



# THE GOVERNANCE AND LOCAL INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS AND EUROPE'S REFUGEES

## WORK PACKAGE 2: CYPRUS

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*The current 'migration crisis' presents openings and well as challenges. The aim of GLIMER is to generate research that will help European cities and regions facilitate the long term inclusion of displaced people in a way that remakes local spaces.*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The integration of migrants and refugees is a major challenge in Cyprus. It's an area which remains under-researched with respect to the difficulties faced by migrants in general and migrant women in particular. Literature on the subject is relatively limited, focusing far more often on economic migrants, rather than refugees. Considering the relatively high number of 'low-skilled' migrants in Cyprus and despite the efforts undertaken by Cyprus to harmonise its legislation with the European Union acquis, a number of issues remain unaddressed with regards to the effects and impact of immigration on the island's political, social and economic spheres. The current migration model which has been developed without consultation with groups representing migrants refugees or women, is considered outdated and not effective in addressing the needs of Cypriot society on one side and the migrants themselves on the other. The predominant focus of the government since 1990 has been to preserve the Cypriot national identity from the 'other', a term which includes often marginalised groups such as migrants, refugees and women who do not conform to patriarchal notions of womanhood. The government's approach has led to the segregation and ostracism of certain groups from society, and it is crucial now more than ever, that a comprehensive integration policy is developed which also takes into consideration the gender aspect in the course of its design and implementation. This would require the government to undertake a thorough assessment of all social, economic and budgetary policies from a gender perspective so as to ensure that future policy reflects all social groups and respects the full gamut of human rights. This country report aims to present the development of national integration policies in the areas of urban regeneration, education and the labour market, focusing especially on whether gender has been impacted and mainstreamed. For the purposes of this report it should be noted that in the definition of migrants we include refugees and asylum seekers, while the legal distinction between the two is recognised throughout the report.

# 1.1 KEY EVENTS AND DEMOGRAPHIC DEVELOPMENTS IN MIGRATION

The literature evaluating the development of migration policies in Cyprus indicate a dramatic transformation over the past 30 years; Cyprus has evolved from a country of emigration to one of immigration: In terms of emigration, the island experienced two waves in its recent history. The first, in the early 20th century, involved a large-scale emigration<sup>1</sup> of Cypriots, predominantly for employment and economic purposes, and the second occurred between 1960 and 1975, principally as a<sup>2</sup> consequence of the rise in ethnic tensions and the subsequent invasion of the island by Turkey.

More recently, in the 1990s, labour shortages and other external factors resulted in a policy shift with regard to the system of governance relating to asylum and integration. Prior to engaging in this aspect however, we present a brief overview of Cyprus' migration history and approach undertaken up to this shift, in order to provide a rationale for current policy.

Conquerors have historically been attracted to the geographical position of the island, as it's located at the crossroads of the European, Asian and African continents. Cyprus provided safe harbour to many refugees in the early 20th century while it was a British colony - Armenians and Greeks from Asia Minor, Jews on their way to Palestine and Lebanese fleeing from war.<sup>3</sup> British camps<sup>4</sup> in Cyprus, which provided protection to Jewish refugees after the Second World War, raised concern among the local population, who feared the potential economic burden on the island by this new influx of refugees. These concerns were amplified by the uncertainty about the residence status of these refugees and the impact their stay would have on the national aspirations of the Greek-Cypriot community which sought to unify with Greece (Enosis).<sup>5</sup> A recent analysis of local media articles from the 1940s and records of social commentary at the time indicate that organisations across the political spectrum were resistant to the arrival of the Jewish refugees, requesting "a ban on Jews or other foreigners entering Cyprus".<sup>6</sup>

The island gained its independence from the British in 1960, but the Republic which was established was quickly enmeshed in a period of ethnic tension between the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities, leading to the 1974 invasion and occupation of 37% of the island by Turkey. The gross domestic product (GDP) consequently suffered a severe drop during the period of 1973-5, accompanied by a distinct rise in unemployment and poverty.<sup>7</sup> From that turbulent period, what remains in Cyprus is a physical and ethnic partition between the two communities, with the Greek-Cypriot community residing south of the UN buffer zone (the so-called 'green line'), while the Turkish-Cypriot community resides to the north of it. This report focuses on the area south of the green line, the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus.

1. According to the definition used by the Cyprus Statistical Service, emigration includes individuals who have resided in Cyprus for at least a year who subsequently leave the country to settle elsewhere.

2. Panayiotis Gregoriou, Zenon Kontolemis and Maria Matsi: Immigration in Cyprus: An analysis of the determinants. Cyprus Economic Policy Review, Vol 4, No, 1, pp 63 – 88 (2010).

3. Migrants, Social Space and Visibility, The Cyprus Review, vol 20(2), pp 189-193.

4. These have been described as being akin to transitional camps for displaced persons that were founded and operated opportunistically to facilitate British policy in the Middle East: Alexios Alecou and Josefina Mavrou: Refugees in Cyprus: Local Acceptance in the Past and Present (2017)

5. This interpretation is presented in Ibid 4

6. Selioti V, British Refugee Camps in Cyprus (1946 – 1949). Thessaloniki: Epikentro. (2016). It cites a variety of articles in the newspaper 'Eleftheria' and its coverage of the issue during the period covering 1946-8.

7. Press Information Office 1997: The Almanac of Cyprus 1996, PIO Cyprus.

Since 1974, there have been waves of migration to the north of the island by ethnic Turks; this has been perceived as a “methodical plan by Turkey to alter population balances with obvious political motives”<sup>8</sup> and it is critical to view the developments to Cyprus’ migration policy in light of this fact. The ‘Cyprus issue’, which continues to dominate political discourse and permeate policy in every affected field, has had a galvanising effect on the Greek-Cypriot community in terms of their continuing efforts to preserve a sense of ‘national identity’. As Vassiliadou<sup>9</sup> asserts, the issue of ethnic identity in Cyprus is highly complex and assumptions which relate to ‘Cypriot identity’ tend to rely heavily on patriarchy, class and political affiliation. While a range of mainstream ethnic identities have been constructed and propagated,<sup>10</sup> they are all complicit in the marginalisation and erasure of the ‘other’, which includes women, as well as subgroups that are largely oppressed or discriminated against, such as migrants. Therefore, the development of immigration policy and strategy in Cyprus has at its core the preservation of the Greek Cypriot community’s ‘identity’. Understanding this perception and desire to hold onto the national identity can also explain the state’s reluctance and continuing lack of proactiveness to propose or effectively implement policies promoting integration.

Since 1974, a population of approximately 200,000 internally displaced Greek-Cypriots provided the economy with cheap labour which, combined with the government’s assistance and the political environment of the time, created positive conditions, making the economic revival of the island possible.<sup>11</sup> During the 1980s and 1990s, Cyprus experienced dramatic economic growth, often called the “economic miracle”,<sup>12</sup> which resulted in an increased demand for labour. Up until 1990 however, immigration policy was highly restrictive. The economic surge brought about the need to overhaul the approach towards immigration policy and an evaluation of the needs of the labour market and the economy. In contrast with other Western European countries—which had greater experience with migration flows, as well as a more developed legislative and policy framework adept at meeting the needs of both migrants and the labour market—Cyprus lacked the appropriate legal, administrative or operational infrastructure to tackle the issue.<sup>13</sup>

The most recent population census undertaken in the Republic of Cyprus in 2011, tallies the population at 840,407 (with 659,115 Greek-Cypriots, 3,656 Maronites, 1,831 Armenians, 208 Latins,<sup>14</sup> 1,128 Turkish-Cypriots, and 170,383, around 20%, foreign citizens).<sup>15</sup> Since 1990, there has been a dramatic increase in immigration. In 1990, according to the Cyprus Statistical Service, there were 545 migrant workers who were documented third country nationals (TCNs); a figure that rose to an

8. Margarita Zervidou, National Report: The case of Cyprus, in: *Integration of Female Migrant Domestic Workers: strategies for employment and civic participation* (2008) Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies.

9. Myria Vassiliadou, *Questioning Nationalism: The Patriarchal and National Struggles of Cypriot Women within a European Context*, *The European Journal of Women’s Studies* (2002), Vol. 9(4): 459–482

10. The range of identities outlined by Vassiliadou (Ibid 9) are: the right-leaning political groups, advocating a patriarchal Greek identity and excluding a regional, Cypriot identity, the predominantly working-class left, who emphasize their identity as Cypriots, and downplay the Greek aspect. A smaller group, the Neo-Cypriots, present Cypriotism as the ‘real’ identity of Greek Cypriots in opposition to ‘Greek-ness’.

