INTRAC
International NGO Training and Research Centre

RESEARCH BRIEFING PAPER

Cyprus civil society: developing trust and cooperation[1]

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1. Introduction

Civil society in Cyprus has a key role to play in creating spaces for dialogue and cooperation between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities. This paper outlines the context within which civil society organisations are operating, ways in which they are contributing to building peace, and challenges that they face. It demonstrates that important steps are being taken by civil society organisations to overcome prejudices and break down barriers, and that by further developing links with local and international policy makers and institutions, civil society could be a stronger player in the peace process.

The paper draws on research carried out by INTRAC under the European Commission's Cypriot Civil Society in Action Programme.[2] The INTRAC project – 'Developing Trust and Cooperation: Research to Improve Civil Society Practice' – aims to strengthen the process of reconciliation in Cyprus by enhancing the role played by civil society. More specifically, its objective is to develop a greater understanding of how civil society promotes reconciliation, so that concerned actors (civil society organisations [CSOs], civil society support organisations, government, policy makers and donors) can carry out that role more effectively in the future. It was envisaged that the findings of the research would contribute to more effective use of trust building techniques for CSOs and for civil society support agencies, thus increasing the likelihood of bicommunal cooperation and improving the efficiency of trust building elements in support programmes. The research would further add to the body of knowledge and information on useful practices and considerations in bicommunal civil society cooperation.

The project involved participatory research into the factors supporting and inhibiting bicommunal civil society activities in Cyprus and elsewhere. The research was designed to lead to a better understanding of issues affecting trust between the two communities. It builds on previous INTRAC work in 2006–08 through the Cypriot Civil Society

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[2] The overall objective of the programme is to *"strengthen the role of civil society in the Turkish Cypriot Community and to promote the development of a conducive environment for the further development of trust, dialogue, cooperation and closer relationship between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities as an important step towards a solution to the Cyprus problem."* EU Civil Society Support Team (2010) 'Cypriot Civil Society in Action: Awarded Projects' Nicosia, EU Civil Society Support Team.

Strengthening Programme that brought together civil society actors from both sides in common activities.

Through this earlier programme, INTRAC and its Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot consortium partners observed some of the trust building effects of these interactions. By undertaking more in-depth analysis, this research aims to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning how this process takes place, including the factors that support or hinder it, the challenges that this presents, and how these challenges may be addressed.

2. Background to the situation in Cyprus

Since gaining independence from Britain in 1960,[3] the island of Cyprus has experienced ongoing political instability, ethnic division and, at times, serious inter-communal violence. An initial political crisis ensued in 1963 when the majority Greek Cypriot leadership (representing approximately 80% of the population) attempted to reform the new state's constitution. This was rejected by both the minority Turkish Cypriot population (approximately 18% of the population), and Turkey, on the grounds that it undermined a number of guarantees that they had received under the terms of independence.[4] The constitutional arrangements were themselves divisive and operated against the development of a common Cypriot identity. Following widespread civil disorder in December 1963, a United Nations peacekeeping force was deployed to the island and the Green Line[5] was established in Nicosia to keep the warring factions apart. This was accompanied by the displacement of approximately 30,000 Turkish Cypriots into a number of enclaves, and its leadership withdrew from the government and initiated separate administrative arrangements – including its own laws, police and economic policies.

The period after 1963 was characterised by further communal division as the Turkish Cypriots became more dependent on Turkey while the Greek Cypriot community experienced a period of economic growth and modernisation. In July 1974, a coup d'etat led by the EOKA-B organisation, and supported by the then military junta in Greece, attempted to overthrow the Cypriot government, with the aim of enforcing *enosis.* The coup failed, but prompted the Turkish military to intervene with the justification that they were exercising their right as a guarantor power. Although initially viewed with a measure of support from the international community, a second phase of this intervention took place following the restoration of democracy in Greece, the failure of the coup in Cyprus, and while talks were taking place to end the crisis. This led to the occupation of 37% of the island by approximately 35,000 Turkish troops, the displacement of 200,000 Greek Cypriots (about one third of their total) from the occupied (northern part) of the island, and the displacement of almost all the Turkish Cypriots from the rest of Cyprus. Since then Cyprus has been a totally divided island. In 1983, the Turkish Cypriot leadership, with the support of Turkey, unilaterally declared independence, although this was recognised only by Turkey. This led to further isolation of Turkish Cypriots as the internationally non-recognised status of the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' led to economic embargo. During this period the demography of the northern part of Cyprus also changed as there was an influx

[3] Following what became known as the Zurich and London Agreements which, with Britain, Greece, and Turkey as guarantor powers, established a partnership republic with a complex system of veto powers allocated to the representatives of both communities.

[4] Independence was itself a compromise as most Greek Cypriots at the time were in favour of the island being unified with Greece (*enosis*) while most Turkish Cypriots favoured partition (*taksim*) with part of the island united with Turkey.

[5] This refers to a line drawn on a map, by the UN, to delineate the boundaries between the two communities. It was extended across the whole island in August 1974 to mark the current boundaries and includes a UN-controlled buffer zone that stretches from a few metres in some places (notably in the capital) to several kilometres in other parts of the island.

of people from disadvantaged regions of Turkey, creating what became known as 'the settler problem'.[6]

Despite several attempts to reach a settlement based on a bicommunal, bi-zonal political federation (which both sides have agreed to in principle), bicommunal contacts have been stifled in the past due to the level of segregation. In 2003, the Turkish Cypriot leadership initiated the opening of a few crossing points along the Green Line, ending an embargo on inter-communal contacts and communication, and enabling both communities to visit the other part of the island.[7] The most comprehensive attempt at reaching a political settlement in recent years – the Annan Plan[8] – was accepted by 67% of the Turkish Cypriots but rejected by 76% of Greek Cypriots in simultaneous referenda in 2004. The 'yes' vote among the Turkish Cypriots was largely brought about through a successful civil society campaign of mobilising public support.[9] The Republic of Cyprus became a full member of the European Union a week later.

