

STRATEGIC PLAN FOR LINE MINISTRY: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE 2015-2017

LINE MINISTRY: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

MISSION

The continuous upgrade of education in order to ensure the provision of learning opportunities to all learners, through the implementation of an educational policy which embodies the values of equality, inclusivity, creativeness and innovation, aiming at a life-long, balanced and wholesome development, while, in parallel, strengthening culture and supporting cultural creativity.

VISION

The formulation of literate citizens with skills, responsibility, democratic ethos, historical identity as well as respect for diversity. Citizens with a wholesome personality, capable to creatively contribute to the development of society and to cope with the challenges of the future, as well as to the improvement of citizens' quality of life through education and culture.

VALUES

1. **Integrity and respect:** Interpersonal relations among all stakeholders should be characterized by respect, appreciation, justice, tolerance and discretion.
2. **Teamwork:** Promotion of a collaborative and collective work spirit to achieve common goals.
3. **Effectiveness and efficiency:** Our aim is to establish an educational system characterized by a high degree of effectiveness and efficiency, in order to satisfy the differentiated needs of learners.
4. **Accountability:** Emphasis on evidence-based decision making, aiming at transparency and accountability.
5. **Active citizenship:** Empowerment of learners' participation in society, taking into account our historical and cultural identity.
6. **Effective communication:** Uninterrupted flow of information, so as to facilitate communication both horizontally as well as vertically.
7. **Service to society:** Creation of positive experiences for pupils and their families, the labor market and society.

ADMINISTRATION

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 1: EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

2. STATE OF PLAY

The Administration Section of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) is responsible for the implementation of the MOEC's strategy, effectively and efficiently, in all areas of the Ministry's competence.

The role of the Administrative Officers of the MOEC is twofold. On the one hand, they constitute the extension of the Ministry of Finance's Department of Public Administration and Personnel, in the MOEC. Officers in the Administration handle personnel issues, i.e. terms of service of permanent, non-permanent and hourly paid personnel on the basis of the relevant legislation, regulations and circulars, as well as the hiring procedures, transfers, negotiations with the unions etc. During the school year 2013-2014, the MOEC was responsible for the management of approximately 12 500 employees (civil servants, teachers, non-permanent employees, hourly paid employees, school clerks). On the other hand, they constitute the extension of the Permanent Secretary of the MOEC on policy issues, strategy and coordination. On the basis of the relevant legislation the administrative officers are in position to provide counseling and direction to the Permanent Secretary of the MOEC.

Amongst other things, the Administration of the MOEC is responsible for the lawmaking process, the study, interpretation and implementation of legislation, the written communication through the composition of memos, letters, minutes, reports, proposals to the Council of Ministers, the procedure for the submission of proposals to the Council of Ministers, implementation of administrative law principles, the Ministry's budget preparation, procurements etc.

The current economic situation of the country has led to the more efficient use of public funding by semi-governmental and government supported organisations. Additionally, the new state of affairs, has led this organisations to seek for alternative sources of funding besides public funding. Shortage of the administration personnel due to the economic crisis created problems to the smooth implementation of the administration duties within the MOEC.

Lack of ICT and e-governance impedes the efficient carrying out of day to day activities within the MOEC as well as communication with the semi-governmental organisations under its competence.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Personnel Administration

The Administration is responsible for the organisation and management of the personnel (teachers, civil servants, non-permanent employees, hourly paid employees, school clerks) of the Ministry and its services, by keeping data and overseeing leaves, sick-leaves, maternity leaves, retirement claims etc. Further, it undertakes disciplinary investigations, monitors and controls the posts and arranges for recruitment in case of vacancies. In its effort to upgrade the Ministry the administration organises in-service training seminars for new and existing staff of the civil service.

Activity 2: Administration of semi-governmental and non-profit organisations

The MOEC, is the competent authority responsible for specific semi-governmental organisations (Cyprus Sports Organisation, Youth Board of Cyprus, Cyprus Theatre Organisation) and non-profit government supported organisations (Cyprus Olympic Committee, Cyprus Anti-Doping Committee etc). With regards to semi-governmental organisations, the Administration is responsible for the forming and the finalization of their annual budgets in collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, the implementation of the procedure for possible amendments to their respective legislations in collaboration with the Legal Service, the submission of proposals to the Council of Ministers, the preparation of replies to Representatives of the House of Parliament etc. The Administration oversees the implementation of the organisations' budgets and acts as the liaison of the semi-governmental organisations and other line Ministries. The Administration takes all necessary measures, within its competence, for the efficient operation of semi-governmental and non-profit government supported organisations.

Activity 3: Internal policy coordination and fund administration

The inflexibility of the Ministry's structures and processes does not allow its efficient and productive operation. Due to the fact that with the current structure, the educational policy as regards the organisation and the management as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education provided lies with the Departments of Education separately, in an effort to achieve the implementation of common education policy for all the levels of education, provisions were carried out for the establishment of education policy groups under Administration. Policy decisions as well as budget provisions for programmes, such as the Health Education Programmes, the Afternoon and Evening Programmes as well as the All-Day Schools, have been carried to central Administration in order to encourage internal policy coordination. This act facilitates the design, the development and implementation of common education policies for all departments and simplifies the processes in relation to the monitoring, the assessment and the implementation of the policies in an over-

departmental manner. This action has provided the Ministry the opportunity to respond to particular needs in a timely and effective manner as appropriate policy decisions are made, reflecting simultaneously the uniformity of the policies as well as the administration of funds for all levels of education. The aforementioned action can be perceived as a remedy as the Ministry is planning, in the very near future, to focus on its restructuring, aiming at the decentralization and delegation, not only of procedural issues but also of the authority to manage the programmes' budgets accordingly, to the appropriate authorities, and more specifically to the Directorate of General Education.

Activity 4: Manage organisational reform of the Ministry-Introduction of an IT system

The highly centralised and bureaucratic structures of the Ministry have been repeatedly noted by several reports and experts, as the main sources of inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the education system. The restructuring of existing departments and their reorganization into fewer and larger departments, while delegating administrative and other responsibilities from the central administration of the Ministry to the departments/units and district education offices and schools, is a major priority. Furthermore, the introduction of an IT management system with the aim of increasing efficiency and effectiveness of the Ministry's function is also part of the restructuring effort. Since the Ministry does not have all the required expertise and knowledge, the outsourcing of the study and implementation of the necessary actions will be sought for.

Activity 5: Asset management (tangible assets)

The Administration coordinates the expropriation process for acquiring private property/land in order to construct school buildings. Further, it deals with requests from various private bodies for using school buildings.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 2: MANAGEMENT OF HORIZONTAL EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

2. STATE OF PLAY

The MOEC is currently facing a number of different challenges which have been repeatedly discussed with all stakeholders during the last years. The Cyprus Educational System needs structural changes which will upgrade the quality of the education offered, taking into consideration that our teachers should be in a position to help pupils cope effectively with any problems they will face as active citizens of the society. Among the issues that need to be addressed are areas related to teachers' evaluation system, teachers' recruitment system as well as teachers' in-service training.

The current teachers' evaluation system is in operation since 1976 without any substantial modifications. The system, which exclusively concerns teachers and not the educational work in general, is anachronistic and outdated and needs to be modernized. The way teachers are appointed, through the ranking of candidates in a list based on the filing date of their degree, has been a matter of extensive discussions. In recent years there have been many suggestions to improve and modernize the system, without a positive result. It is generally accepted by all stakeholders in the educational process that the introduction of a more contemporary and flexible recruitment system.

Moreover, the improvement of the system of continuous teacher professional development is a priority. The MOEC's proposal takes into account the need for a systematic and continuing effort for teachers' support and empowerment, in order to enable upgrading of the quality of the teaching staff horizontally in the educational system (from pre-primary to upper secondary education).

In addition, the MOEC actively participates in the co-funded projects of the structural and other European funds, in order to maximize its effort for implementing its policies for education and culture. The previous programme period 2007-2013 has been highly successful for the MOEC, since major projects have been introduced and applied in the educational system (e.g. Zones of Educational Priority, Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training etc). The MOEC has already prepared detailed plans for the new programme period, in order to implement new policies as well as to continue to offer the good practices of the previous period.

In the past years, a programme has been implemented aiming at integrating and utilizing ICT in the educational process and the digital literacy of pupils and teachers. In this context IT is extensively provided and used in schools.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Development of educational reform policies

The drafting of a new system for teachers' evaluation and evaluation of the educational work as well as the processes for internal evaluation/self-evaluation and external evaluation has been submitted to the stakeholders and it is estimated that its final development will be formulated with consensus; followed by the completion of the necessary legislative regulations and implementation of the new system. The described process will also be applied for the adoption of a New Recruitment System as well as the policy regarding Teachers' Professional Development, focusing in the area of in-service training. Thus, revised suggestions have been prepared and submitted and upon consensus, all the necessary legislative regulations will be revised and the implementation phase will be initiated. In addition, a consensus will be reached in order to have a system for teachers' in-service professional development in a systematic and continuous form, ensuring the quality of teaching and learning.

Activity 2: Management of co-funded projects

The European Funding Management Unit of the MOEC was established after the accession Cyprus accession to the European Union (EU) in order to manage and supervise projects undertaken by the MOEC, which are co-financed by the Structural Funds of the EU. These projects are primarily funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). The role of the Unit is quite important both at a European level, since it acts upon the implementation of the EU priorities, as well as at a national level, because through the implementation of projects undertaken, the Republic of Cyprus receives considerable funds, which cover the promotion of lifelong learning, human resource development and strengthening of social and economic cohesion. For the programme period 2007-2013, the European Funding Management Unit manages six co-funded projects financed by the European Social Fund. For the period 2014-2020, four proposals of the MOEC have been initially approved in order to be incorporated in the co-financed projects of the EU for Cyprus.

Activity 3: ICT integration in teaching and learning

The development of contemporary infrastructure in schools, so that teachers with the use of contemporary teaching methods can utilize the tools and content of ICT for the benefit of pupils and the revision of the content and the supportive means of teaching will continue. In addition, the formulation, maintenance and development of ICT infrastructure in school units and development, revision and enrichment of the educational content and the supportive means of teaching and learning will be pursued.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 3: EFFECTIVE AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF THE MOEC IN EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS (**EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS OFFICE**)

2. STATE OF PLAY

The current societal, economic and political realities require from each country to be well equipped to face the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities which exist in today's globalised world. This is particularly important for Cyprus, as a Member State of the EU, where several policies that influence national priorities are developed and a rich pool of resources is available. Active participation in the institutions of the EU, productive bilateral relations with other countries, engagement in peer learning activities and introduction of innovative policies and practices are some of the activities which should be pursued.

Within this context, the MOEC is striving to adopt an outward looking approach so as to maximize the benefits in all the fields of its competences, namely, education, culture, youth and sports. The EU 2020, the Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020), the Youth Strategy 2010-2018, the New Work Plan for Culture, the EU Work Plan for Sports 2014-2017, are important policy documents that steer the efforts of the Ministry towards achieving specific aims and objectives. To succeed in this endeavor the MOEC needs to have strong internal coordination and be ready to influence policy making at European and international level. At the same time, it has to be ready to improve, modify and introduce new policies that derive from EU policy documents and recommendations and also adopt good practices from other countries, establish close relations and productive partnerships with international stakeholders and implement relevant programmes and projects. Furthermore, it needs to continually update and upgrade the capacity of its personnel to think and act with a European and global perspective.

