Study on educational support for newly arrived migrant children

Case study report
Cyprus
Introduction

The first introductory part of this case study presents information on migrant profile in Cyprus and key features of Cypriot education system.

Migrant profile in Cyprus

Foreign-born residents make up 18.9% of foreign-born population in Cyprus (Eurostat data for 2009). Major immigrant group is Greeks. Other immigrants are from Eastern Europe, South East Asia, China and Arab countries.

In addition to migration, according to a recent UNHCR report, Cyprus is second amongst 44 industrialised countries worldwide in terms of the asylum-seekers it receives in relation to its population: 30 asylum-seekers for every 1000 inhabitants. Since 2002, only 0.6% of 42217 such applications were granted. Consequently, in 2006, out of a total of 867,600 inhabitants in the whole of Cyprus, the estimated percentage of Greek-Cypriots was 76.1%; of Turkish-Cypriots 10.2%; and, of ‘foreign’ residents 13.7%. The percentage of ‘other-language’ students in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools for the school year 2010-11 has risen to 12%, while it used to be 7.3% in 2006-07.

Key features of Cypriot education system

For the purposes of this case study the research team identified several education system design characteristics that shape educational support policy towards newly arrived migrant students and migrant children in general in European countries. The table below presents design characteristics of Cypriot education system.

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1 Malta is first.
3 Savva, K. (2010, 12 July). Thousands of political asylum applications hanging [Hiliades oi aitiseis pou ekkremoun gia politiko asylo]. Politis, p. 16.
Table 1: Key features of Cypriot education system

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education system design</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Non-)identification of NAMS</td>
<td>The Greek-Cypriot Ministry’s discourse identifies ’other-language’ [αλλόγλωσσοι – alloglossos] students’, focusing on language differences rather than nationality. ’Other-language’ is used interchangeably with ‘alien’ [αλλοβάτοι – allodapoi], ‘foreigners’ [ξένοι – xenoi], and ‘foreign-language’ [ξένος γλώσσας – xenoglossos]. NAMS and asylum-seekers fall under this category. There is a distinction made between ’other-language’ children and children of ’repatriates’ [παλιννοστουντες – palinnostountes]. Given that immigration is a recent phenomenon in Cyprus, all ’other-language’ children are basically NAMS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to formal education regardless legal status</td>
<td>There is no restriction on legal status of children. According to the provision of the Compulsory Education Law of 1993, parents are obliged to register their children at a school within their educational region, independently of whether they reside in the island illegally or not. However, a Circular from the Ministry of Education (2004) questioned this right for undocumented migrant children by giving individual schools the discretion to decide on admissions. Though the Circular was not officially withdrawn, it is not put in practice by any Head teacher and the only criterion for registering children of any background at the school continues to be their place of stay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catchment area requirement</td>
<td>Parents can freely choose a kindergarten for their child, however, primary and secondary school is under catchment area requirement (however, parents can apply to a different catchment area by following the permission of Ministry of Education).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of first ability tracking</td>
<td>There is no early ability tracking in Cyprus. The first selection happens at the age of 15, when education splits into academic (Eniaio lykeio) and vocational (Techniki scholi) tracks. In general, mixed ability teaching is supported on school, classroom, and classroom group levels and is generally maintained. However, in some cases, because of the high concentration of migrants and asylum-seekers in areas with low-rent accommodation, some schools become ‘ghettoized’ and are considered, albeit in unofficial discourses, to be of ‘low level’. Therefore, though there is no official or broad selection process, unofficially and sometimes de facto, segregation and selection occurs in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public expenditure on education</td>
<td>7.8% (of GDP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(De-)centralisation of the education system</td>
<td>Highly centralised system. The Ministry of Education and Culture makes all appointments, transfers, promotions and evaluations of teachers, and prescribes the curricula and syllabi, based on the Greek education model. It also draws and makes the final decisions of all policies for implementation in public (and some private) schools, including those related to NAMS. Teaching staff at all levels is selected by the Educational Service Commission (appointed by the Council of Ministers).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Compilation of the authors.

Thematic educational support

The research team identified four educational support themes that make schooling linguistically and culturally more sensitive and adaptable to different needs of migrant

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6 I use Greek-Cypriot, rather than Cypriot when referring to the education system and official policy documents of Cyprus because: a) since the de facto division of the island in 1974 Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots have been living in isolation, which remains at a great extent despite the partial lifting of restrictions of movement in 2003; b) the education systems of Greek- and Turkish-Cypriots have always been constitutionally and practically segregated; c) for practical reasons, the scope of this research does not allow for the exploration of NAMS educational support in the Turkish-Cypriot educational system, which would have to be included, for the term Cypriot to be used appropriately.


children: linguistic support, academic support, outreach and cooperation, intercultural education.

