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National Country report for Project “Generation 0101” data research – Cyprus

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Generation 0101 – Intellectual Output n.1

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INTRODUCTION

The research was run in March -April 2015 by the Cyprus Community Media Centre. Established in 2009, the Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC) works to empower civil society organisations and community groups with the tools to communicate their message to a wider audience. Through training and dedicated production support, equipment loan and access to a state-of-the-art production studio, CCMC promotes the benefits of community-based media by giving people the skills to be in control of their own messages. The research conducted for the Generation 0101 project used various information sources such as e-mails, web sources, youth survey and phone conversations. Six key stakeholders representing the government, public body, non-governmental ICT or youth organisations have been identified for the research. 123 surveys have been completed, 110 of which reflected the desired target group.

DIGITAL AGENDA STRATEGY

Digital Strategy for Cyprus, a comprehensive national action plan for the development of information society, was developed by the Department of Electronic Communications (DEC) with the guidance of the Advisory Committee for Information Society was approved by the Council of Ministers of Cyprus on 8 February 2012. [Digital strategy for Cyprus](#) is in line with the objectives and actions proposed in the Digital Agenda for Europe, and is expected to contribute to economic growth, productivity increase and job creation.

The strategy promotes the use of ICT in all sectors of the economy and society. The following objectives, measures and actions are included.

Objective 1: Connecting Cyprus with high speed networks, so that all citizens, businesses and public bodies have access to information society services and benefit from the use of ICT. This objective also includes measures for promoting competition in electronic communications, in order to create various infrastructures offering high quality and high speed electronic services to all citizens at affordable prices. It also includes measures to ensure the security of infrastructures and information. Cyprus aims to achieve universal broadband access and ultra high speed access until 2020 based on the targets of the Digital Agenda for Europe

Objective 2: Modernizing public administration and providing public electronic services. By using ICT for its internal functioning, the Government aims to become paperless and therefore decrease bureaucracy and cost and increase civil servant productivity. Furthermore, by providing public services electronically the government will offer better services to businesses and citizens and reduce business's cost.

Objective 3: Including all into digital Cyprus through improving the digital literacy of all businesses and unemployed people and the enrollment of all citizens in lifelong learning programs and enabling the use of broadband and ICT services by all citizens.

Objective 4: Promoting the Digital Education by using ICT as a dynamic tool aiming at the upgrade, the enrichment and the reform of the educational process.

Objective 5: Promotion of digital entrepreneurship in order to help businesses use ICT extensively to support their functioning for increasing their productivity and becoming more competitive in domestic and international markets. Moreover, research and innovation in the ICT sector will also be promoted in order to increase public and private spending on ICT research and development.

MAJOR STAKEHOLDERS FOR ICT SKILLS AND YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

The stakeholders identified for the Digital Agenda goals in scope of this research include the Human Resources Development Authority (HRDA), Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Communications and Works, Welfare and Social Insurance, the Digital Champion of Cyprus as well as non-governmental youth and ICT organizations.

HRDA is a semi-governmental organisation that has a significant influence in shaping and implementing national policies in regards to Human Development of the workforce. HRDA focuses on new skills development, support to employment and local training centres who host HRDA approved courses.

