

# Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy

# 2021-2027



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Republic of Cyprus



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
SPORT AND YOUTH

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# Executive Summary

## Overview

The Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (CyLLLS) 2021-2027 addresses the national political priority of developing a framework for lifelong learning, setting the strategic objectives and targets for the abovementioned period. The development of the strategy was funded by the European Union via the Technical Support Instrument, managed by the European Commission Directorate General for Structural Reform Support. The CyLLLS 2021-2027 is coordinated by the European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Office of MESY. The National and Technical Committees for lifelong learning are responsible for the development, supervision, monitoring, and updating of the strategy.

Extensive research preceded the development of the strategy. Desk research included studying numerous national and European policies relevant to lifelong learning to formulate the background conditions and future envisions. Critical analysis of the literature, research, and online study visits in countries such as Estonia, Austria, and Slovenia examining good practices and examples, provided a good overview of the factors and actions that make lifelong learning systems effective. As part of the field research, ongoing consultations, interviews and discussions with policymakers, key stakeholders, social partners, and experts were conducted to identify needs and gaps, as well as generate interest and develop future synergies among them.

The European Commission emphasizes that education and training are essential for building knowledge-based economies and fostering individual and social growth, economic and sustainable development, as well as social cohesion and inclusion. At a national level, the MESY recognises that a lifelong learning culture should be cultivated from the early stages of education. It is also appreciated that activities related to the lifelong learning system are within a remit of several public authorities and bodies. The CyLLLS 2021-2027 aims to align its vision with other national authorities' strategic measures and actions, as communicated through their objectives and operating frameworks.

Prior contextual analysis revealed several challenges. First, the lack of an institutional framework for lifelong learning in Cyprus and the absence of a dedicated authority to supervise the relevant activities had been limiting the opportunities for coherent advancement. Furthermore, there is no systematic mechanism to monitor, align and evaluate the impact of various national actions in lifelong learning, which could ensure quality and assess system performance. Similarly, the adult education sector appears to be hardly defined and fragmented with minimum supervision mechanisms, because there is neither legislative nor policy framework neither coherent quality assurance mechanisms to clarify its operations and standards. Learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal education cannot be validated and recognised, as no official process has been set up yet. The lifelong learning culture should be developed from the first years of schooling. Therefore, educators of all levels are required to infuse the spirit of 'learning throughout life' through their practice. The identification of these needs and gaps, along with the desired future results as outlined from the stakeholders, led to the vision and strategic priorities of the current strategy. Apart from the above information and data derived from the contextual analysis, it worth noting that the COVID-19 pandemic has inevitably affected the labour market due to the reduced economic activity during the last years, with negative consequences on the employment of youth.

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## Vision and Strategic Horizontal Pillars

The Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021-2027 aspires to provide the long-term strategic framework towards the development of a knowledge-based society, where all citizens are provided with learning opportunities, to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will facilitate their personal and social growth, professional advancement, social inclusion, resilience, and well-being.

Lifelong learning is a multifaceted system, influenced by diverse forces. When considering these factors as practical issues, they might fall under the responsibility of various authorities. However, it is crucial to consider their cumulative impact and contribution to the lifelong learning system. In this respect, the following concepts are treated as **strategic horizontal pillars** because of their significant horizontal influence on the strategic measures of the CyLLLS 2021-2027:

- **Digital transformation:** The digital transition is imperative at all levels for developed countries to strengthen their economies, meet global challenges, maximize their potential, and achieve their goals. Digital skills are considered essential for individuals to take advantage of learning opportunities, compete in the labour market, and participate in social life.
- **Green transition and sustainability:** The green transition implies fundamental adjustments in all sectors, aiming for a sustainable future and a positive impact on our quality of living. This new approach requires certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that individuals can actively support their community for a successful transition to an ecologically viable and sustainable development.
- **Inclusion and equality:** Lifelong learning opportunities should be accessible and available to all citizens so they can develop their skills, participate in society, and succeed in life. Equal treatment and opportunities for lifelong learning are to be provided regardless of social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, and sexual orientation.
- **Validation of non-formal and informal learning:** Recognition, validation and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning is a key feature of a successful and effective lifelong learning policy, as it enhances the visibility and transferability of skills acquired from education and training programmes or work experience.
- **Health and wellbeing:** Continuous personal and professional development allows citizens to be flexible and adaptable to their rapidly changing context, building resilience to challenges and crises. More importantly, lifelong learning also opens prospects for socialization and social participation. The socio-emotional outcomes of learning are important factors for an increased sense of health and well-being for individuals.
- **Lifelong learning culture:** Participation in lifelong learning programmes entails positive dispositions towards learning. Teachers and parents have a key role in promoting lifelong learning values to children. Similarly, public efforts can contribute to forming a lifelong learning culture by mitigating potential obstacles for learners and providing meaningful incentives to participate in education and training.

## Strategic Priorities and Objectives

Towards the accomplishment of the CyLLLS vision, four strategic priorities were set as key objectives to achieve until 2027. These objectives are necessary for providing the long-term strategic framework of lifelong learning towards the development of a knowledge-based and inclusive society and guiding future actions:

1. **Establish the governance, monitoring, and evaluation framework** that entails policy arrangements, action plans with clear stakeholder roles, and sound financial management. Key performance indicators and criteria are also required to ensure quality assurance and facilitate ongoing continuous improvements.
2. **Decrease youth unemployment and upskill/reskill youth and the workforce** through the provision of learning opportunities reflecting labour market needs and taking into consideration the digital and green transitions, with emphasis on people at risk and upskilling/reskilling the national workforce.
3. **Increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning** by improving the quality of the adult education sector, providing incentives to individuals and enterprises, eliminating barriers, and enhancing outreach and communication.
4. **Enhance the professional practice of adult educators and trainers** and support educators of all education levels to develop lifelong learning skills.

To support and monitor the achievement of the strategic priorities and objectives, certain Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were set. These indicators provide the required benchmark for measuring the accomplishment of the objectives set, including the timeframe of attainment and the requested target for 2027. Last, the current strategy will be accompanied with a draft Action Plan, which will support the National and Technical Committees to fulfil their mission. The Action Plan, which will be presented as a separate document, was developed in consultation with all key stakeholders and social partners. The plan includes indicative actions aligned with the above strategic measures and it can be used as a mapping instrument to set the timeline of activities and bring together undertakings from other authorities towards a common work line within the national lifelong learning system. The National and Technical Committees, which are responsible for implementing and monitoring the strategy, may revise and adjust the Action Plan and KPIs, as needed during the execution of this strategy. This strategy, including its priorities and draft action plan, should be seen as a live document considering the dynamic character of the external environment. In this process, the yearly monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will provide insights and recommendations for amendments, always in consultation with key stakeholders.

# Introduction

## Overview

New working and lifestyle conditions, technological advancements, the digital transition, and the green transition to environmentally sustainable economies, call for changes in education and training. For individuals, communities, and societies, learning for life is vital for achieving sustainable growth and quality of life. Apart from the development of skills and the acquisition of qualifications for personal and professional reasons, lifelong learning involves the cultivation of social attitudes and values. Collective society improvements require individuals that hold democratic values, respect diversity, and lead an active citizenship. The Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (CyLLLS) 2021-2027 provides the framework for a supporting and inclusive lifelong learning system, where all individuals are motivated to participate in education and training.

Lifelong learning is a process that starts at birth and continues throughout a person's life. It covers the full range of the formal education system, learning that takes place during in-service education and training, re-skilling and up-skilling, non-formal and informal learning, face-to-face or at a distance. It also includes opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills at the workplace or during activities for personal development and self-improvement.

The formal education system, from pre-primary to tertiary education, plays a key role in developing the lifelong learning skills and competences of learners. Life skills are becoming paramount in preparing people to adapt, live, and work in a rapidly changing world. People need to be prepared for an unknown future, with jobs not yet defined, technologies not yet invented and social problems or pandemics not yet encountered, making them more resilient and flexible towards uncertainty. Lifelong learning can equip individuals with the skills, attitudes, competences, and values to adapt to upcoming changes and shape their future.

The CyLLLS 2021-2027 is expected to drive significant developments in the field of education and training. Its successful implementation will help individuals to achieve their educational, professional, and personal goals during all stages in their lives. The strategy is aligned with the contemporary developments as outlined in the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth (MESY) Strategic Plan 2021-2023, as well as other Ministries' and national agencies' strategic plans and priorities. The strategy takes into consideration the needs of all learners including those of people at risk such as early school leavers, migrant students, and learners with special educational needs. In addition, the strategy takes into consideration results from international achievement surveys, adult participation in education and training rates, the level of digital skills, and the needs of low-skilled adults. It is important to highlight that the CyLLLS 2021-2027 does not substitute the strategic plan of the MESY or other national Ministries and Agencies. In the contrary, it creates the necessary synergies to assist in their implementation. Therefore, through the CyLLLS Action Plan which will be formulated by the Technical Committee and validated by the National Committee of lifelong learning, the strategic objectives will act complementarily with the strategies of the other ministries and national agencies.

Existing policies, actions and programmes of national bodies that fall within the area of Education and Training, inevitably create synergies through handshakes and handovers aligned with the strategic priorities of the CyLLLS 2021-2027. Indicative examples are the "Development of a National Graduate Tracking Mechanism, and Design and Implementation of an Employers' Skills Survey" project implemented by the Department of Higher Education (DHE) of the MESY, and the recent developments initiated by the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training, and the focus on the development of 21st century skills. These initiatives can contribute to the realisation of the CyLLLS 2021-2027 priorities, such as the reduction of unemployment, especially among young people, or the provision of information about the labour market needs, graduates' pathways, and skills mismatches. Continuous and systematic forecasting of labour market trends and anticipation of the future context can also contribute to the adaptability of human capital and flexibility of the labour market. In this context, the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) systematically monitors developments in the labour market, providing forecasts and estimates of employment and training needs.



