

# THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND



## Support to Education and Training: 2014-2018

CYPRUS

### SUMMARY

ESF Thematic Objective 10 funding is used to support education, training and vocational training for skills and lifelong learning. Over 20 million euro has been allocated to such operations in Cyprus, with 732 participations having taken place by the end of 2018. This factsheet summarises the main actions, outputs, results and lessons learned so far in the use of this funding in Cyprus.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Early school leaving (ESL) rate (%)



- ▶ The **early school leaving rate** is relatively low in Cyprus and has remained below the EU 2020 target of 10% since 2014. However, it has fluctuated in those years, increasing particularly between 2015 and 2017. The rate of 7.8% in 2018 remains below the EU28 average but marks an increase from the rate at the start of the programming period. The rate for men (9.9% in 2018) is higher than that for women (6% in 2018).

Tertiary educational attainment rate (%)  
(30-34 year olds)



- ▶ Cyprus is performing well in terms of **tertiary education**, with a very high attainment rate of 57.1% in 2018 compared to the EU average of 40.7%. However, there is a mismatch between tertiary education and the needs of the labour market.

- ▶ There is a low and decreasing **adult participation rate in education and training**. The rate was 6.7% in 2018, below the EU28 average of 11.1%.

- ▶ OECD 2015 data shows that underachievement in basic skills (reading, maths, science) remains high. **Digital skills** are low with only 50% of people with basic digital skills and a high proportion (26%) of people that have never used the internet.

Participation rate in education and training by adults  
aged 25-64 (%) (last 4 weeks)



- ▶ **Total general government expenditure on education** has declined slightly in recent years but remains just above the EU28 average. In 2017, the rate in Cyprus was 5.7%, while the EU28 average was 4.6%.

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES

ESF European Social Fund

TO10 Thematic Objective 10

OP Operational Programme

IP Investment Priority

\* Figures present the situation for ESF operations under Thematic Objective 10 and its four Investment Priorities (IPs) for the programming period 2014-2020 implemented up to the end of 2018, as reported on 1 October 2019. In many instances, operations are not yet complete at this stage, or have only recently started.

\* As one person could participate more than once in ESF operations over time, the number of participations is reported. These figures exclude Technical Assistance.

\* Where the breakdown of participants according to employment status, age, and level of education does not add up to 100%, it means that it was not possible to include characteristics of a number of participants in some OPs.

Support to Education and Training: 2014-2018

## ESF PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS IN CYPRUS

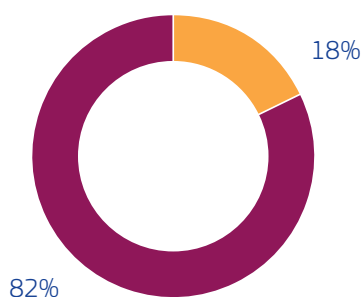
- ▶ There is **one** ESF Operational Programme in Cyprus: OP Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion.
- ▶ The OP has the following priorities relevant to Thematic Objective 10 (TO10):
  - ▶ Better **aligning the education system to the needs of the labour market** through developing the vocational education and training system and promoting apprenticeships;
  - ▶ **Promoting lifelong learning** through the validation of non-formal and informal learning, and the expansion of the national qualifications framework.

15% of total ESF funding<sup>1</sup>...

€20 000 000

...is allocated to the following TO10 investment priorities: **enhancing access to lifelong learning (18%), and improving the labour market relevance of education and training (82%).**

Allocation of ESF TO10 funds



○ Enhancing access to lifelong learning - IP10.iii

○ Improving the labour market relevance of education and training - IP10.iv

## STATE OF PLAY

144% of planned resources under TO10 had been allocated in 2018, with 35% spent.

Number of overall participations in TO10 operations by the end of 2018:

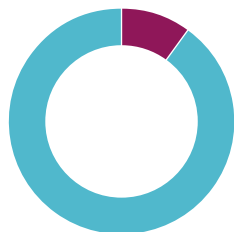
▶ **732** participations in operations to enhance access to lifelong learning

**732**

<sup>1</sup> This includes EU-only funding and co-financing from the Member State.

## PARTICIPANT PROFILES WHEN RECEIVING SUPPORT

Employment status



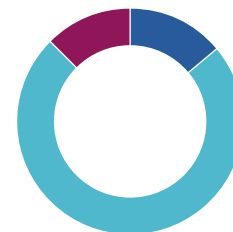
**10% (73)** Unemployed  
**0% (0)** Inactive<sup>2</sup>  
**90% (659)** Employed

