

This report was commissioned by the  
Cyprus Office of UNHCR and conducted  
by INDEX: Research & Dialogue.  
Fieldwork was undertaken between  
June and October, 2012.

May, 2013

# **The Needs of Refugees and the Integration Process in Cyprus**

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# Acknowledgements

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First and foremost we would like to thank all those people who agreed to participate in this research and were willing to share sometimes very personal information with us. Considerable hospitality was shown during the numerous interviews conducted and questionnaires administered. Patience, good humour and generosity of time were invariably shown.

We would also like to thank our co-collaborators; Carla Cabrera, Nader Taghizadeh and Nicolina Karaolias as well as Fatema Islam, who acted as a volunteer on this project. Each one made an important contribution to the complex research process involved.

The research upon which this report is based also benefitted significantly from the assistance offered by Panayiotis Stavrinides PhD, Lecturer of Psychology at the University of Cyprus and Member of the Board of Directors at Index - Research and Dialogue.

Credit must also go to state officials and others who dealt with our requests in a magnanimous way. We would also like to thank the Cyprus Office of UNHCR who commissioned this research and, at key moments provided important guidance and support.

This report was also produced within the context of INDEX's 'A Democratic Audit for Cyprus', funded under the European Union's Aid Enlargement Programme, and gratefully acknowledge the support offered from that quarter.

Finally, any opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of UNHCR or those of the EU.

Nicosia, Cyprus

May, 2013

# 1 Key Findings and Recommendations

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## **Key Findings**

Recognised Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection are a discrete group within the wider population of non-Cypriots on this island who are both marginalised from mainstream society and live in increasingly vulnerable and precarious circumstances.

Evidence suggests that well over half of this group are currently without work, and thus four times more likely to be unemployed than Greek Cypriot citizens.

Whilst the impact of the recession has been felt throughout Cyprus it has had a seriously detrimental and disproportionate effect on the quality of life of those with International Protection (IP). For those who remain in employment insecure, low paid jobs are the norm.

Discriminatory attitudes and practices would appear widespread, training opportunities limited and increased competition for jobs in the service and construction sector in particular are the major barriers placed in the way of securing economic independence.

Very little practical assistance appears to be forthcoming from the state in easing these circumstances. Many public officials, particularly within the Employment Service, would appear to operate on the principle that there exists a hierarchy in the distribution of work opportunities which places Cypriots at the front of the queue followed by EU citizens and only remaining work opportunities (invariably poorly paid and undertaken in harsh conditions) available to Third Country Nationals.

However, the composition of those with International Protection as 'merely' Third Country Nationals stands in absolute contradiction with the oft repeated assertion, based on the intent behind the 2000 Refugee Law, that this group has 'the same rights' as citizens of the Republic.

The disjuncture between the spirit of that law and its implementation permeates the relationship of various institutions and services as the state comes into regular contact with the group under consideration.

Despite the discrepancy between the spirit of the law and the actual operation of many state institutions as well as the exclusory practice from some professional associations there appears little effective remedy. Accessing justice is costly in terms of both money and time and even when remedy is sought via state institutions such as the Ombudswoman's office recommendations made appear to be ignored in many cases and appropriate responses inordinately delayed.

It is a common experience for many that both the Welfare Service and Employment Service appear to treat those with International Protection (IP) as if they were less deserving than Cypriot citizens. The service they do receive tends to be minimal with access to resources sometimes arbitrarily denied or of a poorer quality. There is little evidence, for example, that the Employment Service, takes into account the specific needs or skills and competences of those with IP who are seeking assistance.

Given the need to demonstrate a willingness to work in order to receive a range of benefits the Employment Service is a critical, gatekeeping institution to the large number of IPs who are currently unemployed. Evidence suggests that Employment Service workers do not tend to treat this community of people with impartiality

Given the significant rise in unemployment amongst those with IP over the past two years as well as the recent modification or curtailment in the right to access a range of benefits, the material conditions of life have seriously deteriorated for many.

This is particularly the case for family households in general and single parent families specifically. There is evidence of some adults and children experiencing relative poverty which appears to be of little concern to the relevant state authorities. The experience of relative poverty gives every indication of becoming disproportionately experienced by those with IP with little, if any, indication that state institutions are monitoring the impact of the economic crisis on this group in order to target appropriate assistance.

There is also scant evidence that the Republic's Integration Plan 2010-12 has had any tangible effect on promoting integration in general or enabled those with IP to become better integrated in particular. From a policy perspective the Plan did not appear to be well thought through with little sense of a coherent strategy adopted in implementation and no locally grounded philosophy on which it could have been based.

Neither was the Plan clear about the targets set for its realisation beyond the monitoring of purely quantitative targets against which progress could be measured. It is disappointing to report that the Plan itself appears not to have been based on any prior assessment of the needs to be addressed as well as the conspicuous absence of any sustained attempt to consult with key stakeholders, including migrant communities themselves. As such, both the development and implementation of the Plan appears to fall well below 'best practice' promoted with European Union member states.

Despite long-term residence and the payment of taxes those with IP are almost completely excluded from being active participants within the political life of the Republic. Without the ability to vote they play no role in debate and deliberation about the distribution of public resources (which they themselves have contributed towards), the formulation of policy or issues related to its implementation.

Consequently, their collective interests find no adequate representation, rendering them a voiceless and disenfranchised community. However, a wide variety of political actors do seek to represent those with IP within political discourse, amplified through the mass media, but this invariably takes a hostile if not derogatory form.

As an outcome there is no positive encouragement offered to the community of those with IP to become self-organised and play a role in the public life of the Republic with that territory clearly bounded and reserved for Greek Cypriot citizens alone. This is in sharp contradiction with the objective of promoting integration which entails the active promotion of those with IP, amongst others, as recognised communities of interest within the general population.

Relationships between those with IP, neighbours and the wider community again vary depending upon area but in the main are amiable, engendering a degree of trust and a related

sense of being treated fairly. This is an important outcome since this creates a general perception that Cyprus is a safe and secure place to live in – a necessary foundation upon which thorough-going integration can proceed.

However, as is the case for the wider population, there are strikingly low levels of ‘generalised trust’ which implies that you can extend trusting relationships to those who you know but to no one else beyond this immediate circle of acquaintances and other associates.

A sense of not being treated in an impartial manner when accessing resources has the effect of generating a lack of trust in state institutions which is compounded by the IP population not having the same networks of associates, friends and family through which to circumvent blockages in the system – a common practice within the wider Cypriot population who have the means to do this given their greater embeddedness within society.

Lack of trust in state institutions and officials is also the outcome of either a lack of clarity about access to citizenship, for example, or the frequently reported experience of inordinate delays and unnecessarily complex bureaucratic procedures in relation to securing a ‘pink slip’, specific benefits or rights in relation to being disabled or a single parent amongst others.

Access to resources through which social mobility could be pursued appears variable at best. Both training and educational opportunities are critical in this regard. Whilst some language courses were judged reasonably effective there appears little evidence that they are delivered in a consistent manner, neither would there appear to be a prior assessment of educational needs in this regard or progression routes from one educational level to the next.

Access to training in relation to a wide variety of relevant skills to enhance entry into the labour market was largely conspicuous by its absence with very little awareness amongst the target population of any services of this sort being provided. Neither was there evidence that any prior assessment of the needs of the target group had been conducted or consideration given to the promotion of progression routes through which knowledge and skills could be accumulated on a consistent basis rather than through ‘one-off’ courses periodically made available.

Schools were identified as a primary site of integration for pupils, parents and their wider families alike. However, the unequal access of those with IP to subsidies in order to continue in higher education undermines the full potential for education to promote future mobility. Whilst there is evidence that the Education Ministry’s promotion of multiculturalism in Cypriot schools has some positive effect there is a continuing need to monitor and respond to the needs of non-Cypriot pupils.

## **Recommendations**

We believe the following recommendations to arise clearly from the evidence present in this report. We also judge them to be practical measures which lie within the competency of the state and its agents to deliver in a simple and cost effective manner.

1. The forthcoming Integration Plan should be based on a prior needs analysis which takes account of the specific needs of specific groups within the wider population. Stakeholders should be invited to participate in shaping the Plan and enabled to do so.

2. Given fiscal constraints and the conditioning or curtailment of certain forms of social assistance it is vital that state agencies become proactive in measuring the impact of these changes on vulnerable sections of the population. As a priority an 'At Risk of Poverty Assessment' should be conducted amongst the population of those with International Protection and particularly those who are also single parent families.
3. It is of the upmost importance that front-line workers within key public institutions and services are made aware of the particular rights which should be enjoyed by a person designated as having IP. A simple and cost effective initiative would be for the Ministry of Interior to issue clearly stated letters to all state functionaries who are likely to come into contact with this group informing them about their rights to employment, education, training as well as the general legal status accorded to refugees. Monitoring on a regular basis, ensuring an impartial service being delivered to this community, should be regularly undertaken in order to improve future service delivery.
4. The need to inform other important stakeholders about the specific rights of those with IP extends beyond state officials and includes key actors within society more generally, Trade Unions, Employers Organisations and Professional Associations should also be the focus a targeted dispersal of information which clearly outlines the rights associated with those who have IP as these relate to the activities of the organisations concerned.
5. Access to training should be made available and information widely disseminated to alert members of the community of the services being offered. Training provision should be targeted and based on the conduct of a prior needs analysis to ensure its utility. Attention also needs to be paid to developing progression routes from one course to the next so that skills and knowledge can be accumulated in an effective way.
6. Practical measures should be developed to assist the target group to represent their own interests and play an active role in the socio-political life of the Republic. An enabling context for the formation of NGOs through the provision of resources and a reformulation of the NGO Law is of priority. Future integration plans should prioritise the promotion of the active engagement of those with IP and ensure resources are available to secure this objective.
7. The basis upon which citizenship can be conferred ought to be made transparent and based on clearly defined criteria. Clarity and transparency should also characterise other rights and benefit provision to which specific sections of the IP population, such as single parents, the young and the disabled have legitimate access to.
8. Of particular concern are the difficulties confronted by young people within the refugee community in securing access to educational opportunities akin to their Cypriot peers. Education is a primary means through which social mobility can be achieved and greater integration within Cypriot society more likely to result. In this context it is recommended that the Finance and Education Ministry should consider extending the provision of student grants, to those with IP, on the same basis that this is made available to Cypriot citizens.

9. The role of the Ombudswomen’s Office, as well as the related activities of Cyprus’ Anti-Discrimination Body, is important as a reference point for those with IP to pursue specific grievances experienced including the violation of key rights upon which successful integration ought to be based. However, as this report notes, her office identifies key problems to be addressed but with a limited ability to enforce judgements reached. It is recommended that the powers of enforcement associated with this office are re-examined with a view to enhancing the ability to enforce judgements.



## 2 Introduction

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A Refugee, according to the 1951 Refugee Convention, is a person who is outside the country of his nationality owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted.

A major task of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as well as the receiving countries to which people flee, is to find durable solutions for those who have been forced into flight. Durable solutions can take the form of repatriation, or return in safety and dignity to the countries of origin, as well as resettlement. Resettlement is the selection and transfer of people from a country in which they have sought refuge to a safe host country, which has agreed to admit them. Here, they are accorded permanent protection, including legal residence, allowing them to integrate into the host society. But how is this best achieved and what are the specific needs expressed by those with International Protection in the process of making a new life?

This research report is focused on the experience of Recognised Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection, collectively referred to here as those with 'International Protection'. It considers how this group negotiates the challenge of integration as individuals, members of family groups and as specific communities of people. Whilst integration is a common challenge faced both by Cypriot society and those who have arrived here from elsewhere, those with International Protection are a distinct group different from others, since they have arrived on the island as a consequence of involuntary migration. It is important to remember that this group has exercised little choice in terms of destination, when flight occurred or the possibility of being able to return to the place of origin.

Consequently, the report is cognisant that this community's characteristics are held in common with other migrants to this island, but the circumstances of their migration and the choices made available are proscribed in important ways.

Given these circumstances the challenge of resettlement and integration within a new society are multiple, extending well beyond the immediate needs of securing personal safety to the long-term demands of economic independence, cultural adaptation and the negotiation of a place within a much larger host community. Thus, whilst the process of integration involves a negotiation between both the settled and migrant communities on the island there are very specific circumstances, and a set of specific needs, which are particular to Recognised Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection and which this report seeks to explore.

Our ambition has been to ensure that the exploration of needs ranges across a number of different levels or aspects as they become expressed; the needs of particular individuals, family groups and specific communities of people, however defined. Secondly, as these needs are related to the complex process of integration, we have taken account of needs expressed by wider society as a whole, migrants or non-Cypriots more generally and the needs of those with International Protection in particular.

In order to meet this challenge we have adopted a research strategy which combines both a qualitative and quantitative approach to the generation of data which enhances the reliability of the information produced and the robustness of the resulting analysis. We adopt a quantitative approach, through the form of a questionnaire administered to 192 members of the target

community, which aimed to ensure that the findings were representative of the group under consideration. Whilst five focus groups and 40 in-depth interviews provided qualitative data which allowed us to explore specific issues or relationships in greater detail as well as contextualise the data produced through the questionnaire. This was also correlated with documentary research that draws on sources of 'official' data, policy documents and other forms of prior research undertaken.

Given that the demands of integration are multifaceted, involve actors from across Cyprus as a whole as well as the wider institutional framework, primarily organised by the state, there were potentially many different ways in which the needs analysis and related research could proceed.

For our purposes, we pursued a number of primary questions related to how people who are designated as Recognised Refugees or with Subsidiary Protection met the challenge of resettlement, responded to the demands of adaption to a new host society and how they achieved progress towards the overarching objective of securing integration. We also sought to disclose how, and in what ways the state assisted in this complex process and how far, and to what effect, the host society also played a role.

We paid particular attention to two important dimensions of socio-economic life which are critical in determining successful integration;

- Access to the labour market
- Relationships with state institutions, specifically those institutions which act as 'gatekeepers' to public resources such as the Employment Service and the Welfare Services

Further, we were also concerned to enquire as to whether particular sub-groups within the target group, defined on the basis of their gender, ethnic origin, age and so forth, negotiated the process differently or faced a variable combination of opportunities and barriers to secure a place within Cypriot society commensurate with the objective of integration more generally. The research design thus took into account the need to differentiate between specific groups within the target population and assist in the articulation of particular perspectives and experiences which would otherwise be lost if being a protected person had been reduced to a singular and homogenised community of people.

The target group is at the centre of this research and the objective of accurately reflecting the plurality of opinions, perspectives and reported experience was prioritised. A more comprehensive report on integration as such would have also conducted interviews with other groups, state officials and opinion formers – but that was not the objective pursued here.

## **2.1 What is Integration?**

Integration is a complex and contested category which is nevertheless understood by many as, first and foremost, a two-way process of adaption. Consequently, the demands of integration do not simply apply to those who have either recently arrived and settled within the boundaries of new place of abode but also apply to the 'host' community, society and state in equal measure. As such, this report is also about the experience of Cypriot society, its institutions and peoples as reported by the target population.

Integration is not a linear process within which there is a progressive embedding of refugees into Cypriot society, the process can become fractured, discontinuous, speeding up and slowing down depending upon the particular conditions experienced by the refugee and the more general conditions which prevail in society at large.

*An individual or group is integrated within a society when they achieve public outcomes within employment, housing, education, health etc. which are equivalent to those achieved within the wider host communities; are socially connected with members of a (national, ethnic, cultural, religious or other) community with which they identify, with members of other communities and with relevant services and functions of the state; and have sufficient linguistic competence and cultural knowledge, and a sufficient sense of security and stability, to confidently engage in that society in a manner consistent with shared notions of nationhood and citizenship. (Ager and Strang, 2004)<sup>1</sup>*

It is important to note that within the EU in general and amongst policy makers in particular the objective of integration has become progressively disassociated from assimilation; A process aims to erase difference and merge migrant populations into the host society.

Whilst there is no universally accepted definition of integration, the framework developed by Ager and Strang is structured around four key domains that are of central importance to the integration of refugees, these domains can be outlined as follows;

- **Legal/Citizenship Domain**

This is a domain within which refugees and others are enabled or disempowered in securing a definite legal status within which a set of rights and reciprocal responsibilities can be exercised. It proceeds along a continuum of status positions from being an asylum seeker, someone with Subsidiary Protection, a Recognised Refugee or a citizen of the Republic of Cyprus. Each of these different forms of categorisation, and the different status position they occupy carry with them, a concomitant set of rights.

- **Statutory Domain**

Statutory support for the integration of refugees which involve a range of stakeholders in the development of strategies and programmes largely initiated by the state and sometimes implemented in conjunction with NGOs.

- **Functional Domain**

This domain encompasses access to welfare and other forms of support and also includes levels and forms of participation in the labour market, education services, as well as access to social housing, health services and other related services. It should be noted that this a domain which has tended to gain significant emphasis since integration which enhances

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<sup>1</sup> Agar, A & Strang, A Indicators of Integration - Final Report; Home Office Development and Practice Reports are produced by the Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, UK; (2004)

access to key resources largely determines the ability of refugees to secure conditions of self-reliance and thus self-autonomy.

- **Social Domain**

This domain shifts attention away from rather more formal relationships, processes and institutions in order to focus on how, and in what ways, certain relationships, networks and other social characteristics are developed and utilised as well as how a sense of becoming embedded in society takes root. This also suggests the development of confidence to become increasingly active agents in the integration process rather than the passive recipient of state action.

Having identified specific domains through which integration proceeds it is possible to develop a series of indicators through which to capture and measure progress towards integration in Cypriot society as well as the needs expressed by refugees in that context.

- **Clustered Indicators**

- **“Markers and Means”** which extend across a range of vital goods and services including access to employment, housing, education and health. All these stand within what has previously been identified as the functional domain.
- **“Social Connections”** including ‘social bridges’ (connections with members of other communities), ‘social bonds’ (connections within a community) and ‘social links’ (connections with institutions, including local and central government services) are cultivated. Together, they provide a basis upon which integration can be secured within the social domain.
- **“Facilitators”** including ‘language and cultural knowledge’ and ‘safety and stability’. These represent key facilitating factors for the process of integration.
- **“Foundations”** including ‘rights and citizenship’. This represents the basis upon which expectations and obligations for the process of integration are established.

It should be noted that processes overlap and link suggesting that the separation between the domains out of which they arise does not exclude considerable blurring between one domain and another.

## **2.2 Integration and the Needs Analysis Framework**

The form through which evidence was gathered and subsequent analysis conducted for this report has taken account of both the plurality of individuals and groups within the target population as well as the multi-level complexity of what integration constitutes and the means through which it can be secured.

As with many other research initiatives focused on these topics and conducted elsewhere, attention has been directed towards highlighting what can be called the functional, foundational and social aspects of refugee integration but this has also been supplemented by attention also directed towards integration as a social process which points to the prominent role of trust, networks and other relationships which bind people together and have an impact on the opportunities to integrate within wider society. Attention is also directed towards the active

role which the state plays in the process with an emphasis on two related aspects of its performance;

- 1) **Input Side** – The formulation and elaboration of a legal and policy frameworks directed towards defining and securing the rights, access to services and other public resources as a member of the target community
- 2) **Output Side** – The access to, and delivery of, those rights, services and resources in actual practice

It is not only legal and policy frameworks that are explicitly directed towards integration that are considered here. This is particularly relevant in a context where the Republic of Cyprus has consistently articulated a policy objective, in conformity with wider EU led initiatives, of seeking to tackle ‘social exclusion’ which goes beyond those domains and draws attention to wider socio-economic circumstances which condition an individual or a group’s experience. In this context social exclusion can be grasped as the multi-dimensional experience as well as other forms of disadvantage which may disproportionately affect certain groups in society in comparison with others.

A related concept, sometimes linked to social exclusion as an explanatory variable that plays a significant part in determining exclusion is captured by ‘social capital’ which identifies the inter-relationship of networks, reciprocal relations, commonly held norms and social trust. These together facilitate coordination and cooperation in the pursuit of mutual benefits including access to public goods. Different forms and levels of social capital can be identified as adhering to different groups in society and have an impact on the resulting ability not only to access public goods, for example, but secure effective integration within society as a whole.

More recently, within European social policy debates, the dual emphasis on the objective of reducing social exclusion and the identification of social capital as a key determinant in that outcome has become prominent and is reflected in this report.

### **2.3 Integration – Policy and Practice in Cyprus**

Policy and practice directed towards the general objective of securing the integration of particular groups of non-Cypriots into Cypriot society are at an early stage of development. It has been prompted by the challenges perceived in coming to terms with the significant presence of non-nationals, the percentage of which is well above the EU27 average, as well as the demands imposed by the European Commission in advocating the implementation of an EU wide integration initiative by the Republic. We should also note that progress towards successful integration is achieved through policy and practice by the state which extends well beyond the boundaries of what is formally identified through a dedicated integration policy as such, touching as it does important dimensions such as work and welfare, housing and community as well as well as access to a range of national and local services also available to Cypriot citizens and those with IP alike. The important point here is that successful integration is not solely determined by a dedicated integration policy as such but also by the wider socio-economic 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.

It is important to remember that it was only in 2010 that Cyprus developed and launched an Action Plan which explicitly aimed to address the objective of securing the integration of legal migrants, including Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection. The absence of such a policy framework prior to this would appear to mirror the failure to develop a coherent migration policy. Rather, what had emerged from the late 1980's and early 1990's was a pragmatic state response to what were seen to be gaps in particular sectors within the local labour market which were to be temporarily filled by 'Foreign Workers' from Third Countries. This ad hoc response was predicated upon the assumption that migrants to Cyprus, under these circumstances, would only be admitted as temporary guests, thus the objective of securing integration for a temporary guest is a non sequitur given these circumstances.

Following the accession of Cyprus to the EU in 2004 not only did the wider inter-governmental framework within which the Republic became fundamentally transformed, not least of which was the need to seek convergence with EU policy and related norms, but the nature of the population profile in Cyprus was also opened to significant alteration. Migrants from other EU countries, particularly those that were also new accession states in 2004, could now freely move in search of work and settle in Cyprus.

During the late 2000's a rolling National Inclusion Policy was developed, encouraged and supported by the European Commission. The Plan broadly sought to offer forms of support to migrants from Third Countries, Recognised Refugees and others which included information dispersal, consciousness raising, training programmes, rights promotion etc. as well as forms of support aimed at encouraging a range of public and state institutions to respond more effectively to the needs of non-Cypriots who were legally resident on the island.

The National Inclusion Policy (2010-12) consists of eight Priority Pillars with specific objectives and specific actions for their implementation, as well as time tables, competent services of implementation and funding sources of the actions. The Priority Pillars are identified as being;

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| <p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Priority Pillar:</b> "Information – Service – Transparency"</p> <p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Priority Pillar:</b> "Employment, Training, Trade Unions"</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Priority Pillar:</b> "Education and Language Learning"</p> <p><b>4<sup>th</sup> Priority Pillar:</b> "Health"</p> <p><b>5<sup>th</sup> Priority Pillar:</b> "Housing – Improvement of quality of life, social protection and interaction"</p> <p><b>6<sup>th</sup> Priority Pillar:</b> "Culture, Civics, basic elements of political and social reality"</p> <p><b>7<sup>th</sup> Priority Pillar:</b> "Participation"</p> <p><b>8<sup>th</sup> Priority Pillar:</b> "Assessment – Annual and Total"</p> |
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The Plan goes on to elaborate that, in combination these activities, services and other provisions have an overarching goal;

*The aim of our national policy and of the action plan is to integrate immigrants to the Cypriot society through the creation of a clear route, with eventual (sic) stops till the*

*acquisition of the long-term residence status, the Migration Permit, of some political rights and of citizenship. The implementation period is fixed for 2010-2012 in order to give the possibility to assess its effectiveness and make any amendments if needed.*

And further, that;

*Within the scope of our policy, we will make any possible effort to include the social integration of immigrants to all public policies on information and service, employment, education, health housing, culture and participation (Mainstreaming). The National Action Plan activates Local Authorities and the participation of representatives from the civil society.*

Whilst there is reference in a short introductory and methodology section to how the Plan conforms to wider EU integration policy and National Plans developed elsewhere there is no substantive attempt to define what the integration process constitutes for the Republic or how the proposed actions meet documented needs. It would be fair to infer 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. Consequently the Plan does not provide much evidence of any nuanced targeting of the planned actions at differentiated groups within the population as a whole. Neither did there appear to be anything which could be described as even a minimal consultation process with non-state stakeholders, in order to shape the Plan, which involved a range of non-state stakeholders. Of particular note was the absence of any consistent contact with migrant or refugee communities and, in doing so, recognition extended towards them as some of the most important stakeholders in the process.

Related to this obvious weakness was the apparent lack of commitment to the on-going assessment of the Plan's actual impact or an assessment framework through which an evaluation of whether targets had been met. The only targeted actions which appear tangible relate to mechanical measures of either expenditure related to the action or a crude measure of the numbers of people participating. The prospect of a qualitative evaluation of relationships changed by the actions undertaken, more effective service delivery or the empowerment of targeted groups was conspicuous by its absence, and quantitative monitoring was substituted.

Finally, it should be noted that the overall budget attached to the Plan was relatively small and many of the actions proposed were apparently to incur no extra costs beyond state funding already committed for other purposes.

If this describes an important aspect of the State's attempt to address the needs associated with progress towards a more integrated society, we now focus our attention on what those needs might be on the basis of previous work undertaken.

## **2.4 Evidence of Integration (MIPEX Index)**

The annual MIPEX Report, which seeks to measure the effectiveness of integration policy and practice, offers a comparative perspective across 31 countries from across the EU and North

America.<sup>2</sup> It explores 148 policy indicators to offer a multi-level assessment of migrant opportunities to participate in society as well as the commitment of states to facilitate this objective. Importantly, the Index does not only record and evaluate the input side of policy (conformity to international or EU level regulation, convention or legal frameworks) but also the outputs associated with policy and law which are aimed at securing the conditions for effective integration.

Seven policy areas are identified and scores allocated on the basis of the achievement of EU and international standards which aim at achieving equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all residents. These policy areas include;

- 1. Labour market mobility**
- 2. Family reunion**
- 3. Education**
- 4. Political participation**
- 5. Long-term residence**
- 6. Access to nationality**
- 7. Anti-discrimination**

The aggregated figures from across these policy areas produces an overall mark which allows for a general scale to be produced against which each country can be ranked. The results published in 2011 ranked Sweden in first place with a MIPEX Index score of 83 and Latvia in last place, rank 31, with 31 points. The EU average was 52 points with the more advantageous locations being the Benelux and Nordic countries as well as some southern European states including Italy, Portugal and Spain.

Cyprus is ranked second from bottom in 30<sup>th</sup> place with a score of 35. Compared with other countries in the Mediterranean region only Malta remains close;

**Table 1 MIPEX Rankings and Scores (2011)**

<b>Ranking (out of 31)</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>MIPEX Aggregated Score</b>
<b>2</b>	Portugal	<b>79</b>
<b>8</b>	Spain	<b>63</b>
<b>10</b>	Italy	<b>60</b>
<b>16</b>	Greece	<b>49</b>
<b>28</b>	Malta	<b>37</b>
<b>30</b>	<b><u>Cyprus</u></b>	<b>35</b>

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<sup>2</sup> MIPEX Report III (Brussels; 2010); the Cyprus specific report is available here; <http://www.mipex.eu/cyprus>



The report identifies the area of labour market mobility as the most unfavourable within the EU. As this relates to Recognised Refugees, highlighted is the difficulty of accessing a number of professions as well as the related issue of the recognition of both educational and professional qualifications. Further, for those with International Protection who have not secured citizenship there is no access to public sector jobs. In terms of political participation the report notes that non-EU citizens are denied access to forms of political representations available to Cypriot citizens including the right to vote or stand for local or central state assemblies. Further, the report records that 'Immigrants are not structurally consulted' by the state although they have the ability to form their own associations but, without a dedicated funding stream, these associations will be 'limited' in being able to represent community interest.

On a more positive note the Index records that there are laws which are aimed at tackling discrimination as this relates to a range of social and economic contexts. However, what may appear to be robust laws to tackle discrimination are weakened by the form they take and difficulties in securing their implementation. As reported, there is little account taken of a variety of forms that discrimination can be expressed through, legal proceedings are cumbersome and complex with no alternative methods of dispute resolution and limited sanctions available to the court. The Cypriot Equality Body is also noted as having limited resources and understaffed and its role limited to issuing recommendations and instigating investigations but cannot pursue a claim in court on a victim's behalf.

## **2.5 The Cypriot Context – Foundational Rights**

In this section we outline some of the foundation rights and related responsibilities which are accorded to those with International Protection. These are contained in a 56 page document produced by the Asylum Service and available on its website.<sup>3</sup> This appears to be the only place where the Republic of Cyprus provides a comprehensive outline of how the Ministry of Interior perceives what those essential rights and obligations are and seeks to convey that information to the target groups affected.

The document is based on the Refugee Law of 2000 (last amended 2007 – see Appendix I), which aims to provide for the recognition of refugees and for the better implementation of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.<sup>4</sup>

The initial sections describe the process of applying for asylum and the decision process this sets in motion, the appeals process as well as the role of the reception centre and the rights and

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<sup>3</sup> See ' "Guide for Asylum Seekers and Those with International Protection in Cyprus' Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior. The extracts from this document reproduced in this report, retain the original misspellings. See;

"[http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/Asylum.nsf/All/BF8875C4DC3EA7D8C2257840004FF9E0/\\$file/Guide%20for%20asylum%20seekers%20and%20beneficiaries%20of%20international%20protection%20in%20Cyprus.pdf](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/Asylum.nsf/All/BF8875C4DC3EA7D8C2257840004FF9E0/$file/Guide%20for%20asylum%20seekers%20and%20beneficiaries%20of%20international%20protection%20in%20Cyprus.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> The law is available as an 'unofficial translation' which was made by UNHCR Cyprus for the purposes of use in its office. However, UNHCR notes that 'it has been requested by and has been shared with the authorities of the Republic.' See; <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a71aac22.html>

responsibilities of asylum seekers. The following chapter deals with the rights accorded to those granted International Protection.

### **Recognised Refugees**

Following the acquisition of this status as a **Recognised Refugee** the person is 'entitled to a residence permit of three years subject to extension for three more years' and the following rights are granted;

*(1) You have the right to fair treatment regardless of gender, race, and religion, membership to a particular social group or political opinion or country of nationality.*

*(2) You have the right to the same treatment as nationals regarding*

*a) the right to primary education.*

*(b) exercise of salaried or independent professional activity in accordance with the rules implemented generally in the profession as well as in public administration and with regards to diploma recognition and salary.*

*(c) the right to full access of the minors to all levels of education.*

*(d) 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.*

*(e) the right to free access to the Courts of the Republic as well as to the exemption from providing guarantee from the juridical expenses.*

*(f) the right to food supply in cases of emergency.*

*(g) the right to public assistance and any other necessary public support as well as the right to sufficient medical care for people with special needs, like pregnant women or individuals who have suffered torture, rape or other kinds of psychological or physical or sexual abuse or minors that are victims of mistreatment such as neglect, exploitation, torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or suffered because of armed conflicts.*

*(h) the right to social security.*

*(i) the right to protection of literary rights.*

*(j) the right to free medical care.*

*(k) the right to participate in adult educational programs that relate to issues of employment, professional training and practical performance at work places.*

*(3) You have the right to enjoy the most favourable treatment possible which is not less favourable than the one provided to foreigners found under the same conditions according to relevant laws and regulations and which regards the right to a) access to lodgings and b) for partnerships.*

*(4) You have the right to enjoy the same treatment as the one provided to foreigners who found under the same conditions in accordance with relevant laws and regulations and which regards*

*a) the right to choose place of residence and the right to travel freely to the Republic, b) the right to own or possess property and other rights of similar nature as well as the right of hiring and contracting contacts relating to real estate.*

*(5) You have the right to relocate property in the Republic of Cyprus according to the relevant laws and regulations.*

*(6) You have the right to express and practice freely your religious duties.*

*(7) You have the right to participate in social integration programs.*

Under the title 'Administrative help provided' the document goes on to elaborate that;

*After three years of legal residence in the Republic, persons who have been recognized as refugees enjoy the same treatment as nationals as regards to: 1. the right to enjoy the most favourable treatment possible which is not less favourable than the one provided to foreigners found under the same conditions according to relevant laws and regulations and which regards the right to a) access to lodgings and b) for partnerships and 2. the right to enjoy the same treatment as the one provided to foreigners who found under the same conditions in accordance with relevant laws and regulations and which regards a) the right to choose place of residence and the right to travel freely to the Republic, b) the right to own or possess property and other rights of similar nature as well as the right of hiring and contracting contacts relating to real estate.*

*A person recognized as refugee enjoys the same treatment as nationals according to the relevant laws and regulations which regard the right to employment at a profitable business....*

*...The authorities provide the recognized refugee with documents or certificates which should normally be given to them by their national authorities or through them.*

*(That an identity card and travel documents will be) issued and given to a refugee upon receipt an i.d. card and travel document unless reasons of national security and public order disallow it.*

*Taxes or fares or any other kind of charges higher than the ones imposed to nationals are not imposed to refugees.*

The following subsection then outlines the obligations imposed on the person with International Protection as follows;

- A refugee must respect the Constitution, the laws and regulations of the Republic.*
- A refugee is not allowed to participate in activities which may threat national security or public order or harm national interest.*

- *A refugee should not participate in activities that are against the United Nations principles or international law.*

### **Those with Subsidiary Protection**

Turning to those who have secured **Subsidiary Protection**, along with many of the rights accorded above the following is also added in relation to employment;

*You have the right to exercise or practice independent professional activity in accordance with the rules and conditions applied to the profession and to public administration in general and in relation with diploma recognition and salary, upon recognition of the Subsidiary Protection, the condition of the labor market may be taken into account among others, as well as the possibility of defining the priorities concerning the access to employment for a time period that does not exceed the predefined by a decree time that is issued by the Minister of Interior after consulting with the Minister of Labor and Social Security as well as with the social partners, and which is published in the Official Gazette of the Republic. The beneficiary of the status of Subsidiary Protection has access to work positions for which he/she has received an offer for a time period defined in the relevant laws and regulations for the determination of priorities in the Labor market....*

*....A beneficiary of Subsidiary Protection has a right to employment which is limited for the first twelve months from the decision. After the twelve months, the beneficiary of Subsidiary Protection has the same rights at the employment field as refugees. For the first twelve months, beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection can work in the following sectors of the labor market:*

- 1. Farming – Agriculture - Fishery,*
- 2. Manufacturing,*
- 3. Constructions,*
- 4. Trade and Repairs,*
- 5. Other activities (including cleaning of buildings, workers at the sectors of sewage system and waste processing of collection and processing of waste (garbage).*

Having provided a synoptic overview of rights and obligations the document goes on to outline ways practical measures and services through which the integration of those with International Protection is to be achieved. It is boldly stated, as part of the preamble to this section, that ‘refugees have the same rights in most sectors as citizens of the Republic’. The measures and services are as follows;

*a. **Housing:** There are no special arrangements for the housing of beneficiaries of international protection either by the State, local authorities or private organizations.*

*b. **Social Welfare:** Beneficiaries of international protection have access to public subsistence and other social benefits under the same conditions as the citizens of the Republic.*

*c. **Employment:** There are no restrictions for refugees in accessing the labor market. Vocational training programs are available for refugees and holders of Subsidiary Protection in order to facilitate their access to the labor market. Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection have the same rights as refugees in the employment sector after a year of the decision for international protection.*

*d. Education: Beneficiaries of international protection have the right by law to access public education (basic and higher) the same as Cypriot citizens. Greek language training programs are available for this target group.*

This document constitutes the main, publically available, outline of the rights and responsibilities of those with International Protection in Cyprus and thus the most important sources of information used by the target population to determine the legal framework within which they are located. However, the document itself presents a number of difficulties both in its forms of expression as well as the status of the claims made when judged against actual state practice. It is, at times, a poorly written text which all too often is expressed in language which is difficult to interpret, thus undermining its avowed purpose as a guide to the relevant law. Further, in actual practice whilst right of access to rights, services, benefits and other resources appear unambiguously stated there are many gaps, caveats and ambiguities which accompany the implementation of the Refugee Law in practice. A wide range of state and other institutions are involved in the actual application of the law including government ministries and departments, as well as the offices of both the Ombudswoman and the Attorney General. This opens up an important issue about the Refugee Law as such and the pronounced intention of law-makers in passing this legislation, how that law appears conditioned, modified or potentially compromised in its implementation and the role of the legal organs of the Republic in closing the gap between original intention and actual outcome. These issues will be briefly explored later in the report.

## **2.6 The Cypriot Context – Demographic Profile**

Data suggests that both emigration from and immigration to Cyprus is experienced in almost equal measure. Those designated as migrants to the island constitute 149,600 (2011), represent approximately 17% of the Cypriot population of just over 900,000. EU data shows;

*...that 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. (Teerling, J and King, R 2011)<sup>5</sup>*

It is also the case that;

*...Cyprus ranks high on two other indicators of immigration: population with foreign citizenship (second only after Luxembourg) and population with foreign birth (third after Luxembourg and Ireland). These indicators are, once again, all the more revealing bearing in mind the recency of immigration into Cyprus compared to most other countries of Western Europe, whose mass immigration dates back to the early post-war decades. (Ibid)*

Within the migrant population there is significant diversity. As recorded in 2010;

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<sup>5</sup> Teerling, J and King, R Cyprus as a Multi--Diasporic Space, Working Paper No 67, Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex (2011). Available here; <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=mwp67.pdf&site=252>

*...the official number of non-Cypriots residing in the area under the control of the Republic of Cyprus, the vast majority of whom are migrant workers, is estimated to be over 180,195: 97,638 are EU citizens, the other 66,187 are TCNs, and there are 7,803 students. From the TCNs (Third Country Nationals), about 35,000 are domestic workers and a large number work in farms and agriculture. 3,413 TCNs work in international companies and another 9,123 with work permits. Also, there are 2,270 asylum seekers and refugees. The irregular migrants are estimated to be around 25,000–30,000. (Demetriou, C & Trimikliniotis, N 2011)<sup>6</sup>*

However, it should be noted that not only the figures attached to different groups within the migrant population, but the overall circumstances experienced, has potentially changed significantly during the course of 2012. The Eurozone crisis has engulfed Cyprus with the consequence that unemployment has sharply risen, economic activity fallen and austerity measures implemented. This has had a consequence for migrants in general including Recognised Refugees and others.

It can be anticipated that the migration flow to Cyprus may experience a downturn as employment opportunities decline. State service provision is likely to experience contraction and a reduction in the quality of delivery. Welfare and benefit support is also currently under review and very likely to be reduced, imminently.

