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REPUBLIC



OF CYPRUS

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE
1434 NICOSIA

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**TOWARDS THE CREATION
OF
A EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA**

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

Overall structure of higher education and various types of higher education institutions

Higher and Tertiary Education in Cyprus is provided by public and private institutions which operate under an existing legal framework. The University of Cyprus is a public corporate body, which operates under the Law 144/89 and is fully self-governed.

Public schools of higher education operate under various Ministries (Ministry of Labor and Social Insurance, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Tourism, Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment, Ministry of Justice and Public Order). Each school is supervised and financed by the corresponding Ministry. Private schools of tertiary education (Idiotikes Scholes Tritovathmias Ekpedefsis-I.S.T.E.) operate under "The Schools of Higher Education Laws of 1996 to 2003" and are controlled and supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The programmes they offer are subject to accreditation by the

Council of Educational Evaluation-Accreditation (Symvoulío Ekpedeftikís Axiologísis-Pistopoiísis –S.EK.A.P.).

According to the above Law a private institution may be established and operate in the Republic by persons being citizens of the Republic, or citizens of a country member of the European Union (The latter is to be enforced after accession).

The system is binary with university level education offered by the University of Cyprus and the public and private schools offering programmes at sub-degree level.

Statistics:

According to the Statistical Service,

The total number of Cypriot students during the academic year 2001-2002 were 26493, thus comprising about 50% of the total population in the age range 20 to 24. From the above figure, 11611 students were following programmes in Cyprus, and the remaining 14882 studied abroad (mainly in Greece, UK and USA). During the same academic year there were also 2316 foreign students attending courses in Cyprus.

Internet address for information on Cyprus Educational System:

Ministry of Education and Culture

www.moec.gov.cy

1. Recognition of degrees: Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees

The standards set in higher education are those of the public institutions (University of Cyprus and other higher education institutions), where students are accepted, after success at competitive entrance examinations at national level. Programmes offered by Private Schools of Higher Education are subject to educational accreditation regulated by the corresponding legal procedures.

The competent authority for the evaluation and recognition of degrees is the “Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications- Kypriako Symvoulío Anagnorísis Titlón Spoudón” (KY.S.A.T.S.). Its main functions include the following:

- The Council decides on issues of recognition of diplomas, and issues a relevant certificate.
- The Council advises the Minister on international and transnational agreements

Cyprus has signed and ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention and has established the mechanism on professional recognition through the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance.

The competent authority for the accreditation of programmes of study offered by private schools of tertiary education is the Council of Educational Evaluation – Accreditation (S.E.K.A.P.). The Council sets up committees of experts to examine the quality of the programmes of study and advises the Minister on the level of each programme. The final decision on the accreditation of each programme rests with the Minister of Education and Culture. Accredited programmes are reevaluated after four years.

2. Degree Structure: Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles.

The system is already based on two main cycles:

The undergraduate cycle with a duration of four years, leading to the first final University degree (Ptychio)

The graduate cycle with a duration of 18 months leading to the Master Degree
Complementary to the above, the University of Cyprus offers doctorate programmes

After an expressed desire by the Ministry of Education and Culture, for a common language in Diploma awards, all private institutions of third level education have adopted the new framework of qualifications.

1-year	Certificate
2-year	Diploma
3-year	Higher Diploma
4-year	Bachelor

The Diploma Supplement has been sent to all institutions of higher education, public and private, and most of them have expressed their willingness to adopt the tool, in the place of the official transcript.

3. Establishment of a system of credits

The credit system has already been adopted, and is considered as an important step towards supporting student mobility and recognition of their qualifications.

The University of Cyprus and a number of private tertiary institutions, adopted from their inception a credit point system. The University of Cyprus has implemented the provisions set out by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). The ECTS comprises of 60 credits for a full academic year, and 30 per semester. The credit point system of the university of Cyprus corresponds to 30 credits for a full academic year and 15 for a semester. Thus the ratio between ECTS and University of Cyprus credits is 2:1.

4. Promotion of mobility

Free mobility of students, educators, researchers and professionals, is extremely important and timely relevant to the national priorities and concerns of Cyprus which fights consistently against isolation imposed by nature and size. The rules which have to be met for the mobility of students within the public institutions of higher education stem from the “numerous clausus” principle and transfers are limited. Mobility is much easier for students of private institutions and for professionals.