Academic support and outreach and cooperation are most developed facets in Cypriot education policy. Detailed description according to thematic support is presented below.

Linguistic support

**Linguistic support to NAMS is provided within mainstream education.** Unless migrant children are fluent in Greek, based on the policy they are placed in a mainstream classroom a year lower than their age level as ‘auditors’.

At the primary school level NAMS attend mainstream lessons regularly, except for two weekly periods of 40 minutes, when they are offered **Greek language support lessons** (ενίσχυση) for their first two years in Cyprus. The Directorate of Primary Education has provided of the educational material, including books for teaching Greek as a foreign language and methodology books for teachers. These are usually given by Greece or diaspora schools of Cyprus and do not necessarily meet the needs of children’s backgrounds. The Directorate also provides **in-service voluntary and optional training for teachers instructing bilingual pupils**.

At the secondary school level first, students take **Greek learning tests** in the beginning of September in order to ascertain their level of knowledge of Greek. Then, beginners are entitled to two years of intensive courses, while for non-beginners to one year. **These students are released from certain courses**, the attendance of which is considered particularly problematic or not so essential, like Ancient Greek, Religious Studies and History. Teaching hours of the intensive learning course of Greek counterbalance with the number of allocated teaching hours of the lessons students withdrawn from.

In addition to the morning Greek language support lessons in mainstream schools, NAMS (and also children of repatriates) have an opportunity to attend **free intensive Greek language courses at State Educational Institutes (Επιμορφωτικά Κέντρα)** in the afternoons and evenings.

There are no policies for teaching in any other languages than Greek.

Academic support

Some schools offer **day centres following the school hours** (between 1.05pm and 4.00pm) which NAMS may attend and where help with homework and lunch are provided, as well as computers, art, English language and other lessons. NAMS who wish to attend the afternoon school hours are expected to pay a small fee as the rest of the children.

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Within Cyprus education system there are also so-called **Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP) schools**\(^{10}\) - schools in disadvantaged areas of Cyprus which function in order to support students and families with low socio-economic status and other disadvantages, aiming to particularly minimise early school leaving and school exclusion. These schools form networks and collaborate through joint programmes for the socialisation of pupils. Eight nursery schools and ten primary schools belonged in the ZEP networks in 2009\(^{11}\). These schools receive additional help through measures such as lower numbers of pupils in each class, free breakfast, extra teachers for Greek support lessons, and help to develop programmes for the prevention of school exclusion and violence. In addition to the provision of intensified language support, ZEP schools also promote multiculturalism and foster closer links between schools and the community.

Furthermore, for students who leave school early and wish to complete their High School degree, there are the Evening Gymnasia (Esperina Gymnasia – Εσπερινά Γυμνάσια) (http://www.schools.ac.cy/esperina.html) which they may attend. NAMS do not generally attend these schools upon their arrival, as they do not speak the language, so these are normally attended by Greek-Cypriot early school leavers.

**Outreach and cooperation**

In Cyprus, parents associations are vital decision-making and lobbying bodies that influence policies. The participation of immigrant parents in such associations is important. However, NAMS parents’ involvement is minimal at the moment, if existent at all, shaped by the lack of substantial home-school communication and relations (see Theodorou\(^{12}\), Symeou et al\(^{13}\)).

A recent measure for the smoother transition of NAMS and their parents into the Greek-Cypriot education system has been the *preparation of an induction guide* (Guide to Education in Cyprus\(^{14}\)) in the eight most commonly met foreign languages in Cyprus (English, Turkish, Russian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Georgian, Ukrainian, and Arabic). The Guide gives information on all levels of the educational system of Cyprus to students and their parents and is considered to be a much needed step towards the development of more effective home-school communication and the smooth adjustment of NAMS and their families.

It is common that schools with high numbers of migrants form networks and collaborate with each other on the issues of diversity and intercultural education (mostly ZEP schools).

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Intercultural education

Intercultural education is currently on the agenda of Ministry of Education. A new curriculum with integrated intercultural elements (for all subjects at all levels from pre-primary to secondary) was introduced in September 2011\(^{15}\).

As for the school environment – it is not very sensitive towards cultural diversity. Religion forms a central part of Greek-Cypriot education. All schools are involved in activities of collective worship such as Holy Water ceremony, Morning Prayer, church service attendance, and Christmas and Easter celebrations. Each classroom has a Byzantine icon on the wall and confessions are regularly carried out in most schools. Some schools have a church and/or a confession room inside their premises. Non Christian-Orthodox NAMS are allowed not to go to the church with the rest of children, but stay in class with a member of staff; they are also allowed not to say morning prayer with the rest of the class, but sit quietly instead.

