Ukrainian refugees fleeing to the territories of Member States, the bureau has been coordinating all actions concerning the education of Ukrainian refugees, including:

- cooperation with the Embassy of Ukraine and representatives of the Ukrainian community in Cyprus.
- coordination of the directorates for the smooth reception of displaced children from Ukraine in the educational system.
- contribution to reports, surveys, collection of statistics / information concerning Ukrainian refugees from various local, European and international organisations.
- participation in Working Groups and monitoring of good practices of other Member States.
- coordination and monitoring of a project funded by the European Funds Unit of the Ministry of Interior for the Education of Ukrainian refugees, lasting one year (14. 4. 2022 -14. 6 .2023).

5.1.2.7 European Agenda for Adult Learning

The budget of the project to further enhance the digital skills of adult educators and adult learners for the years 2022 - 2023 amounted to €246 648 (80% from the European Commission funds and 20% from National funds).

The project was completed in December 2023 and met the following targets:

- Enhancing the capabilities of the Moodle Platform, introducing new online courses, as well as introducing modern learning in its features for adult learners' access.
- Promoting the professional development of adult educators, through training on the digital skills of adult learners as well as developing of an online MOOC course for trainers teaching basic skills to adults.
- Strengthening synergies and coordination between the various internal and external bodies of the MESY that offer adult education and training, mainly aiming at enhancing the digital skills of adults.

On November 10th, 2023, the "Digital Skills in the Modern Age" conference was held at the Filoxenia Conference Centre, attended by representatives of public policy makers on adult digital skills, adult educators, representatives of trade unions and other organisations and social partners. The conference discussed contemporary issues related to digital skills in education and the workplace. All information about the project is posted on the ministry's website: <http://www.moec.gov.cy/aethee/index.html>.

5.1.3 Upskilling adults

The ADULTDIGITALUP project (2021 - 2023) promotes adult digital literacy, with a special focus on low-skilled adults and adult educators. The project was sponsored by the Directorate-General for Structural

Reform Support (DG REFORM) of the European Union (EU) and CARDET (Centre for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology), aligned with the EU Digital Strategy, the European Skills Programme and the EU Council Resolution on a new European Agenda for Adult Learning 2021.

The project exchanged good practices and experiences in order to fulfil the pan-European vision of the digital age. In addition, it was in full alignment with the commitment and strategic plans of the ministry to enhance and develop the digital skills of adult educators in Cyprus.

The work in the training of adult educators is focused on three main pillars:

- Pedagogical skills of trainers / Adult educators - adult teaching and learning and digital skills.
- Designing adult education programmes and using new technologies to promote digital skills.
- Low-skilled adult teaching practices.

The following actions were carried out in 2023:

1. Development of educational material in order to capture the planned, hybridized training of adult educators, by introducing digital material that give life to education. The education material was provided in three ways:
 - (α) Development of pedagogical knowledge, competences and skills.
 - (β) Use of digital tools and methods in adult education.
 - (γ) Management of low-skilled learners.

Training was carried out during June 2023. A total of 20 trainers and 100 trainer educators participated in the training. The three courses created will build on the new project of the European Agenda for Adult Learning for the years 2024 - 2025 and will be offered to new groups of adult educators, along with new courses developed within this project.

5.1.4 Preparation of reports and briefings

The participation of Cyprus in various international organisations and networks, such as the European Union, the Council of Europe, UNESCO, the United Nations, the Commonwealth, the International Organisation of Francophonie, the Eurydice Network, CEDEFOP, ReferNET and so on, required the bureau to prepare and submit periodic or special reports on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus.

Contributions to the following reports during 2023 were:

- Report on the National Reform Programme
- Data collection for the Education and Training Monitor 2023
- Progress Report on implementation of the Council Recommendations on the validation of non-formal and informal learning
- ReferNet Report 2023 on Policies in Vocational Education and Training
- Human Rights Report prepared by the U.S. Department of State
- Progress Report on the implementation of the Council of Europe's European Social Charter
- EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) Report on Asylum and Migration.

5.1.5 Development of collaborations / networks with national, European and international organisations

The exchange of good practices and peer learning from other MS of the EU or participating countries in UNESCO and other European / international organisations (e.g. European Association for the Education of Adults and European Basic Skills Network, Lifelong Learning Platform) is a means to further promote lifelong learning and adult learning. Additionally, the exchange of good practices and the development of cooperation with European / international organisations, such as the European Observatory on

Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights, is a means to promote the benefits for culture, society and the economy of the protection of copyright and related rights in the field of education. The bureau contributed towards the promotion of the participation of the Republic of Cyprus in the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) in 2023.

In parallel, the development of partnerships is promoted with other governmental bodies of the Republic of Cyprus in areas of common competence (Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes, Deputy Ministry of Innovation, Research and Policy, Statistical Service, Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare, and so on.) with contributions for the monitoring of other national strategies such as the National Strategy on Active Ageing, the Strategy on Active Ageing, and so on.

5.2 EUROPEAN FUNDS MANAGEMENT UNIT

The European Funds Management Unit of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth was established after the accession of Cyprus to the European Union in order to manage and supervise co-financed projects by the Structural Funds of the EU undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MESY).

The Partnership Agreement for the Development Framework 2021 - 2027 constitutes the main strategic plan for growth. The contribution of significant resources originating from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) of the European Union in the 2021 - 2027 Programming Period further promotes the MESY's commitment to successfully and efficiently implement the education policy agenda.

The measures adopted comply with the Country Specific Recommendations for Cyprus and focus on the following operational Projects:

- 1) "School Management System" with a Budget of €30 000 000
- 2) "Structured cabling and wireless networking in Secondary General Education and Secondary Technical and Vocational Education" with a Budget of €3 500 000
- 3) "Providing free breakfast and lunch to all pupils in need in the Public Education System" with a Budget of €22 000 000
- 4) "Development of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (VET)" with a Budget of €38 000 000
- 5) "Activities of School and Social Inclusion (DRASE+)" with a Budget of €60 000 000
- 6) "Green Schools - Energy upgrade of existing school buildings" with a Budget of €20 000 000

In parallel to the co-funded projects that the European Funds Management Unit of the Ministry manages, a project which is funded by the European Union Recovery and Resilient Fund is implemented and managed by the Unit. The project has a Budget of more than €13 000 000 and the aim of this reform is to support the digital transition of the education system. This measure entails the modernisation of educational structures through the development of e-classrooms and the equipping of classrooms with digital tools, the transformation of curricula and educational materials to strengthen digital skills and STEM methodology, as well as the alleviation of costs purchase of digital equipment (laptops / tablets) for pupils from low socio-economic backgrounds.

It also includes the provision of digital skills and STEM methodology training to at least 675 teachers (including 300 primary, 300 secondary general education and 75 secondary vocational education teachers) annually for five years (a total of at least 3 375 teachers, a number corresponding to approximately 32% of all teachers (primary and secondary)).

5.3 EDUCATIONAL STAFF SERVICE

The Educational Staff Service deals with tasks regarding the administration of the educational staff. The Service maintains the personal files of the educational staff serving in public schools. It also monitors and ensures the correct implementation of the relevant legislation and regulations, as well as the process of amending and modernising them. The Educational Staff Service, in cooperation with the Education Departments of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth monitors and controls the different levels of positions, furthers the process for the filling of the vacant positions and secures new positions according to current educational needs. In addition, the Service monitors the terms of employment, the leaves, the absences and furthers the procedure for retirement. Furthermore, it undertakes the process of conducting disciplinary investigations and advises the investigating officers on the procedure and legislation. Lastly, it handles the issues of the Joint Committee of Personnel Education Service, the official body between the government and the trade unions of the educational staff.

5.4 SCHOOL CLERKS ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

The Administration Office of School Clerks is responsible for the administration and organisation of all School Clerks, who serve mainly in Secondary General and Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training School Units, but also in large School Boards.

Specifically, it is responsible for the staffing of 106 Secondary Education Schools, five Evening Gymnasia - Lycea, 13 Technical and Vocational Schools of Education and Training (TESEK), five Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education (ESTEE), seven Afternoon / Evening Classes of Technical Schools, 44 School Boards, 42 State Institutes for Further Education (K.I.E.), five Music Schools, four Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (M.I.E.E.K.) and the Library of the Pedagogical Institute.

