

Young Migrant Women in Secondary Education: Promoting Integration and Mutual Understanding through Dialogue and Exchange

National Policy Review: Republic of Cyprus

Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies [MIGS]

Prepared by: Georgina Christou

March 2010

A. Historical background of migration in Cyprus and current issues

The Republic of Cyprus was established in 1960, having gained independence from the British, with a constitution affirming equal rights to both the major communities in Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities. However, the inter-communal fighting that followed this establishment culminated in the de facto division of the island in 1974 into a mainly Turkish-Cypriot populated north and a mainly Greek-Cypriot populated south. Despite the division, the Republic of Cyprus remains the only internationally recognized state in Cyprus albeit with a homogenous Greek Cypriot administration. Due to the fact that the current project aims to investigate the educational experiences of young migrant women, and make recommendations addressed to policy-makers in the Republic of Cyprus, the current document will focus on migration flows, groups and trends that are most relevant to the south of Cyprus, e.g. the territories under the control of the Republic of Cyprus¹. In May 2004 Cyprus became a full member of the European Union.

During the middle of the 20th century, Cyprus was framed as a country of emigration with an important number of its inhabitants migrating (mostly to the UK but also to other destinations) for better work opportunities, a phenomenon that continued after the 1974 hostilities and the division of the island. Regular migration flows of migrant workers into Cyprus began to gain pace during the 1980s and 1990s causing, or responding to, newly-formed migration policies by the government of Cyprus to address national shortages in a number of employment sectors². It is important however to note that due to the fact that migration at this initial stage was perceived by the state as something temporary (addressing current shortages), policies facilitated only short-term employment and permits for migrants. This initial accommodation of the phenomenon of migration into Cyprus did not seem to translate into policy measures for long-term permits and more comprehensive social, political and labour rights for migrants until after 2004, when processes for accession into EU were intensified and the Cyprus government had

¹ Hereafter referred to solely as Cyprus.

² Zervidou, M. (2008) 'National Report: The Case of Cyprus', in *Integration of Female Migrant Domestic Workers: Strategies for Employment and Civic Participation*. EC project coordinated by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies [MIGS]. University of Nicosia Press, p. 35.



to align its legislation to EU directives³. Despite this alignment, policies that were implemented in relation to migration continued to frame the latter as a temporary phenomenon and therefore justifying the failure to introduce a wide-ranging integration policy for migrants residing in the country. Furthermore, issues such as the inclusion and treatment of minorities, migrants and other disadvantaged groups were for years treated as marginal issues in all social policy sectors including education, due to the dominance of the 'national question', e.g. the ethnic relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots mentioned above.

In the early 1990s migration flows consisted mostly of Greek Pontians, from the Black Sea area of Russia, who were categorized by the Cypriot government under the term 'repatriates'. This meant that the status of temporary work did not apply to them as they were considered Greek citizens, and therefore entitled to permanent residency and employment based on a bilateral agreement between Cyprus and the Greek government⁴. Despite being Greek citizens, Greek Pontians still face racial stigma and xenophobic attitudes enhanced by the media's constant depiction of male Pontians as criminal, aggressive and delinquent. Issues concerning Pontian women are hardly referred to, less so addressed, in public discourse, a fact that reflects itself in policies related to integration⁵.

In later years, migrants increasingly came from Russia, Eastern European countries, Sri-Lanka and the Philippines. According to the latest Demographic Report (2008), these flows are increasingly becoming feminized as there is a significantly higher number of women coming to Cyprus in comparison to their male counterparts. More specifically, according to the latest Labour Force Survey (2008), the average number of third country nationals (TCNs) in Cyprus in 2008 amounted to 45.007, 17.883 men and 27.125 women. The average number of TCNs in the labour force in 2008 amounted to 30.888, of which 10.036 were men and 20.851 were women⁶. According to gender segregated statistics relating to the purpose of arrival of immigrants, the countries with the highest percentage in female migrants are Sri Lanka and the Philippines followed by Vietnam, India and Russia⁷. Unfortunately, there are no available data that depict the percentages of TCNs in terms of all three categories: sex, economic activity and citizenship. Therefore it is difficult to draw conclusions on the economic activity of male and female migrants in terms of sex and citizenship categorization. However, according to the latest Labour Statistics Report (2008), the great majority of employees working in private households are female and are mostly TCNs

³ Country Report Cyprus on Migration and Asylum (2003). Available at [http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/doc_centre/asylum/docs/2003/country_reports/cyprus.pdf].