It should be noted also that a great number of students follow educational programmes abroad in various European countries, the United States and other parts of the world. A number of foreign students pursue their studies at public and private third level education institutions in Cyprus. Since November 1997, Cyprus participates to the ERASMUS programme. Cyprus considers free mobility of students, academic staff and professionals as a very important factor towards European integration.

The University of Cyprus has introduced an intensive Greek language programme for foreign students in order to overcome the language barrier. In all private and most public third level education institutions the language of instruction is English, which facilitates to a certain extent the mobility of students.

5. Quality assurance

European cooperation has to be planned and founded on quality assurance of higher education and as such it is accepted by all partners as a significant step forward.

The competent authority on quality assurance and accreditation in Cyprus is the Council for Educational Evaluation- Accreditation (Symvoulío Ekpaideftikis Axiologisis – Pistopoiisis S.EK.A.P.), which started its operation in 1993.

The Council is appointed directly by the Council of Ministers upon the recommendation of the Minister of Education and Culture, and consists of seven members, the chairman and six other members.

The Council has the following functions:

- (a) Appoints the Visiting Team for Educational Evaluation-Accreditation of Programmes of Study of Private Institutions of Tertiary Education.
- (b) Considers the final recommendations of the Visiting Team of Educational Evaluation-Accreditation and decides on:
 - (i) the approval of the application;or
 - (ii) the rejection of the application ;or
 - (iii) postponement of a decision for a specified period of time, during which the institution shall attempt to remedy the specific deficiencies that are identified .

-No bilateral official agreements exist, for the time being, with other countries for mutual recognition of accreditation procedures.

-Foreign accreditation agencies have various agreements with private institutions, but the government does not recognize the results of such procedures.

6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education

The Ministry of Education and Culture is the National Agency under whose aegis the SOCRATES National Coordination Unit of Cyprus operates. Cooperation in the field of tertiary education has been promoted through the ERASMUS programme by the University of Cyprus and the other public schools of higher education with projects in curriculum development and mobility. The European dimension is also promoted through curriculum development in schools of primary and secondary education, in the context

of the Programme COMENIUS, with special emphasis in teaching of European languages and history, and information technology.

7. Lifelong learning

In line with the broad vision of the Bologna Declaration to reform education systems in order to create overall convergence at European level, Cyprus is planning the following:

- (i) Establish a new University of Applied Sciences and Arts to include the public institutions currently operating, and possibly add new disciplines, and
- (ii) Establish an Open University, which will provide the opportunity to all citizens for life-long learning.
- (iii) Prepare the Law to facilitate the establishment of Private Universities.

A multitude of programmes are offered in Lifelong Learning by other Ministries, Private Organizations, Institutions and Centres of Adult Education and Training

8. Higher education institutions and students

Fees at the university of Cyprus are set at CP 2000 per year, paid by the state. Fees for foreign students are CP 4000 per year. Fees at other institutions, public or private, vary from CP1000 to CP3500 per year for Cypriot students. Fees for foreign students are often higher.

Higher education institutions can increase their fees only after approval by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Further to the payment by the state of the fees for all Cypriot students of the university, the Ministry of Finance subsidizes the family of each student of every recognised institution or accredited programme of study with CP1000 in the context of tax relief.

University students with very serious financial problems may be subsidised by the Student Welfare Fund.

The scheme of the Ministry of Finance covers also Cypriot students abroad with CP 1000 for students who do not pay fees, and CP 1500 for students who pay fees.

Exceptional students may also gain significant financial support from the Foundation of State Scholarships or other organisations.

A number of bursaries are offered to foreign students in public and private higher education institutions.

9. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

One of the main priorities and concerns of the Cyprus Government and the society is the optimisation of both the production process and the provision of services. A tool towards accomplishing this target is the increase of competitiveness of our higher education system.

National higher education has been under the scrutiny of the educational accreditation of programmes of study offered by the Private Schools of Higher Education. A number of programmes of study

have been accredited by the Ministry, after recommendations by the competent body (The Council for Educational Accreditation-S.E.K.A.P.).

Imported higher education takes only the form of qualifications conferred to Cypriot students studying abroad. Those qualifications are examined by the

competent authority, which is the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (KY.S.A.T.S.), after application by interested graduates.

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