

Cyprus

INCLUSIVE LABOUR MARKETS: ENSURING NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND



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About this report

Caritas organisations are essential actors in the fight against poverty and social exclusion, and the striving for social justice, globally and in Europe. They do so by assisting and providing services to people in need, as well as by presenting alternatives to address unfair structures, policies and measures.

The Caritas CARES poverty reports are an important instrument in this endeavour, in the European context especially. Caritas informs local, regional, national, and European authorities and formulates recommendations based on its daily work with people experiencing poverty. Caritas CARES poverty reports support the advocacy efforts of Caritas at national and European levels, and endeavours to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable members of society are heard.

The focus of this edition of the Caritas CARES poverty reports is on inclusive labour markets and the social economy as part of national social models. The poverty report focuses particularly on the challenges that should be urgently tackled to make labour markets more inclusive and to promote the social economy, based on Caritas Europa's vision for sustainable social models, as well as on existing EU and Council of Europe processes, programmes and legal instruments.

The Cyprus country report has been realised on the basis of a questionnaire, designed in consultation with the participating member organisation.

About Caritas Cyprus

Caritas Cyprus is a member of the Caritas Europa network and the Caritas Internationalis confederation whose 165 members serve the world's poor, dispossessed and marginalized, and who work to end poverty, promote justice and restore dignity. Since registering as a charitable association in 1986, Caritas Cyprus has responded to humanitarian crises on the island with the aim of providing compassionate care and support to the vulnerable. Against the backdrop of regional developments and

the broader European migration crisis that began in 2015, Caritas Cyprus has seen a dramatic increase in demand for its services by those seeking refuge and/or asylum. Its work is conducted through local initiatives as well as island-wide programmes that focus on migrants and local community needs. Caritas Cyprus is managed by an Executive Manager and has a small number of paid staff members (including roving field workers and staff based in the Migrant Centre in

Nicosia) and dozens of committed and active volunteers and university level interns. Its head office is in Nicosia and it has a presence across the island's different regions and cities.

Caritas Cyprus tries to respond to all requests for assistance. Its parish-led and island-wide programmes assist a variety of vulnerable people, such as migrants with different types of legal status and needs. Cyprus continues to witness an increase in the number of people seeking refuge and/or asylum. As one of the few local humanitarian organisations that provides direct assistance, Caritas Cyprus has seen a steady and dramatic increase in the demand for its services. In 2017, Caritas Cyprus registered 733 new beneficiaries and in 2018 that number nearly doubled to 1,363. In 2019 and 2020, Caritas Cyprus received roughly the same number of new registrations, almost 2,300.

While indicative of the increase in need, these figures under-represent our beneficiary population because not everyone who receives aid or a service is captured in our centrally-maintained database. Assistance is offered to many more people and is available to

anyone who requests it. Almost everyone who comes to Caritas Cyprus seeks information, advice or assistance in understanding and navigating the asylum, welfare and labour bureaucracies. Many also require support with food or with accessing housing, employment, medical treatment, psychosocial services, and schooling for children. In addition, Caritas Cyprus serves many others through its parish programmes that include food banks, weekly meals, language classes and other social programmes.

EU citizens and Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) with an EU family-tie make up 6% of the population served by Caritas Cyprus. Though often poor and vulnerable, this group can have more rights and access to government services than other beneficiaries. They are also served by a variety of EU and government-funded programmes and projects.

Most of the information provided in this report will refer to migrants, with an emphasis on asylum seekers who are currently the largest in number. Caritas Cyprus relies on government, EU and Caritas Cyprus' own statistics to monitor poverty and other indicators relevant to its work.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Caritas services

Since the pandemic erupted, Caritas Cyprus has seen an increase in demand for its services, especially from families with children, women, people with health issues, and migrants and refugees. In 2020, it provided services to 40% more households as the pandemic and its economic implications forced many to seek assistance. In fact, there was a ten-fold increase in the demand for emergency food, specifically during the spring and summer lockdown periods of 2020. In the first half of 2021, Caritas Cyprus had already registered 1,522 new beneficiaries—an indicator of a continued increase in needs. There has also been a dramatic increase in the demand for income support/minimum income and access to social services; healthcare services; public housing; and employment advice.

Caritas Cyprus' casework and advocacy is focused on the migrant sector. In 2020, 2,290 new individuals registered, 1,961 of whom were asylum seekers, 75 were recognized refugees/subsidiary protection holders, 34 domestic/agricultural workers, 74 EU citizens or TCNs with an EU link, 28 rejected asylum seekers and 34 students. A further eighty-four were classified as undetermined because of difficulties with the

asylum application process due to COVID-19. During this period, Caritas Cyprus experienced an increase in the number of beneficiaries who were domestic or agricultural workers or students left without funding sources due to the pandemic and response measures. Looking at 2020 in greater detail, broken down by gender, of the 2,300 new individuals registered with Caritas, 645 (28%) were female and 1,645 (72%) were male beneficiaries. There was also a much larger percentage of women-headed households with dependants, 14% of women versus 3% of men.

Caritas Cyprus' services needed to adapt to the pandemic and local measures and restrictions. The COVID-19 pandemic affected all aspects of Caritas Cyprus' work as well as of life on the island in 2020. Throughout the year, Caritas Cyprus put in place a series of contingency plans and policies meant to keep staff, volunteers, and beneficiaries safe and to comply with evolving conditions and the Government's guidelines. At times, it was necessary to curtail in-person services and temporarily close the Migrant Centres to the public so as not to attract crowds. In addition, Caritas Cyprus asked staff to work from home, moving most services to the telephone or online in order to reduce the number of people in the limited square footage of the office.

Home delivery of emergency food and medicines was instituted and coordinated with the few other NGOs that continued operating. By remaining flexible, Caritas Cyprus was able to stay open throughout the lockdown and summer periods and to continue to provide essential services. Thanks to the strong sense of local partnership and spirit of localisation exhibited by its partner Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Caritas Cyprus was able to divert funds earmarked for activities that were not possible due to COVID-19, and redirect them to

emergency needs such as cleaning supplies, masks, gloves, stationery and, especially, food. As a frontline, grassroots organisation, Caritas Cyprus strived to always respond quickly, flexibly, and appropriately to the evolving situation.