11. Anthias F. and Ayres R. *Ethnicity and Class in Cyprus*, *Race and Class*, XXV, (1983), pp 59–76.

12. Demetris Christodoulou. *Inside the Economic Miracle. The Labours of an Embattled Economic*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. (1992)

13. Cochliou D. and Spaneas S. *Asylum system in Cyprus: a field for social work practice*, *European Journal of Social Work*, 12(4), pp 535 – 540.

14. Armenians, Maronites and Latins are officially recognised as religious minorities in the Republic of Cyprus, and all three communities are represented in the House of Parliament, without, however, having a vote.

15. Non-Cypriot nationals.

estimated 68,000 by 2011.<sup>16</sup> In fact, as Teerling & King asserted, “Cyprus has experienced, proportionate to its population, the largest-scale immigration in recent years. Of the EU27, Cyprus had the highest rate of net immigration during the mid-late 2000s”.<sup>17</sup> This said, despite the major migration crisis in the Mediterranean and the island’s proximity to the Middle East, the number of asylum seekers arriving in Cyprus remains relatively low in comparison to Greece and Italy. According to the Statistical Service, it has been estimated that in 2015, there were less than 3,000 asylum seekers arriving in Cyprus.<sup>18</sup> The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights attributed these low figures to the “island’s geographical isolation from the rest of Europe, [being] outside of the Schengen area, difficulties in leaving the country and restrictive asylum policies, especially regarding family reunification.”<sup>19</sup>

When it comes to residence permits granted to foreign nationals and migrants, the number seems disproportionate to the general population. For example, the number of female migrant domestic workers in Cyprus: The Civil Registry and Migration department<sup>20</sup> granted 15,610 permits to domestic workers in just 2015 – which constituted 35% of the total number of permits that had been granted since the start of the scheme. At the same time, the total number of domestic workers in Cyprus amount to more than 30,000 and it is estimated that the island hosts an additional 30,000 undocumented domestic workers. Female migrant domestic workers statistically form the biggest group of foreign residents in Cyprus and, as such, warrant particular consideration with respect to their access to services, education and the labour market, as well as their human rights.

Justifications for the surge in immigration are multi-fold. As mentioned above, on the one hand, Cyprus’s economic growth translated in a corresponding increased demand in labour. The initial justification for opening its doors to migrant labour in 1989 was that there was a temporary need to “cover the developmental needs arising from the shortage of labour”.<sup>21</sup> Political developments around the world also had an impact on migration to Cyprus in the early 1990s. Namely, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the migration of a large number of Pontiacs from the Caucus region who had been granted Greek citizenship, the Gulf war and successive crises in the Middle East region, unrest in Israel and Palestine, and the fall of Yugoslavia.<sup>22</sup> The same factors were behind the migration trend of Eastern European women arriving in Cyprus to work as ‘artistes’ in high risk establishments, often victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation.

According to the Civil Registry and Migration department, the main factors behind the increased migration flow into Cyprus since 2004 have been “a) the need of individuals for circumstances that

16. Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, Latest Figures: Population and Social conditions, available at: [http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/populationcondition\\_22main\\_en/populationcondition\\_22main\\_en?OpenForm&sub=2&sel=2](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/populationcondition_22main_en/populationcondition_22main_en?OpenForm&sub=2&sel=2) (accessed on 12 December 2017).

17. Teerling, J and King, R. Cyprus as a Multi-diasporic space, Working Paper No 67, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex (2011).

18. This is mainly due to the fact that Cyprus is an island, i.e. it has no easily traversable land borders with other European countries. It is also not very close by sea to the next closest European country, making it difficult for asylum seekers to journey on to their preferred host countries, usually in western or northern Europe.

19. Report by Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe, following his visit to Cyprus from 7 – 11 December 2015: [https://rm.coe.int/ref/CommDH\(2016\)16](https://rm.coe.int/ref/CommDH(2016)16) (accessed 19 December 2017).

20. Statistics can be found at: <http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/crmd.nsf/All/083980C0BA1B224AC2257EA4003861BA?OpenDocument> (accessed on 15 December 2017). (accessed on 15 December 2017).

21. Trimikliniotis and Demetriou, Labour Integration of Migrant Workers in Cyprus: A critical appraisal, Chapter in Mojca Pajnik and Giovanna Campani (2011), Precarious Migrant Labour Across Europe, MIROVNI INSTITUT, Ljubljana, pp 73 – 96 (2011).

22. Ibid 18

would provide them a better quality of life, b) sound democratic conditions that prevail in Cyprus, c) the accession to the European Union on 01/05/2004 and the benefits stemming from this accession, such as mobility once a legal status is acquired".<sup>23</sup> Moreover, despite the small size of the island, over the past decade, research<sup>24</sup> has shown an increased rate of Cypriots graduating from tertiary education, which has left a gap in the market for low skilled or manual labourers. Such positions have become increasingly filled by migrants.

23. Information provided by the Civil Registry and Migration Department to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Cyprus to the Office of the UN at Geneva. July 3 2014 at: <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Migration/GA69thSession/Cyprus.pdf> (accessed on 12 December 2017).

24. Andri Kyrizi, Overeducation in Cyprus, University of Leicester, Department of Economics: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/hellenicObservatory/CMS%20pdf/Events/2011-5th%20PhD%20Symposium/Kyrizi.pdf> (accessed 16 December 2017).

## 1.2 DEVELOPMENT OF A 'NATIONAL INTEGRATION POLICY'

Literature focusing on the integration of migrants and asylum seekers in Cyprus remains sparse. The limited information tends to focus on asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. Where a distinction is made, specific reference is provided on the particular needs and situation of the latter group.

From its inception, integration policy has been based on the premise that immigration to Cyprus serves the temporary purpose of covering labour shortages in specific sectors which are unpopular with Cypriots.<sup>25</sup> Integration in itself not being a priority, policy development in this field has remained limited. This has consequently resulted in criticism of the policy; there has been a “theoretical blindness of the gender aspects of the Europeanization of immigrant integration” which is said to also perpetuate “to a great extent the traditional gender blindness of theories of citizenship and rights”.<sup>26</sup> The ‘feminization of immigration’<sup>27</sup> has essentially changed “the structures of gender inequality”, in areas where “gender exclusion intersects with migrant status, race, class, sexuality etc, both in relation to the precariousness of migrants, as well as in relation to the patriarchal outlook of the state and state institutions”.<sup>28</sup> The European Commission asserts that Cyprus integration policy, which has been under-developed in general and especially so from a gender perspective, does not look at the “intersection of migrant status with structures of gender inequality in the receiving society”.<sup>29</sup> Doing so would ensure a more holistic approach to integration, taking into consideration the overlapping aspects and obstacles for all migrants and particularly women, being able to integrate in society.

According to the assessment by the 2015 Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX),<sup>30</sup> Cyprus has been ranked second to last among 37 countries in terms of achieving integration for migrants, and its policies have been concluded as discouraging long-term integration. MIPEX’s evaluation states that Cyprus has relatively unfavourable policies on mobility in the labour market, limiting access to migrants. Furthermore, very little targeted support has been found which would allow TCNs to access training, health or political participation. Despite the fact that Cyprus has put in place an EU-backed National Programme for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF),<sup>31</sup> the policies have been criticised by MIPEX as not being effective in promoting integration of migrants as they are restrictive and the limited support provided serves to discourage migrants and local communities from investing further in integration. Local NGOs<sup>32</sup> have stressed that the majority of beneficiaries under this fund are public authorities, municipalities and consulting companies, and so doubt has been raised as to the effectiveness of this measure with respect to improving the integration of migrants. Moreover, the priorities set within the framework of the AMIF have not been based upon any consultation with groups representing migrant women; the priorities, therefore, are gender blind, thereby hampering their ability to adequately cater to the very groups in need of positive integration measures.

25. Ibid 18

26. Zelia Georgiou, Questioning the location of gender in integration discourses and policies, in *Young Migrant Women in Secondary Education*, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2011: [http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/Integration\\_of\\_young\\_migrant\\_women\\_2011.pdf](http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/Integration_of_young_migrant_women_2011.pdf) (accessed 19 December 2017).

27. Feminization of Migration is the phenomenon where the majorities of migrants travelling alone or as head of the families are women.

28. Ibid

29. Commission of the European Communities (2003) Communication on immigration, integration and employment. COM (2003) 336 final, Brussels, 3.6.2003.