Since its establishment in 2009 the Office for European and International Affairs (EIAO) of the MOEC has made a significant contribution towards effective coordination of internal and international policy coordination and it has contributed to the introduction and implementation of policy initiatives with a European and international perspective. Its pivotal role for successful preparation of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU was one of its major achievements. This experience has helped to accumulate significant expertise and create a strong network of contacts with local and international stakeholders.

The main challenge faced by EIAO lies significantly with the fact that all of its officers, with a considerable amount of experience in many sectors, are seconded teachers and not permanent staff. Another challenge that has to be faced is the fragmentation of the European and international issues,

which are administered by various departments of the Ministry. Putting all separated parts under the same roof can enhance maximum results and better exploitation of available human resources.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: EU and international policy coordination

The EIAO promotes the implementation of EU and international policies in Cyprus in line with national priorities through coordination of education committees, technical working groups and other groups of experts and works towards the enhanced cooperation with other government agencies and non-governmental organisations in Cyprus and abroad, regarding European and international affairs. To achieve the above-mentioned aims, the EIAO cooperates closely with all departments/services of the MOEC; the Cyprus Sports Organisation, the Youth Board of Cyprus and other governmental departments, the Permanent Representation of Cyprus in Brussels, Strasbourg, Geneva and elsewhere; and the embassies of the Republic of Cyprus abroad. The EIAO coordinates the preparation of monitoring reports on matters arising from the conventional obligations of Cyprus as a member of European and international organisations. It also monitors the implementation of the National Strategy for European issues coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, it prepares the participation of the Minister of Education and Culture and other Ministry officials in meetings taking place abroad and promotes policy decisions, recommendations and conclusions, taken at European and international level, to competent authorities aiming to reinforce national policies. It coordinates the conclusion and renewal of international agreements between the MOEC and respective bodies.

Activity 2: Support for maximising the use of European and international resources

The EIAO reinforces the MOEC officers' capacity to take advantage from funding opportunities and activities from European programmes, by inter alia, the organisation of professional development activities for MOEC's officers. It organises specialised training seminars and workshops according to the needs of the MOEC's officers that would assist them in applying for competitive European funding programmes. The EIAO works towards the creation of structures that will encourage the targeted submission of proposals, according to the Strategic Plan and priorities of the MOEC and increase their chances of success; provides information and administrative support related to funding opportunities, records the MOEC's applications for feedback purposes, monitors the implementation of the projects so as to ensure implementation of projects' activities in the best possible way and maintains a strong network of potential partners. The EIAO works in close collaboration with other public and private stakeholders.

Activity 3: Implementation of projects

The implementation of good practices and learning among peers is an important practice that is exploited among the EU Member States and other international organisations. Within this framework, the EIAO and other Departments / Services of MOEC implement programmes resulting from the international and European cooperation. The majority of the programmes is co-funded by European and international sources and helps the MOEC to increase growth, ensure sustainable development and enhance social cohesion, in line with the MOEC's strategic priorities and the European and international objectives.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 4: IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNIZATION OF INFRASTRUCTURE (**TECHNICAL SERVICES**)

2. STATE OF PLAY

The Technical Services which are responsible for the development of the public educational infrastructure are now asked to cover all needs with limited financial resources due to the economic crisis. The programme for building new schools has been suspended even though there are plans and studies available. The programme of anti-earthquake upgrading though it has been completed at 80% is now slowed down. For the above reasons, there is a systematic effort to increase the added value of existing schools by extending school buildings in order to have a better use of the existing infrastructure (laboratories and athletic infrastructure facilities.) There is also an effort regarding the allocation of resources, for the environmental and energy-efficiency upgrading of schools. The aim of this effort is to create a secure, creative and pleasant school environment that is accessible by society. Finally, another goal pursued, is the upgrading of the role, efficiency and productivity of Technical Services with the re-evaluation of the procedures and the use of Information Technology tools.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Construction of new schools and modernization of existing school buildings

Design and monitoring of the construction of new schools, expansion and modernization of existing ones according to modern standards. Design and monitoring of anti-earthquake upgrade with pedagogical redesign of existing schools and construction of new sports facilities to be used during and after school hours. Use of educational directives and standards for the accommodation of pupils and the modernization of school infrastructure.

Activity 2: Setting of adequate standards and inspection of buildings

Study, research and setting of standards regarding sustainable school buildings in order to create pedagogically friendly schools with emphasis on the environmental design. This includes the use of new techniques and materials in order to achieve the best results with respect to cost, reliability, environmental impact and maintenance. Furthermore, the implementation of a programme for the expansion in the use of renewable energy sources and the installation of thermal insulation so to further improve the energy efficiency of school buildings. Provision of in-service training seminars and

presentations from private sector companies, aiming to increase efficiency in the conduct of studies, project management as well as briefing in new market trends.

Activity 3: Introduction of a management system

Installation and use of a comprehensive highly deployable software system that provides direct management for all the operations carried out. The principal operations of the system are to accept requests from the School Boards and in-service users and convert them to work orders and projects. Provide complete management of these work orders and projects and through the assigned cost the allocation of the budget can be made. Asset and maintenance management are also provided.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 5: REINFORCEMENT OF LEARNER'S POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR AND DEALING WITH ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE)

2. STATE OF PLAY

Educational Psychologists (EP) employed in the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) are traditionally involved in dealing with individual cases of children referred to the service and having different problems, e.g. learning, emotional, behaviour or psychosocial difficulties. According to the annual statistics that the EPS keeps, during the school year 2013-2014, the EP's dealt with 6 036 individual cases. The ratio of general school population is 3 500 pupils to each EP. Specifically, each EP dealt with 145 individual school cases during the previous school year.

For the year 2013-2014, there was an increase of 9% to the individual cases the EPS had to deal with. Due to the economic crisis the problems that the families and therefore the children face have increased and became more complicated and difficult to handle. According to the EPS data statistics, 48,3% of the children referred faced learning difficulties (either general or special learning difficulties). During the year 2013-2014, there was an increase in the number of children facing emotional problems, 23,7% compared to 20,1% during the previous year.

Each EP is responsible for an average of 20 schools. EPs mainly assess children in schools either for learning, emotional or behaviour problems. Apart from the initial assessment there is a need sometimes to reassess children in schools, due to different reasons. The EPs also offer counseling to parents, teachers and to the pupils in schools. And, of course, they participate to multidisciplinary meetings for the children they assess. According to the EPS's annual statistics during the school year 2013-2014, the above four domains of services offered to children sum up to 72,2% of EPs' working time in schools.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Awareness-raising programmes/prevention

The primary aim of the intervention programmes is the prevention of school failure and functional illiteracy, the promotion of mental health and citizenship behaviour and the integration of pupils with disabilities in ordinary schools. EPs implement programmes in schools according to the specific needs and to the general demand.

Activity 2: Pupil's assessments

EPs respond to requests from teachers and parents/guardians for assessing pupils from the age of 3 up to the age of 18 in public and private schools. After the assessment is finished they give suggestions to the school and to the parents including specialised help in a wide range of difficulties that pupils may present at school, including learning, emotional and behaviour problems. They also respond to referrals from the District Committees on Special Education and Training for psychological assessment and they offer recommendations including interventions. EPs intervene at the level of the whole school as well as at the level of the group or the individual.

Activity 3: Intervention and counselling

After the assessment is finished and there is a clear picture of the specific problems that children face, the EPs with the assistance of the teacher design and implement an intervention for the whole classroom. In addition to the above, they may suggest to the parents an intervention which can be implemented at home at the level of the family aiming at improving the child's behaviour. Counselling is one of the main domains of activities EPs offer to teachers, parents and children. Counselling is offered for empowering teachers on how to deal with the child, offering to them strategies and pedagogic methods (in order to deal with the different problems of children).

Activity 4: Policy coordination

In addition to the above three activities which are directly connected with the cases of children EPs have under their responsibility in schools, they also deal with managerial duties, represent their Service and the MOEC in different committees. These committees are permanent or ad-hoc, interdisciplinary and sometimes inter-ministerial and their goal is to design, implement and monitor policies and programmes.

DEPARTMENT OF TERTIARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 1: ENSURE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

2. STATE OF PLAY

Over the last few decades, issues of quality assurance and quality enhancement have been a major focus of attention in Europe and the world. As part of the European agenda for the modernization of Higher Education (HE), issues of quality assurance are constantly being revisited in an attempt to ensure that institutions of HE revolve around and build a culture of quality. Within this framework, Cyprus has placed quality assurance issues very high on its political and educational agenda.

Since the establishment of its first university in 1992, Cyprus has considered quality assurance and quality enhancement as a priority for the country. The quality assurance system has its roots in 1987 with the establishment of the Law of the Tertiary Education Institutions. The system developed gradually, together with the gradual development of the HE scene. As a result, four independent bodies have been operating: (1) the Council of Educational Evaluation – Accreditation (SEKAP), (2) the Advisory Committee for Tertiary Education (SETE), (3) the Evaluation Committee of Private Universities (ECPU), and (4) the Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KYSATS), which is the competent authority of the Republic of Cyprus for the recognition of HE qualifications obtained in Cyprus and abroad. Recent educational developments, including the establishment of three public and five private universities, have urged the MOEC to form a new legislation that will establish an Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in HE. The Agency's aim is to further enhance internal and external quality assurance procedures as well as accreditation matters, in accordance with the European Standards and Guidelines.

Furthermore, the financing of public Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) needs to act as a means to improve the quality of the education as well as the quality of the services provided to students, the academic staff and the researchers. Public universities receive funding from the national budget. Public universities are also funded through the fees paid by their post-graduate students, through research projects and through donations. In general, the use of private funds by public HEIs is included in the annual budget and, therefore, is monitored by the General Auditor. Since their establishment, public universities submit annually a draft budget, based on their strategic development plan and the state's commitment to gradually increase the number of programmes offered and students in universities. The preparation and proceeding of the budget is carried out in a combination of input-based and negotiation-based funding methodology agreed between the university, the MOEC and the Ministry of Finance and is then submitted to the Council of Ministers and the House of Representatives. In an effort to improve the quality and to modernize public

universities funding system, the MOEC intends to prepare and adopt a performance-based funding system. The whole effort is to turn funding into a results-oriented, rather than resources-oriented procedure. There is a shift towards more diversification of funding and soliciting of more private funding, especially for research and industrial application. Moreover, the funding must be based on performance indicators in order to clearly measure the relationship between resources invested (inputs) and results obtained, both economic and social (outputs).

Finally, the Examinations Service of the MOEC has a mission to provide reliable and valid examinations aiming at objective and fair assessment of candidates and thus promoting significantly meritocracy in Cypriot society and assure quality. The Examinations Service is constantly reviewing its procedures to further improve the provided testing services, including testing, marking and security of the processes involved, aiming to become an Assessment Centre meeting all international quality standards.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Quality assurance of Higher Education institutions and programmes

The Department of Higher and Tertiary Education (DHTE), after submitting a proposal to the Council of Ministers, has initiated the introduction of legislation for the establishment of the Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in HE, as the competent authority for quality assurance in HE in Cyprus. The Agency will undertake all the responsibilities of the existing evaluation bodies (SEKAP, ECPU, SETE) and will be responsible for the evaluation of public and private HE institutions as well as accreditation matters. The Agency will comply with the European Standards and Guidelines and, therefore, will be eligible for membership in the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). After the approval of the legislation by the Parliament, the DHTE will be responsible to take over all issues concerning the establishment and operation of the Agency.