Below, is a **testimonial** from a beneficiary of Caritas Cyprus describing some of the challenges they faced as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

‘Due to the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the labour market, I have become increasingly reliant on government support to cover my subsistence expenses. However, due to late cheques and limited funds, I find myself in a position where reassigning money from the allocated budget for food becomes essential for me in order to pay the rent. This creates yet another challenge for my family and we are now dependent on organisations like Caritas for humanitarian aid, especially food, each month.’¹

— An asylum seeker from Cameroon

¹ Kyritsi, T., Pashia, E. and Andreou, M. (2020). The Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic to the Young Migrant Women Living in Cyprus. Centre for Gender Equality and History, Nicosia.

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Photo: Having an English-language CV which outlines contact information and relevant skills can be important when approaching a prospective employer. Caritas Cyprus has assisted hundreds of beneficiaries to develop CVs since piloting this service in the summer of 2019. **Source:** Caritas Cyprus



JOB CATEGORIES

Cat

Frameworks for an inclusive labour market

Catholic Social Teaching recognises that economic activities must operate within a broader moral framework of honesty and accountability, respect for human dignity, fairness, and a vision of integral and authentic development that goes beyond mere material profits. For Caritas Europa, the economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is more than a way of making a living; it is a form of participation in society. If the dignity of work is to be protected, then the basic rights of workers must be respected – the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to the organisation and membership of unions, to private property, and to economic initiative. In the final statement of Pope Francis' *'Economy of Francesco'* (2020), it is stated that 'the right to decent work for all, family rights and all human rights [must] be respected in the life of each company, for every worker, and guaranteed by the social policies of each country.'²

These rights are also enshrined in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 8), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions, the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, the European Social Charter (r), and more recently, the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR) (2017). The 20 principles of the EPSR are what guides the Member States towards a strong, social Europe that is fair and inclusive.

For Caritas Europa, respecting the rights and dignity of every worker necessitates a human-centred economy, founded on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, which recognize the interdependency and interlinkages between climatic developments, economic activity and social rights. It is a sustainable and inclusive social model, which does not consider economic growth as an end in itself but rather as a means for social and environmental

² Pope Francis (2020), *The Economy of Francesco*, November 21, 2020, www.francescoeconomy.org/final-statement-and-common-commitment

progress in combination with climate protection. Human-centred economic policies are therefore based on an assessment of social and environmental needs designed to deliver benefits for people over time and not to the detriment of the planet or future generations.

An essential element of a human-centred economy is an inclusive labour market, which is one of the three pillars of Caritas Internationalis' social model.³ Just as Caritas Europa does regionally, Caritas Cyprus supports and advocates for this model locally. Active inclusion, adequate income, sustainable employment, and quality services remain mandatory objectives for every economic system oriented towards social justice and the common good. Inclusive labour markets, therefore, recognise the value of work and people's contributions to society.

3 Caritas' social model is made up of three pillars: 1) Family, 2) Inclusive Labour Markets, 3) Social protection Systems – Caritas Europa (2016) [Social justice and equality in Europe is possible - www.caritas.eu](https://www.caritas.eu)

SECTION 1:

Current challenges in accessing the Cypriot labour market

1.1. The labour market: pre- and post-pandemic

1.1.1. The evolution of the socio-economic context

According to Eurostat statistics,⁴ between 2010 and 2020, the employment rate⁵ in Cyprus decreased slightly from 75.0% to 74.9% (compared with the EU27 average of 72.4% for 2020). Over the same period, the female **employment rate**⁶ increased from 68.8% to 69.1% (compared with the EU27 average of 66.8%). The figures relating to the third quarter of 2020, which reflect the initial effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, show

a reduction in the employment rate of -0.1 percentage points (pp) when compared to the third quarter of 2019. For women, the reduction was slightly higher (-1.1 pp).

Between 2010 and 2020 the **unemployment rate**⁷ grew from 6.2% to 7.6% (compared with 6.9%, the 2020 EU27 average). The figures relating to the third quarter in 2020 show a

4 www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/main/data/database (Date accessed: 09/08/2021).

5 % of population aged 20-64.

6 % of females aged 20-64.

7 % of active population aged 20-64.

considerable increase in the unemployment rate, from 6.7% to 8.1% (+1.4 pp). For women, the increase was less significant (+0.1 pp).

Over the last decade (2010-2020), **youth unemployment**⁸ rose above the European average. While in 2010, youth unemployment was at 16.6% (compared to 21.5%, the EU average), it increased to 18.2% in 2020 (compared with 16.8%, the EU average). On the contrary, female youth unemployment dropped from 17.2% in 2010 (compared with 20.9% at EU level), to 12.3% in 2020, below the EU average (of 16.7%). The unemployment rate among young people between 15 and 24 years of age stood at 16% for the fourth quarter of 2019, and this represented a consistent and dramatic decrease in the unemployment rate among young people from 2013, when the figure was 38.9%. For 2019, the employment rate among people between 20 and 64 years of age increased to 76% from 74.5% in 2018, thus slightly exceeding the target set by the EU for 75% employment.

At the same time, the **employment rate of the population aged 15-24**⁹ decreased during this decade; and the same trend was noted for the overall working population, although Eurostat data indicate that the decrease for young people between 2010 and 2020 was more noticeable (equal to -2.5 pp, from 33.8% to 31.3%). Over the same period, the EU average decreased by -0.2 pp. (from 31.7% to 31.5%).

According to the 2020 European Commission country report,¹⁰ overall, labour market conditions in Cyprus improved but challenges remain:

- although decreasing, the share of young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs) is still a concern. Public Employment Services' operations have been temporarily enhanced but their long-term capacity is at risk;
- Cyprus strives to ensure fair labour market working conditions, through its newly established unified inspection service;
- Cyprus has one of the lowest growths in compensation per employee;
- active labour market policies and targeted schemes for vulnerable groups remain below the EU average;
- permanent employment is growing strongly, the fastest in the EU, while in-work poverty is declining;
- there is room for improving gender equality.

In the following section Caritas Cyprus discusses more specific challenges, informed primarily by its work with migrant groups.

8 % of population aged 15-24.

9 % of population aged 15-24.

10 COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, Country Report Cyprus 2020, Accompanying the document SWD/2020/512 final. (p. 4-5)

1.1.2. Challenges in the labour market for vulnerable target groups

Persons with a migrant background, young people and women all face specific challenges in the Cypriot labour market.