The Office of Administration of School Clerks makes informed suggestions to the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry for better staffing of the above-mentioned educational units. As regards this, it monitors and controls the organic positions, and takes care of the filling of vacancies.

Furthermore, it has numerous responsibilities, such as the whole process of recruiting temporary School Clerks through the submission of a relevant proposal to the Department of Public Administration and Personnel, the approval of the annual budget, according to the needs of the Service. Moreover, it sets criteria, evaluates candidates' applications, prepares and publishes a preliminary list, examines objections, and proceeds to the publication of a final list, with which the recruitment of temporary School Clerks is made. In addition, the Office is responsible for the procedures for the placement of School Clerks, on the basis of the Service Plan and the relevant legislation.

Furthermore, it keeps records of all School Clerks, approximately 452 (Personal and License Files), carries out work on rest leave, sickness, maternity / paternity leave, parental leave, medical boards, retirements, gratuities, evaluates service reports, and so on.

The office is responsible for coordinating and supervising the work of the School Clerks. It is a link between School Heads, Chairpersons of School Boards, School Clerks and the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth.

In order to train our school clerks, seminars and programmes are organised on issues where needs are identified. During the year 2023, the following were organised:

- a) Computer Skills.
- b) Online training for the New Assessment Plan.

The Office provides School Clerks with access to useful information, forms and aids on the website of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth: http://www.moec.gov.cy/grafeio_dioikisis_epimeliton/

5.5 MESY WAREHOUSE

The main objective of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth Store is the dispatching of scholastic needs to public schools. Additionally, the Store assists all the schools throughout the year.

Arrangements are made by the Store in co-operation with the successful tenderers to receive and store, books, note books and teaching methodology (materials for lessons of Art, History, Geography, Mathematics, Music, Physics, Design and Technology, for Private Education. For Secondary Education books and teaching methodology (materials for lessons of Physics, Biology, Chemistry, Music, Home Economic, Design and Technology are also sent. The receiving is made according to the quantities, the terms and specifications of tenders awarded.

The Store is responsible for the follow-up of the contracts and has to ensure that all the terms and conditions are fully met and works in close co-operation with the Accounts Department for the payments.

The preparation of dispatches is carried out by the Store in close co-operation with the schools, school boards and community councils.

The Store prepares a timetable and undertakes the responsibility to serve the needs of all public schools, private schools of Elementary and Secondary Education and the community schools after receiving their orders. The transport and delivery of the required items of Primary Education in each district, is undertaken by a transporter under contract and store employees.

Books donated by various authors and approved by the Ministry are also delivered to school libraries. Apart from the above, the Store sells to individuals books published by the Curriculum Development Unit.

In 2023 the Store attended approximately 1 000 schools.

5.6 OFFICE OF CIVIL DEFENCE, HEALTH AND SAFETY MISSION

5.6.1 MISSION

The Office of Civil Defence, Health and Safety has the mission to create a safe and healthy environment for all employees in educational institutions and services, as well as for pupils attending public schools. Based on the Legislation for Health and Safety at Work, the Office focuses on risk assessment and prevention, managing emergency incidents, and providing first aid. Additionally, it deals with issues concerning the physical security of schools. Guidelines and clarifications for managing safety and health issues in school units are provided in relevant circulars.

5.6.2. STAFFING

The head of the Office of Civil Defence, Health and Safety is the Director of Technical and Vocational Education and Training. The Office is staffed by educational functionaries and Educational Programming officers.

5.6.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

The Office is responsible for the following issues arising from the Laws and Regulations on Health and Safety at Work and ensures their implementation by school units and buildings / services of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth:

- Conducting Written Risk Assessment (WRA) and using the OiRA interactive tool.
- Establishment of the Internal Protection and Prevention Service, IPPS (Safety Officers, Safety Representatives and Safety Committees, responsible persons for Fire Safety, Evacuation, First Aid).
- Implementation of the Defence Policy Plan.
- First Aid and use of Automated External Defibrillator (AED) (necessary equipment, trained personnel).
- Management of accidents involving pupils, educators, auxiliary staff, or other individuals.
- Training personnel in Health and Safety at Work. Training of personnel in First Aid.
- Conducting inspections and audits.

5.6.4 ACTIONS

- Review of the Defence Policy Plan in cooperation with the Cyprus Civil Defence Force.
- Receipt and review of Defence Policy Plans from all Public and Private Schools.
- Monitoring of Civil Defence Exercises in schools.
- Visits / inspections to schools and other Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth services (60 inspections in schools of all levels and six inspections in buildings housing Ministry's services). Visits included accident investigations, inspection of spaces and equipment, identification of risk sources, and monitoring of Civil Defence Exercises.
- Collaboration with the Labour Inspection Department and other governmental services on current Health and Safety issues.
- Recording / reporting / notification of accidents and dangerous incidents (fifteen reportable accidents involving educators were investigated in 2023).
- Investigation of complaints in canteens.
- Preparation of the Annual Report on Health and Safety at Work for 2023 and its submission to the Labour Inspection Department.
- Updating the forms posted on the Office of Defence, Security, and Health Policy's website.
- Air Quality Matters: In 2023, the Office continued its collaboration with the University of Cyprus within the framework of a pilot air purification programme in school classrooms at Troodos. Additionally, the Office monitors daily dust concentration levels in the atmosphere, advising school administrations on protective measures accordingly.
- First Aid: Collaboration with Psychiatry Services and Resuscitation Services of the Ministry of Health in order to organise and conduct First Aid training seminars for primary education educators.
- Collaboration with the Ministry of Health's Resuscitation Services to inform schools about the installation, use, and maintenance of Automated External Defibrillators. Furthermore, eight Automated External Defibrillators were provided to primary and secondary education schools.
- School Security - Security Guards: Collection, accounting check, and promotion of payment for school security through the institution of Security Guards following relevant decisions of the Council of Ministers, Guest Register, and Document. Additionally, the Security Office proceeds with checking the perimeter fencing of school premises, installation of intercoms at school entrances, collection, evaluation, and promotion of service requests for night time security of public schools as well as two-hour morning security.
- Collaboration with the Ministry of Health: The Office is always in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and relevant services such as Psychiatry Services, Public Health Services, the Department of Health Services, and the Unit of Epidemiological Surveillance and Control of Communicable Diseases. The aim is the immediate implementation of necessary preventive and control measures for Public Health and primarily for the protection of children, who belong to vulnerable population groups.

6.

OTHER BODIES UNDER THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH

6.1 THE CYPRUS COUNCIL FOR THE RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS (KY.S.A.T.S.)

In accordance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997) all member states of the European Union have established National Councils for the recognition of higher education qualifications. The need to form such Councils arose out of the idea of a united education policy aiming at supporting member states in developing control mechanisms regarding criteria for quality and duration of studies for professional and scientific purposes. It was under this context that, the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KY.S.A.T.S.) was established in 2000.

KY.S.A.T.S. is the competent authority of the Republic of Cyprus for the recognition of Higher Education qualifications, awarded by recognised Higher Education Institutions in Cyprus or abroad or qualifications awarded by accredited programmes of study. Moreover, it provides information on the Cyprus system of Higher Education, as well as about the system of Higher Education of other countries, including the titles of studies offered.

During the period January - December 2023, KY.S.A.T.S. received 1 700 applications for recognition of qualifications and 2 200 written inquiries. During the same period, the Council held seven meetings.

KY.S.A.T.S. has been a member of the European National Information Centres - National Academic Recognition Information Centres (ENIC – NARIC) and MERIC (the Mediterranean Recognition Information Centres).

6.2 THE CYPRUS AGENCY OF QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ACCREDITATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION (CYQAA)

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA), is an independent authority responsible for ensuring the quality of Higher Education in Cyprus and supporting, through the procedures provided by the relevant legislation for the continuous improvement and upgrading of higher education institutions and their programmes of study. The procedures and the criteria implemented by CYQAA are determined by the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). In order to ensure the quality of its work, which constitutes an integral part of its broader self-awareness and accountability, CYQAA has been externally evaluated and managed to become a member of the most important international quality assurance organisations (i.e. ENQA, EQAR, WFME).

