

Educational Policies that Address Social Inequality

Country Report: Cyprus

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Education Policies to Address Social Inequalities: Cyprus Country Report

This report analyses educational policies in Cyprus dealing with issues of social inequalities. It begins with a brief historical introduction into the political situation in Cyprus. It then proceeds with a presentation and discussion of terminology with respect to Communities as referenced in the Cypriot constitution versus minorities and describes the various groups that make up the Greek-Cypriot community. The latter includes several smaller groups distinguished by their linguistic, cultural and/or religious characteristics. A brief description of the Cypriot educational system is followed by a presentation and discussion of the ways in which educational disadvantage is addressed in Cypriot education policies and practice. The information included in this report is for the educational policies and population in the portion of the country that is controlled and governed by the Republic of Cyprus and makes only cursory references to the occupied portion of the island.

1. Introduction

The Republic of Cyprus, [*Kypriaki Dimokratia/Kıbrıs Cumhuriyeti*] is a recent member of the European Union. It is a relatively small island country located in the north-eastern portion of the Mediterranean. Cyprus is a country with a long history of governance related to the ethnic composition of its population. The Cypriot population is composed of two major ethnic groups, the largest are the Greek Cypriots (77 percent) and the second are the Turkish Cypriots (18 percent). These two Communities constitute the majority of the population, while the remaining 5 percent includes Maronites, Armenians, and Latins as well as a significant number of immigrants and a small number of Roma. The two main Communities (the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot) have always had separate educational systems.

In 1960, after the London and Zurich Agreements, Cyprus became an independent state, after a long period under the British Administration. The provisions of the Agreements placed education under two Communal Chambers functioning in each Community, one for the Greek-Cypriot community and one for the Turkish-Cypriot community. In 1963, shortly after the declaration of independence, armed conflict broke out between the two Communities which resulted in the abolishment of the two Communal Chambers, and the two Communities separated. In 1965, the Ministry of Education formally took over the administration of the Greek Communal Chamber (Cyprus National Report 2004). In 1974 as a result of another armed and violent clash which included the military presence of non-Cypriot forces, the island was divided into two ethnically distinct areas.

Cyprus has been a full member of the European Union since 2004, but the application of the *acquis communautaire* is in force only in the areas where the Government of the Republic of Cyprus control. According to the Constitution of the Republic of Cyprus, Greek and Turkish are both official languages, but they are used in the South and North Cyprus respectively. English was the official language of the island during the British administration. However they were used in court proceedings until 1989 and in legislation until 1996.

2. Minorities of Cyprus

There are no officially recognised minorities in the Republic of Cyprus. The Constitution acknowledges two “Communities”, the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot. The other groups, Armenians, Maronites and Latins are referred to as “religious groups” and they had the right to choose to belong to either the Greek or the Turkish Community. The two Communities are defined according to the following criteria: ethnic origin, language, cultural tradition and religion (European

Commission 2007). The Latins, the Armenians and the Maronites chose to belong to the Greek-Cypriot Community. Overall though, it should be noted that these particular minorities are not considered to be educationally disadvantaged on the basis of their religious minority status. If there is an educational disadvantage it is considered to be related to socio-economic factors. There have however been reports which while not focusing on educational disadvantage do however raise the issue of these groups minority status in terms of language rather than as being predicated solely upon religious group membership.

2.1. Armenian

There are approximately 2,600 Armenians living in Cyprus (European Research Centre of Multilingualism and Language Learning nd). Armenians first settled in Cyprus in the late 6th century, but the main migration wave to Cyprus followed the Armenian Genocide of 1915-23 in Turkey. Armenians have traditionally inhabited towns in South Cyprus, while those who lived in Famagusta (North Cyprus), left after the Turkish invasion in 1974 (European Commission 2007).

According to the Constitution, Armenians are considered as a “religious group” formally included in the Greek-Cypriot Community, with the right to elect a representative to the Cypriot Parliament. They are guaranteed the right to use their own language in private and in public, and to receive instruction in this. All Armenians appear to be bilingual in Greek and Armenian.

Three public primary schools function for the education of the Armenian language group. In these schools, students receive education in Armenian, Greek and English. These schools are funded by the Cypriot government and are supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture but they are also autonomous institutions. These primary schools adopt the official school curriculum, but they also organise extra-curricular activities such as classes in Armenian history, geography and traditional Armenian dance (European Research Centre of Multilingualism and Language Learning nd).