In 2017, **Greek Cypriots** made up the majority of the registered unemployed population, with 15,686 persons (61%). Of the total unemployed population, 6,870 persons (27%) were European citizens. The number of new European entrants who came to Cyprus to work during the first two months of 2020 stood at 318, accounting for 19% of the total number of new entrants to the Cypriot labour market.

These figures provide some general context, but do not include the increasing number of **asylum seekers** who are also new entrants into the Cypriot labour market, nor do they reflect the economic implications of the pandemic, which continue to affect all aspects of the economy. Since 2018, Cyprus has experienced a surge in the number of applicants for international protection; per capita, it has received more asylum seekers than any other EU Member State since the third quarter of 2018. Asylum seekers are expected to find employment one month after submitting their asylum claim. However, they are limited to a small subset of sectors where thousands of applicants vie for a limited number of low-paying, intermittent jobs. Many of these sectors were particularly hard-hit by

the 5.1% economic contraction in 2020, linked to COVID-19, resulting in fewer opportunities for the increasing number of asylum seekers.

Different forms of discrimination contribute to exclusion across the labour market.

In Cyprus, discrimination can take place based on ethnic, racial or religious background and can be compounded by underlying gender discrimination.

How a **migrant** engages with the labour market in Cyprus is largely determined by their **residential status**. In practice, there is something of a 'hierarchy' of migrants. Those who come from other countries to work for a company located in Cyprus will often be assisted with the immigration and registration process by the company which is employing them. They have contracts upon arrival and are usually skilled and well paid.

Others, who come from third countries to work in Cyprus, do so to fill labour market gaps in areas in which no local labourers can be found. Many of these are domestic and agricultural workers typically contracted (through an agent) to work for a specific employer that is linked to their visa, which lasts for a maximum of 6 years. Should a domestic or agricultural worker leave an employer with the appropriate release paper,¹¹ their visa remains valid for one month, thus allowing them to find a new employer to take on and extend the

¹¹ A termination letter specific to this category of migrant workers, which allows another employer to take on their visa.



Photo: Caritas Cyprus collaborated with Refugee Support Europe's Dignity Centre to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups far or cut off from essential services. **Source:** Caritas Cyprus

visa.¹² If they are unsuccessful and remain in Cyprus for longer than one month without an employer, they lose their legal status.

Intra-EU migrants who arrive in Cyprus and wish to enter the labour market have the same access as Cypriots, provided they

register with the Migration Department. There are no restrictions placed on this category of people and they are free to access any part of the labour market. Their rights include access to social insurance, the national healthcare system and a pension.

¹² In the European Parliament, there is a draft LIBE report providing recommendations to the Commission on legal migration and the law (2020/2255(INL)), which proposes an extension of three months for workers to find a new job, possibly going so far as to six months. But this is still under negotiations. One month is clearly a very short time period.

Recognised refugees and holders of subsidiary protection also have access to all sectors of the labour market and are entitled to the same rights as Cypriots. Similar to migrants from EU countries, they are also entitled to social insurance, the national healthcare system and a pension. Having said this, recognised refugees and holders of subsidiary protection face particular challenges when accessing the labour market, specifically when transitioning between different types of status. In addition to this, many migrants in this category **face significant language barriers, limited access to childcare facilities and discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity and religious background.** This is especially prominent in the case of women who are Muslim and from countries in Africa and who are trying to access the labour market (KiiF, 2020)¹³.

Without language skills, and with no way to certify their professional credentials, qualified individuals are often precluded from working in their fields of expertise.

Third country national (TCN) students make up a small but noteworthy subsector of the labour force, working in high-demand sectors such as food delivery services and agriculture. Though their visas allow for only part-time work, they often derive enough income to support themselves and to send remittances abroad. Because their

employment arrangements can remain informal (and not enshrined in a contract), their jobs, hours and wages are unprotected by legislation, and they remain outside of the social safety net. The problems with this arrangement have become acute during the pandemic. In this period, many migrants in this category have found themselves unable to work; outside of any unemployment scheme and unable to return to their home countries. As a result, many quickly fell into (and remain in) poverty, homelessness, and hunger.

Asylum seekers are allowed and encouraged to access the labour market one month after lodging their asylum applications. However, their access to employment opportunities are limited to a few sectors¹⁴ of the labour market based on administrative regulations. The employer must have a special permit to employ asylum seekers and work contracts must be validated by the district labour office for the employment to be considered legitimate. These sectors are considered unattractive to the local population and often offer low pay and/or intermittent work and inconsistent hours. In recent years, several obstacles to asylum seekers' access to employment have also been observed. Their monthly compensation is relatively low as they are considered unskilled workers and employers may not pay them consistently. Many of these jobs are located in remote areas and so there

13 Kyritsi, T., Pashia, E. and Andreou, M. (2020). The Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic to the Young Migrant Women Living in Cyprus. Centre for Gender Equality and History, Nicosia.

14 These are: agriculture; animal husbandry, fishing industry, animal shelters and pet hotels; processing and waste management; trade - repairs; service provision (cleaning, groundskeepers, loading/unloading, pest control); food industry—limited to delivery services only; restaurants and recreation centres—only as kitchen aids and cleaners; hotels—only as kitchen aids and cleaners. Other— defined as advertising material delivery persons and laundromat labourers.

may be difficulties and costs associated with commuting. Even if they use low-cost transportation (e.g., public buses), their monthly income does not cover travel expenses (Drousiotou and Mathioudakis, 2015: 57).¹⁵

Furthermore, asylum seekers' inability to communicate effectively either in Greek or English often impedes their efficient communication with Labour Office officials, as well as potential employers (Drousiotou and Mathioudakis, 2015).¹⁶ Last but not least, employers including those in the agricultural and farming sectors often demonstrate a lack of interest or willingness in employing asylum seekers. Many employers in these sectors prefer to employ third-country nationals who arrive in the country vetted by an agent, with an employment permit and authorised to work for a period of up to four years (Drousiotou and Mathioudakis, 2015).¹⁷

Additionally, as mentioned above, employing asylum seekers is a lengthy and complicated process that involves obtaining an employer's licence, filing a job posting, interviewing many candidates and submitting and validating a contract at the district labour office. This

process can be prohibitively complicated for those employers open to hiring asylum seekers. Consequently, many potential employers forego hiring asylum seekers altogether or, if they do begin the process, abandon it part-way. This leaves some asylum seekers in limbo, where they may be considered illegally employed or at risk of not being paid since the employment arrangement was never formalised with the authorities.