## **2.7 Attitudes to Non-Nationals and Integration**

In this section attention is directed to evidence in relation to the attitudes and perceptions towards the heterogeneous reality of contemporary Cypriot life previously explored. The data is drawn from a recent Eurobarometer Poll, undertaken by the European Commission, and published on a regular basis. The advantage of this polling data is that it is undertaken across all 27 EU member states thus providing the opportunity to offer a comparative insight into the attitudes expressed in one national context in comparison with others. This allows a degree of judgement to be made about the strength or depth of feeling in the Cypriot context when compared with answers given to the same questions posed elsewhere.

It should be noted that the questionnaire upon which this data is based is administered in Greek and the sample on which it is based is almost certainly exclusively Greek Cypriot, thus reflecting the attitudes of the majority community rather than those residing in Cyprus as a whole.

The questions posed in the poll aimed to explore attitudes to migration, both forced and voluntary, as well as the presence of Third Country Nationals in EU member states. The criterion for data selection and presentation here is where the results capture a range of reported dispositions within the majority population which are likely to impact on the

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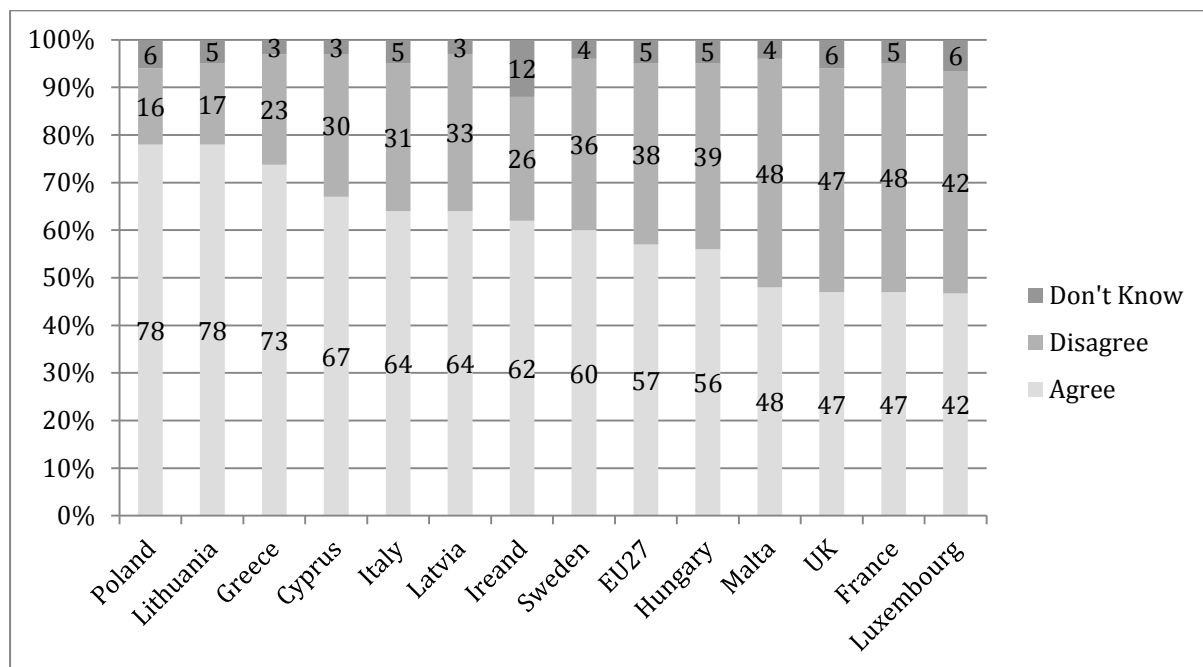
<sup>6</sup> Nicos Trimikliniotis and Corina Demetriou. Labour Integration of Migrant Workers in Cyprus: A Critical Appraisal" Precarious Migrant Labour Across Europe. Ed. Mojca Pajnik and Giovanna Campani. Ljubljana: 2011, 2011. 73-96

negotiation of an integrated society in general or appear to have significance for the fate of the target group in particular.

Turning to the evidence from this source, contained in a recent (2012) Special Eurobarometer devoted to exploring ‘awareness of Home Affairs’, here we abstract polling data generated in Cyprus but with results from other EU states in order to judge the extent and depth of perceptions on a comparative basis.<sup>7</sup>

The fieldwork was conducted at the end of 2011, before the economic crisis had become fully apparent in Cyprus, which could imply that should the poll be rerun in 2013 the trends uncovered in the results might be effected.

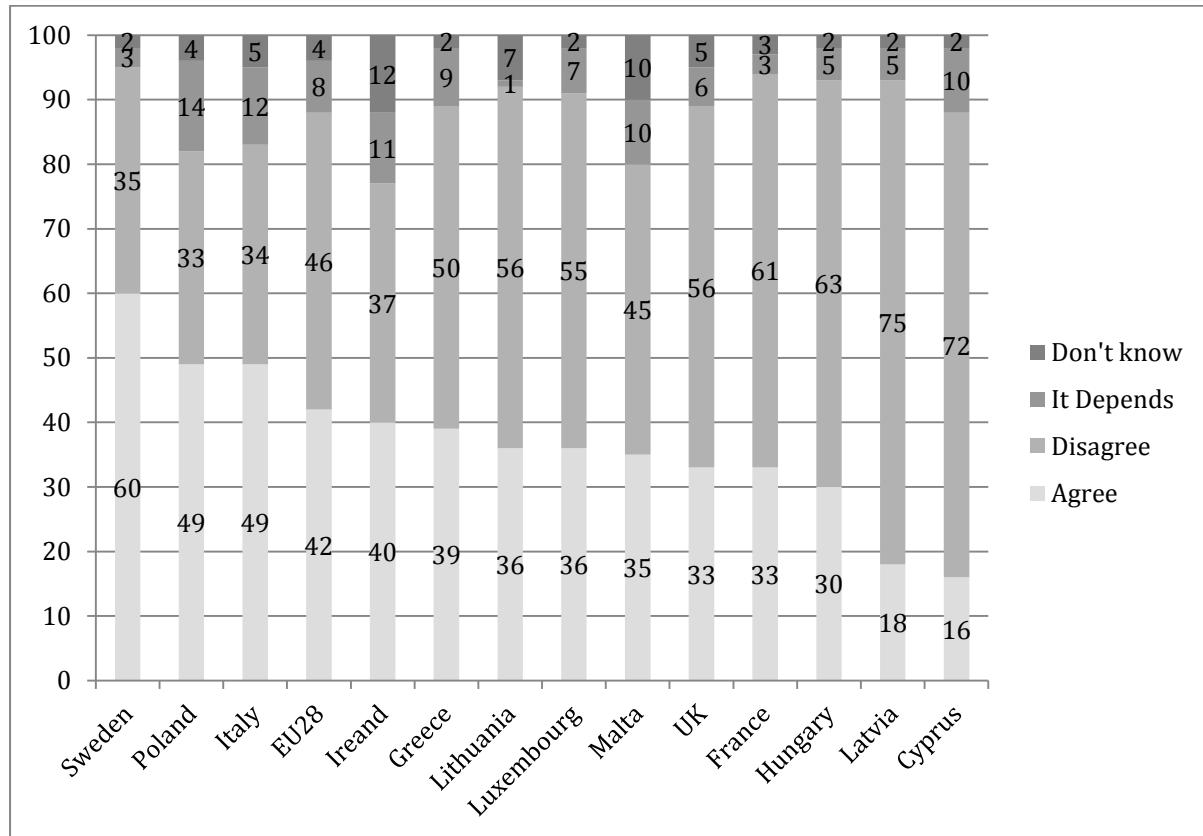
**Table 2      Some people think that it should be easier for non-EU citizens to travel to the EU for business or tourism. Would you say you...?**



Cyprus ranked 5<sup>th</sup> amongst all EU member states in terms of the extent of attitudes revealed (67% in favour), in supporting ease of access of non EU citizens into the EU for the expressed purposes of trade and tourism (the fourth country which supported this measure with a higher proportion of respondents was Romania).

<sup>7</sup> Special Eurobarometer 380 ‘Awareness of Home Affairs’ June 2012. Available here; [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_380\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_380_en.pdf)

**Table 3** When thinking about the demographic challenges ahead (e.g. ageing population) and the need for filling in labour shortages in certain sectors of EU economy (e.g. healthcare, new technologies), some people think that the EU should encourage labour migration from non-EU countries. Would you say you...?



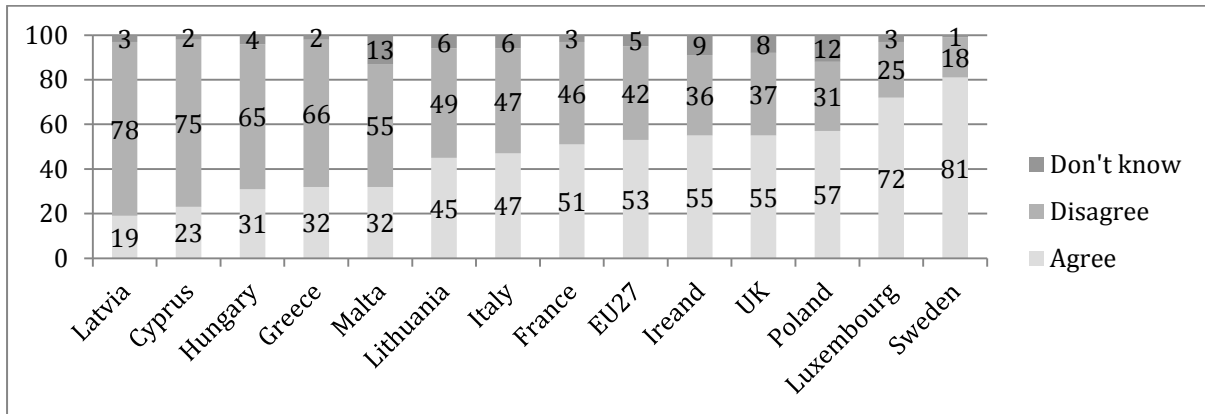
The table clearly indicates the extent opinion ranged against the prospect of migration from Third Countries even when contextualised by an economic-rational argument which suggest that some forms of migration will be necessary in the future. The lowest assent to the prospect of migration in this context is recorded by Cyprus.

Bearing in mind the results displayed in Table 2, even though over two thirds of Cypriot respondents were keen to ease the entry of non EU citizens to the EU for the purposes of trade and tourism, they were, at the same time, the least likely community of EU citizens to support labour migration from non-EU member states (only 16% assent to this proposition) for the purposes of addressing specialised labour needs that the EU member states may face as a result of an ageing population (Table 3).

Public opinion in Cyprus exhibits the widest gap, in terms of attitudes expressed, between assenting to encouraging trade and tourism on the one hand and supporting migration from Third Countries on the other. This could be interpreted to suggest that there appears to be a professed willingness to do business with TCNs but only a small minority of respondents invite the prospect of directly working or living with migrants from the same countries of origin.

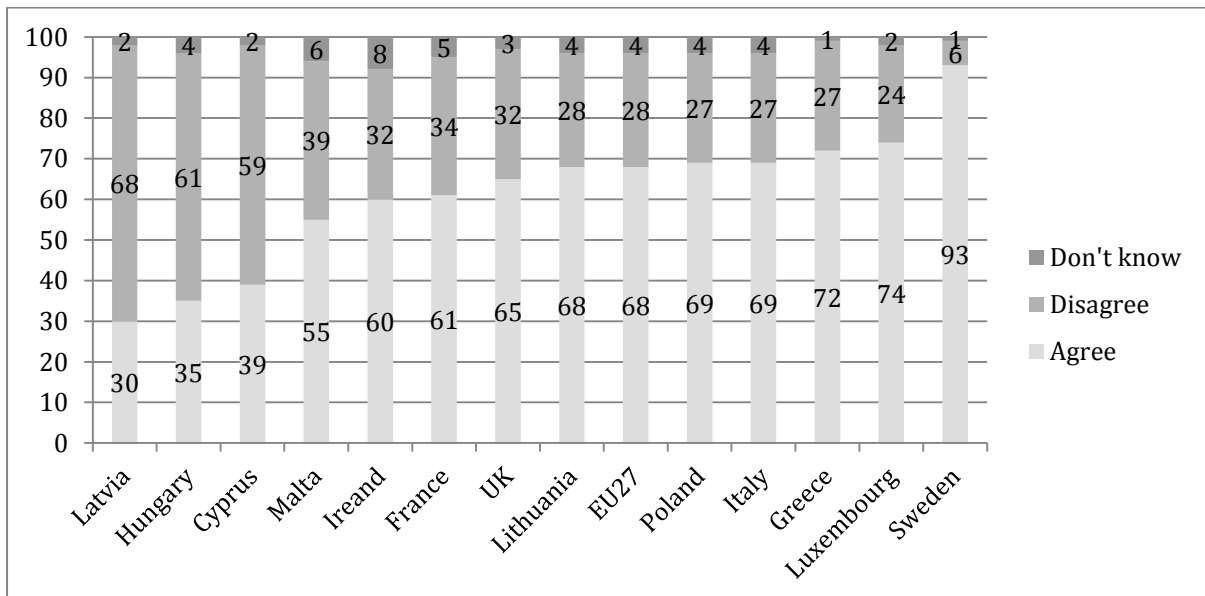


**Table 4** About 4% of the people living in the EU come from a non-EU country. There are different views regarding their integration in European societies. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about integration?  
**Immigration enriches (OUR COUNTRY) economically and culturally.**



With the exception of Latvia (where very specific national conditions prevail<sup>8</sup>) Cyprus records the highest rejection, from across the EU, of the proposition that migration from Third Countries enriches the host society either culturally or economically.

**Table 5** About 4% of the people living in the EU come from a non-EU country. There are different views regarding their integration in European societies. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about integration?  
**Legal immigrants should have the same rights as (NATIONALITY) citizens**



<sup>8</sup> See Nils Muižnieks (ed)'Latvian-Russian Relations: Domestic and International Dimensions' (2006); available here; [http://www.szf.lu.lv/files/petnieciba/publikacijas/no\\_vescas\\_majaslapas/latvian-russian\\_relations\\_final\(1\).pdf](http://www.szf.lu.lv/files/petnieciba/publikacijas/no_vescas_majaslapas/latvian-russian_relations_final(1).pdf)

Whilst, across the EU, 28% of respondents rejected the proposition that migrants from Third Countries should enjoy the same rights as national citizens, similar attitudes in Cyprus were more than double this (59%) and represent a substantial majority of respondents.

Drawing the data presented in these tables together it is apparent that Cypriot respondents tend towards strong, if not decisive, opinions on the issues raised. Whilst recognising the economic advantages in engaging with Third Country Nationals travelling to the EU for business or tourism purposes there is strong resistance to allowing any temporary contact for these purposes to become a more long-term engagement in local society for the purposes of filling gaps in the labour market.

Further, there is a general view widely shared, that current patterns of migration to Cyprus have not enriched the host society. Further there is reported elsewhere in the Eurobarometer results awareness, amongst a majority, that discrimination directed towards migrants of this sort is a barrier put in the way of their successful integration.<sup>9</sup> Simultaneously, there is strong resistance to the proposition that Residents from Third Countries should be able to access the same rights as nationals.<sup>10</sup>

To contextualise this data and the patterns which emerge it is important to note that Cyprus is already a deeply heterogeneous society which has experienced considerable migration both from other EU states as well as Third Countries over the past 25 years (see section 2.6 in this report). Given this context, as well as the ad hoc migration policy developed by the Republic, modelled as it has been on a *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker) frame of reference, the legitimacy of the presence of Third Country Nationals appears to be only secured by the fulfilment of three criteria;

- 1) That their presence remains temporary rather than permanent
- 2) That the work they undertake does not bring them into either widespread or systematic competition with national workers
- 3) That they remain economically active, self-supporting and thus do not make any substantive claims on public resources

These conditions are breached if economic conditions change to the extent that Cypriot workers are forced, by necessity, to engage in economic activity previously allocated to migrants (as a consequence of austerity, for example); where there is a belief that some are seeking to secure permanent residence (by making 'erroneous' demands for asylum); or secure access to benefits and services believed to be outside the rights fitfully accorded to them.

## **2.7 The Refugee and Subsidiary Protection Community in Cyprus**

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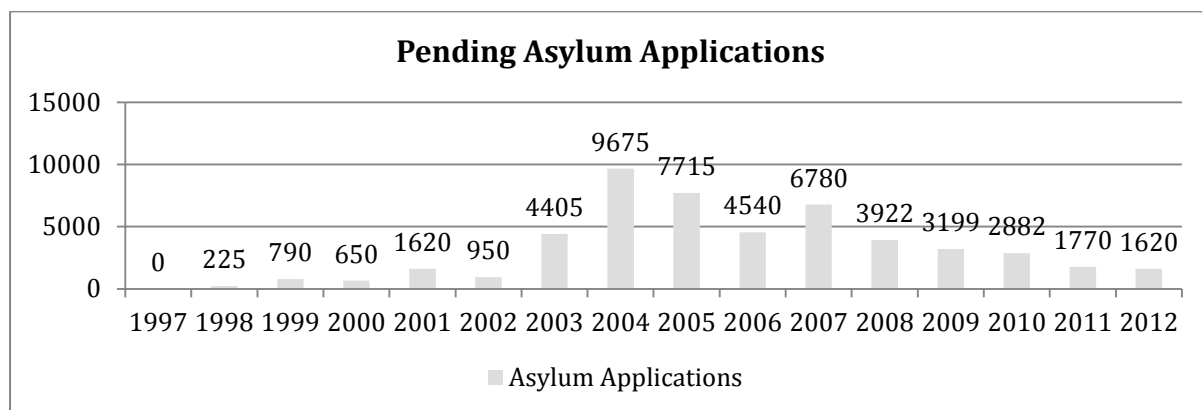
<sup>9</sup> See question QB9.3 (p. 32) Eurobarometer (2012) Ibid. The majority of Cypriot respondents (53%) agree that non-EU immigrants may 'face difficulties integrating because of discrimination they face within the country'. Although, it should be noted, 46% rejected the proposition.

face difficulties integrating because of discrimination they face within the country

<sup>10</sup> See question QB9.2 (p. 33) Eurobarometer (2012) Ibid

Having established the broad outlines of migration flows to Cyprus over the past twenty years or so we now briefly turn our attention to the nature of the specific population which is the object of this research. The table below records the number of asylum applications made to the Republic of Cyprus between 1997 and 2010. The top ten countries of origin of those making the application were Iraq, India, Vietnam, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria Chin and Nepal.

**Table 6 Asylum Applications Made in Cyprus<sup>11</sup>**

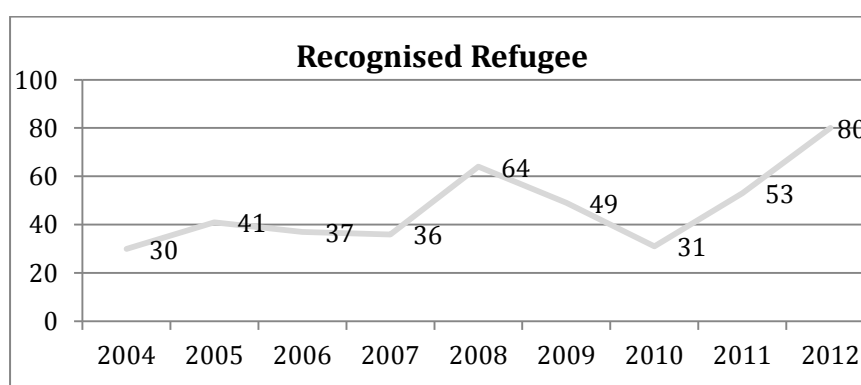


There is a substantial rise in applications made between 2002 and 2004, with that year marking the high watermark with nearly 10,000 applications being made. However, from that year on there is a steady, if uneven, decline in numbers through to the second decade of the century.

The Asylum Service provides basic information about the conferment of the status of being either a Recognised Refugee or securing Subsidiary Protection on a year by year basis.

Turning to the decisions made on the basis of these applications, the following table shows the number conferred Recognised Refugee status between 2004 and 2010.

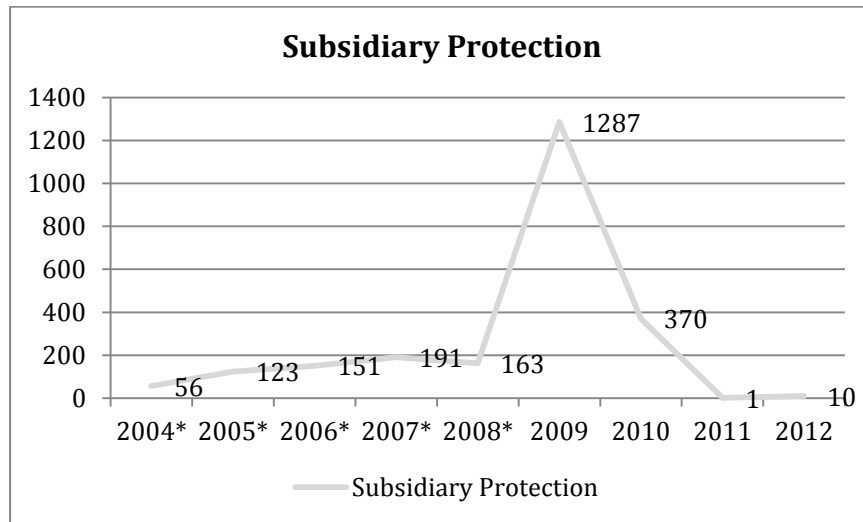
**Table 7 Decisions by the Asylum Service in the Conferment of Refugee Status**



<sup>11</sup> Source: For the years between 1997 and 2007, Eurostat Yearbook 2009 p.172. For the years between 2008 and 2012, the Asylum Service website.

Similarly, the next table records the number of people who are conferred the status of Subsidiary Protection;

**Table 8 Decisions by the Asylum Service in the Conferment of Subsidiary Protection Status**



\* The figures for the period 2004-2008 are not representative as they include both cases where the Subsidiary Protection as well as Humanitarian Status was granted.

Again there is a very stark pattern apparent with the designation of Subsidiary Protection only granted to very limited cases whilst from 2009 onwards, a peak in that year, and a significant decline 12 months later.

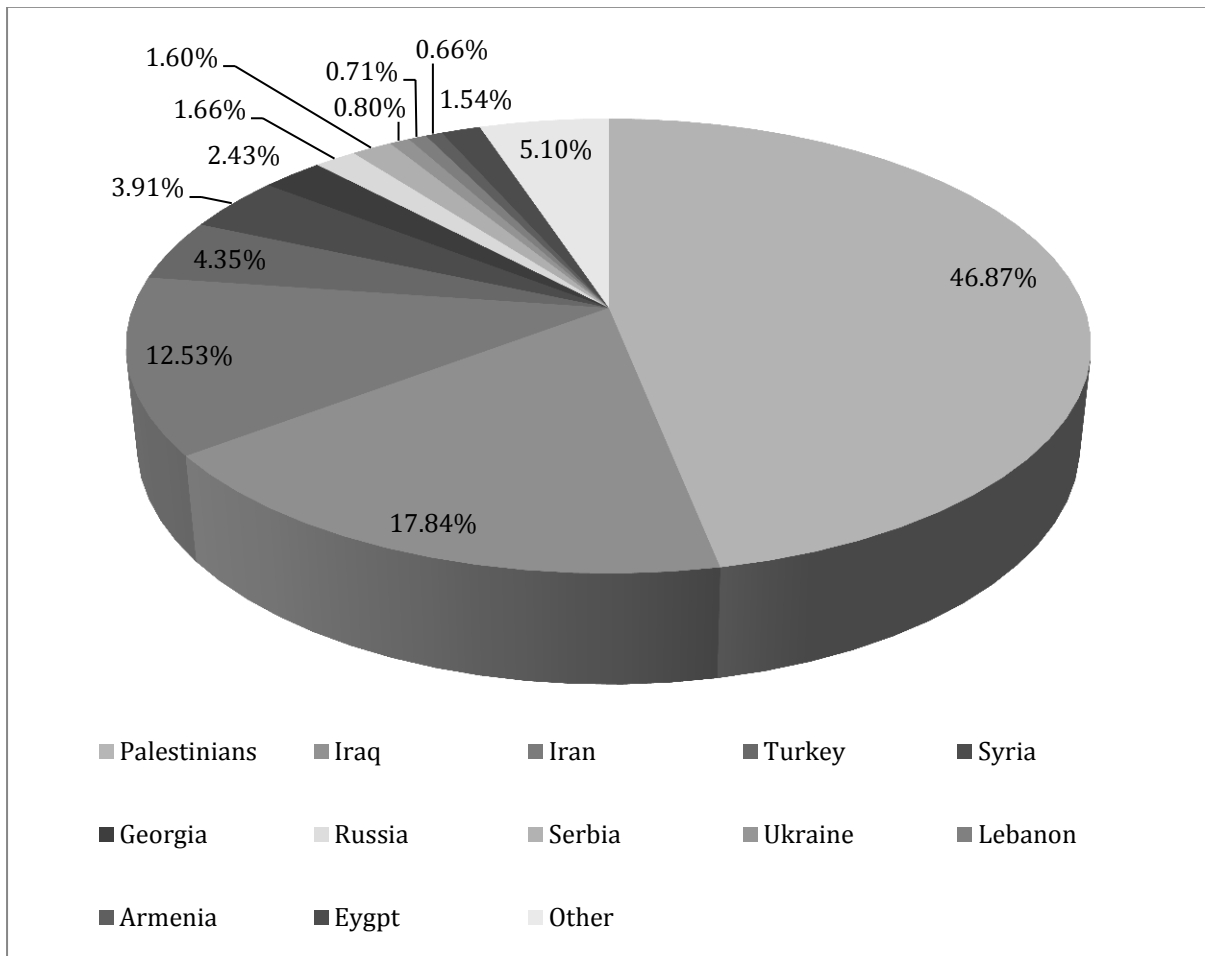
The three previous tables reflect a gap between the number of asylum applications, their processing and a decision being made as to whether to confer International Protection with a peak in asylum applications between 2003 and 2005 and a subsequent peak in appropriate status being accorded between 2008 and 2009. It should also be noted those who do receive International Protection are only a small percentage of the numbers who apply.

## 2.8 Profile of the Target Population

Turning to the task of outlining how a differentiation can be made within the total population of those who are the subject of research here we outline the principle population groups as recorded by UNHCR at the beginning of 2010. According to this data source there are over forty separate national or ethnic designations into which the total population can be composed.

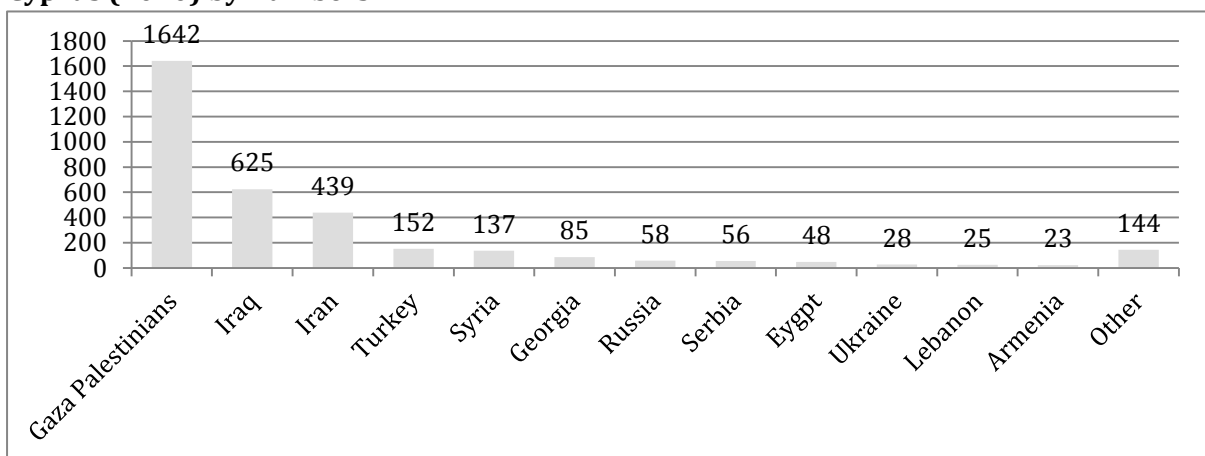
The following charts (Table 9 &10) records the number of people who are identified according to ethno-national designations which including twenty or more individuals. Smaller groups are aggregated as 'other'.

**Table 9 Ethno-National Designation of the Refugee and Subsidiary Population in Cyprus (2010) by Percentage**



The same information is presented below in the form of a bar chart;

**Table 10 Ethno-National Designation of the Refugee and Subsidiary Population in Cyprus (2010) by Numbers**



This data clearly indicates the heterogeneous nature of the general population group as a whole with approaching one in every two persons being designated as Palestinians. National groups, comprising those from Iraq and Iran, are both substantial in number and constitute a second

tier into which they can be distributed. A third tier can be identified, populated by groups under 140 individuals but more than 20. Finally, a fourth tier made up of others each from specific location throughout the world but under 20 in number.

The size of the groups in the first and second tier, currently located in Cyprus, share two important characteristics; located within the wider region of which Cyprus is a part as well as being locations which have experienced considerable conflict. Within the third tier a similar observation may be made about Turkey, Syria, Egypt and the Lebanon. But, what also appears to be a factor at play is not only proximity to Cyprus but also trade, cultural and migration routes which lead to the island from locations which may be some distance removed. This speculation holds for Georgia, Russia, Serbia, the Ukraine and Armenia. However, it should also be noted that what also can play a determining role in seeking refuge in Cyprus rather than elsewhere are established transit routes from a country of origin. Not uncommonly, a large number of people make their way to the Republic of Cyprus via Turkey; travel to northern Cyprus and cross the Green Line to the south.

It is important to register what can appear to be the ambiguity or opacity of the ethno-national categories through which people are designated in the data presented above. This is particularly true of the two groups identified as either Palestinians or from Iraq. Disaggregating these groups suggests that many of those composed in this way are in fact Palestinians who were previously resident in Iraq as an original place of settlement or non-Palestinian Iraqi nationals. This reflects the complex nature of being a refugee where the need to flee and secure safety elsewhere is often disproportionately the fate of trans-national diasporas, such as the Palestinians or minorities within particular state boundaries such as the Kurdish population in Turkey.

The implications of these observations are that caution needs to be exercised when an administrative label is attached to population groups of this sort where the commonsensical utility imputed to nationality or citizenship can obscure as much as it reveals. Consequently, categories of this sort can homogenise complex groups within which are distinct forms of identity, affiliation and experience which either transcend the boundaries of the state or is a minority experience within it.

There is no substantive data available on the distribution of the target group within the boundaries of the Republic. However, during the course of this research, and on the basis of information shared with UNHCR, it was possible to generate informed estimates of patterns of settlement for the groups as a whole. A large majority live in urban locations, principally the major towns and cities of Nicosia, Larnaca, Limassol and Pafos. There was a marked tendency to secure residence either in the older urban centres which have become increasingly hollowed out, frequently run down and dilapidated. However, the advantages of these locations are the low rents paid for accommodation and their proximity to public transportation hubs. Many also chose to settle in suburban neighbourhoods but few people made their home in rural areas. This is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that only one family could be located in the Famagusta District dominated as it is by agricultural production. Whilst we found clusters of co-nationals congregated together within certain locations these communities tended to be dispersed throughout urban centres across the south. The conspicuous exception to this assertion was a considerable concentration of Palestinians, many from Iraq who had chosen to congregate together in particular areas of Larnaca.

### 3 Structure and Scope of the Research

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The research was conducted between June and October, 2012 within those areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus and was limited to those people who had acquired the status of being a recognised refugee or a person granted international protection. Whilst the total population of these two groups is impossible to gauge absolutely accurately the best estimates would suggest that there are about 3,500 people in Cyprus who carry either of these two forms of status. This population is distributed across the island with a concentration of their number in urban centres, the most prominent being Nicosia, Larnaca and Limassol.

The research was assigned a number of stages, each informing the next step in its implantation;

1. **A Literature Review** was conducted which drew together already available empirical material related to the process of integration, comparative literature on the fate of Recognised Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection, local conditions in Cyprus and related research materials.
2. **An initial Focus Group** was held in order to explore general issues and identify research questions, test the survey and interview schedules.
3. **A Survey Questionnaire** was developed, tested and administered to 192 respondents.
4. **Follow-up Focus Groups** were conducted with identifiable communities of interest including women, young people, Palestinians located in Larnaca and Cypriot citizens.
5. **In-depth Interviews**, Semi-Structured Interviews were then conducted with 40 respondents
6. **A Final Analysis** of the different forms of data was undertaken, the results triangulated and a report completed.

The research methods employed combined both quantitative and qualitative methods as well as a review of literature relevant to the study. By adopting a mixed methods approach not only could different types of data be generated but the possibility of a thorough-going process of triangulation as part of the subsequent analysis could be realised.

This approach also had the advantage of combining the generation of verifiable quantitative data which could be generalised across the target group as a whole whilst not losing site of the specific circumstances and related experience which accrue to particular sub-groups or individuals within that general population. Further it also facilitated the production of 'hard' empirical evidence whilst also according prominence to the subjective experience of integration. The interviews and focus groups aimed to yield insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings which capture the texture of life lived in contemporary Cyprus.

Turning now to the methods and procedures employed;

**Quantitative Methods – A survey questionnaire** was designed, developed and tested, aided by feedback from a sample of the targeted population. A battery of questions were administered which covered a basic enquiry as to who the respondent was, the circumstances of arrival in Cyprus and a series of questions which covered the main areas of inquiry related to the process

of integration. The survey was administered by a trained group of researchers who assisted the respondent to make sense of the questions asked. This took place in the field, normally within the family household, and took about an hour to complete. The responses were then coded and subject to a statistical analysis. (The sampling procedure is discussed in greater detail elsewhere)

**Qualitative Methods – Focus groups** were held with between 4-8 respondents and conducted according to a pre-arranged schedule which also allowed space for unanticipated issues or themes to emerge. There was a variable composition in the focus group formations which took account of ethnic background, status, age, gender and regional location within Cyprus. This allowed the researchers to concentrate on salient issues specific to a particular community of interest or identity which might otherwise have been subsumed within the general data derived from the survey questionnaire. Recruitment to the groups was undertaken through selection from the general list of contacts provided by UNHCR or via prior contact in the administration of the questionnaire. Notes were taken at each group meeting, written up and refined by the research team who had been present.

**Qualitative Methods – Interviews** were conducted with 40 separate individuals on the basis of a semi-structure schedule which reflected the principle themes related to integration and the specific needs associated with this process. This interview technique was selected because of the fairly open framework which allows for focused, conversational, and two-way communication. Interviews were conducted at home or in a mutually agreed public space and lasted from 1.5 to 2 hours, in most cases. Notes were taken during the process, written up immediately afterwards, coded and compared to other interview data. The respondent was either selected from the general list of contacts provided by UNHCR or via prior contact gained through the administration of the questionnaire or participation in a focus group.

**Qualitative Methods – Participant observation** was also a feature of the data gathering process. On a number of occasions researchers were present within family households as well as accompanying respondents in their dealings with state institutions. These events provided important contextualising information that helped to frame respondents own perceptions and experiences.

**The Analysis** – the survey data was coded and subject to statistical analysis. For the qualitative data, field notes were disaggregated according to emergent themes and coded so that comparisons and meaning condensation could be employed to analyse the re-ordered results. This then allowed for the reduction of lengthy interview texts into briefer, more succinct formulations and categorized according to the indicators of integration previously outlined.

**Ethical Concerns** – in conducting this research emphasis was placed on the need to take account of substantive ethic issues which accompanied the process. The target group is one of the most vulnerable and marginalised communities in Cyprus to which the researchers responded by guaranteeing anonymity and confidentiality as a binding commitment in exchange for collaboration. As a consequence, informed consent was secured from respondents and information which could identify and individual has been anonymised.



## 4 Key Quantitative Data – Questionnaire Survey

In this section we present the key quantitative data generated through the administration of a structured questionnaire. In the first sub-section we outline the nature of the sample as well as some of the salient features of the sampled population more generally. We conclude by providing some evidence as to whether gender or acquired status as a Recognised Refugee or a person with Subsidiary Protection were important variables in the results generated.

In the main subsection we provide an overview of the principle findings organised around clustered indicators which highlight key aspects of the integration process and the needs of the target population expressed within that general context.

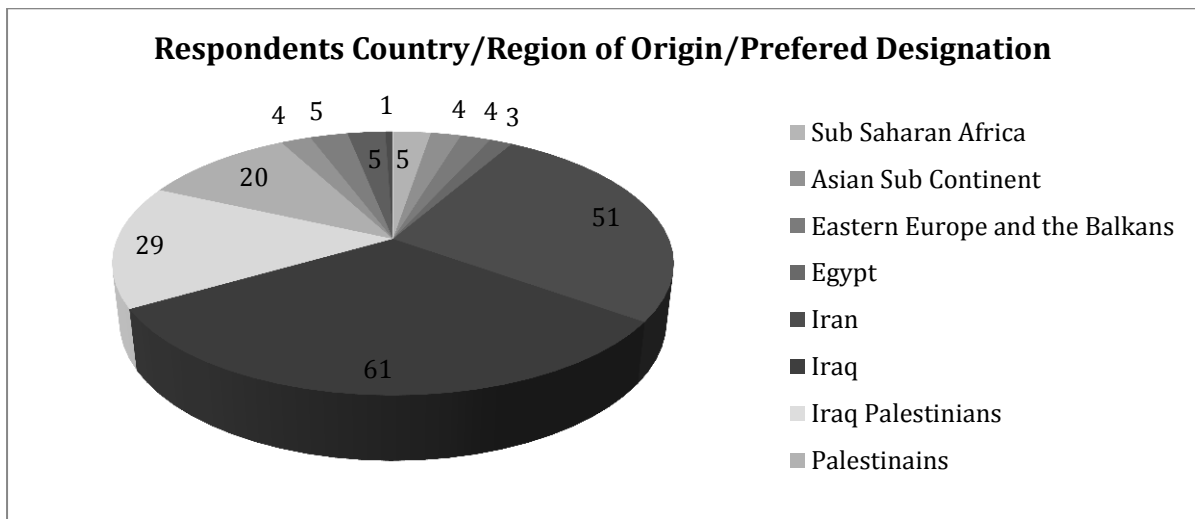
### 4.1 The Survey Sample

Below is an outline of the number and self-designated origin of respondents who were sampled to participate in the survey. Recruitment was achieved primarily through an approach based on the individual's name being included in records kept by UNHCR and also by snowballing from one respondent to another as well as informal networks within the community more generally. Sampling was conducted on the basis of seeking to roughly reproduce some of the general characteristics of the community at large including place of origin, age, gender, place of residence in Cyprus.