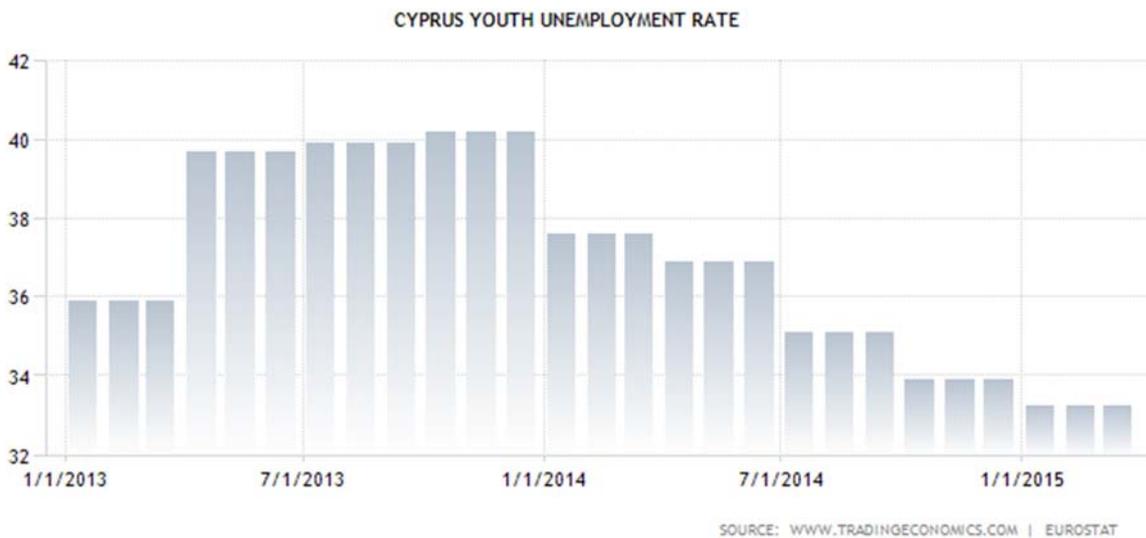
Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance is one of the government bodies involved in e-skills for jobs. Ministry of Communications and Works hosts the CY Digital Champion Mr. Stelios Himonas.

Non-governmental organizations include [Youth Power](#) that has a large youth network across the whole island of Cyprus and is influential in disseminating information and hosting training workshops for youth entrepreneurship and skills development in the framework of projects they run. In addition, [Cyprus Youth Council](#), a union of non-government Youth organisations, is the largest youth organization in Cyprus which is influential in promotion and dissemination of information to Youth, especially on EU initiatives and strategies. Future Worlds Centre is an eclectic NGO, which is influential with other NGO's in foresting support for programs or events. They host a group of Young people who work on ICT and give trainings. [Amalgama Information Management](#) focuses on ICT tasks, mainly in EU-funded [Projects](#), such as ICT systems design, development and integration with particular focus on (online) e-learning systems, Content Management Systems (CMS) and Online Systems, Multimedia handling, Systems Analysis, ICT Project Management and Consulting. [#hack66](#) is an innovation center/hackerspace hybrid located in Nicosia, Cyprus. [#hack66](#) aims to be the physical space that empowers the local community to gather, experiment, share and create. Its main goal is to promote the mindset of openness and sustainable innovation in Cyprus.

In support of the European Commission's recent action call for a Grand Coalition seeking to address the shortage in the new ICT skills and the future mismatching of unfilled ICT related vacancies, Cyprus proceeded, in September 2014 with the creation of a National Action Plan for Coalition for Digital Jobs in close cooperation with the Department of Electronic Communications. The action plan is divided into three active categories: a) Education/Training, b) Certification and c) Awareness.

COUNTRY FIGURES IN ICT SKILLS AND YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY

Youth unemployment rate in Cyprus, as of 2015 is 33.2%. Considering the general unemployment rate in Cyprus is 16%, the youth unemployment rate is noteworthy. The following graph shows the sharp increase in youth unemployment rate during the 2012-2013 financial crisis and the slow decline since.