⁵ Gregoriou, Z. (2009) 'Policy Analysis Report: Cyprus', project Ge.M.IC: Gender, Migration and Intercultural Interaction in South-East Europe. Available at [www.gemic.eu/?p=370], p. 21

⁶ Statistical Service, Republic of Cyprus, 'Labour Force Survey 2008'. Available at [www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/publications_archive_en/publications_archive_en?OpenForm&OpenView&RestrictToCategory=13&SrcTp=1&Category=1&Subject=3&SubSubject=0&subsubtext=0&].

⁷ Statistical Service, Republic of Cyprus, 'Demographic Report 2008'. Available at [www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/publications_archive_en/publications_archive_en?OpenForm&OpenView&RestrictToCategory=12&SrcTp=1&Category=1&Subject=2&SubSubject=0&subsubtext=0&].



coming from Sri Lanka and the Philippines⁸. This fact corresponds to the already gendered pathways for labour migration which provide migrant women coming from third countries with specific options in terms of the kind of work they can opt for in order to be able to work in Cyprus. Upon arrival to Cyprus female domestic workers face a precarious regime of employment as their residence permit is dependent on their work permit which is further linked to a specific employer. Furthermore, the salary for domestic work in Cyprus is currently below the standard for minimum wage afforded to other employment sectors which are in this way protected from exploitation⁹. At the same time, this kind of gendered labour migration reinforces the already gender-segregated employment sector of Cyprus with women mostly employed in sectors such as education, health and social work while men mostly employed in areas like business, construction and agriculture. It is also important to point out that by coming to Cyprus, migrant female domestic workers act as 'reconciliators' of Cypriot women's professional and family life, due to the lack of a comprehensive welfare state which would promote women's participation in the labour market¹⁰. Moreover as documented in a recent research on female migrants in Cyprus a significant number of domestic workers have reported experiences of unequal treatment and abuse including sexual harassment and sexual violence¹¹.

Another major employment category in which migrant workers are employed is the hotel and restaurant sector. The majority of workers employed in this sector are female and they come mostly from Central and Eastern Europe¹². Other employment sectors in which a major number of migrants are employed are agriculture, construction and manufacturing¹³. The latter form low skill/low wage sectors and as in the case of domestic work they serve the labour system in Cyprus which allows for migrant workers to be employed in sectors with shortages in terms of Cypriot or EU nationals.

Another area for employment of female migrant workers, although not mentioned as such in the labour statistics, is the entertainment sector. A significant number of migrant women employed for work in entertainment establishments are originating mostly from Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. However, this sector has been directly linked with trafficking of women for the purpose of sexual exploitation. According to a report by the Ombudsman on the Status of Artists in 2003, about 2, 000 foreign women

⁸ Statistical Service, Republic of Cyprus, 'Labour Statistics 2008'. Available at [\[www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/001428F9873F3493C22578180035F1CD/\\$file/LABOUR_STATISTICS-2008.pdf?OpenElement\]](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/001428F9873F3493C22578180035F1CD/$file/LABOUR_STATISTICS-2008.pdf?OpenElement).

⁹ Cyprus National Strategy Report on Social Inclusion and Social Protection 2008-2010, p. 20-21.

¹⁰ Gregoriou, Z. (2008) 'Gendering Migration and Integration Policy Frames. Female Migrant Domestic Workers as 'precarious workers' and 'reconciliators', in *Integration of Female Migrant Domestic Workers: Strategies for Employment and Civic Participation*. Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies, University of Nicosia Press, pp.11-30. This premise also stands for the wider EU context where the lack of adequate state structures to provide the necessary services for this 'reconciliation' will have effect on the opportunities of female migrant domestic workers to form and sustain a family while at the same time remaining in employment in the host countries.

¹¹ Ερευνητικό Κέντρο Ισότητας Φύλου, 'Μετανάστριες: οι γνωστές-άγνωστες της Κυπριακής κοινωνίας', presentation of research results on 01/06/2010.

¹² Labour Statistics 2008, p. 35.