The inability of asylum seekers to access employment for several months also creates a gap in their employment history, negatively affecting their prospects when they seek to then establish professional networks. It can also have a psychological (as well as a reputational) impact on asylum seekers (Mestheneos and Ioannidi, 2002),¹⁸ with their lack of employment (and in some cases subsequent poor societal inclusion) making them less active or less mobile in seeking employment, even once they are legally able to do so (Dumper, 2002¹⁹; Feeney, 2000²⁰).

As far as **gender discrimination** is concerned, while better than the EU average, women in Cyprus are still paid €10.40 less for every €100

15 Drousiotou, C. and Mathioudakis, M. (2015). Asylum Information Database, Country Report: Cyprus. Brussels: European Council of Refugees and Exiles. Available at: www.asylumineurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/report-download_aida_cyprus_first_update_february_2015_final.pdf

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Mestheneos, E. and Ioannidi, E. (2002). Obstacles to Refugee Integration in the European Union Member States, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 15(3), pp. 304-320.

19 Dumper, H. (2002). *Missed Opportunities: A Skills Audit for refugee Women in London from Teaching, Nursing and Medical Professions*. London: Greater London Authority.

20 Feeney, A. (2000). Refugee employment, *Local Economy*, 15(4), pp.343-349.

their male colleagues are earning²¹ and Cyprus is ranked 21st in the EU in the EU Gender Equality Index.²² Further, a lack of regular and reliable childcare effectively excludes parents (more mothers than fathers) from participating in the labour force; and few want to hire workers they perceive to be 'unreliable' due to family obligations. Childcare is costly, regularly outpricing low-income families with young children. There are no government subsidies and few facilities to support families with children not of school age, thus ultimately preventing families of this demographic from participating in the labour force.

Though the principle of non-discrimination in the labour market and workplace – including discrimination based on sex, age, ethnicity, and religious background – is enshrined in the laws of the Republic of Cyprus, discriminatory behaviours and tendencies persist amongst employers and sometimes even among Labour Officers. For example, women are discriminated against when employers (or those referring potential candidates) decide

that women do not have the physical strength or stamina for certain jobs. This happens in particular in the sectors approved for asylum-seeker employment. Women are thus routinely excluded from working in some sectors. This further restricts the already limited categories of the labour market to which female asylum seekers have access. As a result, the unemployment rate among female asylum seekers is higher as is, consequently, their dependency on material reception conditions.

Concerning **youth**, Cyprus has one of the highest rates of tertiary education in Europe²³ resulting in a highly-skilled, young workforce competing for a limited pool of local jobs. Cyprus experiences emigration among youth for purposes of study and employment, something that can temper the youth unemployment rate.

21 Financial Mirror, Feb 9, 2021: www.financialmirror.com/2021/02/09/women-in-cyprus-paid-10-4-less-than-men

22 EU Gender Equality Index 2020: www.eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2020/compare-countries/index/table (Date accessed: 22/07/2021).

23 64.2% of people aged 25-64 have completed tertiary education, according to the 2016 national statistics agency. Available at: [www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/227C48E4CFFC0F7C22576560030A6DF/\\$file/ADULT_EDUCATION_SURVEY-2016-EL-310118.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.mof.gov.cy/mof/cystat/statistics.nsf/All/227C48E4CFFC0F7C22576560030A6DF/$file/ADULT_EDUCATION_SURVEY-2016-EL-310118.pdf?OpenElement). (Date Accessed:09/08/21)

1.1.3. The impact of the pandemic on the Cypriot economy and the labour market

Economic activity fell due to the supply shocks caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Supply chains were cut, affecting shipping and tourism in particular, but also slowing trade and commerce, hampering financial transactions due to reduced money flows and less activity in key sectors such as construction. Lockdown measures likewise paralysed economic transactions and inevitably contributed to the demand shock that will take time to reverse.

Against this backdrop, the poor and those on the margins of the labour market with few reserves to draw from in a crisis were, and remain, particularly vulnerable to unemployment and poverty. According to a survey conducted in 2020 by Project Phoenix and the non-profit organisation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung,²⁴ and cited by Chatzipanagiotou et al (2021), a majority of respondents (mainly **asylum seekers**) suffered financially, with loss of livelihoods and delays in receiving material reception conditions;

lost opportunities for education and further development; faced discrimination (half of all respondents); and found it difficult to communicate with the authorities and to receive medical care due to the pandemic.

Those that have been most affected by the employment crisis during the pandemic are workers in non-standard employment;²⁵ young people; older workers; workers with physical or other disabilities; and migrant workers. For all these groups, both men and women were affected. Given the number of people working at or near what would be considered minimum wage, it is likely that many live on the verge of poverty despite being employed.

24 Chatzipanagiotou, K., Akoni, S., Sandilya, H., Morsheimer, S. (2021). A Systemic Analysis of the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Refugees, Migrants, and Asylum Seekers in Cyprus: Part II—The Survey. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Project Phoenix, Nicosia Cyprus.

25 [Non-standard forms of employment \(Non-standard forms of employment\) \(ilo.org\)](#) (16.08.2021)

For some, **the precariousness of their situation has been exacerbated by COVID-19** where the employment of many day labourers, shift workers and people paid by the hour was disrupted by lockdown measures and closures as well as by the illness itself. The government's priority during the crisis was to keep people in employment, something that kept the full-time unemployment rate relatively low (7% in 2019 and 7.6% in 2020, according to Eurostat)²⁶ – but those working part-time or not formally employed likely suffered a decrease in household income. A study carried out on behalf of the Cyprus Consumers Union in February of 2021²⁷ found that 12% of participants in the study reported facing a 'survival problem' in the second half of 2019 as a result of reduced income and this can only have worsened in 2020, for which there is no comparable data. This shows an 11% increase, from only 1% in 2018.

Generally, **young people** have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic. According to the ILO, 1 in 6 young people in Europe aged 18-29 have stopped work since the pandemic began.²⁸ In Cyprus, one of the main impacts of the pandemic has been an increase in the number of new graduates who are unemployed on the island. Youth unemployment in Cyprus has been roughly

20%, with more university graduates returning to the island because the pandemic has limited their opportunities elsewhere.

