



# Annual Report on Migration and Asylum National Report Cyprus 2018



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Article 9(1) of Council Decision 2008/381/EC establishing the EMN, each EMN NCP is required to provide an annual report describing the migration and asylum situation and developments in the (Member) State as well as statistical data.

### 1.1 SCOPE OF THE EMN ANNUAL NATIONAL REPORT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM 2018

The EMN National Annual Report on Migration and Asylum 2018 will cover the period 1st January 2018 to 31st December 2018.

**ANNUAL REPORT 2018 ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM  
IN CYPRUS  
NATIONAL REPORT (PART 2)**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

According to the latest Eurostat Reports for 2018, the highest percentage of applicants for international protection at first instance, compared to the population ratio, was recorded in Cyprus. In order to meet the challenges observed with the increased numbers of applicants arriving to Cyprus, where necessary, applicants were provided with a confirmation of a 'making' of an application in order to be able to access their rights provided for in the Cyprus Refugee law.

During the reporting year EASO deployed staff to support with the registration of applicants for international protection in the district offices of the Aliens and Immigration Service of the police in Nicosia, Limassol and Pafos.

Additionally, the Cypriot Asylum Service submitted a formal request to EASO for support in the area of backlog and case management, first and second reception, registration and capacity building – following consultations between the Asylum Service and EASO and ongoing needs assessments.

In relation to the reception of asylum applicants during the reporting year, a new operational scheme has been introduced for the Reception and Accommodation Centre in Kofinou based on a decision of the Council of Ministers dated 14/3/2018. This includes a Manager who is a public servant, permanently posted at the Centre, reporting to the Asylum Service and the Ministry of Interior and on call on a 24hour basis.

Moreover, all competent governmental departments are participating in a Coordination Mechanism in order to handle directly and effectively all issues risen in Reception Centre. The Head of the Asylum Service has a coordinating role in the Mechanism, while UNHCR has a consultative role.

In regards to applicants claiming to be unaccompanied minors, there has been an increase in age assessment interviews due to the increase in the numbers of applications received for this certain category especially from applicants of African countries.

During 2018, the AMIF Multiannual Programme 2014-2020 continued to co-fund many projects that successfully addressed integration related issues. These are listed to the respective chapter.

The Republic of Cyprus, through the competency of the Ministry of Interior, and the competent authority which is the Civil Registry and Migration Department, gives priority to voluntary returns, thus providing the chance to persons who attempt to misuse the legal migration channels, when in Cyprus, to return to their countries safely.

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this report is to provide objective, reliable and comparable information to the reader, regarding notable developments occurred in 2018 within the asylum and migration fields in Cyprus.

The EMN engages primarily in desk research, i.e. it collects and analyses data and information already available or published at the Member State or international level.

All respective data and information collected for the purposes of the 2018 Annual Report on Migration and Asylum in Cyprus have been provided by national bodies, competent authorities working in the fields of migration and asylum, national and international organisations.

### 1 LEGAL MIGRATION

#### ➤ **Economic migration;**

In relation to economic migration and highly skilled/qualified Third Country National workers, there were no quotas for their admission under the Blue Card Directive. Yet, no new policies or developments took place in the reporting year, in relation to intra-corporate transferees.

A policy development implemented during the reporting period refers to the maximum duration of stay for seasonal workers that is set to eight (8) months for each 12-month period. Whereas, previously, a maximum 4-month duration of stay was approved and then renewed accordingly, during the reporting period contracts of an 8-month duration were accepted. Regarding the domestic employment, the Contract of Employment was amended during the reporting period. As for the employment in the agricultural and animal husbandry sectors, a signed contract is required by both parties (employer and employee) while applying for an entry permit in Cyprus.

#### ➤ **Students and researchers;**

There were no new developments in relation to students and researchers during the reporting period,

➤ **Family reunification and family formation;**

There were no new developments in relation to the field of family reunification and family formation.

➤ **Information on routes to and conditions of legal migration;**

There were no new developments in relation to the information on routes to and conditions of legal migration.

**Other aspects of legal migration.**

The relevant law, transposing the Directive (EU) 2016/801 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of research, studies, training, voluntary service, pupil exchange schemes or educational projects and au pairing was under discussion in the House of Representatives (parliament). The Directive was transposed to the national Law in January 2019.

## 2 INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION INCLUDING ASYLUM

➤ **Implementation of the Common European Asylum System and related policy developments (e.g. applications for international protection and first-instance / final decisions);**

In 2018, 7761 new applicants for international protection were registered in Cyprus compared to 4582 in 2017. The majority of applicants are Syrian nationals, while Indian, Bangladesh and Pakistani nationals follow in numbers. Furthermore, according to the latest Eurostat Reports for 2018, the highest percentage of applicants for international protection at first instance, compared to the population ratio, was recorded in Cyprus (2484 applicants per one million population).