The most recent attempt to reach an agreement – initiated by the UN in July 2006 – has so far showed little prospect of making a breakthrough despite the determination of the UN to broker a settlement by the time Cyprus assumes the presidency of the EU in 2012.

Compared with other conflict areas, the severity of violence in Cyprus has been minimal since 1974. Nevertheless, the relative absence of violent conflict has been at considerable cost, including the continuing division of the island, the segregation of its two main communities, and the isolation of one of these from the international community. In addition, over one third of the population are either displaced persons or their recent descendants. The island has also been host to the longest serving United Nations Peacekeeping force in the world. Cyprus is due to assume the presidency of the EU in 2012 with a divided capital and with the EU's *acquis communautaire* [10] being suspended in the northern part of the island until a settlement can be reached.

3. Civil society's role in Cyprus

UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's recent assessment of the current peace negotiations acknowledged, for the first time from such a source, the role of Cypriot civil society in contributing to the peace process. The Secretary General has urged the leaders of the two communities *"to engage civil society in the task of reaching a comprehensive settlement and to take into account … important civil society efforts to contribute to the peace*

[6] Estimates of the number of 'settlers' in the northern part of Cyprus vary substantially – from about 50,000 to 300,000 – although with the subsequent departure of thousands of younger Turkish Cypriots to other countries for mainly economic reasons, most commentators agree that the Turkish Cypriot population in the northern part of Cyprus is, or is in danger of becoming, a minority within the northern part of Cyprus itself.

[7] There were a few exceptions before this – such as a few remaining Greek Cypriots in the Karpas peninsula being allowed across on certain occasions. Since 2003 Turkish Cypriots, with the appropriate documentation (a Republic of Cyprus passport or identity card), can also work in the southern part of Cyprus while residing in the northern part of the island.

[8] Named after the UN Secretary General who had initiated it.

[9] Hadjipavlou, M. and B. Kanol (2008) 'The Impacts of Peacebuilding Work on the Cyprus Conflict' CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, Nicosia: CDA, 54.

[10] The accumulated legislation, legal acts, and court decisions which constitute the body of European Union law.

process."[11] However, civil society groups argue that more could have been achieved and that their role in supporting the peace process could also have been more significant.[12]

While civil society actors can work towards peace by reaching out to other concerned people, peace cannot be built without the participation of citizens. This requires involving 'more people' or involving 'key people' at two levels, the individual and the socio-political. Drawing on experiences in other parts of the globe, Chigas notes that while civil society is involved in many activities that contribute to peace, it is not the main actor in the process and that a peace process needs to be synchronised on many levels – including the social, political, and structural.[13] Hadjipavlou and Kanol emphasise how peacebuilding is a multi-track and dialectic phenomenon that needs to be *"pushed and played at different levels"* of society at times of a *"favourable international conjecture"*.[14] They point to the importance of incentives for people to become mobilised, for example in relation to security, democracy, or economic improvement. One such period was during the lead up to the accession of Cyprus to the EU in 2004. However, Hadjipavlou and Kanol also point to the need to tackle, at such times, *"the difficult issue of organising and pressing activities at a cross-community, bicommunal level rather than just focusing on mono-communal movements"*.[15] This partly explains the loss of momentum following the accession of the Republic of Cyprus (minus the occupied areas) to EU membership when such incentives for the Greek Cypriot community receded.

Chigas also notes that peace needs support from the leadership and many other actors.[16] She argues that effective peacebuilding strategies need to establish linkages between:

- Track 1 (official processes) and Track 2 (citizens' processes)
- Key people and more people – especially hard-to-reach people
- Individual work and larger-scale socio-political work (and this involves key people in important positions beginning to work for reconciliation).

In the Cypriot context, effective peacebuilding requires not only the participation of key people – which civil society partly provides – but also that they are effectively linked to Track 1 processes, which has not been the case. It also needs both support and incentives. While incentives can come from political momentum, a key challenge is how to maintain momentum when political incentives recede. But peacebuilding also requires the involvement of more people, especially hard-to-reach people. This is a challenge that civil society is attempting to meet.

Research suggests that contacts between different ethnic communities have a positive effect on people's attitudes and perceptions of the other,[17] and civil society plays an important role in providing these contacts, including through participation in trust building

[11] 'Civil society wants bigger say', *The Cyprus Weekly* 9-15 September, 2011, 2.
[12] Reported in 'Has sufficient progress been achieved in the peace talks in the two years that have passed since the inception of ENGAGE – Do your part for peace project?', ENGAGE Press Release, 7 July, 2011.
[13] Chigas, D. 'Putting Our Experiences in Perspective' Booklet 2: Civil Society – rebuilding peace worldwide: Cypriot Civil Society Strengthening Programme, International Civil Society Forum, June 2008. Oxford: INTRAC, Nicosia: NGO Support Centre and The Management Centre (now MC-Med).
[14] Hadjipavlou and Kanol (2008) op.cit., 54.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Chigas (2008) op.cit.
[17] Webster, C. (2005) 'Optimism and Pessimism Regarding Interacting with Turkish Cypriots: Greek Cypriot Public Opinion and its Implications for Reconciliation in Cyprus', paper presented at the Third International Symposium on Management in the Non-Profit Sector, Nicosia, Cyprus, 25–26 February 2005.

initiatives.[18] However, research to date also suggests that civil society in Cyprus has been generally relatively weak, and that bicommunal cooperation between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, as well as citizen participation in bicommunal events, is very limited.[19] The low levels of trust *within* Cypriot society in general are also not conducive for the development of civil society.[20] Indeed, Hadjipavlou and Kanol reported *that "in Cyprus the dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' still prevails and a zero-sum approach is adopted which leads to the deepening of partition and mistrust."*[21] Despite this, previous research has shown that civil society in Cyprus is not content with the status quo and is open to reconciliation.[22]

Within this context, any initiatives that support the development of civil society in Cyprus and its contribution to the reconciliation process are to be welcomed.