The Government of Cyprus has tried to encourage employers to hire/retain youth in long-term employment. In one such scheme, the Government commits to contributing up to €850 per month, plus social insurance contributions, towards the salary of new hires under the age of 29, provided they were previously registered as unemployed. The demand for this scheme has been high and the Labour Office is looking to find the funds to continue supporting such incentives. The need to support actions for unemployed young people was highlighted by President Anastasiades at the May 2021 EU Social Summit in Lisbon, Portugal, where he noted plans to take advantage of synergies between the public employment services, local agencies and social partners, all for the benefit of new entrants to the job market.

As a result of the pandemic, **migrants and refugees** have had to face additional challenges since, with the economic downturn, fewer jobs were available across most sectors (including tourism) and there was more competition for the available jobs. Those reliant on job placements or referrals from the labour authorities, especially asylum seekers, were

26 Eurostat: Labour Market Information Cyprus. Available at www.ec.europa.eu/eures/main.jsp?catId=2751&Imi=Y&acro=Imi&lang=en&recordLang=en&parentId=&countryId=CY®ionId=CY0&nuts2Code=%20&nuts3Code=null&mode=text®ionName=National%20Level (Date accessed: 21/05/2021)

27 Available at: www.cyprus-mail.com/2021/04/15/half-of-households-see-drop-in-income-64-have-trouble-making-ends-meet (Evie Andreou, Date accessed: 21/04/2021)

28 ILO (2020). Youth and COVID-19: Impacts on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Well-Being: Survey Report 2020. Available at: www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_753026.pdf (Date accessed: 09/06/2021)

hard hit by the closure of the government offices during the pandemic. There was no one to support employers and suitable candidates through the matching and contracting process. For many in the system, labour cards were renewed automatically, and material reception conditions provided by Social Welfare Services (which are closely linked to one's work status) were not lost, but for those outside of the system, or people who did not have a chance to register with the Labour Office or people with outstanding issues, it was impossible to access the Labour Office and their cases quickly became dire. As a result, many were left without access to vital material reception conditions provided by Social Welfare Services because they could not secure labour cards or resolve employment matters. Some migrants fell into destitution and homelessness, dependent on support from the community or NGOs. Many asylum seekers have been able to find and keep jobs during the pandemic, but a growing number of new arrivals have not had the benefit of the Labour Office's services nor been able to make the social inroads necessary to find suitable employment.

The COVID-19 crisis made it even more difficult to obtain consistent and reliable information on everything from the hours of operation to the revised policies governing residency permits and labour cards. This led to an increasing sense of confusion and helplessness on the part of those with few if any resources. Compounding this was the real social and community isolation resulting from the pandemic, especially among single-parent families and new arrivals who could not take advantage of integration programming, language learning opportunities or any type of community awareness and orientation activities. This was exacerbated by the fact that 2020 saw the expiration of the 2014-2020 EU-funding period on which many social support programmes relied, something that has resulted in a gap of services in the support network for at-risk populations.

Over a year after the initial closure of the district labour offices and the suspension of services for asylum seekers, the Labour Office remains difficult to access. An online system has been developed and transition to it is underway, but this is not without practical difficulties. As the gradual rollout of the online system takes place, asylum seekers, in particular, will continue to remain relatively excluded from effective participation in the labour market and all the unquantifiable benefits that employment provides during transition and integration.

Women also have been disproportionately affected. A study focused on the experiences of migrant women, conducted by Kyritsi et al.²⁹ between July and November of 2020, found that 56% of the women interviewed were unemployed despite actively looking for employment. During the lockdown periods especially, those without access to the labour market and without material reception conditions had to rely on NGOs and community initiatives for humanitarian aid.

Below, are testimonials from beneficiaries of Caritas Cyprus describing how COVID-19 affected their day-to-day experiences.

One of the few places that felt welcoming, the Caritas Cyprus Migrant Centre, has had to change due to COVID-19. A Syrian beneficiary explains how, before the pandemic, “you would see all the people inside, socialising, receiving food, making breakfast. It was crowded here before, but now people cannot go inside for their own safety” (KIIF, 2020: 29)³⁰. Another Syrian beneficiary explains how “before the pandemic you could see people smiling in the streets, now with the masks you can’t see the faces and the expressions, it affects my psychology” (Kyritsi et al. 2020³¹).

29 Kyritsi, T., Pashia, E. and Andreou, M. (2020). The Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic to the Young Migrant Women Living in Cyprus. Centre for Gender Equality and History, Nicosia.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

SECTION 2:

Assessing national and EU level policy responses

2.1. Cypriot labour market policies and responses and opportunities offered by EU policy making

Considering the challenges that many marginalised groups, as well as youth and women, face in the labour market in Cyprus, it can be argued that its labour market is insufficiently inclusive, despite positive changes in recent years.

One policy implemented in response to the pandemic that is having a positive impact on the inclusiveness of the labour market is the **'emergency support measures to employers'** promoted by the **Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance**. The scheme combats unemployment by providing employers with a subsidy to retain workers who would otherwise have been laid off due to the negative economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cyprus does not have a set minimum wage.

In Cyprus, wage rates must be agreed upon directly with the employer through collective bargaining or other means of negotiating a fair living wage. While there is no enforced minimum wage requirement, the guaranteed minimum income for Cypriots, EU Nationals, holders of subsidiary protection and recognised refugees is €870 euros per month or €10,440 per year. This is provided as financial support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance. With rents in the capital city of Nicosia ranging from €350–€600 for a single or two-bedroom apartment, this amount is low. Additionally, for TCN migrants arriving in Cyprus with the intention to work in the domestic or agricultural field or for asylum seekers joining the labour market in one of the sectors that are

available to them, the minimum wage remains unregulated or unenforced, allowing employers to substitute lodging and subsistence or other material goods, such as foodstuffs, as payment. Adequate minimum wages are essential to help guarantee decent working and living conditions, prevent in-work poverty, and reduce precarious employment. Given the lack of a minimum wage infrastructure in Cyprus, establishing a set minimum wage would help promote a more inclusive and equitable labour market in terms of ensuring fair and adequate pay no matter the sector or level of experience. A European directive,³² in accordance with Principle 6 of the European Pillar of Social Rights, would be extremely helpful in order to ensure that this minimum wage improves.