Notably, during 2018, the top countries of applications for international protection in Cyprus were:

Syrian Arab Republic	2007
India	883
Bangladesh	637
Pakistan	587
Cameroon	507
Egypt	407
Vietnam	415
Georgia	395
Iraq	370
Sri Lanka	278
Other	1275

Moreover, in 2018, 191 persons received refugee status (123 cases), 1011 persons received subsidiary protection status (693 cases), while 1260 persons were rejected (1196 cases). 699 persons (610 cases) proceeded with the withdrawal of their application for international protection.

In order to meet the challenges observed with the increased numbers of applicants arriving to Cyprus, where necessary, applicants were provided with a confirmation of a 'making' of an application in order to be able to access their rights provided for in the Cyprus Refugee law. This has been a practice applied especially in the District Immigration Office in Nicosia, where most applicants arrive in order to submit their asylum applications.

During the reporting year EASO deployed staff to support with the registration of applicants for international protection in the district offices of the Aliens and Immigration Service of the police in Nicosia, Limassol and Pafos.

Additionally, the Cypriot Asylum Service submitted a formal request to EASO for support in the area of backlog and case management, first and second reception, registration and capacity building – following consultations between the Asylum Service and EASO and ongoing needs assessments.

➤ **Reception of applicants of international protection, including information on the reception of applicants from specific third countries (e.g. Syria, Afghanistan, Western Africa);**

In relation to the reception of asylum applicants during the reporting year, a new operational scheme has been introduced for the Reception and Accommodation Centre in Kofinou based on a decision of the Council of Ministers dated 14/3/2018. This includes a Manager who is a public servant, permanently posted at the Centre, reporting to the Asylum Service and the Ministry of Interior and on call on a 24hour basis. The Manager is supported by an officer of the Asylum Service (public servant). Also, 3 maintenance officers are appointed from the public sector and there is provision for a nurse, a mental health specialist, a psychologist and a health visitor. Additionally, are deployed on a contract basis 5-6 Front-Desk Officers, 2 administrative support officers, 2 social support officers, 1 secretary, 1 general assistance officer, 5 – 6 cleaners and 4 security staff. The European Asylum Support Office (EASO), after a security assessment, has deployed experts and has donated prefabricated offices to support the Centre. UNHCR has donated an external gym, a play-ground, computers, air-conditions and a mini-bus, and will also deploy a social advisor.

Moreover, all competent governmental departments are participating in a Coordination Mechanism in order to handle directly and effectively all issues risen in Reception Centre. The Head of the Asylum Service has a coordinating role in the Mechanism, while UNHCR has a consultative role. Furthermore, the Asylum Service may request the presence in meetings, of the Office of Volunteers of the Reception Centre in Kofinou or other NGOs depending on the circumstances.

Yet, since April 20th, 2018, the monthly allowance of the Reception Centre residents has been increased from €40 to €100 for the main applicant and from €10 to €50 for each dependant. The increase of the allowance will address more efficiently their daily basic needs.

Finally, two new Special Houses for unaccompanied minors operated in 2018, in Nicosia and Larnaca respectively whilst an AMIF project continued to co-finance the

operational expenses of the Menoyia Detention Centre, as well as 2018 improvement measures and recreational activities for its residents.

### 3 UNACCOMPANIED MINORS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS

In regards to applicants claiming to be unaccompanied minors, there has been an increase in age assessment interviews due to the increase in the numbers of applications received for this certain category especially from applicants of African countries. A significant number of applicants claiming to be unaccompanied minors were also sent for medical age assessment, due to serious doubts concerning their real age. A large percentage of persons referred to medical age assessment, was proved to be over the age of 18. In addition, several AMIF projects are implemented for their support in relation to education and development of language skills, access to social security, social assistance and housing.

#### ➤ **Unaccompanied minors NOT seeking asylum;**

In relation to unaccompanied minors not seeking asylum, projects that promote their integration in the local society, have been implemented or continued their implementation during the reporting year. Notably, an AMIF project titled "Measures to improve social and educational inclusion of TCN children" continued in 2018. This initiative was co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. In practice this project researched and evaluated existing school practices, offered systematic training to school personnel on sociocultural diversity management issues and teacher training for reinforcement of Greek language learning and multilingualism. Also, it introduced the concept of facilitators-supporters with third country origin for school attending children and their parents, of the same origin. Additionally, an agreement for a new AMIF project is expected to be signed in early 2019, which will co-finance, free after school Greek language lessons for TCN minors, as well as the services and school presence of escorts/facilitators/supporters who speak the mother tongue of school attending children with little understanding of Greek.