The Agency has, according to the Law, extended competencies amongst which are the following:

- Institutional, Departmental and Programmatic Evaluation and Accreditation of higher education.
- Quality Assurance in higher education on the basis of the European Standards.
- Evaluation and Accreditation of cross-border forms of education, offered by local institutions in member states or third countries.
- Assessment of the conditions for the provision of cross-border education from foreign institutions in Cyprus.
- Assessment of inter-institutional cooperation of higher education institutions.
- The provision of information of Quality Assurance in higher education.

The lists of all recognised institutions of higher education and the accredited programmes of study as well as the results of evaluation will be published on the Agency's website.

CYQAA is,

- Recognised by the World Federation for Medical Education (WFME)
- Included on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR).
- A full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA).
- A full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Higher Education (INQAAHE).
- An affiliated member of the European University Association (EUA).
- A full member of the European Distance and E-Learning Network (EDEN)

According to Law, CYQAA publishes its own annual report which is published on its website:

<https://www.dipae.ac.cy/index.php/el/publications-el/reports-el>

PART B: SPORT



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

1.

CYPRUS SPORT ORGANISATION (CSO)

The Government of the Republic of Cyprus, has established by Law No. 41 of 1969, a public body, "The Cyprus Sport Organisation (CSO)"- KOA in Greek in order to regulate and promote sports in Cyprus. The CSO is an independent, non-profit institution governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Council of Ministers, and its primary objective is the promotion of sport, physical training and athleticism. It is the highest authority, and by law possesses extensive powers over sport activities in Cyprus. It has its own offices and staff and is financed by public funds.

The Organisation is empowered by law to:

- exercise control over sport activities and sport facilities and take all necessary steps required for the promotion of sport,
- monitor and license private gymnastic schools,
- maintain a register of physical instructors / educators,
- advise all athletic and gymnastic clubs on their athletic programmes and regulate their activities,
- provide financial and technical assistance to communities, sport clubs, gymnastic clubs, athletic teams and representatives abroad,
- establish and operate athletic centres for use by the public,
- establish and maintain stadiums and create athletic playgrounds for use by communities, athletic and gymnastic clubs and so on,
- encourage, promote, organise and finance the participation of Cyprus in international athletic meetings,
- organise local and international seminars and meetings,
- publish and circulate bulletins and other publications for the promotion of sport,
- act as arbitrator and regulate disputes, within its powers of authority, between the various athletic, and other sport clubs and federations,
- impose punishments, within its powers of authority, on athletic and other sport clubs and federations,
- award prizes and trophies to individuals rendering high sport services and performance, and
- attest to and recognise federations, and other athletic clubs.

In addition to the above, the CSO is actively involved in various European Union committees in order to develop skills and expertise in the direction of promoting the Organisation's objectives.

In this direction a budget of approximately €55 million was allocated as follows, for the promotion of the Organisation's main objectives:

	Expenses	2023 Budget €
01	Regular - Administrative Expenses / Maintenance	20.249.400
02	Regular - Sponsorships	16.869.990
03	Development - Creation & Improvements of Sports Areas	15.486.360
04	Regular - Repayment of Loans & Other Liabilities	1.950.000
05	Regular - Unforeseen Expenses	400.000
06	Regular - Implementation of Law on Prevention and Suppression of Violence in Sports Venues	20
07	Regular - Programmes Against Violence	10
	Total	54.955.780

The CSO runs successfully the “Sports for all” programme, by offering various mass sporting programmes, aiming at improving the quality of life of each person, mostly children, through physical activities.

PART C: YOUTH



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

1.

YOUTH BOARD OF CYPRUS

1.1 WHO WE ARE

The Cyprus Youth Board (ONEK in Greek) is a public organisation responsible for youth issues. It has been operating since 1994, actively contributing, in various ways, towards the empowerment of young people in Cyprus. It is governed by a seven-member Board of Directors, appointed by the Council of Ministers.

Vision

To establish ourselves as the organisation that puts young people at the centre, inspires and empowers them to pursue their dreams and ambitions.

Mission

We believe in the power of young people. We empower them to reach their full potential through modern policies, innovative programmes and quality services, today, for a better tomorrow.

1.2 CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH POLICIES

The primary purpose of the Youth Board, which is also derived from the Youth Board Act, is to contribute creatively towards the formulation of youth policies, focused on contemporary challenges and with the greatest possible positive impact on young people.

Since 2017, ONEK has been coordinating the implementation of the National Strategy for Youth (2017 - 2022), which is the first policy document on youth in Cyprus. One of the key principles of the Strategy is the participation of young people in decision making on issues that concern them and the close cooperation between all state agencies implementing youth programmes and actions.

Having the responsibility to transmit to the state policy proposals for youth empowerment, the Youth Board conducts specialised surveys to identify young people's needs, consultations and open discussions with young people, using multiple tools such as the functioning of the Advisory Boards, the Youth Summit and the National Group for European Dialogue with Youth.

In addition, ONEK participates in working groups at national, European and international level, actively contributing towards youth policy-making at all levels and drawing on good practices.

In 2023, the following were implemented by ONEK's Policy Department, which is responsible for the implementation and coordination of the above issues:

Surveys

Surveys are one of the most important tools of the Cyprus Youth Board, in the context of its advisory role to the State for the formulation of youth policies, as the findings of surveys reflect the real needs and perceptions of young people.

In 2023, ONEK announced the results of a survey on young people's perceptions of marriage, relationships and church, conducted during the months of February and March 2023, with the participation of 500 young people aged 18 - 35 years old. The results of the survey were presented at a

press conference held at the ONEK offices on 15.6.2023. Through the findings of the survey, the importance that Cypriot young people attach to the institution of family is highlighted, with 58% citing family as one of the most important values in life. Premarital relationships between people in a stable relationship are accepted by all young people (92%). As for establishing relationships with people of the same sex, it is considered perfectly acceptable by the majority of young people (58%). As for the institution of marriage, seven out of 10 young people consider it important but at the same time they state that there are more important things in life. Moreover, the clear preference of the majority of young people for a religious marriage is revealed by the survey findings, with 73% saying that they have or would have a religious marriage.

In 2023, a survey was also conducted to explore young people's perceptions on social justice and inclusion issues, with a sample of 500 young people aged 18 - 35 years old, the results of which were presented at a press conference held at the ONEK offices on 9.11.2023. According to the findings, the vast majority of young people feel social injustice, with exclusion and discrimination, and the absence of equal rights and opportunities. In particular, for the statement "I live in a fair society", eight out of 10 express disagreement. The majority of young people consider that there is a problem of discrimination in the Cypriot society, mainly in terms of origin (84%), economic status (81%) and sexual orientation (77%).

Finally, in the period December 2023, the 5th consecutive Youth barometer was announced. In this survey, as in every Youth barometer, 1 000 young people, aged 14 - 35 years old, took part, selected at a random sampling. Particular emphasis was placed on investigating young people's economic situation, living conditions and their views on housing. According to the results of the 5th Youth barometer, finding a job is still the number one problem for 53% of young people. Financial issues are of particular importance, with 35% citing financial problems, 27% punctuality, 25% low wages and 22% housing.

The results of all surveys are published on the online library of the Policy Section's page on youthpolicy.onek.org.cy.

National Youth Strategy

By decision of the Council of Ministers, dated 18th May 2017, the Youth Agency was assigned the coordinating role for the implementation of the First National Youth Strategy (2017 - 2022). With the completion of the two three-year Action Plans of the Strategy in 2022, data collection was carried out in 2023 in cooperation with the inter-agency working group of the Youth Council for the preparation of the second and final Progress Report on the implementation of the Strategy. In addition, following a relevant decision of the ONEK Board, the processes for the external evaluation of the completed Strategy 2017-2022 and the design of the new Strategy for 2030 were officially launched through the launch of a Call for Tender.

Youth work

The Youth Agency, as the governmental body responsible for youth issues in Cyprus, implements a series of actions and activities to strengthen youth work in Cyprus and improve its quality. ONEK continued to actively participate in the work of the project coordinated by the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth on "Formulation of mechanisms for validation of non-formal and informal learning - pilot implementation", which includes among others the development of a professional standard for the youth worker.