Sex

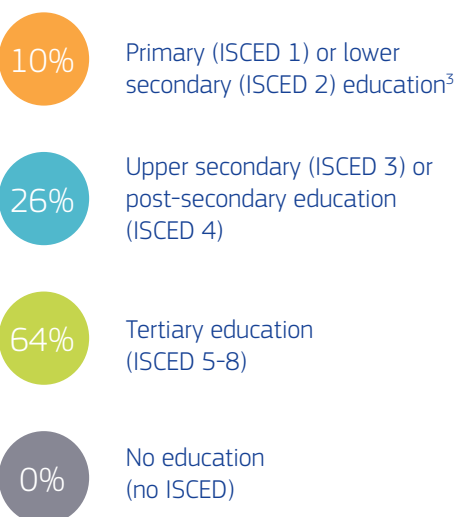
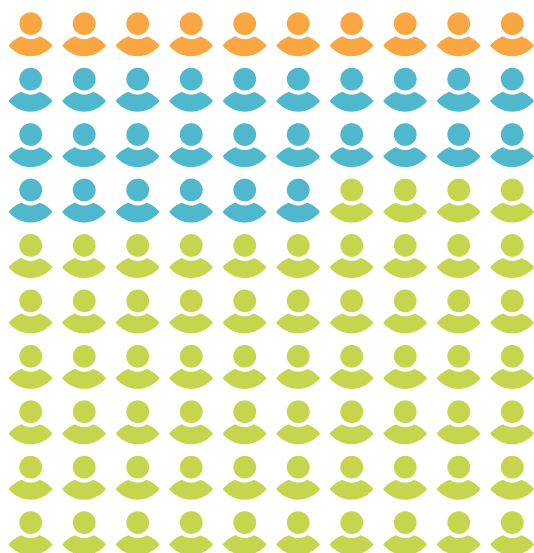


**50%** Women  
**50%** Men

Age



**13% (95)** <25 years  
**69% (502)** 25-54 years  
**11.5% (135)** >54 years



**40**  
Migrants

**0**  
Other disadvantaged

**1**  
Participants with disabilities

**0**  
Homeless

**Key achievements to date** of ESF T010 activities in Cyprus include<sup>4</sup>:

- ▶ **636** successful results have been achieved to date following participation in an operation funded by ESF T010, of which:
  - ▶ By end of 2018, 35 new VET programmes had been designed as part of the action to develop Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Cyprus, well over-achieving the milestone set in the Performance Framework (18) and on track to achieving the target of 53 by 2023.
  - ▶ Under the T010 operation to facilitate work placements for students in tertiary education, all universities in the country were on board by the end of 2018, with liaison offices and support structures in place. However, work placements of students had not yet started.
- ▶ **636** participants gained a qualification

<sup>2</sup> The inactive population can include pre-school children, school children, students, pensioners and housewives or -men, for example, provided that they are not working and not available or looking for work.

<sup>3</sup> ISCED is the UN reference classification for organising education programmes and related qualifications by education levels and fields.

<sup>4</sup> Participants' data are collected when starting an operation. Data on results are collected at the end of an operation or even later. Because of this time lag the two sets of data (participations and results) should not be directly compared.

## LESSONS LEARNED SO FAR

### ► Alignment of ESF TO10 with EU recommendations and policy tools

The operations under ESF TO10 respond well to European Semester recommendations for Cyprus to increase the labour market relevance of its education system. They are also closely aligned with relevant EU frameworks – for example, the development of the new VET curricula and VET quality assurance frameworks are based on ECET and EQAVET.

### ► Adapting to local realities

Rural and mountainous regions in the country are characterised by an ageing demographic and development disparities. However, the territorial focus of the OP is on the country as whole. ESF operations could benefit from a greater focus on local territorial specificities to increase their effectiveness across both rural and urban areas.

### ► Employer engagement

The operations under TO10 in Cyprus require active participation of employers. During the first years of the programming period, the economic downturn in the country as a result of the crisis, meant that businesses – particularly SMEs that employ the majority of the workforce – were unable to engage as expected in actions (e.g. offering work placements for students). This heavily impacted the achievement of output and result indicators.

### ► Target audiences

ESF TO10 operations in Cyprus reach mainly employed people and those with tertiary education. Operations are not sufficiently reaching young people who are not in education, employment or training, although these are a key target group for operations under both investment priorities.

### ► Raising awareness of the need for certification

There is low interest from both unemployed and employed people in having their skills and qualifications certified. This may be linked to the lack of awareness around the benefits of certification both in the workforce and in the business world. Designing and implementing operations in consultation with stakeholders, including employer organisations and trade unions, may help to address this challenge.

## PROJECT EXAMPLES

### ► The Development of Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Cyprus

This is a landmark operation for the Cypriot education system and a direct response to recommendations under the European Semester. The operation aims to develop technical and vocational education and training for young people as well as adults through their participation in lifelong learning programmes. Curricula for 35 programmes have been developed, and other services (e.g. counselling, psychological services for students) are currently being designed and implemented.

### ► Establishing a mechanism for the validation of formal and non-formal learning

The aim of this operation is to enable individuals to validate their skills and competences, and acquire qualifications to support their educational and professional integration. By 2018, an action plan for the establishment of National Qualification Standards was completed.

### ► University labour market liaison offices

This operation aims to facilitate and increase the number of work placements for students in tertiary education by setting up dedicated offices in universities. As of 2018, all universities in Cyprus (3 public and 5 private) have established the liaison offices and support structures, though work placements of students have not yet started.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

<https://www.structuralfunds.org.cy/OP-Evaluations>

European Commission, Study supporting the evaluation of ESF support to education and training (Thematic Objective 10)

The ESF in Cyprus: <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/main.jsp?atId=373>

Website of the ESF in Cyprus: <https://www.structuralfunds.org.cy/>