2.2. Maronites

Maronites migrated to Cyprus in the eighth century and are also considered as a religious group. Maronites are Roman Catholics of Lebanese origin. Maronites are now located in the southern part of the island, mainly in the city of Nicosia. Of the approximately 4,800 Maronites in Cyprus (European Research Centre of Multilingualism and Language Learning nd) only a few (165 according to UN estimates in 2001) have remained in areas occupied by Turkey (European Commission 2007). Maronites speak Cypriot Arabic, Maronite Arabic or Kormakiti Arabic [Kormakiti Arabiyya] (European Research Centre of Multilingualism and Language Learning nd).

There is no extra education provided in Maronite Arabic. According to the Initial Periodical Report, contemporary Maronites speak Greek and receive their education in Greek schools (European Research Center of Multilingualism and Language Learning nd). According to Constantinou (2008), in a report from the Republic’s Law Commissioner to the Council of Europe concerning the implementation of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the Republic declared Armenian as a minority language within the meaning of the Charter, but not Cypriot Maronite Arabic (CMA), which it excluded and designated as only a dialect and thus not in need of protection. This position was not accepted by the Committee of Experts of the Council of Europe, which visited the island and investigated the presence and condition of minority languages.

2.3. Latins

Latins are also mentioned as a religious group in the Constitution. The approximately 900 Latins (European Research Centre of Multilingualism and Language Learning nd) are descendants of migrants from Italy, France and Malta, who arrived on the island during the 16th century. The Latins do not have their own language. With respect to education, while there are Latins enrolled in Greek-Cypriot schools they also have separate Roman Catholic schools, which accept children from other religions (Council of Europe 2005).

2.4. Romani

There are no official records of the arrival of Roma in Cyprus. Altogether there are between 500 and 1,000 Roma living in Cyprus (Kendrick and Taylor 1986), and they are not considered a religious group. Most of them live in the occupied part of the island. There are no data available on their language (European Commission 2007), and there is no extra educational provision for this group on the basis of their group affiliation. They, as well as the other minorities noted, may receive additional educational support because of socio-economic factors.

2.5. Immigrants – Foreign Residents

In the current situation the total number of immigrants and foreign residents located in Cyprus represent about the 10 percent of the total population (around 83,000) (European Research Centre of Multilingualism and Language Learning, nd). Most of them are employed as domestic workers, in agriculture, in construction, in service and manufacturing industry. It should be noted that there are also a large number of undocumented immigrants (approximately 10,000-30,000). According to Trimikliniotis (2003) the 2001 Cyprus Census indicates that, the total number of migrants legally living and working in Cyprus was 29,730, comprising 6.8 percent of the whole labour force, compared with 2.5 percent in 1990. These data do not, however, include Greek immigrants, immigrants of Greek descent from the Black Sea area, domestic workers, performing artists, ‘illegal immigrants’ or permanent visitors (mainly pensioners from other European states). The main countries of origin of immigrant workers are Moldavia, Romania, Bulgaria, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Sri Lanka, India and the Philippines. Two-thirds of the workers from Sri Lanka, India and the Philippines are employed as domestic workers, the vast majority being women; the other third are employed in agriculture and livestock farming. Men predominate among immigrant workers in the construction industry: their main countries of origin are Syria and Egypt (Trimikliniotis 2003).

3. Education System of Cyprus

The educational system in Cyprus is centralised. The responsibility for educational policy and the administration of Greek-Cypriot schools and the schools of all the other groups lies with the Ministry of Education and Culture (formerly the Ministry of Education to 1994). Specifically the Ministry is responsible for the development of educational policy, enforcement of educational laws and the preparation of educational bills. It also prescribes the syllabus, the curricula and the textbooks used in all levels of education (Ministry of Education and Culture 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007).

The educational system of Cyprus is divided into four levels: Pre-primary (under the administration of the Department of Primary Education), Primary Education, Secondary Education and Tertiary Education (Ministry of Education and Culture 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007). Pre-primary Education has been compulsory from 2004. Access is free to all children who attend public kindergartens. The main aims of Pre-primary school are children’s overall cognitive and emotional development;

children's development in skills, attitudes, values and principles; and children's preparation for Primary School.