### Lifelong Learning spectrum

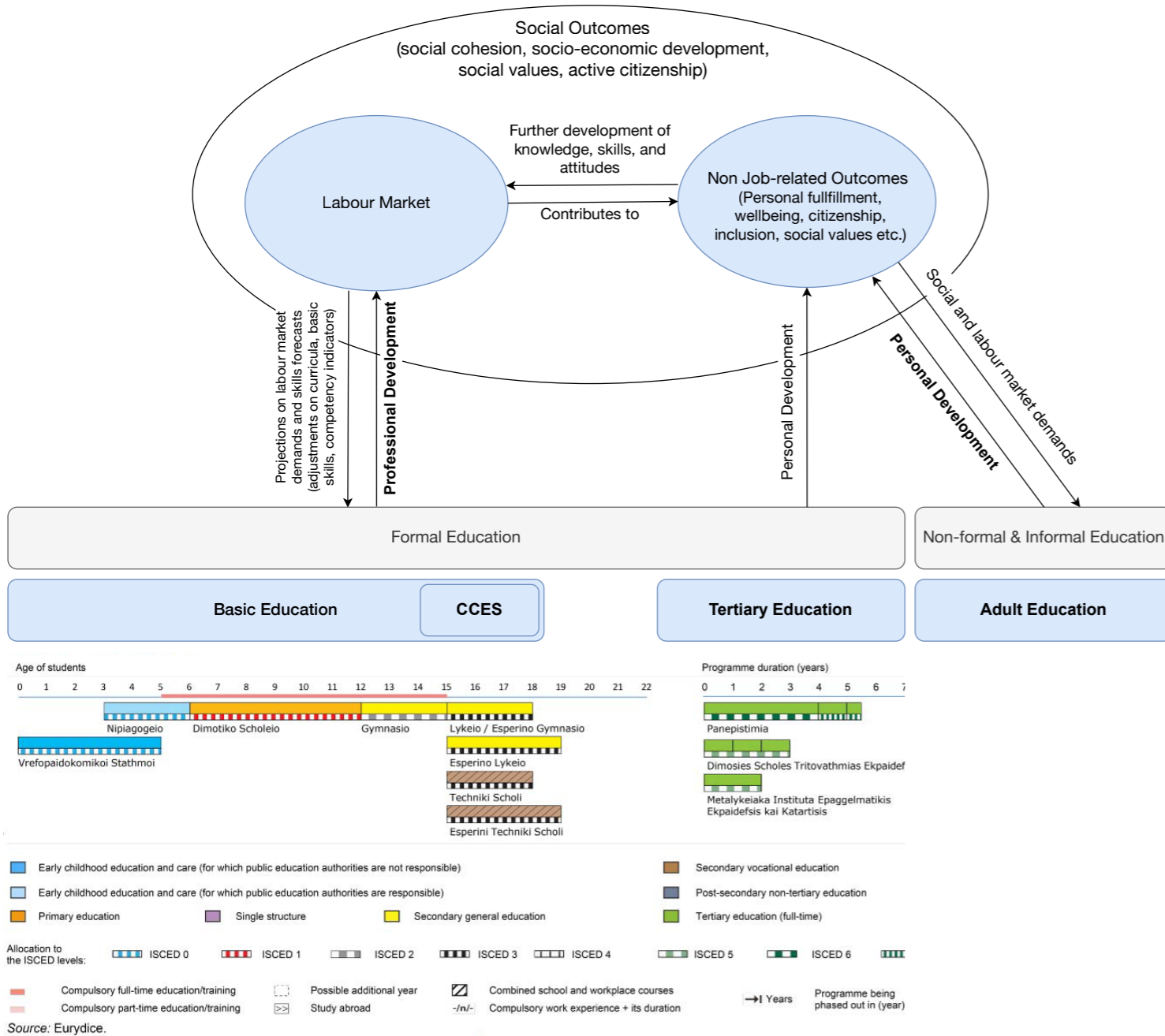


Figure 1. Lifelong learning spectrum in Cyprus<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The schematic diagram of the structure of the Cyprus education system is adopted by the Eurydice report "The Structure of the European Education Systems 2021/22", that does not cover ISCED 8 and some private sector initiatives

Given the technological advancement and rise of digital jobs, lifelong learning will generate new opportunities for individuals to acquire new skills and competences to enter or re-enter the labour market. In this respect, the CyLLLS 2021-2027 will reinforce key objectives of the Republic of Cyprus, such as digital transformation through equipping people with digital skills, especially those with low skills and qualifications. Furthermore, by having as a key priority to increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning, will contribute to promoting active citizenship, social cohesion, inclusion, and empowerment.

Therefore, as lifelong learning is expanded through numerous systemic interconnections among all factors involved in the education system, the CyLLLS 2021-2027 will develop synergies and handshakes between the involved stakeholders with the aim to activate those factors that will lead to the achievement of the priorities.

Recognizing the systemic nature of education, a comprehensive needs analysis of all key stakeholders preceded the CyLLLS 2021-2027 development. The results highlighted the importance of the selected strategic pillars and priorities for the next years. Those priorities focus on specific age groups and themes on which gaps were identified. For example, there is a special emphasis on low-skilled adults, youth, and people vulnerable to unemployment. In this respect, the coordination and collaboration among actors that provide formal and non-formal education (e.g., evening schools, Public School of Higher VET, Adult Education Centres, programmes of the MLWSI and the HRDA and programmes of Youth Board of Cyprus etc.) are promoted and further strengthened. Similar examples are the development of synergies that arise from the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022 and National Industrial Policy 2019-2030 towards the achievement of shared objectives.

Through these actions, it is expected that important national challenges will be mitigated such as youth unemployment, unemployment of recent graduates, or low participation in lifelong learning. Specific actions and Key Performance Indicators, as agreed by stakeholders, will be followed to monitor the achievement of these objectives. The CyLLLS Action Plan includes proposed actions to be undertaken by stakeholders towards the implementation of the strategy. The Departments of MESY and other Ministries, as well as other authorities, will be invited to contribute with specific actions and recommendations in the CyLLLS Action Plan. The CyLLLS 2021-2027 has a dynamic character recognising the contextual influences of the European and national socio-economic environment. Therefore, priorities, objectives, and indicators will be continuously monitored and amended as needed.

## Stakeholders

The Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (CyLLLS) 2021-2027 addresses the national political priority of developing a framework for lifelong learning, setting the strategic objectives and targets for the next six years. The overall strategy design, including the research and analysis that preceded, has been supported by the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support of the European Commission (DG REFORM), as requested by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, and Youth (MESY). The strategy was developed by the European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) with the support of the international research and education centre CARDET. The CyLLLS 2021-2027 is coordinated by the European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Office of MESY. The National and Technical Committees for lifelong learning are responsible for the development, supervision, and monitoring of the strategy.

The governance of the CyLLLS 2021-2027 is under the National and Technical Committees. In particular, the National Committee is responsible to monitor the implementation of the CyLLLS 2021-2027 and assess the effectiveness of its strategic measures. It is also responsible to submit suggestions to Ministries, Bodies, Organisations for developing new, or revise and improve existing programmes and measures relevant to lifelong learning. Last, it has the final say about the approval of the CyLLLS 2021-2027 and inform the Council of Ministers about the implementation progress.

The Technical Committee of lifelong learning supports the National Committee and is mainly responsible to set the implementation and monitoring framework of the CyLLLS 2021-2027, identifying the Key Performance

Indicators (KPIs) and developing relevant strategic measures. The Technical Committee is also provided the legitimacy to report the overall progress of the CyLLLS 2021-2027, as well as the related progress of the involved Ministries, Bodies, Organisations, and devise suggestions to the National Committee. Last, it is also in charge to organise events to inform the public for upcoming strategic measures and programmes in collaboration with the relevant stakeholders. Both Committees are chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the MESY, and their members are presented in the table below. The Committees cadre is complemented by 22 Social Partners indicating that lifelong learning system is a collective effort and concerns numerous stakeholders.

### National Committee

- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth
- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
- Permanent Secretary of the Directorate General Growth of the Ministry of Finance
- Director of the Public Administration and Personnel Department of the Ministry of Finance

### Technical Committee

- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth
- Permanent Secretary of the Directorate General Growth of the Ministry of Finance
- Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
- Director of the Department of Labour of Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
- Head of the European Social Fund Unit of Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
- Director of Human Resource Development Authority
- Director of Cyprus Productivity Centre
- Director of the Public Administration and Personnel Department of Ministry of Finance
- Chairman of the Youth Board Cyprus
- Director of the Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes
- Head of the Office for European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth

## Method

The first phase of developing the strategy, included extensive research and numerous in-depth consultations. Desk research included studying numerous European policies and initiatives relevant to lifelong learning, to achieve good alignment with the European vision and guidelines. Also, several national strategic documents were reviewed for an in-depth analysis of the country's context and the future direction as envisioned by

the governmental authorities. To formulate the background conditions of the next years, especially in the education and labour market which are the focus areas of this strategy, upcoming trends in education and market-related forecasts were considered as well. Additionally, critical literature reviews and study visits in countries such as Estonia, Austria, and Slovenia examining good practices and examples, provided a good overview of the factors and actions that make lifelong learning systems effective. The table below summarizes the most important data sources used for developing the strategy.

### Summary of data collection and consultations

Number of documents reviewed	100+ Policy documents & reports 50+ Scientific articles and studies
Number of interviews conducted	35
Number of consultation meetings (internal and external)	17
Number of study visits	3 (Estonia, Austria, and Slovenia)
Number of stakeholders consulted	32 (including Public authorities, European offices, Universities, Social partners and more) <sup>2</sup>

The implementation of lifelong learning actions in Cyprus falls under the activities of many stakeholders, from the public and private sectors. Consultations and discussions with policymakers, key stakeholders, and experts were necessary and valuable as part of the field research to identify needs and gaps, as well as generate interest and develop future synergies. During the initial stages of the research, stakeholders from several Departments of the MESY (e.g., Cyprus Pedagogical Institute), Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI), Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA), Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes (FFMELLP), Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC), Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB), Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC), Directorate General Growth of the Ministry of Finance (DG Growth, Ministry of Finance), and Ministry of Interior (Mol) among others, were invited to a strategic visioning workshop to discuss the key topics and priorities of this strategy. Moreover, in-depth interviews with 35 key stakeholders and social partners representing employers and employees from the public and private sector, adult education providers, universities, the Cyprus VET experts' team, and civil society organisations were conducted. Ongoing consultations and reflections on various drafts of the strategy preceded this document, while additional revisions will be held with the main stakeholders until the final version is developed. Further details can be found on the research report that preceded the CyLLLS 2021-2027.

