

**New channels for the integration of Third Country Nationals
in the local community**

**Νέοι δρόμοι για την ένταξη Υπηκόων Τρίτων Χωρών
στην τοπική κοινωνία**



Minutes from the Forum held on Dec 5 2018 at Nicosia Municipality Multifunctional Foundation

Forum Theme: "Promoting communication, cooperation and understanding amongst migrant communities and Civil Society"

Roula Thoma, European Affairs Officer of Nicosia Municipality, welcomed the participants to the meeting of the Network of Cooperation, underlining the contribution of the Network to the shared goals of support and integration of third country nationals in our society, during its six years of its continuous operation.

Giannis Giannakis Commissioner of Volunteerism and NGOs

In his address, Commissioner Giannakis emphasized the leading role Local Authorities play in achieving integration of migrants into the host society. Equally important is the role of Civil Society to work together with migrant organisations and Local Authorities in providing a platform of structured dialogue, discussing pressing issues facing migrant communities, and undertaking action to overcome marginalisation and social exclusion of migrants.

In a time where we experience extreme right anti-migrant sentiment, intolerance and violence, we are concerned that we will fail as a society to provide a sensible pathway for integration of third country nationals into the local society. Civil Society has to support projects like "New Channels for Integration" implemented by the municipality of Nicosia and other players from local authorities and social support structures. Civil Society organisations can communicate better with migrant groups and can mobilize more people to become actively involved in the process. When Civil Society organisations and Local Authorities come together to collaborate we can achieve great results in integrating third country nationals.

Michael Beys, Administrative Officer, Civil Registry and Migration Department, Ministry of Interior

Integration can be seen as a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all migrants and residents of the hosting country. There are two parties involved in integration processes: the migrants, with their characteristics, efforts and adaptation, and the receiving society, with its interactions not only with these newcomers and but also with their institutions. It is the interaction between the two that determines the direction and the ultimate outcome of the integration process. These two, however, are unequal partners. The receiving society, in terms of its institutional structure and the way it reacts to newcomers, has much more say in the outcome of the process. How hard the actual process of integration is, can be easily understood by how hard is to define the term integration.

To counter this inequity, migrant organisations ought to mobilize resources and ambitions, and mechanisms of the integration process and must also apply at the collective level. The mechanisms

working at the individual, group, and institutional levels are different, but the results on each of these levels are clearly interrelated. Institutional arrangements determine the opportunities and scope for action of organizations. Institutions and organizations together create the structure of opportunities and/or limitations for individuals. Conversely, individuals may mobilize and change the landscape of organizations, and ultimately even contribute to significant changes in institutional arrangements.

In preparing the new action plan of AMIF for the period of 2021-2028 a number of key players such as relevant ministries, Commissioner of Human Rights protection, municipalities, social partners and NGOs, will collaborate with an aim to create a network of stakeholders at the local level, that means mainly the NGOs, the local authorities and the migrants' organizations, in order to promote cooperation, exchange of ideas, and contributing to the creation of policies. Migrants' organizations will have a crucial role to this network. These organizations are crucial to the lives of migrants, their families, and communities. They will act as community centers where migrants can be among others who speak their language and where they can learn to navigate life in their adopted country. They are safe places where second- and third-generation migrants can learn about their ethnic culture. They can also double as social service providers, as advocates and representatives and promote the civic and political engagement of migrants.

It is important that relevant actors in the integration process, both the migrants and the receiving society, become connected by a clear and sound integration policy. It is the vision in the CRMD to have such a clear and sound integration policy, a policy that we will formulate in cooperation with all the stakeholders and especially the migrants' organizations. Furthermore, we aim at building a local integration network to promote cooperation among all actors, and we hope that the migrants' organizations will have a crucial role to play.

Presentation "Multicultural societies, multicultural challenges", Dr Stavros K.

Parlalis, Assistant Professor in Social Work, Frederick University

Professor Parlalis presented latest figures and facts on migration in Cyprus, relating to

Migrants because of their diverse cultural and racial background may be negatively *stereotyped* or heavily *discriminated* against because of their differences from the mainstream culture. That can pose extreme risks to mental health, and depending on their immigration status can threaten individuals' access to medical and mental health care. Whether a person or family receives permanent visas, temporary visas, or time in a detention facility can have a profound effect on the mental health. Particularly, migrants with temporary visas face higher rates of mental health issues in the form of anxiety, homesickness, compounded with other health problems. Other factors that can be detrimental to migrant's health include financial stress, discrimination, loneliness and social exclusion. For detainees, the effects can be even more damaging.