#### ➤ **Other vulnerable groups.**

Additional to the aforementioned information provided on projects implementation, an AMIF call for proposals included the development and operation of a new Centre for Vulnerable applicants of international protection within the reporting period.



## 4 INTEGRATION

During 2018, the AMIF Multiannual Programme 2014-2020 continued to co-fund many projects that successfully addressed integration related issues. Also, the annual Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the AMIF Programme 2014-2020 which was organized in November 2018 has provided stakeholders with latest relevant information and a chance to exchange viewpoints. Aiming on the promotion of integration, some of the projects that have been implemented during the reporting year or continued their implementation, enhance the topics of civic participation, access to rights and obligations, education, treatment etc.

For instance, the project titled "Measures to improve social and educational inclusion of TCN children" was an initiative co-ordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. In practice this project researched and evaluated existing school practices, offered systematic training to school personnel on sociocultural diversity management issues and teacher training for reinforcement of Greek language learning and multilingualism. Also, it introduced the concept of facilitators-supporters with third country origin for school attending children and their parents, of the same origin.

AMIF continued to co-fund, free Greek language afternoon courses for adults yet aiming to continue their implementation in the following years. An additional project that continued for a third consecutive year its implementation during the year of report, titled «Integration programmes by local authorities» which includes multidimensional activities for integration. Refreshed activities were implemented in all five districts of the island by local authority partnerships. To enhance the socio-economic participation of TCNs, municipalities offered TCNs a variety of programmes and educational courses such as computer lessons, English language lessons and First Aid classes, social and family support, (including counselling sessions and after school child care programmes).

Yet, the AMIF project titled Migrant Information Centres (MICs) continued its operation. Four Centers operated in different cities as a one stop service shop for TCNs. The Centers provided guidance and advice on housing, access to health and education services, family support, completion of official forms, translation and interpretation services etc. Also included in the project is the operation of an InfoBus equipped with qualified staff whose main role is to service TCNs residing in remote areas. Additionally an informative website has been developed as part of the project.

In regards to the integration into the labour market, an agreement for a new AMIF project is expected to be signed in early 2019 which will co-finance measures that facilitate the entrance of TCNs into the labor market (e.g procedure to assess qualifications, occupational and skills training courses as well as customized counselling for the labor market).

Finally, in July 2018 there was a call for proposal for the project named "National Action Plan on integration of migrants for the years 2020-2022". The deadline was in September 2018 and a grant agreement for the implementation of the project was signed in February 2019. The project includes the drafting and communication of a National Integration Plan which will be drawn following the engagement of stakeholders and the monitoring of relevant government authority/committee.

## 5 CITIZENSHIP AND STATELESSNESS

No significant developments occurred in the area of citizenship and statelessness.

## 6 BORDERS, VISA AND SCHENGEN

During the reporting period, the ISF Multiannual Programme 2014-2020- (Borders and visas) continued to co-fund projects that improved border control and short-term visa issuing process. More such projects are planned for the near future. Additional Projects are included in the National Programme. Also, the annual Monitoring Committee for the implementation of the ISF Programme 2014-2020 which was organized in November 2018 has provided stakeholders with latest relevant information and a chance to exchange viewpoints.

Since the beginning of July 2018, 74 interactive BorderXpress Kiosks have been installed at Larnaca and Pafos International Airports. More precisely, 44 BorderXpress Kiosks have been installed in Larnaca International Airport (18 at Departures and 26 at Arrivals) and 30 in Pafos International Airport (14 at Departures and 16 at Arrivals).

This equipment provides the ability to passengers who are holders of machine-readable travel documents, to scan the documents themselves and after being provided with the relevant printing, to present themselves with their documents before a Border Guard for final passport control.

Among others, the above-mentioned kiosks have the ability to check passenger data as well as travel documents. Furthermore, the kiosks have the ability to check the security features of the travel documents as well as, with the use of face recognition software already installed in equipment, to proceed with the identification of the document to the passenger, by comparing the passenger's photo with the one in the travel document.

Additionally, during the last quarter of the reporting year, the Aliens and Immigration Unit organized different training programs on the topics of detection of false/falsified documents, human rights, trafficking, risk indicators of terrorism, debriefing of persons subject to return etc.

## 7 IRREGULAR MIGRATION INCLUDING MIGRANT SMUGGLING

Misuse of legal migration channels is mostly seen (i) in the areas of student visas drop outs, (ii) the lodging of asylum applications following a rejection of any other visa application and (iii) even when Detention and Deportation Orders are issued for purposes of expulsion.

