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Vocational Guidance Education in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe

European Commission

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN FULL-TIME COMPULSORY EDUCATION

CYPRUS

School year 2007/08

Education is compulsory for pupils between the ages of 4 years and 8 months and 15 years, and covers pre-primary education (*prodimotiki ekpaidefsi* – ages 4 years and 8 months to 6 years), primary education (*dimotiko scholeio* – ages 6 to 12) and lower secondary education (*gymnasio* – ages 12 to 15). The end of compulsory education is a key moment in terms of guidance. Pupils have the possibility to go on to general, technical or vocational upper secondary education.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Specific legislation does not exist concerning information services, counselling and educational and vocational guidance for pupils. The guidelines established by the Council of Ministers based on the recommendations made by different ministries constitute a legal basis for these services. Furthermore, detailed descriptions *(Schemes of Service)* of the different posts of guidance practitioners exist.

The main objective of the national policy in the area of educational guidance is to provide young people with the necessary assistance and education to allow them to make well-informed and reasoned choices regarding their future studies and career.

In the employment sector, the objective of the policy in the area of vocational guidance is aimed mainly at the situation on the labour market (the reduction in the level of unemployment).

RESPONSIBILITIES

The main stakeholders involved in the establishment of counselling and guidance services are the Ministry of Education and Culture (*Ypourgeio Paideias kai Politismou* – YPP), the Ministry of Labour and Social Security (*Ypourgeio Ergasias kai Koinonikon Asfaliseon* – YEKA) and the Authority for the Development of Human Resources (*Archi Anaptyxis Anthropinou Dynamikou* – AnAD).

Counselling and Careers Education Service – Ministry of Education and Culture

The Counselling and Careers Education Service (CCES) operates within the public secondary education system of Cyprus and offers help to students and other young people through the Counselling and Careers Education Offices at schools and the central offices of the service at the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC).

The goal of the CCES is to provide specialised help to students and other young people through counselling in order to deal effectively with the personal, educational, vocational and social problems they face.

At the level of the Ministry of Labour, information and vocational guidance services are offered via the Public Employment Service (*Dimosies Ypiresies Apascholisis* – DYA) and are aimed mainly at people seeking employment (as well as pupils in certain situations).

VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE EDUCATION IN THE CURRICULUM

Counselling and Careers Education Service – Ministry of Education and Culture

The 'Careers and Social Education' course is included in the formal curriculum of the 3rd year of lower secondary school *(gymnasium)*. The course is offered by the school counsellors once a week during the first term of the academic year and its educational objectives are described below:

Careers education (objectives):

After completion of the course the students will:

- realise the need for vocational guidance and counselling;
- know the goals of the Counselling and Careers Education Service;
- acquire the self-knowledge needed in order to make suitable educational/vocational choices;
- familiarise themselves with the world of work, the different professions, the scientific taxonomies of professions, work values, working conditions, the recent changes in the Cyprus and European labour market, etc.
- know the educational system in Cyprus with specific emphasis on the existing educational choices after the completion of lower secondary school *(gymnasium)*;
- be informed about post-secondary education institutions in Cyprus, Greece and other foreign countries;
- develop the necessary decision-making skills so as to be able to make suitable educational/vocational choices.

Social education course (objectives):

After completion of the course the students will:

- acquire appropriate self-knowledge;
- develop self-approval;
- develop self-confidence;
- develop the skills needed for a normal adjustment to the school and social environment;
- develop self-resilience skills to protect themselves from different social dangers;
- develop problem-solving and social skills;
- develop decision-making skills;

It needs to be mentioned that the CCES publishes two instructional books ('Careers Education' and 'Social Education') related to the teaching of the abovementioned course. The books include theory, as well as student activities related to the thematic subjects of the books. The course is not graded.

Traineeships within the framework of the curriculum

Ministry of Education and Culture

During the 2nd year of upper secondary school *(lyceum)* students have a one-week traineeship in a job of their interest. This activity is organised and supervised by the schools in collaboration with the world of work. The school counsellors help the students in deciding on a suitable job setting according to their interests, skills and abilities. Additionally, students in technical education (students can choose to follow technical education after they complete lower secondary school, or *gymnasium*, ages 12-15) have traineeships according to the specialisation of their choice within the framework of their curriculum.

OTHER TYPES OF ACTIVITY/GUIDANCE SERVICES

Contacts with the professional world

Counselling and Careers Education Service – Ministry of Education and Culture

The Counselling and Careers Education Service (CCES) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) organises different activities – specifically for pupils in the 3rd year of lower secondary school *(gymnasium)* and the 2nd and 3rd years of upper secondary school *(lyceum)* – with the goal of helping students get acquainted with the professional world, become familiar with the nature of different professions and university studies, as well as with the skills and interests needed to enter different professions, labour market demands in relation to different professions, etc. (An example of the abovementioned activities is the organisation of a four-day educational/vocational exhibition, where professional organisations are invited to help the students and other young people know more about the professions they represent. Another example is the production by the CCES of an informative educational film related to different professions.)

