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# KNOW RESET – BUILDING KNOWLEDGE FOR A CONCERTED AND SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE EU AND ITS MEMBER STATES

Co-financed by the European Union

## *KNOW RESET – Country Profile*

### *Cyprus*

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### Country Profile: CYPRUS

Cyprus is located upon a strategic geopolitical point linking Europe with Turkey and the Middle East. The southern part of the island of Cyprus (or Greek-Cypriot part) has been a Member State of the EU since 2004. Cyprus does not belong to the Schengen area, because of the territorial dispute with the northern (Turkish part) of the island.

The Cypriot asylum system has only been established relatively recently. The Cypriot authorities have responsibility for handling asylum cases since January 1, 2002, when the Refugee Act (2000) replaced the UNHCR with the Cypriot Asylum Service for the processing of asylum applications.

Since February 6<sup>th</sup> 2004, the responsibility for asylum was transferred to the newly founded Cypriot Asylum Service. The Asylum Service manages the European Refugee Fund which finances projects for the refugee integration and the improvement of their living conditions in Cyprus. A Dublin Regulation unit is included inside the structure of the Asylum Office, the main competence of which is to check whether an asylum application must be examined by Cyprus or another member-state. The Refugee Act of 2000 is completed by Regulations on asylum seekers introduced five years later (598/2005).

The rate of foreigners in Cyprus is 127.3/1000, or 15.9% of the population (127,692 foreign nationals-EU citizens included), making Cyprus one of the EU countries with a very high rate of foreign nationals<sup>1</sup>. EU citizens compose 10.4% of the population, while the amount of non-EU citizens is estimated at round 5.5%. Cyprus is one of the few EU member-states where there are more EU citizens residing than third nationals.

With regard to asylum applications, there has been a continuous decrease in the number of submissions: 3,922 in 2008; 3,199 in 2009; 2,882 in 2010; 1,766 in 2011<sup>2</sup>. Cyprus accepts 'large flows of asylum seekers' every year, due to its geographical location<sup>3</sup>. The authorities are trying to deal with the increasing amount of asylum applications. Besides that, the on-going financial crisis reduces the potential for resettlement initiatives in the future.

Cyprus is a country of first asylum for an increasing number of third nationals. Not only does Cyprus not have plans for resettlement but it also engages actively, with Malta, in negotiations with the EU with regard to relocation<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> 6.5% of the EU population are foreigners and 9.4% are born abroad, EUROSTAT, 34/2011, p. 1

<sup>2</sup> Idem and Statistics of the Asylum service of Cyprus (2011)

<sup>3</sup> Interview with the Cypriot Asylum Authority, Natasa Andreou, for Head of the Asylum Service, Ministry of the Interior, January 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Idem. The legal provision can be found in the Article 20-K of the Law on Refugees, 'Solidarity with other member states'.

<b>Asylum Profile</b>	
<u><a href="#">Number of protection status granted</a></u> <sup>5</sup>	<p><b>69</b> (2011)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 53 Refugee Status Granted</li> <li>• 15 Humanitarian Status</li> <li>• 1 Subsidiary Protection</li> </ul> <p><b>426</b> (2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 31 Refugee Status Granted</li> <li>• 395 Other Protection</li> </ul>
<b>Number of asylum seekers</b> <sup>6</sup>	<p><b>1,766</b> (2011)</p> <p><b>2,882</b> (2010)</p>
<b>Resettlement Scheme</b>	/
<b>Resettlement Quota</b>	/
<b><i>I. Legal and Administrative Framework</i></b>	
<p>Asylum law / Aliens Act</p> <p><u><a href="#">Law on Refugees</a></u>, No 6(1)/2000, 28 January 2000 (With several modifications, last one in 2009)</p> <p>Regulations on the reception of Asylum seekers (No 598/2005), 30 December 2005</p> <p>Law on aliens and immigration, 19 June 1952 (with modifications, last amended in 2001)</p>	<p>The Cypriot law does not explicitly make reference to ‘resettlement’ as such. Hence, we should look for legal dispositions open to interpretation for the possibility to resettle. Article 11 of the Law on Refugees (2000) states that ‘The application is submitted at all entry points of the Republic upon arrival of the applicant or within the Republic at any Police Station, and in case of the applicant’s detention or imprisonment, at the detention centers or the prisons where he is held<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, the recognition of refugee status outside of the country’s territory does not seem to be possible.</p> <p>However, Article 18(3) identifies the conditions of assessment of the refugee status by the administration. This assessment is being conducted on an individual basis and according to certain criteria. The presence of the applicant in the Cypriot territory is not considered as an indispensable condition of attribution of the refugee status.</p> <p>Finally, the interview with the Asylum service did not focus on the legislative obstacles when it comes to resettlement but rather on the political unwillingness to develop this practice. They do not exclude the possibility of future resettlement initiatives although at the moment this is unlikely<sup>8</sup>.</p>
<b>Other basis of resettlement</b>	/

<sup>5</sup> Statistics Service of the Republic of Cyprus (2011).

