

OBJECTIVE 03

To support reconciliation, dialogue, closer relationship and trust between the Turkish Cypriot and the Greek Cypriot communities

DATA COLLECTION FOR A STUDY ON WILLINGNESS FOR RENEWED COHABITATION IN CYPRUS

DENİZ YÜCEL AND CHARIS PSALTIS



Photo Credit: Civic Space



THIS ACTION INVOLVED

Collection of data from 504 Turkish Cypriots for a study entitled "Intergroup Contact and Willingness for Renewed Cohabitation in Cyprus: Exploring the Roles of Trust, Prejudice and Subgroup Identification" (a similar survey with 502 Greek Cypriots was conducted with the support of the University of Cyprus).

Dissemination of the findings via local newspapers and other media outlets.

Presentation of the final research findings at the University of Cyprus on 19 October 2017 and at the Home for Cooperation on 13 February 2018.

ABOUT DENİZ YÜCEL AND CHARIS PSALTIS

Deniz Yücel is a Full Professor at the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at William Paterson University in the USA. Charis Psaltis is an Associate Professor at the Department of Psychology at the University of Cyprus.

STORY OF THE ACTION

The research study "Intergroup Contact and Willingness for Renewed Cohabitation in Cyprus: Exploring the Roles of Trust, Prejudice and Subgroup Identification" assessed whether an increase in social contacts (both in quantity and quality) between Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities led to an increase in willingness for renewed cohabitation.

The data collection in the Republic of Cyprus was completed at the University of Cyprus and the Grow Civic action supported the data collection in the Turkish Cypriot community. The latter was completed by the Prologue Consulting and Research Center.

According to the team, long-term intergroup conflict can have long-term consequences, negatively affecting all aspects of society and potentially wounding surviving individuals and groups for a lifetime. Intergroup contact, a subject of constant interest to social scientists, is especially crucial for reducing prejudices and increasing trust and tolerance in post-conflict societies.

"The historical overview highlights how important the 2003 opening of crossing points was for the people living on the island. They had been under a no-contact status quo for 30 years, while currently it has only been 14 years since the two communities resumed formal contact. Intensive bi-communal talks have been going on since then, and thus it was important and timely to analyze how and whether the increased social contact between the two communities influenced inter-cultural trust and prejudice on the island, and to prepare for the possible challenges ahead."

Deniz Yücel

The results of the study are consistent with prior research in finding that the quantity and quality of social contacts has a positive impact on the willingness to reestablish cohabitation between the communities.

"The action helped further the discussion on peaceful coexistence between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots. As I anticipated, this project shed light on how the two groups view each other, which enabled me to contribute to the dialogue currently taking place in bi-communal meetings. Moreover, as a consequence of this project, I was able to recommend policies to facilitate a better understanding between the two communities."

Deniz Yücel

RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

The research team underlines the importance of intergroup contact, while simultaneously examining its major effects and challenges. One of the major remaining challenges is to increase the number of people who get the chance to meet and talk to members of the other community. Yücel points out the highly successful "Imagine" programme that brings elementary and high school students from across Cyprus to the UN Buffer Zone to develop peacebuilding activities. She emphasizes the urgency to politically support the institutionalization and sustainability of such actions, to increase both the quantity and the quality of contacts between communities.

"For the younger age group, higher subgroup identification reduces the positive effects of contact. This should alarm educational policymakers about the identity, citizenship, and history teaching policies followed in the educational systems of the two communities."

Deniz Yücel

The research results were shared to the broader public with a presentation at the University of Cyprus on 19 October 2017 and at the Home for Cooperation on 13 February 2018. The results were also communicated to decision makers and to the public via various media outlets.



WHAT'S NEXT?

The researchers are still working on the issue, trying to shed light on the effects of dialogue between the communities. Yücel is working on analyzing the data further, comparing these results to prior data collected by Charis Psaltis and his team in 2007, to see the trends over time. She will focus on understanding and further discussing the social and policy implications of these findings.

TO FIND MORE ABOUT THE ACTION

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This Project is funded by the European Union.