Primary education lasts six years and is attended by children aged 6 years old and above. There are both public and private primary schools.

Secondary General Education, public and private, is a substantial sector of the Cyprus education system. Secondary General Education prepares students for either academic or professional life. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2005) its focus is "the development of healthy, mental and moral personalities and the creation of able, democratic and law abiding citizens". Public Secondary Education provides two cycles of education (each of three years) – *Gymnasio*, which completes the nine year compulsory education, and *Lykeio* - for students between the ages of 12 and 18 years old.

The *Gymnasio* comprises a complete cycle of education focused on humanistic education and reinforces the general education offered in Primary Education. The principal aim of *Eniaio Lykeio* is to prepare students for entrance to Tertiary Education and to generally offer classes of special interest. There are also a number of private secondary education schools which function according to the Ministry's regulations in the same way as public schools.

The Cyprus Secondary Educational System also includes Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE). According to the Ministry of Education (2005) Technical and Vocational Education also prepares young people to be integrated into the labour force, providing them with useful skills and knowledge. The students have the opportunity to choose to follow either the Theoretical domain or the Practical domain, and to continue their education in this domain of study. Technical School graduates can also enter the Tertiary Education in the same way as *Lykeio* graduates through the Pancyprian examinations. An evaluation of the curriculum offered by Secondary Technical and Vocational Education is currently underway, co-financed by the European Social Fund as part of the framework of Measure 2.2.2 (Improvement and Reinforcement of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education) (Ministry of Education and Culture 2007).

A programme that is part of any description of the Cypriot education system is the Apprenticeship Scheme, supervised by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. The Apprenticeship Scheme is a two year training programme, which has provided for drop-out students aged from 14 to 17 since 1963. It provides both technical and theoretical education: practical training takes place in industrial workplace locations, and theoretical training takes place in Technical Schools. A study to revise the curriculum offered by the Apprenticeship Scheme is currently being tendered for: this will be co-financed by the European Social Fund (Ministry of Education and Culture 2005).

Recently becoming a European member state has brought new challenges for Cypriot Higher and Tertiary Education. The public tertiary education in Cyprus is still under development. There are three public universities: the University of Cyprus, the Technological University of Cyprus (since 2007) and the Open University of Cyprus (since 2006). The Ministry of Education and Culture is responsible for the development of institutions of tertiary education and for the development and expansion of the University of Cyprus, the establishment and operation of the Cyprus University of Technology and the operation of the Open University of Cyprus. There are also private institutions for Tertiary Education in the Republic: the Council of Ministers decided (September 12, 2007) to allow the establishment of three private universities, *Frederick University*, *European University-Cyprus* and *University of Nicosia*. In the past the tertiary education needs of Cypriots were (and to an extent still are) satisfied by the universities of Greece and to a lesser degree by universities of other countries, especially those in the United Kingdom. The strong relation between the Cypriot

and Greek educational system (curriculum, textbooks and personnel) and the same mother tongue (Greek) can in part justify the large number of Greek-Cypriot students attending Greek universities (Ministry of Education and Culture 2007).

While this report does not include detailed information on the situation in the northern portion of Cyprus that resulted from the 1974 conflict between the two Communities, it is possible to give some brief information on education there. In the north of Cyprus the language taught in schools is Turkish. All teaching material comes from Turkey. Most students from the Turkish part of Cyprus study at universities in Turkey or they attend the Public Pedagogical Academy in the northern portion of the island. Because of the original constitutional arrangement, the Republic of Cyprus is not considered to have authority over the education of the Turkish-speaking community (European Commission nd).

4. Actions for Groups at Risk

4.1. Education for Children with Special Needs (Disability)

Children with special needs are educated in public schools, which are equipped with suitable infrastructure (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education 2005). The majority of children with special educational needs are educated within mainstream schools. Special education is also provided in special units at mainstream schools. Children with severe difficulties are educated in special schools equipped with appropriate staff (psychologists, speech therapists, doctors, physiotherapists and other specialists as well as auxiliary staff) to provide the support needed. The educational and other needs of children in nursery schools, primary schools, special units in primary schools and in special schools are addressed through programmes for Special Education (Ministry of Education and Culture 2006a) (See projects summaries CY94: [Integration of students in elementary education](#), CY95: [Integration of students in secondary education](#)).