The key priorities of this strategy address the two main challenges initially requested by the MESY as part of the national policy agenda, which deal with increasing adult participation in lifelong learning and reducing youth unemployment, issues of vital concern for the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI) as well. Two more priorities were identified based on the research and analysis of the national context that deemed necessary for the achievement of the strategic goals. These concern the establishment of an institutional framework for the lifelong learning system and the formation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and the enhancement of teachers' and adult educators' competence to infuse the spirit of lifelong learning into their practices. This strategy, including its priorities, should be conceived as a living document considering the dynamic character of the external environment. In this process, the yearly monitoring and evaluation mechanisms will provide insights and recommendations for any amendments needed, always in consultation with key stakeholders. The National and Technical Committees are responsible for the implementation of the strategy and for making any adjustments needed to the Action Plan and the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

<sup>2</sup> The list of Consulting organisations can be found in [Annex 3](#).

# 1. Policy Framework

## Alignment with European Policies

The European Commission emphasizes that education and training are essential for building knowledge-based economies and fostering individual and social growth, economic and sustainable development, as well as social cohesion and inclusion. As it is communicated by the European Commission in the European Education Area<sup>3</sup> framework, education should be “at the heart of the European way of life” (p. 1), because it can reinforce economic and social development promoting the values of democracy, freedom, diversity, human rights, and social justice. The Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (CyLLLS) 2021-2027 is aligned with these ideas as communicated by European policies and frameworks. More than one hundred key documents have been reviewed to align the national efforts with the European objectives (Annex 2), with the most relevant presented below.

The Council of the European Union, in an effort to establish a common strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training, agreed on five priorities that will guide actions during the next decade reflecting the objectives of **European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)**<sup>4</sup>:

- Strategic priority 1: Improve quality, equity, inclusion, and success for all in education and training.
- Strategic priority 2: Make lifelong learning and mobility a reality for all.
- Strategic priority 3: Enhance competences and motivation in the education profession.
- Strategic priority 4: Reinforce European higher education.
- Strategic priority 5: Support the green and digital transitions in and through education and training

Quality education is a social right. Due to the vastly changing living and working conditions in modern societies, ongoing learning and continuous skills development are essential for individuals to maintain employability and personal fulfilment. In this respect, the concept of lifelong learning gains particular importance as it reflects the vision for the education of the European Union. Lifelong learning encompasses all levels and types of education and training which is seen as a vital instrument for “shaping the future of Europe”<sup>5</sup> (p. 2). Although the value of non-formal and informal learning is well recognized as means of a holistic approach for education, further progress on the quality and validation of educational outcomes, as well as the flexibility of learning pathways, are among the main concerns for the future of lifelong learning in Europe. The current strategy is oriented towards a modernized lifelong learning system that offers learning opportunities to citizens of any age and background. Learning provision is intended to be future-proof, flexible, and retain a real value for the learner.

To cope with the future transformations of modern societies, education and training should address the appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes development for individuals. In this respect, the **European Skills Agenda**<sup>6</sup> aims to guide this demand towards sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience upon crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This Agenda covers five building blocks which consist of inviting cooperation, matching skills with jobs, promoting lifelong learning, ensuring adequate financing, and setting ambitious objectives for upskilling and reskilling. As it is indicated, “to succeed, lifelong learning for all must be a reality in Europe” (p. 19). It is also emphasized that basic education alone cannot ensure adaptation to the rapid societal transitions for individuals but learning throughout life can better reflect the ongoing needs and developments. As part of its objectives, the European Skills Agenda emphasizes that nations should instil a lifelong learning culture and support everyone regardless of their employment status. Access to education, guidance, validation of learning outcomes, and quality of training is also among the national concerns taken

<sup>3</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0625&from=EN>

<sup>4</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226(01)&from=EN)

<sup>5</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226(01)&from=EN)

<sup>6</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0274&from=EN>



into consideration in this strategy.

Acknowledging the importance of lifelong learning for the adult population, especially for the most vulnerable groups, the Council also adopted a series of initiatives to improve their adaptability to changes in the labour market and society. The **European Agenda for Adult Learning**<sup>7</sup> aims to the advancement of the adult learning field, emphasizing upskilling or reskilling, employability, life skills, and active citizenship. Adult participation rates in formal, non-formal, and informal learning are used as a central indicator that designates the achievement of the agenda's objectives, also set as a priority in the current strategy. Following these objectives, **Upskilling Pathways**<sup>8</sup> is an initiative that aims to ensure that all adults are equipped with the minimum level of basic skills (i.e., literacy, numeracy, and digital) and qualifications (i.e., EQF level 3 or 4).

The challenges of a constantly changing future increase uncertainty for young people, who are often unable to face enduring issues such as unemployment, inequality, and discrimination. To support their adaptability and resilience, special measures need to address youth and ensure that they are provided with the required opportunities and resources to succeed in life. The **European Youth Strategy 2019-2027**<sup>9</sup> is one of the main documents of the European youth policy. This strategy focuses on three core areas which reflect opportunities to engage in democratic life, possibilities to connect, and tools to empower young people. Education and training are seen as essential for youth to develop life skills and attitudes that will support their employability and civic participation. It is also noted that recognition of informal and non-formal learning through youth work should be systematically applied, as means of improving their professional development and prospects. Similarly, the current strategy outlines that lifelong learning entails benefits that are directly related to youth employability as means to tackle national unemployment rates. In line with these objectives, EU Member States in 2020 have committed to implement the reinforced **Youth Guarantee**<sup>10</sup>, which aims to fight youth unemployment and facilitate the education to employment transition. The programme is financed by the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI), and it is developed to ensure that all young people get a decent quality of employment, continued education, apprenticeship, or traineeship within four months after becoming inactive from work or education. Another important instrument for youth citizenship and informal or non-formal education is the **European Solidarity Corps**<sup>11</sup>, which encourages young people to take part in projects for the benefit of their communities and beyond.

Considering the economic and societal changes, European Union makes regular reference to green and digital transitions. As Europe aspires to move towards a sustainable, climate-neutral economy and technological innovation, people should acquire the required skills to adapt and support the future work demand. To facilitate the digital transformation in education and training, European Commission published the **Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027**<sup>12</sup>. This policy sets up the European strategic vision for the digitalization of education addressing the challenges and opportunities of the COVID-19 pandemic, encouraging cooperation, and improving the quality of learning from a pedagogical point of view. It considers and promotes the values of inclusiveness and accessibility for learners and teachers focusing on two priority areas: a) the development of digital education ecosystems and b) the development of digital skills and competences. In addition, the **European Green Deal**<sup>13</sup> is the EU's response towards climate change and environmental degradation. The plan consists of promoting sustainable development and improving social well-being, guiding actions in multiple sectors such as industry, transportation, and construction. Accordingly, individuals need to proactively acquire the skills to support this ecological transition, contribute to the growing job sectors, and be prepared to adapt to the green economy.

**Erasmus+**<sup>14</sup> is the European Union's instrument to support education, training, youth, and sport across Eu-

7 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011G1220\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32011G1220(01)&from=EN)

8 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32016H1224(01)&from=EN)

9 [https://europa.eu/youth/strategy\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/strategy_en)

10 <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en>

11 [https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity\\_en](https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en)

12 [https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en)

13 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en)

14 <https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/>

rope, continuing for another programming period (2021-2027) with an estimated budget of €26.2 billion. The broad aim of the programme is to contribute to the quality and inclusiveness of educational systems around Europe, offer non-formal and informal learning opportunities, and equip citizens with the appropriate skills and qualifications for a successful professional and civic life. The focus areas for the next years are social inclusion, green and digital transitions, and youth participation in democratic life, considering the dynamically changing social environment and the indispensable recovery process from the COVID-19 pandemic. Erasmus+ programmes offer a broad range of mobility and cooperation opportunities addressing all levels of education, from early childhood up to vocational, and adult education.

The European Commission has recently released the **Recovery and Resilience Facility**<sup>15</sup> (RRF) to financially support reforms and investments of Member States on improving economies' resilience and recovery from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This large-scale financial support of €672.5 billion as part of the NextGenerationEU<sup>16</sup> (€806.9 billion), is being provided in loans and grants to countries upon national plans submission and approval. The focus of this Facility is towards the twin transitions: greener economies and digital transformation. Moreover, one of the seven flagship areas for reforms and investments encouraged by the Commission is education and training, with emphasis on reskilling and upskilling of individuals, especially on digital skills.<sup>17</sup>

## European Targets and Benchmarks

To align the national efforts with the European vision and contribute as a Member State in the European community, the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021-2027 takes into consideration the European targets and benchmarks to be achieved during the next years. The Council of the European Union sets seven targets to be reached by 2025 or 2030 to support the strategic priorities adopted in the **European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030)** and monitor the performance in education and training. However, Member States are invited to set their equivalent national targets. The seven EU-level targets are:

1. "Low achieving 15-year-olds in basic skills: The share of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%, by 2030.
2. Low achieving eight-graders in digital skills: The share of low-achieving eight-graders in computer and information literacy should be less than 15%, by 2030.
3. Participation in early childhood education and care: At least 96% of children between 3 years old and the starting age for compulsory primary education should participate in early childhood education and care, by 2030.
4. Early leavers from education and training: The share of early leavers from education and training should be less than 9%, by 2030.
5. Tertiary level attainment: The share of 25–34 year-olds with tertiary educational attainment should be at least 45%, by 2030.
6. Exposure of VET graduates to work based learning: The share of recent graduates from VET benefiting from exposure to work-based learning during their vocational education and training should be at least 60%, by 2025.
7. Participation of adults in learning: At least 47% of adults aged 25-64 should have participated in learning during the last 12 months, by 2025."<sup>18</sup>

15 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/business-economy-euro/recovery-coronavirus/recovery-and-resilience-facility_en)

16 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/recovery-plan-europe_en)

17 [http://www.cyprus-tomorrow.gov.cy/cypresidency/kyprostoavrio.nsf/all/B37B4D3AC1DB73B6C22586DA00421E05/\\$file/Cyprus%20RRP%20For%20Upload%2020052021.pdf?openelement](http://www.cyprus-tomorrow.gov.cy/cypresidency/kyprostoavrio.nsf/all/B37B4D3AC1DB73B6C22586DA00421E05/$file/Cyprus%20RRP%20For%20Upload%2020052021.pdf?openelement)

18 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226(01)&from=EN)

From the perspective of the **European Skills Agenda**<sup>19</sup> focusing on lifelong learning as well as socioeconomic recovery and accelerating environment transitions, the Commission sets out four quantitative objectives to be reached by 2025:

1. Συμμετοχή ενηλίκων ηλικίας 25-64 ετών σε μαθησιακές δραστηριότητες κατά τους τελευταίους 12 μήνες: 50%
2. Συμμετοχή ενηλίκων με χαμηλά προσόντα, ηλικίας 25-64 ετών, σε μαθησιακές δραστηριότητες κατά τους τελευταίους 12 μήνες: 30%
3. Ποσοστό των ενηλίκων ανέργων ηλικίας 25-64 ετών με πρόσφατη μαθησιακή εμπειρία: 20%
4. Ποσοστό ενηλίκων ηλικίας 16-74 ετών που διαθέτουν τουλάχιστον βασικές ψηφιακές δεξιότητες: 70%

## National Context and Policies

The Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (CyLLLS) 2021-2027 is coordinated by the European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Office of MESY. The National and Technical Committees for lifelong learning are responsible for the development, supervision, and monitoring of the strategy. In this respect, the implementation of the strategy implies collective efforts from various parties, as described below.

