



# Mapping of social orientation: the case of Cyprus

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## Content

Introduction.....	3
I. Legal and institutional framework .....	4
1. Legal framework of social orientation .....	4
2. Course/module providers .....	5
II. Audience.....	7
1. Coverage of social orientation courses, by category of non-nationals.....	7
2. Initiatives targeted at specific non-national groups.....	8
III. Courses/modules' characteristics.....	8
IV. Content of courses.....	9
1. Aims of the courses.....	9
2. Themes covered.....	9
3. Teaching methods.....	10

# Introduction

The process of social integration of *migrants* in their new *host* community is *one* of the *biggest* and most sensitive challenges for Member States of the European Union (EU). Cyprus, within the last decade, has been transformed from a country of emigration to a net immigration receiving country. Therefore, it has become a necessity to assess the existed policy and institutional frameworks, to analyse and legislate adequately; taking under consideration the large immigrant population (permanent/ long-term and temporary) that currently resides in Cyprus. Despite some signs of attempting to provide quality services, several areas are still considered problematic.

The legal framework surrounding the integration of migrants is constituted from various international, European and national legal instruments, each of which makes specific provisions (Solidarity Funds Sector, 2008).<sup>1</sup> The submission of national action plan to the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) pinpointed to the need to increase the efforts of integration. Mainly at that time a more comprehensive approach started with several integration activities involving eagerly the civil society.

An additional effort was made with the establishment of Integration Task Force (2016). The overall aim was to strengthen the dialogue between the different stakeholders and actors in the field of refugee integration through regular discussions, information sharing, and collaboration/joint action on priority issues. The Task Force was co-chaired by the UNHCR and the Asylum Service of the Ministry of Interior aiming to formulate specific recommendations for the design and implementation of a national integration plan.

Linguistic and cultural factors were identified as potential enablers to both allow the direct communication and mutual understanding as well as to facilitate the social inclusion of migrants into the Cypriot society (EMN, 2016). Under that perspective we should note the introduction of Greek language courses offered by several entities as well some social orientation classes. It is critical though to note that those courses are not institutionalised by law.

The aim of this report is to examine the social orientation of third country nationals (TCNs), where civic education elements are or should be present in the integration process and where best practices may be sought. In particular, this report will attempt to shed some light on the legislative framework, define the beneficiaries and present the basic characteristic of the available modules.

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<sup>1</sup> Solidarity Funds Sector (2008). Multi-annual program 2008-2013 European Refugee Fund, Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Cyprus, [http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/sf/sf.nsf/sf26\\_en/sf26\\_en?OpenDocument](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/sf/sf.nsf/sf26_en/sf26_en?OpenDocument) [accessed on 12/01/2017].

# I. Legal and institutional framework

## 1. Legal framework of social orientation

The National Action Plan 2014-2020 for Asylum and Migration (2016) identifies the Priority for Education and Language Learning. In particular the 3rd Pillar refers to specific objectives and actions that need to be achieved. However, formal integration processes for TCNs have not been yet institutionalised. For example, there are no formal or mandatory orientation programmes for them upon their arrival in the country. Even though the legislation states that all migrants aged 15+ must attend courses for the purpose of accessing the long term migrant visa, such obligation selectively applies only for those migrants who will apply only for long-term residence under the EU Long-term residence Directive. In such case, the A2 level based on the Common European Framework Reference for Languages<sup>2</sup> has to be achieved.

It is worth to note that no such language proficiency is required when applying for “the next step up” in the integration ladder; when applying for Cypriot citizenship.<sup>3</sup>

The law purporting to transpose the Long-Term Residence Directive requires applicants to have, among others, ‘sufficient knowledge of Greek’ based on the Common European Framework Reference Level A2.<sup>4</sup> Candidates are examined in:

- Listening and reading comprehension;
- Reading and comprehension;
- Writing;
- Basics of modern politics and society in Cyprus.

The Examinations Service of the Directorate of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education holds twice a year Greek Language exams dedicated to migrants for language proficiency. A fee of €25 applies for participation in the exam. On annual basis, the exam programmed time period is posted (in Greek) on the website of the Examinations Service.<sup>5</sup> The application form to participate in the exam, available only in Greek, can also be found electronically.<sup>6</sup> The exam involves three papers of one hour duration each plus an oral examination lasting about 10-15 minutes. The successful candidate must obtain an average of at least 50% of the total score and at least 40% in each of the four parts of the examination.