¹³ Ibid., p. 59.



entered Cyprus as ‘artists’ every year and were being employed in establishments classified by the state as ‘high risk’ in terms of trafficking of human beings for the purpose of sexual exploitation¹⁴. Although in 2008 the state abolished the ‘artist visa’, with the aim to curb trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, trafficking still continues to flourish in Cyprus¹⁵. The US State Department on Trafficking in Persons Country Report for 2010 continues to place Cyprus in the Tier 2 Watch List, while it recommends that the government take active measures to ensure that the ‘barmaid’, ‘performing artist’ and ‘creative artist’ work permits, that came to replace the former ‘artist visa’, are strictly monitored so that they do not become a gateway for importing trafficking victims to Cyprus¹⁶.

In addition to economic migrants, in recent years Cyprus has received a major influx of refugees and asylum seekers. According to the latest UN Statistics, Cyprus has 2,888 refugees, with another 5,015 pending cases of people seeking asylum in Cyprus¹⁷. No sex disaggregated data are available.

B. National policy context for the integration of migrants in the Cypriot educational system

The right to education for all children living in Cyprus and the principle of non-discrimination is guaranteed in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as other international legal documents signed and ratified by Cyprus. Furthermore, Article 20 of the Constitution of Cyprus guarantees this right without making any discrimination as to national or ethnic background or citizenship status, so school units are obliged to register every student independently of the legal status of their parents¹⁸.

¹⁴ Commissioner of Administration Ex Propio Motu Inquiry on the state of the entrance and occupation of foreign women employed as ‘artist’ (Αυτεπάγγελτη έρευνα της Επιτροπής Διοικήσεως ως προς το καθεστώς εισόδου και εργασίας αλλοδαπών γυναικών με την ιδιότητα της καλλιτέχνης ΑΥΤ/Ε1/2001). November 24, 2003.

¹⁵ MIGS Press Release 24/03/2010, ‘Lack of sufficient political will to combat trafficking in women’ available at www.medinstgenderstudies.org/press-room.

¹⁶ US State Department on Trafficking in Persons Country Report 2010, p.27, www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2010/.

¹⁷ 2009 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons, 15 June 2010, Division of Programme Support and Management, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees www.unhcr.org/statistics

¹⁸ Despite this, the Ombudsman in a recent report found a violation of this right after the distribution of a circular in November 2004 obliging schools to report information regarding the parents of foreign children to the Migration and Population Department. According to the Ombudsman this measure might prevent parents from registering their children in schools and therefore indirectly violates free access to education. (Έκθεση Αρχής κατά του Ρατσισμού και των διακρίσεων αναφορικά με παραβίαση του δικαιώματος των αλλοδαπών μαθητών στην εκπαίδευση). The circular is still in place today and despite allegations by the Ministry of Education that the circular is inactive in practice, according to the Ombudsman’s office there are still complaints where school directors are asking the parents to show proof of legal residence in order to register their children to school which has as a result the non-registration of a number of migrant children by their parents due to fears of deportation.



Policies relating to migrant children in schools in Cyprus can be divided into three categories: a. Integration measures, b. Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP) and c. Intercultural Education policies.

According to recent statistics from the Ministry of Education and Culture (Moec) 'the number of students speaking a language other than Greek for the school year 2009-2010 is approximately 8500 students'¹⁹. This quotation is taken from the webpage of the Moec referring to measures taken for the integration of *alloglossoi* (αλλόγλωσσοι, children speaking a language other than Greek) in the Cypriot educational system. Taking into consideration the term used for children coming from other countries, namely *alloglossa*, it is already implied that the policies for integration of third country national children will mostly be referring to the learning and teaching of the Greek language. This perception of integration by Moec officials narrows down the scope of the concept to language support, a fact which not only emphasizes the 'otherness' and 'shortcomings' of foreign children but also simplifies and minimizes the appropriate measures that need to be undertaken by Moec for this purpose. These integration measures which are funded by the European Integration Fund refer specifically to secondary education schools and include the provision of Greek language courses to children coming from third countries²⁰. This measure started to be implemented in the school year 2007-2008 whereas, before this, the provision of additional support for Greek language learning was only available in primary schools. Another measure included within the integration measures taken by Moec is the publication of a guide for students coming from third countries with information on the Cypriot educational system printed in 5 languages: Arabic, Georgian, Ukrainian, Russian and Turkish. This guide is the short version of a guide published earlier in nine languages. Furthermore, another measure mentioned in this section is the training of educators by the Pedagogical Institute in issues like management of diversity and language diversity as well as teaching Greek as a second language. However, the trainings provided to educators on intercultural education are not always obligatory in terms of participation and are not conducted on a systematic basis, therefore not ensuring that educators teaching in schools with a substantial number of migrant children receive the proper training. Taking this under consideration, the follow-up and evaluation of these trainings remain questionable.

