

Research Report

CYPRUS

**Competence development of youth workers & youth
trainers who work towards the social inclusion of young
people with fewer opportunities**



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Current situation in Cyprus

Overview of SEAL CYPRUS

SEAL CYPRUS, the Cyprus Organisation for Sustainable Education & Active Learning, is a non-profit organization based in Nicosia, the ethnically divided capital of Cyprus. The members of the organisation are from both ethnic groups. The organisation was established in 2013 with the aim to promote dialogue and cooperation in the fields of education and training, youth, life-long learning, global education, career guidance, vocational training, sustainable development, culture, entrepreneurship, employment, and social affairs. SEAL CYPRUS encourages Cypriots to participate in a variety of national, European and international projects and also to disseminate the knowledge they gain at the local and the European level.

SEAL CYPRUS achieves excellence by:

- Developing and delivering state-of-the-art training and coaching.
- Building strategic partnerships to address learning needs of individuals and organisations.
- Implementing international projects granted by European Programmes.
- Attracting, developing and retaining dedicated and skilled trainers & adult educators.

The organisation uses participatory teaching and learning methods to motivate and empower youth and adult learners to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values necessary to shape a sustainable future. Starting from the needs of the learners, SEAL CYPRUS provides blended learning solutions based on accurate scientific ground.

The organization is experienced in the implementation of international projects funded by the European Commission's Programme "Erasmus+ / Youth in Action" such as:

- "Biodiversity and Active Learning" (2015) to explore the employment opportunities of green jobs.

- "Make an Impact! (2015) about Dissemination and Exploitation of project Results (DEOR) with the use of Digital Media.

- "Know the Way- Go the Way- Show the Way" (2015) provided the participants with opportunities to learn and practice Leadership and increase their employment opportunities.

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-“Making Ideas Happen” & “ARTrepreneurship” (2016) were two projects which promoted entrepreneurship through youth work.

- “Youth Minded” was about the mental health of the young people in the era of the social media.

- The organisation is coordinating this particular Strategic Partnership for Youth project; “Competence development of youth workers & youth trainers who work towards the social inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities/ ARTSQUAD” for the period 2017- 2019.

Overview of youth work (formal, informal and non-formal) in Cyprus

Since there is no specific definition of youth work in Cyprus, the people considered as practicing youth work do so as part of their wider professional role, but have usually been employed to undertake another specialty. This being the case there is no youth worker association. There is a practice for people with a background of psychology to take on youth work type roles, but also people with other degrees undertake similar roles.

The first National Youth Strategy designed by the young people themselves was approved by the Council of Ministers in May 2017. The strategy was devised by the young with the help of the Youth Board of Cyprus which consulted more than 3.000 young people.

The strategy includes targets and priorities in eight thematic fields¹ that directly affect the life of young people in Cyprus: (1) Employment and Entrepreneurship (2) Social Inclusion (3) Participation (4) Education and Training (5) Health and Wellbeing (6)Volunteering (7) Youth and the World (8) Creativity and Culture.

National youth work bodies

Youth Board of Cyprus (ONEK). While the Youth Board of Cyprus is a semi-governmental organization under the Ministry of Education and Culture there is no Ministry for the Youth. The National Agency for Erasmus+ is part of ONEK.

The Cyprus Youth Council (CYC) was founded in 1996 as an umbrella organization for the youth organisations in Cyprus. CYC is in continuous cooperation with the European Youth Forum. Areas of interest include human rights and equality, employment and social issues, active citizenship and life- long learning, non-formal education and youth policies.

¹ Based on the 8 pillars of the European Youth Strategy 2010-2018.

Youth training

In general, in Cyprus there is a tendency to perceive the term “youth worker” as tantamount to the term “youth trainer”. In the research “Youth Trainers in Cyprus” conducted in 2015 by A. Dalosi, the youth trainers in Cyprus are:

- Devoted to youth education while working in other professions.
- Motivated by a sense of altruism and genuine interest in young people
- Giving emphasis to cooperation.
- Fascinated by the intercultural dimension of youth training.
- Driven by the social nature of the training activities and the originality of the methods of non-formal learning.
- Attending training for trainers (usually abroad) on their own initiation.
- Using a wide range of non-formal learning methods.
- Promoting important competences for learners.
- Gaining considerable job satisfaction regardless of economic rewards.

Overview of training provision for professionals working with young people

There are no undergraduate or postgraduate courses in the field of youth work in Cyprus. The youth organisations are very active in organising international training courses with funding from Erasmus+/ Youth. The National Agency for Erasmus+/ Youth (Youth Board of Cyprus) organises Transnational Cooperation Activities (TCA) and Contact Seminars in Cyprus. Moreover, it provides the Cypriots with the opportunity to participate in the same kind of activities abroad.