The exam requires:

- Understanding expressions frequently used related to areas of most immediate relevance like basic personal and family information, shopping, regional geography and work;
- Ability to communicate for simple and routine tasks requiring basic direct exchange of information on familiar and routine topics;

<sup>2</sup> Cyprus, Ministry of Education, Examinations Service, Exams for Certification of Basic Knowledge of Greek Language (Level A2) for migrants and aliens. Available at [www.moec.gov.cy/ypexams/exams/pistopoiisi-vasikis-gnosis-ellinikis-glossas-a2.html](http://www.moec.gov.cy/ypexams/exams/pistopoiisi-vasikis-gnosis-ellinikis-glossas-a2.html).

<sup>3</sup> Trimikliniotis, N. (2015) *Country Report on Citizenship Law: Cyprus*, European University Institute, Florence Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies EUDO Citizenship Observatory in collaboration with Edinburgh University Law School Country Report RSCAS/EUDO-CIT-CR 2015/1, revised and updated January 2015. Available at [www.cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/34479/EUDO\\_CIT\\_2015\\_01-Cyprus.pdf?sequence=1](http://www.cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/34479/EUDO_CIT_2015_01-Cyprus.pdf?sequence=1).

<sup>4</sup> Cyprus, Law on Aliens and Immigration Cap. 105 (Ο Περί Αλλοδαπών και Μετανάστευσης Νόμος, Κεφ. 105), Article 18Θ.-(1)(a1). Available at [www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/ind/0\\_105/section-sc576ba623-7c58-4ff9-3f08-24a8b0eb9c95.html](http://www.cylaw.org/nomoi/enop/ind/0_105/section-sc576ba623-7c58-4ff9-3f08-24a8b0eb9c95.html).

<sup>5</sup> Available at [www.moec.gov.cy/ypexams/pdf/anakoinoseis/pistopoiisi\\_elliniki\\_glossa\\_allodapoi/2014\\_09\\_19\\_programma\\_exetasis\\_2015\\_vasikis\\_gnosis\\_ellinikis.pdf](http://www.moec.gov.cy/ypexams/pdf/anakoinoseis/pistopoiisi_elliniki_glossa_allodapoi/2014_09_19_programma_exetasis_2015_vasikis_gnosis_ellinikis.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> Available at: [www.moec.gov.cy/ypexams/pdf/entypa/13\\_01\\_2014\\_vasiki\\_aitisi\\_symmetochis.pdf](http://www.moec.gov.cy/ypexams/pdf/entypa/13_01_2014_vasiki_aitisi_symmetochis.pdf).

- Ability to describe in simple words aspects of the history of the candidate, the immediate environment and emergency issues.

In addition to reading and writing, the exam involves an assessment of the candidate's knowledge of modern social and political realities of Cyprus; the thematic focus is based on concurrent developments. Frequent questions include customs and practices in Cyprus, public persons like ministers or MPs who have recently been in the public eye, important dates, holidays, and areas in Cyprus etc. The oral exam is divided into three sections: personal information, a brief dialogue on a subject and a discussion with one of the examiners on an issue of current affairs.<sup>7</sup> The results of the exam are published on the site of the Examination Service and certificates are posted to the successful candidates.

Other than that, language attainment is not used as a measure for accessing a different legal status. Nor are any other integration tests carried out (formally) in Cyprus. Furthermore, there are no preparation courses available for civic education to teach immigrants about the legislation, customs, recent history or politics.

Other organisations attempt to fill in the noticed gap within the integration process. Several programmes offered by local municipalities and NGOs have undertaken initiatives to assist migrants. Quite often, such efforts are supported financially by AMIF at national level.<sup>8</sup> These are optional social orientation training programmes. Migrants may select to participate on their free will. For those projects that are co-funded by AMIF, certain goals have been previously set. A significant weakness which derives from those programmes is the lack of common accepted standards regarding the educational level. Further to that, the migrants are not either obliged to attend or to pass successfully the studying level; **there is no impact on legal situation/status whatsoever.**

It is worth mentioning that schooling for children between the ages of 4 and 15 is compulsory and all migrants have free access to primary and secondary education. The right to education is enshrined in the Republic of Cyprus' Constitution and is afforded to all residents on its territory. Students have the right to study in public educational institutions irrespective of their residence status, their nationality, and their parents' origin. The pupil's age is the only admission criterion. Admission to public sector schools is free for all pupils. As regards access to tertiary education, migrants can enter either public or private universities, although they are attending the latter mainly because of the language barrier. For example to become accepted to the public universities they have to sit on national exams. The national exams presuppose excellent command of the Greek language; some fees also may apply. To study to private Universities, they have only to bring their high school certificate and a certification of English language. However, for private universities they are being subjected to the (higher) fees applying to non-EU students (Drousiotou and Mathioudakis, 2016).