The MESY is responsible for the national education policy and continuous development of education provision at all levels. As part of its strategic objectives outlined in the **Strategic Plan 2021-2023**<sup>20</sup>, the Ministry established in December 2019 the European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning, and Adult Education Office for the coordination of programmes under the fields of adult education and lifelong learning, as well as the development and promotion relevant policies. Existing programmes of lifelong learning are currently managed by respective Departments of the Ministry. For example, the Adult Education Centres operate under the responsibility of the Department of Primary Education. The Department of Secondary General Education manages the State Institutes of Further Education (KIE), Evening Schools, and the Career Counselling and Educational Services (CCES). The Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training, within the context of the System of Technical and Vocational Education and Training, offers a wide range of secondary technical and vocational education, initial training, lifelong training programmes and higher vocational education and training to eligible lower secondary and upper secondary education graduates. These pathways are known as Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (morning classes), Apprenticeship System of VET, Evening Schools of Technical and Vocational Education (second chance schools), Lifelong Learning Programmes of VET, and the Public School of Higher VET (known as PSIVET; "MIEEK"). The Project "Upgrading of Technical and Vocational Education" is currently implemented by the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and Training. It was initially implemented from October 2015 until December 2021, and it currently continues under the new Program until 2027, with an increased budget. The overall objective of the Project is to further develop and improve public VET provision in Cyprus, providing learners with the necessary knowledge, skills, and competences in order to be fully equipped in facing labour market challenges. Indicative actions and initiatives are, amongst others, the development and introduction of new programmes of study in Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and in the Public School of Higher VET which are aligned with current and future labour market needs, the purchase of state-of-the-art technical equipment and the access to modern infrastructure, the evaluation and improvement of VET curricula, the organization of promotional campaigns to increase participation of learners in the various VET pathways, the provision of high quality professional training to VET teachers, the development of a national monitoring system to track VET graduates' access and success in the labour market, the construction of new Technical Schools etc. It is also recognised by the MESY that a lifelong learning culture should be cultivated from the early stages of education, stating that "quality early childhood education is fundamental for lifelong learning, social inclusion, and personal development" (p. 58). In this framework, it implements several European Programmes that promote adult educa-

<sup>19</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0274&from=EN>

<sup>20</sup> [http://archeia.moec.gov.cy/mc/642/moecsy\\_strategic\\_plan\\_2021\\_2023.pdf](http://archeia.moec.gov.cy/mc/642/moecsy_strategic_plan_2021_2023.pdf)

tion and lifelong learning at national level, such as the European Agenda for Adult Learning and the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE) in Cyprus.

The Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI) has set the integration of citizens in the labour market as a strategic measure to tackle unemployment. The Euroguidance Network, coordinated by the MLWSI, can also play a catalytic role in informing young people about educational opportunities in other Member States, by promoting seminars, lectures and one-to-one meetings for studies and careers, providing links to other Euroguidance Centres. Several of the policies and programmes of the MLWSI as well as schemes for the country's human capital professional training and development, are implemented by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA).

Main activities for the upgrading of human resources include the integration of the unemployed and inactive into employment and the lifelong learning of the employed. The quality assurance of the training and development system of human resources is currently being obtained via the operation of the System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) and the System for the Assessment and Accreditation of Training Providers both operated by the HRDA. Moreover, the HRDA conducts studies and surveys relevant to trends and forecasts of employment and training needs, assessment and evaluation of HRDA's schemes, vocational education and training systems and infrastructure analysis, and specialised studies on human resources. The findings constitute a significant tool for guidance which also contribute to improve labour market relevance of education and training. Therefore, much of HRDA's actions and initiatives are reasonably associated with the pursuits of this strategy, in terms of associating lifelong learning with professional competences and qualifications.

**Erasmus+** is an important instrument for Cyprus to finance and support lifelong learning activities in all sectors (school education, higher education, vocational education and training, adult education, and youth). Along with the advancement of skills and employability, the programme aims to modernise the education and training sectors and promote transnational partnerships between institutions and organisation to strengthen cooperation and bridge the worlds of education and employment. The Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes (FMELLP) is the national agency of Erasmus+ (Education and Training sectors) which implements the management of relevant grants and the participation of Cypriot beneficiaries to the promoted activities. Additionally, it coordinates the National VET Team for the promotion of the European tools and instruments for Vocational Education and Training and the eTwinning program which support collaboration among teachers in School Education.

Youth is a focus target group of the lifelong learning system because it is considered an essential part of the country's workforce today, as well as the future. The **National Youth Strategy 2017-2022**<sup>21</sup> established by the Youth Board of Cyprus (YBC) highlights the value of investing in young people and addresses their needs for national social and economic advancement. The provision of equal learning opportunities, establishment of career counselling services, formation of links between education and labour market, and improvement of the national lifelong learning system are key actions mentioned under the Youth Strategy objectives, which the CyLLLS 2021-2027 considers as well. The YBC is the responsible agency for the Erasmus+ Youth sector and non-formal education programmes in Cyprus which includes youth exchange, cooperation partnerships, mobility & participation activities, and training opportunities. Another important instrument to enhance youth citizenship by creating volunteering activities and working schemes is the European Solidarity Corps. YBC is the National Agency for the European Solidarity Corps, responsible for the management of the Programme at national level.

Education and training outcomes gained from individuals outside formal education system are often valuable. Cyprus has not set an official framework for the recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. However, several developments took place during the last years. For example, the Council of Ministers approved in 2017 the establishment of the National Qualifications Authority («Εθνική Αρχή Προσόντων»), as the official body responsible for the implementation of the Cyprus Qualifications Framework (CyQF). From the scope of professional learning and qualifications, the HRDA has progressed in developing the System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), as well as the System for the Assessment and Accreditation of Training

<sup>21</sup> <https://youthpolicy.onek.org.cy/en/national-youth-strategy/>



Providers. The same authority plans to implement the micro-credentials and the individual learning accounts. Moreover, based on a policy decision of the Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KY.S.A.T.S.), tertiary education institutions are now eligible to accredit students with up to 10% of the total credits required for an official degree, as a recognition mechanism of prior non-formal learning. The FFMELLP, under its capacity as the Erasmus+ national agency (Education and Training sector) and the coordinator of the 'VET Team of Experts', initiated a series of consultations for the establishment of a national framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes.

Toward the reinforcement of research, innovation, and acceleration of the digital transformation of Cyprus as encouraged by the European Union, the Government has established in 2020 the Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digital Policy (DMRID), to assume responsibility of the Digital Strategy, thereby demonstrating political commitment in accelerating the digital transformation of Cyprus. In line with the National Digital Strategy, Cyprus aims to become a fit-for-the-future society and knowledge-based economy enabled by digital and emerging technologies that will drive economic prosperity and competitiveness to position the country as a resilient regional player in the European digital economy and a regional science and high-tech hub. The Deputy Ministry adopts and undertakes the implementation of the **Research & Innovation Strategy Framework 2019-2023**<sup>22</sup> ("Innovate Cyprus") which focuses on nine strategic pillars. Lifelong learning is seen as an essential investment to infuse academic and research excellence within the human capital in terms of literacies, competences, and attitudes that are necessary for the 21st century workforce, as described in a strategic objective. It is also recognised that lifelong learning has a decisive role in cultural change through the development of new societal values, perceptions, and attitudes. Moreover, as part of the digital transition, which is a central theme of the Deputy's mission, the development of individuals' digital skills is also among the important and necessary steps to achieve its ambitions. This approach is especially beneficial from the perspective of the CyLLLS 2021-2027, as they are commonly appreciated for the digitalization of society and the economy. The National Digital Strategy (2020-2025) evolves under four key initiatives:

1. Promote eGovernment by redesigning the Ministry's internal enterprise architecture and governance model, optimizing the service delivery model, delivering a resilient, robust, and secure ICT infrastructure.
2. Facilitate high speed network connectivity and increase take-up, ensure security in data and networks, and increase the trust of the public to the online transactions.
3. Deliver a stronger digital economy and increasingly more digital and competitive industries.
4. Promote an accessible and inclusive society that has the skills and the motivation to embrace the national digital transformation and actively participate in digital communities.

Within this context, the Digital Society Portfolio aims to deliver a user-centred, accessible and inclusive digital society that raises people's digital literacy and encourages them to more actively participate in digital communities, offering them everything they need to transact in the digital era including devices, connectivity, digital identities and access to infrastructures enabling them to carry e-Payments.

Basic digital skills are necessary at all levels of society, representing a key enabler for the holistic digital transformation of societies and economies. Digital transformation is, therefore, a multidimensional endeavour to develop and provide digital solutions, empowering people to promote active digital citizenship.

To facilitate the enhancement of digital skills, the Deputy Ministry opts to create a citizens' Digital Academy, with educational material addressing all above needs and objectives, accessible to all target groups. The main objective is to create a dynamic, easy to use and well-accessible e-learning platform, containing a self-assessment tool, index of all available programmes, and content material on digital skills and cross-sectoral competences.

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.dmrid.gov.cy/dmrid/research.nsf/All/93BD79089C22336BC225853400356CCB/\\$file/Innovate-Cyprus-CYRI-Strategy-Framework-2019-2023-NBRI-May-2019.pdf?OpenElement](https://www.dmrid.gov.cy/dmrid/research.nsf/All/93BD79089C22336BC225853400356CCB/$file/Innovate-Cyprus-CYRI-Strategy-Framework-2019-2023-NBRI-May-2019.pdf?OpenElement)

The new **National Industrial Policy for 2019-2030**<sup>23</sup>, as set out by the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, and Industry (MECI), aspires to develop a competitive industrial ecosystem by investing in sustainability, innovation, digitalization, infrastructures, and skills. One of its six pillars focuses on the acquisition of new and upgrade of existing skills to support economic growth and progress. Promoted initiatives under this strategic objective are the Labour Market Liaison Offices in eight Universities, the Public School of Higher VET (formerly known as Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training - PSIVET; "MIEEK"), and certain programmes of HRDA (i.e., integration of the unemployed and inactive into employment, lifelong learning of the employed, the System of Vocational Qualifications (SVQ), and the System for the Assessment and Accreditation of Training Providers). Recognising the importance of digital competency for workers, the strategy also encourages the provision of training programmes for digital skills offered by the Department of Electronic Communications (of DMRID) and Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC). Setting out the Action Plan for 2019-2022, MECI also proposes several actions which refer to the adjustment of in-service training programmes tailored to the needs of the labour market, redefining the direction of technical and vocational education, and enrichment of school curricula and lifelong learning programmes to reflect modern society's requirements. Several of these pursuits overlap with the strategic measures of CyLLLS, in terms of enabling a smooth education to employment transition and providing opportunities to individuals for continuous professional development.