30. Migrant Integration Policy Index 2015: <http://www.mipex.eu/cyprus> (accessed on 14 December 2017).

31. [http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/eufunds2015.nsf/page12\\_en/page12\\_en?OpenDocument](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/eufunds2015.nsf/page12_en/page12_en?OpenDocument) (accessed 14 December 2017)

32. KISA: 75 million into a bottomless pit. <https://kisa.org.cy/75-million-into-a-bottomless-pit/> (accessed 18 December 2017)



The National Action Plan (NAP) for Integration of Immigrants Legally Residing in Cyprus 2010-2012 <sup>33</sup> was adopted in 2010 by the Ministry of the Interior, as a result of the recommendation and support of the European Commission. Whilst this was an encouraging development, the NAP was drafted without consulting civil society or migrant organisations. Due to the lack of an inclusive approach in the drafting process, there is little to no focus on undocumented migrants and female migrants who are the most vulnerable groups and whose needs and circumstances warrant particular attention. The result of such an approach is the institutional marginalisation of these groups and a continuation of their inability to fully and actively participate across all levels of society.

Whilst the government had articulated that there were plans to draft a subsequent plan and strategy, this commitment remains unfulfilled. Currently, no NAP is in force and it is unknown whether there is a genuine commitment on the part of the government to adopt a comprehensive and inclusive policy. Successful integration is not solely determined on the existence and implementation of a comprehensive national policy, but also requires “the wider socio-economic relations within society as a whole”.<sup>34</sup> Cyprus has been described as having “poor governance and a fragmented civil society ... [which] impede progress towards successful integration irrespective of the effectiveness of a dedicated integration policy as such”.<sup>35</sup>

The aforementioned NAP consisted of 8 priority pillars: i) information – service – transparency; ii) employment, training, trade unions; iii) education and language learning; iv) health; v) housing – improvement of quality of life, social protection and interaction; vi) culture, civics, basic elements of political and social reality; vii) participation; viii) assessment – annual and total. The lack of a substantive effort to define the integration process has indicated that “the Plan did not proceed on the basis of any substantive needs assessment of the ‘host community’, non-Cypriot communities of identity or interest or the needs of specific state institutions”.<sup>36</sup> Some success was recorded by ECRI,<sup>37</sup> according to information provided by the national authorities, namely the provision of Greek language programmes and the organisation of multicultural festivals. However, there doubt was expressed as to whether these sorts of disjointed actions led to any tangible long-term effects in promoting integration.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the NAP was not subject to ongoing assessment by the authorities, nor was there an evaluation as to whether targets had been reached, a failing that was certainly compounded by the relatively small budget that was allocated to assessment efforts.<sup>39</sup>

The NAP has been further criticised for failure to genuinely tackle social exclusion and promote integration of migrants in a variety of areas and across society. Specifically, despite general adherence to the European Union’s legislative framework regarding immigration and asylum, there is an absence of any gender mainstreaming in the migration and integration policies produced. This inadequacy of the framework is detrimental to migrant women in particular, who have been characterised as being invisible in both political and social discourse, as well as in society.<sup>40</sup> A variety

34. Officer and Taki, The needs of refugees and the integration process in Cyprus, UNHCR (2013): [http://www.unhcr.org.cy/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Images/Protection/The\\_Needs\\_of\\_Refugees\\_-\\_26\\_June\\_.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org.cy/fileadmin/user_upload/Images/Protection/The_Needs_of_Refugees_-_26_June_.pdf) (accessed 19 December 2017)

35. Ibid

36. Ibid 30

37. ECRI 2016: <https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/Country-by-country/Cyprus/CYP-CbC-V-2016-018-ENG.pdf>

38. Ibid 30

39. Ibid 30

40. Views expressed in Integration of female migrant domestic workers: Strategies for Employment and Civic Participation pp 9, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (2008): <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/wp-content/uploads/integration-of-female-migrant-domestic-workers.pdf>

of problems experienced by female migrant workers have to their marginalisation and exclusion from the dominant culture and society, and as such warrant more strategic focus.<sup>41</sup>

Lastly, with respect to beneficiaries of international protection, at the end of 2014, Cyprus was hosting 3,412 refugees and persons with subsidiary protection status. As reported by UNHCR, whilst the NAP included some actions to address their needs, no integration measures were taken in favour of these persons. ECRI<sup>42</sup> notes that they face many challenges, amongst others a lack of knowledge of the local language and culture, employment issues, lack of awareness that refugees are allowed by law to work after six months of having submitted their asylum application, and the non-availability of vocational training programmes. Furthermore, there are no measures in place to assist recognised beneficiaries of international protection to obtain social welfare or find accommodation and employment. This results in many remaining in reception centres in conditions which have been deemed not conducive to integration. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, during his visit to the island in 2015,<sup>43</sup> condemned the 2014 law which restricted the right of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection to family reunification. Local NGOs reported to the Commissioner that the very high rate of subsidiary protection reflected the “national authorities’ will to send the message that there is no long-term prospective in Cyprus for beneficiaries of international protection”.<sup>44</sup>

41. Ibid 30

42 Ibid 33

43 Ibid 16

44 Ibid 16

## 2. CYPRUS IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

### 2.1 REGENERATION AND URBAN EXCLUSION

The literature around the regeneration and urban exclusion of migrants is quite under-developed. Cyprus has a conservative political culture where power is predominantly held centrally, with local governments enjoying limited political autonomy.<sup>45</sup> Municipalities have the right to promote activities and events in a range of areas which depend on both the political will and the financial capability of the municipality in question. Since 2012, the municipality of Limassol, the second largest city in Cyprus after Nicosia, has participated in projects backed by the European Integration Fund, implementing a variety of 'social actions', such as Street Work,<sup>46</sup> which are specifically geared towards TCNs.

Limassol witnessed a rapid increase in its population since the 1974 Turkish invasion; apartment blocks were hastily built wherever space was available in order to accommodate the estimated 43,000 internally displaced persons from the North.<sup>47</sup> The need to provide immediate, as opposed to sustainable, housing for the sudden influx of displaced persons led to what has been characterised as "anarchistic urban development" in Limassol.<sup>48</sup> Today, these social housing estates are increasingly inhabited by migrants; this was enabled by a change in governmental policy over the years, which granted ownership titles to the original inhabitants, allowing them to rent their apartments out at affordable prices.<sup>49</sup>

Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus and the largest city of the island, includes the old city and its immediate environs. The restrictions in movement between the Republic of Cyprus and the Turkish-occupied part of the island were partially lifted in April 2003. This resulted in several thousand Turkish-Cypriots crossing over to work south of the green line, where low skilled jobs were more readily available and salaries were higher. This greater freedom of movement has reportedly also resulted in "an unspecified number of undocumented migrants from Asia, northern Africa and the Middle East to enter the government-controlled area".<sup>50</sup> Migrant populations are spread throughout Nicosia, but are "particularly visible in the old centre of town owing to the concentration of poorly-kept buildings rented out for accommodation at relatively cheap prices".<sup>51</sup> Despite the apparent ghettoisation of these areas, the actual number of migrants in Nicosia is not known. There are specific areas in the centre of the city, such as the Municipal Park, which attract migrants, especially on Sundays when migrant labourers such as domestic workers are usually given the day off.<sup>52</sup> It has been argued that, as a result of negative public views on migration, there is a "sense of alienation from areas associated with

45. Legal base for local government is the Municipal Law of 1985 (N.111/85), found at: [http://www.ucm.org.cy/Document-The\\_Municipalities\\_Law\\_in\\_English,966,35,English](http://www.ucm.org.cy/Document-The_Municipalities_Law_in_English,966,35,English) (accessed on 12 December 2017).

46. The initiative is funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance and takes place in a multi-ethnic part of the city. Several days a week a social worker is present in the neighbourhood to provide assistance and support where required. The programme targets 13-35 year olds, largely of Bulgarian, Romanian and Roma origin

47. Barderi, Freeman and Guidikova, City of Limassol, Intercultural Profile, Intercultural Cities (2011 updated in 2013)

48. Ibid 16

49. Olga Demetriou, British Council Living Together Programme, Migrant Cities Research: Nicosia South, November 2008. (PRIO, Cyprus)

50. Ibid 16

51. Ibid 45

52. Ibid 45

high migration levels, such as the old city within the walls”<sup>53</sup> According to a UNOPS<sup>54</sup> study, those who owned businesses but did not live in the area, exhibited much stronger intolerance towards migrants than the resident population. The municipality of Nicosia was criticised by local residents<sup>55</sup> in 2014 for having removed benches in public spaces in an attempt to appease business owners and encourage the gentrification of the old town. This removal not only impacts the youth and residents of the local area, but also serves to marginalise migrants who would use this area for leisure and entertainment.