Activity 2: Financing of public universities

Efforts have been initiated, aiming to change the financing system of public universities to a more modern one, based on performance indicators, with a goal to enhance the effective management of resources, the introduction of a comprehensive system of accountability of public universities, the increase of universities' own funds, through research programmes, contributions, donations, sponsorships etc. and the provision of a framework which regulates other economic activities and actions of each university.

Activity 3: Examinations

The Examinations Service aims to become an Assessment Centre meeting all international quality standards. The most significant areas of assessment in which the Service is currently active are the following: (1) Pancyprian Examinations (high school leaving examinations and entrance examinations for public universities in Cyprus and Greece), (2) examinations for appointment or promotion of applicants in the public sector, semi-governmental organisations, the police force, local authorities etc., (3) examinations for certification of different levels of knowledge of the Greek language, (4) examinations for certification of foreign languages, according to the public service law, (5) examinations for the selection of officer candidates for the cadet school of the army, (6) entrance examinations for the Higher Fine Arts Schools in Greece, the Merchant Shipping Academy of Greece etc., (7) Greek typing and shorthand examinations and (8) examinations for certification of certain professional skills.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 2: ESTABLISH CYPRUS AS AN INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF HE

2. STATE OF PLAY

Internationalization of HE includes the policies and practices undertaken by governments, educational systems and institutions to cope with the global academic environment and to develop an international HE strategy, which is aimed at improving coherence and complementarity between existing international cooperation initiatives at both EU and national level.

The MOEC places great emphasis on the internationalization of HE and promotes collaboration with European and third countries. As all Member State, Cyprus is required to adopt measures designed to consolidate the international dimension of its institutions, to increase their attractiveness and promote their global dimension. Cyprus has taken certain actions in this regard, such as preparing and signing memoranda of understanding, organising international conferences, participating in education fairs, promoting the mobility of students, academics and researchers etc. The internationalization of HE will enhance and develop in general the relations of Cyprus with other European and third countries, within the framework of the planned activities and operations. The internationalization can also affect the economic, political and social strategic intentions of Cyprus and further contribute to the development of a mobility culture among students, academics and researchers. In addition, it will support the development of partnerships between the Cypriot universities with universities in other countries and their participation in inter-university programmes. It will also contribute to the achievement of the strategic goal of making Cyprus an international and regional centre of HE and research and attract students and academic researchers.

As far as the degree mobility is concerned, there are more Cypriots studying abroad (outgoing students) rather than foreigners studying in Cyprus (incoming students). According to the Statistical Service, during the academic year 2011-2012, 19 199 Cypriot students attended foreign universities and 8 540 international students attended institutions of HE in Cyprus. Thus, the main policy of the Republic of Cyprus as regards to HE is to fulfill not only the local needs for HE, but also to establish Cyprus as a regional educational and research centre and as a hub for international scholars and students.

In order to ensure high standards in HE, while implementing the above goal, the MOEC cooperates with other ministries and governmental services regarding the registration and the academic progress of international students. The aim of this procedure is to attract quality students in order to ensure high standards in education and research in the field of HE.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Promotion of Cyprus HE abroad

Towards the above, the MOEC has decided to adopt certain measures to attract international students, such as:

- Participation of HEIs and the MOEC at international and local education exhibitions
- Preparation and implementation of publications for HE in Cyprus
- Continuation of the targeted promotion of Cyprus' HE abroad to attract foreign students
- Establishing programmes in English in public universities
- Scholarships
- Collaboration and participation in the framework of regional cooperation programmes
- Signing agreements with selected countries for the mutual recognition of titles.

Activity 2: Screening of international students

The MOEC is aiming to maintain a high level of international students enrollment and adopts the following measures:

- Examination of international students' registration, transfer and internship applications in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Interior (Migration Department) and the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
- On-spot inspection of international students' attendance
- Keeping and processing statistical records regarding international students in Cyprus.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 3: MAKE HE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

2. STATE OF PLAY

The Bologna Process has paid particular attention to the European dimension of HE and specifically to the social dimension, which presents the most significant challenge to European modernization of HE. The aim is to have more countries which will link their policy on the social dimension to the Bologna Process commitment of raising the participation of under-represented groups to the point where the HE population mirrors the overall societal distribution. The most common national measures to widen participation are greater fairness between students, the provision of targeted financial support and the development of alternative access routes or admission procedures.

The MOEC acknowledges the fact that opportunities to HE should be given to the largest possible proportion of the population and is taking measures to achieve this target. The promotion of inclusive growth and the focus on ensuring equal access in quality HE are presented in the following national policies: widening access to university education, establishing equal access opportunities and providing financial support. As far as the financial support provided by the Government, until recently the following grant schemes were offered to students:

- A specific grant offered by the Ministry of Finance to Cypriot students studying in Cyprus or abroad in accredited programmes of study, on the basis of financial and property criteria.
- Scholarships are offered by the Cyprus State Scholarship Foundation to Cypriot students based on merit and mainly, on socio-economic criteria in order to reach students from lower income backgrounds.
- Targeted financial support through the Government's Student Financial Package is available to eligible students studying in public and private universities and public HEIs, to cover living, books, rental and computer expenses. The eligibility is based on socio-economic criteria. Similarly, a Student Financial Package is offered by the Cyprus State Scholarship Foundation to students studying abroad.

The provision of student grants by three different authorities of the Republic of Cyprus is considered by the International Monetary Fund as problematic. According to the International Monetary Fund, in order to strengthen social protection in Cyprus, all grants/allowances paid by the Grants and Benefits Service of the Ministry of Finance should be placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, except of educational benefits which should to be placed under the supervision of the MOEC.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Grant scheme for students

The DHTE, after a proposal to the Council of Ministers, has initiated legislation so that the Student Financial Package, which was offered by the MOEC and the Cyprus State Scholarship Foundation, is incorporated into the Student Grant offered by the Ministry of Finance. This consolidated Student Grant, which will be offered by the MOEC, will provide grants to students based on financial and property criteria. The aim of the Student Grant is to offer equal educational opportunities for all, by supporting economically disadvantaged students' families. After the approval of the legislation by the Parliament, the DHTE is responsible to take over all issues concerning the development and running of a system for providing the consolidated Student Grant.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 1: ENSURING QUALITY OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

2. STATE OF PLAY

Education has been well appreciated in our country. However, structural malfunctions, various socioeconomic factors as well as the inability of the system to cope with constantly emerging challenges and demands in education processes, or the conclusions of the latest research and trends in education, have led to unpleasant results. Namely, the results of the latest PISA survey (2012) in which our country participated for the first time ranked our education system in the last but one position of all EU countries. More alarming is the percentage of low achievers which according to the survey is about 33% for reading, 42% for mathematics and 38% for science. Cyprus has to take immediate and drastic measures if there is a chance to meet the 2020 benchmark of 15% for low achievers. Measures should be taken both as regards structural aspects, which will facilitate the teaching and learning process, as well as the quality of teaching and the learning environment. Even more important is the need for all stakeholders to reach a consensus about the general aim, which is the promotion of learning for all pupils. As the most important factor in the equation of effective teaching and learning, beyond the pupil himself/herself, is the teacher, the bulk of our measures should aim in the provision of qualified teachers. Then, teachers demonstrate their best when they operate in well organised and stimulating school environments. Thus, our next effort is dedicated to the provision of the necessary equipment and the capacity for District Educational Offices (DEOs) and school units to operate autonomously over time. Autonomy is not an end in itself. Rather, it is the vehicle to apply differentiation at the school unit and the capability of school leaders to identify and tackle priorities for improvement taking into account special characteristics of their schools units. In the same sense, autonomy at the district level is seen as the vehicle to support the differentiated school priorities providing experts, information, knowhow, analysis of performance data for formative assessment. The same aspect of differentiation is applied at the pupil level by acknowledging different abilities, talents or interests and helping each pupil to reach success. This provision is facilitated by the Counseling and Career Education Service. Under the jurisdiction of the Department of SGE 115 lower, upper and evening secondary public schools operate with a total number of 43 913 pupils.

Moreover, the Department is also responsible for the accreditation and the quality of education services provided by private schools and institutes. The share of private secondary education in the system is about 18%. We aim at enhancing the quality monitoring schemes and processes applied for private schools and institutes. The Office of Private Schools and Institutes operates under the Department of SGE and is responsible towards this aim. The Office is not responsible for recruiting teachers for private education, but it is responsible for checking the qualification and ensuring the suitability of teachers for private schools and institutes as well as for approving tuition and other fees

claimed by private schools. In that sense, it is of vital importance that we have updated and efficient Management Information System for keeping records of the teaching staff of private education. We also need to ensure that the qualification of all teachers is regularly checked and recorded by our inspectors. In addition, the Office needs to ensure that the private school teachers are regularly trained and are kept up-to-date with the current trends in education.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Provision of qualified teachers and school leaders

Quality of teaching is essential to the success of our pupils. Research shows that the difference between good and bad teaching can amount to two years of pupil achievement. As neither the Department of Secondary General Education (SGE) nor the school units have the right to recruit the best possible teachers available, our aim is to ensure the continued professional development of teachers. Capable teachers work effectively in well-structured learning environments. Therefore, it is also essential to furnish school leaders with capabilities to inspire and work with others and address complex challenges. Details on the activity:

- Studies and mapping of staff needs regarding teachers, school leaders or supportive services staff, per specialty, school and educational district
- Improvement of timely staffing mechanism of schools and supportive services
- Provide in-service training programmes with the collaboration of the CPI and other stakeholders for school leaders and teachers
- Develop and introduce code of conduct for the personnel of secondary education.
- Promote legislative adjustments to ensure that private schools and institutions provide for suitable training of their teachers, keep suitable demographic and performance attainment data of their pupils and pass on the data to the MOEC.

Activity 2: Provision of educational materials

Educational material is a crucial element in the effort to ensure a high quality education and to provide high standard of teaching and learning. Fully equipped laboratories and classrooms, carefully selected textbooks and educational software are necessary to provide the appropriate environment in school areas in order to achieve the goal of high quality of education. Details on the activity:

- Ensure smooth functioning of all laboratories and special teaching rooms by providing all the necessary educational equipment, machinery, instruments, furniture and fittings and consumables

- Provide all the necessary books for foreign languages and literature to all pupils
- Provide educational software to enhance teaching and learning processes.

Activity 3: Pupil assessment/school inspection

Pupils are assessed regularly following the educational law as well as the teacher regulations and circulars. However, most of the pupil assessment taking place is summative, unable to inform pupils and their parents on qualitative pupils' progress aspects. We aim at promoting formative assessment or as is termed "assessment for learning". School and subject inspectors have the duty to provide assessment of the quality of education taking place in schools and make sure that pupils are achieving as much as they can. Furthermore, they are obliged to act as teacher counselors promoting best practices in teaching. They also act as carriers of educational policies and reforms. Even though inspectors are required by the law for providing teacher assessment for promotion purposes, their role in the quality assurance of the education system is even more crucial. Thus, we aim at enhancing inspection mechanisms and evaluation protocols. Details on the activity:

- Provide adequate number of qualified school and subject inspectors to ensure quality in teaching process, and learning environments both among public and private schools and institutions.
- Continue and enhance regular school unit assessments based on structured criteria
- Promote contemporary evaluation forms (assessment for learning) and emphasize on the need of formative assessment of pupils.
- Provision of sufficient number of specialized staff for monitoring educational programs, fees and increments claimed by private schools and institutions.
- The introduction of a bespoke Management Information System to meet the needs for the Office of Private Education

Activity 4: Promote peripheral and school autonomy

Secondary Education schools are entirely depended on central decision making centers. Similar is the situation for District Education Offices. Autonomy, even partial one, will empower school and peripheral leaders to take decisions to address the learning needs for their learning communities with an unrelenting focus on improvement. Details on the activity:

- Provide for adequate grants to School Boards to ensure the smooth functioning of school units according to their specific needs
- Develop the capacity for District Education Offices and school units to operate autonomously over time.

