

## MINUTES OF THE IMMIGRANT AND NGO NETWORK MEETING

Held at Nicosia Multifunctional Foundation

27 March, 2014

### A. Agenda

- Brief presentation of project actions for the period January – June 2014 (Mission - activities)
- Presentation of inclusion programmes and develop collaboration practices for immigrant organisations, NGOs and local Authorities
- Collaborating on joint projects including this project action to benefit immigrant community
- Plan and develop media outreach and communication strategies to promote selected events planned by immigrant community
- Present opportunities for immigrant involvement in cultural events (folklore festival, cultural, sporting and culinary events).

### B. Participants

Representatives from Immigrant Organisations, NGOs and project practitioners attended the Forum:

| A/A | NAME                    | ORGANIZATION   |
|-----|-------------------------|--|
| 1   | Georgios Effraimidis    | Pro.So.Po (Pontian Association )   |
| 2   | MeiMei Han              | Chinese Friendship Association Cyprus  |
| 3   | Melvount Kaplanides     | Georgian Diaspora – Cyprus   |
| 4   | Romial KENMOGNE         | International Organization of Cameroonians students in Cyprus / International Student Association Cyprus INCAMSA |
| 5   | Valdez Sylvia           | Consulate of Philippines   |
| 6   | Anthoula Papadopoulou   | KISA   |
| 7   | Stylianos Christou      | FREDERIC UNIVERSITY  |
| 8   | Parlalis Stavros        | FREDERIC UNIVERSITY  |
| 9   | Danae Psilla            | Future World Centre  |
| 10  | Agamemnonas Zachariades | Municipality of Agios Dometios   |

|    |                     |                                    |
|----|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 11 | Savvas Charalambous | NGO Support Centre                 |
| 12 | Andria Antoniadou   | Lakatamia Municipality             |
| 13 | Marios Argyrou      | Nicosia Multifunctional Foundation |
| 14 | Roula Georgopoulou  | Nicosia Multifunctional Foundation |
| 15 | Roula Thoma         | Nicosia Municipality               |
| 16 | Maria Mavrou        | Independent Expert                 |
| 17 | Nikos Stathopoulos  | NVK Advent Consulting              |

### **C. Presentations**

#### **Welcoming Remarks**

Roula Thoma, Officer of the European Affairs Office, Municipality of Nicosia, welcomed the participants, outlined the scope of the Forum and presented the issues to be discussed under the theme ***"Cooperation to plan and deliver social inclusion actions for immigrant community"***. She stressed the importance of the ongoing dialogue and communication of Immigrant Associations and community organisations to effectively implement current project but also build the foundation for future cooperation in social inclusion actions delivered by local authorities.

#### **Presentation of project actions by each partner**

**Municipality of Lakatamia's** actions were presented by Andria Antoniadou. They include:

- Training courses in the use of computer and multimedia, and in learning English
- Interactive seminars/workshops on the history and culture of Cyprus
- Training courses for provision of First Aid, for domestic workers providing care to children, elderly and people with disabilities
- Information and support services for TCNs for various issues that concern them i.e housing transportation, health services, access to local and public administration services
- Information seminars for TCNs who live and work in Cyprus, about the institutions of the Republic of Cyprus and the EU, along with their rights and obligations
- Youth and family counseling
- Hosting of multicultural festival on 20 June 2014 featuring Cypriot and immigrant performers, as well a multicultural art exhibition.

**Municipality of Ayios Dometios's** actions were presented by Agamemnonas Zachariades. They include:

- Counseling for youth and families, support group counseling sessions
- Guidance workshops concerning housing, transport, communication, work, health and welfare
- Information seminars for TCNs who live and work in Cyprus, about the institutions of the Republic of Cyprus and the EU, along with their rights and obligations
- Training courses in the use of computer and multimedia, and in learning English
- Interactive seminars/workshops on the history and culture of Cyprus
- Workshops of art-therapy and painting for youth and adults, dancing for children and adults
- Sport activities
- "Taste of Cultures" culinary workshops and events involving TCNs and the local population.

**Nicosia Multifunctional Foundation's** actions were presented by Roula Georgopoulou, Head of the Nicosia Multifunctional Foundation. They include:

- Day care services for children and tutoring programmes
- Educational and recreational activities for children (music, English, interactive multimedia games, outdoor games, lessons for understanding diversity etc.)
- Programs for cultural and linguistic retention for second generation pupils
- Training in the use of computer and multimedia and English for adults
- Operation of the Information and Support Centre for Immigrants (KEPLYM) in Paliouriotissa, providing social services, counselling and guidance for immigration issues, volunteer services, community and social networking.