In addition, in close cooperation and in the context of coordination meetings with the UNECE Working Group on Youth work, various issues related to youth work at national and European level were discussed, with the most important being the need to formulate a roadmap for the development of youth work in connection with the implementation of the European Agenda on the subject. This group was strengthened in 2023 with a representative of the Lifelong Learning Institute, as from 1.1.2024 it will manage the "Erasmus+ Youth" and the European Solidarity Corps. In addition, representatives of the

Working Group took part in the Bonn Process Exchange Forum on National Processes organised in May 2023 in Bonn by the National Agency for European Youth Programmes in Germany, where participants had the opportunity to share their national realities and learn about good practices of other countries in the field of youth work.

1.3 EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND POLICIES

Participation in the Working Groups on Youth

In 2023, meetings of the Working Groups for the Swedish (first semester) and Spanish (second semester) Presidencies were held. In this context, the UNECO service contributed significantly towards the preparation of positions on the texts discussed in the Groups as well as in the Council of Ministers, always in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth. The texts of Conclusions discussed in the Working Groups on Youth were submitted for approval to the Council of Ministers in each Presidency for final approval. In addition, the European Youth Summit and the Meeting of Directors-General for Youth were held in each Presidency.

The Swedish Presidency's priorities on youth issues:

- Social and sustainable development for youth (Council Conclusions).
- Social and sustainable development for youth.
- European Youth Strategy 2023 - 2024 (Council Recommendation).

Priorities of the Spanish Presidency on youth issues:

- Conclusion document on promoting the participation of young people in decision-making processes for public policies in the EU.
- Draft conclusions on the specific impact of mental health problems on European young people and on integrated public policies to address this issue in the EU.

Youth Wiki

The Youth Agency, as the National Correspondent of the EU's online encyclopaedia, Youth Wiki, undertook in 2023 to collect, update and publish the necessary information on the policies, measures and actions implemented in Cyprus in the field of youth. During 2023, various actions and campaigns were also implemented to promote the Youth Wiki in Social Media, aiming at promoting the Youth Wiki and the individual topics contained in the platform.

In addition, in 2023, the EU updated three comparative maps - Education & Training, Employment & Entrepreneurship and Youth Work - which can be found on the Youth Wiki page www.youthwiki.eu. It should be noted that the comparative maps facilitate the comparison of each country's policies across a wide range of themes.

Finally, the 12th Youth Wiki National Correspondents' Meeting took place on 24 - 25 November 2023 in Italy, where ONEK was represented as a National Correspondent.

Participation in the European Steering Committee for Youth of the Council of Europe (CDEJ)

Two meetings of the European Steering Committee for Youth of the Council of Europe (CDEJ) were held in 2023. In one of them the Youth Agency participated on 13 - 15 March 2023, held at the European Youth Centre in Strasbourg, for the 70th Meeting of the CDEJ and the 48th Meeting of the CMJ.

The CDEJ meetings are attended by States that are members of the European Cultural Convention and which nominate their representatives with knowledge and expertise in youth policies. Representatives from other non-governmental youth organisations (mainly National Youth Councils) and other recognised organisations within the framework of the Council of Europe, mainly concerning participation in the Joint Council of the CMJ, also participate.

European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy (EKCYC)

The ONEK, in its capacity as a national correspondent, participated in the work of the European Knowledge Centre on EU-Council of Europe Cooperation in the youth field, through the collection and promotion of data and exchange of good practices on youth policy issues.

In addition, the EU-Council Cooperation held the annual joint meeting of the European Knowledge Centre for Youth Policy (EKCYC) National Correspondents and the European Youth Policy Researchers (PEYR), in which ONEK participated, at the Lisbon Youth Centre between 27 - 28 April 2023.

United Nations

Through 2023, the study of texts or other documents falling under the United Nations themes, such as Agenda 2030, continued, which is taken into account in the various policies of the ONEK especially in the National Youth Strategy of the Youth Board.

Commonwealth

In 2023, the Youth Agency continued its work on issues related to Commonwealth such as the study of texts, the preparation of questionnaires, informing young people about conferences, seminars within the framework of the Commonwealth. At the same time the annual contribution to the Commonwealth Youth Fund was made. The contribution is determined by the fund managers and the amount is usually fixed without serious fluctuations.

In addition to the above, the 10th Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting was held on 11 - 15 September with the participation of Ministers and / or representatives and young people from the Commonwealth member states. The theme of the meeting: "Delivering more for Commonwealth young people". The meeting was held at the Commonwealth Headquarters and among the topics discussed was the preparation of a paper policy. In addition, workshops were held on various topics such as employment, participation and others. Cyprus on behalf of the Republic of Cyprus and the Minister of Education, Sport and Youth was represented by the President of the Cyprus Youth Board Kleanthis Koutsoftas and the Member of the Board of Directors of the Youth Board, George Hadjigeorgiou.

1.4 PARTICIPATION

Young Cities

The Cyprus Youth Board and the National Betting Authority, after the successful completion of the two previous cycles of the Young Cities programme, proceeded to the launch of the third cycle of the programme from the second half of 2023 and was successfully completed in January 2024 in the framework of a youth event entitled "Pitch Youth Ideas". As part of the event, young people from the Municipalities of Aradippou, Egkomi, Lefkosia and the Communities of Agros, Avgorou and Kalopanagiotis presented their innovative ideas with the ultimate goal of playing the role of an ambassador of positive change in their local community. Young Cities is an innovative and highly participatory initiative of the National Betting Authority and the Cyprus Youth Board, which focuses on empowering and creatively engaging young people in addressing challenges in their local community. The programme aims at creating "Youth Cities" through the development and implementation of proposals with the potential for positive community impact, contributing towards the improvement of living standards and the activation of youth and citizens. As in previous years, the 2023 project was funded by the National Betting Authority.

General Advisory Council

The General Advisory Council (GAC) of the Cyprus Youth Board was established according to the Youth Board Law 33 (1)/94 and has more than 40 members. For 2023 the GAC met twice for its regular meetings. During the plenary meetings of the GAC, opinions were expressed and contributions were made on issues concerning general principles of youth policy, giving young people themselves the

opportunity to submit issues of concern to the GAC for discussion. When these meetings result in policy proposals, they are forwarded to the relevant bodies.

In addition, for 2023, within the framework of the GAC, working groups continued to be set up in which interested members were invited to participate. The purpose of these groups is to further discuss and prepare proposals for discussion at the GSC plenary. These groups meet, as a rule, quarterly. The topics cover a wide range of subjects such as: "Work and Employment", "Education and Training", "Environment", "Health and Well-being" and "Volunteering, Participation and Social Inclusion".

European Dialogue on Youth

The European Youth Dialogue process continued at both national and European level in 2023. In Cyprus, the work on the Dialogue process was continued by the National Working Group which is composed of representatives of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, the Youth Board and the Cyprus Youth Council which coordinates the whole process. For the Dialogue process and consultations, the relevant instructions were received from the Commission for the European Dialogue at European level, always based on the guidelines and themes of the respective Presidencies (Sweden and Spain, which were held during the 2023 first and second semester presidencies, and the Trio Presidency, in general). In the framework of the Dialogue process, consultations were held across the country and actions were taken to further promote the Structured Dialogue process, while the team of young Youth Ambassadors was strengthened.

Partnerships

In 2023, new partnerships emerged such as the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for the National Horizontal Action Plan for the prevention and response to violence in sports venues. The MoU is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order.

Following the previous collaborations between ONEK and the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development & Environment, an event dedicated to young farmers and specifically to those who have been approved for funding under the Rural Development Programme 2014 - 2020 was organised for the third time. The participants of the event on 3.11.2023, had the opportunity within the framework of the meeting to present their views and suggestions, as well as to raise their concerns, while developing channels of communication and directness with the relevant services and networking with each other. As mentioned in his greeting, the President of the Board of Directors of ONEK, Mr. Kleanthis Koutsoftas: "Several of the suggestions expressed by young people and young rural people in the consultations we held have been fleshed out both through the new calls for proposals of the Rural Development Programme, but also through the new programmes and services of ONEK, which is a practical support and investment in our youth."