Activity 5: Provision of counselling and career education services

The Counseling and Career Education Service through the National Action Plan for Youth Employment (2015-2017) and in cooperation with the Department of Labour will undertake Outcome 1.4 which refers to the improvement of the career education system and the provision of pupils with reliable labour market information and advice on career choices. Details on the activity:

- Re-training of school counselors and provide for additional career counselling services to reinforce school district career counseling offices.
- The diversification of the vocational guidance services of the MOEC to better support the vocational choices of pupils, in close cooperation with the Secondary Vocational Education and Training stream and Public Employment Service
- Using an interdisciplinary approach for career guidance in secondary education and strengthening the career guidance taught in gymnasiums using the new revised publications of the Counseling and Career Education Service
- Continuation of services offered by career counselors (in collaboration with education psychologists) to prevent poor pupil performance, drop-out and early school leaders.
- Widening the provision of school mediation in schools.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 2: PROMOTING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALL

2. STATE OF PLAY

The highest performing education systems are those that combine equity with quality (OECD, 2012). They provide all children opportunities for a good quality education. School failure penalises a child for life. The pupil who leaves school without completing upper secondary education or without the relevant skills has fewer life prospects. Educational failure also imposes high costs on society. Poorly educated people limit economies' capacity to produce, grow and innovate. School failure damages social cohesion and mobility and imposes additional costs on public budgets to deal with the consequences as higher spending on public health and social support and greater criminality, among others. For all these reasons, improving equity in education and reducing school failure is considered of high priority for the educational system. However, despite measures already taken towards the goal of equity, the percentage of low achievers as well as the small number of resilient pupils, as were indicated for our country at the latest PISA survey, denotes a challenge for us. What seems to have been neglected are remedial education measures for pupils who fall behind. That is, we were giving support only to pupils with special needs and do not provide for pupils who, for various reasons, they were just left behind. When at eras of economic prosperity, it was more feasible for these pupils to get support by their parents own means. Given the recession our country's economy this approach is infeasible for many people. Therefore, actions should be taken towards this direction without ignoring or neglecting pupils with special needs.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Provision of transportation and specialized equipment

Pupils with special needs have the right to education as every other pupil. According to the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Law 1999 [113(I)/1999], the state should provide for equal education and counseling opportunities so as to enable them develop their abilities to the maximum level. Implementing the Law, the Department of SGE provides all the necessary equipment and facilities for pupils with special needs. The provision of services is extended to cover transportation for pupils with special needs who are not able to use public transportation means. Details on the activity:

- Provide school units, where special training and education is given, with all the necessary specialized educational means and equipment, general or personal, to satisfy pupils with special needs

- Provide all the necessary facilities to allow the unhindered movement, activity, exercise, recreation and generally the satisfaction of personal needs of every pupil, within the means of special training and education
- Provide free transportation to all pupils with special needs either by purchasing services from the private sector or subsidizing their parents to transfer them from home to school and back
- Provide all the necessary transportation means in order for pupils with motion difficulties to participate in any out of school activities, such as attending seminars, excursions etc.

Activity 2: Provision of remedial teaching and learning

The Department of SGE applies remedial intervention programmes for pupils with special needs. The philosophy is to ensure that the majority of pupils with special educational needs are educated within the mainstream classroom at their local school where special tutoring is provided in special equipped rooms for a specified period of the day. Special education is also provided in special classes within mainstream schools. Special classes provide more intensive special education to a small number of pupils (up to eight) in a class whilst maintaining contact and integration with a specific reference class of the school. When children with special needs, due to health or other problems, cannot attend school for a long period of time, education may be provided to them in places other than the public school (e.g. home teaching). As for pupils who simply fall behind, there is not clear provision for remedial teaching except for pupils at A' Lyceum. Actions should be taken towards providing remedial teaching for any pupils in need and enhance the existing programmes. Details on the activity:

- Continuation of existing remedial teaching and learning programmes ("Literacy", "Support", "Residential Education", "Special Educational Units", "Remedial teaching for pupils at A' Lyceum")
- Evaluation of the ongoing programmes by the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation
- Promotion of in-service training for teachers working for special education programmes
- Preparation of a registry of secondary school teachers specialized in special education teaching
- Introduction of pilot remedial programmes for parallel and after school teaching (extent the paradigm already in action at special schools for after school teaching)
- Extension of Priority Education Zones

Activity 3: Provision of special schools and extracurricular activities

The Department of SGE provides educational opportunities for gifted and talented pupils. Namely it operates Music and Sport schools as well as subsidizes non-governmental educational organisations which promote gifted pupils preparing them to represent our country in regional and international competitions and olympiads. Furthermore, the Department grants the operation of extracurricular programmes which aim at the enrichment of educational opportunities and the enhancement of learning engagement when pupils are out of classrooms. Details on the activity:

- Ensure smooth functioning and development of Music and Sport schools
- Subsidized the participation of lower and upper secondary education pupils to international, European or regional competitions
- Cover the expenses for the participation of schools to certain international, European, regional or local programmes, projects and activities.

Activity 4: Support to minority groups and non-native speakers

Beginning with the accession of Cyprus to the EU the number of foreign and non-native speakers has steadily increased (the figure is about 12%). Starting from 2008-2009 the Department of SGE is running programmes for intensive teaching of the Greek language for non-native pupils. The programmes also aim at the integration of foreign pupils in mainstream education. More than 90 schools out 115 are participating in these programmes. The Department of SGE wants the continued evaluation and restructuring of these programmes so as to increase their effectiveness. Also, the Department of SGE supports in various ways pupils from the minority groups (Armenians, Latins and Maronites) as well as minority schools. Details on the activity:

- The provision of subsidies for the operation of Nareg Armenian Secondary School
- The provision of subsidies for operation of the annual summer camp in the occupied village of Kormakitis for Maronite pupils in order to learn the Cypriot Maronite Arabic language
- The provision of subsidies to minority pupils to cover part of their fees for attending private schools
- Continuation of programmes devoted to the integration of secondary school foreign pupils into mainstream education and learning the Greek language by non-native speakers
- Promote the evaluation and restructuring of the existing integration programmes for foreigners and non-native speakers.

Activity 5: Provision of adult and second chance education

Provision for second chance and lifelong learning education is already taking place at the secondary education level. Namely, five evening secondary schools are operating (one in each free city of Cyprus and one in Frenaros) as well as 41 State Institutes of Further Education which are devoted for further and lifelong learning. Also, the last three years the Department of SGE participates in the New Modern Apprenticeship which aims at giving second chance education for pupils who dropped out. As the first two programmes are concerned, they operate for more than fifty years and their contribution is well acknowledged by the community. However, actions should be taken for improving the curricula for evening schools in order to bring them in alignment with those of the morning schools. Regarding the State Institutes for Further Education, the Department of SGE should provide for monitoring the quality of education provided by formulating quality assurance frameworks. Details on the activity:

- Alignment of curricula of evening schools with those of the morning schools
- Support and expand the operation of New Modern Apprenticeship
- Provision of quality assurance for State Institutes of Further Education.

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (STVE)

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 1: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND UPGRADING/IMPROVEMENT OF STVE

2. STATE OF PLAY

The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE) offers a wide range of technical and vocational education, initial training and lifelong training programmes to eligible gymnasium leavers and adults. The STVE programmes are offered at Technical Schools free of charge, in two directions, the theoretical and the practical direction. The duration of studies is three years for each direction. The first year is common for each direction and field of study, and pupils select a specialization offered in their chosen field of study in the second and third year of their studies. The theoretical direction and the first and second years of the practical direction are completely school-based and combine general education subjects with technological and workshop subjects. The third year of studies in the practical direction combines a school-based environment with a real workplace, as final-year pupils are placed in industry for one day per week, where they follow a practical training programme.

The STVE programmes are offered at twelve public Technical Schools.

The STVE programmes, through the provision of a balanced programme of general education, technological specialization and workshop practice, aim at the preparation of STVE graduates to:

- Be employed in industry with favourable terms
- Pursue further studies in institutions of Tertiary Education in Cyprus or abroad, provided that they meet the entry requirements.

In order to achieve the objectives mentioned above, the Department of STVE needs to make provision for qualified teachers and ensure adequate and correct teaching aids (equipment and supplies), while it maintains a proper system for pupils' assessment and school inspection. Publicity and promotion of STVE is also an important activity that should be taken into account.

Problems and weaknesses:

- Absence of mechanisms for the improvement of the relevance of STVE programmes with labour market needs
- Absence of a National Qualifications System and of a system of recognized and validated professions
- Absence of a national approach to quality assurance in STVE
- Prejudice against Technical and Vocational Education

- Extremely low participation rates of girls
- Compulsory education does not provide pupils with high quality technological education
- Restricted availability of some fields of study in certain districts
- Concentration of Technical Schools in urban areas
- Absence of an efficient national network of public transportation
- Absence of a monitoring mechanism regarding the employability of STVE graduates.

Strengths and prospects:

- Use of state-of-the-art technical equipment, teaching material and infrastructure
- The STVE Leaving Certificate is equivalent to that awarded by General Education Schools (Lycea)
- Acquisition of specific vocational competences and broader key competences
- Smooth transition of STVE graduates from education and training to the labour market
- Extensive use of ICT
- Gradual recognition of the value of STVE in the Cypriot society and the role it can play towards economic growth
- STVE can contribute to economic growth through the suitable training of individuals for jobs for which there is demand in the labour market
- Development of an interrelationship between STVE and industry.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Provision for specialized and trained teachers

The improvement of the quality and competences of teachers through the organisation of specialized education and training programmes, training of teachers in industry and participation of teachers in various European programmes is a top priority for increasing the quality and effectiveness of education. Teachers' professional development is a factor which determines the quality of their work and a laborious process during which teachers constantly modify their practice, according to their experiences and their participation in formal and non-formal types of training, either within the system of STVE, or through the Pedagogical Institute programmes and other European programmes. The various aspects of professional development are directly related to lifelong training, the necessity of which is further enhanced due to the constant changes that are taking place in education and in society in general. These changes create new needs regarding the qualifications of teachers and their role, which must be addressed.

Activity 2: Provision for teaching materials (equipment and supplies)

The main target is the enrichment of the workshop equipment, teaching books, technology rooms, teaching aids and supplies which will enhance the STVE pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences. The timely and selective purchase of supplies for the workshops of Technical Schools is essential for the correct implementation of the curricula. Each Technical School has its own funds for purchasing supplies, which are distinguished into two broad categories: (a) supplies for training in the Hotel and Catering Industry and (b) supplies for the workshops of all the other fields of study offered by STVE. Even though over the last few years the funds regarding the purchase of educational equipment have decreased drastically, an effort is being made towards a more targeted allocation of funds, taking into account needs priorities, as well as the proper maintenance and repair of available equipment. This is achieved through the implementation of a programme of preventive maintenance.

Activity 3: Assessment of pupils/school inspection

Assessment of the operation of school units, curricula, teachers and pupils will be developed. This is the main mission of the STVE inspectors, whose role is to guide, offer advice and encourage teachers. They provide the teaching staff with the assistance they need for their work and, in accordance with the Inspection and Assessment Regulations, they assess the work of the school unit and of the teaching staff of the field of study they are responsible for.