A further important cause for concern<sup>56</sup> is the lack of basic infrastructure which affects the migrant population who are the primary users. An example is public transport. In Nicosia, the bus is the only available form of public transport; it has been reported to be unpunctual and unreliable, with a network that fails to adequately cover the city. This has pushed many migrants to ride bicycles instead, but as there are no cycle lanes in the city and local traffic is heavily made up of cars and drivers not adept at sharing the roads with cyclists, this has resulted in many road traffic accidents with migrants being injured. It is evident that the authorities have not taken the needs of migrants into consideration when developing urban infrastructure. This puts female migrants in an especially vulnerable position, as they already encounter great challenges in reconciling their daily responsibilities to their families and their employer and are further impeded by the lack of an efficient, effective transport infrastructure.

Effective urban planning is beneficial to migrant integration, particularly with respect to providing equal access to affordable and decent housing, as well as improving disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, it is necessary for the authorities to undertake an assessment of the needs of the migrant community and model an urban development plan which would include measures to accommodate those needs.

Some ascertain that foreign permanent residents in Limassol “form mixed communities and there is no ghetto phenomenon”.<sup>57</sup> Efforts<sup>58</sup> have been undertaken by the Limassol municipality in recent years to gentrify and revitalise the seafront promenade, pedestrian paths and cycle lanes, the old market square and the municipal gardens in an attempt to provide areas to facilitate greater interaction between the many communities residing in Limassol.

Despite these efforts however, a different picture emerges from the 2016 ECRI report on Cyprus<sup>59</sup> with respect to the Roma community. Cyprus submitted its Policy Measures for the Social Inclusion of Roma to the European Commission, under the EU Framework for National Roma integration strategies up to 2020,<sup>60</sup> where measures were outlined regarding the promotion of greater access to housing for the particular community in two cities (Limassol and Paphos). Despite claims that the policy was aimed at eliminating discrimination, ECRI notes that no measures have taken place nor have been planned in order to attain this goal. The two initiatives that were in fact implemented were

55. An independent residents group entitled ‘Awake within the walls’ issued a press release requesting the municipality to reinstate the public benches: <http://www.35-33.com/press-release-for-abuse-of-public-space-by-residents-of-old-nicosia/> (accessed on 13 December 2017) and a coverage of a public town hall meeting on the issue can be found at: <http://cyprus-mail.com/2014/04/06/the-battle-of-the-benches/> (accessed 13 December 2017).

56. Ibid 45

57. Ibid 16

58. Limassol municipal website: [https://www.limassolmunicipal.com.cy/index\\_en.html](https://www.limassolmunicipal.com.cy/index_en.html) (accessed on 12 December 2017).

59. Ibid 33

60. [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_cyprus\\_strategy\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_cyprus_strategy_en.pdf) (accessed on 12 December 2017)

61. European Union and Roma Country Factsheet for Cyprus:

[http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma\\_country\\_factsheets\\_2013/cyprus\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/discrimination/files/roma_country_factsheets_2013/cyprus_en.pdf) (accessed on 13 December 2017)

prefabricated housing projects, located in remote areas of the cities. The European Commission warned<sup>61</sup> that this would result in Roma segregation and exclusion, and the ECRI has stated its disapproval of the settlements, stating that “the authorities have invested in improving or constructing further housing units specifically for Roma in these two specially designated areas away from contact with other members of society, thus promoting a policy and practice of de facto segregation”.<sup>62</sup> Additionally, due to the lack of a targeted national strategy for the inclusion of the Roma population, as noted by ECRI, the Roma community “continue to be ignored and avoided in society”,<sup>63</sup> and have been rendered “invisible” in Cyprus.

The general perception of the local community towards migrants, as described throughout the literature review, appears to be overwhelmingly negative. The global economic crisis also affected the debates around immigration and employment in Cyprus and as unemployment rose in 2011, extreme right-wing groups<sup>64</sup> focused their rhetoric on connecting unemployment to the presence of migrant workers; the discourse has been demonstrably racist, at times even culminating in violence against migrants.<sup>65</sup>

Preconceptions and negative stereotypes persist among the general population, and it has been argued that “these perceptions and stereotypes are to a large extent based on forging interconnections between race, gender and class”.<sup>66</sup> It has been claimed that “there appears to be a lack of awareness on what ‘racism’, ‘discrimination’ and ‘stereotyping’ really mean and what practices they may consist of, beyond the basic level”.<sup>67</sup> The literature summarises the public opinion that “migrants are poor, eternally in search of work and willing to undertake menial tasks or even engage in illicit or criminal activities to earn cash”.<sup>68</sup> It is further argued by the same authors that “at best migrants are seen as victims, at worst as unscrupulous”. It has been put forward that there is a “victimisation of the local population in a discourse of competition of ‘need’” whereby Greek-Cypriots, as victims of the 1974 Turkish invasion and subsequent economic hardship, have to compete with migrants for the limited available resources.<sup>69</sup>

The stereotypes manifest themselves in particular ways in the area of domestic work and the sex industry: darker-skinned, smaller-built Asian women are thought to be better suited to housework, while tall, blonde, fair-skinned Eastern European women are considered to be more sexually desirable.<sup>70</sup> Despite the fact that discrimination based on colour is not the only form of racism, it has been suggested that “darker people are more likely (italicised in the original text) to be the target of racism”.<sup>71</sup> Research undertaken indicates that “immigrant women in Cyprus experience a greater frequency of sexist and racist behaviour, belittlement by social circles or social exclusion”.<sup>72</sup> ‘Filipina’ is a generalised term used for all female domestic workers, irrespective of nationality, while a more racist term commonly used to refer to domestic workers is ‘mavrou’ (little black woman). Certain ethnic

62. Ibid 33, pp21

63. Ibid 33, pp21

64. ELAM (National Popular Front). ELAM now a political party with a seat in Parliament.

65. Chowdhury and Kassimeris, Racist Violence in Cyprus, ENAR publication: [https://kisa.org.cy/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Racist-Violence-Cyprus\\_KISA.pdf](https://kisa.org.cy/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Racist-Violence-Cyprus_KISA.pdf) (accessed 19 December 2017).

66. Agathangelou Anna, *The Global Political Economy of Sex: Desire, Violence and Insecurity in Mediterranean States*, London: Routledge (2004).

67. Ibid 45

68. Ibid 45

69. Ibid 45

70. Ibid 61

71. Trimikliniotis and Pantelides, *The European Dilemma: Institutional Patterns and the politics of ‘racial’ discrimination*,

72. Charalambidou-Solomi, Maouri and Economidou-Stavrou, *Female immigrants in Cyprus – profile, obstacles, needs, aspirations* (2010).

categories of workers are stereotyped as more suited to some professions more than others, demonstrating that migrants are facing perpetual, multi-layered discrimination by the general population. With respect to the Russian community however, who predominantly reside in Limassol, it has been generally claimed that “Russians are perceived more positively than most of the other migrant communities”.<sup>73</sup> This is primarily due the public perception of them being financially self-sufficient, Christian Orthodox and the historical and political links between Cyprus and Russia. Nevertheless, Russian women, and Eastern European women in general, who are not wealthy and often victims of trafficking in the sex industry are not perceived positively by the public.<sup>74</sup>

With respect to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, amendments made in 2013 to the Refugee Reception Conditions Regulations created a general system of payment in kind, to replace direct financial aid or welfare support to asylum seekers. The effect of this is that newly-arrived asylum seekers and those who had so far been living in private housing and in receipt of welfare support are now required to live in the only reception centre in the country. Their free access to public transportation is insufficient, as the reception centre is located in an isolated rural area which is 45km from Nicosia, 30km from Larnaca and 40km from Limassol. The policy has been criticised as being detrimental for asylum seekers, in terms of access to the job market and public services or direct interaction with the local population, pushing them further to the fringes of society. This is especially disadvantageous to female asylum seekers who are their family’s primary caregivers; they are forced to undergo arduous travel arrangements in order to access basic necessities.

In Cyprus, the ‘refugee’ is widely used and understood as a specific term of reference for the internally displaced Greek Cypriots due to the events of 1974; “it is therefore difficult for public perceptions to accommodate the idea of ‘refugees’ as non-Cypriot”.<sup>75</sup> This persistent frame of reference could also be influencing the lack of adequate consideration afforded to those refugees currently residing in the reception centres.

73. Ibid 16

74. Social Welfare Services referred 169 potential victims to the police; of these, NGOs identified 52 potential victims and the government identified 117 potential victims. US Department of State 2017 report:

<https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271175.htm> (accessed 19 December 2017)

75. Ibid 45

## 2.2 EDUCATION AND DEVELOPING LINGUISTIC COMPETENCES

The literature regarding education and the development of linguistic competence for the purposes of promoting greater integration into the educational system, vocational training and labour market is relatively limited. From the evidence that is available, it is apparent that the issue of racial, ethnic, religious and gender discrimination in education warrants further research. It has been argued that in order to understand exclusion and empowerment<sup>76</sup>, we must also investigate the gender structures, relations and norms in the school environment.