In addition, in 2023, a new collaboration between various State agencies and coordinated by the State Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy was announced, aiming at formulating a joint action concerning the creation of digital education programmes for rural women. This action is part of the new National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024 - 2026.

European Youth Card

In 2023 the focus was on activities to promote the new digital European Youth Card. For this purpose, the Cyprus Youth Board participated in the Unifest Festival that is organised every year for Universities (seven in total across Cyprus, public and private). The information and promotion campaign continued throughout the year through social media, presenting the new digital card, as well as the board's participation in the programme providing discounted privileges, as well as competitions for young people, always aiming at promoting the programme and, by extension, the mobility of youth through the Youth Card programme. At the same time, two meetings / brunch meetings were held in March and December 2023 for the presentation of the digital card and a meeting with the organisations / companies that are

part of the privileged programme and with public or other bodies in order to further develop partnerships and better promote the European Youth Card.

In the framework of the participation of ONEK at European level for the development of a cooperation network, the service participated in the Group Five of the European Youth Card meeting in Cagliari, Italy (May 2023) and in the General Assembly of the European Youth Card held in Montenegro (June 2023). It should also be mentioned that during the year, a large number of both European and student digital cards were issued.

1.5 PROGRAMMES AND SERVICES

Funding Opportunities - Youth Initiatives

The Youth Initiatives Programme supports activities carried out by young people and organised groups of young people. Its aim is to contribute towards the creation of active citizens through volunteering, providing incentives for young people to actively participate in the cultural, sporting, political and social life of Cyprus. During 2023 the software system of the Youth Initiatives programme was implemented. Applications are now submitted electronically, which simplifies the procedures, making it easier for the interested party, reduces bureaucracy to a large extent and at the same time contributes towards the general consolidation and cultivation of environmental awareness, by substantially reducing the use of paper.

In particular, in 2023, there were three application periods for the following groups / categories of beneficiaries:

1. Informal Youth Group
2. Young persons up to 35 years old
3. Youth boards with proven nationwide activity
4. Youth boards without a nationwide action
5. Youth Centres
6. Youth Coordinating Bodies

During 2023, 539 applications were submitted to the Programme with a requested amount of €2 428 401. Out of these, 468 were approved, and the approved amount was €867 728. The funded activities included, among others, cultural activities (theatrical, musical and dance performances, concerts, solo exhibitions, youth festivals, and so on.), educational trips, conferences, seminars, and workshops, sports activities, support for organised youth groups with technological and other equipment, participation of young people in conferences / seminars abroad and in European and international competitions, as well as support for coordinating youth bodies, for which an amount of €365 000 was allocated. Additionally, in 2023, through the same Programme, activities carried out by the Overseas Cypriot Youth (NEPOMAK) were funded with the amount of €55 000, which included, among other things, learning the Greek language and familiarising them with the history and culture of Cyprus.

European Programme "Erasmus+ Youth"

The European Programme "Erasmus+" funds activities in the fields of education, training, youth, and sport for the period 2021 - 2027. Until the end of 2023, the Youth Board of Cyprus (ONEK) was the National Agency for the management of the youth and non-formal learning capital. The funds allocated to ONEK by the European Commission for the management of the Programme, amounting to €4 864 102, were almost fully utilised in 2023.

In 2023, a total of 206 applications were submitted, of which 85 were approved based on the available EU budget. Of the total approved projects, 70 were related to mobility projects in the youth sector (three Accreditation Projects, 32 Youth Exchanges, 24 Youth Worker Mobilities, and 11 Youth Participation Activities), and 15 were related to Partnership for Cooperation projects (Nine Small-Scale Partnerships and six Cooperation Partnerships). It is noteworthy that the number of participants in the approved

Mobility Projects for 2023, including young people and youth workers, amounted to 6 042. It is worth mentioning that 21% of the participants were individuals with fewer opportunities. The beneficiaries for 2023 included non-governmental / non-profit organisations from all over Cyprus, youth organisations, informal youth groups, private organisations, research centres, and more.

Education and Cooperation Activities – Erasmus+

The Education and Cooperation Activities are educational activities or seminars that promote the priorities and objectives of the Erasmus+ Programme. Through these activities, both the services and the participants themselves develop partnerships and exchange good practices, thus, contributing towards the enhancement of the Programme's impact on the broader society.

The Education and Cooperation Activities are aimed at individuals active in the youth sector, belonging to an organisation or informal youth group, and implementing activities (e.g., seminars, forums, trainings) for this specific target group. In 2023, 138 individuals participated in educational activities that took place in Cyprus and abroad, either in person or online.

Additionally, the Youth Board, as the Agency managing the Erasmus+ Youth Programme, implemented the following activities in order to provide participants with a platform to learn about and explore innovative initiatives and practices from the South that enhance and develop the skills and capacities of young people and share knowledge and experiences that contribute towards increased opportunities for employability, entrepreneurship, and social inclusion.

“Green Jobs for Tomorrow”: This is a transnational conference organised from October 30th to November 3rd, 2023, with the participation of 37 individuals from 12 European countries. The focus of this conference was on developing and exchanging green skills, while simultaneously exploring the national reality of Cyprus across all sectors.

“European Seminar for Trainers and Experts on Participation” (LTA POWER): This five-day transnational seminar took place from October 9 - 13, 2023, with 26 participants from various European countries. The seminar highlighted the need to create a pool of experts and trainers on the theme of participation, who will support the implementation of activities within this LTA. It is noteworthy that this group will gather experts and trainers from both Youth and Education & Training sectors, providing an opportunity to share knowledge and experiences and improve the application of the priority of participation in a democratic life.

Throughout 2023, the Agency continued to actively participate in the Strategic Partnerships Youth@Work, Democracy Reloading, New Power in Youth, and Digital Youth Work, aiming at promoting the priorities of employability, entrepreneurship, participation, and digital transformation at national level. This participation focused on training and enhancing the skills of the Erasmus+ Programme beneficiaries, as well as developing meaningful collaborations and synergies with other relevant entities outside the youth sector.

DiscoverEU Learning Cycle Activities

Predeparture Meetings:

Meeting in Lefkosia, on 18.4.2023, from 11:00 - 14:00.

Meeting in Lemesos, on 5.6.2023, from 11:00 - 14:00.

During the predeparture meetings, participants had the opportunity to learn about DEU and Erasmus+, receive travel tips and safety guidelines, thus serving as a learning opportunity for the participants.

Meet-ups:

Meeting in Ammochostos on 25 – 26.6.2023, from 13:00 - 21:00.

Meeting in Larnaka, on 30.6.2023, from 09:00 - 14:30.

During the meet-ups, participants had the chance to visit places of historical and cultural significance in Cyprus and engage in learning activities (such as tours, museum visits, and so on.).

Multiplier Events:

Event in Pafos, on 5.5.2023, from 18:30 - 20:30.

10 multiplier activities (each one hour long) in schools from March to April 2023.

Additionally, the National Agency participated in an online seminar presenting the DEU + DEU Inclusion Action programmes.

In the coordination meetings with the multipliers, the National Agency provided informational material to the relevant stakeholders. After the presentation of the DEU programme, discussions followed on ways to approach future participants.

EURODESK

The purpose of Eurodesk is to provide information on European policies and opportunities of interest to young people as well as to those working with youth. It offers immediate access to specialised and accurate information on topics such as work, studies, mobility, volunteering, funding, exchanges, non-formal learning, and more. Interested parties can submit their queries via email, the European Youth Portal's "Ask a question" service, or through phone. Eurodesk is co-funded by the European Commission and operates in 36 European countries. In Cyprus, the managing authority until 2024 was the Youth Board of Cyprus. Starting from January 1st, 2024, the management of the programme will be transferred to the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes (IDEP).