In order to sensitise principals and teachers towards Special Education, the Ministry of Education and Culture organises in-service teacher training seminars with the cooperation of experts on this domain, such as education psychologists and inspectors of Special Education.

4.2. All-Day School in Primary and in Pre-Primary Education (socioeconomic, ethnic, linguistic, disability)

All-Day school in Cyprus operates both in Primary and in Pre-primary education in two forms: as a voluntary afternoon school and only in Primary education as a unified school. According to the Ministry of Education the All-Day School is a concept that helps confront different kinds of educational inequalities, specifically disability, socioeconomic, ethnic and linguistic inequalities (Ministry of Education and Culture 2006b, 2006c and 2006d).

The Voluntary All-Day School in Primary Education was experimentally implemented in 1999-2000 in nine primary schools (four urban and five rural). This was evaluated by a Special Evaluation Committee, made up of representatives of Cyprus University, the Pedagogical Institute, the Inspectorate, the Teachers' Union and the Pancyprian Confederation of Parents' Associations Federation. The first phase evaluation report found the All-Day School institution successful and useful socially and educationally. The system was expanded to more primary schools and in 2005 to nine rural pre-primary schools. During 2006-2007 150 schools functioned as All-Day Schools on a voluntary basis (see project summary CY89: [All-day as a voluntary afternoon school](#)).

Unified All-Day Schools differ from Voluntary All-Day schools. They have a unified curriculum, unified administration and personnel, and with an upgrade educational content. The Unified All-Day School has been experimentally implemented from 2006 in nine Primary schools. In 2007-2008 this was expanded to fifteen Primary Schools (Minister of Education and Culture nd, a) (see project summary CY90: [All day school](#)).

4.3. Multicultural Education (ethnic minority)

In 2001 the Ministry of Education and Culture introduced a new term for immigrant children: ‘students of another mother tongue’, which replaced terms used in the past (such as ‘immigrant children’ and ‘students of other nationalities’). This term includes both legal and non-legal immigrant school-age children and students whose parents are seeking political asylum in Cyprus, and excludes children of Cyprus-born political refugees and school-age children of another mother tongue also born in Cyprus. The law recognises these students as Cypriot citizens (Eurydice 2007). Approximately 8.8 percent of the pupils attending school in Cyprus do not speak Greek as their mother tongue (Ministry of Education and Culture 2008).

During the past few years, an increased number of students, coming mainly from the Soviet Union and other foreign countries, have enrolled in primary education. As a consequence Cypriot education policy has been modified to include provisions that support the language and distinctive cultural features of the various ethnic groups, while also noting that these children need to learn Greek as their second language to foster a smoother transition into the Greek Cypriot society.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2007), the Ministry’s Department of Primary Education makes provisions for bilingual students to be distributed evenly in various districts, schools and classrooms. The rationale for this is to allow teachers to better and more effectively support their linguistic and cultural needs. The Ministry reports that multicultural education is currently being practised in Cyprus through the implementation of various support measures, particularly language support for these students. Specifically they refer to the learning of Greek as a second language and to the integration of groups with different cultural identities into the educational environment. The model that is currently being used is that of mainstreaming, in which bilingual students participate in the classrooms along with the native Greek-speaking pupils.

Additionally, there is a flexible system of intervention within the regular school time schedule. This involves placing bilingual students in a separate class for some hours of the week for intensive learning of the Greek language and specialised support according to their specific needs. Afternoon Greek as a second language classes for the children of repatriated Greeks are offered at Adult Education Centres. These classes are also open to all those interested in learning Greek (Ministry of Education and Culture 2007).

The Department of Primary Education has provided all schools with educational material, including books for the teaching of the Greek language, activity and exercise books, and teachers’ books with methodological instructions and a variety of suggestions for activities, of mainly in the area of communication. The Department organises in-service training seminars and conferences for teachers who teach bilingual students. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2007), these new populations have brought with them the need for teachers to develop multicultural awareness, have an understanding of their students’ way of life, patterns of thought and attitudes of people who differ from the mainstream.