An important measure that has been undertaken in order to enhance the education of children in areas with low socio-economic status is the Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP) which include the kindergarten, primary and secondary school of a certain geographical area. In the National Report of 2008 by Moec it is mentioned that, according to the principle of positive discrimination, public education is responsible for providing adequate means and resources to support the student population coming from disadvantaged socio-educational strata²¹. It is important to note that throughout this section of the report what appears to be emphasized is the 'preventive role' of the ZEP in terms of issues like the use of drugs, juvenile delinquency and violence, while there is no research undertaken in Cyprus to indicate that these phenomena are intensified in the geographical areas marked within the ZEP. Instead, what is called upon to support the need for this preventive role are general reports on EU countries, and more specifically on Norway and France. In the latter case it is stated that the policy of ZEP also helped in eradicating school failure and student dropout rate as well as functional illiteracy. It is therefore assumed that such risk factors were identified in the Cypriot geographical areas covered by ZEP, in

¹⁹ Ministry of Education and Culture, http://www.moec.gov.cy/endiiferoun/draseis_synchrimatodotisis.html

²⁰ In Cyprus children coming from EU countries also benefit from the language courses provided under this fund.

²¹ National Educational Report 2008, pp. 114-117



which case there is no mention of any gender-specific measures in relation to victims and perpetrators of violence and delinquency, nor any gender-segregated data on these issues. In addition, despite the fact that migrant students do comprise a major part of the population of these schools (at least in the districts of Nicosia and Pafos), there is no special mention of how the migration factor is mainstreamed through the variety of measures undertaken within the implementation of the ZEP. Furthermore, no specific analysis of the needs of migrant students seems to have taken place for corresponding measures to take effect. Gender mainstreaming is also completely absent from any relevant policy document regarding the ZEP. Nevertheless, there are some measures undertaken that seem to be beneficial for the students in the ZEP like the appropriation of afternoon time through creative activities like school clubs, theatre and cinema workshops, summer school etc. (also framed/contextualized under measures for Health Education). However, these positive measures are presented within a discourse of preventing violence, delinquency and drug abuse whereas nothing is mentioned on how students from the ZEP are integrated and interacting within and with the wider society through these recreational activities, or on the creative outcomes of these workshops. This kind of framing comes to reinforce already established stereotypes about the children studying in ZEP schools as criminal, illiterate and deviant which are directly related to xenophobic attitudes in the wider society against the migrant population. It is also important to note that there are a number of schools with similarly significant numbers of migrant students which are not included within the ZEP and therefore do not benefit from any additional measures except for language support.

Measures for intercultural education are only undertaken for primary education schools as is indicated by the separate chapter under this subtitle in the National Educational Reports 2007, 2008 and 2009. No such section is to be found in the chapter referring to secondary education schools and only where reference is made to measures on integration is there mention of training on intercultural education provided to teachers. However, as mentioned above, this training for teachers is not implemented systematically and on a regular basis.

Regarding measures for intercultural education for primary schools as they are set out in the National Educational Report 2007, it is made clear that what the Ministry means by *intercultural awareness and education* is mainly the provision of language support for foreign students in order to learn the Greek language by providing extra teaching hours for this purpose and by securing the acquisition of books for learning and teaching Greek as a second language. The only measure that does not involve language support is described very broadly and imprecisely: 'the Ministry every year develops activities that allow for the interaction of elements from the cultures of foreign (*alloglossoi*) students with elements of the Greek civilization'²². However, there is no explanation on how Moec perceives this kind of interaction, or on the ways through which this measure will be further elaborated into detailed actions that will make this interaction a reality. In addition, no mention is made as to whether these actions are implemented systematically and on a regular basis.