<sup>6</sup> Source: Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior.  
[http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/Asylum.nsf/DMLstatistics\\_en/DMLstatistics\\_en?OpenDocument](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/Asylum.nsf/DMLstatistics_en/DMLstatistics_en?OpenDocument)

<sup>7</sup> Source: Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior.  
[http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/Asylum.nsf/DMLstatistics\\_en/DMLstatistics\\_en?OpenDocument](http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/Asylum.nsf/DMLstatistics_en/DMLstatistics_en?OpenDocument)

<sup>8</sup> Interview with the Cypriot Asylum Authority, Natasa Andreou, op.cit.

On-going or foreseeable project/reform	None
<b>II. Resettlement Policy and Related Involvements</b>	
a) On an ad hoc basis	/
b) On a programme basis	/
<p><b>c) “Temporary Resettlement”: Humanitarian Evacuation</b></p> <p>2011</p> <p>2006</p>	<p>From Libya and Egypt: No data. The minister of foreign affairs declared in December 2011 that Cyprus reacted ‘effectively to the recent events in Libya and Egypt’.<sup>9</sup></p> <p>Lebanon:</p> <p>Cyprus became a de facto humanitarian evacuation station after the crisis in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, with the support of the EU<sup>10</sup>.</p> <p>40,000 evacuees were evacuated from Lebanon. Four days after the evacuation there were 5,197 EU citizens and 2,630 non-EU citizens in Cyprus. EU citizens were rapidly repatriated to their home countries.</p> <p>In a Communication of the Ministry of Defense, it is reported that the Ministry and the General Staff of National Guard assisted and supported facility for military ships and aircraft involved in the evacuation of civilians from Lebanon to the Cypriot evacuation station<sup>11</sup>.</p> <p>The Minister of foreign affairs announced in December 2011:</p> <p>[...]We must not ignore that in cases of instability plaguing North Africa and the Middle East, from the 1970's until today, Cyprus continues to be a humane shelter, tending a helping hand and cooperation, by addressing the immediate consequences of the crisis erupts or as a result of civil wars and military conflicts, or more recently the overthrow of authoritarian regimes. It is worth remembering the case where more than 60,000 Community and other foreign nationals were evacuated through Cyprus successfully, or found temporary asylum in our country, the events of 2006 and 2008 respectively took place in Lebanon, as we did also in the period 1975-1989, while also effectively responded to the most recent events in Egypt and Libya. Cyprus has established today that the mechanism can be managed successfully and efficiently as a result of such a nature panic evacuation, but also provides prospects for peaceful development with neighboring countries through the implementation of the proposed agreements’<sup>12</sup></p>

<sup>9</sup> Conference: ‘Cyprus between Europe and middle East’, University of Cyprus, Erato KOZAKOU-MARKOULI, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 16/12/2011, <http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2006.nsf/0/208BDAA7C48204D6C225796B002ED33E?OpenDocument&print>

<sup>10</sup> European Union, Joint press release, 25 July 2006

<sup>11</sup> ‘The Defense Department supports the humanitarian evacuation of civilians from Lebanon’, Announcement of the Ministry of defense, <http://www.cyprus.gov.cy/moi/PIO/PIO.nsf/All/F6115405EC2ED089C22571AF005A26B7?OpenDocument>

<sup>12</sup> Conference: ‘Cyprus between Europe and middle East’, University of Cyprus, Erato KOZAKOU-MARKOULI, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 16/12/2011, <http://www.mfa.gov.cy/mfa/mfa2006.nsf/0/208BDAA7C48204D6C225796B002ED33E?OpenDocument&print>

<p><b>d) Through other Projects</b></p> <p>Governmental Level</p> <p>Non-Governmental Level</p>	<p>/</p>
<p><b>e) “Resettlement-like” experience</b></p> <p>From Guantanamo</p> <p>Intra-EU “Relocation”</p>	<p>/</p> <p>Cyprus is one of the EU Member States which views relocation as a solution to the challenges from massive immigration fluxes as well as a tool for the expression of solidarity and responsibility by other European members<sup>13</sup>.</p>
<p><b>Comments</b></p>	<p>The Asylum Service of Cyprus declared:</p> <p>‘It is expected that in 2012, the Commission will propose a voluntary, permanent relocation scheme for beneficiaries of international protection. ‘Based on the experience from the two phases of the pilot project with Malta and taking into account EASO’s future engagement in relocation activities, the crucial questions could be whether the EU should develop a voluntary and permanent scheme for relocation of beneficiaries of international protection, following similar criteria and financial support as in the resettlement programmes. In particular, Member States could voluntary relocate in their territories beneficiaries of international protection from Member States which face particular pressures, based on specific indicators (e.g. population, surface, GDP)’<sup>14</sup>.</p>
<p><b>III. Resettlement Implementation</b></p>	
<p><b>Refugees resettled</b></p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>Comments</b></p>	<p>Cyprus is not viewing resettlement as an immediate option, especially because of the large amount of asylum applications it receives. As well as this, the current financial crisis that it is experiencing is a huge obstacle to any resettlement. However, a joint plan organized by the EU with financial support, may lead to further consideration of the possibility of resettlement.</p>

<sup>13</sup> Joint communiqué, Cyprus, Malta, Greece, Italy, Spain, 19 April 2011, [http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press\\_releases/2011/04/DOI%20-%20pr0785A.asp](http://www.doi.gov.mt/EN/press_releases/2011/04/DOI%20-%20pr0785A.asp)

<sup>14</sup> Interview with the Asylum Service, op.cit.,