4. Overcoming divisions in Cyprus

In the absence of a political settlement, there are a number of ways in which civil society can contribute to promoting trust through addressing or alleviating some of the most marked aspects of the divisions in Cyprus. These include the divided and divisive education systems, the role and nature of the media, civil society itself, the political culture, and the legislative context.

4.1. Education

Currently, the education system in both parts of Cyprus is based on a nationalist ideology which demonises the other section of the population. A survey of the population suggests that about two thirds of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots think that the education system has a negative effect on the Cyprus problem.[23] According to Papadakis, Greek Cypriot schoolbooks depict the rule of everyone on the island (Frankish, Venetian, Turkish and

[18] Broome, B. J. (2005) 'Building bridges across the Green Line: A guide to intercultural communication in Cyprus'. Nicosia: United Nations Development Programme, Action for Cooperation and Trust.
Paffenholz, T. (2009) 'Summary of Results for a Comparative Research Project Civil Society and Peacebuilding', CCDP Working Paper 4, Geneva: The Graduate Institute, Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding.
Lönnqvist, L. (2008) 'Civil Society in Reconciliation: beyond the "Cyprus Problem"', INTRAC Briefing Paper 21, Oxford: INTRAC.

[19] CIVICUS (2005) 'Executive Summary: An Assessment of Civil Society in Cyprus. CIVICUS Civil Society Index Report for Cyprus.' Nicosia: MC-Med and NGO SC. This has recently been updated and the preliminary findings suggest that, if anything, participation in bicommunal events has decreased.

[20] Ibid. This has been corroborated by research carried out for UNDP-ACT which shows that 35% of Greek Cypriot respondents trust Turkish Cypriots and only 17% of Turkish Cypriots express trust towards Greek Cypriots. See also: Cymar Market Research Ltd and Prologue Consulting (2010) 'Level of Trust between the Two Communities in Cyprus: Executive Summary', Nicosia: UNDP-ACT, 7.

[21] Hadjipavlou and Kanol (2008) op.cit., 54.

[22] Hadjipavlou, M. (2007) 'The Cyprus Conflict: Root causes and implications for peacebuilding', *Journal of Peace Research* 44(3): 349–365.
Trimikliniotis, N. (2007) 'Reconciliation and social action in Cyprus: citizens' inertia and the protracted state of limbo', *Cyprus Review* 19(1): 123–160.
Sitas, A., D. Latif, and N. Loizou (2007) 'Prospects of Reconciliation, Co-existence and Forgiveness in Cyprus in the Post-referendum Period', PRIO Cyprus Centre Report 4/2007, Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre.

[23] Hadjipavlou (2007) op.cit., 361.

English) apart from the Greeks or Byzantines as oppression and imply that the indigenous people of the island have always been Greeks.[24] This places Turkish Cypriots in an inferior position, conjuring up the impression that they do not belong in Cyprus,[25] and the books project the Turks as *"barbaric, savage creatures who killed and tortured the rightful owners of the island"*.[26] There is an almost mirror situation in the Turkish Cypriot schoolbooks. One secondary-level school book argued*: "From historical-geographical, strategic and economic perspectives, Cyprus is connected to Anatolia"* and that *"history began"* with the arrival of the Ottomans in Cyprus, *"as it was the most important historical event…that sealed its character"*.[27] Turkish Cypriot books also emphasise the *"barbarism and savagery"* of the Greek Cypriots, concentrating on the 1963–74 period.[28]

Johnson has argued that a good start to overcome the negative aspect of education in divided societies is to induce peace education which promotes knowledge in order to build and develop mutual understanding, respect, trust, empathy, tolerance, and the tools to exist in a multicultural society.[29] Apart from the changes to the curricula, pedagogy should be reconceptualised and teachers should be trained to cope with the shift from ethnocentric history teaching to peace education.[30] Johnson also argues that the 'hidden curriculum' in the schools should be changed, this being *"everything implicit that impacts students' learning, from the pictures or images that are displayed on the walls, to the holidays or festivals that are celebrated, to the ways students and teachers interact in the classroom."*[31]

4.2. The media

The Cypriot media has often depicted the other community as the enemy. According to research carried out by the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO), this has been exacerbated by language and the fact that, to a large extent, members of one community could only learn about the other through their respective media, since contacts were limited and most people could not read the other's language.[32] There has also been a lack of an independent media not affiliated to various political positions, and a lack of coverage and understanding of civil society activity.

Paffenholz states that not only do civil society initiatives that have media coverage become more successful, but the media can also promote or dismantle images and stereotypes in society.[33] This is another area where CSOs can address a deficit in promoting or providing more effective coverage and understanding of civil society and peacebuilding issues.

[24] Papadakis, Y. (2008) 'History Education in Divided Cyprus: A Comparison of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Schoolbooks on the "History of Cyprus"', PRIO Cyprus Centre Report 2/2008, Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 6–7.
[25] Ibid., 8.
[26] Ibid., 8–9.
[27] Ibid., 13.
[28] Ibid., 14.
[29] Johnson, L. (2007) 'Reconciliation and peace education in Cyprus: What will it take?' *Cyprus Review*, 19(1): 23.
[30] Ibid., 26–27.
[31] Ibid., 29.
[32] Christophorou, C., S. Sahin, and S. Pavlou (2010) 'Media Narratives, Politics and the Cyprus Problem', PRIO Cyprus Centre Report 1/2010, Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 186.
[33] Paffenholz (2009) op. cit., 22.

4.3. Civil society

With civil society itself divided by the Green Line – with separate support, NGOs, advocacy groups, labour unions, professional associations, and relief and charitable organisations, providing similar functions in their respective communities – opportunities or the desire for CSOs to become involved in joint activities have been limited.

