

The Challenges of Immigration in a Small European State

Cyprus

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Map



Map



Population Trends

- Indicate how the local population has grown/declined in the last 100 years, explaining any trends
- 2019 Population Rank 159
- 2019 World Percentage 0.02%
- 2019 Growth Rate 0.79%
- Density 129.55/km²
- Area 9,251 km²
- Capital City Nicosia

Population Dynamics

- Cypriot population: Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots (uncharted), Maronites, Armenians, Latins and migrants (EU and TCNs)

At the end of 2017 956,800 Cypriots (not including Turkish Cypriots estimated at 200,000, also unknown number of Turkish nationals in northern Cyprus)

2017: 3,580 men TCNs entered Cyprus (2,690 aged 2,690) with work permits. Also 5,487 women TCNs (4,382 aged 20-44) –almost exclusively domestic workers.

The population of Cyprus accounts for 0,2% of the total population of the 28 European Union countries. Cyprus has the third smallest population ranking behind Malta and Luxembourg which had a total population of 475.700 and 602.000 in 2017 respectively.

Population Dynamics II

- 2018: 7,700 A/S mostly from Syria, Somalia, Pakistan, India, Iraq, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Cameroon had claimed asylum. In 2017, there were 4,582 asylum applications. In 2018, refugee status granted to 191 persons (123 cases), subsidiary protection to 1011 (693 cases), 1260 rejected. Rejection rate 51.18%. 8,500 applications pending.
- Claims by government that there are 1,000 asylum seekers entering the country every month forming a “tremendous burden” on a small country like Cyprus.
- Securitisation overtones from discourse of both EU and CY policy makers.
- FGM victims controversy, highlighting policy gaps.

Picture by Fatema Ismam
(*Limbo*, edited by David Officer
and Nicos Philippou)

A young Filipino
assisting an older
Cypriot woman



Types of Immigration

- **Forced migration** (Asylum seekers & refugees). Most do not intend to stay. Poor reception conditions and no integration policy. Hostile public discourse by political and religious leaders that frame them as puppets of Turkey, that feeds into public perceptions. Refugee status is very rarely granted- subsidiary protection that carries no right to FR
- **Economic migrants:** Largest category are domestic female domestic workers from Asia. Discriminatory governmental policy, poor working conditions, no inspections. Few visas for factory/construction workers. Recently, most vacancies in low scale jobs are filled by A/S.
- **Students** – for study or disguised/exploited economic migrants
- **Elite migrants and retirement migrants**

Types of Immigration II

- [updated AIDA Country Report](#) The number of asylum applications has significantly increased in recent years with 2,871 in 2016, 4,459 in 2017, and 7,761 in 2018, bringing Cyprus first in the per capita number of applications among the 28 EU Member States. The upward trend has continued in early 2019 with 1,090 persons applying in January 2019 compared to 440 in January 2019
- https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Migration_and_migrant_population_statistics

Challenges to Immigration (1)

- Very poor working conditions, low salaries and access to rights that also affect conditions for local workers.
- Special cases: domestic workers, agricultural workers, female dancers/bars
- Society does not recognise migrants' contribution to the economy and views them as burden, especially since economic crisis.
- No integration policies leading to long-term residence & citizenship – short-term visa; 'overstayers'
- Migration is main ticket for rise of the far right which more than doubled in past 3 years.

Challenges to Immigration (2)

- Being a SMALL STATE has impacted main challenges as this is framed in a way that attempts to justify the maintaining marginalisation and exclusion of migrants
- The issue of scale, particularly demographics connected to 'Cyprus problem' is at the core – 'small divided & occupied country'
- Danger/threat from Turkey
- Proximity to Middle East

Responses to Immigration

- Main strategies and policies State strategy: cheap short-term labour, few rights, no access to welfare,
- NGOs unable to develop strategy – mere media campaigns of indignation, report to international and European monitoring bodies
- Failure of strategic litigation – courts slow (3-5 years), no effective legal aid, expensive, only want to get the minimum ie out of detention

Flashpoints

GAPS: Housing- Welfare – Language training- Individual support – coordination of scarce NGO services

- A family of Iraqi refugees with three children arrived in Cyprus three years ago. The younger child has health issues. They were placed in Kofinou reception camp where the boy almost died from unsanitary conditions. The family left the camp and slept in the car until they found an apartment that costs 570 euros per month. Their entire benefit is 1000 euros per month to include all their expenses. They cannot afford heating or health care. They do not speak Greek so school performance is poor and parents cannot find work. No assistance from anybody with regard to letters they keep receiving from the authorities (in Greek).

Conclusion: Prospects

- Design a holistic approach on migration policy that reveals the benefits of migration.
- A long-term strategy: Move away from the model of temporary employment of migrants & integrate
- Detach employment of third country nationals from specific job and employer
- Full implementation of collective agreements and extend cover to agriculture and domestic work
- Ensure for rights and unionisation of EU workers

Conclusion: Prospects

Move away from repression & restriction. Develop a regularisation scheme for undocumented workers in Cyprus

- Full implementation of labour rights, anti-discrimination principles and more regulation of labour market.
- The model of migrants reception should be multicultural that promote dialogue, understanding, equal participation and belonging.
- Broaden social provisions and enhance role of the State on welfare and health of elderly