Activity 4: Publicity and promotion of the STVE

One of the priorities of the STVE is to effectively inform the public and potential STVE pupils about the various fields and specializations offered by the STVE, as well as about the prospects of the STVE and the role it can play in the society of Cyprus. Towards this direction and through a spectrum of selected communication activities and means, various activities are implemented, having as a central reference point the “right of citizens to know”. Through information and publicity campaigns, the work of the STVE is promoted and assessed, good practices are exploited and the number of pupils who wish to enroll in STVE, either in order to access the labour market directly or to pursue further studies in a technical/vocational subject, is increased. In order to achieve the objectives mentioned above, information and publicity campaigns, targeting particularly pupils of the first cycle of secondary education (Gymnasium) and their parents/guardians, through various activities and the provision of high quality information and career counselling regarding the career prospects of the STVE fields of study and specializations, are organised.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 2: LIFELONG LEARNING AND SECOND CHANCE SCHOOLS

2. STATE OF PLAY

The Department of STVE also offers formal education programmes through the two **Evening Technical Schools** operating in Nicosia and Limassol as second chance schools, as well as other lifelong learning programmes, in order to further promote participation in STVE and support the integration of school dropouts in the workplace and in society in general. The programmes offered at the Evening Technical Schools are equivalent to the secondary technical and vocational education programmes that are offered in mainstream Technical Schools, leading to the acquisition of a leaving certificate, which is equivalent to that awarded by mainstream Technical Schools and Lycea. This means that the leaving certificate awarded by the Evening Technical Schools entitles graduates either to pursue further studies at Institutions of Tertiary Education in Cyprus, Greece or abroad, provided that they meet the entry requirements or enter directly the labour market as skilled workers. Moreover, in the context of the operation of the Evening Technical Schools, the MOEC, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, offers VET programmes on the premises of the Central Prisons in Nicosia. The objective of this initiative is to offer prisoners a real opportunity to re-integrate into society, through the provision of high quality vocational education and training that will enable them to obtain a qualification at upper secondary level (school leaving certificate), equivalent to that awarded by mainstream Technical Schools and Lycea. The programmes are offered in the form of curriculum modules, giving prisoners the opportunity to select them according to their capabilities, but also according to prison schedule restrictions.

The **Afternoon and Evening Classes of Technical and Vocational Education** aim to provide continuing vocational education and training to adults and to prepare pupils or graduates of Technical Schools for the entrance examinations to Institutions of Higher and Tertiary Education in Cyprus and abroad. Additionally they prepare pupils and adults for various examinations required by governmental and semi-governmental organisations, for purposes of recognition of vocational qualifications or for the issue of a license for a profession.

The **Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training** began their operation in the school year 2012-2013. They operate at existing Technical Schools, as institutions of public education, within the scope of competence and under the supervision of the Department of STVE. The objective of the Post-Secondary Institutes is to offer all types of vocational education and training and provide students with the necessary qualifications by imparting academic and technical knowledge, as well as professional and practical skills. Additionally, to offer students the possibility to develop such skills that

will facilitate them to adapt to the changing needs of industry and the labour market. The programmes offered have been especially designed to be flexible and relevant to labour market needs.

The **New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA)**, which has replaced the Apprenticeship Scheme, aims to provide an alternative pathway for 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. The NMA embraces young people between 14 and 21 years of age at two apprenticeship levels (preparatory and core). It is implemented by the Cyprus Productivity Centre, in cooperation with the MOEC which is responsible for the educational aspect of the operation of the NMA.

Although the two Evening Technical Schools (Second Chance Schools) and the other Lifelong Learning VET Programmes mentioned above use the premises of Technical Schools (morning schools), they are still separate entities and, therefore, they need the proper attention and support from the Department of STVE, such as the effective coverage of their needs in stationery materials, workshop supplies and equipment etc.), in order to fulfil their objectives.

Problems and weaknesses:

- Absence of mechanisms for the improvement of the relevance of Lifelong Learning Programmes with labour market needs
- Absence of a National Qualifications System and of a system of recognized and validated professions
- Absence of a national approach to quality assurance in STVE.

Strengths and prospects:

- Use of state-of-the-art technical equipment, teaching material and infrastructure
- Acquisition of specific vocational competences and broader key competences
- Increased employment prospects of graduates of Lifelong Learning programmes
- The Vocational Education and Training provided in the context of Lifelong Learning programmes can contribute to economic growth, through the suitable training of individuals for jobs for which there is demand in the labour market
- Classification of the programmes of Post-Secondary Institutes of VET at Level 5 of the EQF.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Support of Evening Technical Schools (Second Chance VET Schools)

The enhancement of the quality and competences of teachers and the upgrading of the internal assessment of teachers and students are amongst the priorities of the Department of STVE. The **Evening Technical Schools** use the premises and the workshop equipment of the morning Technical Schools and therefore many bills are common. However, effort is being made to increase specific funds

regarding the purchase of supplies such as (i) stationery material, (ii) consumables for workshops and (iii) food stuff for training in the Hotel and Catering Industry, so that Evening Technical Schools become relatively independent as far as consumables are concerned. The **Evening Technical School of Limassol** is a co-financed project by the Republic of Cyprus and the European Social Fund of the EU. Effort is being made for the full and beneficial use of the resources/funds which are allocated for this purpose. The timely and rational purchase of the necessary supplies and equipment for the correct implementation of the curricula is essential, especially in the light of the grim economic situation of the country.

Activity 2: Support of other Lifelong Learning VET Programmes

The **Afternoon and Evening Classes of Technical and Vocational Education**, the **Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training** and the **New Modern Apprenticeship (NMA)** are programmes which also use the premises and workshop equipment of the morning Technical Schools and therefore many bills are common in this case as well. However, effort is being made to increase specific funds regarding the purchase of supplies such as (i) stationery material, (ii) consumables for workshops and (iii) food stuff for training in the Hotel and Catering Industry, so that these programmes become relatively independent as far as consumables are concerned. The **Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training** are co-financed by the Republic of Cyprus and the European Social Fund of the EU. Effort is being made for the full and beneficial use of the resources/funds which are allocated for this purpose. The timely and rational purchase of the necessary supplies and equipment for the correct implementation of the curricula is essential, especially in the light of the grim economic situation of the country.

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 1: ENSURING QUALITY OF PRIMARY EDUCATION

2. STATE OF PLAY

Primary Education is the initial stage of education and thus the stage which lays the foundations of children's cognitive, emotional and psychomotor development. For this reason, the Department of Primary Education gives emphasis in the continuous improvement and quality upgrading of Primary Education by offering free and accessible education to all pupils and aiming at teachers' continuous in-service training. Attendance in Primary Education is compulsory for all the children that have reached the age of five years and eight months. Furthermore, the Department aims at modernising teaching methods and approaches, designing and implementing modern developmental programmes. Overall, it aims at creating the infrastructure that can facilitate high quality education and towards this end it works for the continuous improvement and upgrading of education through systematic and responsible planning and with the cooperation of all stakeholders. The Curricula and the teaching methodologies adopted in Primary Education emphasize the learning process and focus on strategies which assist pupils in learning how to learn and in developing their critical and creative thinking. Thus the vision of the Department is to provide equal opportunities for quality education to all pupils, so that they are formed into freely and democratically minded persons to progress and achieve their full potential.

For year 2014-2015, 334 primary schools are functioning with a total number of 48 796 pupils enrolled. The number of qualified teachers employed is 4 221. This number covers the needs for Primary Education (4078 in schools, 129 in secondment – including teachers in the Cyprus Educational Mission in the UK and 14 in service concession to other services). Besides the employment of teachers, the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) is also responsible for providing various educational materials to schools. The Department arranges for the purchase of materials on a yearly basis and delivers them through the Store to all primary and pre-primary schools around Cyprus.

Today, school units are granted more pedagogical autonomy than administrative autonomy. However, in both categories there is room for providing a higher degree of autonomy, so that the educational system responds in a more direct and effective way to the needs of pupils. Schools should be given more financial resources for pedagogical and administrative purposes. In addition, the international studies conducted as of today, such as TIMSS, show that Cyprus needs improvement in terms of

learning outcomes, since there is a mismatch between the funds spent on education and the results achieved.

To ensure the provision of quality in Primary Education, the Department is responsible for the following broad areas: (1) provision of qualified teachers; (2) provision of educational materials to schools; (3) monitor pupil assessment and school inspection; (4) provision of subsidies/grants to School Boards for schools' smooth functioning and (5) implementation of various support programmes in schools for different groups of pupils.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Provision of qualified teachers

Teachers' schemes of service require among others, a Bachelor's Degree from Universities' Pedagogical Departments either in Cyprus or Greece, or an equivalent and corresponding degree. In addition, the MOEC is aiming at high quality education through seminars and continuous in-service training of teachers. New ideas in teaching methods, psychological and educational matters are regularly presented, mostly in cooperation with the Pedagogical Institute and other stakeholders. The training can lead to specialization of teachers in specific subjects of the curricula.

Activity 2: Provision of educational materials

Educational materials are provided through bidding procedures based on the laws and regulations of the Government of Cyprus and also the EU. The materials provided to schools by the Department of Primary Education are pupils' notebooks, stationery and printing materials, teaching materials for various school subjects and books for school libraries. The amounts used to cover the cost of the activity come from the following funds:

1. Pupils' notebooks – under the Curriculum Development Unit funds
2. Stationery and printing, teaching materials for various subjects and transportation funds – under the Administration funds
3. Materials for the school subject of design and technology and books for school libraries – under the Department of Primary Education funds.

Activity 3: Pupil assessment/school inspection

Systematic pupil assessment is focused on the improvement of current and development of new practices of formative assessment, the development of assessment tests based on attainment indicators and establishment of written assessment and the provision of information to parents at

regular intervals. Moreover, school inspection emphasizes systematic teacher assessment, with the improvement of the current and development of new practices of teachers' formative assessment, the development of assessment instruments based on indicators of teacher effectiveness and, the establishment of a well-defined structured process of teacher observation during inspectors' visits in classrooms (pre-observation, during observation and post-observation phases). Pupil assessment should become systematic, with the development of assessment tests based on attainment indicators and the establishment of written assessment.

Activity 4:Subsidies/Grants to School Boards

The School Boards, taking into account the needs of each school unit and the recommendations of the Advisory Committee of each school, submit an annual budget to the MOEC. The specific budget covers expenses for: (i) the maintenance, improvement, expansion of school buildings; (ii) schools' running expenses for lighting, heating, water, telephones etc.; (iii) wages for school staff (cleaners, clerks); (iv) educational materials; (v) furniture and ICT equipment and (vi) head teachers' fund. Moreover, in large School Boards additional amounts are allocated for the salaries of the boards' staff (secretaries, accounting staff, cleaners etc.) as well as for their running expenses or rents for their buildings. School autonomy should be further reinforced through the establishment of networks of collaboration between schools and teachers and delegation of authority for decision making at the school level for everyday operational issues. The amounts used to cover the cost of the activity are under the Administration and the Department of Education funds.

