



MINISTRY

OF INTERIOR

ASYLUM SERVICE

“Guide for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection in Cyprus”



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One:	Asylum Seekers	Pages:
	I. Welcome to Cyprus	1
	II. The Asylum System in Cyprus	2
	III. Seeking Asylum in Cyprus	3
	a. Who can apply for asylum	3
	b. When do I apply?	3
	c. Where do I apply?	4
	d. What do I need in order to apply?	4
	e. How do I apply?	5-6
	f. Confirmation letter	7
	g. Right of Residence	8
	h. Medical Examination	8
	IV. Reception	9-10
	a. Basic principles for the operation of the Kofinou Reception Centre	9
	b. Basic rules of the operation of the Kofinou Reception Centre	9
	c. Obligations of asylum seekers residing at the Kofinou Reception Centre	10
	V. Examination of Asylum claim	11-13
	a. When will my asylum application be examined?	11
	b. Interview	12
	c. During the Interview	12
	d. What happens if the decision is of granting international protection	13
	e. What happens if my application is rejected	13
	VI. Appeal	14
	a. When and how can I appeal?	14
	b. Where do I appeal?	14
	c. List of NGOs providing free-of-charge services to asylum seekers	15
	d. Can I appeal before a Court?	15
	VII. Rights and Obligations of Asylum Seekers	16
	a. Rights	16-17
	b. Obligations	17-18
	VIII. Minors	19
	a. Unaccompanied minors	19
	b. Unaccompanied minors at the interview phase	19
	IX. Detention of Asylum Seekers	20
	X. Contacts	21-22

Chapter Two	International Protection – Refugee Status	23-27
	I. Refugees a. Who is a refugee? 23 b. Becoming a refugee 23 c. Rights 23-24 d. Administrative help provided 25 e. Identity card and travel documents 26 f. Taxes 26 g. Obligations 26 h. Sustaining family unification 26 i. Unaccompanied minors under refugee status 27	
Chapter Three	International Protection – Subsidiary Protection Status	28-36
	I. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection a. Who is a beneficiary of subsidiary protection? 26 b. Becoming a beneficiary of subsidiary protection 26 c. Rights 29-31 d. Administrative help provided 31-32 e. Obligations 32 f. Sustaining family unification 33 g. Unaccompanied minors under the subsidiary protection status 33-34 h. Taxes 34 i. The right to appeal – Supreme Court of Justice 34 II. Useful Contacts 35-36	
Chapter Four	Integration in Cyprus	37-41
	I. Integration of Asylum Seekers 37 a. Housing 37 b. Social Welfare assistance 37 c. Medical and pharmaceutical treatment 38 d. Vulnerable groups 39 e. Employment 39 f. Education 39-40 II. Integration of beneficiaries of international protection 39 a. Housing 39 b. Social Welfare 39 c. Employment 39 d. Education 39 e. Orientation 40 f. Public Awareness 40 III. The European Refugee Fund 40-41	
Chapter Five	Living in Cyprus	42-50
	I. Cyprus in general a. Population 42 b. Capital and major cities 42-43 c. Language 43 d. Climate 43-44	

	e. Currency	44
	f. Judiciary	44
	g. Administrative districts	44
	h. Local authorities	45
	II. Education in Cyprus	45
	a. Pre primary education	45
	b. Secondary general education	45-46
	c. Secondary Technical and Vocational	46
	d. Higher and Tertiary education	46-47
	e. Private Institutions of Tertiary education	47
	III. Cultural heritage of Cyprus – Cyprus traditions and Hospitality	48-50
	Contacts for the Asylum Service, Ministry of Interior	51

CHAPTER ONE – ASYLUM SEEKERS

I. Welcome to Cyprus

Cyprus is the third largest island of the Mediterranean at the crossroads of Middle East, Asia and Europe. Cyprus has been a member of the European Union since 2004. The capital is Nicosia. Other major cities are: Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos and the free areas of Famagusta.

Cyprus became an independent Republic in 1960, adopting a governmental structure modeled on Western democracies. The Head of State is the President of the Republic, elected by universal suffrage for a five-year term of office. The Council of Ministers, appointed by the President, constitutes the main executive body of the Republic. Legislative power rests with the House of Representatives, elected for a five-year term. A multi-party system is in operation, while the electoral system is based on proportional representation.

Being an island, Cyprus offers a pleasant climate with dry summers and mild winters, enjoying sunshine all throughout the year. The official languages of the Republic are Greek and Turkish with the Greek Cypriots commonly using the Cypriot Dialect. The currency used is Euro.



II. The Asylum System in Cyprus

The Asylum Service was established in February 2004 with the amendment of the Refugee Laws of 2000, replacing thus the Refugee Authority. The reasoning for this amendment was of the necessity for a more effective and efficient procedure on first instant of the examination of asylum applications for the granting of International protection since after the accession of the Republic of Cyprus to the European Union there was an important increase in the number of asylum applications. The Refugee Law was enacted in 2000 and since then was amendment in the years 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2009 in order to be in line with European *acquis*.



Generally, the asylum procedure in Cyprus is under a constant process of alignment with the development of the European *acquis*, for the purpose of granting protection to the persons facing a fear of persecution in their countries of origin and also of adopting fast and effective procedures in a convenient, fair and effective way.

III. Seeking Asylum in Cyprus

Any person, who is afraid to return to his/her country of origin, because he/she is in fear of persecution, has the right to ask for protection in another country.

a. Who can apply for asylum?

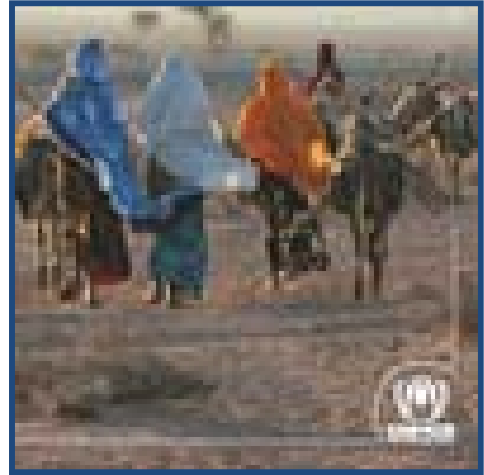
Any person who cannot, or does not want to return to their country because of fear of being persecuted due to reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, gender or political opinion.

Any person who cannot, or does not want to return to their country because they (will) may suffer serious and unjustified harm, such as:

- Death penalty or execution
- Torture, or inhuman, or degrading treatment, or punishment
- Serious and systematic human rights abuses
- Threat to their life, security, or freedom because of armed conflicts, or massive violations of human rights.

b. When do I apply?

- You must apply **as soon as you arrive** in Cyprus.
- If you are already in Cyprus you must apply **as soon as possible**.
- If you entered Cyprus illegally you must present yourself to the authorities **without undue delay**.
- If you apply as a family unit, each person should provide his/her consent to the application.



c. Where do I apply?

At every legal entry point	Larnaca Airport
	Paphos Airport
	All sea ports
At the Immigration Police Office of your District of residence	Nicosia Immigration Police Office
	Limassol Immigration Police Office
	Larnaca Immigration Police Office
	Paphos Immigration Office
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are in prison or being held by the police in detention, you can apply at the prison/ detention centre/ police station you are held. • If you have arrived in Cyprus through the illegal areas, you must present yourself to the authorities immediately. Your illegal entry in Cyprus does not prevent you from applying for asylum. Therefore you should include in your application your illegal arrival. 	

d. What do I need in order to apply?

- Once you wish to submit an application, you will be provided with an application form. Both the application forms as well as its submission are **FREE OF CHARGE**.
- You can fill the application in your own language; otherwise you may request the assistance of a translator.

- You need to present your passport, identity card or any document that proves your identity. In case you cannot present any such documents, because you came to Cyprus without bringing **them along**, you can still apply for asylum.
- Unless **there is a** reasonable cause for not doing so, you must present originals of all identity documents or birth and/or marriage certificates in your possession, relating to you, your spouse and/or your children.
- Three passport-size photographs.

e. How do I apply?