At the same time, in Cyprus, **the informal economy is significant.** Employer taxation rates (for social insurance and medical coverage) are high and can result in some employers choosing alternatives to formal processes. Likewise, migrants who may not have all the required paperwork and permissions to work may seek informal arrangements. Related to this, the bureaucracy faced by employers who want to engage asylum seekers has contributed to the growth of the informal economy. Some employers participate inadvertently since they may not be aware of the restrictions and procedural processes; others do so because they are unwilling to comply with time-consuming procedures and bureaucratic hurdles. Considering the

limited financial and material support asylum seekers receive, many are compelled to work informally in order to support themselves economically. As a consequence, they often sacrifice the basic safeguards that would normally be formalised through contracts, including working hours, time off, compensation, and insurance coverage for high-risk jobs. Ultimately, this exposes them to exploitation and workplace risks. According to the labour authorities, policies are in place to regulate the informal economy. These include sanctions for both the employer and employee engaged in informal arrangements. However, these policies depend to a large extent on enforcement, which seems to be selective to non-existent.

Young people face significant difficulties entering the labour market but Cyprus has specific policies in place to help them. School drop-out rates are traditionally low in Cyprus and have remained so during the pandemic. To support those who fell into unemployment as a direct result of the pandemic, government policies have included several types of emergency support measures. Included in this package of measures was the aforementioned scheme targeting youth. Following the 2013 economic crisis in Cyprus, the Government and the EU developed several schemes targeting new/young entrants into the labour market. However, an analysis of these schemes, including the *Youth Guarantee*³³, indicate that the uptake and impact on youth was lower than expected. Employers did not

32 European Commission (2020), Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on Adequate minimum wages in the European Union, Brussels, 28.10.2020 COM (2020) 682 final. Available at: www.eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020PC0682

33 Reinforced Youth Guarantee www.ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079&langId=en

know how to use the programme nor how to effectively train participants. Learning from this experience, improved projects for youth are planned for the coming months to further mitigate the impact of the pandemic.

ESF+³⁴ funds have been quite important in implementing a number of programmes and activities, including some to promote inclusivity in the labour market in Cyprus. These have included actions to support the inclusion of young people in the labour market, as well as to advance social cohesion and labour-force entry by vulnerable groups. Generally, in order to tackle the broad scope of establishing inclusivity in labour markets, the ESF+ fund could have been allocated to a more diverse scope of projects run by a variety of stakeholders. This would have guaranteed the maximum potential reach of these funds across the population of Cyprus. In the future, it would be beneficial for an independent external evaluation of the needs in each country to be conducted prior to allocating funds. This would allow for more targeted and effective spending on programmes that tackle challenges to inclusive labour markets and social cohesion writ large.

Cyprus does not have many **specific policies in place to help migrants and refugees access the labour market**. Recognised refugees and holders of subsidiary protection are covered by all the policies that are applicable to EU nationals and Cypriots, and as such they have complete and free access to the labour market. This said, recognised refugees face particular challenges when trying to access the labour market. Their qualifications, experience and skills may not be recognised, making it difficult to get work in their areas of expertise. Doctors, nurses, technicians, for example are un(der) utilised. Providing an opportunity to access the labour market is important to facilitate the transition to and participation in Cypriot society, while at the same time cultivating well-being and self-sufficiency. The right to work and related rights – such as equal pay for equal work and the provision of a dignified standard of living – are fundamental human rights based on international legal frameworks (Phillimore et al., 2006;³⁵ Phillimore et al., 2003³⁶). Additionally, recognised refugees and holders of subsidiary protection face discrimination based on ethnicity, race, and religious background despite the fact that protections against discrimination of this nature exist.

34 Proposal for a REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) COM/2018/382 final [EUR-Lex - 52018PC0382 - EN - EUR-Lex \(europa.eu\)](#)

35 Phillimore, J., Craig, L. and Goodson, L. (2006). Employability initiatives for refugees in Europe: looking at, and learning from, good practice. Report for EQUAL and the Home Office, Birmingham.

36 Phillimore, J., Goodson, L. and Oosthuizen, R. (2003). Asylum seekers and refugees: education, training, employment, skills and services in Coventry and Warwickshire. Learning and Skills Council Coventry and Warwickshire, Coventry.

Stop the spread of germs that make you and others sick!

Cover your Cough



Protect yourself and others from getting sick

Wash your hands

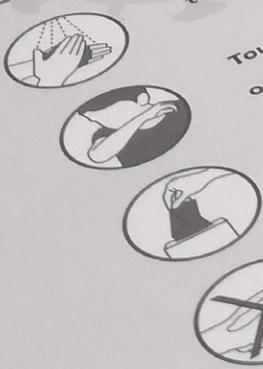
- after coughing or sneezing
- when caring for the sick
- before, during and after you prepare food
- before eating
- after toilet use
- when hands are visibly dirty
- after handling animals or animal waste



Santé publique France

COVID-19

FACE AU CORONAVIRUS : POUR SE PROTÉGER ET PROTÉGER LES AUTRES



Se laver très régulièrement les mains

Tousser ou éternuer dans son coude ou dans un mouchoir

Utiliser un mouchoir à usage unique et le jeter

Saluer sans se serrer la main, éviter les embrassades

Vous avez des questions sur le coronavirus ?
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Photo: Upholding all measures to combat the spread of COVID-19 allowed Caritas Cyprus to stay open throughout the worst of the pandemic period. **Source:** Caritas Cyprus

A **Job Guarantee** could certainly contribute to establishing a more inclusive labour market in Cyprus if implemented for asylum seekers who are currently excluded from most sectors. Adopting a Job Guarantee in Cyprus would reduce unemployment and reliance on material reception conditions provided by Social Welfare Services. Ultimately, this would allow for developing and investing in sustainable social cohesion, through integration of people both into the labour market and into the local community.

Anti-discrimination policies and strategies with regard to the labour market often do not have the desired effect. Anti-discrimination legislation in Cyprus is in fact robust and formalised as part of the Constitution and laws of the Republic. That said, policies to implement, monitor, enforce and refine the legislative framework are limited. Policies and procedures which do exist are often not widely publicised or transparent, making them effectively inaccessible to all those who do not have the ability or means to seek them out. As such, discrimination in the labour market continues and will continue to exist.