However, there are no arrangements for NAMS who are not Christian-Orthodox to celebrate their own religious holidays, and school canteens do not take into account special dietary requirements.

Targeted educational support

**Morning and afternoon Greek language support lessons** (part of intercultural education guidelines) are a targeted initiative towards newly arrived migrants in Cypriot schools.

Each migrant student is provided with weekly or daily teaching periods of Greek language support lessons in a small group with a teacher outside the mainstream classroom. The groups are organized based on NAMS’ knowledge of Greek language. In primary schools this is done with informal diagnostic tests while in secondary education this is done through official tests.

In addition to the morning Greek language support lessons in mainstream schools, NAMS may attend free intensive Greek language courses at State Educational Institutes (Επιμορφωτικά Κέντρα) in the afternoons and evenings\(^{16}\).

In primary schools Greek language support lessons are offered to NAMS attending mainstream schools for the first two years following their registration at a Greek-Cypriot public school. In secondary schools, intensive Greek language support lessons are offered for one year to beginners and two years to non-beginners. 2202 teaching periods were offered for Greek language support lessons in primary schools in 2010-11\(^{17}\), while in secondary and technical schools there were only 52 teaching periods in total to attend support lessons in equivalent groups. However, teachers do not receive any training to teach Greek as a second language.

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\(^{15}\) MIPEX http://www.mipex.eu/cyprus


1. Justification of case selection

Nicosia historically is one of the biggest regions in Cyprus receiving migrants. Eastern area of the capital region was chosen for in-depth case study analysis. This city region being close to the UN Buffer Zone had remained for decades rather deprived and underdeveloped. For this reason the accommodation has been more affordable for immigrants. The school chosen is a regular public school in Cyprus, which hosts 23% of newly arrived migrant children. During the school year 2010-2011, 99 out of the 444 students of the Gymnasium in this area were NAMS. The school corresponds to ISCED level 2 (students begin their education at the age of 11-12 and graduate at the age of 14-15). It has a significant share of NAMS, which reached 22% in the year 2010-2011. The school has 424 students in total (203 male, 221 female), of which 97 students (23%) come from families with both parents born in another country, while 75 students (17%) come from families with one parent born in another country18 (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Number of students at the selected school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Group of students</th>
<th>Value for the 2010/2011 school year</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of students at ISCED level 2-3 (if applicable) at the start of school year</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMS (both parents non-Cypriot)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>The data reflects the total of the school population (ISCED level 2). There are no notable differences between the two genders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>97 (/424)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other students of migrant origin18 (one parent Cypriot, one parent non-Cypriot)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75 (/424)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native students (both parents Cypriot)</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>252 (/424)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics of the school.

Ethnic composition of the school’s population is quite diverse. The most represented immigrant groups are Greeks, Georgians, Syrians, Bulgarians, etc. Table 3 provides detailed description of migrant profile at the selected school.

Table 3: Ethnic composition of the selected school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Number of migrant pupils for the 2010/2011 school year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both parents immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>1 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>7 (/424)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18 Since the school does not keep records of the students’ life histories (e.g. place of birth, native language etc.), the countries of origin of students’ parents were the only indication of students’ background. For this reason, students with both parents non-Cypriot were classified as NAMS, while students with one non-Cypriot parent were classified as students of migrant origin.

19 One should also keep in mind that the number of second generation migrants in Cyprus is rather small, since the first strong current of immigrants in Cyprus started from the 1990’s onwards and involved only Pontian-Greeks from former Soviet Union countries at that time.

According to (Gregoriou and Christou 2011: 22-23), „Regular migration flows of migrant workers into Cyprus began during the 1980s and 1990s and were the result of the Cyprus government’s attempt to address national shortages in a number of employment sectors (Zevridou 2008). It is important however to note that because migration at this initial stage was perceived by the state as something temporary (addressing current shortages), the newly formed migration policies facilitated only short-term employment and permits for migrants. This initial accommodation of the phenomenon of migration into Cyprus did not seem to translate into policy measures for long-term permits and more comprehensive social, political and labour rights for migrants until after 2004, when processes for accession into EU were intensified and the Cyprus government had to align its legislation to EU directives (European Commission 2003)“.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic group</th>
<th>Number of migrant pupils for the 2010/2011 school year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Both parents immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>12 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>27 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>11 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>4 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>14 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>3 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>5 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>3 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>1 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldavia</td>
<td>2 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>2 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>2 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congo</td>
<td>1 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1 (/424)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yugoslavia*</td>
<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>---</td>
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<tr>
<td>U.S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>97/424 (23%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: statistics of the school.