- You must go personally to the Immigration/ Police Office and apply with all your accompanying family members.
- You DO NOT NEED a lawyer to submit an asylum application. You have a right, however, to have a lawyer during all the stages of the asylum procedure.
- Once you are at the Immigration / Police Office, ask for an application form in a language you can read and write. Application forms are available in Greek, Turkish, English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Serbo-Croat and Russian.
- If there are no application forms in a language you can read and write, you can ask for an interpreter. The interpreter's services are provided to you **FREE OF CHARGE**.
- Complete the personal data form with **the required** personal details.
- You must complete the application form at the Immigration / Police Office. You must write in detail, **clearly and truthfully** the reasons you are afraid or do not wish to return to your country.

- If you are not able to read and/or write, a police officer will complete the application for you, with your oral statements and ask you to sign it. You should ask the police officer to read back to you what was written before you sign, so as to make sure that what you have said is correctly written.
- When you submit your application, your fingerprints will be taken, as well as the fingerprints of all **your** family members included in your application. **Children under 14 years of age do not have to give fingerprints.**
- You must state your address. **It is very important to give your address correctly.** Your application **could** be rejected if the Authorities cannot find you in the **given** address. If you change address at any time you **MUST** inform your District Immigration Office immediately and not later than **three days** after **the change**, otherwise your application will be rejected and/or your file might be closed and consequently you will no longer be considered an asylum seeker. You should inform the police officer in case you are homeless, **so that necessary measures regarding your accommodation** can be taken.
- Once you complete all the above, the Police will provide you with a **Confirmation Letter**, confirming that you have applied for asylum.

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO RETURN TO THE IMMIGRATION / POLICE OFFICE ON THE STATED DATE. If you **do not appear then**, you may be subject to arrest / detention / deportation.

- On (the same) **the** day of the issuance of the Confirmation Letter, you (will also) have to apply for an Alien Book. At the same time, you will **also** have to undergo medical examinations, within three (3) days of receipt of the Confirmation Letter.

Issuance of the Alien Book shall be processed by the Immigration Office of your district and is **FREE OF CHARGE.**

f. Confirmation Letter

The Confirmation Letter is **the** proof that you have applied for asylum and that you are **legally** residing in Cyprus. You must keep the Confirmation Letter with you at all times, as it protects you from being arrested and/or deported.

You can use the Confirmation Letter to:

- Legally stay in the Republic of Cyprus
- Move freely in the Republic of Cyprus
- Apply for work at the Labor Office
- Apply for welfare benefits, subject to the laws of the Republic
- Apply for a medical card in order to gain access to public hospitals

NOTE: YOU ARE ENTITLED TO THESE RIGHTS WHILE YOUR APPLICATION IS UNDER EXAMINATION.

The Alien Book, providing the Alien Registration Card (ARC), is an identity document issued to all foreigners, including the asylum seekers, in Cyprus.

The Alien Book is **NOT** a proof of legal residence in Cyprus.

All family members included in your asylum application must get their own Alien Book, except children **under** 12 (years old).

g. Right of Residence

You, as an asylum seeker, have the right to reside in the Republic of Cyprus until the time the final decision in regards to your asylum claim is taken.

Your address is stated on the Confirmation letter and the ARC as well and you are obliged to stay there, while your claim is being examined.

In case of address change you must inform your District Immigration Office immediately and no later than **three days**, otherwise the procedure regarding the examination of your claim will be discontinued and your file will be closed and/or your application to be rejected. Therefore, you will be subject to arrest and/or deportation.

NOTE: YOU ARE ENTITLED TO THESE RIGHTS WHILE YOUR CLAIM IS UNDER EXAMINATION.

h. Medical Examination

Within three (3) days of the receipt of the **confirmation letter**, you must go for a medical examination, at any public District Hospital.

- Visiting hours: Monday to Friday, 11:30-13:30
- The medical examination is **FREE OF CHARGE**.
- The results of the medical examination are confidential.

IV. RECEPTION

In Cyprus there exists one Reception Centre at Kofinou for asylum seekers. Upon your application in case you can't ensure accommodation on your own, inform the person in charge and request housing at the Reception Centre of Kofinou. Such an arrangement holds for a temporary period of time. In case you refuse to reside in reception centers you might not be entitled to welfare allowance.

a. **Basic principles for the operation of the Kofinou or other Reception Centers:**

- Sustaining an appropriate standard of living conditions
- Respect and protection of asylum seekers' private life
- Protection of the family unit
- Distinct Accommodation for unmarried women and men
- Ability of communication with relatives, legal advisors and UNHRC



representatives and any NGOs relating with asylum seekers and refugees' issues.

- Accommodation in the Kofinou Reception Centre or in another reception centre is temporary until appropriate requirements for residence outside the Centre are formed. However, following a decision by the Minister of Interior such option might be terminated and to be obliged to reside in the Reception Centers.
- Free movement of asylum seekers to and from the Reception Centre.

b. **Basic rules of operation of the Reception Centre:**

- Under age children of asylum seekers are to be staying with their parents or relatives responsible for them
- The Asylum Service grants allowance to cover for basic personal needs
- Food supply is provided by the Centre according to their dietary needs
- Free transport to and from the reception centre to the other city centers

c. Obligations of asylum seekers residing at the Reception Centre:

- Keep their rooms and common rooms clean
- Guests are not allowed to be staying with the asylum seekers at the Centre.
- Comply with all internal regulations of the Centre
- In case that asylum seekers are responsible for any damage to the property of the Centre, part of their allowance will be kept so as for the damage to be covered.

- Information and support regarding appropriate housing, work and allowance is being provided to the asylum seekers residing at the Centre, by the Social Welfare Services and other governmental and nongovernmental organizations. Psychological and social aid is also provided for those in need.



- Your right of residing at the Reception Centre could be waived, when you have not stated your true financial condition or you haven't applied for asylum within a reasonable time limit after your arrival to the Republic.
- In case that you belong to the category of vulnerable persons, i.e. people with special needs, pregnant women, single parent, minors, unaccompanied minors, or you have suffered torture, rape or other form of psychological or physical or sexual violence you must refer it to the person in charge at the Centre so as appropriate arrangements are made for you at the Centre.

V. EXAMINATION OF ASYLUM CLAIM

a. When will my asylum application be examined?

- Your asylum application will be examined by the Asylum Service as soon as possible. In any case you will receive a letter of notification in case that your application is still pending after six months.
- The Asylum Service will send you a letter in the address you have stated inviting you to an interview. The letter will state the time, date and place of the interview.
- In case you do not present yourself on that set date and time of your interview, your application will be rejected or your file will be closed and you will no longer be considered an asylum seeker.



In case an emergency arises, due to which it is absolutely impossible for you to show up for your interview you **MUST IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY** the Asylum Service, in order to avoid your file being unjustifiably closed or your application to be rejected. You can inform the Asylum Service by telephone. You may be requested by the competent Officer to provide e.g. medical certificate in case of illness. In such a case, a new date for the interview will be set, which you have to attend.

b. Interview:

- The interview will be conducted by an Asylum Service Eligibility Officer whose effort shall be to understand in detail and clarify the facts which led you to apply for asylum.
- If you wish, you have the right to a lawyer, or legal advisor during the interview.
- If you need an interpreter, the Asylum Service will provide you with one **FREE OF CHARGE**. You must inform the officer immediately, if you cannot understand the interpreter.
- If you are a woman, you can ask for a female interviewer and a female interpreter.
- When the interview is completed, you must carefully read your statements so as to make sure that what you have said is correctly written and then sign the interview record.

c. During the interview:

- You must explain in detail the reasons you are applying for asylum and give any evidence and documents to support your statements.
- You must submit your passport to the Asylum Service at the interview. You will be offered with a relevant document named **“Passport Statement of Receipt”** as well as photocopies of your passport.
- Your statements must be **truthful, clear and accurate**.

Anything you say during the interview remains **STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL**. You are therefore expected to respond in detail to the interview questions and provide all relevant information.

d. What happens if the decision is of granting international protection?