Guidance services at school and Guidance services outside school

Counselling and Careers Education Service – Ministry of Education and Culture

The CCES of the MOEC has the main goal to provide specialised help to students and other young people through counselling in order to meet the general goals of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which are the following:

- the healthy development of students' personalities;
- the development of problem-solving skills so as to deal effectively with their personal, educational, professional and social problems.

Specifically, the counsellors offer help to students and other young people in order to make effective personal, educational and vocational choices. The following areas are emphasised:

- self-knowledge;
- self-approval and self-confidence;
- self-actualisation;
- decision-making skills/problem-solving skills;
- healthy adjustment to the school and social environment;
- critical thinking and effective use of appropriate information.

The multiple socioeconomic and cultural changes caused by technological advances all over the world have increased the complexity of matters concerning young people (e.g. personal, educational, professional and social). As a result of these demanding changes, counsellors place special emphasis on helping students equip themselves with the necessary skills so as to make effective personal, educational and vocational choices through the following:

- personal, group and family counselling;
- administration of specialised tests offered during counselling sessions with an aim to help those interested to make an in-depth exploration of their personality, interests, abilities, work values, etc.
- teaching of the Careers Education and Social Education course (offered in the 3rd year of lower secondary school);
- organisation of seminars and conferences on vocational, educational and other related subjects;
- production of careers education films;
- publication of instructional and informative books.

Additionally, the CCES participates at a strategic level at the MOEC in different committees whose major goal is the strengthening of students' personalities, so as to deal effectively with the challenges of the modern world.

Additionally, based on the principle of providing equal opportunities to students with special needs to be educated along with other students of the same age in the public secondary schools of their community/neighbourhood, the counsellors provide personal and educational counselling to students with special needs and contribute towards the development of individual educational programmes for these students.

As mentioned above, the CCES publishes instructional and informative books, namely:

- The Role of the Family for the Educational Choices of the Children.
- Lower Secondary School (Post-*gymnasium*) Education in Cyprus.
- Careers Education.
- Scholarships for Upper Secondary School (Post-*lyceum*) Education.

- Informative Brochure about the Counselling and Careers Education Service.
- Public Higher Education Institutions in Cyprus.

At present, one of the main goals of the CCES is the provision of lifelong guidance, which is also promoted at European level through the newly established European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN), in which Cyprus participates as a member.

Specifically, the CCES has already proposed the operation of regional (district level) Centres of Counselling and Guidance, which will operate during hours which are convenient to the general public. The centres will be accessible to all European citizens, and emphasis will be placed on the provision of counselling/guidance to all citizens, irrespective of age, gender, religion, race, ethnicity and disability. The qualified counsellors, who will work in these centres, and generally all counsellors employed in the CCES, will have in-service training with special focus on helping their clients to develop appropriate career managing skills over their lifetime. Additionally, special emphasis will be placed on the provision of effective counselling to specific groups of people (already identified) depending on their needs, as well as on the formal evaluation of the services provided, the provision of appropriate in-service training to the staff of the service, and scientific research in areas of special interest to the CCES.

Furthermore, the CCES currently promotes the establishment of a National Forum on Lifelong Guidance, which is considered as a basic immediate goal for the upgrading of all services providing guidance and counselling in Cyprus.

QUALIFICATIONS OF GUIDANCE STAFF

Counselling and Careers Education Service – Ministry of Education and Culture

School counsellors have the official status of Secondary School Teacher for Counselling and Careers Education. In order to be eligible for employment at the CCES of the MOEC as a counsellor (Secondary School Teacher for Counselling and Careers Education) one needs to have a first university degree in a subject taught in secondary education and a post-graduate degree (master's and/or diploma) of at least one year's duration, either in counselling or in careers education/career guidance.

Since Cyprus still does not have a higher education institution which provides post-graduate studies in the abovementioned areas, those interested in the field complete the post-graduate studies required for employment mainly in the UK, USA and Greece. Their degrees have to be approved by the Cyprus Council for the Evaluation of Academic Degrees (KYSATS).

The Authority for the Development of Human Resources (*Archi Anaptyxis Anthropinou Dynamikou* – AnAD) organises seminars and lectures for counsellors, consisting mainly in the dissemination of information on the results of studies on the evolution of the labour market situation. Ongoing training is also offered by the Association of Counsellors and the Educational Institute of the Ministry of Education.

COOPERATION BETWEEN SCHOOLS, EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

Counselling and Careers Education Service – Ministry of Education and Culture

The CCES considers cooperation with parents, employers and others stakeholders to be very important in providing effective help to students. Therefore, counsellors cooperate with them formally and informally, both at school and Ministry of Education level.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

Counselling and Careers Education Service – Ministry of Education and Culture

In addition to publishing informative books and producing educative films related to vocational guidance, the CCES of the MOEC has organised library services in secondary schools as well as a main library at the central offices of the service in the MOEC, where students and other interested people may access up-to-date information.

Furthermore, almost all counselling offices at schools have Internet facilities and provide students with access to online vocational guidance information. Additionally, online information on vocational guidance is available at the central offices of the service, which have also developed a website about the services offered by the CCES.

Sources

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3. Eurybase; Eurydice.
4. Dr. Terpsa Constandinidou, Counselling and Careers Education Service – Ministry of Education and Culture