Nevertheless, there has been a substantial amount of peacebuilding work (training, conflict resolution workshops, interactive problem solving workshops, communication workshops, bicommunal projects, meetings, contacts, visits) over the past two decades.[34] In addition, those involved in such activities in the Turkish Cypriot community were able to mobilise other CSOs and members into a successful mass movement to campaign for a 'yes' vote in the referendum on the Annan Plan in the early 2000s.[35]

4.4. Political culture

Vasilara and Piaton[36] and Çuhadar and Kotelis[37] have discussed the ways in which Cypriots tend to consider political parties as the only channels for conveying their concerns, and how they use their political affiliations as a vehicle for personal and political career advancement. This dependency on political parties has served to undermine and devalue the efforts of civil society in promoting participatory democracy – as expressed through *"the practice of democratic attitudes and values within society, realised through active participation in associations, networks, and democratic movements"*.[38]

CSOs can help to offset this tendency through a focus on participatory democracy, political accountability, social capital (including developing capacity, trust, networks, cooperation, influence and so on), advocacy and equity, citizenship and rights, and promoting innovatory and creative approaches to social inclusion.

4.5. Restrictive legal context

As both communities are governed by different legislative contexts, and related issues of non-recognition, it has not been possible to develop island-wide organisations. In addition, in the southern part of Cyprus, CSOs are working in an obscure legal environment with complicated registration and operation procedures[39] while, in the northern part of Cyprus, the administration has attempted (unsuccessfully) to take control of CSOs through replacing already unhelpful legislation with draconian associations' legislation. To function effectively, CSOs need to be able to play an active role, and are inhibited by the current legislative frameworks in both communities. Although CSOs have made attempts to influence change, this has been limited by the pervading political culture in both communities. It has also been argued that the positive aspects of enabling laws do not amount to much if there is no culture of activism and engagement.[40] In addition, the work of CSOs has not been able to

[34] For a comprehensive list, see Hadjipavlou and Kanol (2008) op. cit., 61–79.
[35] Ibid., 51.
[36] Vasilara, M. and G. Piaton. (2007) 'The role of civil society in Cyprus', *Cyprus Review* 19(2): 107–121.
[37] Çuhadar, E. and A. Kotelis (2009) 'Cyprus: A Divided Civil Society in Stalemate', 186–188 in: Paffenholz, T. (ed.) (2010) *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment.* Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.
[38] Ibid., 195.
[39] Vasilara, and Piaton (2007) op. cit., 116.
[40] Ibid., 117.

encompass the whole of society, and those attending peacebuilding events are mainly English-speaking people (often referred to as the 'usual suspects').

CSOs that engage in peacebuilding need to pursue innovative and proactive strategies to increase participation throughout the island. They also need to be involved in campaigns to have the legislation amended and to explore ways of developing processes for cooperative working that transcend the divided legal context.

5. Research framework and issues identified

To explore the contribution of civil society to building trust, we adopted a social capital approach. Social capital is described as:

> ... features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives ... Social capital, in short, refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust.[41]

It is widely accepted that there are three main types of social capital:

- *bonding* social capital – which refers to the level of connectedness – or trust and quality of relationships – within communities (or social cohesion)
- *bridging* social capital – which refers to cross-cutting ties (or connections) between different elements within society, including relationships between different communities, particularly where residential segregation exists
- *linking* social capital – which refers to connections between those with differing levels of power or social status (e.g. links between those with power or resources in society and local communities).

Social capital provides a useful concept for measuring as well as describing the impact of civil society in different situations as the indicators of social capital tend to correspond with, or include, various aspects of civil society activity. This includes the work of NGOs and others in promoting socially cohesive and empowered communities, developing engagement between communities, and contributing to more participatory forms of governance, including more active and influential communities. In addition, the levels of trust within and between communities have a positive correlation with the levels of social capital.

As in societies elsewhere, the *bridging* aspects of social capital are closely related to the *bonding* and *linking* aspects. The extent to which communities are able to effectively engage with each other largely depends on their level of confidence and skills (and inclination) for doing so, which are aspects of bonding social capital. Just as importantly, both bridging and bonding aspects of social capital are largely related to linking social capital, i.e. the effectiveness of connections with those with influence, including decision and policy makers and resource providers. Having these connections largely determines the extent of resources available to develop capacity building programmes to provide communities with the appropriate confidence and skills to enable effective engagement to take place, as well as providing resources for engagement programmes themselves such as funding common activities and dialogue.

[41] Putnam, R. (1995) 'Bowling alone: America's declining social capital', *Journal of Democracy* 6(1): 65–78.

5.1. Research issues identified

Drawing on the conceptual framework and initial interviews with a small number of key informants, we identified a number of specific research issues:

1. The need to identify the **different ways** in which projects, organisations, and programmes contribute to trust building and reconciliation in Cyprus. By trust we mean the confidence and willingness that people have to engage with the other community in terms of different activities or relationships. This includes forming and/or developing interpersonal contact or personal relationships, occupational relations, or the willingness to engage with other people and organisations for mutual benefit or to explore issues of common concern. It also refers to a willingness to share experiences, knowledge, services, and space.

2. The need to identify or assess **how successful** the above initiatives are in relation to developing trust, confidence and collaboration between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots. This involves identifying the achievements of the initiatives in relation to their contribution to building trust and reconciliation. However, it also needs to consider how the projects, organisations, or programmes measured success. This enables us to identify some general, overarching factors that contribute to success in terms of promoting social capital, good practice, and sustainability within the wider environment of trust building and promoting reconciliation in Cypriot society.

3. The need to identify **the challenges or difficulties** that people involved in these initiatives have faced in the past and how, and to what extent, these have been addressed. This includes consideration of the constraints involved (e.g. political, ideological, practical, resources) and how these influence current work. It also includes issues connected with self-constraint – for instance the reluctance of some people to be seen to be too involved or interested in the other side, or a fear factor, including people's expectations of how they might be perceived or received by their own or the other side. A key question was to consider the factors involved in working bicommunally, including the challenges presented when collaborating with a group from the other side. This entails consideration of the costs and benefits of such bicommunal activities, such as identifying people's feelings about crossing the Green Line.

   A key component was to identify the learning generated through the experiences involved and how this might influence current or future practice.