We now focus on policy, strategy and measures undertaken to successfully integrate non Cypriots in general, and refugees and asylum seekers in particular, in education and their development of linguistic competence. This must be “determined by a dedicated integration policy but also by the wider socioeconomic relations within society as a whole. So, for example, poor governance and a fragmented civil society which might characterise conditions within Cyprus more generally impede progress towards successful integration irrespective of the effectiveness of a dedicated integration policy as such”.<sup>77</sup>

Refugees are entitled to a three-year residence permit, subject to an extension of three more years. The following rights are granted:

- The right to fair treatment regardless of gender, race, and religion, membership to a particular social group or political opinion or country of nationality.
- The right to the same treatment as nationals regarding among others the right to primary education, the right to full access of the minors to all levels of education, the right to education other than primary and particularly as regards to the access to education, the recognition of foreign education school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the exemption from tuition fee payment and the right to scholarships, the right to protection of literary rights, the right to participate in adult educational programmes that relate to issues of employment, professional training and practical performance at work places and the right to participate in social integration programmes.

According to a 2017 study<sup>78</sup> conducted by UNHCR Cyprus, it was highlighted that “there is no official procedure to assess the educational and cognitive level of the children upon enrolment” nor any consultation with respect to which class would be most appropriate for each child. This study confirms the findings of the Ombudsperson<sup>79</sup> which asserted that the state had yet to develop firm policies, free of racist or xenophobic influences, in order to ensure compliance with international legal standards and to ensure that every child enjoys their right to education. UNHCR underscores a

76. Zelia Gregoriou and Georgina Christou, *The dubious gift/debt of integration: Patriarchal regimes, ethnicity and sexuality in the school lives of migrant girls in Cyprus in: Young Migrant Women in Secondary Education: Promoting integration and mutual understanding through dialogue and exchange.* University of Nicosia Press 2011.

77. Trimikliniotis, *Mapping discriminatory landscapes in Cyprus: ethnic discrimination in a divided education system*, *The Cyprus Review*, Vol 15, Fall 2004.

78. Viewpoint expressed in: Trimikliniotis, Demetriou and Papamichael, *The embodiment of tolerance in discourses and practices addressing cultural diversity in schools: The case of Cyprus*, *Accept Pluralism Research Project*, European University Institute (2012).

79. *Ibid* 73

variety of recommendations with regards to the schooling of asylum-seeking children and refugees. Recommendations<sup>80</sup> include, inter alia: training programmes for school administrators and educators on refugee education policy, the development of a national educational policy for the effective integration of asylum-seeking and refugee children, and a comprehensive assessment and evaluation of the needs and capacities of the education system and the children. Lastly, in light of the fact that migrant children's perceptions have also been found to be "influenced and defined by the racial and patriarchal discourses of the host society to which they adjust", this aspect should be incorporated when drafting policies on integration and intercultural education.<sup>81</sup>

Further and in relation to asylum seekers, no specific measures have been undertaken with regards to their rights to education and their linguistic competence. However, when it comes to the asylum seekers who are minors, the refugee law<sup>82</sup> provides for access to primary and secondary education on the same conditions as Cypriot citizens, immediately after applying for asylum to be implemented no later than three months from the date of submission. The Cyprus Refugee Council notes that "in practice, the vast majority of children access public education, However as there is no systematic monitoring of children's registration at school, there have been cases of children remaining out of the education system for more than 3 months, mainly for reasons related to difficulty of families accessing certain schools, lack of information / timely arrangements, limited schools' capacity at a given period to accommodate additional students etc. There is also a lack of official data on dropout rates regarding asylum-seeking children".

With regards to linguistic competence specifically, there are a few programmes that are accessible for refugees and asylum seekers. During the course of the desk research we found two main integration procedures, which assist TCNs in learning the local languages. These are provided by local municipalities, NGOs and through the public educational system but it should be noted that they are not specifically tailored to asylum seekers and refugees.

The language programmes for adult learning courses for migrants that are currently implemented regionally by public institutions, local municipalities and NGOs are the following:<sup>83</sup>

80. Castles, Rogers, Vasta and Vertocec, Report on Migration and Social Integration of Migrant – Report on the Assessment of research reports carried out under the European Commission Targeted Socio-Economic Research (TSER) Programme, Centre for Migration and Policy Research, University of Oxford, Brussels (2003).

81. Ibid 71

82. <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/cyprus/access-education-0>

83. Information as received by Dr Stefanos Spaneas and Mr. Agamemnonas Zachariades, Centre of Social Cohesion, Development and Care of the University of Nicosia, through the project *RACCOMBAT: Preventing and Combatting Racism and Xenophobia through Social Orientation of Non-Nationals*.



<b>PROVIDER</b>	<b>PROJECT TITLE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>
Cardet (NGO)	BLEND-IN – Language, Cultural and Social Orientation for Young Refugees. <sup>84</sup>	BLEND-IN aims to prepare and empower young migrants & refugees seeking a better life in an EU host/ receiving country.  In order to achieve this, the project partners will develop:  A cultural, social and language integration toolkit in the form of a mobile application, orienting the young newcomer refugees and migrants into the hosting societies' cultural and social realities and norms;
Intercultural Centre (Municipality of Nicosia)	Integration programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	Multipurpose Centre which offers Greek & English language and digital literacy courses for migrants living in Nicosia. The Intercultural Centre provides a welcoming training area where members develop both their linguistic and e-skills to support their adaptation and integration into Cypriot society. For more information, see the Intercultural Centre's <a href="#">website</a> .
Municipality of Agios Dometios	Integration programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	Offers Greek and English lessons but not year-round. In addition, it organises open discussions and reflective sessions on civic education issues on a monthly basis.
Municipality of Limassol	Integration programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	The municipality offers, English language, digital literacy, as well as first aid courses for migrants living in Limassol. In addition, it implements psycho-social interventions in primary schools which have a large proportion of migrant students.
Municipality of Aglatzia	Integration programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	The municipality offers English language and digital literacy lessons to TCNs.
Municipality of Ayios Athanasios	Open School Centre <sup>85</sup>	Open to all citizens, minors and adults. The Centre offers a wide range of courses enabling people to learn and develop new skills and abilities. Examples of courses on offer are: English, Modern Greek and basic skills in Information Technology. The Centre also offers a variety of cultural and art related courses, such as arts & crafts, theatre and dance as well as sports activities, which include tennis and volleyball.
Municipality of Geroskipou	Integration programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	The municipality offers English language, digital literacy lessons, first aid courses as well as international cooking courses for migrants living in Paphos/Geroskipou.
Municipality of Paphos	Integration programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	After school support for migrant primary school students; the programme runs on Saturday mornings between 9-12

84. For more information: <https://www.cardet.org/projects/current/763-blend-in-language-cultural-and-social-orientation-for-young-refugees>

85. For more information: <http://www.agiosathanasios.org.cy/%CE%91%CE%BD%CE%BF%CE%B9%CE%BA%CF%84%CF%8C-%CE%A3%CF%87%CE%BF%CE%BB%CE%B5%CE%AF%CE%BF>

The University of Cyprus School of Modern Greek	Intensive Semester Courses. <sup>86</sup>	Free beginner's Greek classes in Nicosia from September to May
The KES College Cardet Innovade Municipality of Agios Dometios The Municipality of Deryneia The Municipality of Agios Athanasios The Municipality of Pafos	iLearnGreek <sup>87</sup>	Greek language courses to TCN over the age of 18, in order to support their integration into Cypriot society. The courses are offered in Nicosia, Limassol, Paphos, Kofinou and Deryneia and are at the beginner and intermediate levels. The following individuals may apply: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refugees</li> <li>• Subsidiary Protection Beneficiaries</li> <li>• Asylum seekers</li> <li>• TCN with a student's or worker's or visitor's or Cypriot spouse's residence permit</li> </ul>
The Ministry of Education and Culture	Adult education classes (Epimorfotika) <sup>88</sup>	These are held in the afternoons and evenings in various subjects, including language courses, such as Greek for beginners. These are offered all over the island at the local community level, open to all and at a low cost of EUR45-55 per year.
Ministry of Education	State Institutes of Further Education (SIFE) <sup>89</sup>	The fees are normally EUR250-400 per year, but for Guarantee Minimum Income (GMI) beneficiaries the cost is only EUR 10 per year.

What remains to be examined is whether asylum seekers and refugees have full access to the above, the rate of participation, the age and gender of participants, evaluation of the classes as well as their impact. To understand this, the research team in Cyprus will further examine these factors during the research phase.