Leveraging the funds of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), Cyprus has recently received approval for the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan 2021-2026** (RRP)<sup>24</sup>, where it justifies the utilization of €1.2 billion for economic resilience through specific initiatives and measures to be achieved by 2026. Among other components, reforms and investments in education are an important focus area of the RRP, aiming at the modernization of the education system and upskilling/reskilling of individuals. Although these are horizontal concerns of the national education system, funds are expected to cover several needs for the achievement of the CyLLLS goals. For example, proposed objectives under the particular investment area refer to the acquisition and enhancement of digital, green, blue, and entrepreneurial skills through targeted training programmes administered by the HRDA and CPC, in cooperation with DMRID and social partners. To address the skills mismatch and monitor the transition from education to employment, the Department of Higher Education (DHE) of the MESY will implement with the RRP financial support the programme "Development of a National Graduate Tracking Mechanism, and Design and Implementation of an Employers' Skills Survey", under the research project "Addressing Skills Mismatch between Education and the Labour Market".

Specifically, the MESY<sup>25</sup> has planned four reforms at a total cost of €39.2 million and three investment actions amounting to €57.7 million. These reforms are the following (Component 5.1 "Educational system modernisation, upskilling and retraining"):

- The skills mismatch between education and labour market (Secondary and Higher Education) through a programme developed by the Department of Higher Education in cooperation with the universities, adapting undergraduate studies and secondary general and technical and vocational education to the needs of society
- A new teacher and school evaluation system.
- Extension of free compulsory pre-primary education from the age of four.
- Digital transformation of school units with the aim of enhancing digital skills and skills related to STEM education.

<sup>23</sup> <https://mec.gov.cy/assets/modules/wnp/articles/202012/86/docs/neaviomichaniki.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> [http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/All/ACCC6F07CA46FD2EC22586DC00233297/\\$file/Cyprus%20Recovery%20and%20Resilience%20Plan%202021-2026.pdf](http://www.dgepcd.gov.cy/dgepcd/dgepcd.nsf/All/ACCC6F07CA46FD2EC22586DC00233297/$file/Cyprus%20Recovery%20and%20Resilience%20Plan%202021-2026.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> <http://enimerosi.moec.gov.cy/archeia/1/ypp12306a> (EL)

## 2. Strengths and Challenges

Based on the research on the national context, several strengths were identified indicating that Cyprus can be a leader in lifelong learning. One of the key strengths is the high value the Cypriot society gives to education. This is evidenced by the high levels of tertiary education attainment (age 30-34; 58.8%), the high participation in early childhood education (95.3%), and the relatively low rate of early leavers from education and training (age 18-24; 9.2%) compared to the other European countries. Public spending on education accounts for 5.2% of the country's GDP, which exceeds the EU average (4.6%)<sup>26</sup>. Furthermore, recent reforms in education, for example, the teacher evaluation system and the new process for teacher appointment aspire to improve the overall education system.

During the last years, systematic efforts aimed to modernise the vocational education and training (VET) sector. These developments led to the growing student enrolment rates in VET reaching 16.7% in 2018; however, participation remains the lowest in the EU. Another reform was the establishment and operation of the Post-Secondary Institutes of Vocational Education and Training (PSIVET, "MIEEK") in 2012, which have been upgraded to a Public School of Higher VET as of April 2017, offering programmes of Higher VET tailored to the labour market demands. These measures strengthened the links between VET and employment, leading to improved attractiveness of the sector and increased employers' engagement. Besides the formal education, HRDA continues to offer various schemes facilitating the integration of recent graduates and unemployed to the labour market, as well as in-service training programmes to enterprises.

At the executive level, to better support the governance of the lifelong learning system in Cyprus, the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the National and Technical Committees for lifelong learning. Moreover, the MESY established the European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education Office in an effort to coordinate the activities that fall under the lifelong learning and adult education sector.

Research and analysis that preceded the development of this strategy revealed several challenges. More details are available in the research report of MESY. One of the key challenges is the lack of a policy and institutional framework for lifelong learning in Cyprus, which hinders the unified understanding of its concepts, structures, and mechanisms of implementation. The absence of a dedicated authority accompanied by the appropriate resources and staff had been limiting the opportunities for coherent advancements, and systematic supervision, implementation, and monitoring of the lifelong learning strategy. As a result, numerous stakeholders act independently which does not allow the development of strong and sustainable partnerships and synergies in the field. Similarly, the adult education sector appears to be hardly defined and fragmented with minimum supervision mechanisms.

Furthermore, there is no systematic mechanism to monitor and evaluate the various national actions in lifelong learning to ensure quality, neither quantitative indicators to assess system performance. Additionally, except for authorities' internal processes and policies (e.g., HRDA), there are no mechanisms to collect comprehensive data that can enable the evaluation of relevant policies and programmes. Thus, the quality and effectiveness of programmes and trainers, especially in adult education, is often challenged.

Inevitably, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the labour market due to the reduced economic activity in many sectors. In 2020, the youth unemployment rate (15-24 years old) increased to 18.2%. This percentage dropped to 14.5% during the third trimester of 2021 because of the reactivation of affected sectors of the economy<sup>27</sup>. However, during the last decade the youth unemployment in Cyprus consistently mark percentages above the EU average<sup>28</sup>. The lack of effective links between education and the labour market affects negatively young people's transition to adult life and creates skill mismatches. There is generally little collaboration between the industry, academia, and research for developing applied and sophisticated solutions for recent graduates. An additional factor relies on the limited availability of career guidance and counselling services, especially for low skilled youth and adults that could support them with alternative pathways. Consequently, another aspect that Cyprus should focus on is ensuring that all citizens are equipped with the basic skills. The high percentages of low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, maths, and science and the fact that only half of

<sup>26</sup> Data of 2018 and 2019: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/f2b8bedb-2496-11eb-9d7e-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>27</sup> Labour Force Survey, Statistical Service, Ministry of Finance, Cyprus

<sup>28</sup> [Statistics | Eurostat \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/)



the adults are equipped with basic digital skills (45% of people aged 16-74) call for structural reforms within the compulsory education system, upskilling and reskilling initiatives for adults, flexible lifelong learning opportunities to different age groups, targeted career services/guidance and stronger synergies among the education and the labour market sector.

Data relating to youth unemployment (%)				
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Youth unemployment in Cyprus (15-24 years old)	20.2	16.6	18.2	17.1
Youth unemployment in the EU-27 (15-24 years old)	16.4	15.3	17.1	-
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment in Cyprus (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year) [ISCED 3-8] <sup>29</sup>	78.9	81.7	78.6	80.4
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment in the EU-27 (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year) [ISCED 3-8] <sup>30</sup>	80.9	80.9	78.5	79.6
Data relating to participation of adults in education and training <sup>31</sup>				
	2011		2016	
Participation rate in education and training in Cyprus (last 12 months)	42.3		48.1	
Participation rate in education and training in the EU-27 (last 12 months)	40.9		44.4	
	2009		2019	
Adult participation in learning in Cyprus (age 25-64) (last 4 weeks)	8.3		5.9	
Adult participation in learning in EU-27 (age 25-64) (last 4 weeks)	7.9		10.8	

The adult education and training sector is a major component of the lifelong learning system. Nonetheless, it appears to be a fragmented sector because there is no legislative or policy framework neither coherent quality assurance mechanisms that clarifies its operations and standards. As a result, adult education and training provision appears to be scattered and non-regulated. Similarly, learning outcomes acquired through non-formal and informal education cannot be validated and recognised, as no official process has been set up yet. Lastly, adult education and training is not treated as a segment, thus there is no comprehensive analysis on adult learning needs which makes it difficult to mitigate their participation barriers. This might produce inequalities against vulnerable groups. For example, adults with low educational attainment or qualifications present lower participation rates.

Recent developments at European and global scale, accelerated the need for digital transformation and green transition. In 2019, only a 45% of individuals (aged 16-74 years old) in Cyprus were assessed to be equipped with basic or above basic digital skills. Therefore, national reforms and initiatives, apart from focusing on upgrading the digital infrastructure, should create opportunities for upskilling and reskilling. Along the same lines, a systematic analysis of the labour market needs and skills forecasts, is essential to design programs that effectively prepare graduates for the future. Forecasts should inform and reciprocally affect education provision by recommending adjustments on the curricula based on graduates' expected skills and competences. Career Counselling and Educational Services (CCES) should better facilitate students' selection on academic and career paths. Graduates tracking mechanisms can provide actual data for assessing the existing education-employment pipeline and inform following decisions. Effective integration of students into the labour market is expected to contribute to socio-economic development, as well as to personal-related outcomes

such as accomplishment, stability, financial safety, confidence, and wellbeing.

In this context, the HRDA systematically monitors developments in the labour market, providing forecasts and estimates of employment and training needs. On a regular basis, every 2-3 years, the HRDA provides ten-year forecasts of employment needs in economic sectors and occupations covering the whole spectrum of the Cyprus labour market. Additionally, the HRDA annually conducts a study, which identifies the specialisations and skills required in the Cyprus economy. In the study, the views of enterprises, social partners and other stakeholders are collected and analysed. The results of the HRDA's studies on anticipation of skill needs are utilised by policy makers for the development of strategies and policies in education, training, and lifelong learning. Furthermore, they are utilised at operational level for the development of programmes of study in education, including the programmes of study of the technical schools and the post-secondary institutes of vocational education and training of the Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth. They are also utilised by people involved in counselling, such as secondary education vocational guidance teachers and employment counsellors, and by the public. The findings of the HRDA's research studies on anticipation of skill needs constitute a significant tool for guidance which also contribute to improve labour market relevance of education and training. Based on the findings, suggestions are put forward to implement the corresponding activities of the HRDA, aiming to cover the needs and alleviate the problems of the labour market.