Soon after the interview, you will receive a decision letter by the Asylum Service, in which the status you are granted is specified.

By this decision letter you will be granted either with the:

- Refugee status; or
- Subsidiary protection status; or
- Residency on humanitarian grounds; or
- Rejection

e. What happens if my application is rejected?

- If your application is rejected, you will receive a letter explaining the reasons **of the rejection**.
- You have the right to appeal against this rejection, **within the time limit** stated in the rejection letter.

VI. APPEAL

a. When and how can I appeal?

- You have a right to appeal if your **asylum** application is rejected.

Note: The appeal is **FREE OF CHARGE**.

- If you have been granted a residency on humanitarian grounds for a specified period of time, or with a decision of rejection, you can appeal against it.
- The decision letter states **the time limit for appeal** (how many days you have to submit your appeal), starting from the day you received the decision letter. You must submit your appeal within this time limit, otherwise your appeal will be rejected or not be accepted and your file will be closed.

b. Where do I appeal?

You must appeal to the Refugee Reviewing Authority. The Refugee Reviewing Authority is an independent body, responsible for examining asylum applications rejected by the Asylum Service.

Contact information:

Refugee Reviewing Authority

Address: 10-12 Gregoris Afxentiou Ave., Agios Dometios , 2360 Nicosia

Tel: 22 449160, Fax: 22 303809

c. LIST OF NGOs providing free-of-charge services to asylum seekers:

1. UNHCR: UN Protected Area, P.O.Box 21642 Nicosia, Tel: 22359043/57, Fax: 22359037



2. KISA: P.O.Box 22113, 1517 Nicosia, Tel: 22878181



3. Future World's Centre: 5 Promitheos Str. 1065 Nicosia, Tel: 22873820, Fax: 22873821



4. Mediterranean Institute for Gender Studies: P.O.Box 24005, 1700 Nicosia



5. ΑΠΑΝΕΜΙ: P.O.Box 27452, 1645 Nicosia, Tel: 22 102353 / 96 656015



d. Can I appeal before a Court?

Yes, you can appeal before the Supreme Court of Justice, in accordance to Article 146 of the Constitution of the Republic, within 75 days of the receipt of the decision letter rejecting your application for international protection.

You can appeal to the Supreme Court of Justice, either against the decision of the Asylum Service, or the Reviewing Authority's decision.

The procedure at the Court is not free of charge. You have though the right to seek for legal aid, which is subject to the national laws of the Republic, as they apply to all nationals.

Note: Such a procedure does not presuppose you are entitled to remain in the Republic.

VII. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

Once you apply for asylum and until a final decision is made by the Asylum Service and in case of appeal by the Reviewing Authority, you have the status of an asylum seeker with the following rights and obligations:

a. Rights:

- To legally stay in the Republic of Cyprus.
- To move freely within the Republic of Cyprus.
- To apply for a job after six months from the date of the application. Asylum seekers are referred to available jobs based on current guidelines. The sectors will be pointed by the Employment Office of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

Note: The right to employment remains during the appeal procedure at the Refugee Reviewing Authority.

- To public allowance by the Social Welfare Office in case you are not hosted in a reception centre, or you are not employed.

Note: Upon your application, the person in charge to receive it will direct you to the appropriate District Welfare Office. By presenting your confirmation letter you have the right to apply for public allowance according and subject to the relevant national laws and provided that you are not offered accommodation in a reception centre, or you are not employed.

- To free medical care, in case of not being able to cover the expenses. You can apply for a medical card at the Ministry of Health or at your district General Hospital by presenting your Confirmation Letter. First aid treatment is provided under any circumstances. The Ministry of Health might need to check if your file with the Asylum Service is still open, before proceeding with issuing you a medical card.

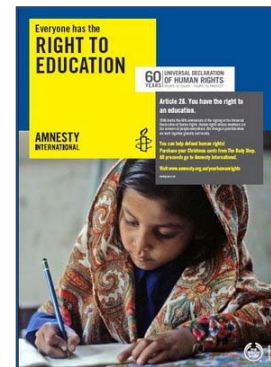


- To public education institutions for minor asylum seekers and/or asylum seekers' children.

Access to education for minors:

Minor applicants and minor children of asylum seekers have the right to public education under the same conditions that apply for nationals, directly upon their application and by no means later than three months. Minors' right to education remains also after their adulthood in case they haven't completed the secondary level of education.

- The right to have a lawyer or legal counselor on your own expenses during the asylum procedure.



b. Obligations:

- You must respect and follow the laws and regulations of the Republic of Cyprus.
- You must not leave Cyprus without the permission of the Director of the Civil Registry and Migration Department. If you leave Cyprus without such permission, you may not be allowed to return and the procedure regarding the examination of your claim will be discontinued. Therefore, your file will be closed. In case you urgently need to travel for humanitarian reasons, you can apply to do so and you may be issued with a relevant travel document.

- You must inform your District Immigration Office immediately and no later than **three days** in case you change your address, otherwise your file will be closed or your application will be rejected. Therefore, you will be subject to arrest and/or deportation.
- You must respond to the letters addressed to you by the Asylum Service. If you do not your file will be closed or your application to be rejected. Therefore, you will be subject to arrest and/or deportation.
- You must present yourself whenever requested to do so by the Asylum Service, or the Refugee Reviewing Authority or the district Immigration Offices.
- You must assist in the best way possible the Asylum Service and the Refugee Reviewing Authority in the verification of the facts of your claim.

VIII. MINORS

The Social Welfare Services are responsible regarding minor applicants and becomes the Guardian for them. The child's best interests are the overall aim of the Service always in accordance to relevant national laws.



The Commissioner for Children's Rights acts as soon as possible as a representative of the minors during all stages of examination of their application for international protection.

a. **Unaccompanied minors:**

If you are a minor the Social Welfare Office will provide hospitality either with:

- **Adult relatives**
- **Foster family**
- **Hospitality Center for minors and any other Centre appropriate for minors**
- **Person accompanying the minor at the time of departure from the country of origin**



b. **Unaccompanied minors at the interview phase:**

The Asylum Service reiterates the right to demand the presence of the unaccompanied minor during the interview regardless the presence of his/her representative.

The Asylum Service may use medical examinations to define the age of the unaccompanied minor as part of the procedure, since the procedure to be followed is explained. Refusal of the unaccompanied minor to be subjected to such medical examination does not necessarily entail the rejection of the application.

IX. DETENTION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

A person who illegally entered the Republic is not subjected to punishment only because of this illegal entrance, if he/she has presented his/herself to the authorities without undue delay.

The detention of an asylum seeker is not permitted for the sole reason of being an asylum seeker.

The detention of an asylum seeker is permitted for the following reasons:

- To verify your identity or nationality and in case you don't have a nationality, the previous state of residence
- If you have destroyed or threw away your travel or identity documents
- If you have used forged documents upon arrival to the Republic so as to intentionally misguide the authorities, upon lodging your application.
- For the examination of new elements in the case that the application has been examined and rejected by both authorities, i.e. The Asylum Service and the Refugee Reviewing Authority and an order of deportation has been issued for you.
- Detention for these reasons is allowed **only by a Court Order**. The Court Order is valid only up to eight days. The Court Order can be extended for a period that does not exceed 32 days in total.
- Upon detention you are informed of the reasons of your detention in a language you understand and also for your right to have a legal representation.
- You have a right to communicate with your lawyer, or a relative, or any other person, to inform them of your arrest and detention.
- If you are under 18 (year old) and have applied for asylum you shall not be detained for any of the above reasons.

X. CONTACTS

Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare

Nicosia

63 Prodromou, 1468 Nicosia

Tel.: 22 406709

Fax: 22 667907

Social Welfare Services

Nicosia District Office

66 Agiou Ilarionos, 1026 Nicosia

Tel.: 22 804605

Fax: 22 804666

Limassol

80 Franklin Roosevelt, 3011 Limassol

Tel: 25 804535

Fax: 25 306576

Larnaca

23-25 Peliou, 6301 Larnaca

Tel.: 24 800101

Fax.: 243 04876

Paphos

28 Aristoteli Valaoriti and Kinira , 8100 Paphos

Tel.: 26 821600

Fax.: 26 306162

Famagusta

1st April 134, 5280 Paralimni

Tel.: 23 821551

Fax: 23 827698

Commissioner for Children’s Rights

Apelli and Pavlou Nirvana str corner, 1496, Nicosia.