²² National Educational Report 2009, p. 77, (author's translation). The reference to the 'Greek civilization' here as the essence of Greek Cypriot culture and identity is already problematic as it emphasizes the monocultural approach to education undertaken by consecutive governments in Cyprus and which has been highly criticized by local and international experts in the broader field of human rights education. For details see Commission for Educational Reform, 'Democratic and Humanistic Education in the Euro-Cypriot state', Ministry of Education and Culture, 2004.



Another aim indicated in the reports is ‘the uniformed and balanced distribution of *alloglossoi* students in the various primary schools’, therefore contributing to the desegregation of students with foreign background in Cypriot schools rather than isolating them in specific schools. Nevertheless, there is no mention of specific measures undertaken for the effective achievement of this aim which has been widely identified by international and European policy documents/reports as a good practice to better school achievement for students with immigrant background.²³ In relation to this, despite the fact that the numbers of Cypriot students registered in schools with a high number of immigrants such as the ZEP schools has been steadily decreasing (at least in Nicosia ZEP schools) since the start of this decade, no measures have been undertaken to provide incentives to Cypriots to register or maintain their children in these schools and in this way secure a more diverse school environment.

In relation to intercultural education, the National Educational Report 2009, in the section concerning intercultural education in primary schools, makes reference to new measures undertaken in the context of the Educational Reform currently taking place in Cyprus. These measures again put great emphasis on acquisition of the Greek language which, despite its importance, narrows down the spectrum of intercultural education into language support, with no mention of any measures related to the acceptance and understanding of difference, combating racial and other stereotypes, and promoting human rights education. In relation to the latter, an encouraging measure that has been provisioned to be implemented in the near future is the inclusion of multicultural elements in the new curriculum and school textbooks that will be distributed after the completion of the Educational Reform. The implementation of this measure remains to be seen. Another important measure that took place in the context of intercultural education was naming the school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 as years for Intercultural Dialogue, in the context of which a number of artistic and educational activities took place to strengthen awareness and understanding of diversity targeting both teachers and students. However, intercultural education cannot be limited to specific years of implementation and to sporadic educational activities but it should be an integrated and consistent part of the educational curriculum in all educational levels.

To sum up, throughout the National Educational Reports there is a repetition of the same measures in order to achieve a number of aims: integration, intercultural education, enhancement of disadvantaged areas in terms of advancing school achievement and countering violence. However, there is need for re-evaluation of the various aims the educational system is called upon to accomplish and the identification and implementation of specific targeted measures for the effective realization of each aim. As a final point, considering that most Cypriot schools are increasingly becoming multicultural there is an imminent need for the systematic training of teachers in both primary and secondary education as to issues relating to intercultural education like deconstructing stereotypes, handling incidents of racism and intolerance in the classroom, as well as promoting active change of attitudes among all students.

²³ Nusche D., “What Works in Migrant Education? A Review of Evidence and Policy Options”, OECD Education Working Papers, No. 22 (OECD, 2009), p. 9. Also see Green Paper: Migration and mobility: challenges and opportunities for EU education systems, European Commission (July 2008) at http://ec.europa.eu/education/school-education/doc828_en.htm, p. 9.



C. Specific issues affecting migrant girls in secondary education in Cyprus

In the policies mentioned in the previous section of this report gender mainstreaming is completely absent from any of the relevant measures undertaken, while girls never formulate a specific group to be considered when drafting policies in relation to education and youth. Furthermore, in the drafting of measures for the integration of children with a foreign background, the specific needs of girls falling within this category are neither researched nor reflected in relevant statistics and therefore the necessary data are not available in order for these needs to be adequately considered and dealt with. This fact is reflected in the recently drafted National Action Plan for the Integration of Migrants legally residing in the Republic of Cyprus, which was prepared by a committee of experts for integration, and chaired by the Ministry of Interior. Gender mainstreaming is to a large extent lacking from the various measures outlined within the action plan that relate to research in relation to the student population as well as to measures focusing on the educational system in general.

