**Cyprus policy towards achieving the Europe 2020 strategy target for ESL**

**Introduction**

Cyprus is working towards achieving the national target of the EU2020 strategy, for reducing the ESL rate to 10% by 2020. Achieving the target set in the strategy is a top priority for Cyprus.

To achieve these goals and address the ESL problem, Cyprus, is working towards increasing the opportunities to keep young people in education and training. Particular emphasis is placed on prevention and early intervention programmes since leaving school early means lost opportunities for young people and loss of social and economic potential for each Member State, but also for the whole of the European Union.

For Cyprus prevention is of particular importance, since it is more effective and can provide better results. It is generally accepted and has been demonstrated by numerous studies, both in Cyprus and in other Member States , that early school leaving is mainly focused on specific groups of students and school population in specific areas and schools.

**Cyprus figures on ESL**

Starting form year 2003 Cyprus had a dropout rate of 17,3. According to the data available by CYSTAT (20/9/13) for the year 2012, the percentage of dropout rate was 11,4%. The data available by CYSTAT (20/9/13) for the 1st quarter of year 2013, was 10,9 and 7,9 for the 2nd quarter.

<http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/labour_31main_en/labour_31main_en?OpenForm&sub=1&sel=2> (LABOUR FORCE SURVEY - MAIN RESULTS, 2nd QUARTER 2013)

The latest figures show a dramatic decrease in the ESL rate that can be accounted both to the successful implementation of a series of programmes during the last few years and to the departure of many immigrant citizens from the country due to the severe economic conditions on the island. Cyprus will pay particular attention to the results of the coming months in order to verify the latest figures.

In order to meet the national target of reducing the rate of early school leavers by 2020, a series of priority measures with aim to facilitate the integration of students at risk, increase the attractiveness of technical vocational education and training and increase participation in Higher Education have been introduced.

**Policy and actions towards tackling ESL**

To tackle the issue, Cyprus has developed a comprehensive strategy that includes measures for the key stages of prevention, intervention and compensation. In all three stages Cyprus has implemented specific actions during the recent years. The most important objectives of these measures include the following:

1. **Restructuring the educational system and modernizing and upgrading the curriculum for all public schools (from Pre-primary to Upper Secondary Education);**

The main objective is to improve the openness and relevance of the education and training systems through the introduction of a new curriculum that will focus on the development of new skills and key competences.

**2. Facilitating the integration of students at risk to the school system;**

The measures referred hereafter envisage to facilitate school enrollment and school success as well as to effectively address any issues of antisocial and delinquent behavior factors that contribute to early school leaving phenomena. The quantitative target for these measures concerns the percentage of the total student population enrolled in an educational establishment belonging to a Zone of Educational Priority (ZEP), by raising the enrollment ratio to 15%.

**3. Upgrading Vocational Education and Training**

The measures presented here after aim to improve the quality and attractiveness of the education and training systems. They include actions other than the restructure of Upper Secondary and Secondary Technical and Vocational Education and are focused on expanding the quality of education and the opportunities presented to the students of Technical and Vocational Schools. The quantitative targets include raising the student population of Technical and Vocational Education.

**4. Strengthening the links between vocational education, training and the labor market;**

All efforts are currently shifted in the creation of an intermediate level of education, between upper secondary and tertiary, which will offer to learners at affordable cost, education and training programs complementary to the ones offered by Private Colleges. The quantitative target is the operation of at least one Post Secondary Institute for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (PSITVE) in all provinces by 2012 and the enrollment of the total of 196 students at the first year of their operation.

**5. Expanding the modernizing the higher education system; and**

In order to be able to increase the number of students attending Higher Education the Ministry of Education and Culture, other competent ministries, such as the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labor and Social Securities, High Education Institutions, businesses, local industries and the labor market are enhancing their cooperation towards the development of an action plan for reinforcing the links between Higher Education and the labor market. The quantitative targets include the increase at 20-22% of the students attending programs of study related to science and technology by 2020.

**6. Promoting transnational mobility.**

This measure has a strong element on geographical mobility as well as the promotion of Lifelong Learning. The aim is to encourage all students and adults to actively participate in EU mobility programs for education, training or employment placements in enterprises abroad. The quantitative target is none other than the increase of the number of participants.