**Table 11 Sampled Populations by Ethnicity/Nationality and Region**

<b>Region/Country or Ethno-national Designation</b>	<b>Specific Designation</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>
Sub Saharan Africa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cameroon (1)</li> <li>• Congo (2)</li> <li>• Ghana (1)</li> <li>• Mali (1)</li> </ul>	5
Egypt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Egypt (3)</li> </ul>	3
Iran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iran (51)</li> </ul>	51
Iraq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraq (59)</li> <li>• Iraq Kurd (1)</li> <li>• Iraq Armenian (1)</li> </ul>	61
Iraq Palestinian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Iraq Palestinian (29)</li> </ul>	29
Palestinian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Palestinian (20)</li> </ul>	20
Kurd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kurd (4)</li> </ul>	4
Eastern Europe and the Balkans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Russian (2)</li> <li>• Serbia (2)</li> </ul>	4
Asian Sub Continent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sri Lanka (2)</li> <li>• Afghanistan (1)</li> <li>• Pakistan (1)</li> </ul>	4
Syria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syria (3)</li> <li>• Syria Kurd (2)</li> </ul>	5
Turkey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turkey (3)</li> <li>• Turkey Kurd (2)</li> </ul>	5
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yemen (1)</li> </ul>	1
<b>Total</b>		<b>192</b>

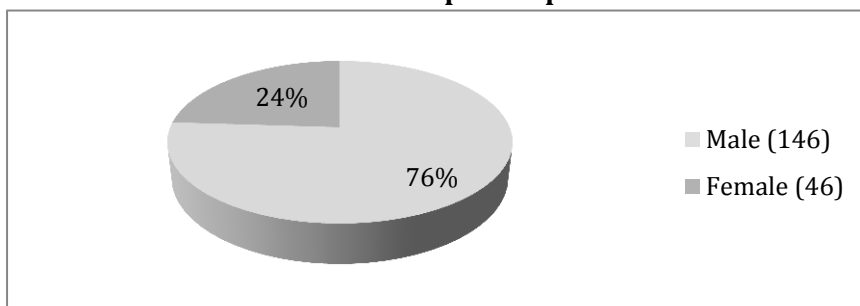
**Table 12 Origin of the Sampled Population**



The data is based on respondents own designation of either their country of origin or a preferred designation which they chose to identify themselves. Allowing the freedom to make this choice rather than imposing a set of fixed categories through which to make this designation introduced a number of ambiguities into the data. Place of origin was identified in a number of ways which included the place of origin prior to seeking refuge in Cyprus; it also prompted some responses which related more directly to ethno-national identity; for others it was interpreted as an issue of nationality. The complexities which this introduced were particularly the case with two prominent groups which reflect the absence of a national state (Kurds) or removal from their former homeland (Palestinians). The dispersal of these national groups across many state boundaries does indicate a significant difference with other refugee groups who have been forced out of their settled conditions within a national state with which they may have identified as their own. By contrast, the Kurds who identified themselves as such either did so without specifying a country of origin or, when they did, had left Iraq, Syria or Turkey for Cyprus. Twenty-nine Palestinians identified the country from which they had travelled from to Cyprus as Iraq whilst twenty respondents elected to identify themselves as Palestinian. Within that group it is likely to be the case that some did indeed travel from Iraq to Cyprus but this group also includes Palestinians leaving from elsewhere including the West Bank and the Gaza Strip amongst other places.

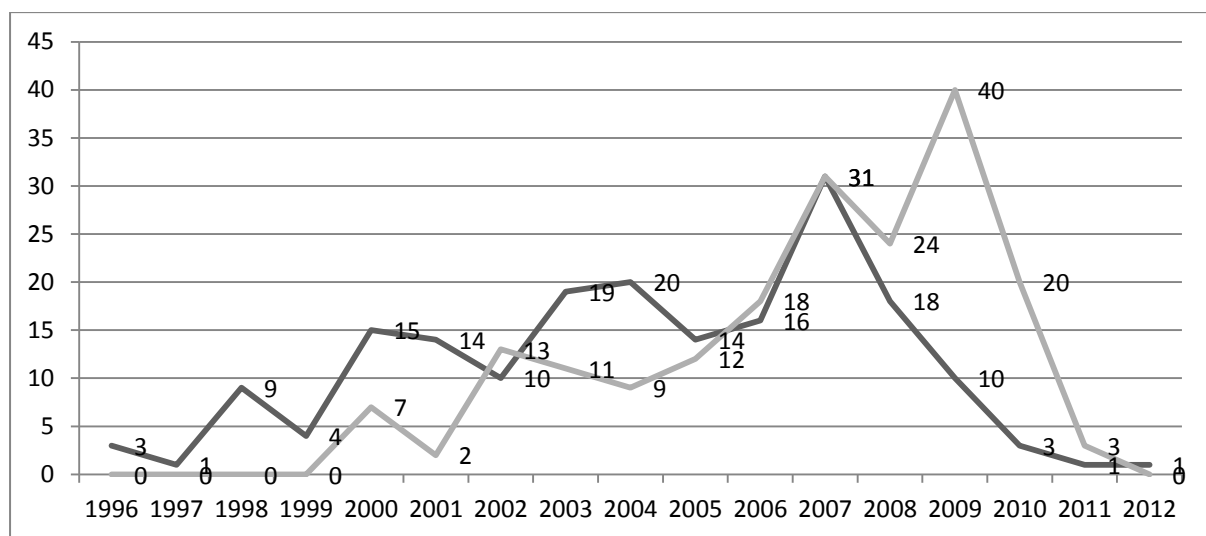
Extending this outline to include the dimension of gender the male/female distinction in the sample upon which this analysis rests can be outlined as follows;

**Table 13 Gender of the Sampled Population**



Given the difficulty of accurately gauging the total numbers of those who are in Cyprus as Recognised Refugees or those with Subsidiary Protection the sample of respondents was primarily based on the contact database provided by UNHCR. This list comprised over 1,200 contacts with a significant majority of them being male as well a large number of single people as opposed to family groups in Cyprus. The contact list included approximately 960 males and 236 females, 4:1 ratio which is reflected in the sample used in the survey conducted in this research. However, this may represent an under-estimation of the actual male: female ratios within the actual refugee population as a whole with men sometimes acting as the primary contact with UNHCR on behalf of a family or with the male adult having arrived first only to seek family reunification upon recognition. Of our sample comprising 192 members of the refugee community 46 were female or 24% of the total sample. Whilst it is difficult to be sure of, in absolute terms, is how this gender balance within the sample reflects the community as a whole. However, it is possible to offer informed speculation about this distribution from the available evidence. It would appear that a significant majority of adult refugees are male with an even larger majority of refugees who come to the island as either single people or as individuals travelling without other family members who again tend to be male rather than female. Whilst, during the course of this research, single women who were either here by themselves or heads of single parent families they tended to be the exception.

**Table 14      Arrival in Cyprus by Year/Year Status Conferred of the Sampled Population**

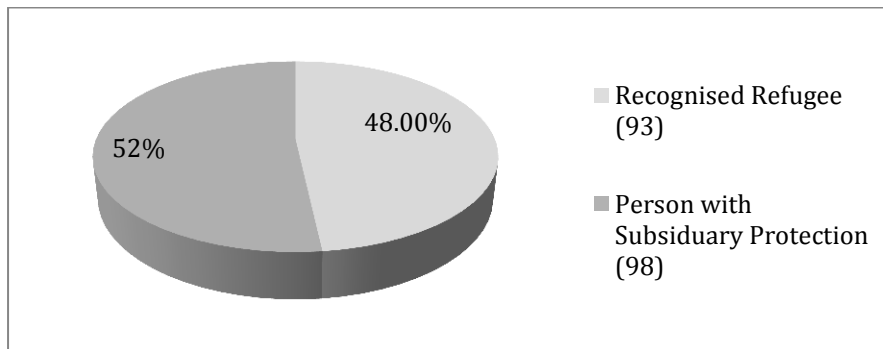


This table combines data from two separate questions asked in the survey in relation to both the year when the respondent entered Cyprus and the year when they were conferred the status of being either a Recognised Refugee or a person with Subsidiary Protection. The data which records entry to the Republic suggests a generally consistent rise in the numbers arriving from the mid 1990's to a peak of 31 respondents entering in 2007. Amongst this cohort it is striking that there is a sharp decline in numbers from that year. However, it should be noted that whilst this is likely to reflect a more recent decline in those who declare themselves as asylum seekers in the recent past this is also an outcome of the way in which the sample has been constructed. Since the data was generated on the basis of accessing those who have secured a transition from the identity as asylum seekers to a status of Refugee or Subsidiary Protection the trend recorded might also be an outcome of the fact that given the length of time between entry and

acquiring recognition the sharp decline recorded from the late 2000's may reflect the sample rather than the actual community of people the sample was taken from.

It should also be noted that this data does serve to indicate that respondents, in their overwhelming majority, have been in Cyprus for at least five years and 57 respondents have been in Cyprus for a decade or longer.

**Table 15      Status Conferred on the Sampled Population**

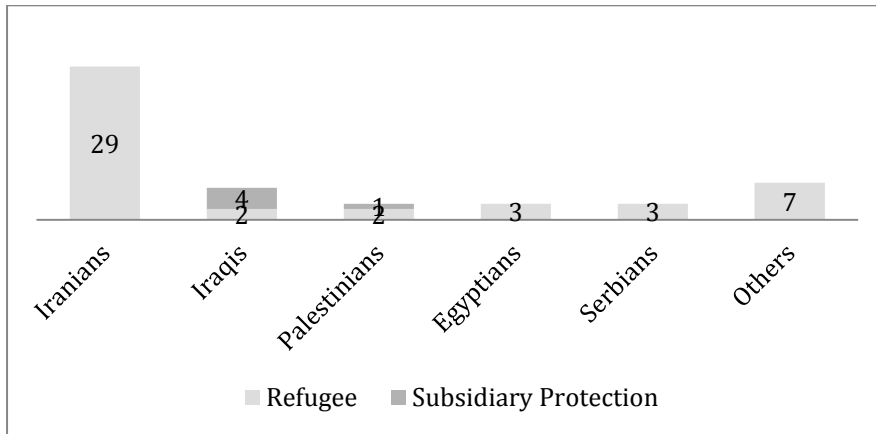


This table demonstrates that within the sampled population there was a near balance between respondents conferred the status of either Recognised Refugee or those with Subsidiary Protection.

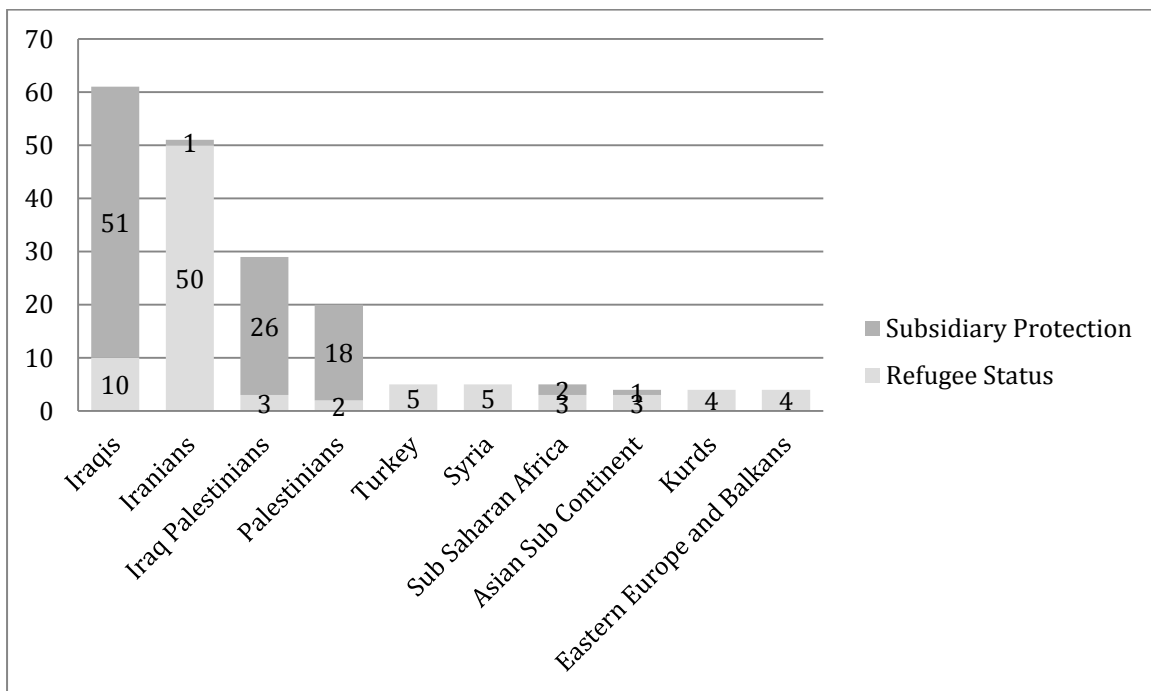
A person granted refugee status means a person covered by a decision granting refugee status, taken by the Asylum Service. Refugee status confers a status as defined in Art.2(d) of Directive 2004/83/EC within the meaning of Art.1 of the Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951, as amended by the New York Protocol of 31 January 1967. According to Art.2(c) of Directive 2004/83/EC refugee means a third country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it.

A person granted Subsidiary Protection status is a person covered by a decision granting Subsidiary Protection status, by the Asylum Service. Subsidiary Protection status means status as defined in Art.2(f) of Directive 2004/83/EC. According to Art.2(e) of Directive 2004/83/EC a person eligible for Subsidiary Protection means a third country national or a stateless person who does not qualify as a refugee but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, or in the case of a stateless person, to his or her country of former habitual residence, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm and is unable, or, owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country.

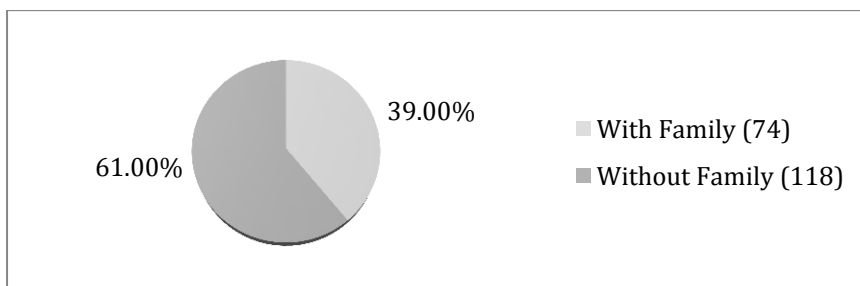
**Table 16 Identity/Place of origin of Those Who have Applied for Cypriot Citizenship**



**Table 17 The Identity/Place of Origin of Those Granted Refugee Status or Subsidiary Protection?**



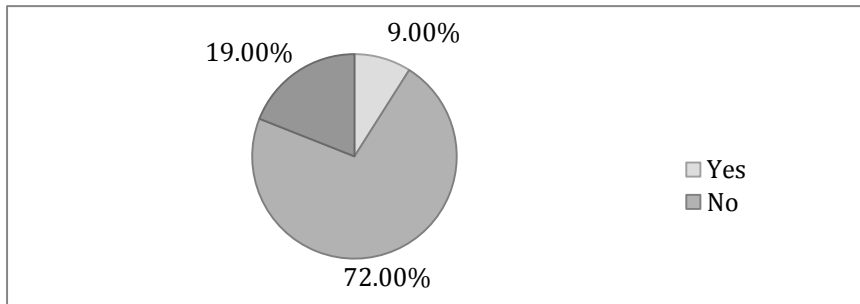
**Table 16 Have You Travelled to Cyprus With or Without Your Family?**



The sample constructed here also reflected different circumstances on arrival in Cyprus with almost two thirds having gained entry without other family members. Whilst some family

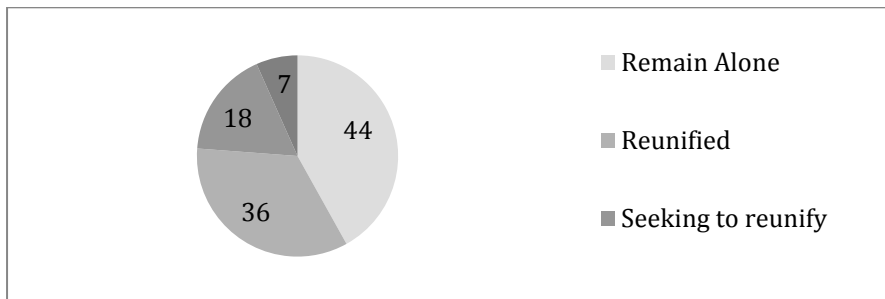
reunions are pursued by those who have travelled alone the majority of respondents remained as single persons having secured their eventual status from the Asylum Service.

**Table 17 Are You Seeking to Reunite With Your Family?**



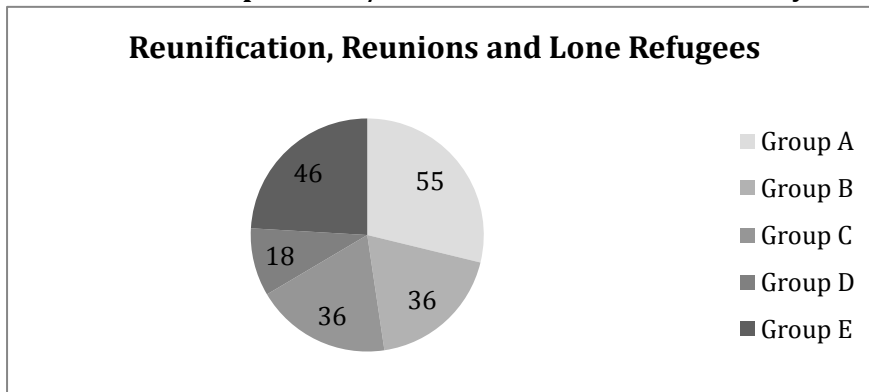
This data would suggest that the need to secure reunification of the family is currently only a pressing issue for less than one in ten people. Nearly one in five had already managed to achieve this desired outcome and over 72% felt no need or desire to pursue this course of action. Of course caution should be exercised when interpreting this data – it may indicate a large number of single people within the sample group whose ambition, for whatever reason, was not to seek reunification with their family in Cyprus or who do not have a family but it is also likely to reflect a minority of people who arrived in Cyprus as part of a family unit, thus obviating the need to secure reunification.

**Table 18 Dispositions Amongst Sample in Relation to the Ambition of Securing Family Reunion**



The data conveys the complexity which surrounds the context within which the pursuit, or otherwise, of family reunification proceeds.

**Table 19 Dispositions/Ambitions in Relation to Family Reunification**

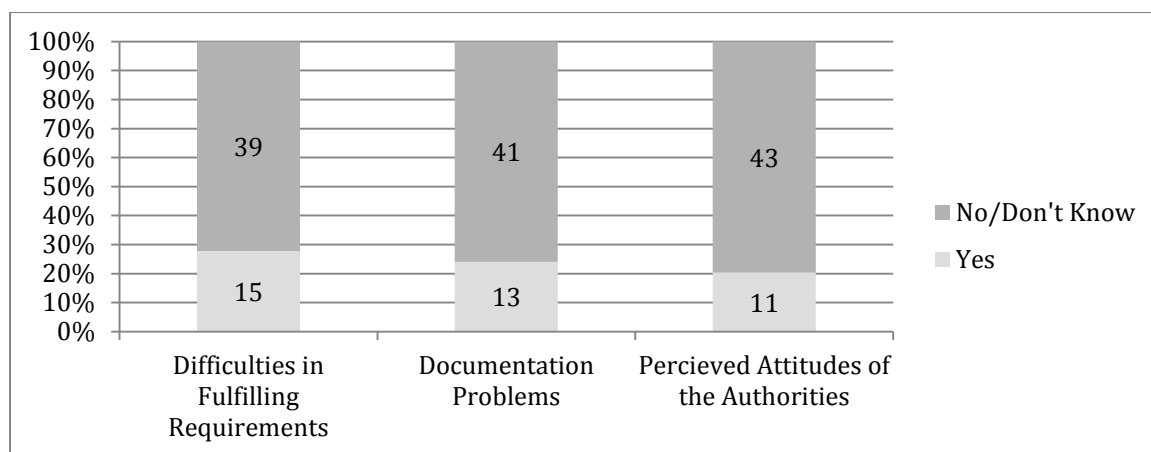


This table seeks to demonstrate how, out of the total sample of 192 respondents what the link was between self-reported circumstances and the disposition towards the objective of securing family reunification.

Of this group;

- **Group A** - Those who have travelled with family and have no expressed need to claim further reunification: 55
- **Group B** - Those who travelled as a single person, have not sort family reunification and remain alone: 36
- **Group C** - Those who travelled alone or with others and successfully realised family reunification: 36
- **Group D** - Those who travelled alone, or with others, have claimed the right to reunification and which has yet to be realised: 18
- **Group E** - Those who travelled alone, did not reunify through the formal process of reunification but are currently with family. This is an outcome of being joined by members of their family who travelled independently to Cyprus or because they constituted their family once settled on the island: 46

**Table 20 Problems Encountered in the Process of Seeking Family Reunification**



Of the 54 persons who have successfully applied for reunification or whose applications for reunification is being processed;

- 15 felt that it was/is difficult to meet the requirements for reunion. The other 39 did not agree or felt that they did not know.
- 13 found that it was difficult to secure the necessary documentation. The other 41 did not agree or felt that they did not know.
- 11 considered that the authorities have too much power to do whatever they want. The other 43 did not agree or felt that they did not know.
- Table Perception of Problems Encountered in Seeking Family Reunification

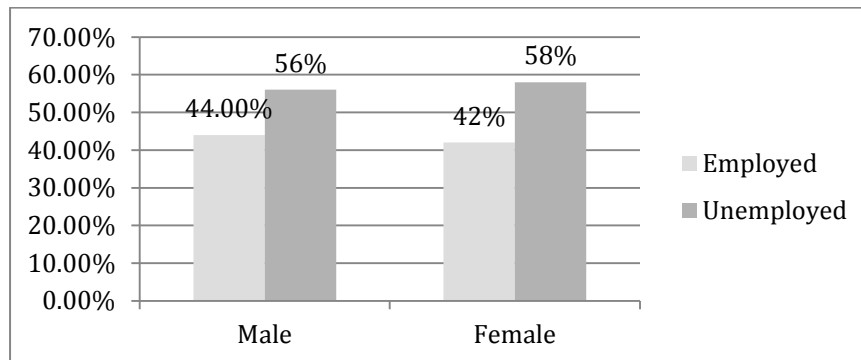
## 4.2 The Role of Gender

It was important to recognise that there were important dimensions of difference within the sample group that required exploration; Gender differentiation between men and women and

status difference between Recognised Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection being the most pertinent. The following sections preview responses to key questions in order to gauge whether there is a significant difference in responses across these dimensions.

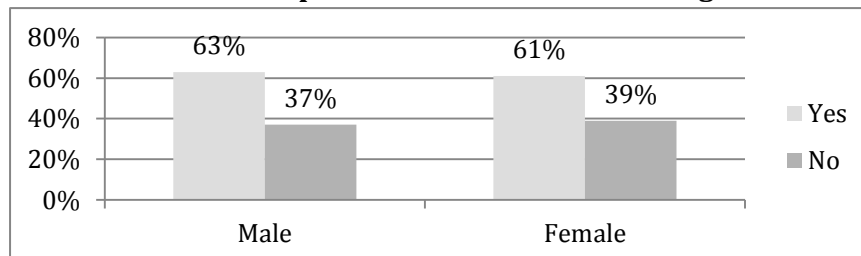
In this sub-section we present data which aims, in a very general way, to test the extent to which being male or female produced differential answers to survey questions. This, of course, does not exhaust the salience of taking account of the different experiences associated with being male or female, but it does provide a simple, baseline measure of both similarity and difference.

**Table 21 Employment/Unemployment**



The survey also sought to explore whether gender difference had a demonstrable impact on rates of employment/unemployment amongst the sample population. The evidence generated would appear to clearly demonstrate that there is no significant difference in employment/unemployment rates between men and women.

**Table 22 Participation in Education & Training Courses**



From the data presented here there does not appear to be a significant difference in the extent to which both men and women within the sample population have taken part in education or training courses.

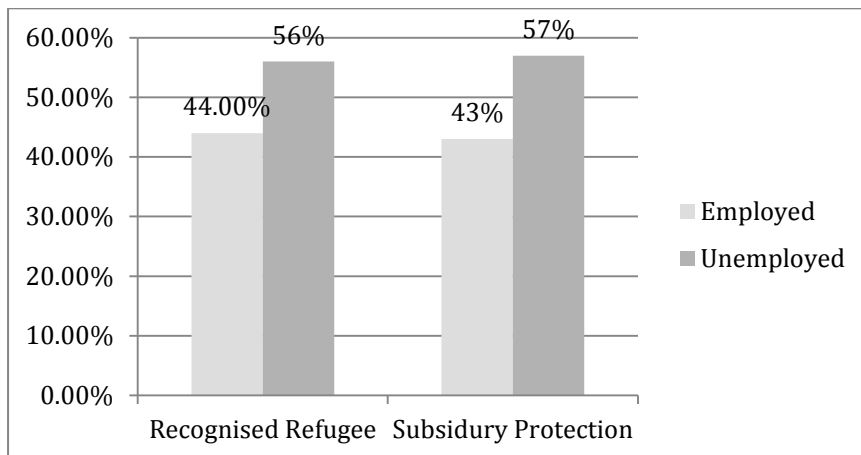
It should be noted that gender issues are not neglected in what follows but addressed via qualitative data reported on elsewhere.

### 4.3 The Role of Acquired Status

This section seeks to briefly explore whether there are significant differences in the responses of Recognised Refugees on the one hand and those with Subsidiary Protection on the other. Again, it is important to stress that this data does not exhaust the possible differences in experience between one group and another but it does provide a general guide to the salience of this difference in relation to two key dimensions.

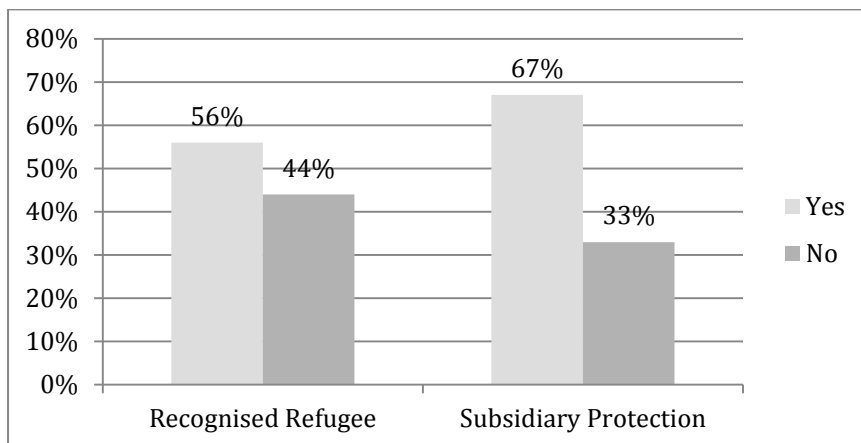


**Table 23 Employment and Unemployment**



This data suggests that there is no significant difference in the employment/unemployment rates experienced by these two primary groups within the population.

**Table 24 Participation on Education and Training Courses**



Here there is a significant divergence between Recognised Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection. The latter would appear to have had the opportunity to participate in education and training courses to a greater extent than the former. We pursue differences in experience on the basis of status later in the report.

#### **4.4 Survey Data - Introduction**

What follows are the principle findings derived from the use of the survey questionnaire administered to 192 respondents. The results are organised into a series of clustered indicators, outlined in Section 1, and are ordered as follows;

##### **❖ Social Connections and Networks**

##### **❖ Markers and Means**

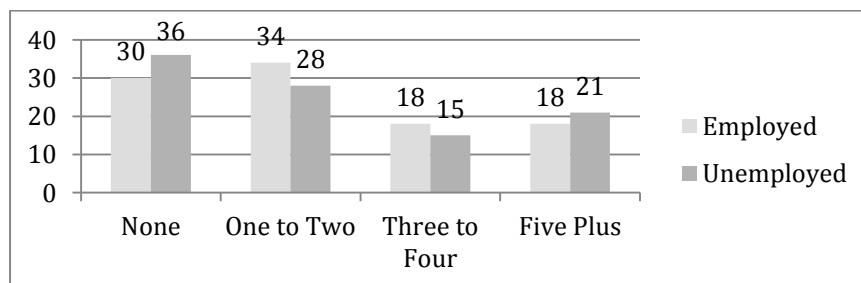
- Employment
- Public Services
  - Regularity of Access
  - Fair Treatment

- Trust
- ❖ **Facilitators**
  - Safety and Security
  - Education and Training
- ❖ **Direct experience of and perceived barriers to public and private resources**

#### 4.5 Social Connections and Networks

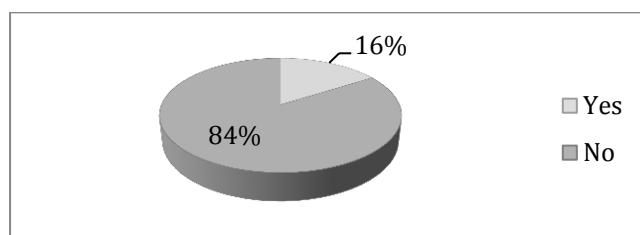
This section discloses data as this relates to the role that social connections and networks play in providing opportunities to access resources and achieve a degree of self-determination in daily life. As such, it also provides a useful insight into the situated context within which respondents are located including the extent of friendship circles, the relationship with the local community, including networked relationships with Cypriots.

**Table 25 Social Networks – How Many Friends Live Within a 15-20 min walk or a 5-10 min drive?**



This data is important in indicating an important dimension of community and neighbourhood life as experienced by this cohort. Local networks of trusted friends are important in enabling a person to secure a degree of mutual support, an important prerequisite being able to take control of their own circumstances and assert a degree of self-autonomy. The data tends to suggest that most of the respondents have limited networks of friends within their own immediate vicinity, whilst a minority do have access to thicker networks of a more substantial nature. This latter group is generally made up of people from communities which have tended to group together in specific locations (Iraqi Palestinians located in the Larnaca area would be an example of just such a community). A total of 66 respondents had no friends within their own immediate vicinity which suggests that a significant minority of the total sampled population do not have immediate and local access to forms of support that others experience. As is demonstrated, whether paid work is available or unemployment experienced, this did not appear to have a significant determining influence on the depth of the extent of the friendship networks to which access is available.

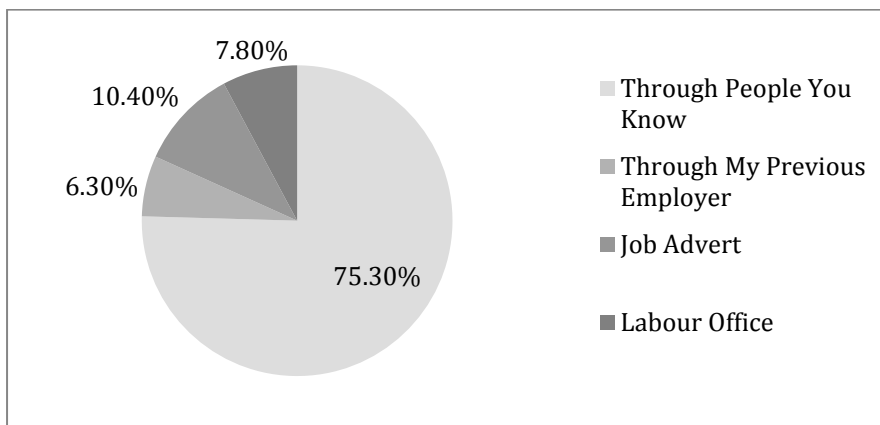
**Table 26 Do you take part in organisations which include Cypriots?**



The importance of this data is that it does serve to illustrate the degree to which common organisational forms may be shared by Cypriots and members of the Refugee and Subsidiary Protection communities. In short, this is one measure through which to begin to assess the level of practical or regular interaction experienced with the hoist community where common interests are expressed and a shared organisational form is held in common. Respondents were prompted, through examples (including religious and trade union formations, sports associations and so forth), to reflect as widely as possible on their own participation in organisational life which might include the participation of Cypriots. The expectation would tend to be that the more extensive the number of respondents who could report sharing a common organisation the more likely it would be to identify the experience of integration more generally. However, it is important to add a note of caution that the results is also likely to reflect the extent to which respondents have access to organisations which they would choose or be encouraged to play an active role within. Circumstantial evidence suggests that with the exception of participation in churches, mosques and other religious organisations there are few civil society organisations which this cohort might choose to access. Consequently, the limited development of civil society organisations in Cyprus and, more specifically, the paucity of CSO's which might appeal as organisational forms worth playing an active part in must also be considered as a conditioning factor on the responses given.

Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of respondents report that they do not share the same organisational space as Cypriots which tends to reinforce the assumption that, within this domain, there is little opportunity to pursue common interests and thus only meagre evidence for the realisation of integration through which both Cypriots and non-Cypriots can participate on a common basis.

**Table 27      If you are currently working, how did you find your current job?**



Securing employment and the means through which this is achieved is an important aspect of the labour market and how it functions. Over three quarters of those who are currently employed had secured access to employment through personal contacts and networked relationships. Over 10% had responded to a job advertisement and over 6% had been directed towards employment opportunities by a previous employer. The Employment Service, charged with the mission of securing a match between vacancies in the labour market and those seeking work, was successfully used by just under 8% of the respondents.

The evidence strongly suggests that the primary route to paid work is through networked relationships and other forms of informal contact. Again, this could be said to highlight a general characteristic of the Cypriot labour market, accentuated by the types of work that those with International Protection aimed to secure. The Cypriot labour market is very small by EU standards with much recruitment to employment proceeding on a relatively informal basis. Access to employment frequently takes an informal route where receipt of information about the availability of work and informal recommendations from friends, associates and relatives can play a significant role in determining access. Further, the forms of employment that many of the respondents seek to secure (within the construction industry, shops and other retail outlets and so forth) also tend to be those locations within the labour market within which these forms of informal recruitment predominate.

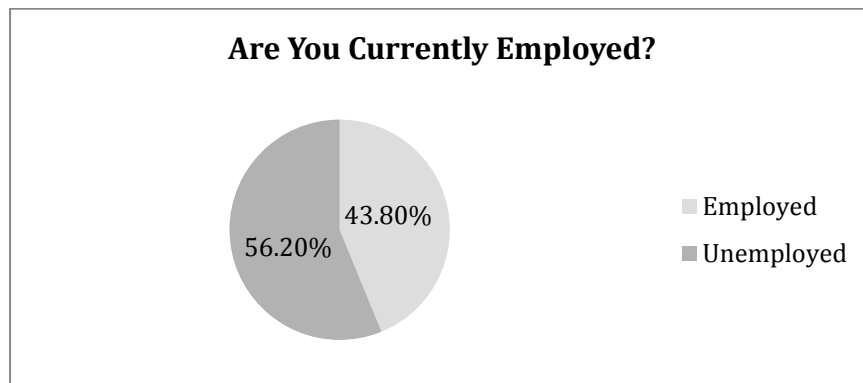
#### 4.6 Markers and Means

This section considers the nature and extent of access to vital goods with a particular emphasis on the role played by paid employment in securing important conditions conducive to integration. Access to other public goods is also considered including the experience of interaction with a range of public services including the Welfare Office, the Asylum Service, the Employment Service and Police Service.

Also included here is an assessment of how far, and to what extent, respondents judge these services to be fairly administered and the levels of trust that they invest in these institutions and the public servants they come into contact with.

Turning to the important venue of the labour market and the experience of employment, and unemployment first;

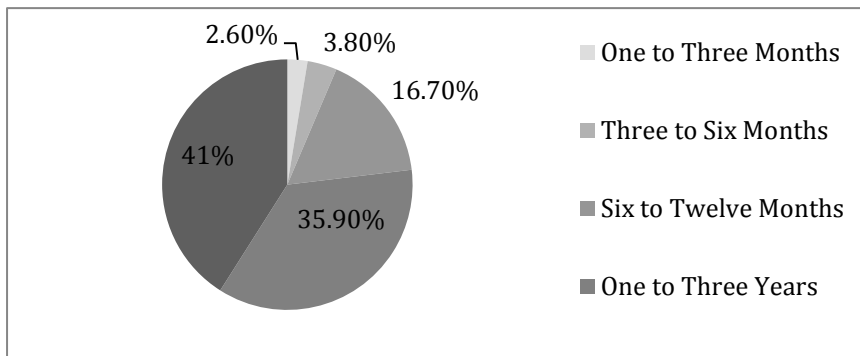
**Table 28 Are You Currently Employed?**



A clear majority of the sample were currently unemployed with many having been unemployed for over a year. An unemployment rate of over 56% is substantially higher than the national average even under conditions where the experience of widespread and deep-seated recession is currently being experienced in Cyprus. Further, it is possible to speculate that with the full impact of the recession only now being experienced, after the conclusion of the fieldwork phase of this research that the number of those without work has continued to rise. It should be noted that securing employment is understood to be an important prerequisite for developing conditions of self-autonomy and independence which obviates the need to be so reliant on state services. Further, not only does employment create conditions within which integration is more

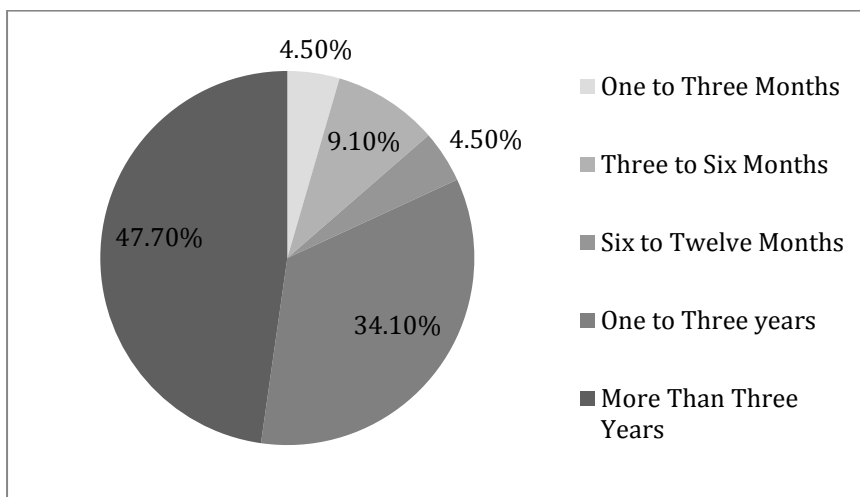
likely to be secured but also the contacts and networks it gives rise to are important means through which this might be realised more effectively.