One major issue that seems to affect migrant girls in the school context from pre-primary to secondary education is the stereotypical pre-conceptions made about them by their fellow classmates. Research has shown that native children tend to perceive migrant children in terms of racialized categories that very often are connected with the type of work and socio-economic status of their parents. In the specific case of migrant girls, race intersects with gender to formulate stereotypes on the status of these girls and their abilities. In a number of cases they are treated as inferior, verbally and sometimes physically abused and perceived to be only adequate for specific chores such as cleaning, care-taking while many times they are targeted as sexually promiscuous²⁴. This reflects a wider public perception of foreign women in Cyprus, especially women coming from countries outside the EU, which is intensified by the pre-determined labour categories set by the state through which they can migrate and be employed in Cyprus (which were mentioned in the first section of this report), as well as the prevailing view of migrant women, particularly of Eastern European origin, as more sexually available than Cypriot women²⁵.

In a recent report of the Authority against Racism and Discrimination of the office of the Commissioner of Administration, referring to a complaint from the family of a girl of African origin that was beaten by a group of students of another school in a school volley game, a number of important conclusions were drawn²⁶. One conclusion was that the Office for Combating Discrimination at the Police, despite the fact that it has been established since 2004, consistently fails to adequately handle incidents of racial discrimination and violence. As pointed out in the above-mentioned report there is an immediate need

²⁴ Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (2008), 'Secondary Education Schools and Education in Values', Daphne II program, European Commission. Available at [www.medinstgenderstudies.org/past-projects/daphne-ii-secondary-education-schools-andeducation-in-values].

²⁵ See extensive analysis at Vassiliadou, Myria 'Women's Constructions of Women; On Entering the Front Door', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Special Issue: Feminist Challenges: Crossing Boundaries, Vol. 5, #3, May 2004 Also available at: <http://www.bridgew.edu/SoAS/jiws/May04/index.htm>.

²⁶ Έκθεση της Αρχής κατά του Ρατσισμού και των Διακρίσεων αναφορικά με τον ξυλοδαρμό μαθήτριας Αφρικανικής καταγωγής και το χειρισμό του περιστατικού από το Υπουργείο Παιδείας και Πολιτισμού και την Αστυνομία, 10.03.2008, p.16.



for a system to track down and analyze the variety of racial incidents that occur, as well as systematic training of police officers that deal with such cases. No systematic data are being collected in relation to racial incidents and behaviours taking place in schools or in the wider social context.

There is also a tendency by the Ministry of Education as well as individual school units to include racial incidents within the wider sphere of anti-social behavior and juvenile delinquency therefore rendering them invisible²⁷. As mentioned in the report of the Commissioner of Administration, this illustrates the limitations on the part of stakeholders dealing with education in identifying incidents as racial or not and in handling such cases effectively. This also demonstrates the reluctance of the Cypriot authorities to name incidents of such nature as 'racial' and/or 'xenophobic'. At the same time, their inclusion in more general categories such as juvenile delinquency impedes the formulation of specific measures to combat this type of violence. In the specific case of the girl of African origin there was also mismanagement of the case by the school authorities following the incident as they proceeded to punish the students responsible, without however undertaking any additional pedagogical measure to prevent similar incidences from occurring in the future by making students more open and aware with regard to accepting and respecting diversity and difference.

The reaction of the school authorities further corresponds to a wider trend of many educational systems in Europe which deal with incidents of racism and xenophobia in a sporadic manner rather than providing a consistent plan of action for the inclusion of education programmes on intercultural understanding, awareness and acceptance of diversity in their school curriculums, starting from pre-primary to secondary education. This needs to be translated into not only the mainstreaming of intercultural elements in the variety of school courses and activities, but also in the provision of specific modules on intercultural education and citizenship²⁸. Furthermore, all these must be in conformity with gender equality principles while deconstruction of stereotypes from a gender perspective must also take place for an effective management of these issues²⁹.

Another important area through which the education of migrant girls is affected worldwide relates to the cultural expectations that require girls to attend to specific household chores and care-taking of younger siblings when parents have to be at work³⁰. In Cyprus, since no research has been carried out yet to assess and identify the specific circumstances of the everyday life of migrant girls within and outside the school context, it is hard to make general conclusions on the specific issues that might affect their integration. Nevertheless, from individual stories of migrant girls that have been documented, one of the issues that regularly arise is the household duties that girls have to undertake in their afternoon

²⁷ Nikolaou, I. 'The Authority against Discrimination-The experience of Cyprus', presentation by the Ombudsman in the context of the Conference of the Pancyprian School for Parents.