It should be noted that the issue with Greek migrants in Cyprus is quite complex, for a number of reasons. First of all, the language of instruction in the two countries is the same, while the two countries also share the same textbooks and other educational material, as well as educational policies and structures.

Furthermore, the cultural domain in the two countries is, to a large extent, integrated (Greeks and Greek-Cypriots listen to the same music, watch the same TV series, read the same books etc), which makes the Greek migrants feeling much more ‘at home’ in Cyprus. It was indicative that the people interviewed for the purposes of this study hesitated whether they should include Greek students within the migrant population. This phenomenon is strongly linked with the history of the island and the powerful movement of Greek nationalism, which has been ideologically dominant in Cyprus since the dawn of the 20th century, leaving its imprint on most of the social, political and cultural developments on the island. Specifically, in the first half of the 20th century Greek-Cypriots came to see themselves as an organic part of the Greek nation and, on these grounds, struggled for political union with Greece. During the last couple of years, because of the financial crisis in Greece, the numbers of Greek immigrants to Cyprus have increased significantly.

The situation becomes even more complex with the flow of immigrants with Pontian-Greek origin from countries of the former USSR first in Greece and then in Cyprus. In the 1990’s the Greek state had provided incentives for these populations to come to Greece and acquire Greek citizenship. A number of these migrants have lived in

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*This is the information provided by the student and written in the school records*
Greece for some months/years and then decided to migrate in Cyprus. Therefore, these people are also included in the numbers provided for the case of Greece. In this case, the students were originally Russian-speaking and are not necessarily fluent in Greek. Trimikliniotis (2001) describes the phenomenon as follows: *In the beginning of the descend of Pontian-Greeks in Cyprus, the government policy from 1991 onwards was to encourage and offer incentives to Pontian-Greeks and other Greeks from the former Soviet Union to come to Cyprus. Thus, Pontian-Greeks and Greeks from Eastern Europe came to Cyprus upon encouragement by the Cypriot government.*

The chosen school does not belong to one of those ZEP schools mentioned in the *Introduction* section. Even though these schools have more comprehensive arrangements for migrant children (see Box below), they constitute only 2% of the secondary schools in Cyprus, thus not being a representative case for an ordinary public school. At the moment there are 4 ZEP schools in total, one in each district (Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos). In fact, ZEP schools offer a number of measures for welcoming and supporting NAMS (see Box below), which nevertheless could be extended to mainstream schools as well, as they host large numbers of migrant children.

**Box1. Zones of Educational Priority**

The areas that are characterised as Zones of Educational Priority are those which are deprived economically and socially. The particular Nursery School/s, the Primary School/s as well as the neighbouring Gymnasium of each district, form a network and all stakeholders work closely together to develop joint programmes for the socialisation of pupils. In these schools a series of extra measures are provided, which include among others, the decrease in the number of pupils per class, free breakfast for all pupils of the schools and other measures that are decided by each school unit in cooperation with the local communities. During the school year 2009-2010, four zones of educational priority were in place. In total eight Nursery Schools and ten Primary Schools participated in this programme in the Lefkosia, Lemesos, Larnaca and Paphos districts, developing 150 action plans and programmes aiming at the prevention of school exclusion, school leaving, violence and juvenile delinquency. Education Priority Zones ensure prevention of school failure and functional illiteracy. Their main principles being to secure the continuity from Pre-Primary to Primary Education and to the Gymnasium, the collaboration with local authorities, the decrease of the number of pupils in each class and the acquisition of the oral mode.

This project involves the implementation of operations for the support of schools that fall into areas/zones designated as Educational Priority Areas, ie. clusters of school in disadvantaged areas, with a student population that comes from families with low socioeconomic and educational level.

The project’s main objectives are the following:

- Reducing early school leaving,
- Reducing school failure,
- Reducing crime phenomena,
- Strengthening social cohesion by reducing the risk of social marginalization and exclusion.

**The total budget for the project reaches 10,775,638 Euro and it is co-financed by the European Social Fund (85%) and the Republic of Cyprus (15%).**
Not being a specially targeted ZEP schools, the chosen Gymnasium is a good representing example of national educational support policies. It focuses mostly on academic support and which will be outlined and discussed below in this report. These actions are based on a mix of national policies, while schools are very limited in exercising their discretion due to highly centralized nature of Cypriot education system. Therefore, the school choice satisfies all the criteria and is a representative case for the in-depth analysis.

2. Inputs and Process

Following the accession of Cyprus in the European Union as a full member (2004), economic migrants have been arriving in the country in larger numbers than ever before. Migrant children are accepted for enrolment in any secondary school according to their residence enjoying equal education rights to Cypriot students.