**Table 29 If You Are Employed How Long Have You Been in Your Current Job?**



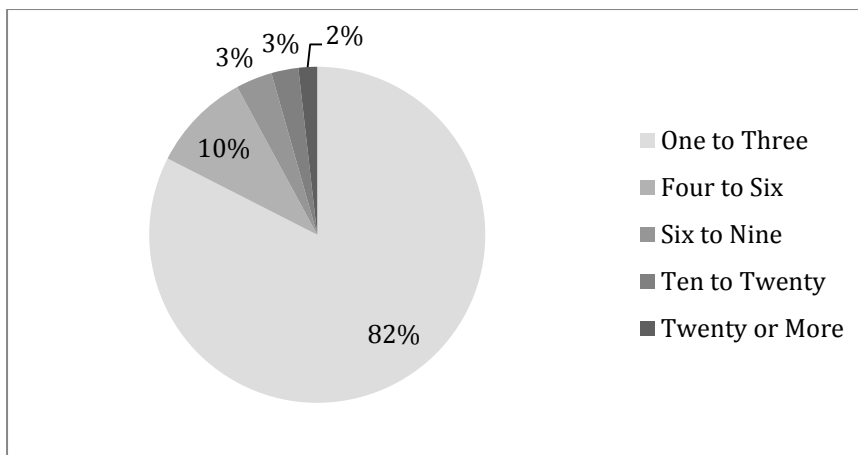
For those who reported that they were currently employed a follow-up question sought to determine the relative stability experienced in remaining in a job rather than circumstances within which movement from one job to another was a common characteristic. Continuity in employment is in many ways said to be a preferable state of affairs since it suggests conditions of relative security and continuity from one month or year to the next. What is striking about the data generated was the fact that the overwhelming majority (76.9) of those who were employed had been in their jobs for one year or more. Further, 41% of the total sample who identified themselves in work reported that they had been in their current jobs for more than three years. Just over one in four respondents reported circumstances in which employment appear a lot less secure and discontinuous. The relationship between the sample population as a whole and the labour market thus appears significantly differentiated. Whilst there is a fundamental division between those who are employed and those without work, amongst those who are working there is a clear distinction between those who have secured long-term employment in a single place of work and others who appear to secure work of a more temporary nature. It might be anticipated that this aspect of the labour market where work becomes casualised, on limited term contracts or of a part-time nature is only likely to increase as the Cypriot economy becomes increasingly characterised by recession.

**Table 30 If You Are Without Work – How Long Have You Been Unemployed?**



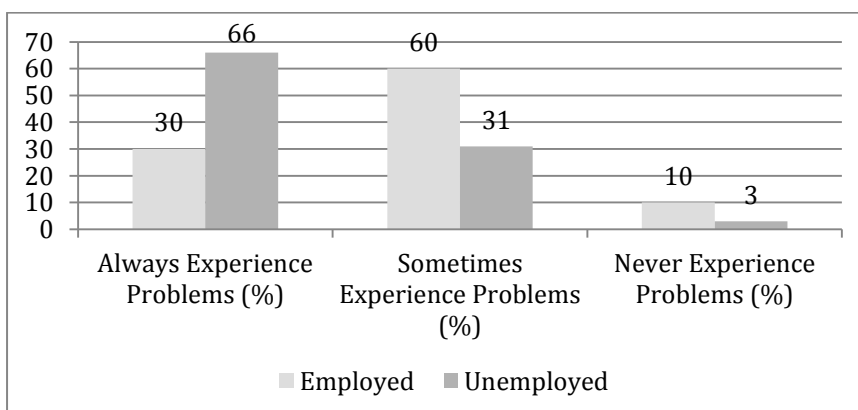
For those who are currently unemployed the duration of being without work varies within this group as a whole. Again, it is striking that 81.8% of the sample reported being unemployed for a period longer than a year and 47.7% had been without work for three years or more. This is important evidence of an unemployment problem which predates the current economic crisis and suggests that even during a previous period of near full employment when the unemployment rate in Cyprus was recorded as one of the lowest in the EU those with International Protection would have been disproportionately represented amongst those without work.

**Table 31 How Many Jobs Have You Had Since You Were Granted International Protection?**



As a corollary to the data already generated in relation to employment the survey also solicited information about the employment history of respondents. The overwhelming majority (82%) revealed that they had moved between one and three jobs since securing international protection. At the other end of the scale only 5% reported that they had frequently moved between forms of paid employment to the extent that they had secured 10 jobs or more. The high number of people who have experienced relative stability in employment may, in large part, be a reflection of characteristics which have been associated with the Cypriot labour market more generally. Until recently the labour market had exhibited significant signs of relatively stability, circumstances within which, once having secured employment, the job was assumed to be one which would remain secure for a significant duration.

**Table 32 Experience of Difficulties in Paying Rent or Mortgage on a Regular Basis?**



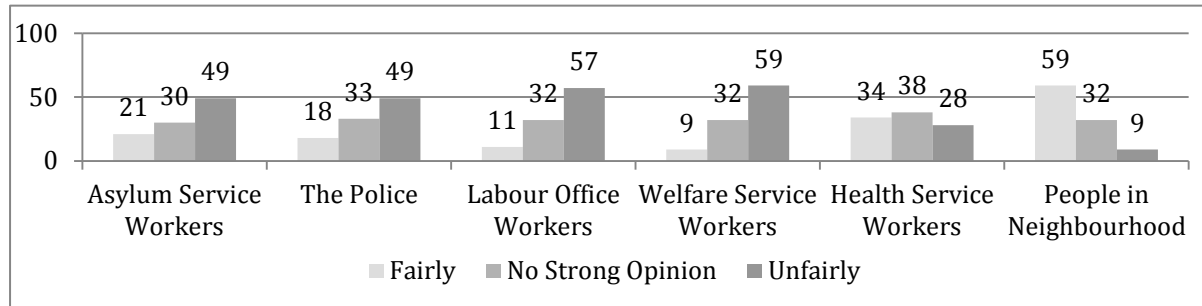
A half of all respondents within the sample as a whole, recorded a perpetual problem in paying their mortgage or rent on a regular basis. Only a small minority of respondents (5.8%) reported that this primary component of the household budget was a form of expenditure which caused no problems in its fulfilment. To disaggregate this data further, a distinction was made between those who reported they were either employed or without paid work. Clearly demonstrated is the impact that unemployment has on the ability of a household budget to be expended on what, for many, is perhaps the largest bill to be paid on a regular basis; a bill which, if not fulfilled, can have dire consequences on the economic and social well-being of the person or family in question. The absence of paid employment has a marked effect on the ability to successfully manage a household budget dramatically increasing the chances of experiencing an ever recurrent problem of securing accommodation. However, it should also be noted that even when respondents were gainfully employed the overwhelming majority reported that at the very least, the need to pay a mortgage or rent was at least an intermittent challenge. This does tend to suggest that whilst unemployment has a marked effect on the economic well-being of this cohort this tends to be an accentuation of difficult economic circumstances for those who are employed. This evidence may suggest that, in general, the wage commanded by those who are employed remains relatively low and certainly not enough to avoid a regular difficulty confronted in paying this regular expenditure.

It should be noted that amongst the larger ethnic/national groups who recorded a response there were significantly more of Iraqi origin who indicated that they always experience problems when paying the rent or mortgage (over half the responses).

#### **4.7 Fairness and Trust**

This next section reports responses to the question as to whether there was a sense of being treated fairly by a variety of state institutions. Perceived fairness of treatment is an important aspect of securing more general well-being and an important aspect of conditions within which integration is more likely to proceed and become enhanced. The institutions were selected since they were the most likely public services to be called upon by this particular population group. In many cases they were also state institutions with which interaction would take place on a regular basis, sometimes at least once a month or more. Further the provision of services and the support promised be it in relation to seeking work, securing health or welfare can also be seen to be critical in determining important elements of a general quality of life. Fairness, or otherwise, in the context can be said to relate to a judgement made about the appropriateness of an institution's response to the expression of need and the exercise of the right of access to publically provided resources in such a way that due consideration has been made of the need or needs expressed. Beyond the institutional context, respondents were also asked to judge how far they felt treated fairly within their own neighbourhood setting which called for an assessment of the relationships within which the target population was embedded. In a simple way this extended to the solicitation of a sense of how far respondents were treated in a just and magnanimous way not only by important aspects of the Cypriot state but also by the local form through which society is more generally experienced.

**Table 33 Are You Treated Fairly by the Following.....**



Considering the data from across the range of institutions that respondents were asked to judge whether they felt fairly or unfairly treated there are some notable variations which bear consideration. Both the Employment Service and the Welfare Services registered the largest share of respondents who judged their treatment by these institutions as unfair - 57%. The Asylum Service was perceived to deliver unfair treatment by 49% of respondents. Whilst the Police Service and the Health Service, solicited from 33% and 28% of respondents respectively, a sense of unfair treatment. The same general order of results is reproduced when the perception of fairness is reported with only 9% of respondents judging the Welfare Services to deliver in a fair manner, 11% perceiving fairness from the Employment Service, 18% from the Police Service, 21% from the Asylum Service and a rise to 34% when respondents considered their treatment by the Health Services. As this indicates, it is only the Health Service which respondents judge positively to the extent that the number who perceived fair treatment outnumbered those who perceived the delivery of those services as being, on the whole, unfair.

Those who had 'no strong opinion' in relation to the question of fairness exhibited a significant degree of consistency across the institutions within a range of between 30% and 38%. The exception here was the Police Service which 49% of respondents judge that they had no strong options to express. This category of response bears careful scrutiny since there are a number of different ways of interpreting the data. Not having a strong or compelling sense of fairness or unfairness in relation to institutional treatment can be a reflection of a number of different circumstances. It may indeed serve to indicate that the treatment did constitute either an anodyne experience or a mixed experience which balanced both fair and unfair experience but whether neither one nor the other predominated. However, the expression of 'no strong opinion' may also be an outcome of not having enough experience of the institutional behaviour specified to be able to make an informed judgement. Of all the services reported on in the data it is probably the case that respondents are less likely to come into repeated contact with the Police whereas, for a significant number, the Welfare, Employment Service and Health Services might very well constitute institutions with which there is regular and long-term contact. All respondents will have had to come into contact with the Asylum Service simply on the basis of their status accorded to them by the Cypriot state.

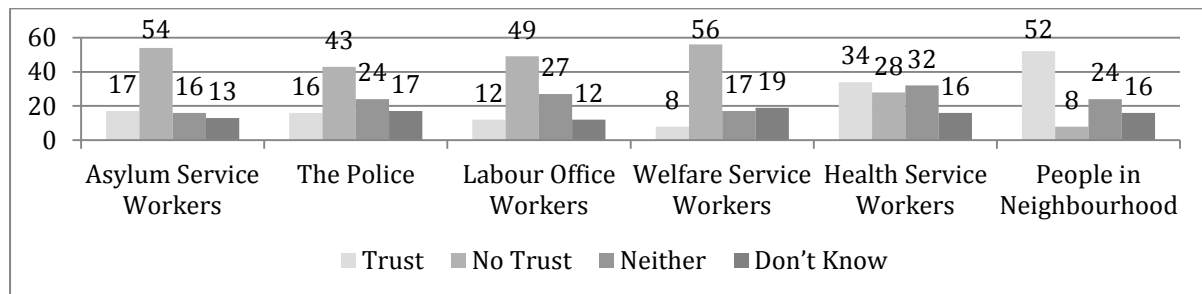
Finally, when asked to report their perception of fair treatment within the neighbourhoods and communities of which they are a part a majority, 59%, confirmed this view whilst only 9% reported a perception of unfair treatment. A further 32% had no strong opinions to report. Direct comparison of the previous data needs to proceed cautiously, given that people are being asked to record experience and assessment of very different entities. The experience of and relationship to the local community of which you are a part is very different from the relationship that transpires between the individual and a local state institution. However, what



the comparative data highlights is that a primary source of a sense of unfairness derives not from interaction with local community members but from interaction with state institutions.

Turning now to the related issue of trust;

**Table 34 How Far Do You Trust the Following.....?**

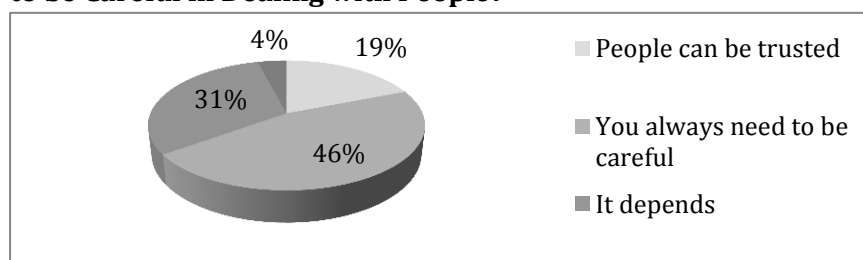


Whilst a previous data set explored the degree to which respondents reported the perception of having been treated fairly or otherwise by key state institutions, attention is here redirected towards how far these same institutions engender a sense of trust. Both the Welfare Services and Asylum Services are distrusted by a majority of the respondents with concomitant results which indicate that only 8% extending a positive sense of trust to Welfare Service workers and 17% to Asylum Service workers. Just under half of the respondents felt it was not possible to extend trust towards those working in the Employment Service with only 12% indicating that they felt they could do so. Low levels of trust were also directed towards the Police service (16%) and 43% reported an active distrust.

The substantive variation in this data arises when considering two further dimensions, the conduct and service delivery of those within the health sector and the assessment of trust as this accrued to people within the immediate neighbourhood. Health Service workers were according to 34% of respondents trustworthy whilst 28% extended distrust towards them, the balance was made up of 32% who were not persuaded in one direction or the other and 16% who did not choose to answer. However, it should be noted that the delivery of health care is not the exclusive domain of the state, in contrast to Policing, Welfare and Employment Service services. This raises the possibility that for those who have the resources to be able to access private health care rather than rely upon state provision may have different cause or opportunity to trust.

Finally, moving away from the provision of services to the issue of how far people within the local neighbourhood can be trusted, over half of all respondents felt they could extend trust. A strikingly low 8% do not generally trust those within their local community.

**Table 35 Would You Say That Most People Can be Trusted or That You Always Need to be Careful in Dealing with People?**



This key question is important as a standard method through which to explore the extent to which respondents make a judgement about the extent of ‘generalised trust’ within society. Generalised trust is distinct from what can be identified as ‘particularised trust’, the former specifies a type of trust which can be extended beyond those directly known to you and be directed towards people within society as a whole who you may not personally know but who you could expect to invest trust in what they say and do. Some social scientists go as far as to suggest the response to the question posed provides a form through which members of a population make a moral assessment in relation to society as a whole. Generalised trust, if realised, is said to be an important aspect of a well-functioning society since it facilitates relationships, reduces transaction costs and enhances a sense of security and well-being.

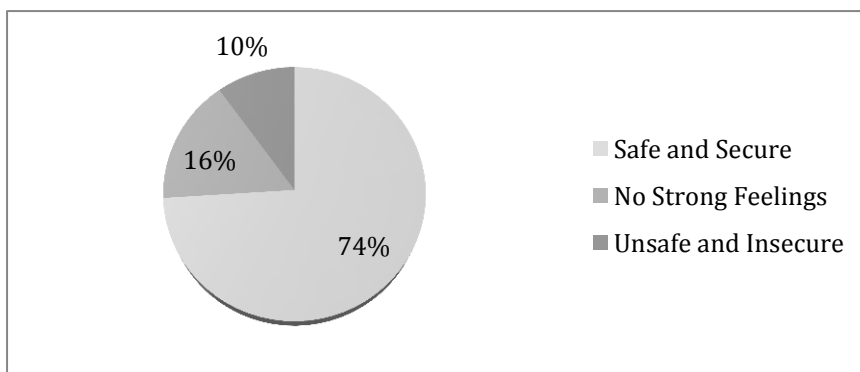
46% of respondents report the need to always approach relationships with others, beyond the immediate circle of friends and acquaintances, with the ‘need to be careful’. Whereas, towards the other end of the range of possible responses only 19% were prepared to identify with the emphatic statement that people could be trusted. 31% suggested that trust would only be extended depending upon the context or other signs which would allow a more informed judgement to be made.

Taken as a whole, this data does strongly suggest that less than one in four respondents indicated a significant degree of generalised trust from their position of being embedded within Cypriot society; with the overwhelming majority expressing varying degrees of distrust. This would tend to underscore a disposition which works on the assumption that people within society, if they are to be extended trust, must first demonstrate that they are capable of being trusted and that for almost one in two respondents, caution needs to characterise any interactions.

#### 4.8 Facilitators

This section looks at two important aspects of what are called ‘facilitators’ – key factors intimately connected with the basis upon which effective integration can be secured. Here we consider how far there is a felt sense of safety and security experience and to what extent the ability to acquire vital skills and knowledge which are important in enhancing the quality of life.

**Table 36 Do You Feel Safe and Secure?**



Respondents were asked to judge how far they felt safe and secure in the area where they lived. This is an important dimension to explore for a variety of reasons, not least of which being that one of the primary reasons why a person becomes cast as a refugee arises out of a common

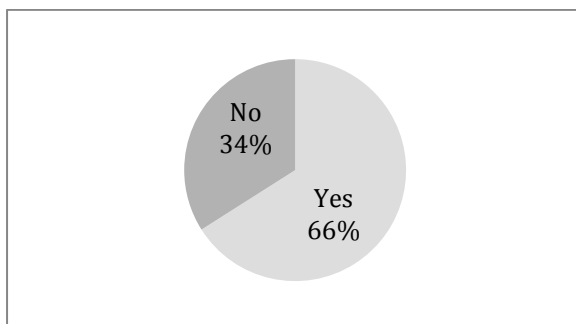
experience of feeling unsafe and insecure within their country of origin which drives them to seek security elsewhere despite the considerable social, economic and emotional costs involved. A sense of security and safety then becomes paramount in assuaging the experience of displacement but also is a necessary prerequisite to rebuilding a life in exile and creating the conditions which are conducive to secure more general integration within the society to which they have relocated. Importantly, the sense of security and safety is also a basic dimension of well-being.

This evidence does strongly suggest that sense of being insecure and unsafe within a local neighbourhood setting is a minority experience in Cyprus which does not detract from those who do experience those unsettling conditions but the dominant experience is one of a positive sense of living without fear and insecurity. It is possible to speculate that there are important characteristics of Cypriot society, as distinct from other societies elsewhere in Europe which promotes this outcome. Cypriot society is one within which violent crime and other forms of disorder tend to be infrequent events. Further the small-scale nature of society centred on neighbourhoods within which most if not all people within the area are known to each other does suggest that the infraction of social rules as well as formal laws are moderated by community itself which, at its best, ameliorates the worst forms of conduct which can create conditions of insecurity within a local setting.

The survey also aimed to solicit views about the ways in which respondents had been able to access ways of enhancing access to the labour market as well as the perceived quality of its delivery and the preferred forms through which training and education could be delivered in the future.

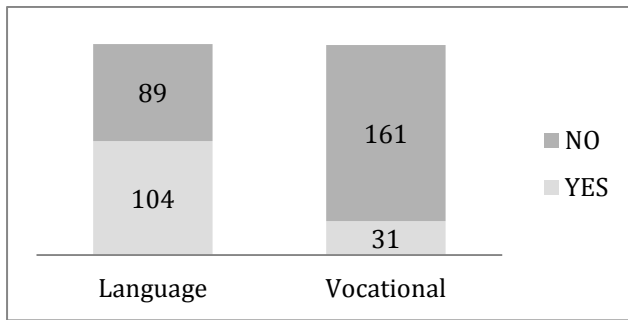
Turning to a closer reading of the empirical data generated in relation to the experience of training amongst those with IP a number of important dimensions of this experience become apparent. Of the 192 individuals with IP to whom the survey questionnaire was administered, 65 did not participate in any kind of training and training of which 16 of these were women (25%).

**Table 37** Did You Receive Education or Training in Cyprus?



The evidence suggests two thirds of those surveyed had actively participated in education and training provision which can be broken down further to indicate the nature of the services accessed. This tends to take one of either two forms, vocational training related to particular skills necessary to participate in the labour market and education courses aimed at improving competency in the Greek language.

**Table 38 Type of Education/Training Received**

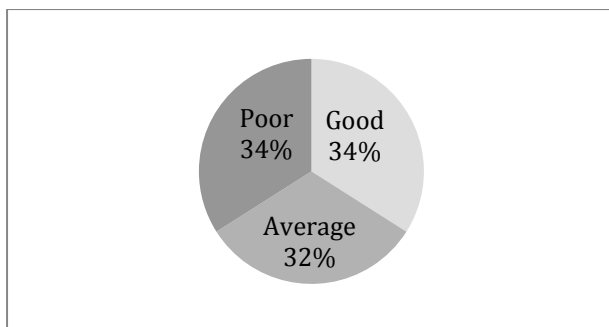


The evidence strongly indicates that the principle form through which education and training is delivered takes the form of enhancing Greek language competency, a vital aspect of the long-term prospects of integration.

However, the fact that over 45% of the sample had not either had the opportunity to access such education, or had chosen not to avail of such services is striking and can be seen as a cause for concern. It should also be noted that only a small minority pursued both language and vocational training.

Turning to vocational training it is notable that only 31 respondents recorded their participation on such courses and of these particular programmes organised around air-conditioning installation (with many of the participants having received this training through the EQUAL programme), for example, and computer training. One individual availed of training in cooking and another in hair dressing. This would appear to indicate that access to general training opportunities which are directed towards the population as a whole, rather than specifically targeted at those with IP, tend not to be accessed by the sample group.

**Table 39 If You Have Accessed Education or Training in Cyprus How Would You Assess its Quality?**

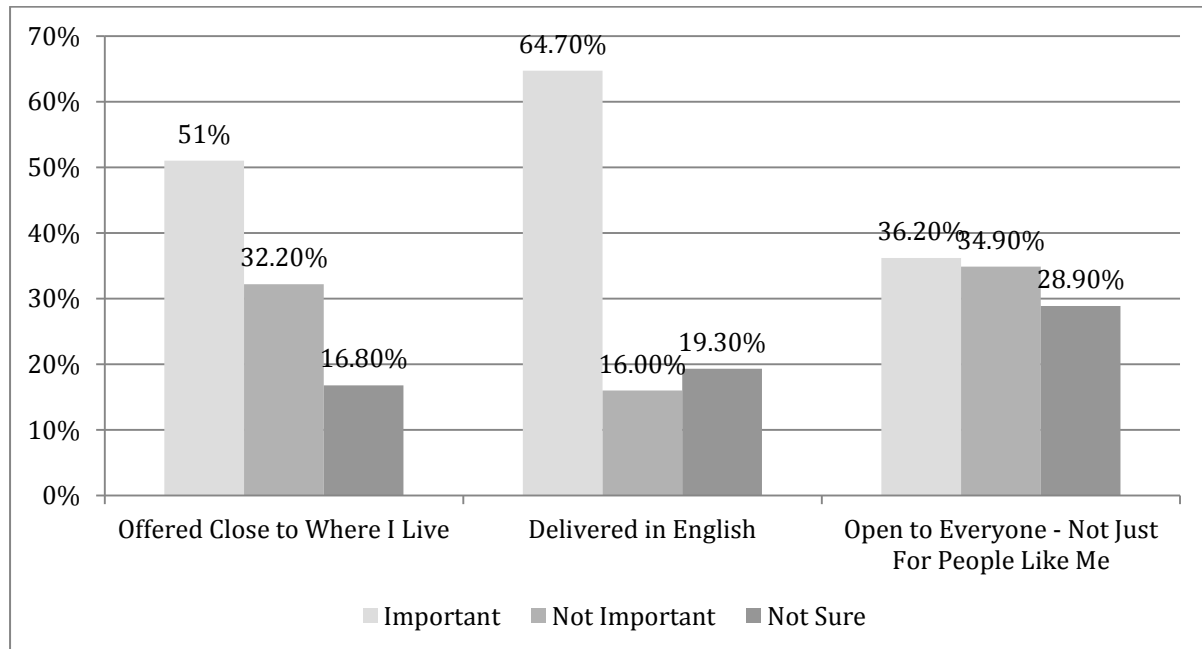


Asked to offer a general assessment of the quality and relevance of the language education which participants had experienced there was an even split across the range of responses available from good, to average and to poor. This suggests a markedly variable experience delivered by a range of service providers offered by a variety of bodies that included the University of Cyprus, Intercollege and PEO.

Briefly turning to the assessment of vocational courses undertaken by only a relatively small number of the survey sample those who had received computer skills training there was again a

mixed assessment whilst most of those who trained in air-conditioning installation/servicing generally assessed their training as good.

**Table 40 What Factors are Most Important in Determining Your Participation or Trainings in the Future?**

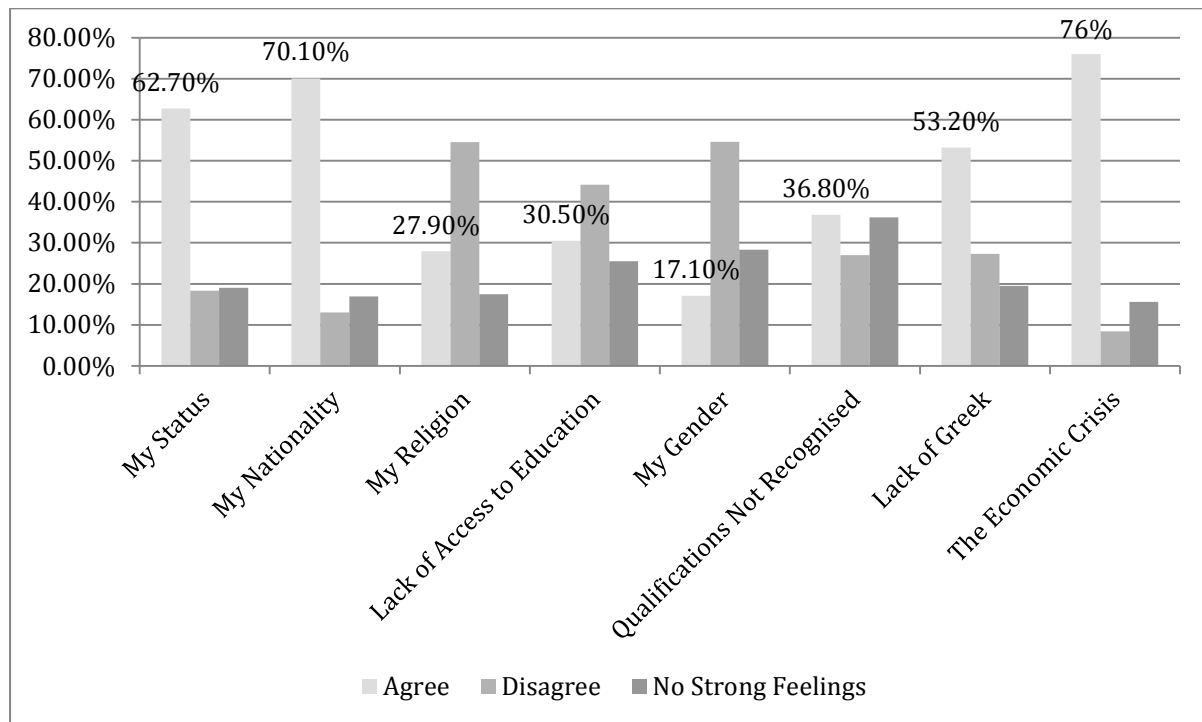


This data helps identify what potential recipients of education and training judge to be important in securing their active participation. A significant majority of respondents prioritised the need for any provision to be delivered through the medium of the English language rather than in Greek. Proximity to the location where delivery would take also secured majority consent whilst a course dedicated to the specific group from which the respondent comes was only prioritised by just over 36%.

#### 4.9 Perceived Barriers

This final section presents data which explores the ways in which respondents identified a series of barriers which prevented them from realising a satisfactory quality of life or the ability to successfully integrate into to Cypriot society. This section concludes by briefly reporting how the experience of coming up against these barriers appears to have an effect on how respondents think of their future in Cyprus.

**Table 41 What Stops You From Getting the Job You Want?**



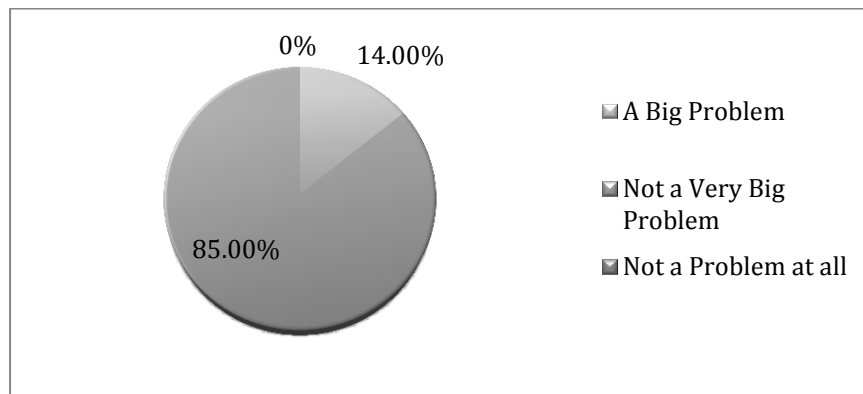
This section of the survey aimed to solicit the estimations made by respondents as to the significant barriers to employment. Multi factors could be identified from a predetermined list. Over three quarters of the sample identified the current economic crisis as a significant barrier, as a general condition this would be recognised to be a factor which would affect people in Cyprus more generally whether they had International Protection or not. However, the identification of nationality as a barrier, by over 70% of the sample, is of particular saliency to a group that is, by definition, non-Cypriot in its diverse origins. It should be noted that the category of nationality, and how it might have been interpreted, is open to significant variation. Nationality, understood in the stricter sense of citizenship may not have been the particular characteristic being identified. More loosely it might be understood that the term nationality was used to prompt how far a sense of difference from the dominant Greek Cypriot community whether expressed in relation to place of origin, citizenship, ethnic or national difference might play in blocking routes to the job respondents desire. Indeed the arbitrariness of ‘nationality’ as a salient form of difference is a reflection of the complexity of the different ways in which the majority community may choose to respond to people who they see themselves as being different from.

Almost two thirds of the respondents also identified their status as a significant barrier. Status in this context is an implicit reference to being a person granted International Protection and thus distinct from the citizenship status accorded to the majority population. The survey also solicited perceptions in relation to religious identity which, for the majority of respondents, did not appear as a significant barrier. However, caution needs to be exercised as to how this is interpreted since there is likely to be a marked differences of emphasis accorded to this factor depending on the religious community with which respondents identify. Consequently, it would appear that a respondent identifies as of the Christian faith, this religious designation does not, on the whole, constitute a perceived barrier to employment. A large number of those who have

secured International Protection are non-Christians, with a large number being of the Muslim faith are more likely to assess that their religious affiliation constitutes just such a barrier. A similar issue attends the identification of gender as a potential barrier, the majority of respondents were male and in almost all cases did not report being male as a barrier to unemployment. For women the figure was significantly higher suggesting that whilst only just over 17% of respondents highlighted the negative role that gender identification plays, this was much more widely felt by women rather than men.

Turning from issues of identity to those of enabling factors which are perceived to play a role in determining access to employment, the majority (53.2%) identify a lack of skills in speaking Greek as a significant barrier. For a significant minority it was judged that both difficulties associated with securing recognition for previously acquired qualifications (36.5%) and a lack of access to education and training (30.5%) were also barriers that need to be overcome in securing a desired form of work.

**Table 42 How Much of a Problem is it for People Being Attacked or Harassed Because of Their Skin Colour, Race or Religion?**



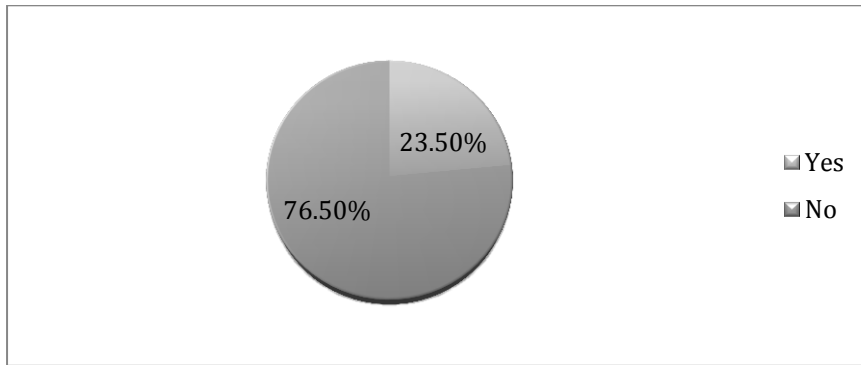
This question, and the resulting responses, was intended as crude but effective measure of securing perceptions about how far being attacked or harassed was anticipated by respondents because of a salient sign of difference. The wording of the question moved beyond examples of what might be called everyday acts of discrimination or prejudice to specify more aggressive and high-level forms of assault which might also include violent conduct. Further, the basis upon which aggressive behaviour could be rationalised was again left open by specifying three prominent signs of difference including those related to skin pigmentation as a sign of inferred origin, notions of race or arising out of assumptions related to religious disposition.

The data generated indicates that no respondent felt able to assert that attitudes and related action of this sort could be identified as 'no problem at all.' However, the dominant characterisation of the extent of this problem, assented to by 85%, was that this particularly aggressive form of prejudice, discrimination or racism was not 'a very big problem'. For a further 14%, the behaviour described was indeed perceived to be substantive.

#### 4.10 Future Options

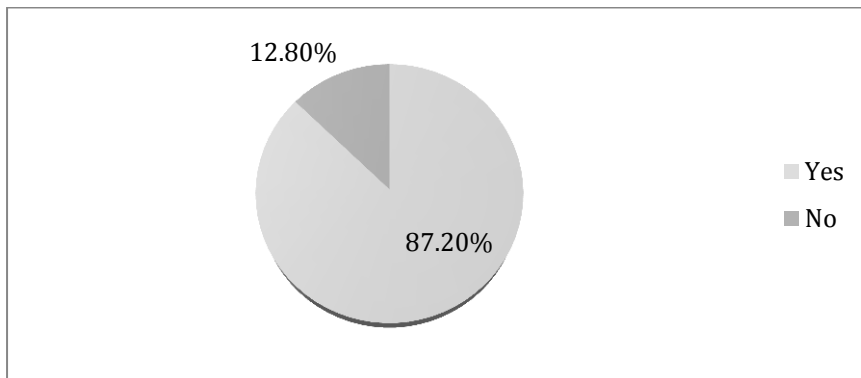
In this final section attention is turned to how the target population judges its medium and long-term future. The primary options presented were those of securing citizenship of the Republic of Cyprus or seeking the right to settle elsewhere.

**Table 43 Have You Applied to Become a Citizen of the Republic of Cyprus?**

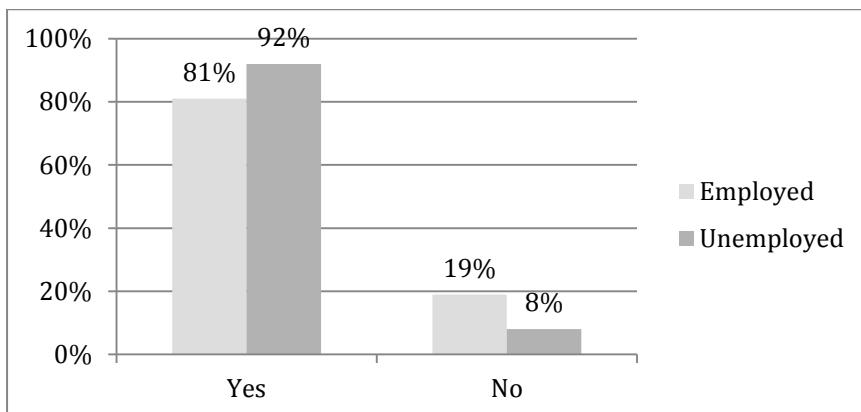


Having secured International Protection some choose to try and secure citizenship of the Republic of Cyprus. This is invariably a long drawn out process with no guarantee that the application will eventually result in citizenship being granted. Within the sampled population less than one in four people with International Protection had applied.

**Table 44 If You Had a Chance to Move Somewhere, Would You?**



**Table 45 If You Had a Chance to Move Somewhere, Would You? (Employed/Unemployed)**



This evidence clearly demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of the sampled population as a whole would be predisposed to moving elsewhere rather than remaining settled in Cyprus. Only 27 respondents out of a total cohort of 192 would opt to remain if they were presented with the opportunity to secure residency in another state. This can be interpreted as a strong



expression of the assessment made in relation to the longer-term interests of the individuals concerned in remaining in Cyprus. It also potentially indicates significant levels of frustration in expressing the desire to seek residency elsewhere but, in almost all cases, being unable to realise that ambition. How this effects the course of successful integration is an important point of speculation since, it could be argued that, when ambitions are directed towards securing relocation elsewhere as a potential solution to the predicament of being a refugee currently located in Cyprus, then the ability to successfully engage in the process of integration here could be undercut.

It is of significance that over two thirds of those who would choose to remain in Cyprus are employed suggesting that secure employment is a factor in determining the choice to remain. However, it should also be noted that being employed or without work did not appear to be a significant determinant of the desire to leave Cyprus and seek settlement elsewhere.

## 5 Key Qualitative Data I – In-Depth Interviews

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This section provides an overview of the qualitative data generated through the use of in-depth semi-structured interviews which was conducted with forty respondents. Selection of interviewees was made in such a way to ensure that they were generally representative of the target population as a whole, taking account of age, gender, ethnic or national identification. Further, care was also taken to include respondents who had settled in different locations within Cyprus, included both those employed and unemployed as well as those who are Recognised Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection. Some were here as single people, others as part of family households.

Each interview lasted for between one and one and a half hours, a semi-structured interview schedule structured the interview but also allowed room for the interviewees themselves to identify other issues which they identified as being relevant. The interview schedule was itself shaped by previously organised focus groups where discussion had centred on salient issues identified by the group participants themselves. Notes were taken during the interview itself and written up immediately afterwards providing data which could be simply coded according to themes which emerged as well as quoted statements which illuminated the propositions made, relationships identified and perceptions held. As a consequence, the data from one interview could be productively compared with data generated from another and recurring themes could then emerge with greater depth and clarity.

The principle themes which arose out of the forty interviews conducted are represented by a selection of twenty-three of those undertaken. This sample is representative of the cohort as a whole and touches on all the main issues raised including;

1. Lack of synchronicity between different services result in an administrative gap during which an individual cannot renew all the documents necessary to ensure the basic delivery of specific rights/permits and consequent entitlements which accrue to their status – see, for example, pink slip, health card, work permit.
2. Time consuming procedures for the renewal of the pink slip during working hours.
3. Uncertainty about the relationship between the rights and entitlements accruing from having a refugee status and those accruing from being a Cypriot. What does it mean to say that refugees share ‘the same rights as Cypriots’?
4. Problem with lack of appreciation of the difference between who is and what is the status of the asylum seeker and who is a person with international protection and the corresponding status.
5. Business persons have experienced differential treatment on the issue of the importation of machinery or raw material from third countries from their Cypriot counterparts.
6. Housing related support is another area in which differential treatment has been experienced.
7. Exclusion from vocational training because of not being a Cypriot
8. Problem of student grants
9. Problem of recognition of qualifications
10. Discrimination and humiliation experienced in interacting with the state and mainly the Employment Service and the welfare service.