86. For more information: [www.ucy.ac.cy/mogr/en/courses](http://www.ucy.ac.cy/mogr/en/courses)

87. For more information: <http://www.ilearngreek.eu/en/>

88. For more information: <http://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/en/index.html>

89. For more information: [http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/state\\_institutes.html](http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/state_institutes.html)

## 2.3 INTEGRATION INTO THE LABOUR MARKET AND SKILLS TRAINING

In developing a model for migrants, Cypriot regulation took the framework of what was used to regulate migrant women in the sex industry (i.e. 'artiste' visas),<sup>90</sup> and developed it to cover other sectors of the labour market which revolved around unskilled, manual or otherwise low-wage work. As these regulations were extended to further sectors of occupation, trade unions began to view migrants as a potential 'threat' to the rights of Cypriot workers.<sup>91</sup> Consequentially, a migration model was developed offering time-limited work permits, and only when no Cypriot nationals are willing or available to take the job.

As a consequence, we witness TNCs being overwhelmingly employed in sectors of the economy where there are labour shortages. Whilst steps have been taken by the government over the years in order to harmonise domestic legislation with those mandated by the European Union, more effort is required to remove the obstacles faced by migrant workers, especially female migrant workers,<sup>92</sup> to have access and be integrated in the labour market, on a long-term basis.

Studies have suggested that "it is generally admitted ... that there is exploitation of foreign labour in Cyprus and especially on subjects such as pay, labour/industrial relations, and working conditions".<sup>93</sup> This has been attributed to "inadequate information, the general feeling of social exclusion, and marginalisation due to the inability and unwillingness of Cypriots to accept cultural diversity".<sup>94</sup> A framework has been developed where "low wage migrant workers can be utilised, rather than high skill, professional workers".<sup>95</sup> According to research on the distribution of work permits among migrant workers,<sup>96</sup> it has been found that there is a prevalence of permits being granted for low wage – low skill sectors, such as tourism, construction, agriculture and manufacturing, as well as domestic work.<sup>97</sup> Studies have highlighted cases where employers register migrant workers as farm workers but use them for a variety of other tasks unrelated to their job description and pay them less than what those jobs normally bring in as wages.<sup>98</sup> Meanwhile, professional migrant workers in offshore companies are perceived to enjoy favourable treatment free of discrimination, as a result of a targeted governmental policy to attract such companies to Cyprus.<sup>99</sup> This further erases the plight of migrant workers in low pay – low skill jobs.

90. Although reference is made to women in the sex industry on work permits, the position of MIGS is that prostitution is not a professional occupation and cannot therefore be subject to labour regulation.

91. Doros Polykarpou: <https://kisa.org.cy/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Migrants-and-the-Right-to-Equal-Treatment-in-Cyprus.pdf> (accessed 16 December 2017).

92. When it comes to domestic workers, MIGS notes that there is a lack of any control mechanisms employed by the Labour Department to ensure that the terms of employment are complied with, or for inspecting the conditions under which these women live was ascribed to the particularity of their "workplace" which comes under the "private sphere" and is protected by law. It can be claimed that this constitutes deferential treatment, as the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance does exercise respective control in the case of all other employees—migrants or Cypriots—through the Department of Labour Inspection. As a matter of fact, one of the Department's responsibilities is to inspect the premises or workplace of a Cypriot employer applying for the employment of a TCN, before hiring approval is granted by the Labour Department, a procedure which is not followed in the case of migrant domestic workers. This suggests the possibility that these women are not considered to be part of the labour market, something consistent with the fact that the Ministry of Labour is not responsible for the preparation of their employment contracts in the first place.

93. Presentation of preliminary results of a research, 2006: European Mobility Year in an Enlarged Europe, on behalf of the Labour Department of the Ministry of Labour, 2/10/2006, Lefkosia.

94. Ibid 18

95. Ibid 66

96. Research undertaken and expressed in: Ibid 66

97. Domestic work in Cyprus is not recognised as a labor sector.

98. Case studies presented in Ibid 18

99. Ibid 66

It is pertinent to note that public perception towards higher skilled migrants, who enjoy a correspondingly high social status and level of wealth, is significantly more positive than the attitude towards migrants working in lower skilled professions. If we then take into account that “women are over-represented in low-skilled jobs, and there are indications that they fill a significant number of jobs in the clandestine economy”,<sup>100</sup> the public’s perception has an even more detrimental impact on the likelihood of migrant women being treated equally. Local idioms often reflect such racially discriminatory perceptions - ‘I work like a black (person)’ is a common expression, carrying patently racist connotations. As reported by migrants themselves,<sup>101</sup> this abusive term is often hurled at them outside their working environment. Similarly, as more and more Asian women have taken up domestic work in Cypriot households, a common phrase used among Greek Cypriots is ‘What do you think I am? Your Asian/Filipino woman?’. This perception places women who form the majority<sup>102</sup> of migrant workers in a more vulnerable position in society with respect to their experience of discrimination and also hinders their inclusion and integration.

The immigration policy which regulates the employment of TCNs has been described as controlling “migrant workers on a short-term, temporary, employer-tied and restricted-to-specific-sectors basis”.<sup>103</sup> TCNs have “little, if any opportunity for training and betterment and no opportunity whatsoever to progress or advance in the employment ladder in terms of promotion or career move, as their stay is dependent on the particular job and employer”.<sup>104</sup>

This aptly reflects the situation particularly with respect to female migrant domestic workers in Cyprus who “experience many barriers and disincentives often in the form of exclusion from the labour market, major social, legal and political institutions as well as exclusion within communities and neighbourhoods”.<sup>105</sup> Statistics indicate that the labour market in Cyprus is strongly gender segregated. According to Eurostat,<sup>106</sup> out of 21,060 immigrants in 2008, 55% (11,598) were female, while in 2015, out of 15,183, the proportion rose to 57% (8,688).

Further, female migrant domestic workers are mainly recruited from countries in South-East Asia (Sri Lanka and the Philippines) and constitute the largest group of TCNs employed in Cyprus. According to gender segregated data relating to long-term immigrants by country of origin and purpose of arrival, it is evident that the vast majority of immigrants are from Sri Lanka and the Philippines and are female.<sup>107</sup> The Civil Registry and Migration Department recorded a total of 57,672 work permits in 2015, out of which 18,549 (32%) were granted to domestic workers.<sup>108</sup>

100. Ibid 18

101. The Cyprus Weekly, 7 – 13 October 1997

102. Regarding the gender distribution of migrants, Eurostat underlined that across the EU Member States in 2015, there were slightly more men than women, however, by contrast, Cyprus had the highest share of female immigrants (57%): [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration\\_and\\_migrant\\_population\\_statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics)

103. Trimikliniotis and Fulas-Souroulla, Mapping of policies affecting female migrants and policy analysis: the Cyprus case, Working Paper No. 11 – WP1, December 2006.

104. Charakis K, (ed) (2005), Anti-social behaviour of Cypriot Youth – Racist Tendencies (Αντικοινωνική Συμπεριφορά των Νέων της Κύπρου – Ρατσιστικές Τάσεις), Athens, Sakoulas.

105. Castles, Rogers, Vasta and Vertocec, Report on Migration and Social Integration of Migrant – Report on the Assessment of research reports carried out under the European Commission Targeted Socio-Economic Research (TSER) Programme, Centre for Migration and Policy Research, University of Oxford, Brussels (2003).

106. [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_imm2ctz&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_imm2ctz&lang=en) (accessed 19 December 2017).

107. Ibid 8, pp. 36-37

108. Immigration statistics for 2015: <http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/crmd.nsf/All/083980C0BA1B224AC2257EA4003861BA?OpenDocument> (accessed 19 December 2017)

Research<sup>109</sup> has been undertaken to determine the reasons behind the increased demand for in-house female migrant domestic workers in Cyprus. Justifications include the fact that there is a growing number of women entering the labour market who require domestic workers to undertake what was previously their own unpaid domestic chores, a lack of comprehensive state welfare for the elderly, children and disabled persons, and the need to elevate one's own social status by projecting the economic capacity to employ such a worker. Some of these justifications point towards a perpetuation of gender stereotypes and inequality.

The legislation pertaining to the employment of domestic workers has not been gender mainstreamed nor have the specific needs of migrant women been taken into consideration.<sup>110</sup> Despite the fact that the employment contract<sup>111</sup> specifically tailored to domestic workers will involve predominantly women, the employee throughout the document is referred to using male pronouns.<sup>112</sup> Furthermore, whereas the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance is tasked with drafting and preparing employment contracts for migrant workers, the Civil Registry and Migration department is the authority which drafts employment contracts for domestic workers and 'artistes' specifically; this poses questions and concerns as to the level of protection and redress afforded to these 2 categories of workers.