The Republic of Cyprus, through the competency of the Ministry of Interior, and the competent Department which is the Civil Registry and Migration Department, gives priority to voluntary returns, thus providing the chance to those persons who attempt to misuse the legal migration channels, when in Cyprus, to return to their countries safely.

Regarding misuse of legal channels when the third country national is outside Cyprus, those are not detected. What it is easily detected are the irregular means by which TCN enter Cyprus. Notably, TCNs arrive in Cyprus through irregular channels by sea, as well as through the green line, after having arrived in areas where the Government doesn't exercise effective control.

Prevention of irregular stay for persons who are "smuggled" in Cyprus, in the sense that they use irregular routes by sea to arrive, is carried through the policy of asylum. The TCNs who find themselves in Cyprus, are requested to register their claim on asylum. By this way their irregular stay is prevented and it is easier to specify and deal with their needs, including first and foremost their healthcare. All other individual requests and needs are dealt with on a case by case basis. In the case of rejection of their asylum claim, the right to stay can be examined following an individual request on behalf of the TCN.

Prosecution of smugglers, is under the competency of the Police and the Attorney General's Office.

## 8 TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

During the reporting year, within the framework of National Action Plan 2016-2018 the Multidisciplinary Coordinating Group developed and approved a standard referral form of potential victims to the Social Welfare Services, which will be introduced in early 2019. It also investigated the operation of a 24-hour help line for information, guidance and support of victims of trafficking, through the help and expertise of NGO A21 Greece.

Additionally, the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute (CPI) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC), continued the provision of trainings and workshops to schools and teachers on topics indirectly related to trafficking in persons. Specifically, in regards to the implementation of the anti-racist policy, the CPI provides trainings such as the yearly two-day teacher trainings for primary and secondary school teachers, by organizing conferences on issues of racism, gender issues and human rights. In addition, the CPI organizes in-service teachers' training seminars, on a school basis, as well as a series of seminars.

Furthermore, the Social Welfare Officers are adequately trained to provide the necessary assistance, support and counseling to victims of trafficking. First-line officers have been trained for early detection and referral of cases of trafficking and exploitation of persons. These sessions included training on the main provisions of the legislation, the indicators for detection of victims and the National Referral Mechanism.

Training courses and seminars specifically addressing the topic of trafficking in human beings, have been also provided to members of the Immigration Department as well as to staff members of the Cyprus Police.

The ISF Multiannual Programme 2014-2020- (Police) continued to co-fund projects that improved police systems, equipment and staff skills in order to address serious crime and indirectly trafficking. Additional projects are planned under ISF National Programme 2014-2020 that deal more directly with trafficking.

New developments and general practices involving the cooperation with third-countries on the prevention and fight against trafficking in human beings, have also took place during the reporting period. Notably, the Counsel of the Republic (public prosecutor) has participated at the OSCE Live-Simulation training course on "combating human trafficking". The aim of the course was to enhance the capacity of interested OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation to effectively investigate and prosecute trafficking in human beings (THB), as well as to promptly identify trafficked persons along migration routes by promoting a multi-agency and human rights-based approach.

## 9 RETURN AND READMISSION

The main national developments include:

(1) the priority provided to TCN for voluntary return, the cooperation with the International Organization for Migration Country Office in Cyprus, which carries the EU Funded Program on Return and reintegration,

(2) the use of alternative to detention where possible, and

(3) the policy on the incentives which has positive results overall.

Cyprus, follows the policy on return and the recommendations of the European Commission to this regard. Rejected asylum seekers are returned, when there is no refoulement. Likewise, irregular migrants are returned when there is no refoulement.

Cyprus follows the EU policy on readmission, by exchanging the details of the competent authorities with the third states which the EU enters into agreements. Moreover, Cyprus is in the process of drafting readmission Protocols with third States which the EU does not, as yet, started any negotiations for readmission agreements.

Strengthening of cooperation with regards to return and reintegration is carried out through the IOM-Country Office program on Voluntary Return and Reintegration, co-funded by AMIF, with very good results.

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## **EMN ANNUAL REPORT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM**

### **National Report Part 2: ANNEXES**

#### **ANNEX A: Methodology and Definitions**

##### **Methodology**

The collection of information consisted primarily of desk research (use of data already available or published, including national statistics, legal texts, reports etc.), complemented, when necessary, by interviews conducted with different stakeholders in the field of migration, asylum and integration, depending on the topical issues aroused of the respective publications.

Public servants from the Ministry of Interior, as well as the other Ministries, contributed as experts in their field, to all of the CY EMN NCP outcomes, tasks and developments' provision of information, when needed.



