National strategy

There is no special national strategy tackling ELET in Cyprus. However, a special mention of the topic was made in the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2014-2020 [1] of the Republic of Cyprus. The National LLL Strategy was developed by the Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development (DG EPCD) in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance (MLWSI), the Human Resource Development Authority (HRDA) and the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC) and was approved by the Council of Ministers in June 2014. The Strategy targets all age groups of the Cypriot population.

More specifically, in the 2nd priority axis of the Strategy named “Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training”, it is stated, among others, that “the measures to be implemented under this axis will aim, inter alia, to ensure the acquisition of basic skills and competencies by all citizens and reducing early school leaving”. In addition, in the 3rd priority axis, there is also a reference to the conduct of surveys and studies for i) evaluating the effectiveness of actions related to early school leaving (ESL) and for ii) identifying positive actions related to ESL in order to upgrade and expand them to more schools.

The responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the LLL Strategy is delegated to: a) the National LLL Committee which has an enlarged composition, comprised of the services and organizations with major involvement in the provision of LLL and the social partners, and b) the Technical LLL Committee which assists the National LLL Committee and is comprised of the representatives of the DG EPCD, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth, the MLWSI, the
In the 2014 Eurydice report "Tackling Early Leaving from Education and Training in Europe: Strategies, Policies and Measures" (see pp. 174-175), a number of other measures and individual policies are also presented and concern different levels of education (e.g. pre-primary, VET, etc.).

No evidence-based monitoring of the implementation of the specific measure on ELET of the LLL Strategy is available.

**Formal education: main policy measures on ELET**

The most important initiative implemented at top-level for preventing early school leaving is the "Activities of School and Social Inclusion (DRA.S.E.)" (Δράσεις Σχολικής και Κοινωνικής Ένταξης [3]). The project aims to support, expand and improve the outcomes of the previous programme against "Early School Leaving, School Failure and Delinquency in Zones of Educational Priority" (p. 514), which was implemented during the 2007-2013 programming period. Based on the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth Annual Report 2018 [5], for the school year 2017/2018, the project ran in 96 school units and 14.5% of the total pupil population has been benefited by actions provided through the project. The project’s objective is to cover 15% of the pupil population by 2020. It is implemented in all levels of education, from pre-primary and primary to lower and upper-secondary education as well as technical schools. The project is 85 % funded by the European Social Fund and it will be into force between 2014-2020.

In the DRA.S.E. project, the following programme actions are being implemented, as they were described in the Ministry of Education and Culture Annual Report 2018.

Provision of morning and afternoon programmes to reinforce pupils and their families learning and creativity:

a) Reinforcing Teaching and Learning during school time
   - Pre-primary Schools
   - Primary Schools (Greek Language - Mathematics)
   - Secondary Schools (Modern Greek - Philology, Greek for bilinguals, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Economics)

b) Creative programmes during school time
   - Theatre, Art, Physical Education (Sports / Dance), Home Economics, Musical Instrument, Music

c) Teaching and Creative Programmes during afternoon Time
   - Greek language/Modern Greek/Philology, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Computer Science, Theatre, Art, Home Economics, Physical Education (Sports / Dance), Economics, Music Instrument (Guitar / Bouzouki / Piano), Music, Foreign Languages (Arabic, Bulgarian, Russian, Turkish)
   - Psychosocial support for pupils and their families through the establishment of “Information and Social-emotional Support Centres”
   - Supply of technological school equipment and educational tools/materials
   - Seminars and training for teachers
As it was already mentioned in the section 6.1 (Main trends [6]), there is also the programme (p. 514) of intensive teaching of the Greek Language in secondary education public schools for children with a migrant background. The programme supports both the inclusion of all youngsters and contributes, in long-term, to the prevention of early school leaving.

As for ELVET-specific measures, there is not a specific strategy, but the most important measures that are still in progress are mentioned in the Eurydice report of 2014 [7] (p. 174). Indicatively, the most important are:

- The New Modern Apprenticeship [8] (NMA) Programme which started its operation in the school year 2012/2013. The NMA provides an alternative pathway for education, training and development for young people who drop out from the formal education system and is geared towards meeting the needs of the labour market. The NMA embraces young people between 14 and 21 years of age at two apprenticeship levels (preparatory and core). Participation is not compulsory and is free of charge.
- The Evening Technical Schools (Εσπερινά Σχολεία [9]) are second chance schools that have been established to promote participation in secondary technical and vocational education and to combat early leaving. The Evening Technical schools target any person above 18 years old who, for any reason, has dropout school.

**Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work**

There is no policy, programme, project and initiative - either directly organised or funded – by top level authorities aiming at preventing and reducing ELET through non-formal and informal learning.

However, the first 3-year Action Plan for the implementation of the National Youth Strategy 2017-2022 [10] (Εθνική Στρατηγική για τη Νεολαία 2017-2022 [11]) states that non-formal educational activities and classes (such as theatre, sports and arts) are offered to children and teenagers of migrant background in the Reception and Accommodation Centers for Applicants of International Protection so as to support their skills and educational background.

**Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions**

In regards to the existence of policies/programmes/projects/initiatives supporting multi-agency partnerships between the main categories of professionals working to address early leaving at school and community level, the Eurydice report of 2014 [7] (p. 174) mentions that in Cyprus “the policy areas of employment, social affairs and health are involved in the cooperation on tackling early leaving, but cooperation mechanisms have not yet been established. Multi-agency partnerships at local/institutional level are well established and involve both psychologists and guidance specialists. School heads, teachers, social workers, therapists, speech and language specialists, as well as other necessary specialised staff to help students with specific problems may also be associated within projects. Youth workers may also be involved”.

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth Annual Report 2018 (Ετήσια Έκθεση 2018 [12]) (p. 223-224) also mentions that the Coordinating Committee for Health Education and Citizenship (Συντονιστική Επιτροπή Αγωγής Υγείας και Πολιτότητας [13]) undertakes the coordination of health and citizenship issues in collaboration with all departments and other responsible units of the Ministry that deal with issues that affect the physical, mental and social well-being of students, such as the
DRA.S.E. Programme.

As for the project "Activities of School and Social Inclusion (DRA.S.E.)" (Δράσεις Σχολικής και Κοινωνικής Ενταξίας [14]), the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport and Youth Annual Report 2018 [5] mentions that there will be a programme evaluation which will include:

- Internal Evaluation
  a) Reports on creative and reinforcement teaching activities. Each educator will prepare an annual report on the creative and / or reinforcing teaching services provided.
  b) Experts’ Reports. Specialists providing psychosocial support will produce quarterly reports on the services provided.

- External Evaluation
  a) Final Project Evaluation / Project Report by external evaluator.

However, the report does not mention further information concerning the results of the evaluations undertaken the previous years of the programme’s implementation.

In an attempt to safeguard young people’s continuous participation in education and training, the Ministry of Labour Welfare and Social Insurance [15] also launched in 2017 the National Action Plan for Youth Employment [16] which implements the Youth Guarantee Recommendation in Cyprus. It endorses a wide range of actions that aim to reinforce youth employment and activate young people (especially NEETs) as regards available employment schemes, encourage them to register at the Public Employment Service [17] and provide substantial help in job search, education or training opportunities. Development, monitoring and evaluation is overseen by a cross-sectoral Working Group [18] which was established for the preparation of the National Action Plan for Youth Employment. This working group includes representatives from all implementing bodies, social partners and youth organisations.