4. The need to consider **outcomes** achieved beyond the anticipated or expected outcomes of specific activities, events, projects, and programmes. This includes consideration of the extent to which collaborative actions had additional outcomes in terms of opening new doors, or possibilities, or allowing new perspectives to emerge. It also involves consideration of the nature and extent to which participants have kept in touch or developed further personal or professional relations and whether they were willing to continue working together. An important aspect was the creation or development of networks for sustaining relationships and facilitating good practice through the synergies produced, including through providing appropriate support mechanisms.

5. The need to assess the ways in which **the effectiveness** of civil society in general and, more particularly, CSOs, **can be improved and strengthened** in relation to developing trust and collaboration between Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots.

This involves identifying specific resources that are needed (e.g. funding, personnel), specific potential training activities – for instance capacity building, governance, advocacy, lobbying skills – and what else should be done in order to:

a. support the work of CSOs, including the development of networking and appropriate infrastructural support
b. identify what international bodies and other funders may or should be doing in relation to this (e.g. EU, UNDP, government agencies)
c. identify what the limitations/constraints/challenges might be in this process and how they can be addressed.

6. The need to identify how CSOs can make the most of or **create opportunities** that will allow them to:

a. increase trust and contact between the two communities
b. expand their participation base and their influence in their own communities
c. contribute to shaping policies (or influencing decisions/actions) that are relevant to them and their work.

We identified key variables, such as informants' previous experiences of trust building and bicommunal work, and the role of informants' organisations, agencies, and projects in this. This enabled us to ascertain factors relating to the extent and nature of informants' personal experiences in civil society and bicommunal activities, including the nature of contact with the other community (i) as they were growing up and/or (ii) after 2003.[42] We therefore asked informants to tell us about this as well as about their organisation and their activities. Where appropriate, we also asked about the frequency of contact with organisations on the other side. Regarding relationships with or between *specific* organisations or individuals (on the other side) we also assessed the types of formal or informal working arrangements adopted.

5.2. Methodology

To address the research issues we used the following methods:

- Semi-structured interviews with key representatives of a cross-section of Greek and Turkish Cypriot organisations or groups – working bicommunally or otherwise (i.e. specific interest groups that may have potential to work bicommunally) (105 were completed)
- Seven in-depth case studies of projects, organisations, and programmes[43]
- Review of relevant documentation, actions, and reports provided by or identified through the semi-structured interviews and case studies
- Review of relevant literature on similar experiences in other societies
- Review of the wider strategic policy and legislative context within which projects, organisations, and programmes in Cyprus are operating
- Five interactive focus groups – these events were held in different parts of the island to discuss preliminary findings with key civil society representatives before finalising the written outputs.

[42] When the crossing points across the Green Line were opened.
[43] Specific methodology for the case studies included interviews with directors/managers/staff/ volunteers; interviews/focus groups with beneficiaries/representatives of targeted groups; interviews with partner agencies/donor agencies/policy makers/influencers; document review; participant observation.

The case studies provided a rich narrative of the extent to which specific CSOs and projects, operating in different contexts and addressing different themes, were promoting social capital in Cyprus. They enabled us to gain in-depth knowledge and insights into the internal and external factors that influence success and those that cause difficulties or present challenges. Through this we were able to identify key issues in relation to how practice may be improved.

To select the case studies we drew on the semi-structured interviews and literature reviews. In addition to the two main NGO support organisations in their respective parts of the island, other case studies addressed key aspects of the division that had been identified in the areas of education, the media, and young people. A further case study looked at one of the few initiatives involving the displaced former (Greek Cypriot) and current (Turkish Cypriot) residents of a village working together to restore and maintain the cultural heritage of the village. This identified some of the ways in which CSOs can transcend the restrictive legislative frameworks and political culture in order to develop cooperation across the Green Line.

Finally, it was decided to include at least one organisation that was relatively new to trust building work in order to examine how monocommunal work can contribute to trust building and lead to bicommunal approaches.

The case studies selected were:

1. **The Management Centre of the Mediterranean (MC-Med)**. This is the main support organisation for the Turkish Cypriot community and has been involved in a number of bicommunal activities and programmes, including with NGO SC.
2. **The NGO Support Centre (NGO SC)**. This is the main NGO support organisation for the Greek Cypriot community and has been involved in a number of bicommunal activities and programmes, including with MC-Med.
3. **Akova Women's Association (AWA)**. This is a rural women's association in the Turkish Cypriot community that has been involved in some bicommunal activities but is also involved in promoting a monocommunal strategy for building trust and reconciliation.
4. **Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR)**. This organisation seeks to address the divisions between the two main communities through focusing on aspects of history, addressing the divisive ways in which it is presented, and promoting the enhancement of history teaching and historical research.
5. **Cyprus Community Media Centre (CCMC)**. This organisation focuses on the promotion of an independent media in Cyprus, including enhancing the presentation of civil society initiatives and promoting a more balanced approach to civil society, news items, and political developments on both sides of the Green Line.
6. **The Kontea Cultural Heritage Circle Project**. This project involves the former Greek Cypriot villagers of Kontea village to the north of the Green Line, working in conjunction with the current mainly Turkish Cypriot villagers, to restore and develop public buildings and space in the village for mutual benefit and to promote trust and reconciliation.
7. **Working with Young People – HASDER and Soma Akriton**. This case study considers the contribution of two organisations – Soma Akriton and HASDER Folk Arts Foundation – that are working with young people in the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities respectively (as well as through some joint projects with each other) to promote trust, confidence, mutual respect and peacebuilding.

6. Findings: making a difference – promoting social capital

The research shows that CSOs are contributing to the development of bonding, bridging, and linking social capital in Cyprus in a number of different ways.

