



## REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

### MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SPORT AND YOUTH

Speech by Dr Athena Michaelidou, Minister of Education, Sport and Youth at the  
Conference:

“Connecting Higher Education with Labour Market:  
Building the Future-Ready Workforce”  
9 -10 May 2024, PwC Offices, Nicosia

It is a privilege to address this conference today organised by the Department of Higher Education of the Cyprus Ministry of Education, Sport, and Youth in collaboration with PwC Cyprus, on the vital topic of connecting Higher Education with the labour market. In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and evolving economic landscapes, the alignment between Higher Education and labour market is more vital than ever before.

Higher Education Institutions have long been recognized as the engines of progress, fostering innovation, critical thinking, and personal growth. However, in recent years, there has been a growing acknowledgement that the traditional model of Higher Education does not always adequately prepare graduates for the modern workforce. Many research studies, and policy reports highlight that graduates are struggling to secure meaningful employment, while employers experience a shortage of skilled workers. This mismatch between the skills possessed by graduates and those demanded by employers emphasizes the urgent need for closer collaboration between Higher Education and the labour market.

To bridge this gap, a collaborative and multifaceted approach is needed among key stakeholders so we can ensure that graduates are better prepared to meet the demands of the modern workforce.

First and foremost, Higher Education Institutions must align their curricula to better reflect the evolving needs of the labour market. This means equipping students not only with academic knowledge but also with practical and soft skills, such as problem-solving, communication, and teamwork, that are valued by employers. In addition, it is imperative that Higher Education Institutions promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Moreover, we must prioritize lifelong learning and upskilling to ensure that individuals remain competitive in an ever-evolving job market. The skills demanded by the labour market are evolving at an unprecedented pace, driven by technological innovation, automation, and the emergence of new occupations. Education cannot be longer viewed as a static one-time event but a lifelong journey of continuous growth and adaptation. Through continuing education programs, we can empower individuals to adapt to changing demands of the workforce and pursue meaningful career pathways. Equity, diversity, and inclusion in the context of this skills-oriented approach are of paramount importance to safeguard that all individuals have access to high-quality education and training opportunities that enable them to realize their full potential.

Central to this endeavour is the need of accurate and valid labour market information. Accurate and valid information is essential for informing decision-making, guiding educational and workforce development initiatives, and advancing equity and inclusion in the labour market. Efforts to improve the collection, analysis, and dissemination of labour market data should be a priority for policymakers, educators, employers, and other stakeholders. We are here today, to learn more about such an effort. The project of the Department of Higher Education in the context of the Cyprus Recovery and Resilience Plan aims to develop a centralized database regarding skills supply and demand. This mechanism will enhance our capacity to track skill demand and supply, assess the alignment between education and labour market needs, identify emerging trends and challenges, and develop targeted policies to address the evolving needs of its labour market. Experts from Poland and Italy are among us to present their own graduate tracking mechanisms and how data collected is used for informed decision making and action.

As we are gathered here today, let me reaffirm our Ministry's commitment to establishing a strong connection between Higher Education in Cyprus and the labour market and at the same time empowering graduates and students with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities they need to contribute meaningfully to the workforce of tomorrow.

I would like to congratulate the Department of Higher Education for organizing the conference and PwC for their collaboration.

Thank you, and I wish you an enlightening conference ahead.

**Dr. Athena Michal**  
Minister of Education, Science  
Youth



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“Connecting Cyprus  
Higher Education to the  
Labour Market:  
National Graduate  
Tracking Mechanism  
and National  
Employers’ Skills  
Survey”