Education staff has a key role in the cultivation of lifelong learning culture. As these attitudes need to be infused to learners from the first years of schooling, teachers are required to develop certain sets of skills that will enable the new culture transmission. Learning to learn, digital, green, entrepreneurial, and life skills are some examples of competences teachers require to have. Similarly, the professionalization of adult educators and trainers should be supported, as currently there is no mechanism to evaluate their qualifications, performance, and effectiveness.

<sup>29</sup> Education and Training Monitor 2020

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Adult Education Survey, Statistical Service, Ministry of Finance, Cyprus

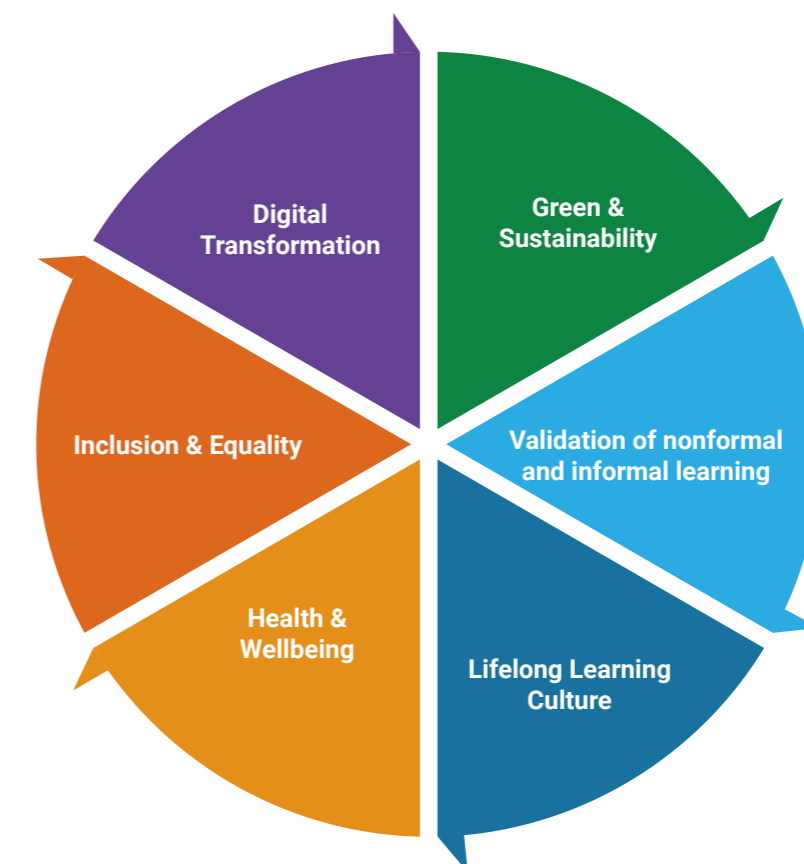
## Vision

The Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021-2027 aspires to provide the long-term strategic framework towards the development of a knowledge-based society, where all citizens are provided with learning opportunities, to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will facilitate their personal and social growth, professional advancement, social inclusion, resilience, and well-being.

## Strategic Horizontal Pillars

Lifelong learning is a process of holistic development of competences for personal fulfilment, active participation and engagement to the society, and professional advancement. The strategy if informed is derived from the European and national political context, as it was detailed in the previous chapters. Furthermore, the European Reference Framework for Key Competences for Lifelong Learning shares the philosophy of a competence-based orientation for lifelong learning and sets out eight key competences: a) literacy, b) mathematical, c) multilingual, d) digital, e) personal, social, and learning to learn, f) civic, g) entrepreneurship and h) cultural awareness and expression. The CyLLLS 2021-2027 recognises the importance of integrating these competences into the lifelong learning system and culture, while it encourages the diffusion of other transversal skills such as communication, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving.

Lifelong learning is a multifaceted system, influenced by diverse forces. When considering these factors as practical issues, they might fall under the responsibility of various authorities. However, it is crucial to consider their impact and contribution to the lifelong learning system. In this respect, the following concepts are treated as pillars because of their significant horizontal influence on the strategic measures of the CyLLLS 2021-2027.



# 3. Vision and Strategic Horizontal Pillars of the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy

## Digital transformation

The rapid technological advancements as well as the emerging remote working conditions and distance education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has put digital transformation at the forefront of the EU political agendas. The digital transition is imperative at all levels for developed countries to strengthen their economies, meet global challenges, maximize their potential, and achieve their goals. At the same time, digital advancements should be directed towards sustainable and inclusive growth. The CyLLLS considering this necessity focuses on enhancing citizens' digital literacy and skills, which is a basic element of such transformation. In Cyprus, a big part of the digital transformation reforms is under the DMRID. Digital skills are considered essential for individuals to take advantage of learning opportunities, compete in the labour market, and participate in social life. Education and training are key factors to ensure that all citizens are equipped with the appropriate digital skills and can thrive in a digital era. Therefore, reforms towards digital education and the provision of lifelong learning programmes accessible for all are the main subjects of the CyLLLS.

## Green transition and sustainability

Climate change and environmental degradation present serious challenges that call for immediate action towards a more sustainable economic model. This transition implies fundamental adjustments in all sectors, aiming for a sustainable future and a positive impact on our quality of living. Climate-neutral ecosystems, energy-efficient industries, and toxic-free environments are only some of the green transition streams which will transform the scene of our economic activity. This new approach requires certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes so that individuals can actively support their community for a successful transition to an ecologically viable and sustainable development. At the same time, new jobs and opportunities will arise to promote 'green employment', while others will be replaced or redefined. Accelerated transition to a green economy in Cyprus has set off as a policy axis of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP). In line with these national efforts, the CyLLLS aims to provide the means by which the citizens can reap the benefits of this transition and adapt to the new processes, as a measure of increasing employability and building a green economy.

## Inclusion and equality

According to the first principle of the European Pillar of Social Rights<sup>32</sup>, everyone has the right to access quality and inclusive education, training, and lifelong learning. Lifelong learning opportunities should be accessible and available to all citizens so they can develop their skills, participate in society, and succeed in life. Equal treatment and opportunities for lifelong learning are to be provided regardless of social class, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, age, or sexual orientation. Moreover, to promote equality and ensure that no one is left behind specific measures need to address the barriers and challenges of people at risk and under-represented groups. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted even more the fact that educational success follows social patterns, meaning that disadvantaged groups are overrepresented among underachievers. Therefore, issues such as equal and inclusive attainment in early childhood education, provision of alternative pathways to dropouts, upskilling and reskilling of low qualified adults, accessible educational opportunities for persons with disabilities, pathways for re-entering education, or an efficient VET system are of particular importance for the CyLLLS.

## Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Recognition, validation, and accreditation of non-formal and informal learning is a key feature of a successful and effective lifelong learning policy, as it enhances the visibility and transferability of skills acquired from education and training programmes or work experience. A comprehensive validation mechanism could function as a valuable incentive and motivation factor for individuals, education institutions, and enterprises. A series of European policies and guidelines have been set to align and coordinate actions of Member States towards this direction. However, despite several scattered efforts, a comprehensive national system is not yet in place.

<sup>32</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/economy-works-people/jobs-growth-and-investment/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en)

The CyLLLS, recognising the need for further developments in this area, supports any efforts on establishing validation and assessment processes, introducing quality standards for non-formal learning programmes, and forming links between validation arrangements and credit systems.

## Health and wellbeing

Lifelong learning could function as an instrument to promote individual and societal wellbeing. Continuous personal and professional development allows citizens to be flexible and adaptable to their rapidly changing context, building resilience to challenges and crises. This may increase opportunities for career progression and higher wages as means for a better quality of life. More importantly, lifelong learning also opens prospects for socialization and social participation. The socio-emotional outcomes of learning such as self-confidence and self-efficacy are important factors for an increased sense of health and well-being for individuals. In this respect, the CyLLLS aspires to contribute to citizens' health and wellbeing by providing opportunities for education and training.

## Lifelong learning culture

Participation in lifelong learning programmes entails positive dispositions towards learning. These views consist of attitudes cultivated from the first stages of schooling and often lead to higher education and career expectations. On that account, teachers and parents have a key role in promoting lifelong learning values to children. Similarly, public efforts can contribute to forming a lifelong learning culture by mitigating potential obstacles for learners and providing meaningful incentives to participate in education and training. The CyLLLS recognises the importance of lifelong learning culture and aspires to establish a new approach towards learning that supports each learner's growth.

# 4. Strategic Priorities and Objectives of the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy

The strategic priorities presented in this chapter emerged from the in-depth research conducted during the period of July 2020 – July 2021. These priorities were fine-tuned during the numerous consultations that took place with all key stakeholders and social partners. The extensive research and consultations highlighted the most important gaps and needs of the lifelong learning system in Cyprus. To achieve the vision of the CyLLLS, four strategic priorities and objectives were defined, which provide the long-term strategic framework of lifelong learning towards the development of a knowledge-based and inclusive society. At the same time, experts from the national and European scene provided guidance on effective strategic design and planning based on successful examples and best practices. The four key priorities are:

- 1. Establish the governance, monitoring, and evaluation framework** that entails policy arrangements, action plans, with clear stakeholder roles, and sound financial management. Key performance indicators and criteria are also required to ensure quality assurance and facilitate ongoing continuous improvements.
- 2. Decrease youth unemployment and upskill/reskill youth and the workforce** through the provision of learning opportunities that matched with the labour market needs and take into consideration the digital and green transitions, giving emphasis to people at risk and upskilling/reskilling the national workforce.
- 3. Increase the participation of adults in lifelong learning** by improving the quality of the adult education sector, providing incentives to individuals and enterprises, eliminating barriers, and enhancing outreach and communication.
- 4. Enhance the professional practice of adult educators and trainers**, and support educators of all education levels to develop lifelong learning skills.



## Strategic priority 1: Governance, Monitoring, and Evaluation Framework

### 1.1 Establish the governing and financial management

The implementation of lifelong learning brings together various stakeholders, and as such a strong management is required. Coordination among key stakeholders is always challenging but vital for reaching a consensus towards a common vision and objectives. Each stakeholder needs to have a clear role and responsibility for the collective implementation of the strategy so that operations and processes are aligned. Therefore, a robust and comprehensive institutional framework is essential for the successful and efficient execution of the lifelong learning strategy while allowing flexibility, for a sustainable and long-lasting developments. Similarly, as financial resources for lifelong learning originate from various public and private sources, a general financial management and detailed analysis-based budgeting are required to advocate for the efficient utilization of resources.