The implementation of the new *EU Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion*³⁷ could also contribute towards building a more inclusive labour market. The Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion for 2021-2027 acts as a roadmap for future policy and programme implementation over the next six years across Europe. The Action Plan highlights a number of key areas for attention, including education and training (plus language learning), improving employment opportunities and skills recognition, promoting access to health and increasing access to affordable housing. All these areas are vital for the integration and inclusion of migrants across the European Member States. Though the Action Plan highlights a number of priorities, policies and programmes to ensure progress in these areas, they are not well defined, which could get in the way of meaningful implementation of the Action Plan. Unless policies on a national level, including in Cyprus, are informed and adjusted in accordance with the Action Plan, the potential for improvements as a result of its implementation remains limited.

37 European Commission (2020), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions, *Action plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027*, Brussels, 24.11.2020 COM (2020) 758 final.

The implementation of a new *EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020–2025*³⁸ and a new *Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*³⁹ could further contribute towards building a more inclusive labour market. However, though it is encouraging to see the EU adopt an Action Plan aimed at tackling racial and gender-based discrimination in the workplace and beyond, the potential impact they may have at the national level in Cyprus remains limited. There is already a solid legislative framework in place that outlaws discrimination of any nature, including in the workplace. The Action Plan does not

outline concrete policies for monitoring and implementing legislative frameworks on the ground, possibly limiting its potential.

The policies and Action Plans listed above cover key areas which contribute to the development of a more inclusive labour market in a comprehensive manner. Yet, unless policies are developed, implemented and monitored in a systematic fashion across the EU Member States, including in Cyprus, any proposal or Action Plan will have a relatively limited impact.

2.2. The EU framework

Introduced in 2010, the **European Semester** enables Member States to coordinate their economic and social policies throughout the year. Within this framework, each year in May, country-specific recommendations

(CSRs) are issued to EU Member States to provide guidance for national reforms over the following 12–18 months.

38 European Commission (2020), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions, A Union of Equality: *EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020–2025*, Brussels, 18.9.2020 COM(2020) 565 final

39 European Commission (2020), Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions, A Union of Equality: *Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025*, Brussels, 5.3.2020 COM (2020) 152 final.

As far as labour market and social inclusion are concerned, it has been recommended that Cyprus take action in 2020 and 2021 as follows:

1. Take all necessary measures, in line with the general escape clause of the Stability and Growth Pact, to effectively address the COVID-19 pandemic, sustain the economy and support the **ensuing recovery**. (...) Strengthen the resilience and capacity of the health system to ensure quality and affordable services, including by **addressing health workers' working conditions**.
2. Provide adequate **income replacement** and access to social protection for all. Strengthen **public employment services**, promote **flexible working arrangements** and **improve the labour-market relevance of education and training**.
3. Secure adequate access to finance and liquidity, especially for SMEs. Front-load mature public investment projects and promote private investment to foster the economic recovery. (...).

Though the reforms mentioned in the **National Reform Programme 2020** are relevant and pertinent to development and growth, they do not necessarily or explicitly take into consideration the needs and challenges faced by marginalised or vulnerable groups in Cyprus as outlined in this report. For this reason, they may fall short of alleviating burdens placed on marginalised or at-risk groups by the pandemic and the associated economic downturn. Therefore, even if the suggested **country specific recommendations (2020)** are fairly implementable, they are definitely not adequate in Cyprus.

To mitigate the socioeconomic impact of the pandemic and to help European economies and societies become more sustainable, the *Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)*,⁴⁰ developed by the EU, presents an important opportunity for Cyprus to address its social needs. However, the details on how funds will be used under the RRF in Cyprus have yet to be detailed in public.

40 European Commission (2021), Regulation (EU) 2021/241 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 February 2021 establishing the **Recovery and Resilience Facility**.

2.3. The Social Economy

The main aim of a **social economy** is to put **people over profits**, developing an economy which works for people and not vice versa, and Caritas Cyprus welcomes and embraces this. In Cyprus, social economy interventions have remained an unmined resource with potential to include all groups within the community, including migrants and the marginalised. Investment in social economy interventions remains low, with most opportunities coming through the implementation of various social economy-focused projects funded under Horizon2020, AMIF, ERASMUS+ and other similar agencies. Though these are effective in creating awareness of the potential that a social economy approach has to offer across relevant stakeholders, projects of this nature

tend to run their course and then fade away leaving no lasting legacy. The sustainability of such programmes is limited and there is a need for national actors to champion the principles of the social economy so that they become embedded in the fabric of policies and approaches in Cyprus. Given the circumstances described above, Caritas Cyprus supports the development of a robust social economy framework, capitalising on the potential such opportunities have for the inclusion and integration of migrants and other marginalised groups into the local economy, whilst also implementing equitable person-focused labour practices.

SECTION 3:

Caritas Cyprus' promising practices

Caritas Cyprus would point to four modest initiatives that seek to improve access to information and services, thereby contributing to labour market inclusion in Cyprus.

'Online Orientation Video Series'⁴¹

Ready access to information on procedures, rights and obligations is vital to the successful arrival, integration and transition process for migrant groups. The growing number of new arrivals and the pandemic have made it that the in-person services or activities, organised by organisations like Caritas Cyprus, are impossible to render, resulting in misinformation or an uneven distribution of advice across communities. To combat this and to effectively communicate critical information to migrants across the island, Caritas Cyprus has developed a library of online resources to orient newcomers and inform asylum seekers about the asylum process and the welfare system. Besides outlining procedures, the videos - in multiple languages - try to provide practical instructions on how to, for example, obtain medical cards and apply for legal aid. They use easy to follow instructions to empower migrants as they engage with the often Greek-language bureaucracy.

Some of the online orientation videos provide a comprehensive overview of the Cypriot asylum and migration framework, others focus specifically on areas that have the potential to influence migrant integration journeys, including navigating the labour market. Hosting the videos on a public platform that is easily accessible and user-friendly, like YouTube, has made their dissemination easy, even during a challenging time. The videos are also available to others who may be supporting migrants.

In a period of approximately six months, the Caritas Cyprus YouTube channel gained over 190 new subscribers with the videos receiving over 1,000 views.