Wishing to support their quick integration in the school society, the Ministry of Education and Culture, starting in the school year 2008 - 2009, is running the mainstreaming programme (pilot) of intensive teaching of the Greek language which is the language of instruction in the Greek-speaking schools. Ninety-one secondary schools, out of a total number of 127 on the island, with about 1250 migrant children, are participating in this programme. The programme was evaluated by the Educational Research and Evaluation Centre, during the previous school year (2009 - 2010). On the basis of the evaluation results and the suggestions offered, the Ministry has taken measures in order to reinforce it and improve its effectiveness. According to the regulations, foreign speakers are placed in normal classes mixed up with Cypriots, attending the same lessons and syllabi as their Cypriot peers except for Religious Studies, Ancient Greek and Common Core History, during which they withdraw to form special classes and study the Greek Language. All the teachers who have been appointed to teach migrant children in the framework of this programme have been trained by the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus. Along with the intensive teaching of Greek, a "Reception Guide» for migrant families, translated into the eight most dominant foreign languages that appear on the island, has been prepared and recently reprinted, ready for use in all secondary schools.

The Greek-Cypriot support system in general can be characterised by the following:

- **Inception classes**: There are no separate inception classes in Cyprus, this Intensive programme is the only measure in place and operates within the mainstream.

- **System of further language support**: Once this programme is over (2 years max.), there is no further apparatus for NAMS linguistic support.

- **Teacher assistants**: The school does not provide teacher assistants in classes with NAMS.

- **School funds**: The schools have no considerable funds of their own and the sole funding source for such programmes is the MOEC.

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22 MOEC’s Annual Report (2010a: 343)

23 There are no teacher assistants in the Greek-Cypriot system; personal assistants are provided only to students with physical disabilities
It is also important to note that the Intensive programme, as described in this section, is applied in all selected state schools in Cyprus, while the centralization of the system leaves little – if any – space for schools to take their own initiatives, as to the language support they provide to their NAMS.

There is no policy for mother-tongue teaching in state schools in Cyprus.\(^{24}\) According to the Inspector, the MOEC had asked for the involvement of embassies for the teaching of the mother tongue to NAMS, because it would be too costly for the MOEC to undertake this for each and every language spoken in Greek-Cypriot schools, but so far there is no development in this direction.

However, in some ZEP schools with a high concentration of immigrants of a particular ethnic origin, there has been an attempt to recruit\(^ {25}\) bilingual teachers (provided that they have the required qualifications for the position) to work in the school and mediate between the students and the school. Although this is obviously an exception and has been set up rather informally, interviewees listed three cases of ZEP schools where this measure was applied\(^ {26}\). It was accepted that this measure is very helpful and should be institutionalised and expanded to all public schools.

The following description of the arrangements is divided into the thematic areas where support is offered at the selected school. The aim of this section is to reflect on the extent to which national arrangements and policies in the field of migrant education are represented and practiced at the school level. The information provided is based on in-depth interviews and desk research

**Linguistic support**

The linguistic support offered at the school, as well as in any other schools catering migrants in Cyprus is provided in the frames of the programme “Organization of special classes for Greek Language Teaching to Third Party country students in secondary schools” first started in the school year 2008-2009. In the schools this Intensive programme for Greek as a foreign language is known as *Programma Alloglosson* (which literally translates as Programme for other-language students). Schematically the process of providing of assistance of Greek as a second language to all bilingual students at secondary education level is presented in the Figure below. Further, the section elaborates on linguistic support arrangements offered at school in a more detailed way.

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\(^{24}\) The only exception pertains to the existence of two schools for two national religious minorities – not immigrants – (Armenians and Maronites) which are supported by the state and include instruction of Armenian and Maronite languages, not without problems (Council of Europe 2010: 28).

\(^{25}\) This was achieved in collaboration with the State Institutes of Further Education, which operate in the afternoon and offer language classes in various languages, amongst other things (see below).

\(^{26}\) These were the following: (a) the ZEP school of Nicosia with a high concentration of Russian-speaking students (b) the ZEP school of Limassol with a high concentration of Turkish-speaking students and (c) the ZEP school of Larnaca with a high concentration of Arab-speaking students.
The programme applies to the Gymnasium (ISCED level 2), the Lyceum (ISCED level 3) and the Technical School (ISCED level 3). This year in the Nicosia District the programme runs in 16 out of 25 Gymnasia and in 12 out of 14 Lyceum and Technical Schools. Its duration is 2 years maximum and there are three available levels for students to join (levels A1 A2 B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Candidates for this programme are immigrant students with no or little knowledge of the local language of instruction. For Gymnasium students, the programme offers 5 teaching periods (45’ each) of language instruction weekly and 4 teaching periods (45’ each) of language instruction per week for Lyceum students. NAMS are directly placed into mainstream education and this programme operates on a pull-out system, where NAMS are pulled out from the following non-examined school subjects: Ancient Greek, Religious Education & Greek History. The programme is taught by a specialised qualified teacher which is usually works for two schools. In each school there is a deputy head in charge of the programme. In the focus school, this was the first year that the specific deputy head undertook this role. When teachers need support, they can contact either the teacher advisors at the MOEC or the trainers at the Pedagogical Institute.