Housing of migrants and refugees are characterized by multiple occupancy of rented accommodation in inner city areas. As migrants are often a source of cheap labour in low paid jobs, they have tended to concentrate in areas of poorest housing and sanitary conditions in major cities.

Concentration of migrants and their family members in inner-city areas has brought considerable communication challenges at the school level as parents lack Greek or English language skills to follow-up with progress of their children at school.

Low language skills may also be an obstacle to obtain employment and to integrate at the local level. Second-generation migrant children, educated in the hosting country, grow up speaking the language (e.g. Greek) and have different aspirations from their parents. They are more likely to *integrate*.

Religion of the migrants may also cause friction with employers and authorities when migrants wish to adhere to their own religious calendars and practices. There can also be tensions between different migrant groups on the basis of religious belief.

Migrants are often welcomed during times of economic growth but resented during recessions, when they are often accused of taking 'our' jobs. Government studies (in the UK) have shown that migrant workers tend to make a greater contribution to GDP than they cost to the public services.

Discussion by participants

Nadia Kornioti, active citizen in various NGOs and Public International Law specialist, highlighting key issues that really matter for TCNs and their integration and deserve more attention and resources, at the meeting of the Network of Cooperation last Wednesday:

- psychological/mental health issues
- material factors seriously detrimental to well-being
- delays in issuing documents with effect on access to housing
- health care and other key services
- cooperating and disseminating information to municipalities that are willing to help.

Ms Roula Georgopoulou, Officer in charge of Nicosia Municipality Multifunctional Foundation speaking at the meeting of the Network of Cooperation on December 5, underlining the need for effective consultation and meaningful participation of the migrant community organisations, Local Authorities and NGOs in the design of future policies and action plans in order to ensure that the allocation of resources will address the real and pressing needs of TCNs and their integration.

Mr Willy Totoro's intervention at the meeting of the Network of Cooperation highlighted (a) the pressing need and the difficulties in accessing resources for the creation of infrastructure where the refugee and migrant community can meet, collaborate and seek solutions to everyday life problems, and (b) the increasingly problematic access to housing for refugees and even access to basic sanitary facilities for a humane life. He underlined the need for the investment of substantially increased resources in securing housing for refugees as a top priority of government migration policy.

Migrants emphasized the need for more effective communication of the fundamental problems faced by TCNs and the need to be heard by the responsible authorities, at the meeting of the Network of Cooperation of Migrants' Organisations, NGOs and Local Authorities last Wednesday.

In her intervention, Ms Achu Maureen Anim from Cameroon underlined the need to pay attention to the serious problems of the housing system in order to confront the exploitation and racism exhibited by many landlords, and in particular prejudice against black people, and to improve urgently access to housing for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

Ms Lissa Jataas co-founder of Obreras Empowered (association of Filipino Domestic Workers in Cyprus) at the meeting of the Network of Cooperation last Wednesday, communicating problematic aspects of the legal framework regulating the employment of domestic workers, which adversely affect the rights of this almost exclusively female group. She highlighted the specific requirements for health insurance

policy and consequent restricted access to proper health care as one such problem. She also suggested communication is needed towards setting up programmes/ support services exclusively addressed to women TCNs.

Ms Ester Beatty from FFOC (Federation of Filipino Organizations in Cyprus) at the Network of Cooperation, inquiring into whether TCNs who have been here for more than 7 years are actually entitled to apply for long term residence and, if they are so, why they don't seem to be able to acquire the status .

Mr Michalis Beys, Officer of the Civil Registry and Migration Department informing participants in the Network of Cooperation of new initiatives of the Ministry of Interior seeking to secure EU funding earmarked to address pressing housing needs, in an appropriate manner for integration of TCNs in the local community. He also underlined the significance of participation of all interested parties in the upcoming consultation for the design of the new Action Plan for 2021-2027 AMIF funded programme of Cyprus.

Mr Stavros Trakoshis from ARTE Migrante Cyprus at the Network of Cooperation last Wednesday, pointing out that we should examine the focus of integration efforts, that the integration of well-off TCNs does not present the same challenges as the integration of low income TCNs, and setting out his suggestions on achieving wider integration across different social classes.



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Προγράμματα Ένταξης ΥΤΧ από Τοπικές Αρχές



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