6.1. Bonding – improving community assets/activity

CSOs are contributing to creating a more connected community through developing an appropriate support infrastructure, including the initiation of and support for networks, and strengthening civil society through providing capacity building programmes, increasing confidence, and promoting more active and informed communities. The work of MC-Med and NGO SC was key to achieving this in both their support and networking roles. This included working with sections of the community not previously involved in civil society activity, including hard-to-reach and marginalised sections of the population – such as young people and isolated rural communities – including work described in the Working with Young People case study and AWA. They were also increasing people's trust or confidence in CSOs, including through raising visibility, increasing efficiency, and promoting the role and value of civil society in addressing a range of issues. The CCMC case study provided examples of some of the ways this was being achieved through enhancing media coverage and promoting the work of CSOs with the general public. This also involved sharing information and resources within the community (which was both an outcome of, as well as a process involved in promoting, community activity). CSOs were also contributing to more connected communities through shared activities and promoting joined-up approaches in working towards shared goals.

6.2. Bridging – promoting engagement between communities

CSOs have increased the incidence and level of engagement between members of the two communities. This included through joint activities and dialogue, as exemplified in the Working with Young People case study, or activities that bring young people together to work on environmental projects, but perhaps most significantly through wider programmes such as the ENGAGE project.[44] Engagement was being promoted through specific initiatives for mutual benefit – as demonstrated through the Kontea restoration project – as well as through improving the quality of structures or processes, For example, the management arrangements for CCMC and ENGAGE were, in themselves, key developments in this field, as was the creation of the Cyprus Island-Wide NGO Development Platform (CYINDEP).

All of the case studies illustrate ways in which civil society was improving or increasing understanding of the interdependence between people from the two communities. The Akova Women's Association (AWA) was promoting understanding of the common issues faced by women in rural communities on both sides of the Green Line. Both the ENGAGE project and AHDR were, in different ways, promoting an appreciation of the shared history of the two communities and the benefits accruing from this – including how the cultural, social, and economic life of each community was enriched by that of the other.

[44] The ENGAGE project is supported by the United Nations Development Program – Action for Cooperation and Trust (UNDP-ACT). It is implemented jointly by NGO SC and MC-Med. The overall aim of the project is to strengthen civil society and provide means and opportunities for individuals and organised groups to play an active role in the process of peace and reconciliation.

The case studies also demonstrate how CSOs were increasing the willingness of each community to engage with the other. This included AWA contributing to the creation of the pre-conditions for engagement through monocommunal approaches. AHDR were also addressing one of the main barriers to engagement by improving approaches to historical research and the teaching of history and, through this, promoting an interest in historical dialogue and learning about the other community in a constructive context. They were also helping to allay some of the primary causes and manifestations of divisions through challenging ideological and ultra-nationalistic approaches to history. The Working with Young People case study illustrated that young people were prepared to learn about the culture of the other community as well as participate in activities based on shared interests. The Kontea case study showed how the former and current residents of a village were willing to work together in order to preserve the cultural heritage of the village. This helped to preserve the former residents' sense of identity while also enhancing the quality of life of the current residents.

All of this was enhancing each community's awareness and competence to address or deal with issues of separation, including willingness to participate in structures, processes, and activities aimed at reducing issues of separation. The case studies also highlight how the stakeholders involved were able to explore and adopt new ideas and approaches in order to promote engagement and build bridges between the two communities, as well as considering the needs of each community in the wider global context.

6.3. Linking – improving connections with those with power and resources

Relationships between civil society and those with power and influence within Cyprus (politicians, public agencies and policy makers) have generally been relatively weak. Relations with international funding bodies, such as the European Commission (EC) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have been much more developed. Furthermore, the networks created through initiatives such as ENGAGE (for instance, CYINDEP) and organisations such as AHDR have been enhancing these relationships at a strategic, more global level. These are key developments given the importance of international players, including the EC, for the peace process in Cyprus. Such contacts can enhance the confidence of local power brokers and public agencies in Cypriot CSOs, while also influencing policy development in terms of the application of European (and other) standards in relation to citizen involvement, participatory democracy, and social inclusion.

CSOs have been active in generating additional resources to both communities for peacebuilding and related work – mainly through the EC and UNDP – but also from other significant sources (such as support provided to AHDR for the Home for Cooperation initiative).[45]

CSOs have provided a voice for those involved in peacebuilding work through establishing and improving linkages with the media as well as working towards the provision of independent media coverage, improving the standard of mainstream media coverage of both civil society activity and other news items, and supporting the self-promotion of CSOs.

[45] This AHDR initiative was opened in May 2011. It provides a convenient and inexpensive meeting place within the UN buffer zone as well enabling several CSOs to share office space and resources.

7. Findings: Meeting the challenges

In order for civil society to work effectively and make a significant contribution to promoting trust and reconciliation in Cyprus, there are a number of specific challenges that individual organisations, civil society in general, and other stakeholders (funding agencies, policy makers, government, and international bodies) need to address.

7.1. Internal issues

7.1.1. Sustainability and continuity

Three crucial issues which affect the capacity of CSOs in Cyprus are: sustainability and funding; staffing; and maintaining networks. First, a key challenge is being able to diversify sources of funding (as some of the case studies have done). Funding is complicated by the status of the legislation which currently allows tax benefits only for donations to registered charities, which exempts many CSOs. However, the legislation in the Greek Cypriot community is currently being revised, in negotiation with CSOs, to allow for the registration of public benefit organisations which would be eligible for such benefits. EU membership opens up additional opportunities, including the benefits of joining various international platforms which may provide access to funding and international cooperation. Support from the private sector is more problematic. The current scarcity of developed social corporate responsibility schemes means there is little support from the private sector. Contacts with the business sector could focus on securing funds in exchange for publicity, at least for events which can attract attention and participation like conferences and cultural events.

Second, staff turnover is high and building team spirit is difficult. Although the recent CIVICUS report shows positive developments since 2005, the sector still cannot offer job security and attractive benefits.[46] Moreover, the short-term nature of project funding exacerbates the problem. As a result, there is a relatively high turnover of civil society professionals as they tend to avail of more secure opportunities in the public or private sectors. This may result in a lack of continuity as the sector loses invaluable experience and expertise, although some of these people may remain active in civil society in less demanding roles or in a voluntary capacity. While staff changes may boost a team's expertise and motivation, frequent staff turnover can also undermine the development of a team spirit. Larger support organisations have been able to sustain a level of continuity by maintaining a core of staff members for a number of years and retaining others on a consultancy basis, This is an issue that needs to be addressed by donor agencies as well as service providers when considering wider strategic objectives.