11. Problem with the health service which in many instances it receives a positive feedback but many times staff are understood to be treating persons with international protection not as patients but rather as an administrative unit of the state
12. Problem of securing employment.
13. Problem with vocational training provision. Some have been excluded from vocational training on the grounds of not being a Cypriot
14. Lack of a standardized approach to language training provision. Inadequate arrangement for those who work. Inadequate progression opportunities.
15. Problem with social assistance payments having knock-on effects on housing.
16. Problem of having to cope by participating in the black market
17. Lack of transparency regarding the criteria for granting citizenship.
18. Absence of a service where persons with international protection can refer to when in need for advice.
19. Access by the off spring of Recognised Refugees to grants, available to Cypriots, in order to continue their post school education.
20. Cyprus being akin to a trap - the lack of clarity over rights and of practical institutional measures that would normalise the lives of the refugees are the same factors that prevent them from moving elsewhere where they will be more accepted and able to reconstitute their lives.

If these were the themes most frequently reiterated by the cohort as a whole, during the selection of respondents it was important to ensure that space was also provided for what may be described as minority experiences within the cohort as a whole. So, for example the experience of prejudicial or stereotypic responses to black Africans or particular attitudes or forms of behaviour directed towards a Muslim woman wearing the hijab also finds a place in the narratives presented below.

In order to organise the presentation of the data in a manner that assists analysis each of the interviewees have been identified according to age, how long they have been in Cyprus, familial connections and their self-ascribed ethnicity/nationality. What then follows is a synoptic presentation of the principle themes which emerged in the interview itself which is supplemented with a range of direct quotations which serve to illuminate that narrative.

## **5.1 Gradated Levels of Integration**

Finally, in order to aid a comparison between one narrative and another each person has been tentatively ascribed a gradated position on a range which extends from those who, on the evidence shared, appeared alienated from Cypriot society to those who can be characterised as most integrated. It should be borne in mind that this scale represents a series of ideal types rather than categorical and clearly defined positions. Further, they arise out of the specific context of Cypriot society rather than being universally applicable.

**Table 44 Colour Coded Gradation of Levels of Integration**

<p><b>Alienated</b> – marginalised within society, isolated and experiencing recurrent anomie. No tangible ties to the island and a consistent failure to find any substantive means to develop them. In particular a sense of powerlessness and a deep distrust of state institutions which are experienced as unsympathetic if not hostile.</p>	<p><b>Low level of integration</b> – would leave at first opportunity, has a limited tangible stake in society and few ties which would bound them to the island.</p>	<p><b>Intermediate level of integration</b> – would consider leaving given the opportunity, experiences a degree of integration through paid employment or family members who have been through the local education system, for example.</p>	<p><b>High level of integration</b> – would like to stay in Cyprus and have many ties which bind them into society. However, this can be concurrent with a perception that there remain major obstacles to normalising their lives. For example, the assertion that the system neither grants them citizenship nor does it deliver ‘equal rights with Cypriots’.</p>

## 5.2 Interview Data

The following substantial section presents the findings from key interviews conducted, selected as representative of all the data collected by this method. A brief profile of the respondent is provided with important contextualising information, although the detail given is conditioned by the need to ensure anonymity. The individual entries in the left hand column then goes on to provide a synopsis of the primary issues which emerged. The right hand column contains direct quotations from the same interview. In proceeding in this way the range of issues adduced gains representation and something of the texture of the ways in which these issues were raised finds due representation.

Profiles and Emergent Issues	Key Quotations
<p><b>This is a single woman (167), aged 45 from Iran who has been in Cyprus for more than 10 years. She was granted citizenship in 2011.</b></p>	
<p>She declares that she is not sure which criteria were used for granting citizenship to her but feels that it has to do with the fact that the asylum service took a sympathetic attitude to her circumstances. She has a health problem which disables her from working or leaving a</p>	<p><i>“I am afraid to go to welfare and ask them anything. It’s frustrating! They ask too many documents every time I visit there. Also, I don’t want to bother them because I am afraid they will find excuse to close my file”.</i></p>

<p>normalised life.</p> <p>However, despite her disability other departments have not been responsive. So for example she does not receive a disability benefit and this she feels is largely due to the fact that the welfare office does not treat people like her (third country nationals) well. The experience, she says, can be humiliating and demeaning, so she has not persevered with a disability claim.</p> <p>She talked about negligence on the part of her social worker and an incident of harsh verbal harassment by the supervisor of her social worker resulting in cutting off an allowance of 35 euro for house-cleaning assistance once a month.</p> <p>She does not want others from her community to know that she has been granted citizenship because people become envious and start gossiping and speculating why she was granted citizenship and others were not. This, she understands, to be the outcome of a system that lacks clear criteria of the basis upon which it grants citizenship.</p>	
<p><b>Everything was working well for this 34 year old Afghani married father of two (62) until he lost his job. He was there for about 5 years, most of his colleagues were Cypriot and he got along well with most of them.</b></p> <p>While working he was able to support his family and felt overall satisfied with his life.</p> <p>He also registered a very positive experience with the hospitals particularly as this related to the birth of his children.</p> <p>He feels he fitted in; he knew Cypriots and felt integrated.</p> <p>People would ask him occasionally if he was getting money from the government but he was OK in general.</p> <p>He has also been happy with the health service in Cyprus. He and his wife have had two children in the public health care sector.</p>	<p><i>“Because of the things they say about us on TV, we are discriminated as refugees. They say very bad things against us lately”</i></p> <p><i>“I didn’t have any problems until I lost my job”.</i></p> <p><i>“At the Employment Service, jobs are first given to Bulgarians and Romanians, not to people who are not Europeans”</i></p> <p><i>“They were rude to me at the Employment Service and there is no communication between the Employment Service and the</i></p>

<p>Since he lost his job, he no longer felt integrated and feels that there is nobody there to help him and his family pull through this stage.</p> <p>He has experienced discrimination primarily due to his non-European identity rather than due to religion.</p> <p>He commented on the lack of coordination between departments which creates problems in relation to the issuing of documentation which in turn is necessary in order to ensure certain rights and entitlements. He explained that he was not accepted by the Employment Service because his pink slip was close to its expiry but on the other hand the pink slip can only be renewed when it is even closer to its expiry date than his was at the time. Each time his pink slip is close to expiry he is, therefore, unable to look for work.</p> <p>Further, it has been his experience that the immigration department and the Employment Service fail to communicate on these issues making their experience more difficult than it needs be.</p> <p>He has been harassed, he explained, by the welfare office workers who verbally abused him and this resulted in him not submitting an application for assistance because of the humiliation he was subjected to.</p> <p>He also explained that he was harassed by police at the check point. He was warned not to cross to the north again.</p> <p>A major issue for this man is ‘where can refugees go to seek assistance when they have problems?’</p>	<p><i>immigration office. For example, I had to renew my pink slip because the Employment Service they told me that my pink slip needed to be valid for a longer period to come but immigration does not permit to go and do that unless it is actually closer to its expiry date. So I was not allowed to renew my pink slip so I had a problem. They couldn't understand that; they couldn't understand that there wasn't anything I could do about it. It is like two different countries that do not communicate”</i></p> <p><i>“I can't talk to my social worker like we are talking here, I need care and I expected that from the welfare office. It's not only money that I need'.</i></p> <p><i>“When I visited the welfare office to claim social assistance they told me, why are you not working' and even though I explained to them that I worked for five years and that I never before asked for any money and that I was looking for a job they continued telling me the same. They also called me “mavros” and they told me ‘why don't you leave from Cyprus?’ I felt so humiliated I left without filling in the application.”</i></p> <p><i>He went to the north two years ago and when he returned he was stopped on the Greek Cypriot side and was told “you get money from us and you cross to the occupied area? If I see you again here I will take you to Larnaca airport and I will kick you out of the country.”</i></p> <p><i>“I had a problem when I travelled to Holland to meet some friends because my travel document is hand written and it looks a bit fake. They were looking at the document at the airport and I was questioned extensively because of that.”</i></p>
<p><b>42 years old this married Palestinian mother (119) of three has been in Cyprus for more than 10 years.</b></p> <p>The main problem faced is that of acquiring citizenship – if that is solved then all will be solved. She elaborated that whilst she was told that she can enjoy the same rights that Cypriots have this has not been the case in</p>	

practice. Her problems relate to the way in which her status as a refugee keeps her short of enjoying benefits that Cypriots in an otherwise similar position to her enjoy.

Further, even where certain things have been taken for granted, as for example has happened in relation to her employment as a nurse, she was informed, out of the blue, that she can no longer practice that profession since regulations, apparently, changed. According to this claim, third country nationals could no longer work as nurses and therefore she could not renew her work permit as a nurse. As it turned out this was put forward by the public servant dealing with her and was in no way a formal decision of the state.

She explained that this was partly due to the lack of good will on the part of many civil servants dealing with refugees and partly due to the confusion surrounding the rights of people with this status.

This woman has also experienced differential treatment in relation to her house which she owns and is in the vicinity of the green line and according to law owners can receive subsidies relating to the cost of refurbishment. She was turned down as she was told that this entitlement does not apply to non-Cypriots. Therefore the lack of clarity in relation to the rights of refugees means, for this woman, that securing Cypriot citizenship can solve all her problems, be they employment ones or ones relating to state subsidies and support.

She also recounted the problem of having a separate and disconnected system for the renewal of pink slips and for work permits. There are times that she cannot renew her work permit because it is necessary for this to have validity for a considerable time to come in order to renew work permits. There are occasions that this does not work out as the pink slip remains valid but not for a sufficiently long period so as to ensure the renewal of the work permit. This causes unnecessary problems and stress both for the employee and for the employer.

The problem is compounded by the absence of a service that those with international

*“Everyday we have a new problem. No matter how much we try, how hard we work, we can never relax and enjoy our life and our family because we need to be solving problems”*

*“Our rights are not clear to us and to anyone”*

<p>protection can refer to in situations where they face problems regarding their rights or entitlements. In the absence of such a system they have to rely on all connections they may have or on the UNHCR.</p> <p>Her three children were born in Cyprus and they are bilingual with Greek being one of their main languages. They attend state schools and have Cypriot friends.</p> <p>She has good relationships with her neighbours and on occasions has offered support as a nurse to some of them. Likewise she has receive3d support from them.</p>	
<p><b>The main reported problem faced by this 34 year old single Palestinian man (10), who has been in Cyprus for more than 7 years, is the fact that he has lost his job.</b></p>	<p><i>‘Those days were good.’</i></p> <p><i>“They expect us to survive by ourselves. Sometimes we do. Other times it is much tougher. They say to us you have been here all these years you should find a way to survive. As if all these were not enough they now have started questioning our status trying to suggest that it is safe for us to go back, that Palestine is a safe place for us.”</i></p>
<p>As he described, whilst he was working everything was going well for him. He did a training course through the ‘equal’ programme and then secured a stable job for a few years.</p> <p>His life has been transformed because not only has he got no job but he also does not access any financial support. This, he explained, was due to the attitude of the Employment Service and the welfare department which were too demeaning.</p> <p>However, seeking to maintain his independence in this way has created many difficulties since he is not able to pay his rent for a flat which though not expensive is a flat he likes and would like to carry on renting.</p> <p>He has advertised and secured flat mates to share the rent but getting a regular job has not been possible and as a result he has tried to survive through the black market. This is described as a very precarious way to live.</p>	
<p><b>This man from the Yemen (137) is 43 years old and been in Cyprus for about 8 years. He has a career and a well- paid job with a non-Cypriot organisation.</b></p>	



The family manages to maintain good standard accommodation and has opted for private, non-Cypriot education. He has occasionally experience direct prejudice and discrimination

The strategy of the family has been that of insulating itself from Cypriot society and get on with their lives without the kind of problems recounted by so many others.

However, his job involves international travel and it is in relation to this that he and his family face major limitations. Though they can travel to many European countries with the travel document issued to refugees they cannot travel to countries where the family has relatives and would be able to receive support from relatives in looking after the children during holiday periods when the father is away.

*"I was in a supermarket with a trolley load of goods and the assistant challenged whether I was the owner of the Credit Card I pulled out to pay. I stood my ground, and politely insisted that it was mine. Fortunately, this was quickly resolved by the manager."*

**This 39 year old Palestinian (12) has been in Cyprus for 5 years.**

A married man he explained that he is disabled and that the welfare office delayed his public assistance payments and that for five months he has not been in receipt of any benefits. This has created very difficult conditions to survive given that it has not been possible to pay his rent for a long time. As a result his landlord is asking him to go.

He describes his experience with government authorities as one of harassment and mistreatment and he believes this to be a strategy to get them to return to their country. He also referred to a lack of communication among different public departments which leads, as he described, to a very frustrating situation. For example, his health card had expired whilst the renewal of his pink slip was pending. In that period his two year old child was denied access to healthcare.

He was also very disheartened by the fact that he was turned down in relation to his application to secure a permit to park in disabled parking spaces. He explained that he was told that the reason for being rejected was that he is not a Cypriot or an EU citizen.

*"Everyone pushes you to go outside - welfare gives you no money, migration gives you no visa, the hospital gives you no medical card, the landlord asks you to leave. What to do? We are desperate to get out"*

<p>The only positive experience he could recount in relation to his interaction with the state was in relation to a social worker who visited his place and managed to secure a new bed for his children.</p> <p>He considers that the state is making the life of Palestinians difficult in order to make them leave Cyprus.</p>	
<p><b>One of the main issues for this single mother of four (34) who is 34 years old and been in Cyprus for 5 years is the role of the media towards people with international protection which she described as negative and she expects that things are likely to get worse.</b></p>	
<p>A major problem she faces is in relation to the irregular payments she gets from the welfare office.</p> <p>Further, she explains that major problems are caused by a lack of communication amongst the different public departments - for example, there were delays in receiving a new pink-slip and for those months she was refused social assistance.</p> <p>She referred to this as a 'technical gap' which occurs when there is no valid pink-slip'.</p> <p>She had faced a serious case of domestic violence and during that period, she explained, police and welfare services didn't 'work together' to provide any form of protection to her (for example, accommodation).</p> <p>She talked of reluctance that characterises the public healthcare service staff in offering services and communication. "I went to the pharmacy and the woman refused to speak to me in English and I don't speak Greek"</p> <p>Further, she talked about how she was injured in the neck and ribs when a car driven by a Cypriot drove into hers making her car a total loss. The doctor who examined her at one of the general hospitals refused to give her a medical certificate in relation to her state telling her instead 'you are ok, nothing</p>	<p><i>"I was told by a doctor at a public hospital 'you see money on trees in Cyprus and you come here to pick it.'"</i></p>

<p>happened to you'. She explained that she suffered from severe pain for a week after that and that moving during that week was very difficult. She believes that the attitude of the doctor was motivated by an inclination on his part to cover the driver who caused the accident against any possible compensation claims.</p>	
<p><b>The four children of this married man (105) are fine at school and have friends. He is Palestinian, 39 years old and been in Cyprus for 7 years.</b></p>	
<p>He pointed out that the major problem in Cyprus is that they are told that they have the same rights as Cypriots but that in practice that is not true</p> <p>He explains that he faces discrimination especially when he is out with his wife who wears a hijab.</p> <p>He faced problems with renewing pink slip and with receiving welfare to supplement his wages. The social assistance benefit had not been paid for the previous three months.</p> <p>He had an interview where his SP status was reviewed. He was asked to sign a paper saying that he will not apply for welfare or he stood to lose his status.</p>	<p><i>"We want to go and complain to Parliament but we are afraid. Welfare is a mafia. We are afraid that they will send us back to Iraq. They are always pushing us to leave Cyprus. "</i></p> <p><i>"Renewing the pink slip is difficult. They make you go to their offices many times. You waste a lot of time. And they ask you to bring many different documents. And it always depends who you talk to. I went a different time and I spoke to a different person and she didn't ask for any of the documents the other woman was asking for"</i></p> <p><i>"I want to apply for citizenship but people have told me that this is never granted so I haven't done it. It takes a long time to gather all documents and I will have to go to their offices many times and because of the type of work I do it is difficult for me. If I don't work one day I don't get paid that day. So why should I waste my time since I know I will not get it."</i></p>
<p><b>The married mother of four (61) is 34 years old and from Iraq who has been in Cyprus for 7 years.</b></p>	
<p>She explained that the family was pushed to earn its living through the black market. This happened when they were faced with the response of the state to her husband's attempt to declare himself as self-employed after registering his own business. As a response, the social assistance benefit received by the family was immediately terminated because, they were told, self-employment counts as full</p>	

<p>time employment. The business closed down and the welfare office said they could not re-open their file because it had been deleted.</p> <p>She explained that she experienced racism by public authorities at the sight of the hijab.</p> <p>In renewing their pink slip they were asked to sign a document declaring that they would not claim welfare otherwise they would have their Subsidiary Protection status withdrawn.</p> <p>The Employment Service has told them that they can only do farming jobs and cleaning jobs because of their status.</p> <p>The family faces serious problems with paying its rent.</p> <p>She perceived the current policies by the state (concerning the refugees) as a push-factor towards their voluntary departure from Cyprus – ‘like many Palestinian from Iraq did in last one year’</p> <p>Nevertheless, the children are doing well at state schools and there are no complaints in relation to this aspect of their lives.</p>	<p><i>"It is a trap for refugees – they neither give us our rights nor let us go to another country to seek for refugee."</i></p>
<p><b>This interviewee, a single man (4) is from Iraq, 29 years old and been in Cyprus for 7 years.</b></p> <p>He explained that a sense of insecurity has been enhanced amongst those affected by the decision of the authorities to review the status of all those that were granted Subsidiary Protection.</p> <p>He has been forced into the black market economy since the Employment Service will not offer him any jobs except from farming jobs which paid 400 euro a month. One employer demanded that he stays on the farm. Another job required that he travelled to a remote area by bus.</p> <p>But this man explains that he was very happy and fulfilled until an accident at work led to a termination of his contract because he remained determined to seek compensation for the damage he suffered after an accident at</p>	<p><i>"I can't stay all my life with Subsidiary Protection and fear to be asked to leave anytime."</i></p> <p><i>Referring to the training he received under equal: – "...it was my happy days. I forgot welfare. I started doing my life and did what I loved to – buying what I wanted, met new</i></p>

<p>work.</p> <p>He received unemployment benefit for 6 months. Turning to the welfare office for benefit, at the end of that period, he was told by his welfare officer that the files of refugees for public assistance are being closed and therefore he does not stand a chance to get any assistance. For this reason, he didn't submit an application for public assistance and faces a serious problem with payment of his rent.</p> <p>He considers that the only way to secure equal rights in Cyprus is by securing citizenship. He believes citizenship facilitates the way to acquiring a similar social status to that of Cypriots, which is otherwise almost impossible to achieve.</p> <p>He has had friendships with Cypriots through work – but it takes time to build these since interaction with Cypriots at work starts with communication through derogatory terms with reference to his origin.</p> <p>He recorded that he was not treated well by the public health sector after he had the work related accident. He qualified that never in the past did he face a problem with the public health care but on that occasion he had to leave the hospital and seek private health care despite the emergency condition he was in. He was convinced that the reason for this had to do with the fact that this was a work related accident and the doctors protected the Cypriot employer. Amongst other things he explained that the doctor refused to speak to him in English. This was an incident that led to a major decline in his trust in the 'system'.</p>	<p>people”.</p> <p><i>“I was said by the officer at Employment Service that they first need to find jobs for 35000 Cypriot unemployed.”</i></p> <p><i>“In Cyprus it's very easy to lose your rights...”</i></p> <p><i>“I had a close relationship with a Cypriot but obstacles remained in the relationship due to my status, nationality and religion – ‘I was told, ‘you are a foreigner, you are an Iraqi, you are a Muslim’ but I didn't have problem who they were. ”</i></p>
<p><b>Aged 34 and an Iraqi Palestinian (106) who has been here for 5 years, the main problem for this married father of two is one of discrimination.</b></p> <p>He explains that he has no choice but to pick up work in the black market. He gets paid less than Cypriots which is how he and others manage to get jobs.</p> <p>His landlord shows understanding for their circumstances and is helpful in relation to his</p>	<p><i>“They always treat me like they were God and I was an animal”</i></p> <p><i>“In order to renew my pink slip I am asked to</i></p>

<p>difficulties to pay rent on time.</p> <p>He has participated in language training courses but he did not find them helpful in that on the one hand they lacked regularity and on the other it was difficult to reconcile work and language training.</p> <p>Immigration asked him to find a job before his pink slip could be renewed.</p> <p>He considers that the Employment Service plays games with Palestinians in general. For example, they are often sent for jobs which they are willing to accept. But in the meantime the employer informs the Employment Service that the concerned individual declined the job. The Employment Service takes the word of the prospective employer and informs the welfare office which then proceeds to close their file.</p> <p>A major complaint of this man is that they are never given the space to give their side of the story.</p> <p>After his file was closed in Larnaca where he lived he was told that if he wanted it re-opened he needed to move with his family to Limassol.</p>	<p><i>get a job but I can't find a job so what can I do?"</i></p> <p><i>"In the past I accepted a job and then when I informed the Employment Service about it I was told that the employer told them that I was not willing to do the job offered to me. As a result my file was closed by the Employment Service and we lost our right to get help from the government. They never give me the opportunity to properly explain my side of the story"</i></p> <p><i>'The public employees behave as if they are god and treat people with international protection as if we are animals.'</i></p> <p><i>"Why do they allow us to come to Cyprus since they don't want us and they will not help us? People don't respect us. This is what I feel."</i></p>
<p><b>A 47 year old Iraqi (125) who has been in Cyprus for 10 years. In 2011, the protection status of this man was re-examined and was withdrawn by the Asylum Service. He appealed against this decision at the Refugee Reviewing Authority and the decision is still pending.</b></p>	<p><i>"When I got Subsidiary Protection I was happy because I thought I would get my rights. But now I realised that my rights are constantly violated."</i></p> <p><i>"Governmental officers think they are someone and we are animals. Employment officers</i></p>
<p>There is a major problem with the renewal of the pink slip and this affects the re-issuing of the health card since the pink slip needs to be secured before the health card can be renewed.</p> <p>If the Employment Service decides to refer us to a job most of the time the job does not exist.</p> <p>He manages to secure ephemeral work in the black market through networks.</p> <p>When he worked in the construction industry the employer treated him as a self- employed</p>	

<p>person so that he would have no obligation to make any social security payments.</p> <p>He explains that in his experience public officials treat him as inferior and speak to him with contempt.</p> <p>He also feels that Cypriots do not trust Muslims – but that his experience is made somewhat easier by the fact that he speaks Greek.</p>	<p><i>harass us asking us ‘why don’t you go back to your country’. They make me feel like I am begging for their attention”.</i></p>
<p><b>A 43 year old Palestinian (133) who has been in Cyprus for 2 years. For this married mother of three the problem is first and foremost perceived as one of access to rights.</b></p> <p>She is overall satisfied with the way they are treated by public officials but she feels that unlike what they are told once recognised those with international protection do not enjoy the same rights as Cypriots. As a result they experience a lot of injustice and they dislike life in Cyprus for that. They want to leave Cyprus in order to get better employment opportunities and better educational opportunities for their children.</p> <p>For the time being a relative who lives abroad pays the fees for her children to receive a private education since she was told that two of the children would be put two years behind their contemporaries in order to catch up with the language.</p> <p>She is not happy with the health service which she has experienced due to a medical problem her son has. She believes that she is not treated fairly because she is a refugee.</p> <p>She received language training where she thought that the teacher was good but the course was too short – twice a week, 2 hours each time for 3 months. This was not enough to result in language learning. She would like to receive more training (not only language one) so that it is easier for her to find a job.</p> <p>The family reunified and this was a fairly easy process. It took only a few months to complete.</p> <p>She is overall satisfied with the way she is</p>	<p><i>“The main problem is that we are educated and we are only offered jobs as cleaners or in farms. I would be willing to do any type of work but I can’t just clean houses. We suffered enough in Palestine. Some officers are nice and some are not. Some scream at you and make you feel afraid of them.”</i></p> <p><i>“The Employment Service send us to jobs but when we get there we are told that there are no jobs for us and that I am too old. At the Employment Service I am always told: you are not European and you are a refugee so these are the only jobs you can do.”</i></p>

<p>treated by welfare officers but she complained about delays in getting their benefits (3 months later).</p> <p>She doesn't have Cypriot friends but seems not to be experiencing any problems with everyday people or her neighbours. They greet each other politely. She tries to get along well with people around her.</p>	<p><i>"We are always late in paying our rent but our landlord has been flexible with us. Our kids can't go anywhere because we can't give them money to enjoy themselves with friends. We can't even afford to have internet. I don't want welfare money. I want to go abroad so that I can work, support my family and offer educational opportunities to my children."</i></p>
<p><b>This 40 year old married father of 2 (8) from Iran who has been in Cyprus for more than 10 years explains that he is able to work as a skilled worker only because he is self-employed. The Employment Service provides only menial jobs for refugees.</b></p>	<p><i>"I came from a country with a dictatorship and I didn't come for money, I had a company. I am a political activist. But now we are fighting to save ourselves here, to secure our job, secure our life. We are getting old."</i></p>
<p>However, even when you are self-employed you need to struggle hard: you have to charge less than Cypriots in order to be given a job.</p> <p>Also, as a business owner he is discriminated in that he has been told that as a third country national he cannot directly import work related machines or tools.</p> <p>Cypriot businesses on the other hand, he claimed, get 30% subsidy for importing technology.</p> <p>He put his son in a private school because there was racism at school and his son was habitually referred to as 'mavros'.</p> <p>People's approach to refugees is influenced by the statements made in the media and by many politicians about the benefits received by people with international protection status. So they ask: 'do you get money?'</p> <p>He states that the problem Cypriots have with refugees is primarily because of their status. Religion does not seem to play a role. The Cyprus government does not give nationality to people with international protection he says and wonders why does the state let them apply and pay for the process when there is in fact no intention to grant them citizenship.</p> <p>He was able to make a loan from the bank for</p>	



<p>his business – as long as you have the money the banks do not have a problem to serve you, he says, but they ask for a guarantor and you need to be networked with Cypriots in order to be able to secure a guarantor.</p> <p>There is also a problem when the pink slip needs renewal – there is no respect for the fact that the hours we spend to renew this are hours lost from work and result in a loss of income. The process takes hours to complete each time.</p>	
<p><b>This 42 year old married father from Iran (23) who has been in Cyprus for 10 years has set up his own business and has done very well for himself. He has achieved that through the cultivation of networks with Cypriots.</b></p>	
<p>He was motivated to set up his own business when his employer in the same field of work did not pay his social security.</p> <p>He identifies the travel documents issued to people with a refugee status as a major problem. Not only it does not allow the family to travel freely but it also closes down business opportunities for him.</p> <p>At school the children faced a problem with their names so we changed their names to Greek ones and things have been better.</p> <p>Cypriots do not distinguish between asylum seekers and people with international protection.</p> <p>Religion is not a big issues but language is since it sets you apart.</p> <p>The precariousness of refugee identity and documentation creates many difficulties. The secondary school where he went to register his daughter asked for her identity card in order to register her. Yet the daughter does not have a Cypriot identity card but an alien one.</p> <p>He describes his experience at the public hospital to have always been a positive one as medical staff is good to him. He explained that</p>	<p><i>"Everything here is related to networks. If you have networks you don't need the public officers. Possessing nationality is also very important in securing public services. Whatever we need, and wherever we go they ask if we have nationality."</i></p> <p><i>"My customers always tell me 'a Cypriot charges so much, so how much are you going to charge me?' So basically they expect me to charge them less to get the job. "</i></p> <p><i>"I wanted to go to China and bring raw materials which are cheaper than here so I could make more benefit out of it, but I can't do that because I don't have nationality."</i></p> <p><i>"Why did my friend in the UK get his passport in 5 years but I cannot get it here even after 10 years? The problems are many. For example, I travelled with my wife to Syria with our travel document. Syrian police arrested us because they didn't recognize the document. I cannot travel to other countries except in the EU and even in Europe we face problems, mainly, they keep us long hours to wait whilst they confirm with the Cypriot government our documents."</i></p> <p><i>"Nobody knows anything – we are sent from one place to another and nobody can answer</i></p>

<p>everything is easier when the patient knows someone there, in which case the examination proceeds almost immediately.</p> <p>Feels safe and secure in Cyprus and in that respect his life has changed for the good.</p>	<p><i>the question so we have to go to the offices over and over again. I am talking about all the offices. But this is true also for Cypriots. It is the way the country is. The main difference is that Cypriots know people in these offices so they get things done easily. They always have a cousin or a "koumbaros" that can help them."</i></p> <p><i>"Most of them don't know the difference between recognized refugees with asylum seeker and they blame us all for everything. "</i></p> <p><i>"My life has changed since I came here and it is better than my life in my country because I feel safer and secure. Because I don't know what would happen if I was in my country. "</i></p>
<p><b>This 23 year old Iraqi Palestinian student (153) has been here for 5 years and managed to secure a scholarship at a private university through an NGO.</b></p> <p>Her parents are unemployed and both have been at the Employment Service where they were offered only farming jobs. Nevertheless they were willing to accept but the employer did not take them on.</p> <p>The mother wears a hijab and gets insulted in the streets. In Cyprus they do not like Muslims because of the Turks. But, she says, there is also the 'Arab' dimension – they don't like Arabs.</p> <p>However, she explains that if they had had nationality they would have had better opportunities both educational and work related ones.</p> <p>Having networks helps a lot in Cyprus, she says. She has Cypriot friends at college. They also tell her that it is important to have networks through which to get things done. For her parents she explains that it is more difficult. But being in education helped her own circumstances a lot.</p> <p>The welfare office stopped the benefits that were received by the family in the past.</p> <p>She feels safe in Cyprus. Weather is also one of the positives as well as the people she interacts</p>	<p><i>"My mother wears a hijab and sometimes when we walk with her people mostly young people insult her. Religious difference is a big issue in Cyprus. They hate Muslims in general because of the Turks. It makes life for us harder."</i></p>

with.	
<p><b>This 34 year old (89) is from a West African country and been here for 2 years. He feels that his colour places him at the lowest possible end of the disadvantage scale.</b></p>	
<p>Cypriots simply do not like black people. He considers that he is the lowest priority for the Employment Service. This creates a vicious circle in his circumstances as he becomes dependent on welfare benefits whilst at the same time the welfare office has more recently made payments to refugees irregularly.</p> <p>He considers that no one can go very far without networks that include Cypriots. For example, the only way through which he can pick up some work is through work related networks. Often he waits around, at specific locations, early in the morning, from where workers are picked up for a day's work.</p> <p>According to this man people who want them to work for them treat them ok. Usually they are good. But many times other Cypriots treat them badly and sometimes this can become physical. For example, the passengers of a passing car who threw cans and bottles on a group of black people.</p> <p>He considers it a problem not to be able to speak Greek. Still, you may be able to pick up a slightly improved job but nothing specialised.</p> <p>He feels powerless to do anything about his circumstances – he considers that he needs to be patient as going back to his country is not an option. But he also feels that there is no future for him in Cyprus either.</p>	<p><i>"I have never been asked my religion, but my skin colour was always a problem. Sometimes when I walk on the street, some old people cross to the other side because they think we are dangerous. It happens to my friends as well. Or another example is when I tried to talk to a little kid as people do, and the mother picked the kid up and said, 'no, don't touch'."</i></p> <p><i>"Our community has no other choice but to help each other, because we can't mingle with Cypriots, although some of my friends have Cypriot friends but the relationship between them is not strong enough to call it friendship. So we have no choice than sticking to our community. We gather, talk and drink beer and we help each other sometimes."</i></p> <p><i>"No, employers never pay fair money. They prefer to give us food, cigarette but not enough money."</i></p> <p><i>"When they send me to the jobs available when I get there they tell me that they don't need anyone anymore."</i></p> <p><i>"I don't think skills are important, anyway, they won't give us a good job. We are only simple workers here."</i></p>
<p><b>According to this 39 year old man from West Africa (1) who has been on the island for 8 years, becoming recognised did not result in a qualitative change of his circumstances.</b></p>	
<p>For seven years he was an asylum seeker and the main difference between being an asylum</p>	<p><i>"When I went to migration to get my travel</i></p>

<p>seeker and becoming recognised has in his experience been the fact that once recognised the police could no longer 'chase you for papers' anymore.</p> <p>He explained that when he requested to participate on a training programme sponsored by the state he was not permitted to do so because, as he was told, he is not a Cypriot.</p> <p>He said that Cypriots do not like to give jobs to black people and explained that he was sent to work in a farm. Though he accepted the job the potential employer did not want to give him the job and didn't.</p> <p>So, he explained, they cannot get jobs, welfare payments are irregular and it becomes very difficult to keep up with the rent. When they visit the welfare office they often get shouted at and feel demoralised.</p> <p>He considers that a supply of social housing would have been important and would have removed the dependency of refugees on individual relationships with Cypriots.</p> <p>The situation is also exacerbated by the fact that the political parties do not want the refugees either.</p> <p>He feels that the refugees are treated as if they are illegal immigrants.</p>	<p><i>document, two employees who were dealing with it, speaking in Greek to each other, said "how did they recognize him?"</i></p> <p><i>"There was a training program for Cypriots and I asked to participate in that program but they told me this program is only for Cypriots, you can't participate. I told them I know Greek and I can handle it, but they didn't let me. In practice refugees don't have equal rights as Cypriots. The government in Cyprus wants to make refugees' lives difficult to make them leave this country."</i></p> <p><i>"But in Europe the situation is different. No matter what they think about you they implement the law because government is monitoring public employees. In Cyprus public servants act like policy makers. When they are dealing with us they have the freedom to do whatever they want. We, the refugees, need some people to be able to help us."</i></p> <p><i>"I can't trust the police. If I enter the police station today, they will look at me as if I am a criminal because I am black. Other institutions are the same. Whenever I go to the Employment Service, they treat me like an asylum seeker. They don't even ask for my documents, they just make their judgement based on my skin colour that I have to be an asylum seeker."</i></p>
<p><b>A 30 year old single man from West Africa (90) who has been here for 3 years, he explains that he has experienced racism and discrimination.</b></p> <p>Whether a black person has documents or not is not what matters but the colour of his skin does, he said. Most Cypriots are racists and it is very hard for a black person to live a good life in Cyprus he added.</p> <p>He cannot find employment and works in the black market. What is clear so far, he says, is that they can only get menial jobs and always</p>	<p><i>"If you do not have lots of confidence they can break you down"</i></p>

<p>need to be willing to get paid less than the Cypriots would in order to get any job.</p> <p>To get by you need to get yourself in networks. Without networks nothing can be achieved. Having better networks means better life.</p> <p>He would not recommend to anyone to come to Cyprus because as he explained there is no support system and Cypriots do not accommodate foreigners. Instead, they are left to solve any problems by themselves.</p> <p>Learning the language is very important and unless this is learnt the obstacles will be greater.</p> <p>He has experienced problems with receiving welfare payments. He used to receive them irregularly but these days, he said, these have been stopped altogether.</p>	<p><i>"If I had chance to leave I would definitely leave. I want to go home and rest first. Very few blacks have good life in Cyprus".</i></p>
<p><b>A 42 year old divorced mother of two from Iran (152) who has been in Cyprus for 10 years. She has made plans to open her own business but found it difficult to secure a loan as the bank required two guarantors for this.</b></p> <p>She took opportunity of a call for submission of applications by the programme for the promotion of female entrepreneurship managed by the Ministry of Commerce and submitted an application. She was informed of this opportunity by a firm that received funding from the Integration Fund in order to inform third country nationals of such opportunities. Three years on she has not heard anything from the Programme.</p> <p>She has been unemployed for the past two years. She was working for a factory but left her job on health grounds after she developed a problem with her back due to many hours spent standing as part of her job.</p> <p>She is a trained hairdresser having done her training in Iran. But her qualification is not recognised in Cyprus.</p> <p>She completed an evening language course</p>	<p><i>"If we had the chance to leave Cyprus and go to another country we would definitely do that. This country has not given us an opportunity to improve our life. And I don't think we can have better future here in Cyprus."</i></p>

when she was working but it was far too difficult to take proper advantage of it as there was little time left for studying.

She feels let down because when the family was recognised they were told that they have the same rights as Cypriots have. But not in practice, she explained. For instance, for very simple things such as telephone line, internet, or a fixed mobile line they have had to pay a large amount of money as a deposit.

Another example is about the banks, they closed her account in the Bank of Cyprus because she is Iranian. Also the Laiki bank has disallowed her from using her visa card to withdraw money.

The family also searched and found out that they could get financial support from the government to buy a house, but when they applied they were told that it is only for Cypriots.

One of her major concerns is that her son is finishing school next year and he cannot receive a government grant because, as they were told, the grants are only for Cypriots.

*"My bank account is still open perhaps because I have a loan there."*

**A 34 year old male from Sri Lanka (88) has been in Cyprus for 6 years. He is a linguistics university graduate and got married in Cyprus with a third country national who was on a two year work permit in Cyprus and who he met in Cyprus after being granted Subsidiary Protection.**

For this he had to secure a marriage permit from the state. He explained how for months he visited relevant public offices in his effort to secure the marriage permit but with no luck. After being told by the Asylum Service that they could not help him he approached a lawyer who on a fee of 1500 euro secured for him his marriage permit.

He explained how in the six years of residence in Cyprus he has had little awareness of the rights or entitlements that accompany his status. For example, following an accident

*"Institutions such as the migration office are not fair with me, they call us mavros, and they don't answer us."*

*"I don't have anyone here to help me when I need help, it is only my boss. My wife and I are left alone here."*

whilst at work he received medical care from the private sector as he was not aware that he could receive this from the public sector.

When his application was rejected by the welfare service he was informed that this happened because on three separate dates he declined a job. He explains that it was not him but the employers who rejected him. He was not given any chance to put his side of the story forward to the welfare service.

There are regular incidences during which he experiences discrimination and what he describes as verbal abuse. For example, on delivering food at the offices of a company he stood around waiting to be paid for the delivery when the secretary turned round and said to him : ‘mavro, what are you waiting for?’

He explained that getting a job in Cyprus is not easy and that he secured his job delivering food after he purchased the job from a friend whose job it was before he left Cyprus. He sold it to him for 300 euro. Otherwise he considered that it is almost impossible for those with international protection who are or can be construed to be black to secure employment in Cyprus through the Employment Service.

He described his and his wife’s isolation in Cyprus - they are alone, they do not have connections with anyone in Cyprus, there are very few people from his country in Cyprus and even then his country is deeply divided, a matter that is reflected in the way in which people from his country also relate in Cyprus.

He indicated that he knows nothing about any language training courses or trainings of any kind.

He says that his boss is nice and supports him when he needs help. In fact, he says, apart from his boss he does not know anyone here he can seek help from when he needs it.