#### **D. Discussion**

Maria Mavrou chaired the discussion which concentrated on the issues of the agenda but also other issues raised by participants focusing primarily on equal rights of TCNs and equal treatment in work and in the tertiary education system. These include:

##### **D1. Sharing, exchanging information on planned events and gain publicity**

All organisations presented their planned activities and were asked to provide detailed information of their upcoming activities in Greek (where possible), English and native language. The network will assist with publicizing the events through the project's website and social media. Moreover, the network will pursue media coverage of events organized by immigrant communities and by other members of the network. This is part of the outreach

media strategy, utilizing a range of media, to inform immigrants and the wider public of events and programmes organized by the project.

Planned events:

The NGO Support Centre in Nicosia in cooperation with the Youth Council will organize an NGO Fair in September with an aim to strengthen and promote civil society organisations in Cyprus. Immigrant Organisations and other members of this Network will be invited to the Fair.

The Filipino community will organise a celebration for Independence Day in June.

The International Student Association Cyprus – INCAMSA will organize the African Diaspora Celebration in October

The Chinese Friendship Association will post all events they organise (New year, National Holiday)

Lakatamia Municipality will organise a multicultural festival in June.

**D2. Collaborating on joint projects including this project action to benefit immigrant community**

Frederick University is conducting a research on immigrant social inclusion and will work closely with this project mapping out best practice achieved by this project and write reports and recommendations to further improve inclusion practices by local actors.

NGO Support Centre is keen to promote civil society action and as such will promote the immigrant association's work in the context of this network, by offering the opportunity for Immigrant associations to present their work in the upcoming NGO Fair in September. The NGO Support Centre is planning to contact Nicosia Municipality for cooperation regarding the event.

For the Filipino community social inclusion of immigrants has a two prong approach: Integrate here in Cyprus but also prepare immigrants for their return home. While training courses offered for language, culture, ICT, caring of the elderly etc will help immigrants with employment and everyday life, there should also be accredited training offered that can be beneficial for recipients here in Cyprus but also when they go back home. Moreover, information on job market and the economy in Philippines is essential to prepare for their return and smooth social and economic integration. It was proposed that Certificates be provided for the members of the Filipino community who received training in the framework of this action, which could be awarded during the celebration for Independence Day in June.

KISA sees this action as a positive measure for social inclusion of TCNs, however, KISA voiced its concerns on immigration policy and practices exercised by the central government that leaves immigrants vulnerable to discrimination of human rights, adverse working conditions, limited access to public services, and no hope for real content in social inclusion. Future actions should be allowed a wider scope so as to deal with the wider range of social inclusion issues. The limited funding period of action like this one also works against formulating an integrated approach for the social inclusion of immigrant communities.

The representative from the International Student Association Cyprus INCAMSA expressed its concerns on the rights of foreign students, even though university curricula offer

internships to foreign students, actual placements are hard to come by and if they are placed it is not in the area of specialisation. Work and study maybe cut short suddenly without notice. Awareness building events should be organized by the network to put a stop of these discrimination practices. It was suggested that future actions should examine the possibilities for services benefiting specifically students from Third Countries.

The representative from the Future World Centre added that the Cypriot public ought to be informed and educated on multiculturalism and social inclusion issues of immigrants. Next period programmes should provide service and address social inclusion needs of all TCNs i.e. immigrants , asylum seekers and refugees, in the framework of the same actions.

The representative from the Pontian Organisation PROPSO expressed their willingness to participate in the events organized by the project and stressed the need to be included in the decision making process for inclusion issues.

The representative from Georgian Diaspora is pleased with the collaboration with local authorities to maintain cultural elements of their community and will provide dance groups for scheduled events

The representative of the Chinese Friendship Association expressed the need to organize multicultural events and give it a centre stage status to promote diversity and multiculturalism in Cyprus. Moreover, she added there is a need to educate immigrants and Cypriots on diversity, including through involving schools / school children and indirectly reaching out to parents, organize tours for the immigrant community to learn about Cypriot history and culture and use all media to share information and promote project events.

#### **E. FOLLOW-UP, NEXT MEETING**

Minutes of this Forum will be prepared and send network members by the project coordinator. An announcement will be made for the next meeting in the context of this programme period.

The project coordinator in cooperation with the partners will explore the possibility of organising an event in the framework of the next meeting of the network on concerns voiced by participants on wider issues of social inclusion and human rights of immigrants.