## 2. Course/module providers

There are two main integration procedures applied to assist TCN to become aware of the local language and attain basic communication skills. These measures are applied by local communities/ NGOs and by the public educational system. The actions, of the former, mainly include civic orientation courses and language courses (including in TCN-first language). The latter one mainly includes the support for the acquisition of the Greek language for minors attending public schools, systematic research and evaluation of practices in the area of multicultural education, training of teachers on multicultural aspects, mentoring system in order to further support third country national students and parents.

The language programmes for adult learning courses for Migrants that are currently implemented in regional locations around Cyprus by public institutions, local communities and NGOs are:

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<sup>7</sup> Cyprus, Ministry of Education and Culture, Examinations Service, Exam material (*ΥπηρεσίαΕξετάσεων, ΕξεταστέαΥλη*). Available at [www.moec.gov.cy/ypexams/exetastea\\_yli.html](http://www.moec.gov.cy/ypexams/exetastea_yli.html).

<sup>8</sup> Information found at <http://help.unhcr.org/cyprus/integration-support/orientation-programmes/>.

PROVIDER	PROJECT TITLE	DESCRIPTION
Cardet	BLEND-IN – Language, Cultural and Social Orientation for Young Refugees. <sup>9</sup>	BLEND-IN aims to prepare and empower young migrants & refugees seeking a better life in a EU host/ receiving country. In order to achieve this, the project partners 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 operating under the Municipality of Nicosia	Integration Programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	Multipurpose Centre which offers Greek Language, English Language and Computer Courses for migrants living in Nicosia. The Intercultural Center 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; however not on steady basis. In addition to that, it organises on monthly basis, open discussion and reflective sessions on civic education issues.
Municipality of Limassol	Integration Programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	The municipality offers, English Language, Computer lessons as well as First Aid courses for migrants living in Limassol area. In addition to that, it implements a psycho-social intervention in primary schools with presence of large number of migrant students.
Municipality of Aglatzia	Integration Programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	The municipality offers English Language and Computer lessons to TCNs.
Municipality of Ayios Athanasios	Open School Centre	It is open to all its citizens; both for minors and adults. It offers a wide range of courses enabling people to learn and develop new skills and abilities. Examples of courses offered are: English, Modern Greek, basic skills on Information Technology. They also offer a variety of cultural and art related courses, such as Arts & Crafts, theatre and dance as well as sports activities, which include tennis, volleyball etc
Municipality of Geroskipou	Integration Programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	The municipality offers, English Language, Computer lessons, First Aid courses as well as International Cooking courses for migrants living in Paphos/Geroskipou area.
Municipality of Paphos	Integration Programmes for TCNs – co-funded by AMIF	After school support for primary school migrant students; the programme is running every Saturday morning between 9-12
The University of Cyprus School of Modern Greek	Intensive Semester Courses. <sup>10</sup>	Free beginner Greek classes in Nicosia from September to May
The KES College Cardet Innovade	iLearnGreek <sup>11</sup>	Greek language courses to third country nationals over the age of 18, in order to support their integration into Cypriot society. The courses are offered in Nicosia, Limassol, Paphos, Kofinou and

<sup>9</sup> For more information: <https://www.cardet.org/projects/current/763-blend-in-language-cultural-and-social-orientation-for-young-refugees>.

<sup>10</sup> For more information: [www.ucy.ac.cy/mogr/en/courses](http://www.ucy.ac.cy/mogr/en/courses).

<sup>11</sup> For more information: <http://www.ilearngreeku.eu/en/>.

Municipality of Agios Dometios The Municipality of Deryneia The Municipality of Agios Athanasios The Municipality of Pafos		Deryneia and are at the beginner and intermediate levels. The following individuals may apply: Recognised Refugees Subsidiary Protection Beneficiaries Asylum-Seekers Third Country Nationals with a student's or worker's or visitor's or Cypriot spouse's residence permit
The Ministry of Education and Culture	Epimorfotika/ or adult education classes <sup>12</sup>	These are held in the afternoons and evenings in various subjects, including language courses, and Greek for beginners. These are offered all over the island at the local community level, for anyone who is interested, and at a low cost of EUR45-55 per year.
Ministry of Education	State Institutes of Further Education (SIFE) <sup>13</sup>	The fees are normally EUR250-400 per year, but for GMI beneficiaries the cost is only EUR 10 per year.

## II. Audience

All the above mentioned programmes refer to the broad category of migrants which includes:

- Asylum Seekers, whose application has not yet been processed; all courses are offered free of charge.
- International Protection Beneficiaries; all courses are offered free of charge.
- Recognised Refugees; all courses are offered free of charge.
- Third Country Nationals; some courses may require a small participation fee:
  - Long term residence;
  - Domestic Workers;
  - Students.
- Resettled Refugees; all courses are offered free of charge.

