

CYPRUS

AND THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND

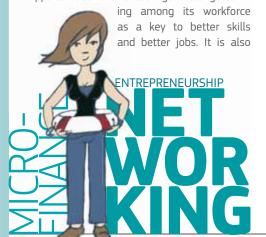
Cyprus is deploying ESF funding to equip workers with new skills and competences such that they can drive the modernisation of the country's economy. And support for women, young people, older workers and the low-skilled is helping them get jobs and raise their living standards. At the same time, the education system is being redesigned to raise standards and ensure young Cypriots have the best qualifications and prospects for their future working lives.

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY: THE CHALLENGES FOR CYPRUS

Cyprus is investing in more technology-centred, innovative enterprises and the workers they need. Cypriot SMEs have traditionally depended on low-skilled workers to maintain productivity growth. However, to improve competitiveness and create better jobs, the government is now actively helping SMEs to switch towards a higher-skilled workforce who can use the latest information and production technologies.

To achieve this, some imbalances in supply and demand in the Cypriot labour market are being addressed. On the one hand, while Cyprus has a highly educated workforce by international standards, Cypriot enterprises do not have the jobs for them. This is particularly true for young tertiary education graduates. So, upgrading SMEs is vital to provide jobs for this group and to prevent a brain drain from the country. On the other hand, the current low-skilled workforce – which has a large immigrant component – must upgrade its skills to meet new demands from employers and ensure it is not left behind as SMEs modernise.

With this in mind, Cyprus is using ESF funding to significantly boost vocational training opportunities and encourage lifelong learn-



investing in better links between tertiary education institutions and Cypriot SMEs to provide career pathways for graduates.

"Boosting vocational training"

In addition, there is an effort under way to increase job opportunities and prospects for women. Cyprus has relatively high overall employment levels, but traditional attitudes to gender roles, as well as a lack of child-care facilities, means fewer women work than men. So, to offer more choice to women, and contribute to combating the impacts of an ageing population, Cyprus is addressing issues such as work-life balance, flexible working and training opportunities to attract more women into jobs.

ESF spending in Cyprus

Each Member State manages its ESF funding according to the challenges it faces. For the period 2007-2013, Cyprus is receiving nearly EUR 120 million of ESF funds which, with matching national funding, brings the total spending on jobs, skills and social cohesion to over EUR 149 million. ESF activities are implemented through a single Operational Programme with two main priorities that address the need to improve people's skills and bring more people into work – particularly from vulnerable groups like immigrants and women.

CYPRUS' ESF PRIORITIES

Better workers for better jobs

ESF funding in this area is focused on better education and training. For example: by modernising the education system and training teachers to improve results; and by building better links between universities and enterprises to ensure workers' new qualifications and skills do offer better job prospects - measures that are reaching some thousands of people in many companies. The ESF is also helping develop vocational education and training in parallel to setting up a National Qualifications System, as well as promoting lifelong learning opportunities, so that workers can benefit from a diverse range of job opportunities. Many people are participating in such projects each year and Cyprus aims to increase lifelong learning participation to 12.5% of the population.

"More chances in the job market"

One project example is the training and education opportunities offered to workers in the tourism sector, who can train to boost their job skills during the winter 'low season' with support from their employers and the government. ESF funding is also helping improve workers' productivity by giving them specialised training.

Investing in a larger workforce

ESF measures are targeting around 9500 people without jobs and in particular women, young people and the long-term unemployed. They are receiving training to improve their job prospects, while employers are being helped to adopt flexible working practices for people with dependents, and cost-sharing is used to help some thousands of disabled. older and vulnerable people get into work. Furthermore, young graduates are receiving company placements to gain experience and offer their newly-acquired knowledge to SMEs. The 'New Modern Apprenticeship system' is providing on-the-iob training to young people without school qualifications - ensuring they get a second chance in the job market and improve their living standards.

ESF funding is also helping companies improve their competitiveness by developing business plans for renewed growth.

THE ESF IN CYPRUS: SOME EXAMPLES

Fair chances for all

The Programme for Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP) is tackling antisocial behaviour in schools and thus reduce drop-out rates and inequalities in educational attainment. It aims to ensure that all students leave secondary education with qualifications. The initiative concentrates on raising young people's self-esteem, teaching them to manage their feelings better, and addressing issues of 'perceived failure'. In doing this, the goal is to ensure that all students have the skills required for good job prospects.

Evolving businesses

The e-Volve project is boosting e-business skills among Cyprus' enterprises and workers. It offers seminars, training and consultancy services on e-business issues and best practice. The project targets 2 500 companies and individuals in total, with 700 receiving consultancy services. There is also a business-awareness campaign to promote the take-up of e-business practices, including the production of educational films.

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