Information on Mobility Opportunities:

In 2023, Eurodesk Cyprus participated in festivals, seminars, informational events, exhibitions of the National Agencies of Erasmus+, and events organised by youth boards and universities, providing information and updates to young people and those working with youth. Additionally, the network had a strong presence on social media, where various opportunities for young people, schools, trainers, and organisations, as well as competitions, are posted daily. Eurodesk also provides information to interested parties about the EU Initiative "Discover EU," which is part of Key Action One of the "Erasmus+: Youth" programme. This initiative targets 18-year-olds, giving them the opportunity to travel primarily by train across Europe. Additionally, information is provided on the EU Programme "European Solidarity Corps," in which individuals aged 18 - 30 can participate in order to offer voluntary work or implement their own Solidarity Projects.

European Campaign "Time to Move":

The "Time to Move" campaign is the largest pan-European campaign of the Eurodesk network, held every October. It consists of various activities and events aiming at informing young people about mobility opportunities. In Cyprus, this campaign was conducted in 2023 by Eurodesk Cyprus in collaboration with its multipliers and the national agencies of the Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes. Specifically, as part of the campaign, both online and physical informational and recreational interactive activities were organised, such as recycling workshops, life skills workshops, treasure hunts, knowledge quizzes, graffiti creation, online presentations, and informational activities at universities, among others. As part of the campaign, Eurodesk Cyprus participated in the Erasmus Festival with its own booth and interactive activities.

European Youth Portal:

The European Youth Portal provides useful information and opportunities for young people living, studying, and working in Europe. It contains articles, news, and events relevant to youth, covering topics at both national and European level. The Youth Portal is available in 29 languages, and Eurodesk Cyprus is responsible for managing the content related to Cyprus. Throughout 2023, the content continued to be updated and upgraded with contributions from handlers across the entire Eurodesk network, including Eurodesk Cyprus.

European Solidarity Corps Programme:

The European Solidarity Corps (ESC) is the European Union's funding programme that creates unique opportunities for young people aged 18 - 30 who wish to volunteer in Cyprus and abroad, addressing various social and humanitarian challenges. It is noteworthy that this programme allows young people to gain by giving, highlighting their love for their fellow humans and their environment.

With a budget of €1 009 billion across Europe for the 2021 - 2027 period, the programme aims at providing opportunities to at least 270 000 young people. Its goal is to promote the participation of young people and their organisations in high-quality solidarity activities. The programme serves as a means to strengthen cohesion, democracy, European identity, and active participation within and beyond the EU. Through the programme, young people turn EU values into action and simultaneously acquire skills and experiences valuable for their personal and professional development.

In 2021, the EU introduced new innovations, focusing on Volunteer Projects and Solidarity Projects, aiming at a real positive impact in the long term, at local, national, and European levels. For this purpose, a new system for the evaluation and funding of organisations wishing to implement Volunteer Projects has been developed. Any entity wishing to engage in Volunteer Projects must first obtain the Quality Label, which certifies that a participating entity can provide young people with the necessary conditions to participate in solidarity activities. This label gives beneficiaries access to funding opportunities with simplified procedures throughout the 2021 - 2027 programme period, reducing administrative costs for beneficiaries and making the system attractive and sustainable for organisations, while also improving quality since organisations are rewarded based on their actual achievements.

Notably, in 2023, 50 applications were submitted: Seven for the Quality Label, 10 for Volunteer Projects, and 33 for Solidarity Projects. From the total applications, Four Quality Labels were approved (with three pending evaluations), 10 Volunteer Projects, and 21 Solidarity Projects. It was anticipated that approximately 206 young volunteers would be involved in Volunteer Projects (100) and Solidarity Projects (106).

The National Agency placed significant emphasis on publicising Solidarity Projects and Volunteer Projects in 2023, as they provide organisations and young people with the opportunity to show solidarity, support others, especially the most vulnerable members of society, and take responsibility and commitment to act as catalysts for a positive change in their communities. Through a targeted communication and support strategy, which included a combination of actions such as an online information campaign, workshops, and meetings, the Agency managed to attract the interest of organisations and young people. As a result, the funding commitment rate for Solidarity Projects reached 99.5% and for Volunteer Projects 95.9%. The number of accredited Cypriot organisations increased to a total of 23 in 2023, with four new Lead organisations, rising from five in 2021 to 10 in 2023, with three more applications pending evaluation.

Within the framework of the Corps' Education and Evaluation Cycle, the National Agency organised seven training sessions in 2023 for 50 volunteers, either in person or online. These training sessions are for volunteers who carry out their voluntary service in Cyprus for a period of two months or more, aiming to help form an informal network of volunteers, create a learning-promoting environment, and evaluate the volunteers' experiences. Additionally, one training session was held for Lead organisations, combined with asynchronous learning methods through the HOP platform, thus providing continuous support to the organisations.

Networking Activities

Networking activities serve as a tool for National Agencies to promote the goals and priorities of the programme, with the ultimate aim to ensure its quality implementation and enhance its impact on broader society. These activities target young people and those working with them, who can act as multipliers in the fields of the European Solidarity Corps (ESC).

In 2023, a total of 32 individuals participated in activities organised by other National Agencies, either in person abroad or online. These activities covered various themes such as climate change, inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities, digital transition, and so on.

At the same time, the Youth Board, as the managing authority of the European Solidarity Corps Programme in Cyprus, implemented the following activities, attracting 270 participants:

Training Beneficiaries for the European Programmes in order to Promote the Participation of Young People with Fewer Opportunities: It was held on January 19 - 20, 2023, at Semeli Hotel in Lefkosia. The goals were to emphasise the importance of the Inclusion and Diversity priority in the Programmes, provide participants with the opportunity to discuss the specificities of their projects, delve into quality issues of inclusion actions, and share methods, tools, and ways to enhance the participation of these groups in the Programmes.

"Activating citizens – local authorities making use of the European Solidarity Corps":

A transnational activity conducted online on June 20 - 23, 2023. The main objective was to motivate and support local authorities and other local stakeholders such as NGOs, local Youth Councils, and Youth Centres, to utilise the European Solidarity Corps as a tool for social cohesion and solidarity. Consequently, local workshops followed in July, presenting good practices to inspire other young people and local actors, and providing necessary information for utilising the Programme. Feedback meetings were held with those who participated in the workshops to encourage them to submit applications.

"Exploring & Celebrating Impact in European Solidarity Corps Activities":

A transnational activity which took place on October 23 - 27, 2023, at Atlantica Miramare Hotel in Lemesos. The aim was to develop synergies among organisations involved in Volunteer Projects by creating a support network, enhancing their knowledge and skills for better management of Projects with a long-term positive impact on the community, and empowering them to continue their commitment to the principles and values of the Corps. In a special event at the end of the seminar, celebrating the 5th anniversary of the Programme, the results of the European Solidarity Corps at both European and national level were highlighted through the presentation of experiences from organisations and participants.

Further Skill Enhancement for ESC & Erasmus+: Youth Beneficiaries:

The National Agency of Cyprus participated in the Strategic Partnership for Social Inclusion, which is a key priority of the Programme, as well as in the Partnership for the Implementation of the European Agenda for Work with / for Youth. These Partnerships are transnational projects aiming at developing, transferring, or implementing innovative practices, and carrying out joint initiatives that promote cooperation, collaborative learning, and the exchange of experiences at the European level.

Psychosocial Empowerment

The Cyprus Youth Board implemented the addiction prevention educational programme, "I Know What I Want," in collaboration with the Nursing Services, Directorate of the Ministry of Health. The programme targeted adolescents aged 12 - 14 and constituted a significant effort in effectively addressing addictions, aiming at fortifying young people against the risks of dependencies through a series of educational workshops that enhanced their life skills cultivation and the development of protective factors needed to face daily challenges.

The Gymnasia of Palouriotissa, Laniteio, Agros, Lefkara, Kokkinohoria and Polemidia were the six schools that participated in the programme piloted during the 2023 - 2024 school year. In this context, 144 experiential workshops of 45 minutes each were conducted, involving 234 pupils, with each pupil participating in 12 experiential workshops. Upon completion of the programme, pupils were invited to complete a structured evaluation questionnaire regarding the usefulness of the programme and how it can be applied in daily life.