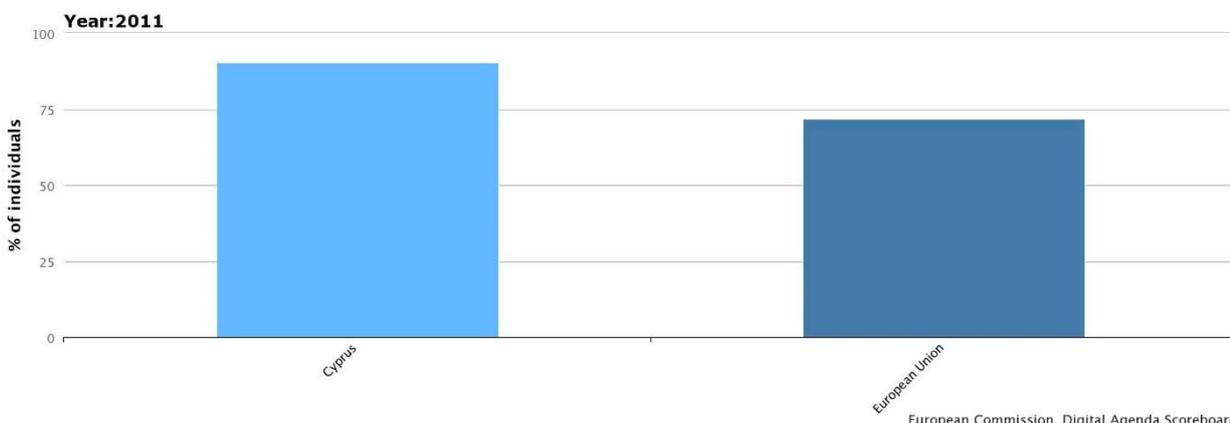


96.3% of young Cypriots (16-24 years old) are regular internet users, where only 65.3% of the general population use internet regularly.

Most Cypriots have basic (average) levels of digital skills, 55.1%. However only 14.6% have above basic skills, while more than 30% have low digital skills.

36.1% of Cypriots acquired ICT skills through formal education, of which 39.7% are unemployed. This figure indicates that 14.3% of Cypriots have acquired more advanced ICT skills and yet are still unemployed.

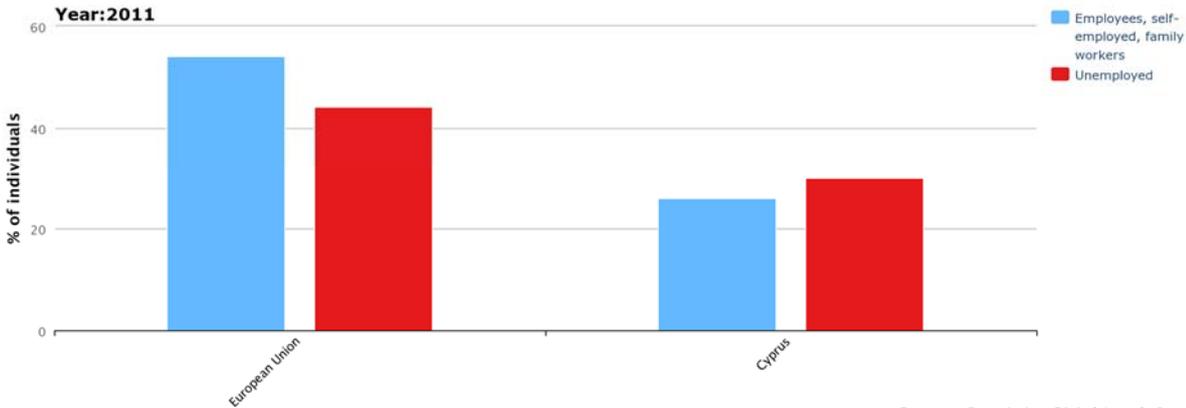
Individuals who have obtained ICT skills through formal educational institutions, Individuals, 16 to 24 years old



Regardless of the size of a company (SME or Large enterprise), approximately 40% people are employed using computers at work. Only 16.9% of enterprises employ ICT specialists in Cyprus; this suggests that in most cases where ICT skills are required, a staff member who does not specialise on ICT skills is asked to fill that position temporarily or someone is contracted short-

term. As a result, only 1.81% of enterprises report having a hard time filling vacancies for these jobs. Notably the larger companies have more difficulty filling the positions, possibly since they have more of such positions available in the first place. The latest available data suggests that only 2.10% people are employed with ICT specialist skills in Cyprus.

workers who judge their current ICT skills sufficient for changing job within a year, by Employment status



Only 16.1% of Cypriots consider their ICT skills as insufficient for the labour market. Of those 15.3% were employed and 24.3% were not. However, 26.4% of Cypriots do think their ICT skills are sufficient, of which 26.1% were employed, and 30% were not.