### 1.2 Establish the monitoring and evaluation framework

Monitoring and evaluation are key parts of every strategy and its successful implementation. Due to the com-



plexities of lifelong learning, a more systematic supervision is required. Also, the monitoring authority needs to be legally entitled to ask for evidence, follow the actions, and advise the stakeholders involved to ensure the predefined performance levels. Therefore, access to data needs to be ensured. Performance management and quality assurance should be based on clear, specific, predefined, and measurable indicators and criteria. Key performance indicators need to be utterly aligned with the priorities of the strategy.

## Strategic priority 2: Decrease Youth Unemployment and Upskill/reskill Youth and the Workforce

### 2.1 Align education provision with labour market needs

Supply and demand on skills need to be aligned. To achieve this, all levels of education need to ensure that learners acquire a sufficient level of basic skills, as well as positive expectations towards their academic success. Alternative pathways should be provided to cover the needs of all individuals, while taking into consideration the need for a digital and green transition. At the same time, education provision should get informed about the labour market demands, based on explicit forecasts surveys and reports. Also, close tracking and monitoring of graduates can ensure that mismatches are addressed and confronted. The education and labour market gap can be mitigated only if there are close collaborations, synergies, and alliances. The lifelong learning strategy envisions that such partnerships should systematically and methodically begin to ensue.

### 2.2 Establish targeted measures for people at risk.

Under the values of equality, fairness, and inclusion, education and training need to be provided equally and fairly. This implies providing equalizing steppingstones and opportunities to people at risk. Access to information, availability of programmes, and existence of upskilling pathways are key elements in the lifelong learning sector. An analysis-based segmentation is required to identify certain target groups as well as their needs, leading to more targeted and effective efforts.

### 2.3 Re-skilling youth and the workforce

Human resource is the most valuable asset of a country, so individuals need to continuously develop their skills and qualifications, following new world developments, such as the digital and green transitions. Employers and employees need to understand and appreciate that further training will make them more effective and marketable, therefore, they need to be given smart incentives to participate without shortfalls. Learning and competences gained through working experience constitute a crucial step for progress, so an official validation and recognition system is required.

## Strategic priority 3: Increase the Participation of Adults in Lifelong Learning

### 3.1 Improve the quality of adult education provision

Adult learning is an integral part of lifelong learning and offers opportunities for personal and professional development at an individual level. It also contributes to growth and economic stability of societies. Adult education and training should open prospects to all adults to develop their skills and competences, either these are basic, digital, global, transversal etc. Developing competences may enhance inclusive, sustainable, and more resilient societies and lead to personal well-being as it increases the possibilities for success in life. Therefore, a comprehensive national framework for adult learning and its measures will support the quality of the sector.

### 3.2 Θέσπιση κινήτρων για συμμετοχή και εξάλειψη των εμποδίων

Aligned with the values of equity and quality, lifelong learning should be accessible and relevant to all adults. By addressing and giving incentives, particularly to people at risk for participating in education and training, progress becomes coherent and collective. Upskilling and reskilling require collaborative efforts to tackle the barriers of participation. In that respect financial and other types of incentives to institutions and organisations can open new pathways for individuals.

### 3.3 Improve outreach and awareness

Adult education and training provision remains unreached and ineffective if it is not communicated. Open and continuous access to information and occasional campaigns about available programmes are essential to maintain public and sustained outreach. Targeted activities reaching specific groups of people are proven more effective. An important point to consider is that online communication activities do not always bring the desired results, especially when adults with limited digital skills are targeted. Communication does not imply only access to information about available programmes but also about the benefits of lifelong learning at all levels (i.e., personal, professional, societal).

### 3.4 Develop and offer programs for non-job related learning

A holistic approach of lifelong learning should offer a balanced emphasis on academic subjects, job-related development, socio-emotional fulfilment, citizenship education and well-being and promote skills for life. Lifelong learning should be provided in multiple forms, shapes, and structures. In this sense, non-job related learning is seen as a possibility for individuals to unfold their unique potential giving purpose, meaning, and direction to their lives.

## Strategic priority 4: Teachers, Trainers, Youth Workers, and Adult Educators

### 4.1 Enhance the professional practice of youth workers, trainers, and adult educators, and support of a number of teachers of all education levels to develop lifelong learning skills.

Teachers' and school leaders' role are essential for building a lifelong learning culture and infuse the passion for learning at an early age. The teaching profession is aligned with the essence of lifelong learning, therefore, teaching staff of all education levels should be equipped with lifelong learning skills and infuse them into their daily practice. Youth workers, trainers, and adult educators need to be better supported and trained, as their profession does not imply any prescribed professional pathway. They are professionals with a wide variety of qualities usually derived from their field of specialization and subjects of knowledge, but also keen to gain qualifications for delivering education. However, the absence of regulatory mechanisms affects their professionalization and working conditions. It is essential that a focus is placed on their professional status and support with innovative approaches and resources, which is also expected to increase the quality of the adult education sector.

## 5. Key Performance Indicators

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) presented below were selected to support and monitor the achievement of the strategic priorities. Similar to the strategic priorities, these indicators emerged through extensive research and consultations with the relevant stakeholders, and they take into consideration the national and European contexts. Each strategic priority is supervised by specific indicators which forms the main measures including the timeframe of attainment or the requested target for 2027. However, within the monitoring, quality assurance, and evaluation framework, supporting indicators can be added and existing ones modified as needed, by the National and Technical Committees.

A/A	Indicator	Target	Data source
<b>Strategic priority 1: Governance, Monitoring, and Evaluation Framework</b>			
1	Comprehensive governance and institutional framework for the lifelong learning strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational structure and organogram with the roles and responsibilities of involved authorities and stakeholders (internal rules of procedure/short document preparation).</li> </ul>	2022/2023	National and Technical Committees <sup>33</sup>
2	Analytical public spending on LLL as a % of GDP and total education spending <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For each authority/stakeholder who assigns a budget for LLL, a detailed breakdown will be provided for each year/period to be agreed by the National and Technical Committees.</li> </ul>	Yearly	National and Technical Committees
3	Internal/External evaluation process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring and evaluation procedures for ensuring quality and continuous improvement. Specific roles and responsibilities will be assigned for the internal and external evaluators.</li> </ul>	2023	National and Technical Committees
4	Monitor and evaluation framework report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The framework for the monitoring of the strategy will be developed based on detailed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and data sources.</li> </ul>	2023	National and Technical Committees
5	Monitoring reports with recommendations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mid monitoring and a final evaluation report will be prepared, which will include specific recommendations for improving the strategy and adjustments that might be needed.</li> </ul>	Mid monitoring report and final report	National and Technical Committees
<b>Strategic priority 2: Decrease Youth Unemployment</b>			
6	Share of early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	< 9%	Annual Statistics of Education
7	Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	65%	Labour Force Survey
8	Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age, and labour status (NEET rates) [15-34]	< 10%	Labour Force Survey
9	Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year) [ISCED 3-8]	85%	Labour Force Survey
10	Employment rate (20-64 years old) <sup>34</sup>	80%	Labour Force Survey
11	Number of participants for the integration of the unemployed and inactive persons into employment	Yearly	HRDA
12	Number of participants in lifelong learning programmes for the employed	Yearly	HRDA
13	Low-skilled adults participation rate in education and training	Yearly	Labour Force Survey

<sup>33</sup> The responsible authorities for implementing and monitoring the strategy are the National and Technical Committees. These two committees will decide whether a new body will be established, or if their role will be revised to improve their implementation capacity

<sup>34</sup> The national target for the employment rate is for the age group 20-64 so as to be in line with the European target (78% by 2030). However, the target will also be monitored for the age group 15-29 for which data are available.

Strategic priority 3: Increase the Participation of Adults in Lifelong Learning			
14	Number of certified vocational training centres, trainers of vocational training and vocational training facilities	Yearly	HRDA ( <a href="#">System for the Assessment and Accreditation of Training Providers</a> )
15	Policy framework for the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning	By 2023	MESY
16	Percentage of individuals (16-74) with basic or above basic overall digital skills	70%	ICT survey
17	Centralized digital platform to inform about available programmes and number of visitors	By 2023/Yearly	National and Technical Committees/DMRID
18	Adult participation rate in education and training (last 12 months)	60%	Adult Education Survey

Strategic priority 4: Teachers, Trainers, and Adult Educators			
19	Framework on the professional status of adult educators	2024	National and Technical Committees
20	Compulsory training programme offered to adult educators with no educational background	2027	MESY/CPI
21	Enhanced professional practice of teachers of all levels to develop lifelong learning skills	2027	MESY/CPI



## 6. Action Plan

Indicative actions towards the accomplishment of each priority will be presented in an Action Plan, which will accompany the CyLLLS 2021-2027 as a separate document. The action plan will be developed in consultation with all key stakeholders and social partners, with the aim to support the National and Technical Committees to fulfil their mission and guide future efforts. It will be also used as a mapping instrument to set the timeline of activities and bring together undertakings from other authorities towards a common work line within the national lifelong learning system. The National and Technical Committees, which are responsible for implementing and monitoring the strategy, may revise and adjust the Action Plan and indicators, as needed during the implementation of this strategy. It is also noted that the Action Plan will be used in conjunction with the horizontal pillars, strategic priorities and KPIs as presented in the Sections 3, 4 and 5 for the effective alignment of efforts with the vision of the CyLLLS 2021-2027.