He also added that his is a very pleasant work environment. He explained that he worked hard and as an example he mentioned that he has done 40 deliveries in 6.5 hours.

*“I feel very alone, I don’t know what to do.”*

<p>He stated that he does not want to stay in Cyprus. He has no friends and said that he does not want to have his children in Cyprus. He would definitely leave the country.</p>	
<p><b>An Iraqi Palestinian (107) who has been here for 5 years. A single man of 34, he is a qualified dentist and teaches biology at a private school with a clientele composed of third country nationals.</b></p>	
<p>He is not permitted to practice dentistry in Cyprus since this is reserved for those with permanent residency. Until recently, he would travel to Syria every summer in order to practice his dentistry skills and remain in touch with his profession.</p> <p>He was recognised in 2007 and has applied for a travel document but was told that only refugees are entitled to a travel document from the state. He was able to travel to Syria on a Palestinian passport.</p> <p>He explains that he avoids dealing with the welfare service and the Employment Service because of the way in which Palestinians are treated. He explains that there is a generalised pattern in the responses of state officials to this population and that he was not referring to isolated cases. He understands that the approach of the state is 'do what you can to push them out'</p> <p>He explains that the government has employed a disbursal approach towards Palestinians who lived in Larnaca. This has amounted to 'blackmailing them out of the town'. For example, people have been told that if they want to be sent for jobs by the Employment Service they would have to leave Larnaca.</p> <p>He added that officers from these public services approach Palestinians as if dealing with animals through what may be described a discourteous dismissal which verges on the aggressive. He, like others, described these actions as akin to ways in which animals are disbursed. Thus underscoring the sense that they were being treated as less than human.</p>	<p><i>"When they (public officials) see that you are not a Cypriot they treat you differently. You experience it and you feel it. It is not a very big problem with some things. But it is a big problem with other things."</i></p>



<p>He referred to his father’s medical condition and that it became important to secure a report from the hospital in order to submit it to the welfare service and the Employment Service. He said that he was informed that there are instructions from the government not to issue such reports.</p> <p>He is generally happy both with his housing circumstances as well as with his neighbours.</p> <p>He also explains that things are not necessarily easy for Cypriots but are far more difficult for persons with international protection.</p>	
<p><b>An Iranian (23) who has been in Cyprus for 10 years. This 38 year old single mother of two explained that she would not advise anyone to come to Cyprus. Though there are amongst a range of problems being faced in Cyprus some positives too.</b></p>	
<p>The positives of the experience in Cyprus relate primarily to the schools and to public services relating to children. Her children like their school and they don’t have any problem except for a problem that arose in relation to her younger child’s name. However, once the name was changed things calmed and the children do not face other problems even though she understands that Cypriot kids don’t like to mingle with her kids for reasons that she does not know.</p> <p>She has started her own business having previously worked as a cashier in one of the main supermarkets. The business was opened with the assistance of a rich person from her country who acted as a bank guarantor. Therefore she managed to get the necessary loan without too much hassle.</p> <p>The economic crisis has led her to believe that she would have been better off if she had stayed in her previous job.</p> <p>She considers that it is important to speak the local language as it is very important in order to establish effective networks. Connections are needed for anyone to solve their problems</p>	

in this country.

She described a situation within which she needed to secure a document quickly – this required securing a document from the asylum service – she mentioned a friend who helped her in the process. This friend was an employee who made it known that he could speed up access. She had never engaged in this transaction before but needed the document quickly. A negotiation ensued with him suggesting 400 euros, she said she couldn't do it for that amount and offered 200 which was accepted.

She is convinced that a combination of networks with bribe money would produce the right results in relation to this too.

It is important to acquire citizenship in order to overcome discrimination she says. For example, she said, refugees pay higher interest rate than Cypriots do. She mentioned friends that she has who bought their own house but they can't get tax relief because they are told they are not Cypriot.

*"I didn't know bribe culture exists here, but I realized that we have to bribe some people in governmental offices in order to make our things to be done. If you need your job to be done, find "good friends" in government."*

## 5 Key Qualitative Data II – Focus Groups

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This section provides an overview of the qualitative data generated through conduct of a series of focus groups. Selection of participants was made in such a way to ensure that they were generally representative of the sub-group or groups affected by the particular issues under discussion, taking account of age, gender, ethnic or national identification. A discussion schedule was used to structure the engagements which each lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours.

The primary purpose of the focus groups were to identify key issues, including those that have a particular impact on a specific group within the general population of those with international protection. In doing so it provided the opportunity to explore the experience of individuals who occupy common social characteristics in a collective context. Consequently, one general group was held with Recognised Refugees to identify key problems that are faced. A second group was made up of women to try and identify specific issues that may relate to them whilst a third was comprised of young people. A fourth group was comprised of Palestinians with Subsidiary Protection who had fled from Iraq and largely settled in Larnaca. A further cohort was comprised of Greek Cypriot citizens who acted as a control group against which the experience reported in the other discussions could be compared.

The salient data generated by each group is presented below and reflect the emergent themes which respondents highlighted as a reflection of their experience in relation to key issues raised. A general description of the group is followed by an introduction to key themes and a presentation of direct quotations through which views were expressed;

### **GROUP 1 Recognised Refugees**

**Participants** included seven Recognised Refugees, five men and two women from various backgrounds - Iranian, Iraqi, Kurdish, West African and Afghani.

**General Experience:** In the past two years it was observed that many refugees had lost their jobs. As a consequence, this led to a series of interactions with public offices which were characterised as amounting to unfair and humiliating treatment and which had the effect of transforming significantly the quality of their lives.

Those with families confronted a more complex reality as the problems faced by them were multifaceted, summed up by the observation that ‘having family is like having more problems, more victimisation possibilities and this is something Cyprus doesn’t want to take into consideration’.

### **Unequal Employment Opportunities:**

There is a widespread experience of unfair and unequal treatment in dealings with the Employment Service. Professional qualifications fail to be recognised and are thus not taken into consideration when identifying potential job opportunities.

*“Sectors of employment to which we get referred to are mostly manual/low-skilled jobs irrespective of our qualifications.”*

*“My employment officer insisted that I take up a job as a labourer in the farming sector though I was presenting to this employment officer my skills and education in Fine Arts and asked if there was something relevant to*

**Social Assistance:** Many found themselves dependent upon welfare assistance given the current absence of work opportunities available.

*"It has become a requirement that the House of Representatives approves our social assistance payments. This causes significant delays in receiving social assistance. And then you get only one month at a time despite the long delay. Only non-Cypriots go through this procedure."*

**Citizenship:** There are long delays in the examination of a citizenship application and is 'almost impossible' to acquire. Not having a citizenship severely limits the predictability of life not only in the long term but on a daily basis. Importantly it limits the educational opportunities of children.

*'Not having citizenship is the main obstacle to accessing equal rights'.*

**Long Term Residency:** Recognised Refugees are issued pink slips which need to be renewed every 3 years. This slip states that the holder of the pink slip has 'temporary residence'. This designation a) is given irrespective of whether a refugee has lived in Cyprus for 1 or 20 years and b) restricts the rights of refugees.

*"In the absence of citizenship, the possibility to use the EU Directive on Long Term Residency (inclusive – beneficiaries of international protection) that will come into force in 2013 is all we can look forward to as he believes this will secure rights such as freedom of movement and explore employment opportunities in other member states, especially during the economic crisis when a great number of refugees are unemployed. It will provide a permanent form of residency in Cyprus unlike the current residency status that beneficiaries of international protection are granted. The problem with refugees staying abroad for more than 3 months for higher education will be solved too."*

**Legislation and Access to Rights:** Cypriot legislation guarantees a wide set of rights but it was argued that these are not being properly implemented.

*"Being granted recognition as a refugee, we are told that we become entitled to certain rights but in practice this does not happen and gives a wrong impression to outsiders (i.e. at a European level) – this maintains the good image of the state at the cost of our rights in practice"*

*"When it comes to obligations, I am equal to the Cypriots, but when it is the case of claiming my rights, we are no longer equal."*

*"There are no clear laws for refugees; our rights are not clear. For example, we are told that we can apply for citizenship but then we are told that we can't get it. So why don't they tell us this from the beginning?"*

*"I was told by a leading political leader that 'refugees should be happy just because they are being allowed to stay here.' We are treated as if we are beggars and we are granted charity"*

**Identity Cards:** The recent change of policy which has led to the withdrawal of identity cards from those who enjoy international protection has created difficulties in accessing services provided by various public and private institutions (e.g. banks etc.). The identity cards given to Refugees until recently looked just like those issued to Cypriot citizens. With their withdrawal, refugees were being asked to present their 'pink slip' in their everyday transactions with institutions a matter which many felt stigmatized them.

It was also elaborated that there was no notice given to the persons concerned of this change in policy. Further, institutions still ask to see their identity cards, a matter which leads them to believe that no one was duly informed of this decision.

**Language Training:** Courses offered by various organisations were described as both inefficient and insufficient.

*"The language learning system is not appropriate for our needs. The courses are too short and it is impossible for us to learn the language that way."*

*"A few of these are good. But most of these are a big problem. The courses are not good and are very short. We have no real opportunities to learn the language. The teachers are not qualified. The method they use is very bad; they don't allow time for practicing the language; it is only 3 month long."*

**Lack of Advocacy:** There was a pronounced sense that there were few, if any, organisations which represented the interests of those with International Protection. Leaving the group with the perception that access to justice and rights was circumscribed.

*"There are no organizations monitoring our situation in Cyprus. They accept us as Refugees but then we are dispossessed of our rights. We are prisoners because we are Refugees who are not granted their rights."*

*"I would like to take legal action against the Cypriot state's refusal to grant us permanent residency rights. But there are obstacles in paying for legal representation as there is no legal aid available to us."*

**Entrepreneurship:** Some had managed to establish their own small-scale enterprises but many problems were confronted in managing day-to-day business.

*"I have to fight every day to be able to run my business. It is very difficult to set up a company because the government puts a lot of obstacles for Recognised Refugees. They tell you that you can open a business but then they make it difficult for you."*

**Household Utility Services:** Barriers were also experienced in relation to access to basic services with different conditions attached to their access when compared with Cypriot citizens.

*"Refugees and all non-Cypriots are asked to pay a considerable deposit in order to be given a contract with the electricity authority, the telecommunications authority and the Water board. This is a discriminatory practice as it is not demanded from Cypriots."*

**Banks and Insurance Companies:** acquisition of loan is almost impossible due to the temporary form of residence permit issued by the state. Opening of a bank account also became troublesome. Insurance companies refused to issue policies to refugees.

**Networks and Corruption:** Whilst discussing the significance of belonging or accessing networks the participants focused the discussion on corruption and its relation to networking. A

few examples were given where people claimed to have paid in order to get things done; this was presented as an alternative to networking.

As a respondent commented; *"If you pay you can get your job done easier"*. Almost everyone agreed with this contribution and claimed it to have been their experience at least once.

**Clarification, Awareness and Application of the Law:**

A widely agreed proposition was that the rights which this group possesses, and which they are aware of are not applied in practice. Further, that Cypriots in general, and state employees in particular, are simply not aware of what these particular rights are, which have been conferred on those with International Protection.

*"There are laws for recognized refugees but these are not applied"*

*"I was given a booklet that specified our rights and this was a very nice gesture but I believe that the problem is not that we don't know our rights; we do. The problem is that people here, Cypriots don't know the rights of Recognized Refugees; even people in governmental offices don't know and when they do they pretend not to know."*

**Dealing with Downward Mobility:**

A widespread pre-occupation within the group was the experience of downward mobility, created by a contraction in the labour market, and the failure of the state to respond to this predicament adequately. Many remarked that there was a failure by the Employment Service personnel to assess their specific qualifications and thus the suitability of work available.

*"People working in Government offices should receive training in how to treat me because I am a refugee but I am not a criminal. Many of us are educated; have degrees etc, so we could work according to our capabilities. But we are told we can only do manual jobs. When I tell the employment service what my degree is they tell me that I am a recognized refugee so I can get a job at a farm."*

*"There is downward mobility because skills, qualifications and long term residency or citizenship is not granted to us and this gives the excuse to public officials to exclude us and our children from opportunities."*

**GROUP 2 Women Refugees**

**Participants** included four women Recognised Refugees whose Ethno-national backgrounds were Russian, Syrian and Iranian.

**General Experience;** participants were characterised by tiredness induced by having to tackle the many obstacles confronted in trying to secure their rights as Recognised Refugees. There was a general understanding that legislatively they have a range of rights granted to them. Hence, on paper, they considered that they are protected by the law. However, administratively, as was explained during the course of the discussion, they faced resistance in practicing those rights.

*'Protecting our rights requires constant persistence with public employees'*

*'We have to fight for everything'*

*'The situation further worsened a couple of years ago.'*

One participant considered that her 20 year old son's suicide 9 months earlier was the outcome of depression induced by the lack of opportunities, racist bullying and hardship caused by the status of the family in Cyprus. It was for the same reasons, a few years earlier, that her husband was on hunger strike protesting their treatment whilst seeking recognition. She went on; *'After 5 years of waiting, we were recognised but nothing changed for us apart from acquiring an identity card'. She added, 'we are done with life. My husband doesn't want to live. I paid with the life of my son'.*

No one visited the family which received no support after the death of the son.

**Access to labour market:** All participants stated that they face discrimination in trying to access employment as well as once having accessed employment. Another participant talked about her son's experience in accessing the labour market - *'my son left his CV everywhere and the only answer he got was 'you are good but you are an alien'.* She believes that if they had citizenship, all her problem would be solved. *'My son is a very responsible person but we are made to feel like we are rubbish'*

Another participant explained that six months earlier she lost her job in a supermarket and that she is aware that the job was given to a European national. She felt that all these could be avoided if employers were aware that refugees shared the same rights as Cypriots and, also, that they are in a different position to economic migrants

**Institutional experience - Social Welfare Service & Public Employment Service:** Their experience with the welfare service was described as humiliating. One of the participants described how she was shouted at and dismissively sent to sit outside when she knocked on the door of an officer.

Besides their status as Third Country Nationals in a broader sense, discrimination by civil servants is also experienced based on visible cultural markers and more precisely on wearing a hijab which according to most of the participants creates greater disadvantage both in the public service as well as in society more generally.

A participant from Syria stated that her social worker made a political statement aimed at harassing her when she told her that *'I am with Assad. He is doing well'.*

All participants explained that there have been long delays in issuing welfare cheques for refugees because, on the one hand, parliament has asked to approve all payments to refugees and, on the other, social workers are not keen to process refugee applications. A participant also explained that she is not being fairly treated by social workers who fail to do proper assessment in meeting the basic needs of her family - *'in my four member family, the only income resource we have since my husband lost his job a few months ago is his unemployment benefit of 500 euros. Based on this my social worker cut our social assistance benefit. As things are now we pay our rent with this money and we are then left with nothing to cover other basic needs.'*

All participants gave their own story of how the welfare office in conjunction with the Employment Service used a variety of methods to close their files. One mentioned that not being

good enough in speaking Greek has been used as grounds for closing her file. An insufficient language skill was treated as a voluntary refusal to work. This caused the closure of her file for social assistance. Another mentioned that she was told that she would be sent for a cleaning job and when she refused to accept this her file was also closed.

A third participant mentioned that she was told by welfare officers to knock on doors asking for house cleaning jobs instead of coming to their offices.

Three participants agreed that there exist what they called 'fake jobs'.

*"These are jobs that don't exist. We go to the employers whose details were given to us by the employment service and they tell us that they already have employees for those positions. Companies/ business claim to have job vacancies for various administrative reasons and accordingly the public employment office refer potential employees to them while the employers are not willing to employ anyone."*

It was reported that there is a refusal by employment service officers to ensure equal access to the job market for the refugees and that regardless of the skills/abilities participants are offered primarily cleaning jobs by the Employment Service.

*"Sometimes we ask to apply for jobs and we are told 'you are not good for this'."*

One of the participants was referred to a vocational training by the Employment Service, however, following the successful completion of the training, the Employment Service was unwilling to take into account the new skills acquired when sending her for work.

**Citizenship:** All participants reported that not having the citizenship constitutes the main obstacle in accessing their rights.

All participants submitted application for naturalisation. One was denied citizenship as she has not met the seven years legal residence requirement. Another applied about four years ago, had her 1<sup>st</sup> interview but has not heard anything else from the authorities since then. The other two participants applied a few years ago and are waiting to see if they will be called for an interview.

Asked whether they would like to stay in Cyprus if the citizenship is granted, one participant said that she would like to stay though the other three responded that they would leave.

One of the participants explained that her son 'can't get married to his girlfriend because her family thinks that he has no future in Cyprus. If we get citizenship, this problem will also be solved. My son would get a job, he will be able to marry his girlfriend, and I could travel to exhibit the

*"I wanted to fight for my rights but I prefer to leave from Cyprus. It's like a prison here. We are tired in this country"*

*"I have a university degree and the only thing that has ever been offered me is a cleaning job. I am not ashamed of doing that but I asked the employment officer: 'would you send a Cypriot in my situation to a cleaning job? I too feel like I am a prisoner and would like to leave.'"*

*"I would like to take my family and go where we could be accepted. But I was told not to apply for citizenship by a migration officer. I was also informed by others that it does not matter how many years refugees stay in Cyprus, nobody gets nationality and that the only thing we can get is a travel document."*



*things I make. But I am afraid I will die without citizenship.'*

**Long Term Residency (as an alternative option to citizenship):** One of the participants explained that she has been informed that the EU directive for long term residency will be implemented soon. This, she hoped, will give her family the freedom of movement and the possibility of seeking residency in order to work in other EU member states.

**ID cards:** The recent withdrawal of Cypriot identity cards was also an issue for this group. The withdrawal of the card creates problems when dealing with banks and other private and public authorities: *'we used identity cards on a regular basis and now we are asked to bring many different documents [pink slip, travel documents etc.] with us to replace the ID card.'*

**Travel Documents:** All participants possessed refugee travel documents but most of them never used it to travel abroad.

One participant referred to her experience at different airports where she was delayed and felt humiliated by the response of authorities at the sight of her travel document, largely because it is hand written and this created suspicion on their part.

**Entrepreneurship** one of the participants brought an album with photographs of clothes she makes herself. Recently her son built a website for her for online shopping.

*'On the internet I am famous but not in Cyprus. I have been invited to exhibitions in Germany and in other countries but I can't go. I don't have money for that'. She spends around 20 hours per day on her craft and has a huge collection of unique clothing. My wish is to open a business in Cyprus once I manage to meet the financial needs necessary for the shop.'*

She feels that there is nowhere she can turn for advice.

### **Barriers to Integration - Discrimination and Cultural Differences**

Three of the participants considered that there are two main grounds on the basis of which they face discrimination; ethnicity & religion.

*"If you are a Muslim here you are a Turk"*

*'Cypriots believe that they are superior to us; we are not animals though they treat us like ones. There are Cypriots who are good to us but many are not and this country is small and if there are people like this, it makes a lot of difference in our life'. She believed that Cyprus is very uncomfortable place to be in that sense although she knows she could face similar problems in other countries.*

Another explained that her son faces discrimination although he looks European and speaks perfect Greek and English and concluded; *'they [Cypriots] don't accept us'*.

*'No one cares to help. I can't find a job. For me my life is finished. My other son says that Cypriots don't understand us. My eldest son used to come home crying. He always had problems at school because he was bullied'*. Both experienced racism. My youngest son believes that one of the main reasons for the suicide of his eldest brother was the fact that he did not feel accepted and was being bullied quite often.'

Another mentioned how her daughter was locked in the toilet by her schoolmates. She was bullied due to her Islamic name/religion. She didn't want to go out with her mother because she wears hijab.

The Russian refugee had a different story to tell; *'my son has a lot of local friends who help him a lot'*. She explained that she and her son face problems with the state authorities in terms of accessing their rights, but not with the local society with whom she has satisfactory interaction.

Further, the Syrian refugee explained that her neighbours are her good friends. They understand her and support her emotionally.

Yet, generally, they all believe they are rejected by the locals - *'they [Cypriots] don't understand us and they don't even try to understand us. Sometimes we feel that we are talking to the wall'*.

One said and others agreed that the Cypriots have a misconception about refugees - *'they don't know much about refugees. They have an image of hungry people in the desert that came here to take their food. They don't believe that we are here for protection and that in the past we had a dignified life in our country'*.

*'I have been bullied and had very rude comments directed towards me in relation to my hijab'*

*'People see us as terrorists. My kids prefer to go out with their father, but not with me wearing my hijab'*.

*'Cypriots connect Islam with their history of Turkish occupation and formulated a negative attitude towards Muslims.'*

Some participants talked about cultural differences between them and the local culture - difference of understandings and priorities in life creates a further barrier in being part of the society. This appears to be a great problem among the youngsters those with children said.

She also referred to her experience with a psychologist she was seeing: *'she doesn't understand me because she is Cypriot. She doesn't understand how my life is.'*

### **GROUP 3    Young Refugees**

**Participants** numbered four and included a Palestinian male, 16 year old who had been in Cyprus more than two years. He was currently studying at a private English language high school in Limassol, fluent in English and with a fair understanding in Greek. An Iraqi, male, 18 year old who had been resident for more than 5 years in Cyprus. He was currently studying in the top grade of a public high school and was fluent in Greek and English. Thirdly, a 19 year old male from Iran who had been on the island more than 9 years. He was waiting for admission to university, fluent in Greek & English. Finally, an Iranian female, 20 year old who had been in

Cyprus for 9 years and was studying in a Greek university. She had graduated from public school in Cyprus and was fluent in Greek and fairly competent in English.

**General Issues** arose out of the fact that three of the youths had spent a considerable proportion of their lives in Cyprus. Two of them attended primary as well as secondary school in Cyprus. Inevitably, having been exposed to Cypriot culture from an early age they have also been influenced by it. Simultaneously, they maintained a strong sense of their own distinct identity, bringing an awareness of the circumstances of their families. They did not always find it easy to relate to their Cypriot counterparts and their exclusion from opportunities that the Cypriot students were presented was a major factor which reinforced a sense of 'out-sidedness' and marginalisation.

**Influence of Local Culture:** For them, the influence of local culture on them is primarily reflected at home through their behaviour, but more demonstrably through their use of language. The use of language in homes where children of school age live can signal the space that can separate parents and children. For example, it was reported by those who had attended state school that in speaking the mother tongue they, to varying degrees, translate from Greek, a matter which is picked upon by and upsets the parents. Further, communication between parents and children proceeds through the mother tongue whilst siblings communicate amongst themselves in Greek. In the experience of these participants children are generally more fluent and comfortable to speak, read and write in Greek than in their mother tongue. Local influence on children extends beyond the use of language.

One of the participants explained that; *'we are influenced in different ways by Cypriot society. Another example is that often I fight with my parents. In our country, if you want to go out with your friends, you need to come back by 10pm but here it doesn't matter'*. Another elaborated that the relationship between Cypriot parents and their children is different than the equivalent relationship amongst their ethnic group. In their experience in Cyprus it is more open and more lenient.

There was also a suggestion that the degree to which a cultural gap between parents and children opens up as a consequence of the variable degree to which each generation is receptive to the local culture, was also dependent on the type of family in question - if the parents are open enough they also adjust with the local culture and their new social environment, then no major tensions emerge. In the case of this participant, in her family, this cultural gap has been merged with time.

**Feeling Part of Cypriot Society:** The majority of the participants expressed an opinion and shared the view that though they have been influenced by Cypriot culture they could not become Cypriotised in the sense of becoming *'like the average Cypriot boy'*. They expressed pride in their national origin and disinterest in what they considered to be a monotonous

'Asian, blacks, Muslims, Arabic, terrorist... that's all they know. They don't know the difference between Iraq, Iran, India or Palestine'.

passing of free time in Starbucks or a preoccupation with their attire. Their Cypriot contemporaries, according to the group, have a very limited understanding of the world.

Similar observations were also made of their Cypriot contemporaries' attitude on social networking sites. One of them explained that; *'my Cypriot Facebook friends are close to their own circle only and they don't want to open up to others - very much like in their real life.'*

*'There are only two ways of getting close to Cypriot youth. One is to talk about football, they like it if you support their teams. The second way is to talk about women - commenting about girls - how she walks, talks, her appearance.'*

The participants also explained that they would be interested in big concerts, trips, technology. Leisure sites such as museums in Cyprus are not diverse; they are, rather, very much concentrated in their national histories only.

**Gender Perspective in Making Friendships:** The female participant explained that she has a lot of Cypriot friends and that these friendships have been an important aspect of her socialisation process. She believed that making an effort and taking the initiative to socialise with Cypriots is important; *'if you keep your distance and consider them as inferior to you, they will become even more distant.'* Though she is also very clear that her experience studying in Greece is very different, a more diverse and positive context.

Nevertheless she still hangs out a lot with her friends in Cyprus. She explains that her parents did not use to be very receptive to these relationships but they have adjusted with time to Cyprus.

Some participants considered that children can often be the bridge between local society and their parents because children are exposed to a more normalised environment, that of the school, they get closer to local society and they learn the ins and outs of it. Parents, especially if they cannot get a job do not get the same opportunities.

**Physical & verbal racial harassment by Cypriots:** Different experience was noted in relation to the degree of racial harassment, bullying and the response of teachers. Participants mentioned their experience at school which they described as racist bullying directed towards all students who originate from anywhere to the south and east of Cyprus. It was described as common to use the flat category of Arab combined with any negative adjective to refer to these students with the exception of those of Chinese origin which are differentiated and different name calling is reserved for them. Students registered incidents of locking third country nationals in the toilets, being laughed at in relation to their non-Cypriot names and being hit. Participants registered that this kind of abuse occurs in all schools but to a different degree in public and in private schools - in private schools, no physical violence was reported and teachers and other school staff appear to be fairer than those reported in relation to the public schools. Participants from both public and private schools complained that the local teachers tend to be 'taking the side' of Cypriot kids in case of any conflicts.

The female participant explained that she also faced physical and verbal abuse by her classmates and that bullying and aggression is also aimed at girls. This was her experience

especially during her years at lower secondary school. It included being hit and locked in the toilets. Her predicament and complaints were ignored by the headmistress at the time. As a child she was sceptical about sharing this kind of problems with her parents who were likely to approach the school authority and in consequence she felt she would have faced more bullying from her classmates. She explained that with time, as she and her classmates were growing up together in the same school context, this situation improved and abuse increasingly declined. But as she underscored she invented a Greek version of her name, which she continues to use since it disguises her identity and makes it easier for her to be accepted.

**Society's Perception of Refugees:** the participants felt that refugees are primarily seen as a drain on financial resources. The understanding that refugees are *'taking our money'* has emerged as a phenomenon two years ago with the influence of right wing political parties and the participants indicated that they experienced the consequences of this belief on the school ground.

Another dimension raised is the lack of awareness in relation to different national origins and religious identities.

'Locals don't understand the difference between different national origins. There is a tendency to identify as Arab both people of Arabic and non-Arabic origin. Further, if you are a Muslim, then in their eyes you are a Turk and therefore you are their enemy'.

**Segregation Among Students:** there is visible 'grouping' of students based on their ethnicity – Cypriot and non-Cypriots – feeling of exclusion. *'Non-Cypriot students (Iraq, Iran, Kurd, African, Russian, Pontius) hang out together. They don't usually mix with the Cypriots and vice-versa'*. In the experience of the student from the private school a more multicultural and more mixed environment existed at his school with nearly equal numbers of Cypriots and non-Cypriots.

Depending on the place of origin and the physical appearance of non-Cypriots (i.e. perceptions as to the significance of skin colour), there are different forms and degree of racism perceived.

*'If you are black, it's an extra issue' but if you look more or less like Cypriots then people can perceive you as 'half Cypriot'.*

But there are also other cultural markers beyond skin colour. The mothers of three of the participants wear the hijab and they mentioned that this triggers prejudice and discriminating attitudes if not bullying. One participant said: 'I didn't want my mom to appear in my school. My brother feels the same now. He doesn't want her to accompany him anywhere in public.' She mentioned that as she grew older, she has managed to negotiate this issue and appear in public with her mother which she often does.

*'My mother wears the hijab. I have felt how people see me differently because of that. But I was ok with my mother'*

**Non-Cypriot Name:** But even when it becomes difficult to tell Cypriots and non-Cypriots apart on the basis of appearance prejudice can be triggered by the sound of names. Some participants explained that on first contact they are often assumed to be Cypriots. They have excellent language skills as well as Cypriot-like physical appearance. But, as soon as their names are disclosed, people usually change their response by disengaging or becoming negative.

*'I have often felt pressure in my school environment to change my name to a Greek one.'*

For the female participant changing her name from a Persian sounding one to a Greek sounding version of it had the effect of minimising the racism she faced in early school years.

*'At school, they used to see me as someone different than themselves even though I was speaking perfect Greek. My classmates often used to call me with a Greek sounding name similar to my real name and in this way persuaded me that changing my name was the right thing to do. This helped a lot in changing their attitude towards me.'*

Now she has a lot of friends and they no longer treat her as someone different. She believes that her Greek name is also easier for her friends to remember.

**Accessing Rights:** The group asserted that non-Europeans in Cyprus were excluded from many jobs and that Cypriots distribute jobs on the basis of ethnicity instead of looking at skills and abilities and utilising different people according to what they can contribute for the

*'The same happens with education. It becomes very difficult to progress because the government will not give opportunities to us, refugees. Yet many of us left school with good marks. But we do not have money to go and study and the government is not willing to let us have the opportunity. So what do they want us to do? Go and join other refugees in the farms?'*

*'I applied for a student grant but they wrote to me that I can't have it because I am a refugee. I have gone to study in Greece to become a vet. But all the time, with the insecurity, we cannot afford this.'*

*'In our family we have experienced a lot of difficulties to secure our rights and understand what is going on. But we still haven't. Things are not easy because you need to fight to get through the system. The Cypriots themselves can shout and scream and demand their rights. Or they use 'meson'. But we, many times, feel scared to fight. The authorities can punish us if we rock the boat.'*

improvement of the country.

Asked if they would be interested to acquire citizenship some replied that they would want to but Cyprus will not grant them citizenship.

*'I asked them [responsible authority], but they said that they have accepted a very small number of citizenship applications. I believe we should all apply and if they don't give us, then we can use it against the government.'*

*'If Cyprus gives us the opportunity then we are willing to work hard to contribute to this country. They could use us to contribute for the advancement of this country. But if they tell us that we are taking their money, then what? We are young and have the motivation to do anything in the future. I would love to invest my youth for Cyprus. Cyprus is losing from us by blindly sending people to work in the farms.'*

*'As soon as I get it, I will leave from Cyprus overnight. But in reality in order to get a Cypriot passport, I need to marry a Cypriot.'*

**Strategies to Survive:** Language constitutes a key strategy and using all the gestures and the accent makes remarkable difference. As one observed; *'if you go to any government offices, speaking as the Cypriots do you get better treatment.'*

The same person also reported that there was a tendency to change his name when he was young in order to get along. *'People used to call me 'Nicos', 'Michalis'. Now I don't like to change my name. Now I am who I am'.* And another reported; *'We may speak Greek like Cypriots but when they hear names, their [locals] attitude changes.'*

**The Future in Cyprus:** Asked if they can imagine spending the rest of their lives in Cyprus the participants responded that there is no way they will spend the rest of their life in Cyprus. The problems already faced in terms of accessing the rights as well as lack of opportunities for improving their lives, are seen as prohibitive in that respect. Asked if they would stay should they be presented with opportunities to secure equal treatment responses varied; *'No, no, no...they will never change their mind of seeing refugees differently. If I was given opportunity, I would have definitely stayed here because I would have been grateful and thus live and work here'*.

*'I prefer thousand times living abroad. I don't want to stay here.' (even though she is well-integrated into Cypriot society and claims to face no major difficulties)*

*'If I am happy and given the opportunity I need, I will love to be part and contribute to this country. I am happy with that'*.

*'The country is good but I hate being here because of the system – they treat animals better than they treat us.'*

*'It's important for local society to understand that we, just like anyone else, can contribute for the improvement of this country. However, they only place obstacles in our way.'*

*'They need to understand that people from other countries can contribute too – we are not here to take their money.'*

All participants agreed with the fact that if the opportunities to a better life is secured, they would prefer to spend their life in Cyprus.

However, Cyprus failed to fill the gaps of the loss of existing social bonds in their country of origin. Participants mentioned that they didn't find anything exciting/ meaningful as complementary to balance their social life. Some long for their social life (i.e. friends, relatives – social environment in general) back home.

*'I want to go back! But life is difficult to survive'*.

*'I want to be a businessman. I am doing all the studying that will lead me to that direction. I want to make the change for my family'*.

*'After my studies, I am hoping to get a job. But I am definitely not staying in Cyprus'*.

#### **GROUP 4 Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection – Palestinian Community (from Iraq).**

**Participants** included **four** men, each with Subsidiary Protection, who have been in Cyprus for more than 6 years. They had settled with their families in Larnaca which is where the group meeting took place.

**General Situation:** Arriving here from Iraq, and generally coming as members of family groups, this substantial community had settled together in Larnaca. They characterised their circumstances as one in which their conditions have markedly deteriorated over the past two years. More specifically, the media was repeatedly identified to have played a central role in accelerating the deterioration of their relationship with others. This sense of precariousness was felt to also be exacerbated by difficulties encountered within the labour market with its concomitant impact on their financial situation. Not only was it perceived that they experienced unfavourable access to the labour market; they also felt that during the past two years key frontline workers in public service offices based in Larnaca had had instructions not to assist the Palestinian population. The motive imputed to these actions being part of a general policy which aimed to disperse them beyond the city limits if not to push them out of Cyprus altogether. The felt need to leave had propelled many families who had previously settled to seek asylum elsewhere – some risking their lives to reach Australia by boat. Their fate is unknown.<sup>12</sup>

**Employment Situation:** Like others, they felt as if their particular needs and capacities were ignored by Employment Service workers and that any work opportunities that did arise were either very badly paid or of an unsuitable nature. In the case of any problems or difficulties faced with the job offer by the Employment Service, no assistance was offered to remedy the situation but rather the response was to consider this as an instance of a ‘voluntary refusal of job offer’, and the case closed.

*‘Our skills and our abilities are not being taken into account and we are constantly pushed to take up unskilled jobs under harsh working conditions.’*

*‘One of my sons is working in a petrol station with 700 euro and the other was sent to a car-wash out of town with 400 euro. He was asked to start working at 4am and he has no transportation to reach there at that time of day.’*

*‘There is a strategy which the employment service is using. They want to close the file of people who have a file with them and with the social welfare service. But if you go and ask them for employment they say that there are no jobs.’*

*‘If I go to the employment service and I express my willingness to work they have no job to offer me. If I go to apply for welfare and then get referred to the employment service, they immediately find several jobs, like the ones we have been talking about. They try to find all possible excuses to close my file’.*

*‘My wife was recently sent to a sheep farm to work with extended working hours on a daily basis – these are extreme working conditions. To get to the job she has to travel out of the city, no transportation facilities have been offered and she has been offered a salary of 300 Euros. In the past month my wife has been offered 4 jobs in farms. I can’t help but think that they are seeking to close her file and terminate her welfare benefit.’*

*‘If a young person goes to employment service to get a job, they say they don’t have jobs to provide but they are likely to give jobs to elderly person. Or if it is a couple, the wife is likely to get a job because she will find difficulty to accept that job and the husband is given nothing. They just find excuses to close the file’.*



**Problems of Childcare:** This issue became pressing when job opportunities were offered which, according to the participants, were very badly paid and well below the minimum wage applicable for some of these occupations. However, childcare needs arising out of parents working, were not taken into account. The welfare services were charged with not acknowledging any responsibility for providing any supplementary support in the form of day-care for their children. This created additional difficulties especially when these jobs are offered by the Employment Service given the power of this office to make decisions which then determined the forms and levels of benefits to be received from the welfare service.

*'There has been a case where the parents were sent to jobs far from each other and they have a 18-months old child. When he asked about childcare, he was told 'it's not our problem'.*

*'Nurseries that are funded by the state are not offered to us to overcome this difficulty.'*

**Professional Qualifications:** At the same time the participants explained that those with professional qualifications are prevented from practicing their profession because the regulations require that the practice of certain professions requires that the concerned persons are permanent residents or citizens of the Republic of Cyprus. As persons with Subsidiary Protection they are excluded from those professions even if they have lived in Cyprus for many years.

*"But when will I ever get permanent residence? Not even in 10 years! In Germany, after passing an intensive language course, I can do a 2-year-course and then practice my profession. I have friends who are refugees there and currently practicing their professions."*

*"I have a friend with a high level science qualification from France. He has tried acquiring work in the field of his expertise in Cyprus but was not allowed to acquire a relevant job in Cyprus because, he was told, there are residence permit requirements as well as other regulations which would disqualify him."*

**Public Authorities:** Participants explained that the attitude of officers in the public services was one of harassment, disrespect, intolerance and discrimination, exemplified by the use of the term 'Arab', rather than 'Palestinian' to refer to them. This antagonistic attitude resulted in a strong sense of insecurity; 'we feel threatened by the public authorities'.

*'The government doesn't care about Arabs and it is as Arabs that they approach us'.*

The public offices that these respondents identified with the expression of this hostility include the Asylum Service, Employment Service and Welfare Services in particular.

*'When we go to any public department they respond to us as if we are monkeys!'*

**Welfare Services:** There was a profound sense of being both dismissed and cast to one side by a variety of welfare and health services. But, at times, the attitudes described also became hostile and aggressive to the extent that some members of the community would choose to fend for themselves under difficult circumstances rather than put up with what they described as deeply humiliating relationships.

*'They don't care about us – welfare officers just want the papers at the end of every month and tell us 'go' after that.'*

*'There is no respect by any authorities - hospital, welfare or anywhere. If you have difficulty speaking in English or in Greek, they will mistreat you.'*

*'We are told: 'if you take money for too long, we will take your Subsidiary Protection away''*

*'A social worker from the Larnaca welfare service asked me 'if there is a war between Turkey and Cyprus, which side will you take? Will you support us or them?'*

*'I don't go to employment service or the welfare office, it makes my life a bit easier but still if I have to go to other offices, it is still a problem. Or if my family members go there, I see them distressed because they are being harassed and are subjected to shouting.'*

Participants explained that there is an intensely negative response to Palestinians by public officers that is as if they are on a mission *'to finish with Palestinian refugees'*.

*'When we ask to receive their decisions in writing, they refuse to give us anything. They want to avoid written proof that they are denying us our rights' – participants mentioned this in relation to their rights to welfare benefit.'*

They also felt that there is no prospect for them to complain to the authorities about this mistreatment - *'we don't have any right. If we complain our lives become more difficult.'*

The authorities, especially the Welfare Services & Employment Service relay their decision of the closure of their files in verbal form and despite the insistence from the part of the beneficiaries it is very difficult to obtain a written document which could have given the claimers the option to file an administrative appeal at the court.