Employment contracts for domestic workers include a restrictive clause linking the employee's labour and residence permit to one specific employer for a maximum of six years. A change in employer is now permitted but limited to two changes over the six year period and a change in sector is possible only with the approval of the Ministry of Interior. The close link which exists between the specific, named employer and the residence permit has been criticised by ECRI, who have ascertained that it may result in migrant workers having to endure "serious situations of exploitation and abuse in order to avoid deportation".<sup>113</sup> Moreover, as domestic workers reside in the employer's abode, this has been said<sup>114</sup> to give rise to "the development of an atypical relationship" which often takes on the form of an "ownership relationship". The fact that the domestic worker lives and works in a very 'insulated' environment severely limits and restricts her integration in the wider community; proactive measures which will encourage or facilitate her integration are therefore required. The concern is that the aforementioned atypical relationship may give rise to any of a number of discriminatory practices on the part of the employer which, compounded by the lack of accessibility or awareness of available forms of redress or assistance, may further marginalise the migrant domestic workers.

As domestic workers are eligible to work for a maximum of six years, they cannot fulfil the seven-year continuous legal residence requirement which is needed to qualify for Cypriot citizenship. The application procedure itself has been described as lengthy, "costly (500 euros application fees), and discretionary; they can be refused on account of 'lack of good character'".<sup>115</sup> ECRI, however, has noted that some improvements have been made, resulting in an increase in the number of persons

109. Ibid 8

110. Christodoulou and Zobnina, Investigating Trafficking in women for labour exploitation in domestic work: The Case of Cyprus, in Combatting Trafficking in women for labour exploitation in domestic work, University of Nicosia, Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, 2015.

111. The conditions for employing a domestic worker can be found on the Civil Registry and Migration department website: <http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/crmd.nsf/All/5314ED0D3F68CA9EC2257D2C003A4DC2?OpenDocument> (accessed 15 December 2017).

112. Contract of Employment:

[http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/crmd.nsf/All/5314ED0D3F68CA9EC2257D2C003A4DC2/\\$file/DOMESTIC%20WORKER%20ContractOfEmploymentEN.pdf](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/crmd.nsf/All/5314ED0D3F68CA9EC2257D2C003A4DC2/$file/DOMESTIC%20WORKER%20ContractOfEmploymentEN.pdf) (accessed 19 December 2017)

113. [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/annual\\_reports/Annual%20report%202011.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/ecri/activities/annual_reports/Annual%20report%202011.pdf)

114. Ibid 8

115. Ibid 33

acquiring citizenship: in 2013, 328 persons were naturalised compared to 1,010 in 2014.<sup>116</sup> It is clear that the government considers female domestic migrant workers as temporary workers and as such, this approach perpetuates their invisibility and vulnerable position as they are not considered 'worthy' subjects of any long-term integration immigration policy.

Another category of vulnerable migrants who warrant attention and who also fall outside the realm of integration policies are women in prostitution / the sex industry. The available literature demonstrates an awareness of their vulnerable and precarious status in which they can easily be, and often are, victimised, as well as of their dependence on their employer in order to maintain their residence permit. The government's approach towards women in this industry has been widely criticised and has resulted in the perpetuation of working conditions which exploit, violate and humiliate female migrant workers.<sup>117</sup> As documented in various research reports,<sup>118</sup> trafficking for sexual exploitation has been an insurmountable problem for many years in Cyprus. The extent of the problem is best illustrated by the 2010 landmark ruling of the European Court of Human Rights, *Rantsev v Cyprus and Russia*,<sup>119</sup> which concerned Oxana Rantseva, a young Russian woman, strongly believed to have been trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation, who fell to her death from the balcony of her employer's private apartment in an attempt to escape. The verdict stated that Cyprus had exhibited a "failure to provide for an appropriate legal and administrative framework to combat trafficking and to properly investigate how and where the victim was recruited".

With respect to beneficiaries of international protection, according to a 2013 UNHCR report,<sup>120</sup> labour market mobility for asylum seekers in Cyprus is the most unfavourable within the EU. Asylum seekers access is restricted to a small number of professions, mostly in agriculture, fishery, manufacturing, waste management and wholesale trade-repairs. They face particular challenges in obtaining recognition of their educational and professional qualifications. There are also no measures to assist asylum seekers who have been recognised as beneficiaries of international protection to obtain social welfare or find accommodation and employment. As a result, many remain in the reception centre in conditions which have been deemed by ECRI as "not at all conducive to integration". The general climate within Cypriot society with regards to refugees, and migrants in general, demonstrates a lack of understanding and sends signals that they are unwelcome. This attitude has dissuaded many employers from investing or targeting them as potential employees.

This reality is incongruous with the relevant legislation focusing on refugees. Under the Cyprus refugee law, a person who is recognised as a refugee should receive equal treatment to the citizens of the Republic with regards to wage-earning employment. In other words, refugees have the same rights as Cypriot citizens to employment; there are no regulatory restrictions on access across sectors of employment and there is no need for the Labour Department to approve and stamp a contract of employment between an employer and a recognized refugee.<sup>121</sup> When it comes to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, as in the case of recognised refugees, they have immediate access to employment upon the date they are granted the above status. In particular, there are no restrictions

116. The figures for 2014 include the naturalisation of EU as well as third country nationals.

117. Ibid 66

118. Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, Mapping the Realities of Trafficking in women for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Cyprus, 2007, <http://www.medinstgenderstudies.org/wp/?p=322>

119. [https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/legislation-and-case-law-case-law/rantsev-v-cyprus-and-russia-application-no-2596504\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/anti-trafficking/legislation-and-case-law-case-law/rantsev-v-cyprus-and-russia-application-no-2596504_en) (accessed 19 December 2017)

120. Ibid 30

121. Information Sheet: Employment of Asylum Seekers, the Department of Labour, Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance. Available at [http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/dl.nsf/page5j\\_en/page5j\\_en?OpenDocument](http://www.mlsi.gov.cy/mlsi/dl/dl.nsf/page5j_en/page5j_en?OpenDocument)

regarding their employment in particular occupations or sectors of the labour market. Further, it is not necessary for the Labour Department to approve and stamp a contract of employment between an employer and a person with subsidiary protection status. The only restriction from a legislative point of view, has to do with their legal status while their applications are being processed by the system; asylum seekers are not entitled to work during the first six months from the date of submission of their asylum application. After the initial six months, asylum seekers are allowed to be employed in the following categories:<sup>122</sup>

S/N	Industry fields	Occupation
1	Agriculture	~Agriculture Laborers
	Animal Husbandry	~Animal Husbandry Laborers
	Fishery	~Fishery Laborers
2	Manufacture	~Forage Production Laborers
3	Waste Management	~Drainage and Waste Processing Laborers
		~Garbage and Trash Collection & Processing Laborers
		~Recycling Laborers
		~Offal Processing Laborers
4	Wholesale Trade-Repairs	~Gas Station and Car Wash Laborers
		~Freight Handlers of Wholesale Trade
5	Other Fields	~Building and Outdoors Cleaners
		~Distributors of Advertising and Informative Material
		~Food Delivery

Additionally, all applicants and recipients of material reception conditions, who are physically and psychologically able to take up employment, are required to register as unemployed after the initial six month period and show that they are actively seeking employment. A labour card is issued to asylum seekers and their unemployment status is confirmed either on a monthly or bi-monthly basis.

There is no formal limitation to their working hours. The standard remuneration for farming and agricultural jobs is set for 80 working hours per fortnight, spread over 6 working days a week.

In practice, asylum seekers still face significant obstacles in accessing the labour market. According to a report by the Commissioner for Administration regarding access of asylum seekers to employment, available data from July 2015 indicated that only 10, all men, out of 89 registered asylum seekers took up work.<sup>123</sup> The major obstacles as described by the Cyprus Refugee Council are summarised as follows :<sup>124</sup>

122. IBID

123. Ombudsman, Report on access of female asylum seekers to employment and social welfare, 1799/2016, 11 November 2016, available in Greek at: <http://bit.ly/2kmGMDG>.