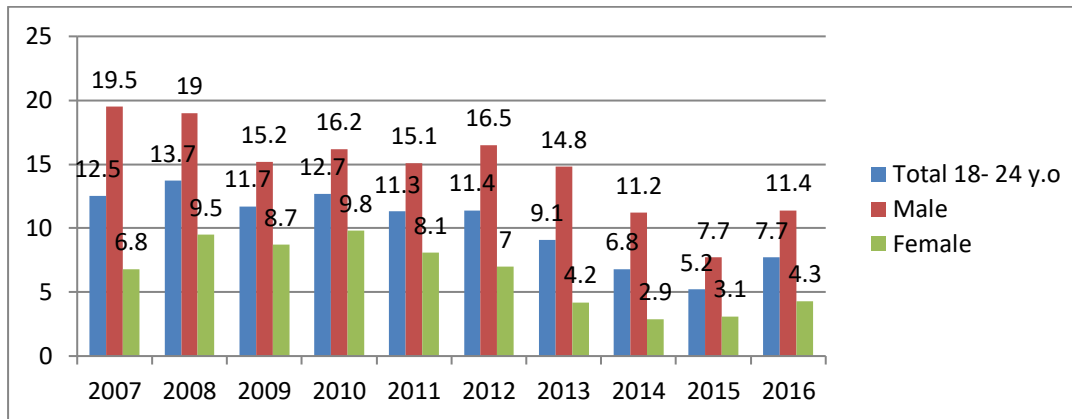
The Cyprus Youth Council organised in February 2017 a Conference with the title [“Recognition of Youth Worker”](#) with the support of Erasmus+, Key Action 3: Support for Policy Reform. During the public event, consultations with policy makers and stakeholders took place in order to establish a commonly accepted description of the term “Youth Worker” in Greek. Many youth organisations in Cyprus are active in organising Training Courses with the support of Erasmus+, KA1, and Mobility of Youth Workers. These actions are international and the Cypriot participants are of equal number as the international participants (ie. 3 participants from each country).

Statistical overview of youth unemployment and disadvantaged youth

Cyprus has a population of around 840,000 with those designated as young people (15-35) to be 77,600. Youth Unemployment Rate in Cyprus at the first trimester of 2017 was 29.60%.²

Early Leavers from Education and training aged 18- 24

The Europe 2020 strategy sets out a target of ‘reducing the share of early leavers of education and training to less than 10 % by 2020. Cyprus reached the target in 2015 but dropped out again in 2016.



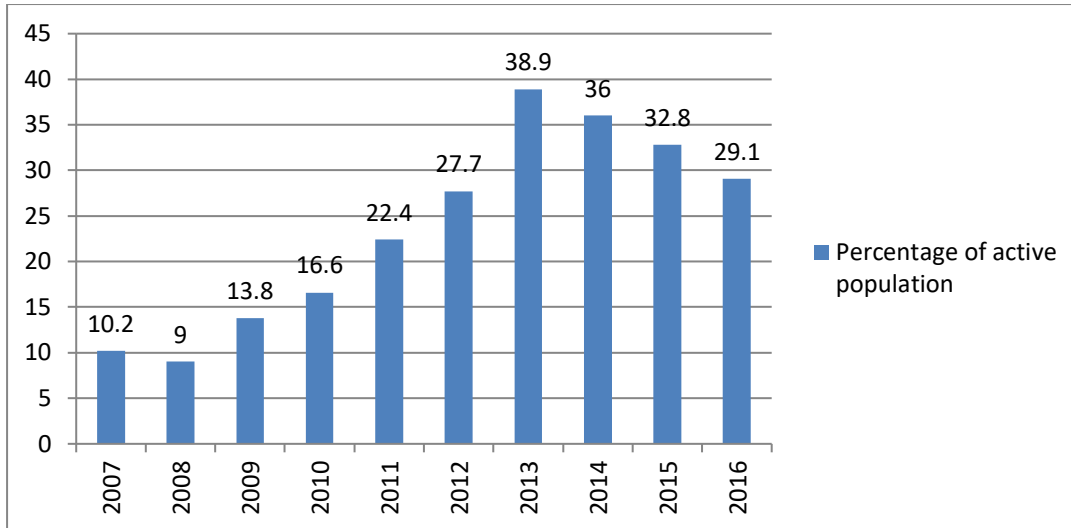
Percentage of early leavers from education and training by sex (Eurostat, June 2017)

Unemployed young people aged 15- 24 in the active population

The percentage of unemployed people aged 15-24 reached its heights in 2013, the year of the collapse of the banks in Cyprus. The numbers are declining but still, one in three young people is unemployed.