## Annex 1: Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>CARDET</b>	Centre for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology
<b>CCES</b>	Career Counselling and Educational Services
<b>CPC</b>	Cyprus Productivity Centre
<b>CyLLLS</b>	Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy (2021-2027)
<b>CyQF</b>	Cyprus Qualifications Framework
<b>DG GROWTH</b>	Directorate General Growth, Ministry of Finance (DG Growth, Ministry of Finance)
<b>DG REFORM</b>	Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support of the European Commission
<b>DHE</b>	Department of Higher Education
<b>DMRID</b>	Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy
<b>EAEA</b>	European Association for the Education of Adults
<b>EPALE</b>	Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe
<b>EQF</b>	European qualifications framework
<b>FMELLP</b>	Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes
<b>HRDA</b>	Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus
<b>KY.S.A.T.S</b>	Cyprus Council of Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications
<b>MLWSI</b>	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
<b>MESY</b>	Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth
<b>MoF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>Mol</b>	Ministry of Interior
<b>SVQs</b>	System of Vocational Qualifications
<b>YBC</b>	Youth Board of Cyprus

# Annexes

## Annex 2: European and International Policies and Initiatives

### European and International policies and initiatives that the Cyprus Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021-2027 also takes into consideration:

[UN Sustainable Development Goals](#)  
[European Pillar of Social Rights](#)  
[EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024](#)  
[The European Digital Strategy](#)

### Funding and financial aid

[Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 \(MFF\)](#)  
[Recovery plan for Europe](#)  
[NextGenerationEU](#)  
[The Recovery and Resilience Facility](#)  
[European Social Fund](#)  
[The Digital Europe Programme](#)

### Skills

[Pact for Skills](#)  
[Europass](#)  
[Skills Panorama](#)

### Employment

[European Employment Services \(EURES\)](#)  
[European network of Public Employment Services](#)

### Adult Learning

[European Qualifications Framework \(EQF\)](#)  
[ET 2020 Working Groups](#)  
[Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe \(EPALE\)](#)

### Education and training

[Erasmus+ 2021-2027](#)  
[Horizon Europe](#)

### Selected Relevant Council Recommendations and Resolutions

- Communication from the Commission on The European Green Deal<sup>35</sup>
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Digital Education Action Plan (17 January 2018)<sup>36</sup>
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Digital Education Action Plan 2021-2027 Resetting Education and Training for the Digital Age (30 September 2020)<sup>37</sup>
- Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on Inclusion in Diversity to achieve a High Quality Education for All (25 February 2017)<sup>38</sup>
- Council conclusions on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) (12 May 2009)<sup>39</sup>
- Council conclusions on countering the COVID-19 crisis in education and training (26 June 2020)<sup>40</sup>
- Council conclusions on digital education in Europe's knowledge societies (1 December 2020)<sup>41</sup>
- Council conclusions on European teachers and trainers for the future (9 June 2020)<sup>42</sup>
- Council conclusions on moving towards a vision of a European Education Area (7 June 2018)<sup>43</sup>
- Council conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school (15 December 2015)<sup>44</sup>
- Council Conclusions on school development and excellent teaching (8 December 2017)<sup>45</sup>
- Council conclusions on the key role of lifelong learning policies in empowering societies to address the technological and green transition in support of inclusive and sustainable growth (18 November 2019)<sup>46</sup>
- Council Recommendation on a Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing the Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee (30 October 2020)<sup>47</sup>
- Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (15 March 2018)<sup>48</sup>

<sup>35</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2019%3A640%3AFIN>

<sup>36</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2018%3A22%3AFIN>

<sup>37</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0624>

<sup>38</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017XG0225\(02\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017XG0225(02)&from=EN)

<sup>39</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A52009XG0528%2801%29>

<sup>40</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020XG0626%2801%29>

<sup>41</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020XG1201%2802%29>

<sup>42</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2020.193.01.0011.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2020.193.01.0011.01.ENG)

<sup>43</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018XG0607\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52018XG0607(01))

<sup>44</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=celex%3A52015XG1215%2803%29>

<sup>45</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52017XG1208%2801%29>

<sup>46</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52019XG1118%2801%29>

<sup>47</sup> [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1104\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32020H1104(01)&from=EN)

<sup>48</sup> <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0502%2801%29>

- Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults (19 December 2016)<sup>49</sup>
- Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning (20 December 2012)<sup>50</sup>
- Council Recommendation on tracking graduates (20 November 2017)<sup>51</sup>
- Council recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (22 May 2017)<sup>52</sup>
- Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning (22 May 2018)<sup>53</sup>
- Council Recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching (22 May 2018)<sup>54</sup>
- Council Recommendation on High-Quality Early Childhood Education and Care Systems (22 May 2019)<sup>55</sup>
- Council Recommendation on vocational education and training (VET) for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness, and resilience (24 November 2020)<sup>56</sup>
- Council Resolution on education and training in the European Semester: ensuring informed debates on reforms and investments (27 February 2020)<sup>57</sup>
- Council Resolution on further developing the European Education Area to support future-oriented education and training systems (18 November 2019)<sup>58</sup>
- Decision (EU) 2018/646 of the European Parliament and of the Council on a common framework for the provision of better services for skills and qualifications (Europass) (18 April 2018)<sup>59</sup>
- Declaration of Bologna (19 June 1999)<sup>60</sup>
- Joint Report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) – New priorities for European cooperation in education and training (15 December 2015)<sup>61</sup>
- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (18 June 2009)<sup>62</sup>
- Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of a European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) (18 June 2009)<sup>63</sup>

49 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC\\_2016\\_484\\_R\\_0001](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ%3AJOC_2016_484_R_0001)

50 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32012H1222%2801%29>

51 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H1209%2801%29>

52 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32017H0615%2801%29>

53 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ.C:2018:189:TOC](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2018.189.01.0001.01.ENG&toc=OJ.C:2018:189:TOC)

54 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32018H0607%2801%29>

55 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C\\_.2019.189.01.0004.01.ENG](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=uriserv:OJ.C_.2019.189.01.0004.01.ENG)

56 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020H1202%2801%29>

57 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32020G0227%2801%29>

58 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32019G1118%2801%29>

59 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32018D0646>

60 [https://www.eurashe.eu/library/bologna\\_1999\\_bologna-declaration-pdf/](https://www.eurashe.eu/library/bologna_1999_bologna-declaration-pdf/)

61 [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215\(02\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/GA/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52015XG1215(02))

62 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32009H0708%2801%29>

63 <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A32009H0708%2802%29>

## Selected relevant documents for Cyprus

[Education and Training Monitor 2020 Cyprus](#)

[Skills anticipation in Cyprus \(CEDEFOR\)](#)

[European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning 2018 – Cyprus \(CEDEFOP\)](#)

## HRDA

[Strategic Plan 2022-2024](#)

[Annual Report](#)

[Trends and Forecasts of Employment and Training Needs](#)

[Assessment and Evaluation of HRDA's Schemes](#)

[Vocational Education and Training Systems and Infrastructure Analysis](#)

[Specialized Studies on Human Resources](#)

[Employment Needs Forecasts](#)



## Annex 3: Organisations who Participated in the Consultations

	Organisation	Type of Consultation
Policy makers / Technocrats / Public authorities	National & Technical Committees	Internal Consultation / Workshop
	Directorate General Growth, Ministry of Finance (DG Growth, Ministry of Finance)	Consultation meeting / Workshop / Written feedback
Other departments of MESY	Permanent Secretary	Internal Consultations
	Office for European and International Affairs, Lifelong Learning and Adult Education	Internal Consultations / Consultation meeting
	Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation, and Digital Policy	Consultation meeting / Written feedback
	Department of Secondary General Education	Consultation meeting / Workshop / Written feedback
	Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education	Consultation meeting / Written feedback
	Department of Higher Education	Consultation meeting / Workshop / Written feedback
	Pedagogical Institute	Consultation meeting / Workshop
Other Ministries / Other Ministries departments	European Social Treasury Unit of Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance	Consultation meeting
	Department of Labour of Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance	Consultation meeting / Workshop / Written feedback
	Cyprus Productivity Centre of Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance	Workshop
	Public Administration and Personnel Department of Ministry of Finance	Consultation meeting
	Statistical Service of Cyprus of Ministry of Finance	Consultation meeting / Phone calls
	Civil Registry and Migration Department of the Ministry of Interior (Mol)	Workshop / Written feedback
	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment	Consultation meeting / Written feedback
Semi Independent organisations	Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA)	Consultation meeting / Workshop / Written feedback
	Foundation for the Management of European Lifelong Learning Programmes	Consultation meeting / Phone calls / Workshop / Written feedback
	Youth Board of Cyprus	Consultation meeting / Workshop / Written feedback

Universities	Open University of Cyprus (OUC)	Consultation meeting
	Cyprus University of Technology (CUT)	Consultation meeting
	University of Nicosia (UNIC)	Consultation meeting
	European University of Cyprus (EUC)	Consultation meeting
Social partners	POED, Pancyprian Organization of Greek Teachers	Consultation meeting / Written feedback
	PEO, Pancyprian Federation of Labour	Consultation meeting
	Cyprus Employers & Industrialists Federation (OEB)	Consultation meeting / Workshop
	Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Consultation meeting
European partners	Centre for the Advancement of Research & Development in Educational Technology (CARDET)	Consultation meeting / Workshop
	European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA)	Internal Consultations / Workshop
	NGO support center	Workshop
	European Commission - Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion (DG EMPL)	Workshop
	Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM)	Internal Consultations / Workshop

## Annex 4: Key EU indicators and targets<sup>64</sup>

Indicator	CY 2020	CY Goal 2027	EU targets (2030) <sup>65 66</sup>	Data source
Share of low achieving 15-year-olds in basic skills (2018)				CPI
Reading	43.7%	20%	< 15%	CPI
Math	36.9%	20%	< 15%	CPI
Science	39.0%	20%	< 15%	CPI
Share of early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	11.5%	< 9%	< 9%	CPI
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	57.8%	65%	at least 45% (25-34)	Education and Training monitor
Young people neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET rates) [15-34]	15.1%	<10%	< 9%	Eurostat
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year) [ISCED 3-8]	78.6%	85%	80% (25-64) (2025)	Education and Training monitor
Employment rate (20-64 years old) <sup>67</sup>	74.9%	80%	78%	Labour Force Survey
Indicator	2016	2027	EU targets (2025)	Source
Participation rate in education and training (last 12 months)	48.1%	60% <sup>68</sup>	At least 47%	Adult Education Survey
Percentage of individuals (16-74) with basic or above basic overall digital skills	45% (2019)	70%	70%	Eurostat

<sup>64</sup> The table presents for each of the key Indicators, where Cyprus stands as of 2020, then the target for 2027, and the EU targets for 2030

<sup>65</sup> European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030): [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226\(01\)&from=EN](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021G0226(01)&from=EN)

<sup>66</sup> European Skills Agenda: <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&langId=en>

<sup>67</sup> The national target for the employment rate is for the age group 20-64 so as to be in line with the European target (78% by 2030). However, the target will also be monitored for the age group 15-29 for which data are available.

<sup>68</sup> Based on the Proposal of the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance to the Council of Ministers (April 2022) on 'National targets for employment, participation in lifelong learning and poverty', Cyprus has set as a national target of "at least 61% of adults participating in training" by 2030 (adult participation in learning in the past 12 months) (Ref: 93.002, dated 4/5/2022).