Tel. :22 873 200

Fax: 22 872 365



Police Immigration Offices

Nicosia, Tel.: 22 808888

Limassol, Tel.: 25 805231

Larnaca, Tel.: 24 804242

Paphos, Tel.:26 806206

Famagusta

Reception Centre at Kofinou

Tel.: 24 322959, 24 322624

Note: The public sector’s working hours are: 07.30 a.m. - 14.30p.m. from Monday to Friday and on Wednesdays from 07.30 a.m. – 18.00p.m.

CHAPTER TWO – INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION – REFUGEE STATUS

I. REFUGEES

International protection equals to two statuses: the Refugee Status and the Subsidiary Protection Status.

Upon examination of the application by the Asylum Service, each case is examined according to its own merits. After the evaluation of each case's facts, (personal and social background, any related condition and all relevant circumstances), the Asylum Service decides whether a person is eligible to international protection. The kind of international protection to be granted is always in accordance to relevant international instruments, the national law and the European acquis.

a. Who is a refugee?

A refugee is a person *who “owing a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country”*, -The 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.



b. Becoming a refugee.

Upon the completion of the procedure by the Asylum Service, you will receive the decision letter stating that you have been granted with refugee status. You are entitled to a residence permit of three years subject to extension for three more years.

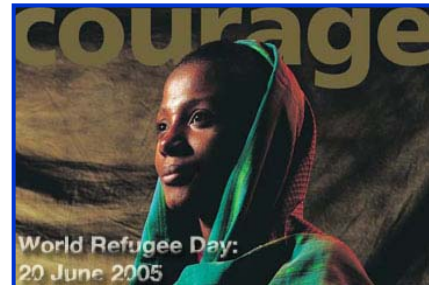
c. Rights

- (1) You have the right to fair treatment regardless of gender, race, and religion, membership to a particular social group or political opinion or country of nationality.
- (2) You have the right to the same treatment as nationals regarding a) the right to primary education.

- (b) exercise of salaried or independent professional activity in accordance with the rules implemented generally in the profession as well as in public administration and with regards to diploma recognition and salary.
 - (c) the right to full access of the minors to all levels of education.
 - (d) the right to education other than primary and particularly as regards to the access to education, the recognition of foreign education school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the exemption from tuition fee payment and the right to scholarships.
 - (e) the right to free access to the Courts of the Republic as well as to the exemption from providing guarantee from the juridical expenses.
 - (f) the right to food supply in cases of emergency.
 - (g) the right to public assistance and any other necessary public support as well as the right to sufficient medical care for people with special needs, like pregnant women or individuals who have suffered torture, rape or other kinds of psychological or physical or sexual abuse or minors that are victims of mistreatment such as neglect, exploitation, torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or suffered because of armed conflicts.
 - (h) the right to social security.
 - (i) the right to protection of literary rights.
 - (j) the right to free medical care.
 - (k) the right to participate in adult educational programs that relate to issues of employment, professional training and practical performance at work places.
- (3) You have the right to enjoy the most favorable treatment possible which is not less favorable than the one provided to foreigners found under the same conditions according to relevant laws and regulations and which regards the right to a) access to lodgings and b) for partnerships.
 - (4) You have the right to enjoy the same treatment as the one provided to foreigners who found under the same conditions in accordance with relevant laws and regulations and which regards a) the right to chose place of residence and the right to travel freely to the Republic, b) the right to own or possess property and other rights of similar nature as well as the right of hiring and contracting contacts relating to real estate.
 - (5) You have the right to relocate property in the Republic of Cyprus according to the relevant laws and regulations.
 - (6) You have the right to express and practice freely your religious duties.
 - (7) You have the right to participate in social integration programs.

d. Administrative help provided:

After three years of legal residence in the Republic, persons who have been recognized as refugees enjoy the same treatment as nationals as regards to: 1. the right to enjoy the most favorable treatment possible which is not less favorable than the one provided to foreigners found under the same conditions according to relevant laws and regulations and



which regards the right to a) access to lodgings and b) for partnerships and 2. the right to enjoy the same treatment as the one provided to foreigners who found under the same conditions in accordance with relevant laws and regulations and which regards a) the right to chose place of residence and the right to travel freely to the Republic, b) the right to own or possess property and other rights of similar nature as well as the right of hiring and contracting contacts relating to real estate.

A person recognized as refugee enjoys the same treatment as nationals according to the relevant laws and regulations which regard the right to employment at a profitable business.

When practicing any of the rights of the recognized refugee, the contribution of the national authorities of their country is needed in which the refugee has no access, the authorities of the Republic provide such a contribution either through those authorities or any other international authority.

The authorities provide the recognized refugee with documents or certificates which should normally be given to them by their national authorities or through them.

Such documents or certificates provided based on the above procedure substitute the documents given to the aliens by their national authorities or through them until proven otherwise.

Fees may be imposed for the above procedure.

e. Identity card and travel documents:

It is issued and given to a refugee upon receipt an i.d. card and travel document unless reasons of national security and public order disallow it.

f. Taxes:

Taxes or fares or any other kind of charges higher than the ones imposed to nationals are not imposed to refugees.

g. Obligations:

- A refugee must respect the Constitution, the laws and regulations of the Republic.
- A refugee is not allowed to participate in activities which may threaten national security or public order or harm national interest.
- A refugee should not participate in activities that are against the United Nations principles or international law.

h. Sustaining family unification:

- Family members of a refugee that enter the Republic at the same time or later than the refugee are eligible for asylum.
- Family members of a refugee who do not accompany him/her at the time of entry to the Republic precisely because of the conditions that primarily lead him/her to apply for asylum can reunite him/her in the Republic as long as he/she request it and the relationship between them is confirmed.
- Family members of a refugee is also considered refugee.
- It may be decided family unification in cases where relatives lived with the refugee's family as a part of it upon departure and were at the same time fully depended on it.
- Family members of the refugee, who do not individually qualify for the refugee status, have still the right to apply for the benefits provided to recognized refugees.
- A refugee's family member mean- the refugee's wife/husband, the under aged children that are single and hence dependant on him regardless of their birth inside marriage or not or if they are



adopted, the refugees mother and father if they are dependent on him and in case of an under aged refugee his mother and father.

i. Unaccompanied minors under refugee status:

- The Director of the Social Welfare Services acts as a Guardian of the unaccompanied minor who is recognized refugee.
- The Director, after receiving the consent of an adult and taking into consideration the minor's opinion, hands over the care of the minor either- a) adult relatives, b) foster family, c) specialized centers in charge of minors' residence, d) other kind of lodgings suitable for minors.
- Brothers and sisters are not separated, to the highest possible degree.
- Efforts are held for the tracing of the minor's members of family.

Note: Revocation or ending of the refugee status could be possible if the preconditions stated in the Refugee Laws of 2000-2009, apply.

CHAPTER THREE – INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION – SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION STATUS

I. BENEFICIARIES OF SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION

a. Who is a beneficiary of subsidiary protection?

“Subsidiary protection status is granted to any person who is not recognized as refugee and who does not qualify as a refugee, but in respect of whom substantial grounds have been shown for believing that the person concerned, if returned to his or her country of origin, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm and who is unable or owing to such risk, unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country”.

b. Becoming a beneficiary of subsidiary protection.

- Upon the completion of the procedure by the Asylum Service, you will receive the decision letter stating that you have been granted with the subsidiary protection status. You are entitled to a residence permit of one year subject to extension for as long as you preserve this status.
- A person being granted with the subsidiary protection status, is not deported to his/her country of origin and the status is preserved until the verification that the grounds which led to the recognition of subsidiary protection have ceased or transformed to such a degree that such a protection is not necessary.
- In case after the granting of the status of subsidiary protection it is discovered that the beneficiary has misrepresented or omitted facts, including the use of false documents which were decisive for the granting of such status, the subsidiary protection status will be revoked.



c. Rights:

(1). You have the right to freely move and reside to the territory of the Republic.