Each category of course has its own different educational needs mainly because of their social and/or financial situation. However the language courses are not designed or implemented according to these needs but according to available funds.

### 1. Coverage of social orientation courses, by category of non-nationals

The non-obligatory type of attending social orientation courses shapes the format of available courses. Migrants, as long as they are aware of the available courses, can choose those they can participate in. An exception are the courses which are co-funded by AMIF, where the audience has to fulfil specific legal status.

The following categories of migrants can participate:

- Individuals applying for international protection status;

<sup>12</sup> For more information: <http://www.moec.gov.cy/epimorfotika/en/index.html>.

<sup>13</sup> For more information: [http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/state\\_institutes.html](http://www.moec.gov.cy/en/state_institutes.html).

- Asylum seekers/ recognised Refugees;
- Third Country Nationals on the basis of employment contract;
- International Students.

## 2. Initiatives targeted at specific non-national groups

There are no initiatives for vulnerable adult groups with migration background. However, the MoEC (Ministry of Education and Culture) produced a policy paper on the Integration of vulnerable pupils with migrant background into the Cyprus educational system. This paper lists five priority areas for integration:

- Greek language;
- Reception of newly arrived children;
- Training of teachers;
- Collection and analysis of data on pupils' needs;
- Development of an intercultural approach in new curricula.

For the 2017-2018 school year, the Ministry implemented a number of programmes in certain schools where there are migrant children. This includes short programmes on Greek as a second language, transitional classes, a community sensitisation programme and a cultural acceptance programme called 'Away from homeland, away from fear'. These initiatives demonstrated the Ministry's determination to put the priority areas from policy paper into practice.

## III. Courses/modules' characteristics

This section will present the modules that are offered by the co-funded program iLearnGreek.<sup>14</sup> It is a programme that aims to provide free Greek language courses at two different levels (the basic and the intermediate level) to third country nationals, in order to support their integration process in the Cypriot society. The consortium is comprised by KES College, in collaboration with, CARDET, the Municipalities of Agios Athanasios, Deryneia, Pafos and Agios Dometios and INNOVADE.

The modules' primary aim is to teach TCNs to read, write and speak Greek in the most interactive way. It specifically aims to improve TCNs language skills in Greek in a short period of time by attending intensive language courses. There are four major levels with the following characteristics:

I learn Greek Courses Characteristics	
<b>Length</b>	Each level consists of eleven courses and has 75 teaching hours. The modules are available two days per week. Each level is completed within four months.
<b>Format</b>	The courses are offered at evening hours.
<b>Language</b>	Greek is the medium language of instruction
<b>Content</b> – how is course content developed;	Please refer to the next section.

<sup>14</sup> For more information please visit <http://www.ilearngreeku.eu/en/>.



<b>Payment</b>	The project "Greek Language Courses for Third Country Nationals" is co-funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (90%) and the Republic of Cyprus (10%). Therefore there are no fees. The students enrol for free.
<b>Exam</b>	Participants, at the end of each level, take one final exam.
<b>Means to certify non-nationals' participation in the courses</b>	After the completion of all levels individuals receive certificates of completion and one tablet as a graduation gift.

## IV. Content of courses

### 1. Aims of the courses

The aim of the courses is to achieve basic and intermediate fluency in oral communication (mostly to facilitate daily living) in a short period of time, and to certify proficiency in Greek through appropriate exams. In particular, each level has various course objectives, and the course outline is modified according to the participant's educational needs. For example, the beginners' level is to assist the students to:

- Learn how to greet according to the time of day (morning, evening, night, etc.).
- Learn how to greet according to the customary (hello/ plural/ friendly approach).
- Pre-announce themselves, using the verbs "I say", "I am" and "They call me".
- Request and provide information in an appropriate manner as well as to engage in brief dialogues to get acquainted.
- Learn how to write all the above.

### 2. Themes covered

The main focus is to assist third country nationals to establish effective communication with the local environment in which they interact on a daily basis. For example, Level A2 covers the following themes:

- To ask and give information about prices, quality, quantity;
- Express a need, a request, a desire or a possibility;
- To understand plural forms of nouns;
- How to use daily transportations;
- Use the impersonal verb;
- Use the interrogative pronoun;
- Use the indefinite pronouns;
- Express like and dislike by using plural forms;
- How to complete transaction at the bank;
- Express an agreement.

### 3. Teaching methods

The courses are delivered through various means. The courses aim to promote an interactive environment where students will be able to develop communication skills.

The methods utilised are:

- Reading comprehension;
- Support/ guidance;
- Experiential learning;
- Communication approach;
- Writing.