4.3.1. Special Measures for Turkish Cypriots

According to the 1960 Constitution, the subjects of education of the two Communities – Greek Cypriots and Turk Cypriots - are assigned by their Community Assemblies. Despite this, the

Ministry of Education and Culture (2007, 2007b) has taken up measures to support Turkish Cypriots. Indicatively, the following measures (Gregoriadi 2004) have been reported:

- Undertaking the expense of study (tuition and registration fees) of Turkish Cypriot students in the MEC private schools of pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education.
- Scholarships for Turkish Cypriots students living in the occupied regions for study in the English Faculty in Nicosia.
- Economic help for underprivileged Turkish Cypriots for books, uniforms etc.
- Economic help for the maintenance of Turkish Cypriots schools, depending on their needs.
- Free courses of learning the Greek and Turkish language for Turkish Cypriots (adults and children) in the Adult Education Centres and the State Institutes for Further Education.
- The employment of bilingual teachers in the schools, aiming at the facilitation of communication between the teachers, the parents and the students.
- Integration in the All-Day school of children for grades A, B and C of specific Primary School.
- Differentiation of curriculum to allow Turkish Cypriot students to take courses in their mother language.
- Providing free dinner in all the Turkish Cypriot students that study in the All-Day school.
- Covering the expenses of purchasing books for Turk Cypriot students that study in private schools.

Efforts to enhance the contact between teachers and students from the two Communities failed. Because of the sensitive nature of subject, today political decisions on importing programs of bi-communal education do not exist.

4.4. Zones of Educational Priority

The policy to create Zones of Educational Priority has been a strategic choice of some European states to fight functional illiteracy and school failure. In Cyprus, the innovation of ZEPs was piloted in 2003-4 in two school complexes, *Faneromenis* (CY88) in Nicosia and *Saint Antoniou* in Limassol (CY86), and in 2004-2005 it was extended with the operation of a ZEP in *Theoskepasti* in Paphos (CY87). All these functioned in 2005-6 (Minister of Education and Culture 2006a), and by 2006-7, 6 kindergartens and 7 primary schools participated in the program in the Nicosia, Limassol and Pafos districts. A fourth ZEP school was opened in Larnaca in 2008-9 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2008).

In Educational Priority Zones the selected complex of schools normally consists of the main Elementary Schools, a High school and the main Kindergartens. The schools are located in poorer areas and the majority of the students come from families with low socio-economic status and a low level of educational attainment. The criteria to determine an area as a ZEP are: 1) a high rate of school failure and functional illiteracy, 2) a high percentage of foreign students, 3) large proportions of drop outs and incidents of violence and delinquent behaviour (Minister of Education and Culture nd, d).

Several actions have been taken to address functional illiteracy and school failure, and the application of Education Priority Zones has been in general regarded as successful. The reduction in levels of school failure and the growth of levels of literacy, through the systematic support for positive attitudes towards reading, books and knowledge, was accomplish in all three ZEPs in Limassol, Paphos and Nicosia. The operation of the ZEPs has been well accepted by parents and the wider community.

4.5. Adult Education Centres (socioeconomic, ethnic)

Adult Education Centres provide one of the most important programmes of adult education in Cyprus. Their aims and objectives are mainly to enhance the quality of adult education on an informal basis, to improve knowledge and skills for those leaving school without basic qualifications and to provide lifelong learning opportunities for adults for their successful integration into a united Europe.

They have provided education and training to thousands of adults, mainly in rural areas from 1960, and, from 1974 also in urban areas. They now cover all areas of the southern part of Cyprus, offering opportunities for further education to thousands of individuals aged 15 and above. During the school year 2005-6, more than 21,000 adults attended Adult Education courses in 280 centres, with over 550 qualified teachers offering about 70 different courses. Adult Education Centres also offer language courses, the most important of which include Greek lessons for immigrants or minority students and their parents.

4.6. Gender and Sexuality Issues

Although it has been some improvement through the years, gender and sexuality issues are still in development in Cyprus. For many years, women in the labour force suffered various forms of discrimination. The situation has significantly improved; at least as far as legal provisions are concerned, as a result of the pressures from women's organisations, trade unions and political pressures. However, the situation has not improved for all women and the legal provisions have not significantly changed women's life (The International Encyclopaedia of Sexuality 1997–2001).