²⁸ Handbook on Integration for policy-makers and practitioners (third edition), European Commission, p. 140

²⁹ For policy documents on this issue see Council of Europe Declaration 'Making gender equality a reality', on 12th May 2009 and Resolution 1464 (2005) on 'Women and religion in Europe'.

³⁰ Munoz V., 'The right to Education of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers', report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education 16.04.2010, p. 10.



time³¹. The latter can be restrictive in terms of time devoted to homework as well as participation in the afternoon creative activities that are organized within the context of the ZEP schools mentioned above, or in the afternoon Greek language classes provided by the State Institutes of Education which provide life-learning courses and activities. A good practice that enhances the opportunities of these girls to participate in the above classes and activities and, at the same time, supports migrant families from third countries, is the provision of low-cost childcare services for children of primary school by the Municipality of Nicosia, albeit with a restricted capacity of service up to 25 children. However, despite its very positive outcomes, this is a single measure, providing for the needs of a limited number of migrant families. Low-cost childcare services need to be provided on a wider geographical scale and be also accessible to families with infants as well as children in pre-primary education. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the lack of accessible childcare services constitutes a wider problem in Cyprus affecting the reconciliation of work and family life for all women independent of their citizenship status.

It is also important to note that culturally-related practices that might affect young migrant women such as the use of religious dressing and symbols in schools have not been the object of any relevant policy of the Moec. As stated by the Minister of Education, in several areas of Cyprus there are many students who attend school wearing the veil, which suggests that no attempt has been made so far for any restriction or regulation of this phenomenon, or of the use of other religious symbols or attire³². However, it should be noted that religious instruction being taught in schools concerns only the Greek Orthodox faith and has not been revised to be relevant to students of other religious beliefs or atheists, despite suggestions by the Ombudsman for a more comprehensive and objective curriculum in relation to religion³³. Furthermore, the extent to which in the context of religious instruction women's stereotypical depiction is challenged and criticized is very limited if not completely absent.

Finally, also in relation to culturally-related practices, it is important to point out that due to the lack of sex disaggregated data and research on the subject, there is no information on any health-related issues that might affect young migrant girls in Cyprus such as female genital mutilation (FGM) or issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights that might also have an influence on their everyday school experiences.

Taking under consideration that feminization of migration is constantly increasing, with Cyprus constituting an indicative example of this trend, as well as a reflection on how globalised categorization of migrants has consequences on the way they and their children are perceived from local societies, the

³¹ One such example can be found in the story of Pervin Shirin, 'Taste of Sugar', a fairytale written by her but based on her life-story. Pervin was a student at the gymnasium of Phaneromeni, in Nicosia, which is one of the schools within the ZEP.

³² Statement referred to in the article by Kiriakidou C., 'Δεν απαγορεύεται η μαντίλα στα σχολεία', in Phileleftheros newspaper on 05.05.2010. A practice undertaken by a particular school, namely the English school in Cyprus, which is composed by both Greek and Turkish Cypriot students as well as students from other nationalities, was to ban national and religious symbols from the school. This practice was encountered with a vehement reaction by Greek Cypriot parents who wanted the school to retain its main Greek Orthodox character. For more information see article by Evripidou. S., 'Unholy spat dogs English school' in Cyprus Mail on 25.06.2010.

³³ 'Έκθεση Αρχής κατά του Ρατσισμού και των Διακρίσεων αναφορικά με μεταχείριση μαθήτριας Μάρτυρα του Ιεχωβά', p. 8.

role of education is all the more imperative for combating xenophobic attitudes as well as promoting an enabling and just environment for all. In the specific case of young migrant girls in the context of secondary education, more need to be done on a general policy level in order to enhance their opportunities for equal treatment and their integration within the Cypriot educational environment. This means that gender-sensitive policies must be implemented in a variety of areas that affect migrant women and their families, including work and social benefits, in order for education to have a substantial effect on integration. On the other hand, educational policies and measures must be specifically designed by taking into consideration the migration factor in students' school experiences while at the same time maintaining a gender perspective. One of the biggest challenges faced by the Cypriot educational system is to make these policies be implemented on a systematic and regular basis while at the same time training professionals working in schools in both the understanding and management of diversity and difference.