According to the directives of the European Integration Fund (which sponsors 75% of this programme), the Ministry employs teachers that are not occupied with subjects teaching already. The teachers that qualify to teach in this programme are graduates of the various Greek Philology departments. Since in Cyprus teacher allocations are always decided centrally by the MOEC (from a waiting list of qualified but still un-appointed teachers), allocations for this Intensive programme were made from teachers on these waiting lists who were given temporary contracts (instead of permanent allocations). The consequence of this limitation was that teachers can teach in this programme for a maximum of two years, since after that time, their turn for

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27 For more information see circular No. 7.1.19.2/5 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011c) and the Guide (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010b: 17-21).
28 The four ZEP secondary schools are provided with extra teaching time for the individual linguistic support of students in need (Demetriou 2/09/2009).
29 Each week has 35-37 teaching periods (7 or 8 periods a day).
30 Usually there is an attempt that NAMS are not concentrated in certain classes but equally distributed to all the classes of the school, in order to avoid ghettoisation.
31 For a detailed table of school subjects available for this programme see the MOEC’s Guide (2010b: 19).
32 Graduates from these departments specialize in one of the following subjects: Greek linguistics; Byzantine and Modern Greek Literature; Classical studies (Ancient Greek and Latin); Greek History and Archeology; Philosophy and Pedagogy.
33 The criteria for this waiting list are mostly chronological, i.e. depending on the graduation date of candidate teachers.
permanent allocation comes and other teachers in the waiting list are called to take
their places. By implication, this means that
(a) there are no requirements other than a BA in Greek Philology for allocation to work
in this programme,
(b) all teachers in this programme are newly appointed and, therefore, rather novice
(c) teachers do not have the time to advance and develop their skills in the teaching of
Greek as a foreign language.
This is the first academic year (2011-2012) that the programme will not be funded by
the EU and, therefore, will not have to comply to EU directives; yet, although many
officials in the ministry acknowledge the problem, so far nothing has changed with
regard to the way in which teachers are allocated. The Pedagogical Institute has
repeatedly suggested (a) the insertion of additional criteria (e.g. specialization on
second language teaching or intercultural education) for the allocation of these
teachers; (b) longer-term engagement with this programme, so that teachers can build
upon teachers’ existing knowledge.
This year there was a problem with the allocation of these teachers both in the focus
school and in other schools in Cyprus. 31 people were initially allocated and
participated in a preliminary training on how to conduct the diagnostic test
(19/09/2011); yet, in early October, 24 of them were offered a permanent allocation as
philologists and 24 new teachers from the waiting lists were allocated for these posts.
These teachers joined the schools in mid-October without considerable prior knowledge
about the programme. In the focus school, the teacher joined the school on the 12th of
October. Until then, NAMS who did not speak Greek were just sitting in mainstream
classes (in many cases without understanding the language of instruction at all.).

To identify the students who can participate in the programme, as soon as allocated34,
the teacher in charge identifies “students with foreign names” in the school and seeks
information from teachers and the administration on which students could make
possible candidates for this programme.
A school is allowed to participate in the programme if there are more than 3
participants identified; in the opposite case students are encouraged and enabled to
enrol to another school which offers the programme
After being identified, candidates take a diagnostic test35 (both written and oral, lasts
for 3 teaching periods) which is prepared by the Department of Educational Evaluation,
at the Pedagogical Institute. The results of this test36 decide whether a student can
participate in the programme and at which level (s)he should be placed. There is also a
questionnaire for the evaluation of this programme for students to complete at the end
of the year.
The books used in this programme are defined by the MOEC and are imported from
Greece (they have been produced by the University of Crete). This is quite rich
collection of recently produced material, which is, nonetheless, not always tuned to the
socio-cultural contexts of NAMS in Cyprus.
Each school also provides a computer for the purposes of these classes, while the
MOEC has provided teachers with a list of relevant software and websites. Each teacher

34 These teachers are allocated usually toward the end of September, in contrast to other teachers that start
at the beginning of Sept, for some reason, perhaps related to their temporary status.
35 A similar diagnostic test is given to the students towards the end of the academic year to monitor their
progress over the year (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011b).
36 For the year 2011-2012, this should be communicated to the MOEC by the 3rd of October (Ministry of
Education and Culture 2011a).
is free to enrich, expand or adjust this material as (s)he likes; yet (s)he remains bound to use the material indicated by the MOEC. The focus school did not report any school-based initiatives regarding the development of extra material.