### **Medical Reports/Certificates**

A few stories related to more recent experience where public sector doctors refused to issue Palestinian patients with medical certificates regarding their medical condition. For example, a Palestinian who has been in Cyprus for 11 years went to the hospital to acquire a health report for a medical problem he was facing. His son who accompanied him there initially built a good rapport with the doctor as he spoke perfect Greek having grown up in Cyprus. When he had to mention that he was a Palestinian the doctor's attitude changed and refused to give his father the required report. On another occasion a doctor explained *'we have instruction from the government not to issue medical reports.'*

## IPP Identification

The procedure of identifying IPPs is often lengthy inconsistent and lacks transparency, according to respondents.

*'We know of Palestinian asylum seekers who have been waiting for a decision for as long as 5 years. Is there a law that sets limit to this procedure?'*

**Residence permit:** Beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection are given a 'temporary residence permit' and according to the participants more recently the validity of this residence permit has been reduced from one year to 6 month – this has created major problems in accessing the labour market, securing a health card, travelling abroad even in an emergency situation. This, they explained occurs because the renewal of the pink slip is time consuming and the gap between the application for renewal and the issuance of the new pink slip is considerably long (it was reported to take approximately three months). As one person simply observed; *'Without a pink slip we cannot access the labour market, cannot have a health card, etc'*

**Revocation of Subsidiary Protection Status:** In the past two years the authorities have written to Iraqi Palestinians calling them to an interview with the aim of re-examining their Subsidiary Protection status and addressing their possible return to Iraq. The reasoning for the withdrawal of Subsidiary Protection has been based on an alleged improvement of the security situation in Iraq.

The participants stressed that many amongst the Palestinian community believe that the revocation effort has nothing to do with safer conditions back in Iraq but rather with a drive to push the Palestinians towards a voluntary departure. *'As a method it has worked. We had 2000+ Palestinians in Larnaca and 1700 left'*

*'Cyprus asks us to go to Iraq saying it is safe there. But Iraq is not my country. I am Palestinian and I was a refugee there'. 'We are Palestinians, not Iraqis! If they want to send me back somewhere, they should consider sending me back to Palestine. They relate us to Iraq and treat us as if we are Iraqi but we are not Iraqi!'*

**Conditions Attached to Granting International Protection:** The participants explained that during the 'revocation' interviews they are given a declaration to sign that they will refrain from

*'Refugees are told by the asylum service, 'if you don't find jobs within the next 2-3 months, we will withdraw Subsidiary Protection from you'.*

*'The asylum service officer called me for an interview again and he told me he would take away my Subsidiary Protection Status unless I secure work.'*

making claims for state benefits. In the course of the interview significant attention is given to the ability of the interviewee to work and warnings are given that protection will be withdrawn otherwise. The participants believe that this is a strategy followed in the past two years by all other related authorities (Employment Service, welfare service, etc) under the initiative of the asylum service.

*'It is as if it is my ability to work that makes me a refugee now.'*

*'During our 2nd interviews we were asked to sign a paper to declare that we will never claim welfare benefit as long as we are in Cyprus'.*

*I was returning from abroad, and the first concern of immigration officer at the airport was 'do you work here?' – The officer's concern was not even the validity of the pink slip or any other travel documentation I had.*

*I had a car accident and when the police came, the first thing he asked me was 'do you work?'*

The participants explained that they are aware of a meeting called by the Asylum Service where community representatives and elderly heads of a few big clans were asked to cooperate with a plan to disperse the Palestinians from Larnaca to other towns, as a first preference being Limassol and a second preference being Nicosia. It was explained at this meeting that due to the economic crisis other towns present better opportunities for work than Larnaca and that a failure to comply with the plan would lead to the termination of the welfare benefit paid to the Palestinians in Larnaca.

*'We said we can't force our people to move'. Asylum Service said 'you have to convince your people to move.'*

*'Most of the people who left from Larnaca, they are threatened to leave - by force, not by choice. They signed papers not to claim welfare benefit.'*

### **Racism Targeted at the Palestinian/Arab community**

The respondents also described hostility directed towards from some members of the wider community. What may originally take the form of deeply prejudicial language could escalate in to violent assault. But racist dispositions do not appear to always remain simply verbal but could take the form of open violence. There was a common perception that when there are physical attacks on individuals reporting crime of this nature to the police was futile. It was assumed that no action be taken by the authorities. In this context, one respondent described how his son was stopped by a group of 10-12 man and assaulted.

*'Somebody wrote on the walls of the inner city 'Fuck you Arab' so we took a picture and gave it to the Asylum Service. They laughed. We sent to other organisations and to the UNHCR. We even complained to the police but they said it's not our job, and that municipal staff will remove it.'*

Further, the group also reported that schools were not safe environments for many of their children. Bullying and instances of physical violence were faced by refugee children at school and subsequent complaints to the school authorities were often futile.

*'They [locals] call us Turkish' - he believes this happens because of their religious identity in a context that the Cypriots conflate the Muslim and the Turkish identity.'*

**Travel document:** The policy of not issuing a travel document to those granted subsidiary protection acted as a *de facto* prohibition on free movement which had important practical consequences. Travelling abroad for the purpose of taking up job opportunities could have been a remedy with the onset of an economic crisis and a decline in available work in Cyprus. However, participants acknowledged the fact that even Recognised Refugees are not given the opportunity to take up jobs in other EU member states.

### **Low Recognition Rate (as Refugee) Among Palestinians**

Participants believed that Palestinians should be recognised as refugees - *'we are real refugees'*. The situation of Palestine is very unstable and resolution to the conflict on which this instability rests is not unexpected in the near future. Consequently, there is real potential that the residence of Palestinians in Cyprus may become permanent rather than a transitory stage.

*'My son's father-in-law got recognition. Some people went to congratulate him but others asked him what did you do to serve the government to get this status awarded?'*

However, only very few Palestinians have been granted Refugee status to date.

## Attitudes to Assimilation and Integration

There was a strong sense of collective identity apparent amongst the group on the basis of their common religion and national identity. It can be partly explained by common characteristics of diasporic communities which are commonly bound by an overarching sense of common

*'The biggest mistake of our community association was when we held a big festival with sports competitions and other cultural activities. Cypriots saw a big community, saw our cars, then we started hearing 'Palestinians are so many here ...They saw our presence in big numbers and got afraid.'*

national and religious dispositions, but this is heightened in the case of Palestinians worldwide engaged as they are in a pronounced national conflict with distinctly religious overtones. Further, since the community in Cyprus is both substantial (compared to other ethno-national minorities) and generally concentrated in the Larnaca area the grounds for reproducing a strong collective identity are present.

What this gives rise to is a complex relationship between the community and the local population more generally, as well as state institutions.

On the one hand there are the conditions to organise assertively and with confidence but this can then be met by hostility and pathologisation where activism of this sort is neither expected from non-Cypriots, let alone

*'Cypriots don't want hijab women or Muslims. Other nationalities adapt with Cypriot culture easily. They know we will not change like others do.'*

those who can be cast as the 'undeserving poor'. Add to the equation that the community is seen to be that much more distinguishable from others on the grounds of being both Muslims and Arabs and the conflict which has been recently experienced in Larnaca becomes easier to grasp. An important outcome of this conflict has been a general refusal to contenance any sign of assimilation into the wider culture but this can come at a cost; *'We are Muslims. They have problem in their mind with Turkey.'*

**Trust Within the Community:** The community can appear homogenous and deeply bound together, viewed from the outside, but this belies a much more complex reality. The community is rife with suspicion expressed between individuals, family groups and clans. As one commented; *'...we trust 0% of any of our own people.'* He went on to elaborate a deeply held suspicion that; *'...the Asylum service recruited spies from us.'* He offered evidence to support this claim from his own experience; *'I went to the Asylum Service one day and the officer there had information about me – he told me about my family clan'*. This information, he asserted, had been harvested by the Asylum Service from another community member who had been offered something in return. Elaborating on this point he suggested that the conferment of a particular status on a person could be offered in this transaction to the extent that; *'As soon as someone gets recognition, it's suspicious!'*

**Greek Language Competency:** Participants acknowledged the importance of learning Greek language – notified the fact of not having opportunity to gain proficient knowledge – available courses are run for a short period of time and are often not effective

*'They tell us the alphabet and then ask us to solve a problem. Of course we can't do it if we don't know the rules.'*

enough in helping the learners to achieve the ability to communicate in Greek.

Courses under the integration programmes funded by various European Solidarity Funds were considered to be of low quality: 'we don't learn to speak Greek, we don't learn to write. And we get a certificate for passing the course in Greek language. Some of us didn't even attend classes but they asked us to come and sign the attendance list'.

## **GROUP 5      Greek Cypriot Citizens (Control Group)**

**Participants** were Cypriot citizens who were based in Nicosia and included one man and five women. All were searching for work and doing so under difficult circumstances as heads of single parent families. Selection of participants was done on the basis of providing a 'control' group against which to judge the data based on research with those who have secured International Protection in Cyprus. They constituted a group of subjects that was matched as closely as possible with the target research population, but were not themselves people with International Protection. This was done bearing in mind that the Republic commonly claims that those with International Protection 'have the same rights as Cypriot citizens.'

The composition of the group was intended to provide a roughly equivalent group of Cypriot citizens to the target group, in a variety of important ways. In particular, the intention was to capture the experience of interacting with local state institutions and services from a position of relative disadvantage as well the barriers confronted in seeking to secure.

The issues discussed concentrated on some of the same themes which emerged in other focus groups where a common event or relationship was likely to coincide between the control group and the rest. Thus common issues and events explored were;

- Accessing welfare
- Interactions with the Employment Service
- Managing a household budget
- Issues of trust and fairness in relation to state institutions and experiences of them
- The roll of networks in securing public resources.
- Securing general rights
- Safety and security
- Relationships within the local neighbourhood

The results are not specifically reported on here, where the focus in the chapter has been on those with International Protection, but inform the judgements made about those research results and the subsequent analysis.

The following points are important to note in contextualising the corresponding experience of persons with IP. Participants in the Greek Cypriot control group shared the same experience on the following issues:

All participants were made redundant due to the economic downturn though they were all unsuspecting of the difficulty in securing new jobs. Though some of them lost jobs which they

remained in for at least five years others, in search of a better job, secured different positions in the past without difficulty.

All participants lost their jobs during the course of 2011. This experience gave rise to the following general observations;

a) In the past employment was commonly secured via word of mouth recruitment. Consequently they were ill prepared for a competitive process in securing work. It was felt that whilst networks through which employment can be secured were key, it was accepted that they should also utilise other methods in job hunting, Given increased competition within the labour market it was felt that job hunting skills would be necessary to increase their employability.

b) The difficulty of securing work brought them closer to the Employment Service. This group felt deeply disappointed by the lack of engagement of the employment officers. It was a shared experience that supportive employment officers were an exception and that the most common experience they have had during their visits to the employment service was of the indifference shown to their predicament. Little information would appear exchanged between them and the officers and the general feeling was that these functionaries were gate keepers, offering access to scarce resources on an arbitrary basis.

c) It became increasingly felt that retraining was also needed to enhance their employability. This issue constituted a second point of contention for this group as they felt that opportunities for vocational training were not advertised effectively and in a context where the majority of people were not aware of the existence of such programmes the employment officers again had control over who to let into this opportunity and who not.

The participants felt that the employment service should be much more transparent about opportunities available and adopt an open access to information policy in relation to vacancies and vocational training courses.

## 7 Analysis - Case Studies and Key Issues

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In this chapter we explore a critical set of issues which span the domain of “markers and means” as well as foundational rights. In doing, so we link a range of predicaments, state responses and actual outcomes which have a detrimental impact on the lives of many within the population under examination here.

Three case studies are presented below which go to the core of the experience reported by those with International Protection and serve to underscore the conditions within which securing integration would appear to be seriously compromised. Whilst there are a wider range of conclusions which can be drawn from the data presented so far, elaborated on in the following chapter, the analysis presented here is secured through the particular case studies.

The cases were selected because they were prominent issues identified by respondents themselves as well as being illustrative of a series of interconnected, as well as recurrent, situations that those with International Protection had to face on a regular basis. Broken into three subsections, these case studies are;

1. **Access to Employment** – a consideration of how the target group enters the labour market and the role of the Employment Service in assisting this process. It explores the connection between the demonstration of the willingness to work, as authenticated by the Employment Service, and subsequent access to social welfare.
2. **Access to Post-School Education** – an investigation of the role of education as a potential enabler of integration for the student and the student’s family alike. The focus is on the ability to secure educational progress beyond school for those with International Protection in a manner commensurate with the experience of their Cypriot peers.
3. **Access to Particular Sectors of Employment** – with a focus on the access to, and subsequent exclusion from, the local private security industry, this case study considers the grounds upon which equal access to the labour market materialise in practice.

Across the cases explored particular attention was directed towards how resources are accessed, either in the form of work, education or welfare support. The normative framework through which those with International Protection judged their ability to access these resources rests on the often repeated claim made by the state that the target population enjoys the ‘same rights as Cypriot citizens’ and thus equal access to public resources. Further, as the MIPEX Index confirms, there are a comprehensive battery of laws which aim at tackling discrimination as this relates to the market through which non-state resources are distributed suggesting, on paper at least, that equality of treatment is also guaranteed in other realms of social and economic life.

How this works in practice is the issue pursued here, with particular reference to how the state characterises the target group, the resulting practices that ensue, and the impact which this has on the target group under consideration. This impact is judged not only in relation to changes in material circumstances but also in terms of the prospect of securing the grounds upon which successful integration can proceed.



## 7.1 Access to Employment and State Services

Access to employment opportunities and securing work and consequently becoming self-reliant, is perhaps the most important factor which determines the levels and forms of integration which is achievable under the present circumstances. Acquiring work is also a priority for the overwhelming majority of the target group because it removes the need to be reliant on state agencies which were widely perceived as operating without due regard for impartiality or fairness. In this section we analyse the connections which exist between the labour market, the Employment Service and the Welfare Services on the one hand and the outcomes this has for many within the refugee community on the other.

*"I have a licence for driving a truck. But they said to me that drivers' jobs are for Cypriots" (Married man, 38, 1 child, 8 years in Cyprus, Pafos)*

*"My wife wears the hijab. We also have four children and they sent her to work night shifts in a pub." (Married man, 37, 4 children, 5 years in Cyprus, Larnaca)*

*"I am an accountant. But there are no opportunities for us to work as accountants so I am learning Greek. I asked to work in a factory but the employment officer said to me that these jobs are not for us." (Single man, 33, 7 years in Cyprus, Nicosia)*

Many observed that there were very limited employment opportunities and that this situation had only deteriorated over the last two years. Experiencing unemployment, they described their

*"Whenever I go to the Employment Service, they treat me like an asylum seeker. They don't even ask for my documents, they just judge from my skin colour that I have to be an asylum seeker and limit the jobs they will offer to me to those that asylum seekers are offered. So I was sent to a farm." (Married man, 39, 3 children, 8 years in Cyprus, Larnaca)*

*"My employment officer insisted that I take up a job as a labourer in the farming sector though I was presenting to this employment officer my skills and education in Fine Arts and asked if there was something relevant to my field." (Married man, 34, 2 children, 5 years in Cyprus, Nicosia)*

interactions with the Employment Service during this period overwhelmingly in negative terms. Common characteristics were repeated in the observations made, irrespective of ethno-national identity or place of residence. A common claim was that the Employment Service frequently referred them to jobs without any consultation about the suitability of the work proposed or whether it was likely that they were in a realistic position to acquire it. Rather, it was felt, the Employment Service decided on their behalf which job prospects they would be offered determined primarily on the basis that these were forms of work rejected by Cypriots such as cleaning services and jobs on farms.

### Social Assistance Predicated on Employment Service Decisions

If you are unemployed, the right to access social assistance is partly dependent on demonstrating a willingness to work. Failure to do so can lead to the closing of a person's social assistance file, managed by the Social

*"My wife is 59. Because of her health condition she cannot work under the sun or do hard work. Here is her medical report... see? She needs non-extraneous work. But they sent her to a job on a farm. She went for the job because we have lost everything and we need the money. But the owner of the farm called my wife and told her that her Greek is not good enough and she is too old for the job. So they closed her file because they said she refused the job." (Married man early 60s, adult children, 6 years in Cyprus, Larnaca)*

Welfare Services.

As became evident from the data gathered, many respondents perceived that there was always a very real possibility that social assistance payments could be terminated because of the ways in which the Employment Service often deal with their cases. Sent for a job, there was the ever present possibility that the outcome could be the withdrawal of benefits when the reasons for not taking the job offered were not necessarily in their control. The reasons recorded for not taking a job could be determined by Employment Service personnel in conjunction with the prospective employer. So, for example, if following an interview the potential employer informs the Employment Service that the prospective employee declined a job offer because it was plainly unsuitable, or, is rejected because they do not have the requisite skills in the Greek language to do the work required, this can be taken as evidence that the person in question was not making satisfactory effort to secure employment.

Consequently, the Employment Service appears to have

*“Because my wife does not speak Greek or English they do not pay her any assistance any more. She received it for two years but they terminated it a few months ago. And this was the first time they ever raised the language issue. They have closed her file. And she has been told that she cannot get a health-card because she is not registered with the welfare service anymore.”*  
(Married man, 38, two children, 9 years in Cyprus, Pafos)

considerable power, which many believed was abused, to determine whether someone was seeking work or not and, in doing so, ultimately acting as a gatekeeper to welfare payments.

### **The Role of the Job Interview in Determining Access to Assistance**

Many respondents elaborated on the process through which this transpired. A two part form is used by the Employment Service when an individual is sent to a prospective job. The first part is filled in by the Employment Officer with the details of the potential employee. The form is given to the applicant to take to the job interview and present it to the prospective employer. After the interview, the prospective employer is obliged to fill in the second part of the form, outlining the results of the interview, with an indication as to whether;

1. The interviewee declined the job,
2. Was not able to do the job
3. Or was not offered the job

*“They are working together; the Employment Service and the employer. They invent fake jobs and then they say that we refused employment. Then welfare closes our files too. Then, we can forget about social assistance payments”* (Married man, 38, three children, 7 years, Nicosia).

This is invariably recorded in Greek which many of those with IP will not be able to read and understand. The form is then returned to the Employment Service. If the employer selects the first or the second options the applicant is almost certainly removed from the Employment Service’s files and loses their Employment Service card. This then leads to their file with the Welfare Office also being closed and social assistance terminated.

Almost without exception, the reported experience with the Employment Service and the Welfare Services, as this relates to seeking employment seeking, was described in ways captured by the accompanying quotes. Together, the two agencies were seen to have a lasting impact on the daily lives of a large section of those with International Protection. The perceptions expressed on the basis of experiences had, designated both these state institutions as the primary agencies whose combined actions set in motion the systematic exclusion of many people within the target group from society at large.

*"In the past I accepted a job and then when I informed the Employment Service about it I was told that the employer told them that I was not willing to do the job offered to me. As a result my file was closed by the employment service and we lost our right to get help from the government. They never give me the opportunity to properly explain my side of the story" (Married man, 34, 5 years in Cyprus, two children, Nicosia)*

As a consequence, as recorded in the data, many chose to stay away from these agencies and are pushed into a situation of becoming self-reliant by seeking work within the shadow economy. Thus swapping one position of vulnerability for another.

*"I never thought about it like this (that it is work in the black market). But I can't deal with the government offices. I lost my job, I lost the stability I had in my life and that is enough. I cannot humiliate myself in the government offices. I get jobs for a few days or a few hours each time." (Single man, 34, 7 years in Cyprus, Nicosia)*

*"They say that first they have to find jobs for the Cypriots, then for the European citizens and then for the refugees. But we also have to live and do something good for ourselves and for that we need to have work to have money to pay rent, eat and have some good time" (Single man, 34, 9 years in Cyprus, Nicosia)*

In order to animate the issues raised in the previous sub-section what follows below is a single case study based on a person without work, accessing the Employment Service, and the consequences which followed.

### **Case Study – Navigating the Employment Service**

In order to amplify the issues raised above the following case study seeks to demonstrate a common predicament, widely reported by respondents, of unfair treatment by local state institutions. In this case, resulting in a family threatened with relative poverty as an outcome of decisions taken by the Employment Service combined with the apparent inertia of the Welfare Services. It serves to illustrate the subordinate position in which many with International Protection are placed and the serious consequences which can result.

A member of the research team accompanied a Recognised Refugee, who was also a single parent of children aged between 5 and 13, to the local Employment Service. This provided the opportunity to observe the process through which those who are in receipt of social assistance do so but on the condition that they demonstrate efforts to be actively seeking work and thus fulfil the criteria through which to continue receiving social assistance payments.

During this visit the employment officer, speaking in English, informed the person that she can no longer remain on the files, with an explanation that that she had been on the files for too long

and therefore she must go out to work. The same officer informed the researcher that she believed that the client *'does not want to work. You can tell just by looking at them most of the time. She is receiving too much money by the state, this cannot carry on.'*

The researcher observed that the said refugee was a single parent of young children and asked what the standard procedure was in these circumstances particularly as this related to the obvious need to care for the children when an isolated parent was to be out at work. The employment officer explained that this was the responsibility of the Welfare Services and that was not their job to take this into account.

The client was sent to a cleaning job that would require her working between 6:00am and 2:00 pm. Her file at the Employment Service, and thus her active file at the Welfare Office were subsequently closed. This despite the fact that, at this point, the said refugee had only been given a phone number through which to get in touch with the prospective employer and an appointment for an interview had not even been made. After repeated efforts to arrange an interview the prospective employer informed the applicant that in fact he did not have any available jobs. Yet the premature closure of her file resulted in her not receiving social assistance for the following five months. Unable to pay rent on the family home, survival was based on the receipt of the 'large family allowance' of 600 euro every month.

In the meantime she was unable to find work by other means. On returning to the Employment Service she was given the contact details for another potential employer in the same line of work. Making contact, this prospective employer was willing to negotiate the time at which she would be able to start work and was informed of the need to wait a little before a job would be made available for her. On informing the Employment Service of these circumstances she was told that an employment service card would not be re-issued in the interim and thus access to social welfare blocked. The Employment Service asserted that they needed the prospective employer to send them the second part of the 'interview outcome form' stating that she was not to be employed immediately. In effect, the person found herself in a state of limbo with the Employment Service declaring that it was unable to take her case any further. In response the person requested an urgent meeting with her social worker but was informed that the social worker was unavailable as she was planning her wedding. Subsequently, she was assigned a new social worker, only to be informed that help would not be forthcoming and she better go and find a job.

As the research data demonstrates, there are many examples referred to by respondents in which files were said to be closed through decisions made by the relevant authorities without the persons concerned being given adequate advice or explanation as to how this outcome had transpired. Neither did there appear to be any adequate support given in cases where severe disadvantage flows from bureaucratic decisions taken.

## **7.2 Arbitrary Exclusion from the Labour Market**

Evidently seeking work as a person with International Protection is not a straightforward process despite the fact that Article 21 of the Law on Refugees establishes that a person who is recognised as a refugee under the said law has 'the right of employment or self-employment, in

accordance with the rules generally applicable to the profession and the public administration and in the recognition of degrees and remuneration<sup>13</sup>.

The experiences outlined earlier (see subsection 7.1) centred on the relationship of the Employment Service to those with International Protection who are dependent on that Office for securing access to employment. We also noted that this relationship was crucial in another respect since this was also the means through which respondents who were unemployed gained certification that they were actively seeking work and thus qualified them to receive continued assistance from the Welfare Office.

As emerged from the survey data previously presented, a representative sample of the target population indicated a generally negative experience arising out of contact with the Employment Service. Not only was this a recurrent theme in both interview and focus group deliberations but there were also indications of the consequences of this relationship in only 11% of respondents characterising the Employment Service as an institution to be trusted and only 12% maintained that they had been treated fairly. Further, it would appear that for the vast majority of respondents the Employment Service did not fulfil its primary function of identifying and securing work opportunities with only 7.8% gaining employment via the Service whilst three quarters of the respondents relied on personal contacts and networks to secure work.

The accumulated evidence strongly indicates that, for the vast majority, the relationship with the Employment Service in particular is a difficult one with many feeling discriminated against. There was a strong sense, articulated by respondents, that part of the explanation for this unequal treatment was driven by a coordinated objective pursued by officials to close their files and, as a consequence, also close their Welfare Office files and thus debar them from social welfare. Thus, the operational imperative identified in determining these relationships was not the officially proclaimed function of the Employment Service to assist in securing work but its manifest function to implement fiscal restraint, in relation to social expenditure, on behalf of the state. The pressure to perform this role has become that much more blatant given the pressures to constrain state expenditure as an outcome of the economic crisis engulfing Cyprus.

It was consistently claimed that this manifest function was materialised through the widespread practice of referring those with International Protection to specific forms of work irrespective of whether a job actually existed in reality or not. In this context it is important to note that the particular forms of employment that they were invariably referred to were jobs that were conceived as those that Cypriot citizens would not normally be willing to undertake. Further, these were forms of employment categorised by the state as the types of jobs for which an employer could be granted a licence to employ a Third Country National who would be allowed to enter Cyprus on a Short-Term Residence Permit exclusively for the purposes of work in that designated field. It is the same type of work which asylum seekers are entitled to pursue six months after applying for asylum.

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<sup>13</sup> Article 21 1(b)(iA)

Thus, the evidence strongly indicates that the relationship of state institutions to those with International Protection mirrors that of economic migrants from Third Countries. But this collapsing of the target group into the broad category of Third Country Nationals appears not to be only made manifest through the informal practice of the Employment Service nor could it be claimed that it occurs only as an outcome of the attitude of individual public servants. It has also taken an institutional form when in December 2009, on the instructions of the Chief of Police, all those with International Protection employed within the private security service industries were made redundant.

This is a prominent case, identified by the target group, where the state can be demonstrated to impinge on core rights secured by law and EU directives, through an exclusory practice despite their legal status. One interviewee, a Recognised Refugee since 2007, explained that he had been working as a security guard for a number of years when, in December 2009, he was suddenly made redundant following instructions communicated by the Chief of Police to security service firms that, according to the law, only Cypriot and European citizens be employed in the security industry.

For this respondent, despite the fact that it was already more than two years since he had lost his job, the prevailing conditions in the labour market made it difficult for him to find subsequent employment. He was still persevering to find out whether it would be possible to work in the security sector as employment prospects in that industry appeared relatively good along with the fact that he had developed positive relationships both with his former employer and work colleagues.

To gain a better insight into this situation a researcher accompanied this man to the Police Department which he had planned to visit in order to explore whether they would be willing to issue

*“They say we have the same rights. I worked for the security service firm for a few years. My work experience back home was far more specialised but still this is what I could get here, I was happy in that job and they were happy with me. I then lost my job because they said that only Cypriots and Europeans can do it.”*

him with a licence to work in the security industry again. This was prompted by his recent acquisition of a certificate issued within another EU member state where he had undertaken training as a guard in the hope that this would enhance his chances of being approved to work in Cyprus. In order to do this he used his meagre savings in the hope that it might secure a route back into employment. On arrival at the Police Office he was given forms through which to apply for a licence to work as a private security guard though he was told by the Police staff present that they did not think he was eligible to work in the sector and referred him to the relevant legislation.

The relevant article of the legislation provides that the Chief of Police cannot license non Cypriot or EU member state nationals to practise the job of guard or private security guard.<sup>14</sup>

Following this encounter, the researcher contacted the Labour Department at the Ministry of Labour to enquire as to whether in a case such as that of the private security services (regulated

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<sup>14</sup> Article 7 (1) (a) of the Provisions of Security Services by Private Offices Law 2007-2009.

as it is by specific law which stipulates that only Cypriot and European citizens can be issued with a licence to work) Recognised Refugees can also be assumed to be eligible to work on the basis of Article 21. The officer from the Labour Department thought that if Recognised Refugees are construed to have the same rights as Cypriot citizens in the field of employment then the presumption was that they should have equal access to the labour market in general.

In order to clarify this further the researcher was advised to speak with the Migration Office. There was a similar response forthcoming, though the migration officer referred the researcher to an officer at the Ministry of Justice for elaboration as this was the Ministry charged with overseeing the implementation of the law. The response from that quarter was that it would be best to pursue the enquiry in writing as; *'I believe no one could tell you (about this issue) with certainty.'*

Subsequent research and further enquiries established that the state's exclusory practice in this regard had been the object of a continuing stand-off between different state institutions where the legitimacy of the practice was called into question. The Commissioner of Administration, in an eleven page report, published on 31 March 2010, asserted clearly that in the context of Cypriot and EU law and directives she considers that the particular case constitutes discrimination.<sup>15</sup>

The concluding paragraphs of the report stated the following;

*Although I advised the Chief of Police to take the necessary measures to recall the instructions for the termination of employment of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection working at private security agencies, even if temporarily, until I completed my investigation, he insisted on his position, with the result that these people were dismissed. The reason for their dismissal was the fact that they ethnically originate from third countries which is in breach of Article 6 of the law on Equal Treatment in Employment and at Work. Bearing in mind that their dismissal was affected as a result of Police instructions to their employers the issue that is posed is that of discrimination based on racial/ethnic origin in violation of the same Article.<sup>16</sup>*

Over two and a half years on from this report having been issued it would appear that the state in general, and the Police Service in particular, have not taken any action as a response to the Ombudswoman's assertions, neither has there been any perceived obligation to dispute the validity of argument presented by the Commissioner.

Cases of discrimination at an institutional level are not confined to public institutions. A case was reported to the Commissioner for Administration, in 2011, related to the rejection of an application submitted by a Recognised Refugee to the Council of Building Contractors seeking to register and work as a building contractor.

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<sup>15</sup> A.K.I. 95/2009 and A.K.I. 6/2010 against the police in relation to discrimination against persons which have been granted IP as it regards their access to employment

<sup>16</sup> Own translation

The Council rejected the application of the Refugee because, it was argued, the Law on Registration and Control of Contractors for Buildings and Technical Works extends the right of registration only to Cypriot and EU member state citizens who satisfy the remaining criteria of the law.

In communication with the legal representative of the International Protection Beneficiary, between 2008 and 2010, the Council insisted that there was no violation of Article 21 of the Refugee Law since the said Article does not preclude the legislator from introducing limitations and criteria specific to the practise of a profession and that Article 21 was implemented according to the regulations that apply to the particular profession.

On investigating this case, the legal context surrounding the registration of building contractors as well as that which relates to the rights of Refugees, along with the equality and the non-discrimination legal framework of the Republic of Cyprus as an EU member state, the Commissioner concluded that;

*...it emerges that the rejection of the application of the complainant to be registered in the building contractors' list on the basis of his ethnic origin not only violates Article 21 of the Refugee Law, it also constitutes discrimination prohibited by law, within the meaning of Article 6 of the Combating of Racial and Some Other Forms of Discrimination (Commissioner) Law of 2004, in conjunction with Article 6 of the Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation Law of 2004.*

*Based on the findings that emerged from the investigation of other similar complaints, which also concerned the exclusion of recognised refugees from registering on the lists of regulated professions, there arises the need of clarifying this issue. The most conducive solution for the purposes of clarification, but also for the purposes of legal security, the recommendation is the introduction of a legal regulation, which will clarify that refugees also have the right of registration/introduction to regulated occupations in accordance with article 21 of the refugee law. On that basis I have decided to submit my report to the Attorney General of the Republic in the context of paragraph 4 of article 39 of the Combating of Racial and Some Other Forms of Discrimination (Commissioner) Law, so that he examines whether it is necessary to introduce this legal regulation to the Law on Registration and Control of Contractors for Buildings and Technical Works.<sup>17</sup>*

As with the previous case cited above in relation to the security industry, the situation remains in a state of limbo as no action has, to date, been taken.

(Non) outcomes such as these have the effect of inducing a strong sense of insecurity amongst the target population affected. The loss of employment after a number of years of waged work, where previously those with International Protection could be employed in the specific sector occurred without warning at the end of 2009. A sense of unfairness combined with a withdrawal of trust in public institutions was further compounded by the apparent failure of any public authority to act in response to the report of the Commissioner of Administration who

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<sup>17</sup> Own translation



had requested the reversal of that action on the ground that it is in breach with the law on Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation. Neither does there appear to be the political will to take long-term, corrective action, by introducing legislative reform so as to ensure that there is no conflict between different forms of legislation. The outcome is a strong sense of alienation made manifest which is characterised by a general uncertainty amongst the target population as to the status of proclamations of equality, impartiality and fairness proclaimed in law and the actual practice of the Cypriot state in implementing that law.

During the course of the interviews conducted another case was reported by a dentist who was informed by the Council of Dentists that only Cypriot and European citizens, along with anyone who is a child or a spouse of a Cypriot citizen (and has had permanent residence in Cyprus), could practise dentistry on the island. Most of those with International Protection think it very improbable that citizenship of the Republic would be granted and, when it has been granted to a very small number, that this has been according to criteria that are opaque and without manifest logic. The outcome in this case was a strong sense of fatalism, resignation to a situation within which all hope of ever being able to practise his profession was surrendered.

Another interviewee also recounted her experience in attempting to renew her permit to work in a specialised position. This job she had been doing for many years having trained to work in this sector whilst in Cyprus. She was informed by a public employee at the relevant office to which she had to periodically attend that her permit to work in her specialised field could not be renewed as Third Country Nationals were debarred from working in that sector.

Though, after a long argument, the response of the public servant was explained as a 'misunderstanding' and her permit was renewed the experience left her traumatised as the threat to her working and home life had been made manifest. She observed: 'every day we have to struggle, we have to fight for everything, we cannot stop and enjoy our lives, our families'.

### **7.3 Access to Subsidies and Other Special Measures**

Turning now to other issues of unequal treatment, in 2009 the Authority Against Discrimination received a complaint in relation to the exclusion of a Recognised Refugee from a special subsidy scheme provided for by the Ministry of Finance. The scheme related to subsidies paid to aid those engaged in the construction or purchase of a house provided they met eligibility criteria linked to citizenship.

The refugee based her complaint on the claim that the legislation regulating the subsidy scheme violated the rights of Recognised Refugees.<sup>18</sup> More specifically, the eligibility criteria for the subsidy scheme were argued to be in conflict with Article 23 of the Refugee Law which foresees that *'no taxes, charges, duties or fees of any nature imposed on refugees shall be higher than those imposed on the citizens of the Republic in similar cases'*.

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<sup>18</sup> The Special Subsidy (purchase or construction of a house) Law of 2006, 91(I)/2006. This was the legal context in place at the time. It has been largely abolished as its provisions were transferred over to the VAT Law (modified) 2011.

The Ministry of Finance asserted that the applicant was not eligible for the special subsidy scheme which was open to citizens of the Republic of Cyprus or of any other EU member state who intend the specific house to be their sole home for a minimum period of ten years. The Ministry concluded that *'given that the complainant is a citizen of a third country and stayed in Cyprus with a temporary residence permit, her application was rejected.'*

In the relevant report published in April 2012 the Authority Against Discrimination concluded that it had not been convinced by the claim that there was no conflict between the legal context of the special subsidy scheme and Article 23 of the Refugee Law. Further, they postulated that the Ministry's reference to the residency status of the refugees was not seen as valid given that neither the length of residence of Cypriots nor that of Europeans could be considered as any more permanent than that of Recognised Refugees. Further, it was asserted that the scheme had foreseen the steps to remedy the situation should, for example, a beneficiary sell the home in relation to which s/he received the special subsidy before the minimum period of ten years foreseen by the relevant law. Despite the fact that the special subsidy law had almost been abolished in its entirety, as its provisions have been transferred over to the VAT law, the Commissioner of Administration went ahead to make recommendations as to the conflict that was observed in relation to the special subsidy scheme having been incorporated in a new legal context. This was done;

*'...with the recommendation that the necessary corrective measures are adopted so as to make possible a faithful implementation of the Refugee Law, the equal treatment of recognised refugees and of Cypriots in relation to tax matters and the elimination of the discriminatory treatment of recognised refugees on this matter.*

*Because, on the basis of my investigation, it emerged that the implementation of legal provisions which introduce a prohibited, by law, discrimination, I forward the current Report to the Attorney General of the Republic, on the basis of article 39 of the Law Against Racial and some Other Forms of Discrimination (Commissioner) of 2004, so that he takes the necessary measures for the legal regulation of this issue.'*<sup>19</sup>

A similar experience of discriminatory practice occurred when a Recognised Refugee, a married mother of three who was also one of the few who managed to purchase her own home, reported that her application for financial support, in the context of a housing scheme managed by the Ministry of the Interior, was rejected.

The housing scheme was framed by policy objectives which aimed to extend support to low income families as well as promote the rejuvenation of the 'Green Line' areas more generally. One of the eligibility criteria which accompanied the measure was the requirement to be either a Cypriot citizen or a citizen of another EU member state. In conformity with other cases highlighted in this section, her application was rejected because she did not satisfy the citizenship criterion despite the fact that the renovation of her house would contribute to the general rejuvenation of the neighbourhood within which she was located.

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<sup>19</sup> Own translation

Issues related to housing emerged consistently throughout this research. Often these had to do with the difficulties in managing monthly rental payment and other household bills. A small minority of respondents had managed to acquire their own property. This frequently accompanied the acquisition of stable employment.

As with others in the wider population, house-ownership was prized as a concrete means through which to secure a degree of independence and autonomy. Seen in this light, access to home ownership can provide a basis upon which a safe and secure environment could be built and the conditions for further integration built upon. However, very few people within the research sample had managed to acquire property of this sort and the benefits which flowed from such a circumstance.

Turning to a final issue of a similar nature; in the course of this research single parents who are Recognised Refugees expressed deep concerns about the impact arising from the withdrawal of the single parent benefit from those with International Protection. This was a recent modification of the legal framework as it relates to eligibility vis-à-vis welfare benefit.

The Social Assistance and Services Law of 2006 constitutes a primary exception amongst legislation referred to in the context of this section as Article 3 lists both Recognised Refugees and beneficiaries of Subsidiary Protection as amongst those eligible, provided they satisfy all other criteria. With the reform of the Social Assistance Law the category of the single parent was removed and the overseeing of single parent benefit transferred from the Social Welfare services to the Grants and Subsidies Service at the Ministry of Finance. In the process those with International Protection ceased to be eligible to receive the single parent benefit.<sup>20</sup>

The regulations issued by the Ministry of Finance set out eligibility criteria which include only those who are Cypriot citizens or citizens of any other EU member state.

## **Conclusion**

What these examples clearly demonstrate are the difficulties in establishing the settled and secure life which this target population in particular seeks to enjoy. Exclusory practices, arbitrary decision-making as well as the failure of the state to respond in a transparent and timely manner to issues raised and complaints made compound the already marginalised conditions which characterise this community.

The detail accumulated in the cases explored here perhaps best serve to underscore why the overwhelming number of respondents in the survey conducted expressed a desire to leave Cyprus and settle elsewhere. The sense of having to be vigilant, without rest, in defending your own interests but with little chance of securing a route of escape through the acquisition of citizenship only heightened the sense of being in limbo.