In recent years the Cyprus government has taken some actions aiming at combating discrimination of women in the labour force. These actions included the creation of infrastructure for children facilities, the provision of training programmes, and the improvement of institutional mechanisms to increase women's participation and status in economic activity and society as a whole. A special committee to addressing sexism in the workplace established as part of the National Action Plan for Employment 2004–2006. According to Pavlou (2005), women's labour participation has increased significantly in the last two decades, although it remains lower than men's.

In terms of education, Cyprus has achieved, to a great extent, equal access to education for women. Statistics shows that women outnumber men at higher education institutions, often outperforming them academically. However, in the fields of science and engineering men greatly outnumber women (Vassiliadou 2004). This educational gender segregation reflects the structures of the gender division of labour in the economy and decreases opportunities for women to increase mobility within and between sectors, affecting the integration of women into particular employment sectors.

In terms of vocational training, the participation of women in training courses offered by the Human Resource Development Authority has risen from 37 percent in 1999 to 52.2 percent in 2002 (Pavlou 2005). Although this is an encouraging improvement, more actions need to be taken to encourage women to train in new occupational fields and to use new technologies.

Homosexuality is still a subject very few Cypriots talk about, despite great media publicity since 1989, when the European Court decided that Cyprus was violating the human rights of homosexuals, and ruled that the 1885 law, criticized as anti-homosexual, should be repealed (International Encyclopedia of Sexuality 1997–2001). General attitudes toward gays are slowly becoming more positive following the European Court's decision.

There are not any specific educational programmes in Cyprus specifically addressing gender and sexuality issues. However, in the curriculum of primary education, in the subject of Health Education, there are some references regarding gender. Our aim was to show how Cypriot society conceptualised gender and sexuality.

5. Markers for Inequality¹

Literacy levels

The percentage of people aged 15-24 who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement related to their everyday life is very high and is at 99.8 percent (UN Common Database, UNESCO 2004). Literacy rates for Greek-Cypriots by gender are as follows: 96.3 percent for women and 98.9 percent for men.

Exclusion /expulsion rates

Data on exclusion/expulsion rates are not available. However, school enrolment data is provided by the Ministry of Education and Culture in various reports. According to the Ministry (2008), the enrolment ratio for children aged 5-14 is 100 percent and for the age group 15-18 the ratio is approximately 95 percent with boys having the lower enrolment rate. The Republic of Cyprus' Planning Bureau (2003) notes that the number of those who drop out before completing the compulsory education, is estimated at around 2000 persons per year, the majority being males. A fifth of these dropouts (mainly boys) enrol in the Apprenticeship Scheme.

Attainment levels at the end of the compulsory education

No official data on attainment levels at the end of compulsory education in Cyprus was found. However, human resources are characterised by a high level of educational attainment (Psahardes 2003).

Continuing in education post compulsory leaving age

The percentage of students graduating compulsory education (which is up to the age of 15) is high. Completion of secondary education studies figures are considered as satisfactory. 89.6 percent of students who had enrolled three years earlier completed their first level secondary studies in school year 1997-98. With respect to the completion of higher secondary education studies during the same academic year, 80 percent of those who had enrolled 6 years earlier successfully completed their studies (Planning Bureau 2003).

According to the Ministry of Education (2008) approximately 98 percent of students completing compulsory education continue through to upper secondary school: 86.1 percent do so in general secondary and 12 percent in technical/vocational education. An issue of concern noted by the Ministry of Education in terms of participation rates is the low rates of participation of students in technical education. This is especially true for female students, who make up only 14.8 percent of the secondary technical/vocational education student population.

¹ Data for Cyprus refer only to the areas of Cyprus controlled by the Government of the Republic of Cyprus.