The pedagogical institute collaborates with the inspectorate at MOEC for the in-service training of these teachers. Due to the system of teacher allocation\(^{37}\), some teachers have already had their pre-service training, which includes some courses on intercultural education, special education and language teaching (but not on Greek as a foreign language). According to the teacher trainer\(^{38}\), last year the training of teachers who were allocated to teach in this programme developed in four phases:

1. A first preliminary meeting\(^{39}\) to inform the teacher about procedural matters and on how to conduct and mark the diagnostic test (mostly conducted by inspectors of the MOEC)

2. Four days of training\(^{40}\) on the basic principles of teaching Greek as a second language. The topics covered here were (a) teaching of Greek as a foreign language and (b) linking the programme with intercultural education. During these days, teachers were informed that they can contact the Pedagogical Institute in case of problems and that they should inform the P.I. about topics of their concern that they would like to receive some training on

3. A one day seminar on a topic that concerned the teachers

4. A last reflective meeting at the end of the year, where teachers reflected on their practices and shared ideas on the improvement of the programme.

Apart from this compulsory training for teachers working in this programme, teachers have the chance to attend various optional seminars offered by the Pedagogical Institute on a variety of related topics (e.g. teaching Greek as second/foreign language, use of ICT in foreign language teaching, intercultural education etc).

From September 2008\(^{41}\) until September 2011, the programme was co-funded by the European Integration Fund. Specifically, the total budget for the project reached 740,432 Euro and was co-financed by the Integration Fund (75%) and the Republic of Cyprus (25%) (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010a: 363). According to the MOEC officials the school year 2011-2012 is the first time the programme will be funded by national funds only.

Before 2008, there was no mechanism in place for the linguistic support of these students, who were simply placed in mainstream classes with the status of the ‘newcomer’. When asked about the mechanisms in place before 2008, the ministry inspector suggested that these were not particularly necessary since the influx of immigrants before 2008\(^{42}\) was not as strong.

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37 Teachers receive their extensive (9months) pre-service training while still on the waiting list, usually a couple of years before their permanent allocation.
38 The teacher I interviewed had missed the initial training (see section ‘Teacher allocations’ and, because of the time of the year, was not in a position to provide me with information about teacher training.
39 For the year 2011-2012 this was conducted on the 19\(^{th}\) of September (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011c).
40 For the year 2011-2012, a series of three in-service trainings were organized on the following dates: 7/10, 20/10 and 03/11(Ministry of Education and Culture 2011e).
41 During the school year 2008-2009 the programme was piloted in 16 secondary schools, whereas in the next year the application of the programme expanded to 31 secondary schools across Cyprus (Demetriou 2/09/2009).
42 In his speech on the presentation of the ministry’s provision for foreign students, the Minister of education (Demetriou 2/09/2009) stated that “the number of other-language students in public schools has risen to 8158 students, which are distributed to the different levels of education as follows: 939 in nursery schools, 4605 in primary schools, 1651 in Gymnasia, 783 in Lycea and 180 in Technical schools”.
The “newcomer’s status”\textsuperscript{43} is another mechanism for NAMS better adaptation and integration into education system. Students with the status of the newcomer can attend all lessons, but can opt not to be examined and evaluated\textsuperscript{44} in any of the school subjects for a whole year. This status allows the newcomer to gradually familiarize him/herself with the local language which is still not mastered without institutional pressures. However, it is the interest of the student/parents to request to be granted one year exemption from exams/evaluation. The school itself does not initiate this.

After the end of the school year, if the newcomer wishes to acquire the status of the normal student, (s)he has to pass in September all four examined subjects of the year (s)he attended (i.e. Modern Greek, Mathematics, Physics, History\textsuperscript{45}). If (s)he opts not to take the exams or if (s)he fails in these exams, the student continues with the status of the newcomer the following year. Yet, if in the following year the student wants to acquire the status of a normal student, (s)he has to take 8 exams (4 examined subjects of the year (s)he is in and 4 examined subjects of the previous year). According to the inspector, this is a tough but necessary measure, in order to ensure that the school leaving certificate of NAMS is equal to that of local students, otherwise this would not be fair for local students.