Third, a key variable for working effectively is the ability to maintain networks. However, NGOs have difficulties in keeping networks functioning, mainly due to a lack of resources such as time and staff. Initiatives such as the ENGAGE project have helped to address this challenge through providing the resources to enable NGOs and funding agencies to dedicate appropriate staff time to the network.

Equally important is the promotion of trust and mutual support within organisations – it is difficult for teams to instil trust and confidence in and between communities if they do not trust and have confidence in each other.

[46] CIVICUS (2011) 'Civil Society Index Report for Cyprus: A Map for the Future – 2011', Nicosia: MC-Med and NGO SC.

7.1.2. Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation procedures are not always formally integrated into project proposals. This is a more general point that emerges from across research in Cyprus. Where a specific budget has not been allocated for the external evaluation of projects there is no capacity to carry these out. Sometimes, external evaluation has been incorporated into initial project proposals, as in the case of the ENGAGE project. Such evaluations, when they focus particularly on process and impact, can provide invaluable learning for improving future practice. Capturing outcomes is another challenge facing CSOs, including in relation to promoting trust and peacebuilding. This is a challenge that future funding programmes should address.

7.2. External relations

7.2.1. Engaging within and across communities

Widening participation

There is a definite challenge facing civil society in Cyprus in ensuring participation in organised events and activities. This may be the participation of civil society members in training events, or members of the public in discussions, information sessions, fairs and other activities organised by a CSO. This is especially true for bicommunal events, particularly within the context of the lack of potential for an imminent political solution. Difficulties of attracting participants in training and networking events has a lot to do with the current state of civil society in Cyprus, whereby many organisations function on a voluntary basis with no core administration or other staff. Therefore, taking part in events and activities beyond those of one's own CSO may put an additional strain on people in terms of time and energy. Organising training which provides clear added value to a CSO or an individual may increase popularity. Larger support organisations are helping to address this issue through needs assessments to identify gaps. Another option might be to keep training sessions short and specific with an emphasis on practical applications of new knowledge and skills.

Widening participation in public events beyond the usual suspects – people who are active in civil society and regular participants – is another key challenge. A number of strategies may be adopted to address this. First, organising monocommunal discussion events on specific topics targeting specific audiences – such as the 'Federation and Economy' event held at the Chamber of Commerce. Although not attracting a mass audience, it still managed to draw key business people who would not usually attend bicommunal or even monocommunal civil society events. The combination of targeting events to specific audiences, selecting appropriate venues and, importantly, liaising with key stakeholders has been a relatively successful recipe in meeting the challenge of widening participation to civil society events.

Second, use of the mainstream media (television, radio and newspapers) can raise the visibility of civil society more generally. Thirdly, linkages with local authorities either in order to host events or explore the possibility of applying for EU funding together can increase the potential for involving new people and reaching out to underrepresented sections of the population. ENGAGE project events that took place outside of Nicosia were a particularly important step in widening participation. However, these contacts in rural areas and other towns need to be upheld and built upon if we are to see long-term results in terms of strengthening civil society in Cyprus.

Language
In the general absence of bilingualism in Greek and Turkish, the two official languages, bicommunal events have long been conducted in English. This results in the exclusion of sections of the population who might speak little or no English, leading to such events being perceived as exclusive and elitist. A way to ensure equality of opportunity is through the provision of translations of written texts and interpretation of discussion events. However, these can be costly. At least some of the ENGAGE events have provided simultaneous interpretation services allowing speakers to use the language they feel most comfortable in. This practice should be further developed.

Overcoming distrust
There have traditionally been low levels of trust within Cypriot society and our research has shown some of the ways that this has been extended to CSOs. Within the organisations we have included in the research it is apparent that they have to work hard and take the time to overcome this distrust. For instance, in spending time to cultivate good relations with parents to gain their trust as an essential pre-condition for engaging effectively with children. Another example is having to address disincentives to involvement in civil society such as young people being subjected to derogatory remarks at school if they are involved with the other community.

However, CSOs have been meeting these challenges through presenting a more open and transparent approach to their work, developing more professional approaches, improving efficiency, and engaging more effectively with the public, and public agencies. This includes developing relationships with the media and publicising their activities and achievements more widely.

Working with the media
Given the previous deficit in media coverage of CSO activity in Cyprus, CSOs have recently made several successful attempts to addressing this. Key achievements have been the establishment of CCMC and the Independent Media Centre, and collaboration with newspapers, radio, and television to include frequent coverage of CSO activities. However, discussion panels on political and social issues in television programmes, for example, still only rarely include civil society professionals. A recent exception was the Cyprus 2015 project which, in delivering a series of population surveys on the key aspects of the political problem, attracted considerable media and public attention. Engagement with the media also requires continuous attention, as journalists tend to be overworked and underpaid, and therefore it is largely up to the CSOs to capture their attention and provide interesting material which can be readily used as features or news items, rather than relying solely on press releases. It is also necessary to invest time and effort in creating long-term relationships with journalists and other media professionals.

7.2.2. Working across the divide

Creating workable solutions
The development of new management structures such as with CYINDEP and CCMC has provided a unique and valuable insight into how structures for working bicommunally, in the absence of a wider political agreement, can be developed in ways that transcend communal divisions. This may include parallel structures or processes being created in each community in order to manage or promote specific island-wide issues or initiatives.

Crossing the Green Line
Attracting participants to activities organised in the other community is often a challenge. This is particularly true when the event involves minors, who are only permitted to cross the Green Line accompanied by a parent or accompanied by an adult as part of a group with parental consent. Such events require more planning time as they involve engaging with

parents as part of the process. Potential concerns for their safety can be alleviated by the development of strong relationships of trust between CSOs and parents. This enables the latter to feel reassured and have confidence in the organisation to guarantee their children's safety. Such relationships need time and continuous communication between the young people, parents and CSOs. These relationships are also more effectively engendered when the organisation involved is strongly rooted and respected in its own community – through a credible record of monocommunal activity.

