The upgrading of the human resources through planned and regular actions constitutes the cornerstone of the efforts made in order to increase productivity and improve competitiveness in the Cypriot market. The establishment and operation of a System of Vocational Qualifications in Cyprus is expected to play a major role in this effort and is included among the priorities of the state. This crucial strategic objective constitutes a commitment of Cyprus vis-a-vis the European Union and has been included in the National Action Plan for Employment, the Lisbon Strategy Action Plan, as well as in the Operational Programme “Employment, Human Capital and Social Cohesion, 2007-2013”.

Proposal for a National Action Plan for the Establishment of non-formal and informal learning validation mechanisms

The proposed National Action Plan [1] for the Validation of Non-Formal and Informal Learning in Cyprus has been formulated as part of the second phase of the project "Preparation of a National Action Plan for the Establishment of Non-Formal and Informal Learning Validation Mechanisms".

The project is part of a larger project entitled "Establishing Non-Formal / Informal Learning Validation Mechanisms and Pilot Implementation", which is part of the Operational Program "Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion" 2014-2020.

The proposed National Action Plan contains elements on strategic targeting, principles, conditions, governance, and whatever is needed to operate a comprehensive non-formal and informal learning validation mechanism in Cyprus.

Upon completion of the National Action Plan, an Action Plan will be developed for the pilot implementation of the non-formal and informal learning validation mechanism in Cyprus in the fields of Volunteerism, Youth and Adult Education. The pilot implementation will be completed on 31/12/2023, during which date the co-funded project "Establishment of Non-Formal / Informal Learning Validation Mechanisms and Pilot Implementation" will be completed.

National qualifications framework

The Council of Ministers, by its Decision No. 67.445, dated 9/07/2008, approved a proposal for the appointment of a National Committee with the mission of developing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) for Cyprus.

The national qualifications framework (NQF) includes all levels and types of qualifications from all subsystems of education and training, including non-formal learning. The Cyprus NQF is not yet in operation. It will be established at the Ministry of Education and Culture as an in-service department and will be implemented gradually. New legislation on operation of the NQF is thought necessary.
The NQF’s main objective is to classify qualifications according to predefined levels of learning outcomes. It is expected that the NQF will support recognition and validation of qualifications; enable progression and mobility; promote lifelong learning, e.g. by certifying learning outcomes acquired outside formal education; improve transparency, quality, and relevance of qualifications; and, strengthen links with the labour market. One important policy objective is also to reinforce vocational education and training (VET) at secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels.

Source of information:

Cedefop (2015), **CYPRUS – European inventory on NQF 2014** [2].
Further information on the Cyprus NQF and its level correspondence to the EQF can be found from the source of information.

**System of vocational qualifications**

The application of a System of Vocational Qualifications in Cyprus was submitted to and approved by the European Social Fund as a co-financed Project for the Programming Period 2007-2013. The European Social Fund is the main financial instrument of the European Union for the support of employment in the Member States, as well as for the promotion of economic and social cohesion.

The Human Resource Development Authority has been designated as the competent Body for the promotion of a System of Vocational Qualifications. The purpose of this System is the upgrading of human resources through the Definition of Standards of Vocational Qualifications and the examination and certification of the competency of the interested persons to efficiently perform in a specific level of Vocational Qualification. The examination shall take place in Examination Centres (Training Institutions and Companies/Organisations), according to the approval of the Authority.

Moreover, the Standards of Vocational Qualifications are expected to be utilised for the adaptation of the detailed programmes of technical/vocational education, as well as of other subsystems, such as the Apprenticeship System, Intensive Programmes of Training and other activities. The System of Vocational Qualifications is expected to be included in the National Qualifications Framework, which will be connected to the European Qualifications Framework and will have an impact on lifelong learning and human resource mobility.

**Development of Vocational Qualification Standards (VQSs) within the VQS System**

Through a public consultation process and taking into account recommendations made by organized bodies, the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA) has prepared an indicative list of the proposed new Qualifications Standards (QSs) to be developed in the context of the 2014-20 Program [3].

The Qualifications Standards (QS) have the following characteristics:

- There are 8 levels of Professional Qualifications patterns
- The certification of qualifications by an official state body is an important asset to any professional course work.
The Human Resource Development Authority has established and operates the Qualifications System, where the ability of a person in a particular professional field is examined in real working conditions and certified.

The list includes a total of 152 QSs, which consist of work areas in various sectors.

The tasks are formulated in the form of learning outcomes for specific levels of knowledge, skills and competences as defined by the Cyprus and European Qualifications Framework (CyQF / EQF) Descriptive Indicators.

HRDA is currently certifying professionals in the following fields:

- Tourism Industry
- Manufacturing
- Construction Industry
- Wholesale and Retail Trade
- Vehicles Repair
- Professional Training
- Systems and Communication Networks / Computers
- Hairdressing

Proposal for the Ministry of Education and Culture

According to the Ministerial Decision (No 74.676, 11/2/2013, proposal submitted by the Ministry of Education and Culture), an interdepartmental committee has been set up for the development of mechanisms for the validation on non-formal and informal learning until 2018, which will cover the general and adult education sector as well as the non-formal learning that takes place within the volunteering sector.

The committee consists of representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, the Human Resource Development Authority, the Planning Office and the Foundation for the Management of the Lifelong Learning Program. In addition, the Commissioner of Volunteering and NGO Commissioner participates in the Committee. The Committee will take into account the work that has been already done by the HRDA, which is realised by the HRDA through the System of Vocational Qualifications.

Finally, it should be noted that the Ministry of Education and Culture submitted a proposal so as for the process to be financed by the European Social Funds (period 2014-2020). The project has been approved and its implementation is underway.
Source URL:
https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning-14_en

Links