

# The Challenges of Citizenship in a Small European State

Cyprus

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# Defining Citizenship

- How is citizenship is defined in your country?
- How does the general public / NGOs / the state ... perceive the basis and rights of citizenship? Is there agreement?

# Routes to Citizenship

Citizenship can be acquired

- Automatically, by Birth (jus soli) born in Cyprus by **both** Cypriot parents (or one the other has to have entered or be legally resident in Cyprus)
- By descent (jus sanguinis) i.e. if either parent is Cypriot
- By registration or by naturalisation

At the core of citizenship regulation remains the notion that *all persons of Cypriot descent are entitled to apply*

# Types of Citizenship I

- Dual/multiple citizenship is allowed
- Citizenship can be offered to foreigners in exchange for services rendered: Discretionary and honorary modes of acquisition
- Acquisition of citizenship via naturalisation for students, visitors, self-employed persons, athletes and coaches, domestic workers, nurses and employees who reside in Cyprus with the sole aim of working there as well as spouses, children or other dependent persons.
- Prerequisites: Residence in the Republic for at least seven years out of which one year in the period immediately prior to the application their stay must be 'continuous'.
- Exceptionally, citizenship may be granted to persons who have offered highly esteemed services to the Republic, irrespective of the years of residence in Cyprus.
- The regime is based on discretionary power of the authorities and in particular the discretion of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of the Interior
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## Types of Citizenship II

- Citizenship can be offered to foreigners in exchange for services rendered: Discretionary and honorary modes of acquisition
- Exceptionally, citizenship may be granted to persons who have offered highly esteemed services to the Republic, irrespective of the years of residence in Cyprus.
- The regime is based on discretionary power of the authorities and in particular the discretion of the Council of Ministers and the Minister of the Interior
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# Challenges to Citizenship (1a)

- **New issues for citizenship and citizenship policies**
- In the 1990s and early 2000, key issues opening up the question of citizenship and requiring a declared and consistent policy emerged.
- **The first issue concerns the children of settlers who are married to Turkish-Cypriots.** Discrimination against Turkish-Cypriots with one Turkish parent after Law No. 65(I)/1999: 12-Nov-99
- Extended the right to citizenship to any person of Cypriot descent (i.e. regardless of whether the father or the mother is Cypriot); **made automatic acquisition of citizenship conditional on lawful entry and stay in the Republic (effectively this covers children one of whose parents is a Turkish settler).**

## Challenges to Citizenship (1b)

- **2. The arrival of migrant workers, who today make up over 20 per cent of the total working population of the island, is a significant factor altering the ethnic makeup of the population.** Although the initial design was that they be 'temporary', they seem to be a permanent feature of Cypriot society.
- **3. The arrival of Roma, who are classified as Turkish-Cypriots, from the poorer (occupied) north in the south between 1999 and 2002 created a panic of being 'flooded' with 'gypsies'**
- **4. The issue of gender has become an important issue**
- **5. Opening of checkpoints 2003**

# Challenges to Citizenship (1b)

- 6. Cyprus Investment Program (2013) Council of Ministers decision May 2018
- Controversy with EU Commission – Response by a Supervisory and Control Committee headed by Ministry of Finance to:
  - Establishing a Service Provider Register
  - Code of Conduct statement ; clean Criminal Record. Violating the Code, removed from Registry.
  - Ministry of Finance is conducting a study on the effectiveness of the program.
- 279 members registered in the Register of Providers- majority law and audit firms.
- February 2018: 295 naturalization. 2000 applications submitted each year; 700 decided.
- 2011-2018: 1685 investors and 1651 family members were naturalized.
- Investors: 2011 - 30 people, 2012 - 48 people, 2013 - 55 people, 2014 - 214 people, 2015 - 337 people, 2016 - 443 people, 2017 - 503 people, 2018 - 47 people)
- 2011-2018: 37 Honorary Families.
- Cypriot citizenship granted to those staying for more than 7 years: 507 (35% naturalization by exception). No data on marriage naturalization.



# Challenges to Citizenship (1a)



# Challenges to Citizenship (1b)



# Challenges to Citizenship (1b)



Halloumi &  
passports



Τι κι αν  
χάσανε το  
χαλούμι  
οριστικά...

θα συνεχίσουν  
να πουλούν  
διαβατήρια...



Ο Ακιντζί επιμένει και καλεί  
τον ΠτΔ να πει ξεκάθαρα τι  
λύση επιθυμεί...  
**Αναστασιάδης:**  
**Μιαν που θα πουλώ**  
**Διαβατήρια**



# *The Policy of receiving citizenship in the Republic of Cyprus:*

**a la carte, and above all,  
a la money**

**A discussion  
with Şener Elcil  
and Nikos Trimikliniotis**



## Challenges to Citizenship (2)

- Being a SMALL STATE - in combination
- Geopolitical issues ('Cyprus problem') and
- Corruption issues influence these main challenges that have emerged as a consequence of citizenship policies.
- EU citizenship is a huge subject- competition with Malta and Bulgaria over 'cheap citizenships' or 'sale of citizenship'
- Construction boom – skyscrapers, destruction of habitat, environment and old city front Limassol





# Responses to Citizenship

Transparency International and Global Witness estimates:

- Spain, Cyprus, Portugal and the UK are the top earners from such programs, each receiving annually, on average, €976 million (\$1.1 billion), €914 million (\$1 billion), €670 million (\$775 million) and €498 million (\$576 million), respectively.
- Figures for **small economies** like Cyprus and Malta are especially impressive.
  - Cyprus sale of citizenship: €4.8 billion (\$5.5 billion) since 2013
  - Malta €718 million (\$831 million) in foreign direct investment since 2014.
- Estimated approx. 3,300 people granted citizenship through Cypriot program since 2013.
- A recent decision taken by Cyprus' Council of Ministers has capped the maximum number of citizenships granted to investors at 700 per year.

[<https://www.forbes.com/sites/antonisantoniou/2018/10/16/cyprus-has-revised-its-citizenship-program-is-it-too-little-too-late/#6e923e6d4d18>]

# Flashpoints

- The EU Commissioner talked to the Financial Times last August, explaining: “We have no power to ban such a practice (grant of citizenship) but we have an obligation to put high requirements on the member states to be careful. They are granting citizenship for the whole of Europe.”
- Europe’s worries derive mostly from the threat of money laundering through these schemes: during the same interview, Commissioner Jourová also alluded to worries about the origins of the wealth of some Russian applicants seeking Maltese citizenship.

# Economy, crisis and citizenship

- Have there been any issues in your country which have altered the challenges in addressing citizenship issues?
- Are there scale/size, national specificities or uniqueness issues invoked and how are these framed in the context of citizenship?
- Please refer/focus on the following:
  - The global economic crisis since 2008 and the austerity policies
  - The 2015 'asylum crisis'
  - Events or debates of national significance
  - Has there been any debate about the schemes of investors acquiring 'fast track' access to citizenship or 'sale of citizenship' schemes?

# Conclusion: Prospects

- Looking forward to citizenship policies and practices:
- More pressure by EU
- Mobilisation of activists against on Investors program – expected that the program will be come more restrictive but there are huge profits and powerful interests that maintain it.
- T/C cases before courts and mobilisations for T/C citizenship
- Migrant support groups mobilise fro opening citizenship for those migrants who have stayed for years in Cyprus