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<sup>20</sup> In a recent reform of the Public Benefit and Services Law, Article 3 of the law removed the category of the single parent as a special category of social assistance beneficiary as responsibility for the provision of this benefit was transferred to the Grants and Subsidies Service of the Ministry of Finance.

## 7.4 Post-School Educational Opportunities for Young Refugees

The sub-section below focuses on the role of education as a potential enabler of integration for the student and the student's family alike. It provides an important example of a set of issues and relationships which illuminate the complex needs which arise out of the target population's circumstances and suggests the ties which bind fundamental rights, access to public resources and the potential for social mobility – a key outcome associated with successful integration.

A focus group participant noted that families face a more complex situation than single people as they were commonly exposed to multiple areas of discrimination. For example, if discrimination is experienced by a son or daughter at school invariably all members of the family will be affected by the experience itself. On the other hand, a positive experience of the educational environment not only benefits the pupil but can have positive ramifications for other members of the family too. In short, the delivery of good schooling can represent one of the few dimensions which helps facilitate the normalisation of the refugee experience in Cyprus in a clear and obvious way.

In the course of this research both parents and children described a mixed experience of tertiary education.<sup>21</sup> Some respondents recounted incidents of bullying taking place, centred on cultural markers of difference such as name, skin pigmentation, religion, language competence and parents dressing code, amongst others.

Nevertheless schooling was also talked about in positive terms. Parents, particularly those whose children have developed the competency in the Greek language were mostly content, reporting that their children are happy at school. Even in circumstances where their offspring were disadvantaged or discriminated against by their peers, it was generally reported that they received a good education and mixed with their Cypriot contemporaries. In the focus group conducted with young people it was reported that experience at school tended to improve as they grew older. They observed that they became progressively fluent in Greek, made friends and developed a range of strategies which gave them greater control over their relationships with their peers.

In short, the primary and secondary educational environment is probably the exclusive realm which those with International Protection have equal access to a common space shared with Cypriots and others.<sup>22</sup>

Importantly, the schooling process impacts on the integration prospects not only of the pupil directly involved but also on his or her family more generally. Some parents, who lacked the necessary language skills to communicate effectively with others including public authorities, elaborated that their children often become the medium for communication between themselves and others. Not only did their offspring have an increasingly skilful command of the

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<sup>21</sup> This was also recorded in the focus group conducted with young refugees who are studying or have completed their studies in Cypriot secondary schools.

<sup>22</sup> This describes the average experience rather than cases where extreme incidents may have characterised a school.

Greek language, but also a range of 'soft skills' including cultural competency which arose out of a familiarity with Greek Cypriot community and society more generally.

This relationship between school and home and its impact on the prospects for integration has been previously explored by research conducted between 2008 and 2010, entitled the; 'Integration/exclusion of refugees in Cyprus'.<sup>23</sup>

The authors of the earlier report confirm that having children at school had an integrative impact on the family at large, identifying the development of language skills, exposure of the family to others associated with the school and connections with teachers and parents from different ethnic backgrounds as key aspects of this outcome. That research also generated data which indicated that parents were relatively satisfied with their children's school with 77% of parents assessing that their children were developing worthwhile knowledge and 53% claiming that their children speak very good Greek as an outcome. The report goes on to record that 66% of parents described their children as 'happy'; and 56% that their children 'felt comfortable' in the school environment. Finally, 59% observed that their children played regularly with children from a different background.

Whilst there is no available evidence to judge the academic performance of young people with International Protection in comparison with their Greek Cypriot peers, there was significant number of respondents amongst the former group who had progressed academically to the extent that they had taken entrance exams for public universities in Cyprus and in Greece.

This suggests that for many the educational domain represented a unique arena within which refugees and non-refugees alike participate as relative equals, a context within which it was possible to negotiate difference as well as to compete primarily on the basis of merit and succeed. Though, it should be added, whilst there is evidence of a real degree of equality of opportunity within the school environment this does not detract from the considerable economic and social disadvantages which are faced outside the classroom.

However, as many explained, the problems faced on graduation from secondary school include being excluded from opportunities that are available only to their Cypriot and European peers. A principle issue of contention was their exclusion from the 'Student Subsidy Scheme' managed by the Ministry of Finance. The sense of injustice was magnified for them by reference to the officially reiterated claim that those with International Protection 'enjoy the same rights as Cypriots' but, in this case, was demonstrably not the case.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Integration/exclusion of refugees in Cyprus, 2008-2010 TEPAK. The research report can be accessed at: [http://www2.cut.ac.cy/digitalAssets/10/10223\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_.pdf](http://www2.cut.ac.cy/digitalAssets/10/10223______.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> According to this scheme all European students whose income is below 100,000 are entitled to a subsidy of a maximum of .... In those cases where the parent's income is below xxxx and a minimum of 850 euro where the parent's income is above 100,000.

Respondents made reference to the Refugee Law;<sup>25</sup> more specifically to Article 21 which specifies that Recognised Refugees enjoy the same rights and equal treatment as citizens of the Republic in a number of areas including;

*“...the right to education other than elementary education, particularly with regard to access to education, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the exemption from the payment of tuition and the granting of scholarship.”*

In 2009 the refugee parent of three students, whose applications for a student subsidy had been rejected by the Ministry of Finance on the grounds that student subsidies were intended exclusively for Cypriot citizens appealed against the Ministry’s decision in court citing the clear intent of Article 21. In January 2011 the court issued its decision stating that student subsidies do not fall within the remit of Article 21 and that the law on student subsidies was a financial regulation specifically directed towards students with Cypriot citizenship exclusively.<sup>26</sup> The court noted that the applicant’s offspring had not faced any obstacles in securing access to the general educational system and, as such, the non-extension of the student subsidies to Recognised Refugees did not constitute a discriminatory practice.

This decision clearly affects a relatively large number of young people from families who have indeed made applications for citizenship aware that, in reality, to secure equivalent rights with the majority community requires becoming a citizen of the Republic. However, as has been previously noted the outcome of an application of this sort can take many years to be resolved, almost always leads to rejection and in circumstances where the criterion by which claims on citizenship are made tend to be opaque if not impenetrable.

Simultaneously, there are numerous cases of children of IPPs who have attended and graduated from schools in Cyprus, in some cases from primary as well as secondary school, their parents have applied to become Cypriot citizens but their applications have not been processed many years after they have been submitted.

The realm of education, at best, provides an important means of integration for both pupils and their families. And evidence suggests that it does perform an important enabling role for pupils who have IP to access a range of resources on a relatively equal basis in comparison with their Cypriot peers. How far these same young people progress educationally beyond school is open to question given the economic conditions that accompany being a refugee or from a refugee family and the difficulties of accessing state resources to do so.<sup>27</sup> Importantly, education is a prime motor in enabling social mobility, and constricting access can have the longer term effect

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<sup>25</sup> Refugee Law N. 6(I)2000

<sup>26</sup> The law on student subsidies valid at the time was Law 77(I)96. It has since been replaced by Law 188(I) 2011. The relevant article which refers has to the eligibility criteria for a student subsidy was modified to include European citizens and states that a student needs to be a Cypriot or European citizen and a permanent resident in Cyprus or, provided that the student has graduated from a secondary school in Cyprus, at least one parent must be a Cypriot or a European citizen and have been living or working in Cyprus.

<sup>27</sup> It is at the same time important to note that sources at the University of Cyprus have informed this project that the state pays the fees of refugees as well as of Cypriots and other EU27 citizens.

of reproducing the same conditions of disadvantage in the future instead of providing the opportunity to overcome those barriers through one's own efforts.

## 7.5 Conclusion

Taking this evidence together a number of patterns and trends emerge which highlight the predicament of those with IP in Cyprus, the precarious circumstances within which many live as well as the barriers confronted in both accessing resources as well as securing appropriate grounds for successful integration.

Earlier, in our opening chapter, we drew attention towards the active role which the state plays in the framing of both legislation and policy with an emphasis on two related aspects of its performance;

- 1) **Input Side** – The formulation and elaboration of the legal and policy frameworks directed towards defining and securing the rights, access to services and other public resources as a member of the target community
- 2) **Output Side** – The access to, and delivery of, those rights, services and resources in actual practice

We also noted that not only should attention be directed towards legal and policy frameworks that aim explicitly at securing integration but also consistently articulated policy objectives, in conformity with wider EU led initiatives, of seeking to tackle, for example, 'social exclusion'. Social exclusion can be grasped as the multi-dimensional experience that this research has sought to outline as well as other forms of disadvantage which may disproportionately affect certain groups in society in comparison with others.

The accumulated evidence suggests that there is a frequent disjuncture between the inputs and outputs of both Cypriot legislation and policy development and delivery. Whilst the general intent of the Refugee Law (2000) is to ensure that those with IP can avail of the same rights as Cypriot citizens this is often compromised in practice. This can take two primary forms: through the introduction of a series of conditions which serve to exclude the target population from particular resources or as an outcome of informal, yet embedded, practices by specific state institutions which, in their effect, have the same exclusory outcome.

Two of the cases discussed above in which those with IP were denied access to certain forms of employment or resources aimed at supporting access to higher education suggest concrete examples of how exclusory outcomes transpire.

Further, unfair treatment by the Employment Service and the implications this has for continued access to social welfare has the effect of undermining the intent behind the Refugee Law of securing equal treatment by the state, equivalent to that experienced by Cypriot citizens.

To recompose these issues, evidence suggests that what appears breached here is a fundamental condition in the exercise of public power associated with advanced liberal democracies, particularly those associated with the European Union project – the delivery of

impartiality in the ways in which the state and its institutions exercises authority and provides access to public resources.

Impartiality in this context can be defined as;

*When implementing laws and policies, government officials shall not take anything about the citizen/case into consideration that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or law.<sup>28</sup>*

This injunction to proceed impartially is of particular significance in assessing the role of street level bureaucrats and public servants who are instrumental in delivering public policy within a legal framework to the population as a whole and the target group, under consideration here, in particular. Evidence suggests that the condition of impartiality is systematically breached by the Employment Service with Cypriot citizens and those with International Protection being treated very differently.

However, it is important to place this assertion within the broader experience of how the Employment Service in particular and other street-level state institutions tend to function in Cyprus. The conditions of impartiality are also commonly breached for Cypriot citizens as well with access to resources and the securing of desired outcomes frequently being dependent on contacts and networks, friends and family members all facilitated by the exchange of favours. This was verified by the experience of Greek Cypriot participants in the 'control group'. They suggested strongly that the quality of service experienced from state institutions was generally poor and overly bureaucratic that if you needed a task done in a timely manner or a resource access to which you had a formal right, then the best way to proceed was to activate any networks you had at hand.

Thus, it can be concluded that the principle of impartiality is frequently breached for all but that Cypriot citizens have a series of networks and other social resources, including Greek language skills and other forms of cultural competence, through which to circumvent the barriers confronted. It goes without saying those resources are not similarly possessed by those with IP.

Their disadvantage is compounded further by what appears to be the standard practice of collapsing those with IP into an undifferentiated category as simply those who originate from Third Countries and only accorded rights commensurate with that status. This gives a strong indication that the perception of those with IP by street level bureaucrats tends to respond to them not as bearers of particular rights given their legal status but on the basis of their origin in Third Countries.

Finally, not only has this predicament become increasingly apparent, evidence suggests that it is only likely to become worse. Given the deteriorating economic circumstances and the demand for fiscal rectitude placed on the state there appears to be pressure placed on the Employment Service and Welfare Services to remove the 'undeserving poor' into which those with IP, recomposed as Third Country nationals, are consigned. These informal practices might even be

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<sup>28</sup> This general principle is explored in depth by Jan Teorell and Bo Rothstein in their paper 'What is Quality of Government: A Theory of Impartial Institutions' (2009)



thought as justified by some given the hostility directed towards the Third Country nationals and their presence on the island registered by polling data in the wider population and amplified by some political actors for their own electoral advantage.

Not only does the cumulative impact of this on those with IP undermine the substantive grounds on which integration might be built but it can also consign some people into conditions of social and economic exclusion and, in some cases, acute poverty.

## 8 Analysis of Principle Findings

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In previous chapters this report has outlined a general framework and related empirical evidence through which to apprehend the community of Recognised Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection in Cyprus. In doing so a wide range of evidence has been presented which has included;

1. An outline of that community, derived from official sources, set in the context of an increasingly diverse general population in Cyprus.
2. Ways and means of apprehending how far, and to what extent, progress towards the objective of securing an integrated society has been realised.
3. An overview of some prominent evidence which relates to the policy and practice directed towards integration by the Republic of Cyprus.
4. An outline of key quantitative data generated through the administration of a questionnaire to 192 individuals within the target population.
5. The presentation of qualitative data derived from semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 40 separate individuals
6. Principle findings from a series of focus groups which including both general and focused discussions.

The following analysis benefits from the mix methods approach which allows for both quantitative and qualitative evidence to be triangulated, increasing the confidence of being able to explore the texture of the experiences and perceptions reported by the target group as well the possibility of making secure generalisations on the basis of the questionnaire data generated.

### 8.1 General Observations

The demographic profile of the target group can be imputed from some of the evidence available. The absolute numbers of those who are currently in Cyprus remains difficult to verify since there is evidence of individuals and families leaving the island to secure their future elsewhere. However, there is a core group who are settled in Cyprus and, largely out of necessity, are likely to remain for the foreseeable future. However, this situation may change should one or two legal changes occur. Either, those who have international protection, in one form or another, may be accorded the right to resettle in another EU member state or they acquire the status of being long-term residents which would accord similar rights to relocate. Evidence suggests that, all things being equal, a significant number of individuals and families would choose to leave Cyprus and secure their future elsewhere in the EU. For many, this ambition is a general objective which, at the moment, cannot be fulfilled and thus the source of considerable frustration.

However, there is a significant minority of people who appeared settled in Cyprus to the extent that the island has become their permanent home. Amongst this group are a number of families

who have school age children and thus would not wish to see the younger members of the family disrupt their education. Further, it would appear that younger members of the target population become more quickly integrated into the 'host' society which is also likely to be weighed up in any decision made to remain in Cyprus.

It should be noted that there appears to be a significant reduction of the numbers of Palestinians who travelled from Iraq and largely settled in the greater Larnaca area who have vacated the island over the past 18 months. A large number of people left Cyprus for Jakarta in order to travel by boat on to Australia. According to reliable press reports, their fate remains unknown.<sup>i</sup> It should also be noted that this community of Palestinians have been subject to pressure in order to secure their dispersal from Larnaca.

The stark evidence that four in every five respondents would choose to leave Cyprus if they had the opportunity would suggest a *prima facie* case that there is a combination of strong push and pull factors at play which determines how the group at large perceives its medium to long-term future on the island. Undoubtedly, there is a degree to which the 'grass appears greener on the other side of the fence', so that faced with difficulties here there may not be a complete realisation that the fate of refugees elsewhere may very well be similar, in some aspects, to the circumstances here. However, it is important to note that many people do have a rounded perspective on conditions elsewhere, being part of trans-national networks through which information is relayed and, in some cases, having travelled within the EU and elsewhere.

It should also be added that comparative studies through which it is possible to judge the general conditions, legal framework and, by implication, the political will to secure the integration of non-nationals strongly indicate the underdeveloped nature of the Cypriot response to this challenge (see yearly MIPEx Reports). Further, whilst evidence of this sort concentrates on the input side of public policy-making and suggests the incompleteness of effective measures to secure an integrated society it is also important to consider the output, or delivery side, of public policy.

In order to organise the following analysis of the data this report returns to a framework developed by Ager and Strang (2004), supplemented by a number of other domains (and related indicators) relevant to the experience and perceptions expressed by the target group in Cyprus. Together, these domains and their indicators, provide a way of mapping the terrain within which the target population finds itself and the needs expressed within each context.

**“Markers and Means”** which extend across a range of vital goods and services including access to employment, housing, education and health. All these stand within what has previously been identified as the functional domain.

Access to the labour market and the ability to secure employment is a critical means of securing relative independence and self-autonomy and, by implication, the necessary material resources to secure the welfare of the self and the family. Whilst some jobs can be characterised as poorly paid and low in status (where many people in the target population are over-represented) access to gainful employment is frequently a route to escaping poverty as well as dependence on the state.

The survey evidence suggests that Recognised Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection are likely to be disproportionately unemployed to a significant extent (56.2%) and it is to be anticipated that figure is now likely to be higher given the impact of the recession. A significant number of people have been made redundant over the past two to three years working as they were in sections of the labour market, such as the construction and general service industry, which have experienced significant contraction. As many people observed, not only does this have a severe material impact on their lives but it was identified as a key factor in increasing their isolation from the wider community, cutting them off from collaborative relationships with Cypriots who had been fellow workers and thus undermining key networks through which a degree of localised integration had been secured. It was also reported that as the economy has deteriorated that this group was the most likely to be made redundant first since, in many cases, it was asserted that Cypriots had priority in securing their jobs and non-Cypriots could be dispensed with.

The consequences of unemployment would appear to be severe. Not only does relative isolation ensue but dependence on the state and its institutions becomes considerably extended. As will be reported below, the experience of state institutions and access to welfare and support appear fraught with operational difficulties, generating a sense of injustice in the treatment received as well as a related lack of fundamental trust in the institutions involved. As reported in focus groups and interviews, the combination of a lack of employment opportunities combined with the experience of becoming dependent on state institutions in which there is limited vested trust would appear to be the primary factors which result in many within the target group seeing their long-term future elsewhere.

However, it is important to note that a significant section of the population remain employed (43.8%) and of these just under 77% have been in their current jobs for one year or more. This suggests that for this group stable employment has been possible and for some the length of service with a single employer has been of three or more years in duration.

Thus the target population cannot be characterised in a monochrome form but seen as a community within which there is a clear and distinct divergence between those who have benefited from long-term, stable employment and a majority group within the unemployed (82%) who have been unemployed for one year or more.

The data also provided a clear indication of the material consequences of unemployment as well the general position of the target group within the labour market more generally. Of the unemployed, two thirds registered their difficulties in paying rent or mortgage payments every month. This would suggest that managing a household account becomes a difficult exercise on a perpetual basis with only 3% suggesting that this issue did not detain them (the balance reported that problems were 'sometimes' confronted).

Even for those who were employed, just under one third also indicated they always faced difficulties in making these monthly payments and a further 60% confront problems of this order 'sometimes'. Consequently, only 10% reported that they had no regular difficulties. This is a striking indication that being employed does not generally create conditions within which the household budget can be managed effectively and without stress. This, in turn, may very well indicate that the wages commanded by many within the target group tend to be low, well below the national average.

There are indications within the qualitative data that large sections of the target group are confined within low pay, low status jobs and some find themselves working, as a practical necessity in informal forms of work within the 'black' economy. Further, in many cases a dual labour market would appear to be in operation where non-Cypriots work alongside Cypriots, undertaking similar kinds of work but the remuneration for the latter can be considerably lower than the former. It is of significance that there appears to have been no action imagined either by the relevant state authorities or those subject to these conditions to seek legal redress in relation to this apparent reality. Whilst the MIPEx Index records the robustness of the legal framework to tackle discrimination in the labour market it is noteworthy that little if any legal action has been activated in this context.

Turning now to the experience of being unemployed, in almost every case this implies a considerable reliance on a number of state institutions through which public goods, to which entitlements exist, are accessed, frequently as a matter of necessity. Of prominence is the need to have to make regular appearances at the Employment Service, declare willingness to work, and demonstrate this through making contact with a potential employer.

For many people in the target group how this process is actually experienced is the cause of considerable discontent. Interview data, correlated with focus group discussions, indicate that common experiences include prejudicial treatment by office staff which are characterised as 'humiliating', 'demeaning' and clearly discriminatory in practice. The allocation of unsuitable jobs, the not uncommon explanation that priority jobs were reserved for Cypriots, the refusal to accept the word of the refugee when countermanded by a potential Cypriot employer; were repeated instances cited.

Of importance is that these observations which strongly suggest a common experience of, at the least, a poor and unresponsive service, at worse, a dismissive and prejudicial attitudes which is, perceived to rest on a predisposition that discriminates between Cypriots and non-Cypriots. The evidence presented extends to other public services including the Welfare Office with similar attitudes reported and a general dissatisfaction expressed in relation to the service received.

An outcome of this is registered in the very high numbers of respondents who characterise their treatment by both the Employment Service (57%) and Welfare Service (59%) as being plainly unfair. These are front line services which are charged with discharging their duties impartially, and act as gatekeepers to vital resources, particularly to those who are vulnerable sections of the population as a whole. In relation to the Police Service and Asylum Service the dominant attitudes are also ones of an expectation of unfair treatment (49%).

It is of little surprise that, across these four public services, on the basis of prior experience or the report of previous by others, that most members of the target population who reported unfair treatment also responded by withholding trust from the same institutions. The absence of trust, partly connected as it is with a pronounced sense of being treated unjustly, highlights a central predicament not only for large numbers within the target population but for society more generally. In the absence of trust, guarded suspicion predominates and the ability to engage in open and reciprocal relationships is undermined. By implication, the ground upon which integration can proceed is compromised, if not undermined substantially.

On the other hand the data generated also indicated the existence of services, supplying important goods, which commands a real degree of trust and is delivered in what is perceived to be a relatively fair manner. The Health Services are judged in this way, although some interviewees did report that they had experiences of unfair treatment. The support forthcoming for pregnant women and subsequent birth of offspring was signalled out for particular praise as was generally the care provided to children. However, when assessing the levels of satisfaction with the health care services more generally, caution needs to be exercised in interpreting these figures since health care, unlike the other services previously mentioned, is not the exclusive preserve of the public sector but also provided by private institutions. As some reported, paying for this service generally guaranteed better treatment and was a reason for opting out of publically provided health care.

Finally, we turn to a form of public provision absent in Cyprus but common elsewhere as an integral component of the 'markers and mean' supplied by the state – social housing. It is important to note that a range of issues related to housing were touched upon by respondents but never fundamentally addressed.

In survey, interview and focus group data generated the importance of finding both affordable and secure accommodation was an important determinant of the quality of life. However, what is perhaps unique about the local Cypriot conditions, when compared with other EU states, is the almost complete exclusion of those with IP from access to social housing. It is plainly a public resource reserved for Cypriot citizens, specifically those who were displaced following the events of 1974 or their living relatives.

There is perhaps a deep irony that there is an abundance of social housing available, particularly in locations officially designated as 'Refugee Housing Estates' to which, it would appear, those with IP, are very unlikely to gain access. Instead, accommodation needs are exclusively dealt with through the private market. Given that the survey evidence suggests that the majority of people in the target community invariably face difficulties in regularly paying their rent and frequently depend on the good will of the landlord or landlady to defer rental payment the disjunction between available public provision and immediate and pressing need is striking.

**“Social connections” including ‘social bridges’** (connections with members of other communities), ‘social bonds’ (connections within a community) and ‘social links’ (connections with institutions, including local and central government services) are cultivated. Together, they provide a basis upon which integration can be secured within the social domain.

Turning now to how the target population is embedded within society, and the relationships within which they are entwined, the analysis considers the role of networks in securing resources and facilitating integration.

The data generated strongly suggests the critical role played by social bonds and social connections in maintaining mutually supportive relationships and providing a mechanism through which public resources can be successfully accessed. However, there are particular characteristics of those bonds and connections which the target group have with other individuals, groups and institutions in Cypriot society.

The importance of networks is highlighted by the form in which the vast majority of Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection access paid employment. Three in every four respondents reported that in securing their current job they did so through people they know and a further 6.3% through their previous employer. The balance reported that work was secured in response to a job advert (10.4%) or via contact with the Employment Service (7.8%). Networked contacts thus appear to be the primary route to employment whilst formalised mechanisms through which to achieve the same outcome appear subordinate. This, in part, may very well reflect the nature of the work generally available to the target population which would tend to be in small to medium sized enterprises and frequently markedly casualised forms of employment. It should be noted that the largest employer on the island, where more formalised routes to work are predominant, in the form of the public sector, rarely, if ever, employ non-Cypriots and thus exclude the target group.

Networks would also appear to play an important role in accessing public services and securing vital resources. Repeated observations were made about how, to secure satisfactory outcomes when dealing with a range of public services, networked relationships with administrators in front-line services were decisive. A common claim was that Cypriots accessing the same services had a necessary advantage since, in many cases, they were networked with key public personnel as members of the same family, friendship group etc, whilst the target group could not call on the same relationships to navigate through the bureaucracy. Indeed, indifference if not hostility were commonly confronted making the experience of accessing the Employment Service or the Welfare Office an onerous and stressful obligation. This predicament appears compounded by the frequent lack of clarity about the rules and regulations which attend access to public resources as well as the appearance of arbitrary decision-making in relation to claims being made or circumstances being explained.

Facing similar difficulties, Cypriots frequently make recourse to networked relations to secure information or exercise influence in order to secure the desired outcome to their own benefit. These strategies, in almost every case, were not available to the target group. Alternate routes were available via networked relationships with key individuals in the local NGOs Future World Centre or KISA as well as UNHCR itself each of which played an important role in acting as an advocate on behalf of some members of the target group in seeking to secure redress for an arbitrary or unfair decision taken or helping to secure a path that, by right, they should have equal access to. However, it should be noted that the services provided by local NGOs and UNHCR tend to be useful as 'fire fighting' responses to difficult predicaments but cannot substitute for informal networks, contacts and relationships which assist in navigating through the state bureaucracy on a more general or everyday basis.

The data also indicated variable relationships within component groups which made up the target population. In many cases, strong networks of mutual support were apparent based on familial, friendship and ethno-national forms of solidarity. This was particularly evident amongst the Palestinian community, largely based in Larnaca who had been forced to leave Iraq. Strong family bonds cohered this community together underpinned by their concentration within particular local neighbourhoods. Mutual support also characterised relations within many of the other larger communities from Iran, Syria and elsewhere. However it is important to register that there are also a significant number of individuals and families who are isolated from others, particularly amongst some of the smaller ethno-national groups within the wider refugee population.

Considering the wider target population as a whole the picture which emerges is of a generally disaggregated group but which can, at times, mobilise to represent collective interest. Networked relations do exist across the group as a whole but they remain weak and underdeveloped. An indication of this is the absence of any organisational form through which Refugees and those with Subsidiary Protection can seek to assert their common predicaments or represent the common interests both to themselves and others. As a consequence, public authorities might find it all too easy to ignore the need to consult with the target population or address the specific needs which could be expressed in an aggregated form. This situation undermines the possibility of aggregating interest and articulating them in a manner that may gain some attention from state institutions, particularly as this relates to public policy and decision-making.

Turning to networked relationships with Cypriots there are mixed results. What was underscored was the importance of employment as a venue through which relationships with Cypriots could be formed. As a corollary, unemployment casts people out of networks of this sort and severely reduces the possibility of being able to form them in the future. Beyond the world of work, within the realm of civil society, the evidence suggests only limited contact through groups and organisations with only 16% of respondents indicating that they are members of common organisations with Cypriots. However, it is important to register that contact with Cypriots within places of residence appears to be marked by engagement which is characterised by a general sense of being treated fairly and where trust is, for many, evident.

**“Facilitators”** including ‘language and cultural knowledge’ and ‘safety and stability’. These represent key facilitating factors for the process of integration.

This report concentrated on two key dimensions which are important in facilitating integration into Cypriot society as well as enhancing the quality of life. An important foundation upon which community life can be successfully led is a sense of being safe and secure, this is particularly the case with a large number of people within the target group who, have been forced to flee from their home countries. In their vast majority respondents clearly indicated that Cyprus provides a safe and secure location in sharp contrast to the conditions which they have, in most cases, left behind. Importantly, this does provide an important prerequisite for settlement as well as conditions within which progress towards integration can be made. A minority did report occasionally threatened or intimidated which appeared to arise out of bluntly racist attitudes being directed towards those who are clearly seen as being different.

A second ‘facilitator’ identified in the data was the capacity to be able to speak Greek given its widespread use as the dominant language in those areas controlled by the Republic of Cyprus. There was considerable variation in Greek language skills within the target population which range from a high and developed competency to an almost complete inability to speak beyond a small range of stock words. However, there was an awareness, even amongst the latter group, that an inability to speak Greek not only hampered daily life but also served to exclude people from many forms of employment (53% of respondents indicated that lack of Greek was an important reason why they did not secure the jobs they wanted). It was also reported that not being able to converse in Greek did serve as basis for exclusion from due care being extended by key public services. In more than one case public sector doctors refused to communicate in



English, demanding that Greek be spoken; an unnecessary, harsh and exclusory attitude to adopt.

Many people, particularly those who have been in Cyprus for some time, have managed to pick-up Greek spontaneously whilst a significant number have had the opportunity to access Greek language courses. However, the experience of accessing this form of education was mixed. Some clearly benefited from a number of the courses offered (with those provided for by the University of Cyprus singled out for particular praise) whilst others report poor teaching methods being used and a failure to link the potential student to appropriate levels at which the course could be delivered. Language course provision appears to be sporadic and with little evidence of any coherent progression routes from one level of competence to another.

**“Foundation” Including ‘Rights and Citizenship’.** This represents the basis upon which expectations and obligations for the process of integration are established.

Acquiring the status of being either a Recognised Refugee or someone with Subsidiary Protection confers a set of rights which is commonly described as constituting the ‘same rights as Cypriots’ as elaborated by the Refugee Act (2000) (see Appendix I). In practice there appears a number of ways in which this statement ought to be qualified since not commanding citizenship of the Republic or being a citizen of an EU state does have the effect of curtailing some rights which would otherwise be available. A brief outline of curtailed rights can be outlined as follows;

- Whilst travel outside the boundaries of the Republic is permissible this can only be undertaken for up to three months. Further, the travel documents secured for such travel are hand written and frequently cause suspicion on the part of border officials not only in the state to which a person travels but also on return to the Republic of Cyprus.
- Until recently those with IP were issued with ID Cards by the Republic. These were withdrawn which had the effect of complicating the ability to prove who they were with ease when using a bank account or gaining access to public utilities for example. The common form of identity documentation now used is the ‘Pink Slip’ which can stigmatise the bearers as it sets them apart
- Not being a citizen of the Republic or the EU debars individuals from certain kinds of work. Consternation was caused in 2010 when regulations were changed in relation to employment of Third Country Nationals working as security guards. This was a move that had a disproportionate effect on the target population and appeared an arbitrary act.
- Rights accorded to the target group to practice their profession, such as working as a nurse; can be subject to revision without the individual affect having means of redress should they be affected.
- Those with International Protection have no political rights which can be exercised in local, national or European elections

As elaborated in the analysis contained in the previous chapter there is a substantive issue in relation to the actual implementation of a rights regime as it relates to the status of someone with IP. The actual treatment accorded to many by key institutions such as the Employment Service and Welfare Services tend to relegate them to the status of Third Country Nationals rather than affording them fair and impartial treatment as if they were Cypriot citizens.

Further, as with many other vulnerable groups within Cypriot society seeking redress should a breach of their rights is experienced is frequently undermined by the lack of financial and other resources to pursue their case through the courts, a legal system that is also noted for cumbersome practices and long bureaucratic delays. More satisfactory has been the experience of seeking support and redress through offices of the state such as the Ombudswoman's Office. But even here, as we have noted, the power of that office is circumscribed and the response of some institutions to reports and recommendations made has been one of ignoring conclusions reached. It would not be unfair to speculate that issues specifically related to the interests of Recognised Refugees, as well as similar groups within the population, are not accorded a particularly high priority nether does there seem the necessary political will to inaugurate change where necessary. In short, there is little political advantage in pursuing issues that relate to groups who have very little political purchase. Indeed, there may be political costs in doing so if they are seen to benefit the 'undeserving poor'.

**Attitudes towards those with International Protection** - the role of societal attitudes and perceptions on the target group as well as related exclusory practices which can arise as a consequence.

It should also be added that seeing these migrants as only being 'temporary guests' might, in the eyes of many, also obviate any responsibility to secure their integration into Cypriot society. It is also important to bear in mind that the relevance of this data can be specified as resting on the fact that there is sometimes a clear line of distinction drawn between Greek Cypriots and 'others' which means that distinctions within the 'other' group can be effaced and into which the target population under consideration is collapsed.

Consequently, those with International Protection may, in many cases, be seen as an undifferentiated group within the general population of Third Country Nationals and thus attitudes and perceptions directed towards this population as a whole will have an impact on the target group under consideration here. In practice, this can result in a thoroughly ambiguous if not contradictory position that those with IP face. Composed by many as part of a large an undifferentiated group towards which strong feelings and sometimes prejudicial attitudes are directed but the rights they are said to enjoy, the reasons for settlement in Cyprus and the duration of their stay being very different from the general group into which they are invariably collapsed.

It is important to offer a clear distinction between attitudes recorded in Cyprus wide opinion polling data, invariably conducted within the Greek Cypriot community exclusively, and attitudes apparent on the ground within local communities including the workplace and public spaces. It was evident from survey data that the majority of respondents judged relationships within the local community as characterised by fairness and that relationships could be invested

with a degree of trust. Whilst there is a general awareness that prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes are a feature of Cypriot society there was not a pronounced fear that this would result in a threat to safety or security.

However, it is important to be aware that the continued deterioration of the economy and the resulting constriction of opportunities within the labour market as well as other forms through which austerity measures will be experienced within Cypriot society may have a discernible effect on inter-community relationships in the coming period.

Recent changes to legislation relating to the distribution of, and access to, social assistance for a number of vulnerable groups within society may only be the beginning of a serious deterioration in the material conditions of those on the periphery of society. Peripheralised, not only because they occupy an ambiguous position as those who are different or alien yet in possession of a set of rights said to be akin to those of the general citizen but also as a function of their marginality within the political field. Without the right to vote this group wields no political power and remains a desegregated community with little history of self-organisation given the paucity of resources available. It thus falls to other organisations to represent their interests by proxy, either via UNHCR itself, or through NGOs such as the Future World Centre or KISA.

Those with International Protection are, in general, a minimally integrated section of the wider population who tend to enjoy reasonable relationships, formed spontaneously, with those they live and work with. The barriers to successful integration, as well as access to adequate material security, are more clearly identified with the practices of a range of state institutions which frequently do not proceed in an impartial manner, undermining trust, a sense of fairness and the quality of life. Given the current economic crisis and the demand for fiscal constraint by the state in a period when demands on the state are only likely to increase it can be safely asserted that the grounds upon which successful integration can be secured are only likely to contract.

# Appendix I

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## **The Refugee Law of 2000<sup>29</sup>**

The following are translated extracts which are the basis upon which the fundamental rights of those with International Protection rest;

### **ARTICLE 21 Rights of Refugees**

21.-(1) Any person recognized as a refugee by virtue of this Law, shall:

(a) Have the right-

(i) to fair treatment, without discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, religion, membership of a particular social group, political opinion, or country of nationality;  
(ii) to transfer assets into the Republic, subject to the applicable laws and regulations of the Republic;

(iii) to manifest and practice his religion freely;

(iv) access to social integration programs

(b) receive the same treatment as that received by the citizens of the Republic under the relevant laws and regulations relating to-

(i) Elementary education

(iA) the right to engage in employed or self-employed professional activities, subject to rules generally applicable to the profession and to the public service and with respect to the recognition of degrees and remuneration.

(iB) the full access of all minors to all levels of the education system.

(iC) the right to education, other than elementary education, especially as regards access to education, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas, and degrees, the remission of tuition fees, and the award of scholarships.

(ii) Free access to the courts of law of the Republic and exemption from the requirement to provide guarantee for judicial costs ("*cautio judicatum solvi*"),

(iii) Rationing system in case of emergency,

(iv) Public allowance, in addition to any other necessary assistance in terms of social welfare, as well as adequate health care to those with special needs such as pregnant women, persons who have undergone torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence or minors who have been victims of any form of abuse, neglect, exploitation, torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or who have suffered from armed conflict.

(v) Social security

(vi) Protection of intellectual property rights

(vii) the participation of adults in employment-related education opportunities, vocational training, and practical workplace experience.

(c) receive the most favourable treatment possible, which in any case may not be less favourable than that accorded to aliens, under the same circumstances, under the relevant laws and regulations of the Republic relating to:

(i) the access to accommodation.

(ii) the right to associate.

(d) receive the same treatment as that granted to aliens which are under the same circumstances, by virtue of the relevant laws and regulations relating to-

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<sup>29</sup> Refugee Law of 2000, Cyprus, No. 6(I) of 2000, 2000, available in English, in an unofficial translation which was made by UNHCR Cyprus for the purposes of use in that office, can be accessed at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/4a71aac2.html> [accessed 20 January 2013].

(i) the right to choose their place of residence and to move freely within the territory of the Republic,

(ii) the right to acquire or possess property and other similar rights pertaining thereto, and also the right to act as a lessor or lessee of immovable property and to enter into contracts relating to immovable property.

(2) In order to facilitate the integration of refugees into society, the competent authority shall make provision for integration programmes which they consider to be appropriate or create pre-conditions which guarantee access to such programmes. The Council of Ministers shall determine the competent authority.

(3) For the purposes of this Section the term “under the same conditions” means that any conditions the recognized refugee would have to fulfil in order to enjoy a relevant right, in case he was not a refugee, they have to be fulfilled by him with the exception of the conditions which by their nature the refugee cannot fulfil.

Exemption from reciprocity

**21A.-** After the completion of a three-years lawful residence in the Republic, persons who are recognized as refugees are accorded the same treatment with that accorded to the citizens of the Republic, regarding the rights referred to in Section 21, sub-section (1) paragraphs (c) and (d).

Right to engage in wage-earning employment

**21B.-** A recognized refugee in accordance with this Law, is accorded the same treatment as the citizens of the Republic in accordance with the relevant legislation, with regard to the right to wage-earning employment.

Administrative Assistance

**21C. -** (1) When the exercise of any right by a recognised refugee would normally require the assistance of authorities of a foreign country to which he cannot have recourse, the respective competent authorities of the Republic arrange that such assistance be afforded to him by themselves or by an international authority.

(2) The authorities referred to in sub-section (1) deliver or cause to be delivered under their supervision to recognised refugees documents or certificates as would normally be delivered to aliens by or through their national authorities.

(3) Documents or certificates so delivered shall stand in the stead of the official instruments delivered to aliens by or through their national authorities, and shall be given credence in the absence of proof to the contrary.

(4) Subject to such exceptional treatment which applies as may be granted to indigent persons, fees may be charged for the services referred to in this Section which should be proportionate to the fees imposed on citizens of the Republic in similar cases in accordance to Section 23.

(5) The provisions set in this Section do not affect the provisions of Section 22.

Reduction of refugee benefits

**21D -** Without prejudice to the provisions of the Convention, the Head may, by a reasoned decision, reduce the benefits that granted to a refugee, whose status has been obtained on the basis of activities engaged in with the sole or main purpose of creating the necessary conditions for being recognized as a refugee.