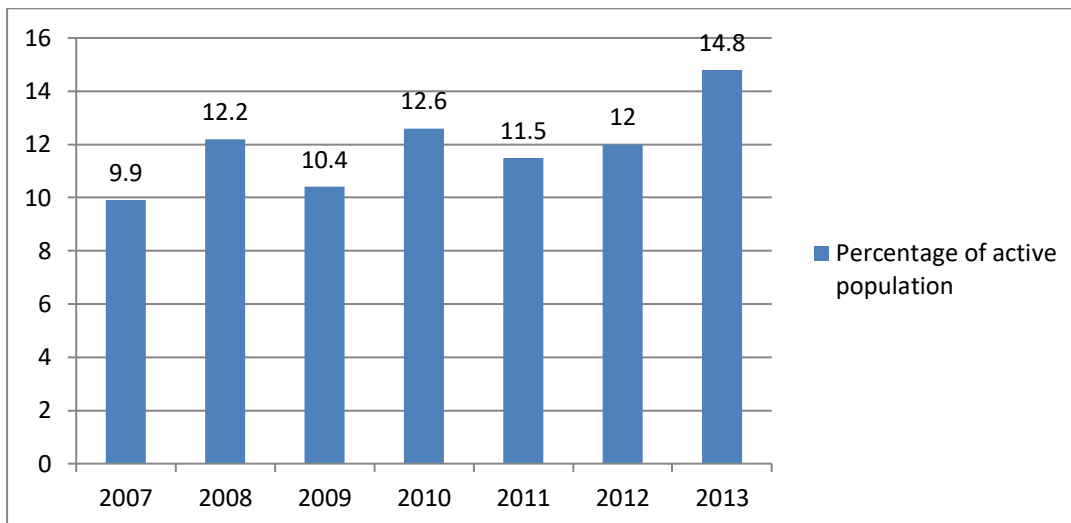
² <https://tradingeconomics.com/cyprus/youth-unemployment-rate>

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Percentage of unemployed young people aged 15- 24 in the active population (Eurostat, June 2017)

Young people aged 15- 29 at risk of poverty



Young people aged 15- 29 at risk of poverty- Percentage of active population (Eurostat, June 2017)

Eurostat has available statistics up to 2013 where the young people aged 15- 29 at risk of poverty where 14,8% of the active population. The Cyprus Statistical Authority estimated the

percentage of people 18- 24 years old to face the risk of poverty to be 17,2% in 2015 (16,5% for male and 18% for female).³

Needs Analysis

Best practices in the design, development and provision of train-the-trainer programmes for youth professionals

There is a clear need for supportive measures in order to continuously develop the skills of those working with young people due to the lack of long- term or even short- term train-the-trainer programmes for youth professionals in Cyprus. As stated earlier, many youth organisations are active in organising Training Courses with the support of Erasmus+, KA1, and Mobility of Youth Workers. These actions are international and the Cypriot participants are of equal number as the international participants (ie. 3 participants from each country). In our research for best practices we have identified three projects of international character which were implemented with the support of Erasmus+.

The project [ACE](#) aims to strengthen the competencies of Adult Educators supplying them with innovative and attractive training material and ICT tools based on Lifestyle entrepreneurship (LSE) approach. The methodology of the project is based on the blended learning approach using the reversed/ flipped training method, ICT tools, Open Educational Resources.

[EntrInnO](#) is a project funded by the European Commission for addressing the need for optimizing the development of entrepreneurship and innovation in Europe. Its main focus is to enhance the skills of young EU citizens, a crucial population of a progressive, entrepreneurial and market-based economy and society. For that purpose, an interactive online game is being developed, which will be accessible online and offline, and can be adapted to fit various contexts.

The [STEER](#) project (“Supporting the Transition from Education to Employment of youth at Risk”) aimed to design, develop, deliver and test a comprehensive training programme for

³ Indicators of Poverty and Social Inclusion 2008- 2015. Updated on October 2016.

http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/populationcondition_25main_gr/populationcondition_25main_gr?OpenForm&sub=5&sel=2

youth workers in transition planning. Part of the project is training for youth workers on how to develop and deliver comprehensive and tailor made transition planning to the target group.

Best practice in the design of blended learning⁴ curricula and e-learning environment

All the best practices we have identified regarding the design of blended learning curricula and e-learning environment have been developed in the framework of European Programmes.