According to the findings:

77% stated that they liked their participation in the programme very much to extremely. The thematic units they liked the most were those related to improving knowledge, about risks and protective factors, as well as building attitudes against substance use. 48% of pupils responded that the programme helped them change their self-perception, while more than 4/5 of pupils reported that the programme helped them learn more about the consequences of smoking, alcohol, and other drugs. Additionally, almost half of the pupils stated that the programme helped them improve their relationships with their friends, while one in three pupils believed that the programme improved their relationships with their teachers. Finally, over 93% of pupils would like to have a similar programme like "I Know What I Want" in the next school year.

Entrepreneurship

ONEK actively supports the New Entrepreneurial Activity Programme of the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, and Industry, providing relevant information and support to young people aged 18 - 55 in order to submit applications. The programme aims at developing, supporting, and promoting entrepreneurship through financing and training seminars in order to create new and sustainable small and medium-sized enterprises.

The Evaluation Committee met throughout the year to evaluate applications for the first call of the "TH.A.L.E.I.A." Programme 2021 - 2027 and approved 180 applications.

Youth Centres

The Youth Centres serve as the physical presence of the Cyprus Youth Board in the provinces. ONEK operates seven Youth Centres in Lefkosia, Lemesos, Larnaka, Pafos, Agros, Sotira, and Evrychou. They provide information about the opportunities offered by ONEK's programmes and services, to utilise European programmes, and training, among others. Moreover, the Youth Centres offer workshops such as "The STEAMers" a creative employment programme and services from the Career Guidance Service counsellors. Additionally, they organise interesting events, lectures, and experiential workshops. The spaces at the Youth Centres can also be made available to third parties, according to the relevant Regulations set by the Board of Directors of the Cyprus Youth Board and subject to availability.

Another goal is to empower young people in their early steps towards full integration into society as independent individuals, as well as to assist them in addressing any difficulties they may encounter later in their lives. This is achieved by providing them with information on issues that concern and affect them, as well as counselling services.

In 2023, the Youth Centres conducted thematic workshops as part of the European Year of Skills, offering participants valuable skills on psychosocial issues, digital skills, job search issues, and more.

Career Guidance Service

The Career Guidance Service is a programme of the Cyprus Youth Board that, through its four pillars of action, provides guidance on study and career issues, as well as opportunities for personal development to young people of different ages and needs. It targets pupils, university students, young job seekers, and unemployed youth. The four pillars of the Career Guidance Service, offered free of charge to all young people, include:

Provision of personalised counselling services for career guidance:

Private meetings with career guidance counsellors from ONEK for pupils of all levels. Topics covered during these personalised meetings vary, including guidance on course selections for secondary schools, assistance with applications for admission to public universities, information on studies in Cyprus and abroad, CV creation, educational and professional choices for young people, and more. In total, during 2023, 1 480 personalised meetings were held by ONEK counsellors with young people on issues related to education, studies, job interviews, CV preparation, and others.

Conducting Career Tests and Analysis of Results:

The Career Test is a valuable supportive and auxiliary tool for counsellors to provide personalised counselling services based on the interests and abilities of each young person. It is primarily aimed at pupils of general secondary and technical and Vocational education, university students, and other young people. Through the administration of the test, young people can achieve self-awareness and realise hidden talents, abilities, skills, and characteristics of their personality. These insights can contribute towards making a more suitable choice of an academic field and professional direction they pursue.

The STEAMers

2023 marked a year of significant momentum for the "The STEAMers" programme, expanding beyond its full operation in Lefkosia, Lemesos, and Pafos to establish itself in Larnaka, and towards the end of the year, making its debut in the free Ammochostos area (Sotira). Moreover, during the academic year 2023 - 2024, the number of participants in STEAMers workshops across all cities remained consistently high, with 234 workshops hosting 1 078 participants.

Following a collaborative agreement between the Youth Board and the Municipality of Sotira, the latter allocated part of its Social Services Centre to the organisation, where the Youth Board now operates the Sotira Youth Multipurpose Centre. This specific centre, like those in other cities, hosts both the workshops of "The STEAMers" programme and the counselling services provided by the Organisation to young people.

In 2023, in addition to the regular workshops aiming at fostering creativity and enhancing skills for children and young people aged 6 - 35, STEAMers organised their own events and participated in third-party events as follows:

May 20, 2023: Participation of STEAMers with their own booth in the 1st Makersfair at the Youth Makerspace Larnaka.

June 10 - 28, 2023: Final Events of STEAMers in Lefkosia, Lemesos, Pafos, and Larnaka at their respective Youth Multipurpose Centres.

July 1 - 2, 2023: Participation of STEAMers in Robotex Cyprus with significant distinctions.

September 23, 2023: Participation of STEAMers with their own booth at the 7th "Up To Youth" Youth Festival at Akropolis Park.

November 17 - 18, 2023: Participation of STEAMers in the World Robotics Competition in Tallinn, Estonia.

December 16 - 17, 2023: Christmas Events of STEAMers in Lefkosia, Lemesos, and Larnaka.

Additionally, as part of its social contribution, the Youth Board, including the STEAMers initiative, continued to involve individuals from Agios Stefanos Foundation in morning workshops in Lemesos. The aim is for these individuals to fully integrate into the programme's curriculum and attend any workshops they desire, fostering acceptance, respect for diversity, and skill enhancement. Participation for friends from Agios Stefanos in the workshops is free of charge.

Youth Makerspace Larnaka

Youth Makerspace Larnaka started its operation on 10th March 2018 and since then it has been an innovative space where young people can create innovative projects, develop their ideas and use the technological equipment to create their own original projects and realise their business ideas. It is housed in a restored building, which is provided free of charge by the Municipality of Larnaka to the Youth Board, and which during the English occupation housed the English governor's residence. Now in its new form and use, young people who visit it can learn about new forms of technology by attending one of the many specialised workshops organised by ONEK, engage and develop creative manufacturing processes and methods, share their knowledge and skills and put that knowledge and skills into practice. Equipment includes 3D printers, laser cutters, drones, virtual reality, robotics,

programming and more. The innovative programme of the Cyprus Youth Board is an important factor in the ecosystem of making, STEAM and the evolution of technology in Cyprus. Youth Makerspace Larnaka is addressed to children and young people as well as to organised youth groups, educational institutions and so on. All the activities of the programme as well as the use of the equipment is offered completely free of charge to all young people.

In 2023 Youth Makerspace held a large number of educational workshops and many other activities, with its main activity being the first Makers Fair technology festival in Cyprus. Additionally, the space is used daily by young makers and during the year it was licensed for use by organised groups, youth NGOs, universities and other organised bodies dealing with youth or youth issues, in order to implement activities, events and workshops.

Mobile Makerspace

The success of the Youth Makerspace Larnaka project from 2018 onwards, prompted the Youth Agency to create a mobile unit, the Mobile Makerspace. This is a specially designed mobile unit, which has almost the same equipment as Youth Makerspace Larnaka. The unit has the same objectives as the physical space and has a special focus on young people with fewer opportunities who reside in geographically isolated or remote areas, who cannot visit the Youth Makerspace in Larnaka. The mobile unit visits schools and other organised groups in rural or geographically isolated areas, aiming at implementing workshops based on the STEAM sector and its technological equipment. Through the creation of the Mobile Makerspace, ONEK aims at disseminating to an even larger number of young people the new technologies and bring young people in contact with them, in order to stimulate their curiosity, give them an opportunity and motivate them to further engage with them.

In 2023 the Mobile Makerspace unit made visits to schools across the country and took part in events, giving young people the opportunity to get to know the equipment in the unit and participate in technology workshops.

Events

Makers Fair 2023

Youth Makerspace Larnaka, on the occasion of its 5th anniversary, organised the first "MakersFair" in Cyprus. The "MakersFair" was held with great success on Saturday 20th May 2023 from 16:00 to 22:00, at the Youth Makerspace in Larnaka. It is a technology and creativity festival based on the Makers' Movement and was open to the general public as well as to professional or amateur makers. The event included interactive STEAM workshops on robotics and programming topics, as well as wood crafts. In addition, there were technology booths staffed by makers, organisations and institutions to showcase their work and crafts. At the same time, activities and crafts, demonstrations of useful skills, a clay workshop and cultivation of the Smart Garden available at the venue were taking place. Participants also had the opportunity to participate in inspiring talks by professionals on technology and making, such as 3D printing and virtual reality. The audience enjoyed street food, drinks, desserts and music, among other things.