(2). You have the right to fair treatment regardless of gender, race, and religion, membership to a particular social group or political opinion or country of nationality.

(3) You have the right to the same treatment as nationals regarding a) the right to primary education, (b) exercise of salaried or independent professional activity in accordance with the rules implemented generally in the profession as well as in public administration and with regards to diploma recognition and salary.

(c) the right to full access of the minors to all levels of education.

(d) the right to education other than primary and particularly as regards to the access to education, the recognition of foreign education school certificates, diplomas and degrees, the exemption from tuition fee payment and the right to scholarships.

(e) the right to free access to the Courts of the Republic as well as to the exemption from providing guarantee from the juridical expenses.

(f) the right to food supply in cases of emergency.

(g) the right to public assistance and any other necessary public support as well as the right to sufficient medical care for people with special needs, like pregnant women or individuals who have suffered torture, rape or other kinds of psychological or physical or sexual abuse or minors that are victims of mistreatment such as neglect, exploitation, torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or suffered because of armed conflicts.

(h) the right to social security.

(i) the right to protection of literary rights.

(j) the right to free medical care.

(k) the right to participate in adult educational programs that relate to issues of employment, professional training and practical performance at work places.

(4). You have the right to enjoy the most favorable treatment possible which is not less favorable than the one provided to foreigners found under the same conditions according to relevant laws and regulations and which regards the right to a) access to lodgings and b) for partnerships.

(5). You have the right to enjoy the same treatment as the one provided to foreigners who found under the same conditions in accordance with relevant laws and regulations and which regards a) the right to chose place of residence and the right to travel freely to the Republic, b) the right to own or possess property and other rights of similar nature as well as the right of hiring and contracting contacts relating to real estate.

(6). You have the right to access to educational services of the public sector and in cases of minors, complete access to the educational system under the same conditions as nationals.

(7). You have the right to exercise or practice independent professional activity in accordance with the rules and conditions applied to the profession and to public administration in general and in relation with diploma recognition and salary, upon recognition of the subsidiary protection, the condition of the labor market may be taken into account among others, as well as the possibility of defining the priorities concerning the access to employment for a time period that does not exceed the predefined by a decree time that is issued by the Minister of Interior after consulting with the Minister of Labor and Social Security as well as with the social partners, and which is published in the Official Gazette of the Republic. The beneficiary of the status of subsidiary protection has access to work positions for which he/she has received an offer for a time period defined in the relevant laws and regulations for the determination of priorities in the Labor market.

(8). You have the right to access to social integration programs, whenever such are considered necessary.

(9). You have the right to relocate property in the Republic of Cyprus according to the relevant laws and regulations.

(10). You have the right to express and practice freely your religious duties.

(11). You have the right to participate in social integration programs.

(22). You have the right to enjoy the most favorable treatment possible which is not less favorable than the one provided to foreigners found under the same conditions according to relevant laws and regulations and which regards the right to a) access to lodgings and b) for partnerships.

(23). You have the right to enjoy the same treatment as the one provided to foreigners who found under the same conditions in accordance with relevant laws and regulations and which regards a) the right to chose place of residence and the right to travel freely to the Republic, b) the right to own or possess property and other rights of similar nature as well as the right of hiring and contracting contacts relating to real estate.

Note: A beneficiary of subsidiary protection has a right to employment which is limited for the first twelve months from the decision. After the twelve months, the beneficiary of subsidiary protection has the same rights at the employment field as refugees. For the first twelve months, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can work in the following sectors of the labor market:

1. Farming –Agriculture- Fishery, 2. Manufacturing, 3. Constructions, 4. Trade and Repairs, 5. Other activities (including cleaning of buildings, workers at the sectors of sewage system and waste processing of collection and processing of waste (garbage).

d. Administrative help provided:

- After three years of legal residence in the Republic, persons who have been recognized as beneficiaries of subsidiary protection enjoy the same treatment as nationals as regards to: 1. the right to enjoy the most favorable treatment possible which is not less favorable than the one provided to foreigners found under the same conditions according to relevant laws and regulations and which regards the right to a) access to lodgings and b) for partnerships and 2. the right to enjoy the same treatment as the one provided to foreigners who found under the same conditions in accordance with relevant laws and regulations and which regards a) the right to chose place of residence and the right to travel freely to the Republic, b) the right to own or possess property and

other rights of similar nature as well as the right of hiring and contracting contacts relating to real estate.

- A person recognized as a beneficiary of subsidiary protection enjoys the same treatment as nationals according to the relevant laws and regulations which regard the right to employment at a profitable business.
- When practicing any of the rights of the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, the contribution of the national authorities of their country is needed in which the beneficiary of subsidiary protection has no access, the authorities of the Republic provide such a contribution either through those authorities or any other international authority.
- The authorities provide the beneficiaries of subsidiary protection with documents or certificates which should normally be given to them by their national authorities or through them.
- Such documents or certificates provided based on the above procedure substitute the documents given to the aliens by their national authorities or through them until proven otherwise.
- Fees may be imposed for the above procedure.

Note: The benefits granted to a refugee or to a beneficiary of subsidiary protection may be limited in cases in which the beneficiary has committed such acts with the sole purpose of producing the necessary conditions that would grant the status.

- You are issued and given upon receipt travel documents that permit travelling at least when serious humanitarian reasons occur that demand your presence in another country, given that you are unable to obtain a national passport and when this does not contradict essential national security or public order reasons.

e. Obligations:

- A beneficiary of subsidiary protection status must respect the Constitution, the laws and regulations of the Republic.

- A beneficiary of subsidiary protection status is not allowed to participate in activities which may threaten national security or public order or harm national interest.
- A beneficiary of subsidiary protection status should not participate in activities that are against the United Nations principles or international law.

f. Sustaining family unification:

- Family members of beneficiary of subsidiary protection status that enter the Republic at the same time or later than the refugee are eligible for asylum.
- Family members of a beneficiary of subsidiary protection status who do not accompany him/her at the time of entry to the Republic precisely because of the conditions that primarily lead him/her to apply for asylum can reunite him/her in the Republic as long as he/she request it and the relationship between them is confirmed.
- Family members of a beneficiary of subsidiary protection status is also considered.
- It may be decided family unification in cases where relatives lived with the beneficiary of the subsidiary protection status family as a part of it upon departure and were at the same time fully depended on it.
- Family members of the beneficiary of the subsidiary protection status, who do not individually qualify for the status, have still the right to apply for the benefits provided to the beneficiary of the subsidiary protection status.
- A beneficiary's of the subsidiary protection status family member mean- the beneficiary's wife/husband, the under aged children that are single and hence dependant on him regardless of their birth inside marriage or not or if they are adopted, the beneficiary's mother and father if they are dependent on him and in case of an under aged beneficiary's mother and father.



g. Unaccompanied minors under the subsidiary protection status:

- The Director of the Social Welfare Services acts as a Guardian of the unaccompanied minor who is recognized refugee.
- The Director, after receiving the consent of an adult and taking into consideration the minor's opinion, hands over the care of the minor



either- a) adult relatives, b) foster family, c) specialized centers in charge of minors' residence, d) other kind of lodgings suitable for minors.

- Brothers and sisters are not separated, to the highest possible degree.
- Efforts are held for the tracing of the minor's members of family.

h. Taxes:

- Taxes or fares or any other kind of charges higher than the ones imposed to nationals are not imposed to beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

i. The right to appeal- Supreme Court of Justice:

You can appeal before the Supreme Court of Justice, in accordance to Article 146 of the Constitution of the Republic, within 75 days of the receipt of the decision letter.

The procedure at the Court is not free of charge. You have though the right to seek for legal aid, which is subject to the national laws of the Republic, as they apply to all nationals.