Activity 5: Support programmes

Today primary school classes consist of children with mixed abilities, that is why all the necessary preconditions should be created to ensure that all pupils enjoy equal learning and success opportunities, in order to develop, to the highest possible extent, their abilities, inclinations, talents and special interests. The need to provide differentiated education and special support programmes to satisfy particular groups of pupils is imperative. These programmes include among others: sporting events, incentives for special conditions, environmental education programmes, pupils' welfare, educational and summer camps, all-day schools, Greek language support for repatriated Greek-Cypriot children, language support for non-native speaking pupils, support to the Armenian school, summer schools, transition from pre-primary to primary and from primary to secondary education, Health Education and Drug Education Scheme, combat early school leaving etc. The amounts used to cover the cost of the activity are under the Administration and the Department of Education funds.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 2: PROMOTING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALL

2. STATE OF PLAY

The MOEC ensures that all children have access to basic education of high quality. The education system is being accommodated in order to respond to diverse groups of learners without discriminating on any grounds such as disability, language, ethnicity, religion, economic status, or gender. Regarding children with special needs, the Laws for Education and Training of Children with Special Needs 1999 to 2014 are the legislative framework which regulates all matters regarding their education. The specific laws entitle children to free appropriate public education along with pupils without any form of disability and stipulate that the state is responsible for making education as well as schools accessible to them.

The MOEC's basic goal is to increase access and provide opportunities for all learners to become successful in their learning. In order for inclusion to be implemented effectively, all schools receive substantial support and a range of resources such as specialised teachers, care assistants, special equipment and educational materials. Curriculum is made accessible with the use of assistive technology and other specialized educational materials. When a child cannot go to school because of health problems home schooling is also available.

Schools increase access for individual pupils by making reasonable adjustments. These include lighting and paint schemes to help visually impaired children, lifts and ramps to help physically impaired children, carpeting of classrooms to help hearing impaired pupils. The MOEC also provides schools with special equipment such as wheelchairs, walking aids etc. to be used by disabled children. Transportation is provided to all disabled and other eligible children who do not attend neighbouring schools. Escorts are also provided on school transport if needed. For the school year 2014-2015 the MOEC is employing 593 specialised teachers to serve the needs of 4 088 children with special needs, attending mainstream and special settings. In the same educational settings 471 care takers were employed to attend the needs of 1 268 children with special needs. When children with special needs are not attending their neighbouring schools, they are eligible for free transportation. For this reason 53 children with special needs are transported by taxi, whereas 196 parents whose children have special needs are subsidized to transport their child to a specific school.

Since 1977 an important goal that the MOEC has set is to support the efforts of the UK Greek Cypriot Community to maintain its ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic identity. This is achieved through the

Cyprus Educational Mission in the UK that is responsible for the teaching of the Greek language, history, religion, geography and culture to Greek Cypriot children living in the country. Another significant goal is to support the efforts of the Jerusalem's Patriarchate to spread the Greek language and culture to Arab Christian-Orthodox Schools. In 2014-2015, the MOEC is employing 28 full-time teachers and 126 part-time teachers to teach 5 400 Greek Cypriot pupils (aged 5-18) living in the UK. Moreover, the Ministry has employed one teacher to teach to Arabic speaking pupils in Israel.

In order to promote access to education for all the Department is responsible for the following broad areas: (1) the provision of specialized teachers; (2) the provision of specialized equipment and educational materials; (3) care assistants/subsidies and grants; (4) school transport and (5) the functioning of the Cyprus Educational Mission in the UK and education abroad.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Provision of specialised teachers

The Laws for the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs 1999 to 2014 put into effect the constitutional right of children with special needs to an education. The specific Laws are the legislative framework which regulates the identification of children with special educational needs and the provision for special education. The MOEC in order to serve the needs of the children, employs special educators and therapists of different specialties (teachers for children with learning, intellectual, functional and adjustment difficulties, teachers for the deaf, teachers for the blind, teachers for special physical education, music therapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists, educational psychologist, audiologist). When necessary, the MOEC is buying services from the private sector to serve children with special needs (eg. services from sign language interpreters, support personnel, therapists and others

Activity 2: Provision of specialised equipment and educational materials

According to the above mentioned Laws the state is obliged to provide special equipment and educational materials in mainstream and special school settings in order to make the curriculum as well as school buildings accessible for all. Children attending mainstream schools follow the regular curriculum, which may be adjusted to suit their particular needs using assistive technology (computers, specialized software touch-screen computers, joysticks and tracker balls, easy-to-use keyboards, communication devices, Braille-translation software, interactive whiteboards). Access to school is ensured with the provision of special equipment such as wheelchairs, walking aids, special tables etc.

Activity 3: Care assistants/Subsidies and Grants

- Care assistants in Cyprus are recruited to provide care for pupils with special needs in mainstream and special school settings. Children are provided with care assistants when they have a significant physical or sensory impairment, their behaviour is such that they are a danger to themselves or to other pupils, they have a significant medical need for such assistance, or they need feeding or changing.
- Special education provision is also available in nine special schools (seven special schools for children with severe or multiple and profound difficulties, one school for the blind and one school for the deaf). Special schools have separate budgets for the employment of auxiliary staff (hourly paid), operating and other expenses. These budgets are under the Department of Primary Education funds.
- The MOEC subsidizes parents associations of special schools for implementing activities to enhance schools programmes. It also subsidizes the autistic association.

Activity 4: School transport

The MOEC provides subsidies/individual transport/other arrangements for eligible pupils who do not benefit from the current school transport system of the Ministry of Communications and Works (MCW). Further policy coordination with the MCW is required in order to clarify eligibility criteria, with an aim to submit a revised proposal to the Council of Ministers to facilitate access to primary and pre-primary education for all. During the financial year 2014, approximately 100 primary and pre-primary pupils benefited from this provision. It is noted that the funds are under the Department of Secondary Education.

Children with special needs that have been identified and placed in schools other than their neighbouring ones are eligible for transportation. These children are either transported by the MOEC or by their parents who are subsidized.

Activity 5: Cyprus Educational Mission in the UK and education abroad

Teaching at the Greek Community Schools takes place during weekdays' afternoon and Saturdays' morning and afternoon. In addition to its teaching responsibility, the Cyprus Educational Mission is also responsible for writing the new curriculum, organising educational seminars for teachers, organising cultural events, running a pupils' drama club, running a weekly educational radio programme, participating in Greek Cypriot community events and publishing monthly educational information reports sent to the local community committees. At the same time the MOEC will continue the provision of education abroad.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 3: PROMOTING PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION/ADULT EDUCATION

2. STATE OF PLAY

High quality early childhood education is the foundation for successful lifelong learning, social integration and personal development. According to the most recent data, Cyprus has a low participation rate in (a) pre-primary education and (b) lifelong learning. The attainment of these benchmarks that have been set in the context of “*Education and Training 2020*” (ET 2020) strategy, claims for reinforced efforts to evaluate the current situation and propose measures that could be implemented to develop a more ambitious educational policy.

Concerning the first EU benchmark to raise the percentage of participation in pre-primary education to 95% by 2020, the data for Cyprus indicated that this percentage was 83,8% in 2012. The national target to raise this percentage by 11,2% can be achieved by providing equal opportunities for access to quality pre-primary education. According to research, pre-primary enrolment rates are growing faster among advantaged than disadvantaged pupils. The Ministry has to ensure that it provides equal educational opportunities and access, independent of socio-economic background or other factors which may lead to disadvantage to all children.

For year 2014-2015, 268 kindergartens are functioning with a total number of 12 064 pupils enrolled. The number of qualified teachers employed is 471. As far as communal schools are concerned there are 83 units, with 2 190 pupils and 115 teachers. The schemes of service require that the minimum level of qualification for kindergarten teachers is a bachelors’ degree. Emphasis should be given in enabling kindergarten teachers to work with all children especially the ones with high risk of exclusion from pre-primary schools, coming from low income and ethnic minority families, so that their participation rate is increased.

The MOEC grants a subsidy to cover some of the expenses for communal kindergartens, which operate only in cases where the public kindergarten classes available do not meet the needs of all the children aged 3 to 4 years and 8 months old in the community. The operation of these schools contributes to increasing the percentage of participation in pre-primary schools. In most cases, communal kindergartens are housed within the buildings of the public schools, operate by the parents’ association, the community or the local authorities and are subsidized by the Ministry with an annual grant. Parents undertake the rest of the expenses. Communal kindergartens are non-profit organisations. Due to the grants allowed, tuition fees are lower than the fees in the private sector.

Assessment of children's progress and achievement is an important task to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in order to provide equal opportunities for all children. Keeping written assessment records based on observations of a child's development and learning, is the only method of pupils' assessment. There is a need to develop specific assessment tools that will provide qualitative data regarding the learning outcomes in pre-primary education and inspectors can contribute towards this direction.

Since September 2004, the financial management of kindergartens is allocated locally to the School Boards. Financial aid for infrastructure and running costs (wages for school assistants, educational equipment, building and maintenance expenses and teaching materials) are covered with an annual grant by the MOEC through the School Boards. Although the School Boards and the kindergarten headteachers are in close cooperation, the procedures followed for decision-making are complicated and time consuming. Due to the above, the school units suffer from a lack of autonomy on direct decision making to address pupils' needs.

The percentage of adult participation, that is people between 25-64 years of age, in Lifelong Learning was 7,4% in 2012, hence smaller than 9,0% which is the average for the EU. The EU has set as a benchmark to raise this percentage by 15% by 2020, while the national target is to increase the percentage by 12% by 2020. During the school year 2013-2014, the Adult Education Centres, that contribute with their functioning to lifelong learning, had a total of approximately 26 000 members, 800 trainers and 2 400 groups, offering 100 different topics. The national benchmark can be achieved by promoting the certification of the diplomas for attending the programmes offered and the systematic training of trainers. Emphasis should be given not only on simply attending a course but in continuous learning. Continuous learning can be achieved by designing a non-formal curriculum with clear guidelines, on which trainers' teaching will be designed and based on new programmes relevant to the needs of the society that are targeted to specific ages and members' interests.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Provision of qualified teachers

The education and training of the teaching staff is one of the key factors, which determine the successful integration of children, especially those from groups at risk. Many studies have shown that governments should focus more on training their teaching staff than increasing the number of teachers. Pre-primary teachers need special training to work with children who may come from widely varying backgrounds and have different abilities, with a special focus on minority and disadvantaged groups. The additional skills and competences are usually acquired through specific training during initial education or later through continuous professional development. Pre-primary teachers should

be involved in well-defined programmes that focus in implementing not only the new curriculum but also new teaching methods that will focus on children's cognitive and intellectual needs.

Activity 2: Support to Communal Schools

A provision for the operation of 117 communal classes is included in the annual approved budget of the MOEC. In total, 111 communal classes have been approved and are operating both in cities and in rural areas, during the school 2014-2015. Each year the demand for places in communal classes operating in cities is higher than the supply, compared to the ones that operate in rural areas, where the supply is in several cases greater than the demand. Therefore, the Department of Primary Education needs to operate new communal classes in cities in order to enable the increase of the participation rate in Pre-primary Education and to meet more parents' needs with lower fees. This can be achieved by reducing the subsidies of the existing communal classes so that additional new classes can be created with the savings. At the same time the possibility of reallocating the communal classes in rural areas can be examined, so that the number of places for younger children (3 years to 4 years and 8 months) is increased to meet parental demand.

Activity 3: Pupil assessment /school inspection

Various assessment methods will enable pre-primary teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning and to identify any difficulties children may have, so that practices can be adjusted to better accommodate their needs. Examples that could be mentioned are the development and practice of specific testing tools for assessing school readiness or the acquisition and development of their language and social skills. The information collected could be shared with parents and in some cases with primary school teachers to facilitate the transition from pre-primary to primary education. Pre-primary inspectors' role is to provide recommendations on assessment methods to be used and also provide practical guidelines and assistance to the teaching staff. They should be involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of specialised programmes which will meet the needs of all children.