The presence of the President of the Republic of Cyprus, Nikos Christodoulides, was particularly honourable for our programme. Among others, the Deputy Minister of Innovation, Philip Hatzizaharias, the Mayor of Larnaka, Andreas Vyras, the Dean of the TEPAK, Panagiotis Zafiris and the Commissioner for the Environment, Maria Panagiotou, were also present.

Young Makers Summer Workshops

During the summer period and specifically in July 2023, the Young Makers Summer Workshops took place for the second consecutive year at Youth Makerspace Larnaka. It is a three-week summer school that aims at the personal development and acquisition of skills of teenage participants, in order to discover new technologies and scientific fields that they may not have the opportunity to get to know at school. In addition, the Young Makers Summer Workshops aimed at developing 21st century skills in

children, such as collaboration, problem solving, critical thinking, creativity, and so on. This year, the Young Makers Summer Workshops aimed at children aged 13 - 17 years old and lasted for three weeks. Specifically, the 15 participants were introduced in depth to the innovative equipment of Youth Makerspace Larnaka through educational workshops, worked in groups to solve the problem they had identified as youth and were invited to design, build and present their own prototypes.

Tree of Hope

Youth Makerspace Larnaka and the volunteer team of the "One We" Association for Active Giving created the "Tree of Hope" structures which were installed in the homes of the "Hope For Children" CRC Policy Centre in Larnaka, Lefkosia, Lemesos and Pafos. The Association's team used the laser cutter equipment available at the site and created, maintained and painted the leaves by gluing them to magnets. The purpose of this construction is not only to decorate these spaces but also to give the opportunity for each child of the House to leave a message on the leaves of the tree that they have passed through the space, so that no child feels lonely. The structures were created in a day-long activity on 25.11.2023 with the participation of over 50 young volunteers.

Partnerships and Co-organisations.

Girls in STEAM Academy

Youth Makerspace Larnaka, in collaboration with the "Be an Ally Foundation", held again this year the "Girls in STEAM Academy" programme, an initiative that aims at bridging the gap in the representation of women in jobs in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics) fields and empower young girls to pursue careers in STEAM fields. The Girls in STEAM Academy was held for the first time in 2021, hosted at our venue the following year and, on 22nd and 23rd April 2023, the Girls in STEAM Academy programme returned again to our venue where adult women 18+ from Ukraine had the opportunity to develop programming skills, learn about career opportunities in the STEAM sector and are empowered by meeting female role models in similar professions and industries from Cyprus. Finally, the Girls in STEAM Academy was also held in December 2023. The participants, for another year, had the opportunity to learn what STEAM means, to get to know innovative equipment and technologies and meet female role models in relevant professions and industries.

Participation in the European Maritime Day celebrations - CMMI

Youth Makerspace Larnaka, in collaboration with the Cyprus Marine and Maritime Institute, the Municipality of Larnaka, the Phoebus Stavridis Foundation - Larnaka Archives, the Larnaka Tourism Development and Promotion Company, the Foundation for Cultural Creation for Children and Youth, the Cyprus Marine Environment Protection Association (CYMEPA) and the Maritime Institute of Eastern Mediterranean (MarInEM) have been organising the "European Day for the Sea in Cyprus" since 2021 in our country. In 2023, our team also participated in the European Maritime Day celebrations in May 2023. Specifically, Mobile Makerspace visited the beach of Finikoudes, where they offered a workshop for primary education pupils on designing with the use of 3D pens. Specifically, the children were invited to create 3D objects with a sea theme.

Larnaka Biennial

Youth Makerspace Larnaka actively participates in the artistic and creative events of Larnaka, supporting the largest artists' event of the city, Larnaka Biennale. The event ran from 11.10.2023 to 24.11.2023, with over 8 000 visitors. Our team as well as the equipment available at the venue helped to create artworks and present workshops by various artists, designers and researchers. In particular, our space hosted artists who used the wood workshop and other equipment for their creations. In addition, the artist Jan Swierkowski presented the work Stellar Entanglement through our virtual reality glasses in our space as well as the COSMIC talk, during which he highlighted how interactions transform our thinking, similar to the transformative Effects Review that astronauts experience.

Larnaka Bio Design Festival - Larnaka 2030

Youth Makerspace Larnaka has once again contributed in the most innovative way to the creation of the Larnaka Bio Design Festival in collaboration with Larnaka 2030. Bio Design is a transnational approach that combines biology, technology and design, seeking to create artworks, innovative products and solutions based on the principles of nature and biodiversity. Our team as well as the equipment available in the space helped to create artworks and present workshops by various artists, designers and researchers. In particular, the Mycelium Pavilion was exhibited in Zouchouri Square from 29.10.2023 to 5.11.2023 with an audience of more than 250 people and the participation of more than 10 artists, as well as the bases of the sculptures of Elina Hadjinicola. The aforementioned were created in our timber workshop and laser cutter machine. Among other things, Youth Makerspace organised and hosted the "Natural Colours" workshop in which bio-colours were produced from natural sources, as well as the "Living Textiles" workshop in which textures were created from seaweed.

Educational workshop on "STEAM and disability"

On 11.11.2023, on the initiative of robotics teachers and instructors Melpo Pittaras and Maria Nikolaidou, the workshop "STEAM and Disability" was held with the participation of five people. The activity involved both children with or without disabilities, so that they could understand the concept of disability and accessibility, through robotics packages.

Education

The Youth Makerspace Larnaka is visited daily by people who come to discover what the space offers, and work or study using the rooms. But beyond the daily visitors, the space is also visited by educational institutions, organised groups and schools. Mobile Makerspace makes visits to schools to inform teachers and pupils about the Youth Makerspace programme and the Educational Programmes offered through the Mobile Makerspace unit.

Educational Programme and visits to schools and educational institutions

For another school year, the educational programme created by the staff of the Youth Makerspace Larnaka is applied to the visits of schools and educational institutions to the site, as well as visits of the Mobile Makerspace unit to them. In the year 2023, the direct interest of schools of both primary and secondary education filled the programme of the mobile unit and the site to a great extent. It is noted that schools and educational institutions no longer receive a letter for a visit, as they have become familiar with the presence and work of the Youth Makerspace Larnaka programme. In particular, the space was visited by 33 educational institutions with a total of 1 112 participants of all ages. At the same time, the mobile unit visited 22 educational institutions with a total of 1 200 participants.

Skills Development Programme for secondary education through the technology of drones in collaboration with the Technical School of Avgorou:

As part of the Youth Makerspace's contribution to Education, the "Skills Development Programme for Secondary School Pupils through the use of drones and 3D printing technology" was implemented. This programme started in 2019 in Ammochostos District. However, from the school year 2021 - 2022 it commenced in Larnaka District, and this year it was additionally extended to Lefkosia District. At the beginning of this school year, letters were sent to all three aforementioned districts aiming at developing digital skills as well as makers' skills, getting in touch with technology in the STEAM field and broadening their horizons, in terms of their education and training and the labour market sector they will join in the future. Due to the great interest shown by schools this year and the importance of this programme, it was decided after a meeting with the Director of Technical and Vocational Education, Mr. Elias Markatzis, that our cooperation for the programme will continue and be extended for the next three school years i.e. 2023 - 2026.

Up to You(th): Youth Festival 2023

The Up To YOU(th) Festival returned renewed on Saturday 23rd September 2023, at the Acropolis Park, in Lefkosia. With the same strong pulse and the motto "Up to You(th)", the 7th edition of the Youth

Festival by the Cyprus Youth Board, invited once again the audience to a celebration for youth, with the young people themselves as the protagonists, sending a strong message that today and tomorrow are in the hands of the new generation, a generation that dares to dream and hope for a better tomorrow. The Festival included the established of the NGO Fair, in cooperation with the NGO Support Centre and the Cyprus Youth Council, which is the introduction to youth boards that are active on issues that concern young people such as environment, health, culture, society, and so on. It also included short film screenings, open discussions, technology applications, music and other events. Over 100 organisations and educational institutions took part in Up to You(th) and over 5000 young people visited the event.