Another sensitive issue relating to this is the selection of venues in the Turkish Cypriot community. Any event that is held there on property whose ownership is unclear or was Greek Cypriot before 1974 would be a strong deterrent for many Greek Cypriots wishing to take part in joint events in the other community. Some organisations address this by stating the ownership of the venue on flyers and invitations.

7.3. Political constraints

7.3.1. Policy and political environment

The prevailing political culture and attitudes to civil society in Cyprus are not conducive to providing platforms for civil society (or citizens in general) in the wider political or policy development process – including the peace process. This is indicative of a serious gap in Cypriot society in relation to how citizens can play an effective role in the governance of their country, including through:

- influencing developments in public policy to better meet their needs
- the application of international (including EC) standards on citizen participation
- providing a role for civil society at Track 1 level in the peace negotiations.

This has been particularly marked in the Turkish Cypriot community, creating major problems including suspicion and antagonism from public figures (including politicians) and sections of the population (including from both the left and right). In this context those involved in policy development and influencing policy should consider the constructive and valuable contributions that CSOs can make when formulating policy and make an effort to promote them more positively with the wider public. CSOs have been attempting to meet this challenge through strengthening their lobbying potential, including through developing networks and engaging with international bodies, including European institutions, in order to influence and bring about change.

It is very difficult for NGOs to lobby effectively as training in this area is very limited and also because policy decisions take place behind closed doors. While some NGOs have been able to address this through gaining access to appropriate individuals in the course of their work, others have been addressing this more strategically through the development of local and island-wide networks and, through these, developing linkages with international, including European, bodies involved in influencing policy development. Securing appropriate media coverage is another key strategy for addressing this challenge.

7.3.2. Terminology

Some words when used in the bicommunal context are considered sensitive and politically charged, such as the way authorities are named in press statements. This can create an artificial language (e.g. referring to a municipality as a local authority) which is not understood by the general audience and distances the reader from the text. As a precursor

to dialogue, agreement must first be reached on the terminology to be used, including how the participants are to be addressed.[47]

In some funding programmes, projects are required to give a common message when advertising activities and one community cannot be treated differently even if its concerns are different or more pronounced than the other. Finding common terms in such circumstances can prove to be challenging for these projects.

8. Conclusions

This paper has identified and examined a number of ways in which the role of civil society in promoting trust and reconciliation in Cyprus takes place, including the factors that support or hinder it, the challenges that this presents, and how these challenges may be addressed. This has included an in-depth analysis of several civil society initiatives that have never before been studied in this context. The research has focussed on the work of a number of CSOs involved in addressing specific themes that, in different ways, contribute to the trust and peacebuilding process. These themes include historical research and dialogue (and the role of education), cultural heritage, the media, working with young people, women's empowerment, and rural development. In addition it has included an analysis of the role of support organisations in this process.

Using a social capital framework, the findings indicate that these initiatives have contributed to building bridges between the two main communities through considering and addressing divisive issues. This has included through promoting an understanding of the causes and implications of division, exploring aspects of interdependence, and promoting the benefits of engagement. They have also provided different examples of approaches that can be utilised for taking this process forward through developing the pre-conditions for engagement and enhancing and increasing the opportunities to do so. This includes a number of practical steps that can be taken to overcome the reluctance to engage, and to provide incentives and support to enable it to happen, as well as creating appropriate management strategies. A central feature of this process is the need to develop an appropriate infrastructure through strengthening civil society. The findings have indicated how this has been closely related to the bridge building aspects of the peace process. However, it is also crucial to link these developments to other macro processes and this can be partly achieved through initiating and strengthening connections between CSOs and those with power, influence, and resources. The findings have pointed to some of the developments that have taken place in relation to this, although in relative terms it is a process that has been under-utilised in the Cypriot context and needs further attention. This is particularly true in relation to linking civil society inputs to the Track 1 aspects of the peace process, as has happened, successfully, elsewhere.

While emphasising the potential for an enhanced role for civil society in this process, there are challenges facing civil society to enable it to play a key role. These include organisational development, external relationships, engaging with the community, political and policy constraints, and working across the Green Line. There are deep-rooted challenges to building trust from deeply ingrained prejudices and apathy within the general population, and disinterest from policy makers and politicians. However, the research has also presented some of the steps that have been taken by different organisations in difficult circumstances, including an unfavourable political and policy context, to address these

[47] For example, someone who attained the title of professor from a university in the northern part of the island would not have that title recognised in the southern part.

challenges. This has provided valuable learning that may be transferable to other attempts at developing similar initiatives in Cyprus or elsewhere.

Supporting previous analyses of the role of civil society in peacebuilding in Cyprus, we would emphasise that peacebuilding is a multi-track and dialectic phenomenon. While civil society can play a key role in this process (particularly in relation to providing a link between Track 1 and Track 2 processes), it also needs support from many other actors. The input of civil society needs to be valued, encouraged, and supported by policy makers and politicians, as well as by the international community. Steps are already being taken to address this issue through CSOs enhancing their profile and influence by becoming active members of international platforms and organisations.

While this research has examined some of the issues that affect trust and how they can be addressed or promoted through civil society, the latter has been a slow and difficult process. The findings highlight a number of steps that need to be taken – by CSOs, policy makers, politicians, international bodies, and other resource and support providers – to speed up this process and make it happen. These include:

- strengthening civil society – including individual organisations involved in or related to trust building initiatives, networks, and infrastructural support for the NGO sector
- exploring ways of promoting and enhancing civil society's contribution to stimulating engagement between the two main communities – including addressing the deterrents involved and providing incentives
- developing strong linkages between CSOs and public agencies and those involved in policy development
- linking the work of CSOs to Track 1 peacebuilding strategies.

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