⁴¹ www.youtube.com/channel/UCA_XuKcYwKn73FqhQSerGRA

'CV Clinic'

As discussed, there are several obstacles impeding access to the labour market for migrants, especially asylum seekers, including a highly competitive climate for the few jobs available in a limited number of sectors. Having a professional English language CV that clearly documents experience, skills and education can ease communication with employers and establish a more formal and professional rapport. Drafting a CV with someone knowledgeable about local labour conditions can also provide useful insights to those trying to understand the local context.

Caritas Cyprus' CV Clinic offers its beneficiaries one-to-one consultations, helping them to develop a CV that captures job-relevant information while offering advice on how to apply for jobs, how to prepare for interviews and how to abide by the rules regulating different categories of employment. Beyond providing a customised CV, these sessions are meant to raise awareness with regard to the local labour market and social conditions more generally. Sessions also assist beneficiaries with the new online application system to the Labour Office, demonstrating how to register or renew an application and how to navigate the new online platform. Participants are given printed and digital copies of their CV to use when seeking employment. This service has been in high demand and has assisted hundreds of beneficiaries.

'Caritas Cyprus Info Facebook Group'⁴²

Having accurate and reliable information is essential to navigate the asylum, welfare, and health systems as well as Cypriot society in general. Indeed, during the pandemic information on public health guidance, lockdown measures and even the virus itself has been critical to survival.

Created in 2019, Caritas Cyprus Info Facebook Group was designed to provide beneficiaries with up-to-date information on a variety of issues relevant to the migrant experience. It serves to keep people informed about local issues and current events as well as to relay updates in policies and procedures. It does so on a daily basis and in multiple languages, as appropriate. It answers questions such as: has a particular government office moved to a new location or changed its hours; is there an event of interest happening or a new service available; has there been or will there be a change in a policy or regulation that affects a category of migrants.

⁴² www.facebook.com/groups/1434037316761447

During the pandemic, Caritas Cyprus Info has become an invaluable tool in disseminating public health messages including about the virus and how to get help; where to get tested for COVID-19 and how to get vaccinated. With the Labour Offices closed, it has also helped communicate information about unemployment-card renewal and other matters, quickly and effectively, thus reducing misinformation, confusion and panic as people worried about complying with the rules to avoid losing their material reception conditions. Caritas Cyprus Info had almost 3,700 followers by mid-2021.

‘Online English Language Courses’

Language learning is particularly important because language barriers can and do stand in the way of migrants accessing essential services, joining the labour force and generally engaging in transition and integration processes. Indeed, the lack of any common language with which to communicate can contribute to social isolation, keeping newcomers separate and apart from others in their host community. This is especially the case in places like Cyprus where learning Greek (the main language of commerce and government) can be prohibitively difficult. English can and does provide something of a bridge between Greek-speakers and migrants, but not all new arrivals to Cyprus speak English. Indeed, with many essential services and administrative procedures going online – in English – as a result of the pandemic, non-English speakers were at a particular disadvantage when trying to access essential services, such as the Social Welfare Office; to book medical appointments or to contact potential employers for an interview.

The pandemic made in-person training and services, including language learning courses, all but impossible. In response, Caritas Cyprus partnered with Project Phoenix to link English-language teachers with migrants eager to learn and practise English during lockdown. The Online English Language Courses targeted migrants with limited to no English and brought migrants in Cyprus together with British Council ELT teachers based in India. Students were connected to teachers online, and via WhatsApp and then met using Google Meets. The classes covered a variety of subjects that emphasised conversation and vocabulary related to professional work, job interviews, and appointments.

The project was able to secure additional funding, providing a new cohort of participants with a mobile data top-up, in order to ensure secure internet connectivity, something that increased the participation and completion rates to 100%.

SECTION 4:

Conclusions and recommendations

Though labour market conditions in Cyprus are generally good, more could be done to incorporate vulnerable groups, including migrants. An essential starting point is recognising that discrimination on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, sex or cultural background and excessive bureaucracy hinder access to the labour market and give rise to many of the challenges then faced by these groups. The absence of a set minimum wage is another compounding factor.

Equitable and inclusive access to the labour market is particularly difficult for those with a migrant background. This is especially the case for asylum seekers who, in addition to the underlying discrimination, face the challenge of being limited to only nine categories of the labour market and complying with multiple and lengthy procedures when trying to register with the labour office or to formalise employment. Though recognised refugees and holders of subsidiary protection are able to access the labour market just like their Cypriot and European counterparts, their access may be limited due to the complex (and sometimes impossible) process of recognising qualifications and experience, leaving many professionals under employed.

Though a robust legislative framework exists in Cyprus, that addresses both discrimination in the workplace and in the labour market more generally, there is insufficient monitoring and enforcement, resulting in limited practical protection for workers.

Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has added additional complications to local economic and social circumstances in Cyprus. Those in non-standard employment; young people; older workers; workers with physical or other disabilities; and migrant workers have been most affected by the pandemic and associated economic downturn. Given the number of people in these groups working near or at what would be considered minimum wage, it is likely that many have fallen into poverty despite being employed.

Reflecting on the above, this report concludes by offering some recommendations to advance labour market inclusivity.

4.1. National level recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1: To ease the transition of newcomers and new entrants into the labour market as well as to ensure integration and support social cohesion generally.

Identify the obstacles faced by those entering the Cypriot labour market, especially as migrants, and address them through a varied cultural mediation programme, including in support of essential language learning.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Promote easy-to-understand information regarding labour practices.

It is necessary to make information regarding labour practices accessible and easy-to-understand. Caritas Cyprus recommends developing platforms that effectively provide workers and employers with up-to-date information on rights, responsibilities, policies, and procedures as they pertain to all categories of workers.

The willingness of multiple stakeholders, including public authorities, to participate in the development of ICT-enabled tools through EU-funded projects such as MiiCT (ICT-enabled solutions for migrant integration⁴³) is evidence that this need is recognised and that the will exists to address it. Opportunities like this should be actively pursued as complements to technological improvements at the national and local levels.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Close the gap between legislation and its implementation with regard to labour practices, fair access and discrimination.

Given the absence of a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to support improvements in labour practices, it would be useful to devise ways to bring labour practices in line with legislation especially with regard to equal access, fair practices and anti-discrimination.

43 See: www.miiict.eu



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