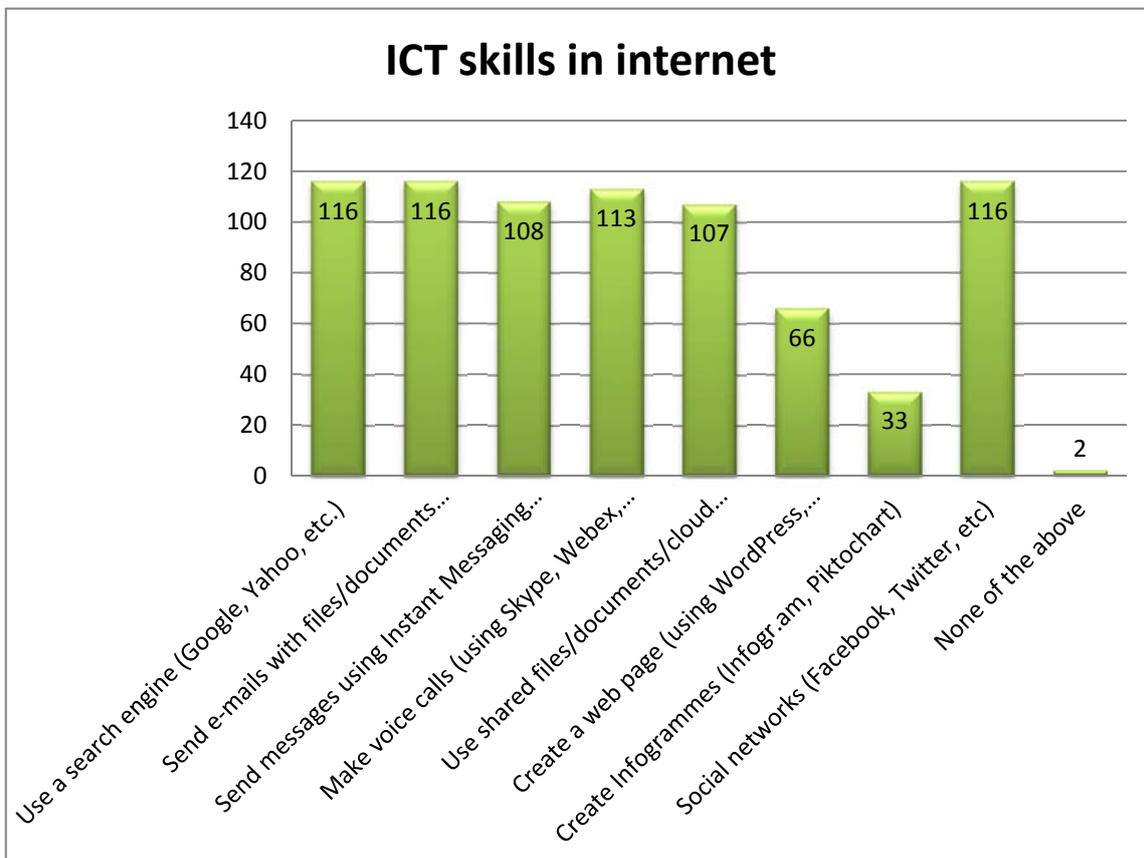
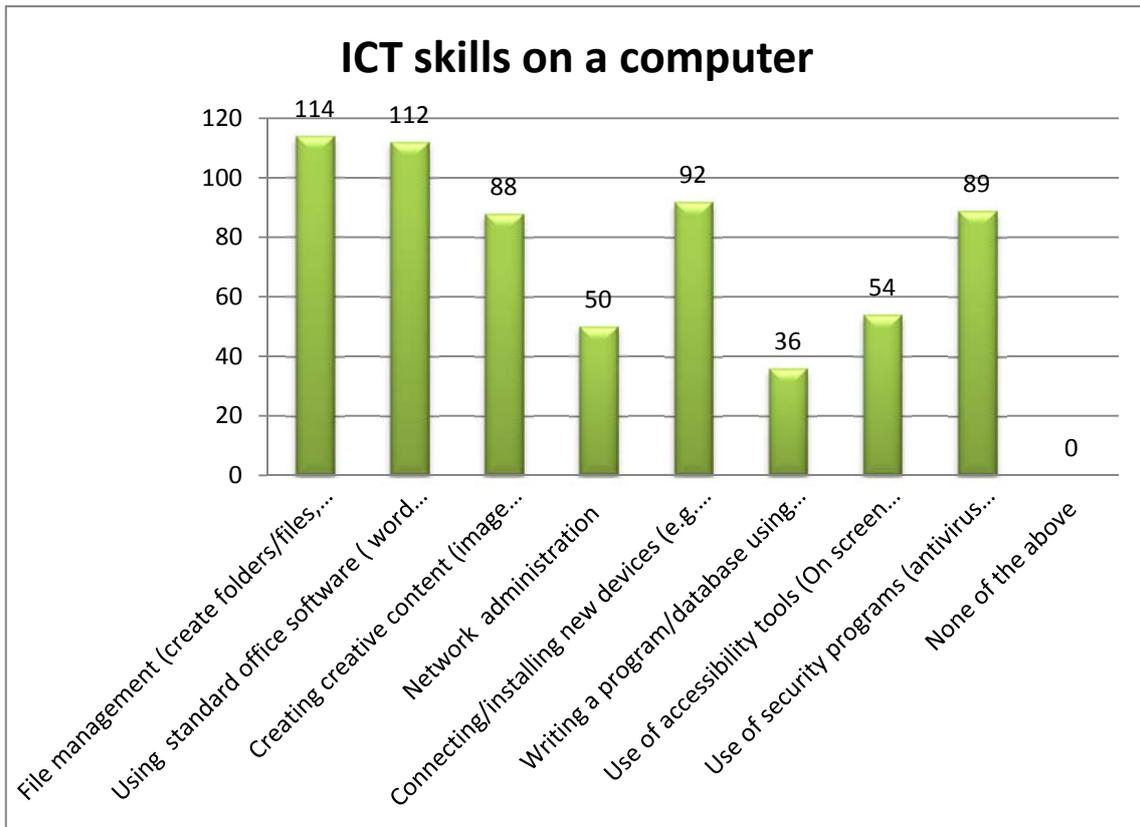
YOUTH SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS

A total of 123 people participated in the survey, 110 of which reflected the estimated target group (89% of the participants were between the ages of 17-35). Of this age group, 59.4% were female and 40.6% were male. The vast majority of the participants (77.5%) indicated that their English language skills are advanced; 20.7% have intermediate and only 2% have basic English language skills. Currently 70.30% of the participants from the estimated target group are employed and 41.5% are studying.

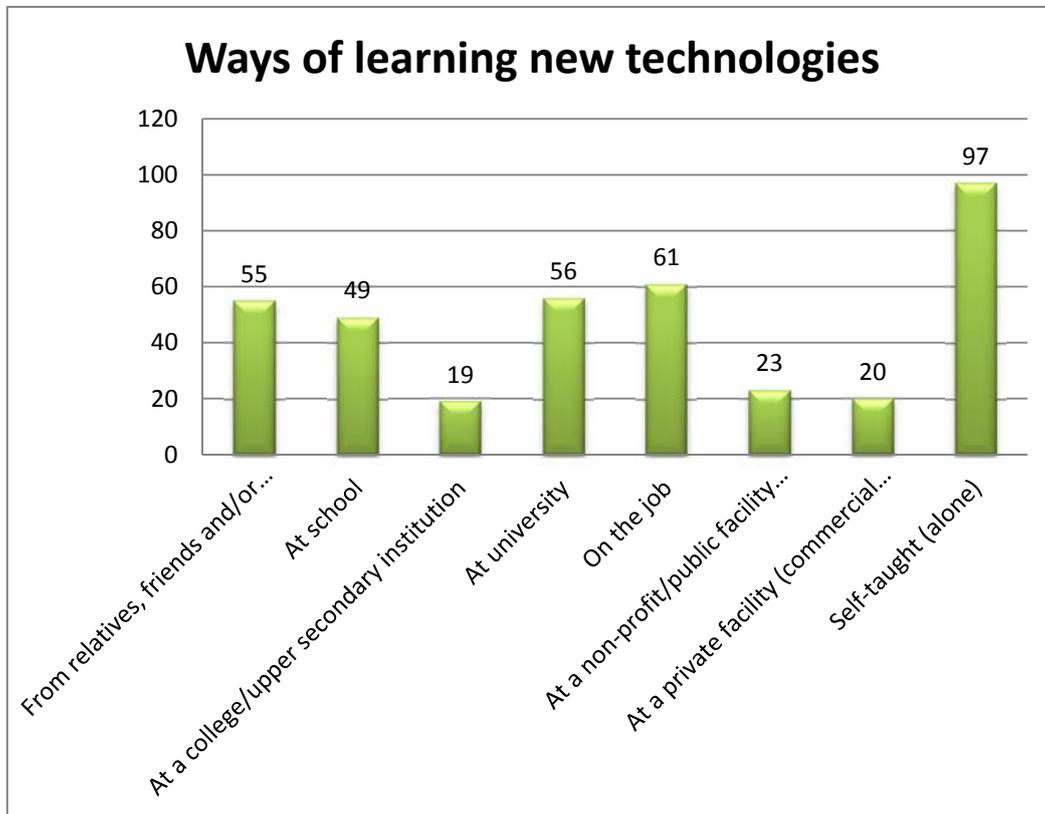
An overwhelming majority use computers for more than 2 hours a day while only 1% indicated that they never use computers. Similarly use of mobile devices is quite high; according to the youth survey, 62.1% indicated that they use a mobile device more than 2 hours a day, 31.5% use mobile devices daily, but less than 2 hours a day.

Given the high percentage of regular internet users among youth as indicated in the desk research coupled with the computer and mobile device usage data gathered from the youth survey, it is not very surprising that 98.2% of the respondents are a part of a social network.

The computer skills were rated very high except for program/database writing. The internet skills were also rated very high except for creating web pages and infographics. Consequently, 58.6% believe that their ICT skills are sufficient for the job market, though it is possible that they overestimate their own skills and knowledge.



As seen from the chart below, most respondents indicated that they have learned the new technologies by themselves. Other main sources for learning IT skills indicated in the youth survey and the chart below are friends/families/acquaintances, university and on the job.



MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Digital Strategy for Cyprus” was developed and approved to address the need for development of ICT skills in key sectors in order to increase the productivity and economical growth in Cyprus. In line with the European Digital Agenda, Digital Strategy for Cyprus calls for integration of ICT skills in various sectors and promotes digital literacy across the board. Since it was only recently approved, the action plan has not been reflected in the government policies yet.

Stakeholders from the private and the public sector cooperated and offered training courses on ICT skills for school teachers, as well as organizing competitions at elementary school level in order to develop programs which were valuable initiatives. Additionally, during the programming period of 2007-2013, the HRDA implemented schemes co-financed by the European Social Fund, for increasing the employability of the unemployed and economically inactive women by providing opportunities for participation in training activities, which included information technology and work experience.

However, except for a funding program supported by the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities which aims for ICT skills development for disabled people, there is no available funding schemes for ICT skills development in the current programming period which ends in 2020. This lack of funding will continue to set back the implementation of ICT-related policies.

According to the results of the youth survey, youth in Cyprus is not competent in developing webpages, applications, infographics and creative content such as editing/creating images and videos. However, they have ranked their skills highly in using social media, sending emails, using search engines, sharing files, using standard office software, file management and using security programs.

For Digital Agenda goals in e-skills area to be implemented in Cyprus, in addition to awareness-raising activities on the importance of the issue, more multi-stakeholder initiatives need to be developed such as establishing training and internship programs to strengthen entrepreneurship and ICT skills required by the job market and introducing ICT skills into the school curricula at all levels, including the advancement of teachers' skills. Furthermore, setting up mentorship programs for young people as part of social corporate responsibility will motivate the youth to improve their digital literacy. These measures will in turn increase the employability of the youth.

All planned training modules will be useful and relevant in Cyprus; however, web design, easy coding, video development and mobile application development skills seem to be ranked lower than the rest.