124. Information as received by the Cyprus Refugee Council

- **Low wages and lack of supplementary material assistance:** This is particularly problematic for asylum seekers with families. Remuneration from employment in agriculture and animal farming falls far short of meeting the basic needs of a family. Labour conditions, such as mandatory accommodation at the place of work, often lead to splitting up the family. These jobs are often offered to single parents with young children without taking into consideration the care or support of the children or the possibility of providing supplementary assistance.
- **Distance and lack of convenient transportation:** Given the nature of employment that asylum seekers are permitted to take up, workplaces are often situated in remote rural regions and working hours may start as early as 4 or 5am. Asylum seekers have reported difficulties in commuting to these workplaces using low-cost transportation (e.g. public buses). Remuneration does not cover travel expenses.
- **Language barriers:** Lack of communication skills in Greek and English often impede the efficient communication between officials of Labour Offices as well as potential employers. Many asylum seekers are unable to understand their prospective employers' needs or views during meetings and/ or the employers' requirements on their job referral forms.
- **Low demand:** There is a lack of interest from employers in the agricultural and farming sectors in employing asylum seekers. In fact, many employers in these sectors often prefer to employ TCNs who arrive in the country with an employment permit and are authorised to work for a period up to four years. In order to receive a license for the employment of TCNs, an employer is required to register at the Labour Office in addition to actively seeking for employees locally, nationally or within the EU.<sup>125</sup> As asylum seekers are referred to them by the Labour Office, the employers may try to avoid recruiting them, hoping that if they do not hire an asylum seeker, they will be able to invite/hire other workers on a working visa. They often frame the labour in such a way that the asylum seekers refuse to take on the work.
- **Lack of gender and cultural sensitivity in the recruitment procedure:** Female asylum seekers often face difficulties accessing employment for reasons related to cultural barriers.<sup>126</sup> For example, many women have never worked before and especially when it comes to the conditions in the sectors of agriculture and animal farming (remoteness, staying overnight, male dominated work spaces) there is a need for gradual and facilitated transition to employment. Women from Muslim backgrounds wearing visible symbols of their religious identity e.g. hijab / niqab report to have faced difficulties accessing the labour market, as in some cases, they were considered as unable to maintain employment due to their attire, according to the experience of Cyprus Refugee Council.

125. Circular on the Strategy for the Employment of Third Country Nationals (Στρατηγική για την Απασχόληση Αλλοδαπών), May 2008

126. Ombudsman, Report on access of female asylum seekers to employment and social welfare, 1799/2016, 11 November 2016, available in Greek at: <http://bit.ly/2kmGMDG>



**When it comes to vocational training that will enable asylum seekers and refugees to access different sectors of employment,** according to the information provided by the Cyprus Refugee Council there is no vocational education programs targeted specifically to refugees. Vocational Education and Training (VET) programmes are implemented by a variety of public and private institutions and enterprises.<sup>127</sup> Adult refugees are allowed to participate in the state-regulated vocational education system, provided that they fulfil the language and entry criteria. Examples of commonly-sought technical, upper secondary and post-secondary, non-tertiary, state-regulated vocational training programmes, leading to formal qualifications, are the following:<sup>128</sup>

1. *Programmes consisting of afternoon and evening classes taking place in technical schools.* One or three-year programmes are provided by technical schools, which are administered by the Department of Secondary Technical and Vocational Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC). A variety of technical courses are offered (e.g. plumbing, electrical installations, engineering, computers, car mechanics, cooking and graphic design). Completion of the one-year programme leads to a certificate of attendance. The successful completion of a three-year programme leads to the acquisition of a leaving certificate equivalent to that awarded to graduates of upper secondary general or technical and vocational education, as far as the technical component is concerned (EQF, Level 4). Fees apply for these courses, ranging from 154 to 257 euro, per year.

2. *Post-secondary institutes offering vocational education and training.* These have been in operation since 2012 and offer technical specialisation (EQF level 5). They operate within existing technical schools within the remit of MoEC. The courses last two years and include workplace learning in enterprises and industrial units. A variety of technical programmes are offered such as management of natural gas, industrial and residential installations, gas handling pipes, welding and industrial structures, bakery and confectionery, computer and communication networks, electrical and industrial refrigeration installations, installation and maintenance of photovoltaic systems and wind turbines, industrial and residential automation etc. Attendance is free of charge. Applicants should be younger than 35 and hold a school leaving certificate as well their grade transcripts.

Attendance by asylum seekers and refugees is extremely limited due to language restrictions, lack of information and guidance, lack of necessary documents and/or funds. Other forms of training targeted to unemployed adults, which do not provide formal qualifications, but offer professional development and bringing specific skills up to date, are training programmes provided or subsidised by Human Resource and Development Authority (HRDA). These are offered mainly through the Public Employment Services and are offered mostly in Greek which makes access difficult for refugees and asylum seekers.

127. For an exhaustive list: [https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016\\_CR\\_CY.pdf](https://cumulus.cedefop.europa.eu/files/vetelib/2016/2016_CR_CY.pdf)

128. The information as provided in writing provided by the Cyprus Refugee Council, Mano Mathioudakis, Integration Officer of Cyprus Refugee Council, author Mano Mathioudakis, Integration Officer of Cyprus Refugee Council

### 3. CONCLUSION

As we reviewed the literature, it became apparent that the Cypriot state's approach towards the integration of migrants and refugees has been developed more as a response to the European Union's legislative requirements, rather a genuine recognition of the need to develop a holistic, comprehensive national framework which caters to the integration specificities of the immigrant groups that reside on the island. The EU Common Principles on Integration, which serve as the normative pillar of the EU's position on integration, underline that "integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States". This requires not only that immigrants adapt to the host society, but that economic, social, cultural and political opportunities are provided to them. There is a mutual obligation on both immigrant groups and on society to further the integration process as effectively as possible as both are mutually affected and responsible. Moreover, national integration policy and measures should be developed in light of this aim by exploring the full scope of policy, as well as the particular needs of the various migrant groups. Creating an environment and framework which is supportive to all sides would be a more effective approach than focusing on one area, such as developing the linguistic capabilities of the migrant and refugee groups. At the same time the concept of integration needs to be further explored in the light of the current migratory challenges.

The 'Cyprus issue' and the political debate regarding the Cypriot identity continues to dominate the public dialogue and severely hinders the development of a national integrative approach to asylum and immigration. The Cypriot identity has been said to rest upon complex understandings of patriarchy, class and political affiliation. Groups which do not fall under these definitions are treated as the 'other', in an effort to protect the national identity which is perceived to still be under threat as a result of the continuing Turkish occupation of one third of the island. Recognising the prevailing importance of this issue can help put in context the very limited efforts which have been undertaken thus far to integrate migrants and refugees, particularly in education and accessing the labour market.

Our literature review highlighted the particularly vulnerable position of female migrants and the multiple forms of discrimination that they face on account of their race, gender and socioeconomic position. Female migrant domestic workers require immediate and particular focus, as they constitute the largest migrant group in Cyprus; their working environment (private homes) is largely unsupervised by the Ministry of Labour's department of labour inspection. This lack of control leaves them exposed to various forms of abuse and exploitation, and they are often uninformed of their (albeit limited) options for redress. As a result, any integration policy must be developed taking the gender aspect into consideration, so as to ensure that the needs of female migrants and refugees are understood and met. Throughout the design and assessment of integration policies, gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting tools should be implemented.

The need for a transparent assessment of the current system is therefore urgently required across a variety of areas, with a specific focus on the fields explored in this report. An evaluation of the expired NAP should be undertaken in order to determine where progress has been effectively achieved and which areas and groups require continued and/or greater attention. The state should furthermore design its integration policy based on consultation with civil society and representatives of migrant

and refugee groups – particularly, female refugees and migrants. It is imperative that they are included in all stages of the process so as to ensure that the state's integration policy addresses the real challenges faced by both the host society and the migrants themselves.

Lastly, the literature also indicated that there is a need to sensitise the Cypriot population and raise awareness as to the plight of refugees, the challenges faced by the migrant population, their positive contribution to society and the effect of the media in forming perceptions. Local media tends to highlight the nationality or ethnic group of news subjects, particularly when reporting acts of criminal violence, where the nationality of the perpetrator has no relevance to the nature or circumstances of the crime itself. By offering this limited image of migrants and refugees as 'criminals', the local population perceives them in a homogenous, and largely negative light. Comprehensive efforts must be undertaken to challenge negative stereotyping and racial and gender discrimination at all levels.

This report has aimed to present the historical development and current status of Cypriot integration policy for migrants and refugees in the areas of regeneration and urban exclusion, access to the labour market and education. The literature reviewed for the purposes of this report has pointed to the conclusion that the state's efforts in this respect have been inadequate, ineffective and disjointed. A more organised strategy and better implementation of the legislative framework, with the consultation of all relevant stakeholders, must be undertaken by the national authorities in order to prevent the social exclusion and marginalisation of migrant and refugee groups. Greater focus must be put on the discrimination experienced by the oft-ignored female migrants and refugees, in order to ensure their human rights are respected and their integration in society at large is promoted.

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