Note: If you appeal before the Refugee Reviewing Authority challenging thus the decision of the granting of subsidiary protection status the appeal will be rejected as inadmissible as it is considered a positive one regarding international protection. Positive decisions are considered the granting either of the refugee or the subsidiary protection status.

II. USEFUL CONTACTS:

- **Ministry of Interior**

Civil Registry and Migration Department, P. O. Box 1457 Nicosia, Tel.: 22804400

District Administration Nicosia, P.O.Box. 1458, Tel.: 22804164, 22804118

District Administration Limassol, P.O.Box 3304, Tel.: 25806400

District Administration Larnaca, P.O. Box 6301, Tel.: 24801818

District Administration Paphos, P. O. Box 8100, Tel.: 26801200

District Administration Famagusta, P.O. Box 6304, Tel.: 24801000, 24801002

Web page: <http://www.moi.gov.cy>

- **Ministry of Health**, P.O Box 1448, Nicosia, Tel.: 22605300, 22605301

Department of Health, Prodromou 17 and Heilonos Corner, 1448 Nicosia

Tel.: 22605300,

Nicosia General Hospital, 22 Limassol Avenue, Tel.: 22603000

Larnaca General Hospital, Inomenon Polition 6043, Tel.: 24800500

Limassol General Hospital, Pano Polemidia, Tel.: 25801100

Paphos General Hospital, Ahepans 8026, Tel.: 26803100

Famagusta General Hospital, Christou Kelli 25 village, Tel.: 23200000

Web page: <http://www.moh.gov.cy>

- **Ministry of Education and Culture**, P.O. Box 1434, Tel.: 22800600, 22800700

Web page: <http://www.moec.gov.cy>

- **Ministry of Labor and Social Security Services**, Byronos Avenue 7, P.O. Box 1463, Tel.: 22401600

Labor Office, P.O. Box 1480, Tel.: 22400807

District Labor Office, P.O. Box 1464, Nicosia, Tel.: 22303555

District Labor Office, P.O. Box 3112, Limassol, Tel.: 25827350

District Labor Office, P.O. Box 6301 Larnaca, Tel.: 24805312

District Labor Office, P.O. Box 8021 Paphos, Tel.: 26821666

Social Security Services, P.O. Box 1465, Tel.: 22401600

District Social Security Services, P.O. Box 1466 Nicosia, Tel.: 22409730, 22409720

District Social Security Services, P.O. Box 3840, Tel.: 25804319, 25804350

District Social Security Services, P.O. Box 1466 Larnaca, Tel.: 24805201, 24805242

District Social Security Services, P.O. Box 8047 Paphos, Tel.: 26821242
District Social Security Services, P.O. Box 5280 Paralimni, Tel.: 23742814
Social Welfare Services, P.O. Box 1468, Tel.: 22406600
District Social Welfare Services, P. O. Box. 1469 Nicosia, Tel.: 22804608, 22804677
District Social Welfare Services, P. O. Box. 3011 Limassol, Tel.: 25804473, 25804458
District Social Welfare Services, P. O. Box. 6301 Larnaca, Tel.: 24800262, 24800128
District Social Welfare Services, P. O. Box. 8100 Paphos, Tel.: 26821600
District Social Welfare Services, P. O. Box. 5280 Paralimni, Tel.: 23811720, 23811737
Web page: <http://www.mlsi.gov.cy>

- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, P.O. Box 1447 Nicosia, Tel.: 22401000
Citizen Service Centre, 29 Katsonis Street, Ayioi Omoloyites, Nicosia, Tel.: 22446686,
Citizen Service Centre, 21 Spyrou Araouzou Street 3036 Limassol, Tel.: 25829129
Citizen Service Centre, 70 Arch. Makarios the 3rd Street, 4878 Pelendri, Limassol, Tel.:
25813400
Citizen Service Centre, 1 Evagoras Pallikarides Street, 8820 Polis Chrysochous, Paphos,
Tel.: 26821888
Citizen Service Centre, 27 Gregori Afxentiou Avenue, 6021 Larnaca, Tel.: 24815555
Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 8.00a.m. – 5.00p.m.
Web page: <http://www.mfa.gov.cy>
- **Ministry of Finance**, P. O Box 1439, Tel.: 22602722
Web page: <http://www.mof.gov.cy>
- **Commissioner for Administration, Ombudsman**, P.O. Box 1470, Tel.: 22405500,
22405503
Webpage: <http://www.ombudsman.gov.cy>
- **Supreme Court of Justice**, P.O. Box 1404, Tel.: 22865741
Web page: <http://www.supremecourt.gov.cy>

CHAPTER FOUR: INTEGRATION IN CYPRUS

The last decade and especially after the accession of Cyprus in the European Union, the island witnessed a mass influx of asylum seekers. Cyprus started to receive large numbers of asylum applications in 2003. Since then, the number of asylum applications has remained high, with a further increase in 2007. The sudden soar in the number of new applications from 2004 onwards has resulted in a huge backlog. The Cyprus government has already made a huge effort to reduce the backlog by increasing staff numbers in the departments directly involved in examining applications. This has resulted in a slight reduction in the backlog.

I. Reception of asylum seekers:

- a. **Housing:** As far as housing is concerned, the majority of asylum seekers find their own place to live in the private sector, even though high rents make this difficult, especially in the towns. The Social Welfare Services help some asylum seekers to find a place to live and, in a few isolated cases, accommodate applicants in hotels.

The Reception Centre in Kofinou is the only centre in Cyprus and its capacity is limited to approximately 80 persons (the number originally estimated was 120 persons, but that included single persons sharing rooms). Due to the limited capacity of the centre, the Asylum Service decided that priority would be given to vulnerable groups, (i.e. families with small children, single women or women with children) when referring people at the centre.

The Asylum Service together with the respective services in the Netherlands participates in a project under the ERF Community Actions. One of the aims is of improving the quality and quantity of the reception conditions.

There are currently two new reception centers prepared for the accommodation of asylum seekers, in Larnaca and Limassol. The total capacity of both is 140 persons.

b. **Social welfare assistance:**

Asylum seekers are entitled to government benefits on the basis of the same criteria and in the same amount as Cypriot citizens.

c. Medical and pharmaceutical treatment:

As far as medical and pharmaceutical treatment is concerned, asylum seekers are entitled to free medical and pharmaceutical care at all national health hospitals if they have not sufficient funds. All asylum seekers are subject to certain compulsory medical examinations as soon as they file an application and this procedure is necessary in order to complete the application. These examinations are carried out at national health hospitals, adding to their already heavy workload.

d. Vulnerable groups:

Identification of vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, elderly people is usually the work of Social Welfare Services where applicants are sent following the submission of their application. Unaccompanied minors are immediately upon the submission of their application usually at the Aliens and Migration Departments and Social Welfare Services immediately informed and take the minors under their custody. Victims of torture are usually identified during the interview before the Asylum Service, and are referred to a doctor.

e. Employment:

Applicants' access to the job market is determined by decision of the Minister of Labor and Social Insurance, in agreement with the Minister of Interior. **The asylum seekers may access the job market six months after the date on which they submitted their asylum application**, in the following sectors: 1. **Farming – Agriculture – Fishery:** Workers at the sectors of agriculture, farming (animal husbandry) and fishery, 2. **Manufacturing:** Animal food production, 3. **Waste management:** Workers at the sectors of sewage system and waste processing, of collection and processing of waste (garbage), at the sectors or recycling and processing of animal waste and abattoir by-products, 4. **Trade and Repairs:** Workers at gas stations and car-wash, porters of wholesale trade, 5. **Other activities:** Cleaning of buildings and outside areas, distributors of advertising or informative material, food delivery.

f. Education:

Minor asylum seekers and minor children of asylum seekers have the right to state education on the same terms as citizens of the Republic. The fact that the state schools only teach in Greek makes it hard

for these groups to follow lessons and after-school Greek language classes have been set up in some schools with co-financing from the European Refugee Fund.