Activity 4: Subsidies/Grants to School Boards

Since September 2004, the responsibility for the financial management of public kindergartens is assumed by the School Boards. The amount subsidized for the operation of each class of kindergarten was set by the Council of Ministers. In cases where small units operate in remote areas the subsidy provided is usually not enough to cover the schools' running costs. In cases where kindergartens operate with two or more classes the subsidies are adequate enough to meet all the financial needs of the school. Therefore, there is a need to reexamine the allocation of funds on the basis of the real needs of schools. In addition, the MOEC has to simplify the procedures followed with regards to the

financial management of the school in order to give autonomy to the school units to address economic matters that are not anticipated.

Activity 5: Support to Adult Education Centres

The Adult Education Centres provide lifelong learning opportunities, since their main objective is the general development of each adult's personality as well as the social, financial and cultural development of citizens and the society in general. A partnership with the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute aims to train trainers on how to teach adults. They offer a variety of interdisciplinary courses which focus mainly on the teaching of foreign languages, arts and crafts, cultural programmes, health and other issues of general interest, as well as on teaching professional and vocational skills. A database will be created in order for all existing and prospective trainers to participate in this basic form of training. The development of a non-formal curriculum will give participants the opportunity to give tests on a voluntary basis. These examinations will be performed in collaboration with the Examinations Service. The Examinations Service will issue the necessary certificates of success.

CYPRUS PEDAGOGICAL INSTITUTE

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 1: TO ENSURE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN THE CYPRUS EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

2. STATE OF PLAY

The Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) is the Ministry's department responsible for teachers' professional development. It ensures the empowerment of teachers on current developments on educational matters, taking into account the priorities of the MOEC. The main priorities of the CPI for 2015-2016 are the decentralization of its actions (from the centralized training to school-based professional development) and the enhancement of its participation in European projects, networks etc. The CPI is focusing on supporting teachers as autonomous learners and practitioners. It offers in-service training both at a central and decentralized level. The CPI is responsible for the organisation of in-service training to teachers of all levels through several compulsory programmes and optional seminars, following current trends in pedagogy and promoting the use of new technologies in education. Statistics show that a large percentage of teachers in Cyprus (83%) have participated in CPI in-service training activities during the last three years and a big number of CPI activities (increased to a percentage of 70% during the last three years) are offered at the school level. Moreover, the international survey TALIS (2012), revealed that Cypriot teachers state that they are satisfied in general with the in-service training they participate in (more than 60%) and that more than 24% of teachers participated in networking activities associated to their professional development.

The CPI undertakes the writing and publication of teaching books, the design and promotion of the curricula and the production of teaching materials. The CPI upgrades the content and the type of its activities through collaboration with many academics and experts from Cyprus and abroad. It also offers ongoing support based on annual needs analysis of the teachers of all levels. By the provision of curricula, support material and teaching aids to teachers the CPI enhances the support and training it offers.

The Center for Educational Research and Evaluation (CERE) which operates within the CPI, implements international (e.g. PISA, TIMSS, TALIS etc.) and national research studies (e.g. literacy project) focused on pupil achievement, as well as other educational and pedagogical issues. To inform evidence-based policy making, the CERE also undertakes evaluation of innovations, interventions and programmes of

the MOEC. In addition, the CERE enhances the establishment and development of research-oriented schools, teachers and pupils through the development of tools and the provision of ongoing support.

The CPI participates in various competitive European and international projects in order to facilitate the exchange of experience and knowledge among teachers and in-service teacher trainers. The topics these projects cover are in accordance with the priorities of the CPI.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Ensuring and promoting teachers' professional development

The CPI aims at supporting and empowering all teachers. This is achieved through offering centrally based actions of professional learning as well as with other forms of support, like school based programmes, school interventions, development of materials and tools, enhancement of ICT tools to promote educational effectiveness, creative learning, educational innovation and critical reflection. The CPI plans, monitors, manages, organises and evaluates programmes and actions of professional learning according to the MOEC priorities, the needs identified by the Departments of Education, as well as the needs of teachers, taking into account current educational trends. The CPI offers seminars for school leaders, novice teachers and mentors, Greek teachers of the diaspora as well as teachers teaching Greek as a second language. In addition, it offers afternoon optional courses and seminars of teachers, seminars for parents, school-based seminars and action research projects and conferences and seminars.

Activity 2: Curricula/teaching materials/books development and teaching materials

The CPI undertakes the purchase of teaching textbooks published in Greece (including the process of preparing and signing the contracts for the purchase of the books from the publishing organisation in Greece and the process of transporting the books from Greece to Cyprus). The CPI, undertakes the editing/revising/reprinting of textbooks and/or other educational materials, as well as the coordination of the working groups who have the responsibility of revising and promoting the curricula in schools. Moreover, the CPI undertakes the process of editing/illustrating/getting permission for the copyrights for the textbooks/educational materials and their quality control, as well as the preparation of relevant documents concerned with the opening of tenders, the evaluation and awarding of tenders for the printing of the textbooks/educational materials. In addition, the CPI has the responsibility of enriching its library with books, supplying constant information on the new trends in education with recent and up-to-date books and academic journals. The CPI publishes the "Pedagogical Institute Bulletin" which

includes articles on the current trends in education. Finally, the activity includes the purchase of software programmes which meet the needs of the CPI.

Activity 3: Promoting Research and Evaluation

(1) International and national educational research studies: The CERE participated/participates in several international studies, e.g. PIAAC 2012, PISA 2012, PISA 2015, TALIS 2013, TIMSS 2015. At the national level, the CERE runs a longitudinal research study that identifies pupils at the third and sixth grades of primary school, who are "at risk" of remaining "functionally illiterate". Beyond this literacy programme, the CERE develops or validates research instruments that can be used to monitor pupils' learning outcomes (e.g. tests for Greek as a second language). (2) Evaluation of educational innovations and programmes implemented by the MOEC: The CERE runs evaluation studies of educational innovations, interventions and programmes of the MOEC. Such studies usually focus on the effectiveness of educational innovations and involve the collection of data from pupils, teachers, headteachers, families and decision-makers. Policy-making, on the basis of the evaluation outcomes, is then made by educational authorities. (3) Promotion of research culture in Cyprus schools: The CERE promotes the development of research-oriented schools through action research and self-evaluation school projects, targeting topics related to school interests and educational needs.

Activity 4: European and other projects

The CPI runs a number of projects that are being co-funded by European funded competitive programmes. These projects include areas such as ICT in teaching and learning, assessment for learning, transversal skills, internet safety, environmental education and multicultural education. There is an emphasis on funded projects based on the priorities of the Ministry on national and European level.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 2: EDUCATION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2. STATE OF PLAY

The promotion of environmental issues and sustainable development at all levels of education (formal, non-formal and informal education) requires the establishment and institutionalization of an independent Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development Unit. The establishment and operation of the Unit at the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture is a central action of the Strategic Planning for Environmental Education with a focus on Sustainable Development, which was approved for implementation by the Council of Ministers (Ref. Decision no. 65/145) in 2008. Based on the decision, this Unit is the responsible body of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture to implement the relevant issues at all educational levels, both horizontally and in a unified way, as well as to develop and connect them with non-formal and informal education. However the evolution and institutionalization of an EE- ESD Unit is still pending.

The need for the establishment of an EE- ESD Unit is consistent and complies with international standards and policies concerning both the strategy "Europe 2020" to promote policies and mechanisms for sustainable and inclusive development, with the global education action plan for sustainable development "GAP" (Unesco) and with the policies and strategies of the UNECE for "ESD 2015- 2024", whose priority is to establish, strengthen and promote structures and support mechanisms and for implementation of policies related to ESD. In particular, at the national level, the need for establishment of a permanent EE-ESD Unit is necessary because the actions implemented through this are greatly expanded and extend beyond the formal, non-formal and informal education levels, with the creation of specific structures and infrastructure (Network of Environmental Education Centers) and also with the networking and cooperation with all the social partners. Additionally, the need to create the Unit is reinforced by the fact that there is discontinuity among actions between the Education Departments and fragmentation, lack of coordination and inadequate dissemination of information are observed.

The establishment of the EE-ESD Unit will contribute to: a) applying a uniform policy at all levels of education on the issues of environment and sustainable development, b) better organization of the framework of implementation of relevant policies and actions horizontally, but also in connection with non-formal and informal education, c) maximizing the effectiveness of the measures implemented, and ensure their viability and d) better distribution and saving of human resources.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE:

Activity 1: Creation of Permanent Environmental Education- Education Sustainable Development Unit

Creating institutional and legislative framework for the establishment and operation of permanent EE-ESD Unit. It forms part of the restructuring of the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture and is a new structure that will start operating from September 2015. The Unit will be staffed with permanent and seconded personnel. Service plans will be created for the opening of two permanent staff positions for Head of the Unit and for Education Officer. The seconded staff will come from internal reallocation of human resources in the Cyprus Ministry of Education and Culture/ Cyprus Pedagogical Institute, based on specific criteria. Responsibility and authority of the Unit is to formulate and implement policy on the issues of EE/ ESD, based on the updating of the Strategic Planning for EE/ESD and to expand and strengthen its' activities (EEC network, professional development in EE/ESD, Curriculum, production of educational material, linking formal with non-formal and informal education, use of European funds).

Activity 2: Completion of Environmental Education Centres Network and determination of their organizational structure

This is an ongoing activity that began in 2004 and will be completed in 2017. Until now four EE/ ESD Centres have been created (EEC of Pedoula, EEC of the Community of Akrotiri, EEC of Athalassa and EEC of Salamiou). The completion of the Network requires the operation of three more centres, at the Communities of Panayia and of Kilani and at the Cape Greco National Park in the Famagusta District. The infrastructures of the remaining centres will be covered by European and National resources. The operation of the EEC is projected to be the responsibility of the EE- ESD Unit, but each Centre will be staffed by a pedagogical team of seconded personnel, based on specific criteria. Additionally, the institutional framework for the operation of the EE-ESD Centres needs to be completed, since it is pending, as well as the clarification of the role and responsibilities of the pedagogical teams. The costs for operating the EEC Network are based on national resources and the utilization of European funds.

CYPRUS RESEARCH CENTRE

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 1: DEVELOPING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE FIELD OF CYPROLOGY

2. STATE OF PLAY

Following an earlier policy decision not to recruit permanent researchers but to assign research projects to outside scholars so as to (a) reduce public expenditure and (b) develop cooperation with scholars of international standing in promoting Cyprological Studies (Cyprology), the Cyprus Research Centre (CRC) today employs one director, two permanent researchers, 22 outside scholars and a librarian. The CRC has a specialized library and has created four archives (History, Folklore, Oral Tradition and War Veterans) in order to preserve the cultural heritage of Cyprus and provide resources and data for the pursuit of relevant research programmes. The aim is to promote scientific research in the fields of Cyprology (i.e. History, Social Anthropology, Folklore, Linguistics, Philology Letters and Sociology), to publish and disseminate the conclusions in independent publications and scientific journals and to enrich the CRC's archival collections. The CRC's work and publications are directed to the international academic community, students in tertiary education and the interested public.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Carrying out research programmes

Location of specialist scholars and assignment of research programmes, fulfilment of research missions in archives and libraries in Cyprus and overseas, supervision/monitoring of the progress of research programmes, qualitative upgrade and evaluation of CRC's works by external assessors before publication, publication of the research findings, promotion of the CRC's work and publications, sale, exchange and donation of the CRC's publications in Cyprus and overseas, participation of permanent staff in international conferences and lectures, organisation of conferences in Cyprus or overseas, enrichment of the CRC's archival collections and library.