Participation rate in higher education

The proportion of young people who opted for tertiary level education in Cyprus is exceptionally high. Eliophotou Menon (1998), referring to participation rates in the 1990s, shows the number enrolled in tertiary educational institutions increasing from 367 in 1960/1961 to 7,765 in 1994/1995, and more than 9,000 Cypriots attending universities abroad in 1994/1995, as compared to a couple of thousand in the 1960s. Approximately 82 percent of the secondary education graduates continue their studies in tertiary education. Of those about 37 percent study in Cyprus and 45 percent abroad (Ministry of Education and Culture 2008). Sixty-seven percent of the pupils who graduated from secondary education in Cyprus during the academic year 2003–2004 continued their studies in higher education. Out of these young people, 45 percent entered tertiary education institutions in Cyprus, and 55 percent higher education institutions abroad (Statistical Service 2006). Fifty-nine percent of the students who studied in Cyprus attended private colleges, and 41 percent attended public higher education institutions. With respect to participation or inclusion of the disabled in higher education, Hadjidakou and Hartas' (2008) research findings suggest that access and availability to resources and services varies as do staff views of disability. At an individual as well as at an organisational level, provision is neither systematic nor pro-active and is more in response to individually expressed need. In other words, to access it, they had to inform and ask, rather than it being offered.

Employment rates

Cyprus recorded the third best performance in the EU-27 regarding unemployment, during January 2008. According to Eurostat data, unemployment in Cyprus reached 3.6 percent in January 2008. The Labour Force Survey and the harmonised unemployment rates tend to be higher than the registered unemployment rate. The two measures report unemployment rates as high as 6 percent but the registered unemployment rate fluctuates close to the level of 4 percent. According to Christofides, Kourtellos and Vrachimis (2007), the difference between the registered unemployment rate and the other measures is that the former does not include a growing number of female and young workers who are willing to enter the labour market but are not registered.

Evidence of social exclusion, being bullied

Cyprus currently has no systematic monitoring of racist incidents in education in place. However, according to Kaloyirou and Lindsay (2008) bullying is a matter of significant concern in the Cypriot educational setting. Teachers usually report their difficulties in understanding bullies and their anxiety to find effective ways to deal with them. Cypriot boys use and experienced more bullying than girls, and boys use more physical and less indirect forms of bullying than girls (Kyriakides, Kaloyirou and Lindsay 2006). A nationwide study carried out in 2006-2007 found that, one in two Cypriot school children believe a classmate of theirs has been physically bullied. Furthermore almost two in 10 children are afraid of being targeted themselves. The study was carried out under the European Commission Daphne II programme 'Needs Assessment and Awareness Raising Programme for Bullying in Schools' (Saoulli 2008).

6. Conclusions

This report seeks to provide information in relation to the educational system of Cyprus, the status of the minority groups that exist on the island and most importantly the connection of the educational policy with the challenge of confronting the educational disadvantages of the student's population.

Cypriot population and society is multicultural. In order to describe the groups, terms such as ethnic or national origin have not been used. In Constitutional terms there are two Communities in Cyprus, the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot and three religious groups, the Armenians, the Maronites and the Latins, which chose to belong formally to the Greek-Cypriot Community. The concept of "ethno-religious" groups derives from the term Communities as defined in the Constitution (Article 2(1) and 2(2)) and which is based on a mixture of origin, language, religion and culture. The rest of the population consists of foreign nationals (Council of Europe 2007). The immigration flow has increased during the last decade and has formed new challenges for the integration of legal or illegal immigrants to the Cypriot society. These facts are evidence of the important role that education acquires as it comprises an important factor that can facilitate the coexistence and the communication between people with different backgrounds.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus (2008) access to all educational levels is free for all children without prejudice based on gender, ability, language, religion, political beliefs or ethnic background. Nevertheless, educational policies do not focus specifically on disadvantages related to language, religion or gender. The objectives of educational policies are concentrated mostly to socioeconomic-related parameters of disadvantage. Examples of this are policies that address illiteracy, dropouts and adult education. An issue that is addressed not only centrally but also to a local level through projects is the integration of students with special needs to the educational setting. Now a new challenge has been raised for policy: increasing the attendance of immigrant students in the Cypriot schools. The implementation of two projects that deal with learning Greek as a second language are a proof of acknowledging the educational disadvantage stemming from the different ethnic and linguistic characteristics of the student population.