II. Integration of beneficiaries of international protection:

As regards the integration of persons entitled to international protection who are settled and living permanently in Cyprus, refugees have the same rights in most sectors as citizens of the Republic. Persons living in Cyprus under the subsidiary protection acquire rights, like refugees, one year after the date of the decision granting them subsidiary protection.

a. Housing:

There are no special arrangements for the housing of beneficiaries of international protection either by the State, local authorities or private organizations.

b. Social Welfare:

Beneficiaries of international protection have access to public subsistence and other social benefits under the same conditions as the citizens of the Republic.

c. Employment:

There are no restrictions for refugees in accessing the labor market. Vocational training programs are available for refugees and holders of subsidiary protection in order to facilitate their access to the labor market. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have the same rights as refugees in the employment sector after a year of the decision for international protection.

d. Education:

Beneficiaries of international protection have the right by law to access public education (basic and higher) the same as Cypriot citizens. Greek language training programs are available for this target group.

e. Orientation:

Orientation programs are available for beneficiaries of international protection, under the ERF national program. These include provision of information on rights, information about daily life, public utilities, help or accompaniment on administrative paper work, housing, telephone, nursery, schooling, social security, opening a bank account, Cypriot culture and also group or personal sessions for persons facing specific problems or difficulties.

f. Public awareness:

The Asylum Service with ERF is funding a number of awareness raising campaigns aiming to facilitate the integration of these groups into the Cypriot society.

III. The European Refugee Fund is a vital tool for implementing projects directed to the improvement of reception conditions and asylum procedures along with the smooth integration of refugees and other persons entitled to international protection in the Cypriot and European societies. With the support of the European Refugee Fund, the Cyprus Asylum Service supported several projects that aimed to improve the various aspects of asylum seekers and refugee' lives on the island.



For purposes of integration the following actions have already been implemented:

- Legal and social aid to asylum seekers
- Provision of housing facilities in emergency cases
- Provision of food and clothing to the vulnerable groups within the asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection
- Provision of psychological support to asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection
- Provision for seminars to women recognized refugees regarding their rights
- Greek language programs for refugees

- Series of seminars and intercultural events aiming at promoting the establishment of relations between Cypriots and refugees
- Social study on the needs of refugees in Cyprus
- Easy access to vocational training for refugees.

CHAPTER FIVE: LIVING IN CYPRUS

The issue of integration poses a great challenge to the Asylum Service and the Cypriot government in general and the national refugee laws are constantly reevaluated so as to offer more chances to the refugees to feel part of the Cypriot society. In Cyprus, you, the recognized refugees or beneficiaries of international protection are offered the right to welfare services, education, language learning, employment and health. But first of all, to feel part of a country is to actually get to know the country, its language, history and tradition.

I. Cyprus in General:

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean, after Sicily and Sardinia, with an area of 9.251 sq. km (3.572 sq. miles).

- a. The **population** of Cyprus is estimated at 854.300 (December 2005) of whom 656.200 belong to the Greek Cypriot community (76,8%), 87.900 (10,3%) to the Turkish Cypriot community and 110.200 (12,9%) are foreign nationals residing in Cyprus.
- b. The **capital** of the island is Lefkosia (Nicosia) with a population of 224.500 in the sector controlled by the Cyprus government. It is situated roughly in the centre of the island and is the seat of government as well as the main business centre.



The second largest town is Lemesos (**Limassol**) on the south coast with a population of around 176.900. Since 1974 it has become the island's chief sea port, an industrial centre and an important tourist resort.

Larnaka, also on the south coast of the island, has a population of 79.000 and is the country's second commercial sea port and an important tourist resort. The Larnaka International Airport is located to the south of the city.

Finally, **Pafos**, on the south-west coast, with a population of 52.800, is a fast-developing tourist resort, home to the island's second international airport and an attractive fishing harbour.

The towns of **Ammochostos** (Famagusta), **Kyrenia** and **Morfou** as well as part of Nicosia, have been under military occupation by Turkey since the Turkish invasion of Cyprus in 1974. The Greek Cypriot inhabitants of these towns were forced to flee to the government-controlled area. In their homes and properties the Turkish authorities installed illegal settlers, mostly from Anatolia, Turkey.

- c. The **language** of the Greek Cypriot community is Greek and the community adheres to the Autocephalous Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus. However, English is widely spoken in Cyprus and is regularly used in commerce and government. Under the Constitution of 1960, the Armenian, Maronite and Latin communities had to choose to belong either to the Greek Cypriot or Turkish Cypriot community. These groups, which belong to other Christian denominations and constitute 1% of the population, opted to be part of the Greek Cypriot community.

The language of the Turkish Cypriot community is Turkish and the community adheres to Islam.

- d. Cyprus has a Mediterranean **climate**: hot, dry summers from June to September and mild, wet winters from November to March which are separated by short autumn and spring seasons of rapid change in weather patterns in October, April and May.

Sunshine is abundant during the whole year, particularly from April to September when the daily average exceeds 11 hours. Winds are on the whole light to moderate. Gales are very infrequent and heavy storms rare.

Snow hardly falls in the lowlands and on the **Pentadaktylos range**, but is a frequent feature every winter on ground above 1.000 metres in the **Troodos** range. From December till April snow is usually in evidence there, but hardly continuous. Yet during the coldest months it lies in considerable depth for several weeks, attracting skiers.

The country has two mountain ranges: the Pentadaktylos range which runs along almost the entire northern coast, and the Troodos massif in the central and south-western parts of the island. Cyprus' coastal line is indented and rocky in the north with long sandy beaches in the south. The north coastal plain, covered with olive and carob trees, is backed by the steep and narrow Pentadaktylos mountain

range of limestone, rising to a height of 1.024 m. In the south the extensive mountain massif of Troodos, covered with pine, dwarf oak, cypress and cedar, culminates in the peak of Mount Olympus, 1.953 m. above sea level. Between the two ranges lies the fertile plain of Messaoria.

On 1 May 2004 the Republic of Cyprus became a full member of the EU completing a long journey that lasted more than three decades.

e. Currency

On 1 January 2008 the Republic of Cyprus joined the Eurosystem and in so doing introduced the euro as its official currency, replacing the Cyprus pound as the unit of account. Thus, euro banknotes and coins became the country's legal tender.



f. Judiciary

Under the Constitution of Cyprus the judiciary is established as a separate power, independent from the other two powers of the state and autonomous in its sphere of competence authority and jurisdiction.

Courts are organized on a two-tier system: The Supreme Court, First instance Courts

The **Supreme Court** is the final appellate court of the Republic. It is also vested with jurisdiction to determine the constitutionality of laws, rules and regulations and has sole competence and exclusive jurisdiction to review the legality of acts, decisions or omissions emanating from the exercise of executive or administrative authority.

The principal first instance courts are the **District Courts** operating in every District of the Republic with the exception of the occupied areas; composed of District Judges, Senior District Judges and Presidents of District Courts.

- g.** Cyprus is divided into six administrative districts: **Nicosia, Limassol, Pafos, Larnaka (in the government-controlled areas) and Famagusta and Kerynia (in the occupied areas)**. Each district is headed by a District Officer who is essentially the local representative or extended arm of the government. The District Officer acts as the chief-coordinator of the activities of all Ministries in

the District. District Officers are answerable to the Ministry of the Interior, which is headed by a Permanent Secretary as chief administrator.

- h. There are two types of local authorities, [Municipalities and Communities](#), which are governed by separate laws. In principle, Municipalities constitute the form of local government in urban and tourist centers, while communities constitute the local structure in rural areas.

II. [Education in Cyprus](#)

[Educational policies are formulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture and approved by the Council of Ministers. Education is provided through pre-primary and primary schooling, secondary general and secondary technical vocational schools, special schools, higher and tertiary education institutions and non-formal institutions and centers.](#)

a. [Pre primary education](#)

The Ministry of Education and Culture of Cyprus, is responsible for the education of 3-year old children and over. It takes on the responsibility to complement the family's role, to provide ample support to the developmental stage of the children and to satisfy their basic needs for a sound personality in a changing environment, so as to enable them to recognize their capabilities and enhance their self-image.

