

Transforming Education Summit, New York, 19 September 2022

Statement of political Commitment-Cyprus

Safeguarding the right to education is a central goal of the Government of the Republic of Cyprus and the competent Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth works diligently, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, to anticipate the needs of the future and provide opportunities for quality education for all. The announcement of the Summit has given a new impetus to already existing initiatives and provided the ground for further and deeper connection of the educational reforms to the needs and the aspirations of the citizens, predominantly the new generation. The results of a very comprehensive consultation which took place for more than 12 months and was concluded recently, has given valuable insights for the designing of the new National Lifelong Learning Strategy.

We acknowledge the paramount importance of education to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic and to contribute to the creation of cohesive, inclusive, resilient, sustainable, green and digital societies. In the aftermath of the pandemic, we are working systematically to counter its negative effects notably the psychological ones. We are restructuring curricula, providing tailor-made support to the groups who were affected the most such as the children with migrant biography and the children with disabilities. We accelerate the digital transformation of schools and support the in-service training of teachers.

Cyprus education system is undergoing major reforms aiming to modernize the educational ecosystem of Cyprus in its three fundamental dimensions: Learning environments, educational content and policies, and educators. The students are at the epicentre of our attention, bearing in mind that our ultimate objective is the improvement of their learning outcomes. Appropriate measures to respond to the challenges emerging from the green and digital transitions and to make better connection between education and the realities of the society and the labour market are being planned and implemented. New school curricula have a focus on basic and transversal skills. Education for the environment and sustainable development is promoted through modules and classes at all levels of education. Furthermore, a digital education strategy focusing on the growth and use of digital technologies and the development of digital skills and competences of the education community is being implemented. Furthermore, we prepare amendments to the law and regulations regarding special education in order to eliminate any obstacles to the access of children with disabilities to education and render our education system more inclusive.

A special emphasis is given at the support of children at precarious situations, notably children with migrant biography. A comprehensive educational policy aiming at the smooth integration of pupils with migrant biography into the educational system and the society of Cyprus is being implemented. The policy focuses on mapping-out the migrant population, combating racist incidents, providing intensive teaching and language learning, as well as social and psychological support. It also includes relevant teacher and school leaders training.

Furthermore, we are implementing reforms to support our educators to reach the maximum of their potential. A new system for the appointment of teachers is already in place, after several years of consultations. Currently, an intensive dialogue with all relevant stakeholders is taking place for the development of a new system for the evaluation of teachers and school work. The system is intertwined with a structured system of teachers' professional development adjusted to the needs of each school unit.

Despite the economic adversities from consecutive crises in the past 10 years, investments in Education in Cyprus remain high. National funds are matched with European to complement each other in an effort to meet national needs and challenges. Cyprus Recovery and Resilience Plan is a fine example of this synergy contributing to the achievement of the European Union's new 2030 climate targets and the objective of EU climate neutrality by 2050. The Cypriot plan constitutes an ambitious but realistic initiative for the effective utilization of 1.2 billion euros aiming to strengthen the country's potential for economically, socially and environmentally sustainable growth and welfare. 96.9 million of the budget will be devoted to education. The plan is the result of intensive work by the competent authorities and a broad consultation with all stakeholders.

In the context of the Cyprus Recovery and Resilience Plan the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth plans to implement in total 4 reforms in the area of education (39.3 million) and three investments in school infrastructure (57.7 million).

The reforms in the field of Education and Training included in the Plan aim to:

- (a) Address skills mismatch between education and the labor market: This project will support initiatives in various levels and types of education which will address this mismatch.
- (b) Implement the digital transformation of schools: In this direction, we upgrade classrooms in all schools to digital, by installing the relevant hardware and software, and providing full support and maintenance. We also aim at enhancing digital skills related to STEM education.
- (c) Provide affordable early childhood education: we extend compulsory pre-primary education, starting now at the age of four guaranteeing equal opportunities when accessing education.
- (d) Introduce a new teacher and school evaluation system, which will enhance the quality of education and the contribute to the improvement of educational outcomes.

Cyprus commits to being engaged in all actions at a regional and international level, to learn and to provide input, in an effort to safeguard quality education for all.