CULTURAL SERVICES

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 1: STIMULATE ARTISTIC CREATION IN CYPRUS

2. STATE OF PLAY

The Cultural Services is the state department exclusively responsible for the constant and continuous support of the contemporary art and culture. In this capacity, it represents the official exponent of the state cultural policy that is accountable for offering the resources necessary for the flourishing of the huge and varied spectrum of activities performed by artists themselves, either as individuals or as groups of artists. The operation of significant cultural centers, foundations, organizations with an annual cultural program together with issues related to the operation and management of a number of cultural venues (such as theatres, cinemas and exhibition halls) also fall within their field of responsibility.

One of the fundamental missions of the Cultural Services is to provide the adequate framework (along with the whole range of the necessary means and incentives) in order to stimulate artistic creation across the whole spectrum of the arts and to support Cypriot artists to further educate themselves. Within the said framework, the role of the Cultural Services is twofold: firstly, to provide the financing tools necessary for stimulating the artistic creation; secondly, to provide all necessary facilities for the presentation of the artistic output resulting from the artistic creation.

With reference to the first objective, the Cultural Services implement various programs of subsidy in order to financially support artistic creation. There are hundreds of individual artists and writers whose creative work is supported by the state, along with approximately 50 significant cultural foundations, artistic centers and organizations. Around 80 minor artistic and cultural groups are also supported by the Cultural Services on an annual basis.

With reference to the second objective the Cultural Services are responsible for the operation and management of various venues which are used by the artists in order to produce and present their work. More precisely, 2 Dance Houses, 4 Cultural Centers (the “Houses of the Letters and the Arts”), an exhibition hall and a theater hall operate with the direct financial support of the Cultural Services. In addition, there are major Festivals organized and institutions supported and fully financed by the Cultural Services, which provide the adequate platform for the artists to present their work to the general public.

According to their mission, the Cultural Services also aim to support Cypriot artists in order to interact with artists and artistic tendencies from other countries and of course, to present their work to the general public.

Nevertheless, it is generally acknowledged that the lack of a long-term strategic plan for culture and the absence of a coherent mechanism for the management of the state subsidies in this domain, have been the main obstacles to the development and promotion of Cypriot contemporary art.

That is why the effort of the Cultural Services is nowadays focused on the planning and implementation of a very specific, target-oriented subsidies program, designed to cater for the specific needs of each artistic domain. This program aspires to provide an up-to-date, smart and transparent framework of support that Cypriot contemporary culture deserves to enjoy.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Provision of resources to the artists

The Cultural Services implement an extended variety of programs and schemes that provide financial support to the artists in order to create and promote their artistic work. These programs include, to begin with, the Program CULTURE which is a subsidy program on an annual basis for projects related to literature, music, dance, visual arts, traditional culture, theatre and cinema. Furthermore, in each artistic sector specialized programs are implemented aiming at the development and support of specific aspects of artistic creation (i.e. Terpsichore Program, the T/C and G/C Translation Program, etc., the Scheme for the Support of Periodical Editions of Cultural Interest, etc.).

Activity 2: Provision of infrastructure to the artists

The Cultural Services are involved – either in their capacity as sponsors or owners – in the operation of a variety of cultural infrastructures (venues). They are all offered to the artistic communities of Cyprus and are used by them in order to present and perform their cultural activities. These venues include the four cultural centres (House of the Letters and the Arts) in each city (Nicosia, Larnaca, Limassol, Paphos), the two Dance Houses in Limassol and Nicosia, the Castelliotissa Hall in Nicosia (a medieval hall converted to a cultural venue) and the Pallas Theatre Hall, also in Nicosia. All these venues can be used by any artist or group in order to present their work. In addition to the venues provided, the Cultural Services also organise and fully sponsor Festivals where Cypriot artists can present their work to the general public.

Activity 3: Organization and support of festivals & institutions

The Cultural Services organize and financially support various important Festivals and events held on an annual basis. More precisely, they organize the “Kypria International Festival”, the “International Festival of Ancient Greek Drama”, the “Cyprus Film Days”, the “Cyprus International Short Film Festival”, the “Images and Views of Alternative Cinema Film Festival”, the “Cyprus Contemporary Dance Platform”, the “Contemporary Dance Festival” and the “Cyprus Jazz and World Music Showcase”.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 2: SAFEGUARDING ACCESS TO CULTURE IN CYPRUS

2. STATE OF PLAY

Artistic creation acquires its specific intrinsic value when it is presented, exposed and involved in a dialogue with the public. According to human rights international law, the cultural rights of the individual – especially those that establish the individual’s right to have free access to its own culture and enjoy its various expressions, without impediments, limitations and constraints – are of pivotal importance.

The Cultural Services, in tune with their objective to stimulate artistic creation, are responsible for creating the necessary institutional and infrastructural conditions that enable the presentation and promotion of the output resulting from the artistic creativity to the general public. Therefore, their second most important mission is to provide both the material and institutional framework that is necessary for the public’s unhindered free access to culture.

The Cultural Services have at their disposal a variety of institutional means that enable them to achieve this objective: part of the artistic and cultural wealth of the country is safeguarded, presented and interpreted in museums, galleries and libraries that fall within their direct or indirect administrative remit. More concrete, the Cultural Services are responsible for the operation of the State Gallery of Contemporary Cypriot Art as well as for the operational and administrative well being of two other specific interest museums – the one dealing with history and the other with naïve art. They are also responsible for the operation of the Cyprus Library, which - apart from being the country’s official documentation center with regards to books and other printed material - also provides for the training of the librarians that are employed in school, municipal and community libraries all over Cyprus.

Furthermore, the Cultural Services also organize and support, on an annual basis, major cultural events and festivals. More specifically, they fully sponsor 7 festivals which cover the domains of theater,

contemporary dance, cinema and music and are organized on an annual basis, as well as one important, interdisciplinary, international festival.

The revolution of the digital era has contributed the most towards the fulfillment of this objective and has essentially widened the perspectives for the access of considerably more people to art and culture. Some of the more recent steps that have been made by the Cultural Services towards this direction resulted in exploiting the new forms of communication that are offered by social media, thus making them useful for facilitating the citizens' access to cultural events.

Parallel to these efforts and resulting from the recently acquired obligation of the Ministry of Education and Culture to perform as the National Aggregator with regards to EUROPEANA, an entire mechanism of digitization has been set up by the Cyprus Library with the aim to protect, preserve and promote cultural related material.

However, there still remains enough terrain for improvement, especially regarding the design of a communicative strategy which will be able to address the cultural needs of specific population groups and finally manage to render cultural events more attractive and more easily accessible to the public.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Operation and support of museums, galleries & libraries

The Cultural Services are exclusively responsible for the operation and the financial support of the Cyprus Library, the Elpinikeios Library, the Costas Argyrou Museum, the National Liberation Struggle 1955-1959 Museum and the State Gallery of Contemporary Cypriot Art. Furthermore, the Cultural Services are the competent authority for the implementation of Law 58(I)/2009 – *Law Providing for the Recognition of Private Museums and of Museums of the Local Government Authorities (Procedures and Requirements)*. The objective of this law is to improve the conditions and operation standards of private museums and museums belonging to local government authorities, to upgrade the quality of services offered to the visitors and to enhance the levels of the professional work they perform.

Activity 2: Support to cultural organizations and foundations

The Cultural Services support financially major cultural key players in Cyprus, such as the Cyprus Symphony Orchestra, the Cyprus State Youth Orchestra, the RIALTO Theatre, the Pafos Aphrodite Festival and SIMAE (Council of Historic Memory of the Struggle 1955-59).

Activity 3: Digitization

The Cyprus Library is responsible for EUROPEANA, the European Digital Library, a project aiming at digitization objects from leading European research libraries and making them accessible to the public. The Cultural Services are also responsible for the design and launch of the Cyprus Cultural Portal, an

online service which will be able to provide any kind of information and documentation on all artistic fields developed in Cyprus.

Activity 4: Publications

With the aim of promoting the works of Cypriot writers, the Cultural Services provide cultural centers, academic institutions, libraries and embassies abroad with a significant number of literary and other publications. In addition, Cultural Services publish the journal “Cyprus Today” which covers a vast spectrum of cultural activities happening in Cyprus and is sent abroad for information purposes.

STATE OF PLAY, OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

1. OBJECTIVE 3: PROMOTION OF CYPRUS CULTURE ABROAD

2. STATE OF PLAY

During the last decades, Cypriot contemporary art is experiencing a considerable development in all artistic fields. This is evidenced not only by the increase in the number of artists, writers and artistic groups who are active in their respective artistic fields, but it is also documented by the quality of the activities and the distinctions and awards earned by Cypriot artists abroad. Their presence in international platforms, festivals and prestigious theatres and art venues reflects this new reality.

Cyprus geographical position has always been an advantage concerning the assimilation of various cultural influences throughout the centuries. At the same time, the relative remoteness of the island's location has also been perceived as a disadvantage. Efforts to make the contemporary Cypriot art and culture known abroad have always been difficult, given that Cyprus is far away from important international art centers where the fruitful blending of the innovative, the traditional and the experimental is taking place.

Significant steps forward have been made in particular after Cyprus became an EU member-state. The artistic community was given opportunities to participate in EU programs such as "Creative Europe" (former CULTURE) and "Europe for Citizens", a fact that has contributed the most to the enhancement of the artists' mobility and the development of intercultural dialogue.

However, there is a general and constant demand by the Cypriot artists for increasing the opportunities that enable them to both have access and participate in exchange programs, residencies and activities organized / arranged by established artistic institutions abroad, where they can present their work as well as get in contact with foreign tendencies, techniques and theories of contemporary art.

There is a common consent that Cyprus should have made more use of all aspects of its contemporary culture as a tool for improving its bilateral relations with neighbor countries, in order to enhance mutual understanding and to further develop and establish the intercultural dialogue, thus upgrading and improving the image of the country on an international level.

3. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO OBJECTIVE

Activity 1: Participation in international events and cultural activities abroad

The Cultural Services encourage the participation of Cypriot writers, artists and artistic groups in international festivals, platforms and art exhibitions abroad. They support the mobility of artists by implementing subsidy programs which provide financial grants to cover the participation expenses. Furthermore, the Cultural Services are responsible for choosing the artist(s) or artistic group(s) who represent(s) the country in major international arts events, such as the Venice Biennale and the Biennial of Young Artists from Europe and the Mediterranean.

Activity 2: Operation of Cypriot cultural centres abroad

The Cultural Services are responsible for the operation of three cultural centres/offices of Cyprus abroad, namely the House of Cyprus in Athens, the Office of the Cultural Attaché at the Cyprus High Commission in London and the Office of the Cultural Attaché of the Cyprus Embassy in Berlin. The Cultural Services financially support the variety of activities and events organized by these centres/offices, which normally include hosting art exhibitions, music concerts, dance performances, organizing lectures and seminars all by Cypriot artists and artistic groups. Furthermore, these centres/offices seek for collaborations and networking with cultural organizations and foundations in the hosting countries in order to encourage the participation of Cypriot artists and groups in their activities.

Activity 3: Participation in EU programs, cultural exchanges

The Cultural Services guarantee that substantial financial support will be granted to any artistic group or cultural organization that succeeds in participating as a leader or a partner in any project approved by the EU. The financial support can be up to 65% of the amount the artistic group will receive from EU funds. Moreover, within the context of bilateral cultural agreements signed between Cyprus and third countries that provide for the implementation of cultural exchange programs, the Cultural Services support activities that promote cultural exchanges, contributing by this way to the strengthening and reinforcement of intercultural dialogue.