The educational program of Pre-Primary Schools retains as many elements of the natural way of living of the family as possible, with emphasis on the free action of the children, on comfort, on love, on support, on trust, on acceptance, on safety and on respect for their personal uniqueness.

b. [Secondary general education](#)

The Secondary General Education, both Public and Private, concerns a large portion of the Cyprus education system. Based on the socioeconomic, cultural and national needs of Cyprus, the Public Secondary General Education offers equal opportunities of education and aims at promoting knowledge by laying emphasis on general knowledge and gradual specialization in order to prepare pupils for their academic and professional future.

Public Secondary General Education is offered to pupils aged from 12 to 18 years old, through two three year cycles of study - the Gymnasio and the Lykeio respectively. These two cycles include study programs for main subjects (Greek, Mathematics, etc), interdisciplinary programs (Health Education, Environment Education etc) as well extra-curricular activities (clubs, field trips, visits etc), aimed at achieving an integral and balanced development of the pupils' personalities. Tuition is free of charge for all grades and compulsory up to the age of 15.

c. Secondary Technical and Vocational

Pupils attending public Secondary Technical and Vocational Education represent, approximately, 15% of the total number of the pupils. STVE programs include formal technical and vocational education programs, apprenticeship scheme programs and Lifelong Learning and Training programs.

Through the above programs, Public Secondary Technical and Vocational Education (STVE) strive to:

- Help society achieve its goals for democratization and social, cultural and economic growth
- Contribute to the improvement of the quality of life, by providing pupils with the opportunity to broaden their intellectual horizons and acquire and continuously improve vocational knowledge and skills
- Introduce and establish lifelong education and training
- Facilitate access to other areas and levels of education
- Offer solid knowledge and broad technological training, making Technical and Vocational Education an attractive option for the development of pupils' talents, interests and skills, preparing them for Higher and Tertiary Education or the world of work
- Enhance understanding of the modern civilization's technological dimensions and their impact on the environment
- Develop the individual's decision-making competencies, as well as the necessary attitudes required for active and educated participation, co-operation and leadership at the place of work and in society in general.

d. Higher and Tertiary Education

Higher Education in Cyprus is provided by both public and private institutions. The competent authority, within the Ministry of Education and Culture, responsible for issues pertaining to higher education is the

Department of Higher and Tertiary Education (DAAE). Specifically, the Department of Higher and Tertiary Education is responsible for, or deals with, the following:

- University of Cyprus (budget, legislative issues, student issues).
- Private Institutions of Tertiary Education (registration, inspection, educational evaluation - accreditation, Advisory Committee of Tertiary Education).
- Administrative support to the Cyprus Council for the Recognition of Academic Qualifications, on budgetary as well as legislative issues.
- Administrative support to the Council of Educational Evaluation – Accreditation.
- [The Pancyprian Examinations for entrance to the public institutions of higher and tertiary education of Cyprus and Greece.](#)
- The exams for appointments in the public and the semi-government sectors through the Examinations Service.
- Student affairs (Student ID, Youth Card).
- Funding of Greek and Byzantine Studies in universities abroad.
- Open University of Cyprus (Budget, legislative issues and regulations).
- The Technological University of Cyprus (budget, legislative issues and regulations).
- Private Universities (legislative issues and regulations, applications for establishment).
- Lifelong Learning.
- Support to European programs and sectors such as [SOCRATES](#), [ERASMUS](#), [Tempus](#), [Erasmus Mundus](#), [NARIC](#), [Eurydice](#), etc.

e. [Private Institutions of Tertiary Education](#)

Private tertiary education is continuously being extended and upgraded. Twenty-three institutions, with additional branches operating in Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaka, Pafos and Famagusta, offer a plethora of programs which lead to academic as well as vocational qualifications of high demand in the local as well as in the international markets. Private Institutions of Tertiary Education are governed by the “Schools of Tertiary Education Laws” of 1996 to (Num. 2) of 2004 and are regularly inspected by the Department of Higher and Tertiary Education of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

III. Cultural heritage of Cyprus - Cyprus Traditions & Hospitality.

Cyprus cultural heritage - 10,000 years of Cyprus history make it impossible to even begin to describe the Cypriot culture. Ten millennia of history has left its mark all over the island of Cyprus, in the hundreds of archaeological sites scattered around Cyprus. To name but a few, the ancient amphitheaters of [Curium](#) outside of Limassol and of Paphos where even now, during the summer months, concerts and plays still take place, the neolithic settlement of [Hirokitia](#), the tens of [Byzantine churches](#) dotted around the island, the antiquities of Paphos, the [sanctuary of Aphrodite](#).



[Cyprus culture today](#) - The government and people of Cyprus are today actively and intensely promoting the Cypriot culture and making it available to all. Art, literature, music, traditional dance, theater, cinema are some aspects where particular emphasis is placed.

[Cyprus customs and traditions](#) - Apart from the many religious customs and traditions that can be traced back to the origins of Greek Orthodoxy and are evident during [Easter](#), [Christmas](#), the [festival of the flood](#) (kataklysmos), and other religious celebrations, there are many more relating to music dancing and wine. On June 28 and 29, St. Paul 's Feast is feted in Pafos, where the Apostle journeyed after leaving Jerusalem.



For example the [Wine Festival of Limassol](#) taking place every year during the month of September , where wine is free flowing for ten to twelve days. Carnival is one of the best known Cypriot celebrations, along with 'Anthestiria', the [Spring Flower festival](#), and 'Kataklysmos' - the festival of the Flood - which coincides with Pentecost. Throughout the year there are also exhibitions, concerts, drama and folk festivals.



Whatever the present-day situation may be, Cyprus is littered with reminders of the island's history. Relics from every era - Greek temples, Roman mosaics and 15th-century frescoes - influence the artists of today. Many Cyprus villages specialize in a particular art form, and as you travel around Cyprus you'll see pottery, silver and copperware, basket weaving, tapestry and [Lefkara's](#) famous lacework.



Cyprus's ancient monuments have been honoured by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which included nine of the Byzantine mountain churches of the island and the town of Kato Pafos in the World Cultural Heritage List.

i. National Public Holidays

The Civil Service is closed at the following public holidays:

1st January (New Year's Day)

25th March (Greek National Day)

1st May (Labor Day)

1st October (Cyprus Independence Day)

The following days are observed as holidays by the Civil Service staff of the corresponding religious groups:

(a) Greek Orthodox:

6th January (Epiphany Day)

Green Monday *

1st April (Greek Cypriot National Day 1955-59) *

Good Friday

Easter Monday

Monday of Pentecost - Kataklysmos

15th August (Assumption)

28th October (Greek National Day) *

24th December (Christmas Eve)

25th December (Christmas Day)

26th December (Boxing Day)

(b) Armenians, Catholics and Protestants:

Epiphany Day (Catholics) and Christmas Day (Armenians)

Good Friday

Easter Monday

24th December (Christmas Eve)

25th December (Christmas Day)

26th December (Boxing Day)

* It is observed as holiday by Catholics and Armenians

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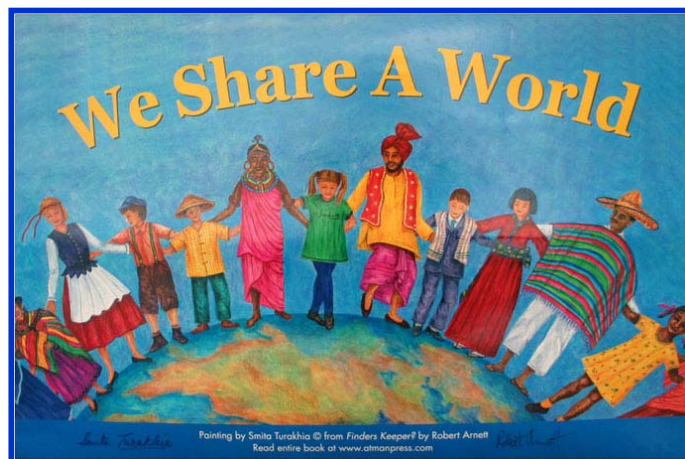
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http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/asylum/Asylum.nsf/DMLindex_gr/DMLindex_gr?OpenDocument



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