[BLearning](#) provided to school teams resources and training to transform traditional schooling by combining on-line and off-line teaching - learning experiences. Based on the needs around blended learning, the project produced an online Toolkit to assist schools in applying blended learning practices. The tools consisted of the following components: Professional Development Program (PDP), guidelines for PDP for trainers, course materials for PDP, self-evaluation tool for school teams, and guidelines for school teams.

[VALUE](#) is project for supporting schools improve their educational processes and outcomes, through the use of multilingual practices. Through the project, learners in schools were provided with tools and methods to use both the language of instructions and the language of origin at different levels of competences. The methodologies, tools and practices (innovative interactive teaching techniques, ICT, digital storytelling) will be incorporated in schools' programmes to improve access and quality of education in relation to the diversity in schools. The open, interactive platform will be available to a wide range of organisations across the EU to embed and use.

The partner from Cyprus in the above projects was CARDET.

[COMEET+](#) was an Erasmus+/ KA2 project funded by the European Commission under Cooperation for Innovation and exchange of Good Practises in Adult education.

The project developed a pilot training experience in each of the 6 participating countries and two people from each country had the chance of participating in an international blended training in Italy.

[EnYouthTeacher](#) was an Erasmus+/ KA2: Strategic Partnership for Vocational Education and Training project aiming to promote the competences that a VET teacher/trainer must own in terms of entrepreneurship or in fostering entrepreneurship. The partners created a platform

⁴ Education approach (formal or informal) that combines online digital media with traditional classroom methods.

where the user can take a test to identify his entrepreneurial profile and a set of modules that one can attend online.

[Under My Wing](#) was a Lifelong Learning project with the aim to support the career progression of graduates from non-business related disciplines as entrepreneurs. The partners designed and provided a set of training courses and online modules to support competence development of unemployed or underemployed young people.

The partner from Cyprus in the above projects was SYNTHESIS Center for Research & Education Ltd.

Prototype tools that use different artistic disciplines to support the key competence acquisition process

In our search for tools that use artistic disciplines for competence development we came across [TABLO](#), a European project for creating a vocational training course that integrates arts therapy into the daily routines of those working with people with long-term conditions. TABLO brings together individuals and organisations from different EU countries, among them CARDET from Cyprus, to develop an e-learning training package applicable to people with a variety of conditions and across many different cultural settings. The e-learning training package created within the project was intended for health care professionals and family members of patients to use in their daily roles assisting people with long-term conditions. During the life-time of the TABLO project, 116 care staff from seven countries gained knowledge of how the arts can be used in different cultural and medical settings.

Main issues to be addressed in the proposed curriculum

The curriculum to be built around the four proposed artistic disciplines (Digital Media, Storytelling, Drama and Music) should focus on the acquisition of social and civic competence, digital competence, cultural awareness and expression, entrepreneurship and critical thinking.

Recognition of non-formal learning, youth training and youth work should be at the core of the curriculum.

The curriculum should address a range of issues such as equality, diversity and disability in the context of current legislation with regard to training provision and be able to show how the use of alternative teaching resources improves the learning experience for those who might have experienced inequality or discrimination on previous occasions.

It is important to take into consideration the fact that the youth professionals in each country have a different level of experience to each of the artistic forms.

Regarding quality, the partners should ensure that development work is of a high standard and that the required learning outcomes are addressed.

Potential areas where the four artistic forms (Digital Media, Storytelling, Drama and Music) can be applied to the design of learning resources for development of key- competences

In their daily practice, the partners have witnessed that although the youth professionals involved with the partners' operations have strong motivation, they are not always prepared to address the needs of young people with disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, the refugee crisis in Europe culminates at an extremely fast pace while the youth professionals are not prepared to meet the needs of refugees, asylum seekers and refugees. Generally, one third of young people in the European Union are at risk of social exclusion. In particular, barriers to accessing quality education and training and early school leaving are common occurrences in the life paths of socially excluded young people.

While most youth professionals are qualified to academic standards many of the educational interventions that form such an important part of their daily work are based on intuitive learning.

ARTSQUAD aspires to support youth professionals in developing and sharing effective methods in reaching out to disadvantaged young people and in promoting social inclusion. Through its innovative integrated approach, the project will provide the people working directly with the youth with practical tools to use in their work.

Another issue we are going to tackle is the attractiveness of youth initiatives to disadvantaged young people. The reason we have chosen Digital Media, Storytelling, Drama and Music as alternative educational tools for the acquisition of key competences is exactly the fact that they can be attractive to all the young people regardless of their background.



Erasmus+

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