Collecting information for this report was a quite difficult task. The recent entry of Cyprus into the European Union has led to the recent reorientation of educational policy-making processes, focusing on subjects that have been the concern other Member States for many years. Most projects are still in their infancy, so the analysis provided here is limited to simple descriptions. The centralised and bureaucratic administration of the educational system also hindered the collection of data needed. The occupation of the north part of the island made it difficult to obtain information about the educational policies there. It should be noted that educational policy promotes the development of school-based projects that meet the needs of the specific school situation. These are directly related to the motivation, interest and ability of school administrators to undertake such projects. These changes in the social environment not only differentiate the school's linguistic and cultural character; they bring forward questions of specialisation in new areas, influencing concurrently the evaluation, supervision and control systems in education, and as such what happens, where and why (Papaioannou and Koustelini 2007). However there have been few published reports on the school-based projects, other than anecdotal references. Local efforts exist, but better dissemination of the projects and their results is needed.

In conclusion, it appears that at the national and local levels, the issue of involvement in efforts to address social exclusion require the active participation of all the relevant partners in designing, implementing and monitoring policies and practices. This type of involvement is not necessarily evident from the formally published documentation found even though there are references to such

partnerships. Something that can be seen as a double edged sword is that while there also appears to be a tendency to group social exclusion, social inclusion tends to be referred to in Cyprus under broad rubrics; this is something that may often dilute the emphasis and direction that specific intervention strategies can take to address potentially problems. As an example of this, in many cases the problems of social exclusion in Cyprus are addressed under the more generic rubric of socio-economic disadvantage. The relatively recent accession of Cyprus to the EU and its efforts to bring its policies in line with those of the EU constitute another reason for much of its documentation being oriented towards what it hopes to accomplish versus what it has in fact been able to accomplish. The centralised educational system of Cyprus needs to continue to work with all its relevant partners to identify and reduce any problems that can lead to conflict and social exclusion. Educational policies and programmes that recognise the uniqueness of its students and their needs is an important basis for reducing potential problems that can result in social exclusion.

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Appendix 1: Project Summaries

Theme	Project	subsidiary themes
Minority ethnic groups	Educational Priority Zone: “Saint Antoniou” School Complex in Limassol [Case Study 1a]	LC
Social Class	All-day as a voluntary afternoon school in primary and pre-primary education [Case Study 2a]	LED
	All- day school as a unified morning- afternoon school [Case Study 2b]	LED
	Literacy Program in secondary education	
	Pilot program of prevention and confrontation of student's delinquency	
	Parents-children, guidance and relationships	
Religious Minorities		
Linguistic Minorities	Educational Priority Zone: “Panagia Theoskepasti” School Complex in Paphos [Case Study 1b]	EC
	Educational Priority Zone: “Faneromenis School” Complex in Nicosia [Case Study 1c]	EC
	Greek language learning for repatriates and foreign children	E
	Greek language learning for asylum seekers	E
Disabilities	Rainbow	
	Integration of students in the elementary education with hearing problems	
	Integration of students in the secondary education with hearing problems	
Indigenous Minorities		
Gender		

Key: **E** ethnic minorities; **C** social class; **R** religious minorities; **L** linguistic minorities; **D** disability; **I** indigenous minorities; **G** gender

Appendix 2: Project Overview

Project	target age range					target theme(s)						
	pre-school	primary	secondary	higher	working life	minority ethnic	social class	religious minority	linguistic minorities	disability	indigenous minorities	gender
Educational Priority Zone: "Saint Antoniou" School Complex in Limassol [Case Study 1a]	✓	✓	✓			✓✓	✓		✓			
Educational Priority Zone: "Panagia Theoskepasti" School Complex in Paphos [Case Study 1b]	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓✓			
Educational Priority Zone: "Faneromenis School" Complex in Nicosia [Case Study 1c]	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓		✓✓			
All-day as a voluntary afternoon school in primary and pre-primary education [Case Study 2a]	✓	✓				✓	✓✓		✓	✓		
All-day school as a unified morning-afternoon school [Case Study 2b]		✓				✓	✓✓		✓	✓		
Literacy Program in secondary education			✓				✓✓					
Pilot program of prevention and confrontation of student's delinquency			✓				✓✓					
Rainbow		✓	✓							✓✓		
Integration of students in the elementary education with hearing problems		✓								✓✓		
Integration of students in the secondary education with hearing problems			✓							✓✓		
Greek language learning for repatriates and foreign children		✓				✓			✓✓			
Greek language learning for asylum seekers		✓				✓			✓✓			
Parents-children, guidance and relationships	✓	✓	✓				✓✓					