If a student wishes to continue to Lyceum with the status of the newcomer, he does not receive a school leaving certificate, only a certificate which confirms that (s)he observed the lessons in this year. Most students attending the Intensive programme for Greek as a foreign language have or had the status of the newcomer.

During this period, the only obligation that students with the status of ‘newcomer’ have towards the school is the regular attendance of classes. Following the MOEC’s instructions, the school is very strict with keeping a register of attendance. As the inspector and one deputy head explained, this aims to prevent students to register in state schools only to receive state benefits for immigrants and then never show up again (a phenomenon observed particularly amongst students of Roma origins). Students who exceed the number of allowed absences are forced to repeat the school year, in the same way as this measure applies for local students.

This year, there are 7 students with the status of the newcomer in the school (1 in Grade A; 4 in Grade B; 2 in Grade C). All of them attend the school’s Intensive programme for Greek as a foreign language.

There are no institutionalized measures of support after the end of the programme for the teaching of Greek to third party students. Both the teacher and the inspector said that, even though the programme lasts for two years only, upon request it might be possible for a student to extend the programme for one year more (basically to repeat level B1), provided that the school judges the request justifiable.

\textsuperscript{43} Until last year, these students have been known as "observers" or "listeners" [akroates]. This year they have been renamed as the "newcomers". Gregoriou (2008) stands rather critically towards this measure: "The marginalization of immigrant students has become normalized through the educational apparatus of "auditors" ("akroatés"): newcomer immigrant students are placed as auditors at a grade level maximum a year lower than their age level and were granted an one year gratis (i.e., exemption from exams and evaluation) to learn, through immersion in a native language communicative environment, the language of instruction".

\textsuperscript{44} Teachers explained that newcomer students take the tests normally so as not to make them feel excluded and to accustom themselves with the system of evaluation, but the tests are not marked and they do not receive a records card at the end of each semester.

\textsuperscript{45} According to the inspector, some thoughts are being made for the exclusion of History as an examined subject for newcomers.
The only other option students have regarding language support is to attend the State Institutes for further Education, which are state-organised afternoon and evening classes offering a range of subjects to students and adults. In the MOEC’s Guide to Education in Cyprus (2010b: 20) these courses are described as follows:

Foreign students, who attend evening classes, have an opportunity to attend the intensive Greek language courses at SEI (State Educational Institutes), in the afternoon, before the beginning of their evening classes. The most suitable time for the intensive courses is considered the period between 3:00p.m and 5:00p.m for four afternoons, according to the working hours of SEI (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday).

These institutes offer Greek language lessons for foreigners who live and work in Cyprus. Regarding the focus school, these Institutes are situated directly within the school (operating in the afternoon in school premises) and encourage NAMS to join these classes. Since the Institutes aim to support low income families to further their education, the fee is very low (5 euros per month). Yet, these institutes are not organically related to the school and the classes are attended by both youth and adults of all ages.

Table 4 below provides a number of students benefited from the Intensive language programme in the school year 2010/2011. Only 31 students (out of 97 newly arrived children) were enrolled into Intensive Greek language teaching. The reason is the “beginners” nature of the course, and the rest of newcomers had a previous knowledge of Greek and did not have a necessity to attend a beginner course.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Group of students</th>
<th>Value for the 2010/2011 school year</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students that benefited from additional hours of teaching of the language of instruction</td>
<td>NAMS</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>This year the school runs three classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other students of migrant origin</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Leven A1 (beginners): 12 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native students</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Level A2 (up to 2 years): 14 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Level B1 (advanced): 5 students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: statistics of the school.

Overall, linguistic support measures are currently going through a transitional phase, since the MOEC has just undertaken the full funding of the Intensive programme and are now free to make changes. There has been wide acknowledgement of the fact that the programme as it is not always adequate or sufficiently effective and the whole process is under revision.

According to an inspector, new regulations are being prepared in collaboration with the Pedagogical Institute and the University of Cyprus, which were asked to contribute in the design of linguistic support programmes.

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46 According to their website: “The State Institutes for Further Education function under the auspices of Secondary Education all over Cyprus. They aim at offering equal opportunities of education to thousands of students of all ages and adults and promoting lifelong learning which is a fundamental requirement of the European Union”. For further information see the MOEC’s Guide to Education in Cyprus (2010b: 86-87). See also the relevant document on the website (Ministry of Education and Culture n.a.).

47 From these students: 7 come from Romania, 5 from Iraq, 4 from Bulgaria, 4 from Syria, 2 from Lebanon, 2 from Moldavia, 1 from Ghana, 1 from Palestine, 1 from Ukraine, 1 from Egypt, 1 from Turkey and 1 from Congo.
for NAMS; yet, once decided, all changes will take effect from the next academic year onwards. There are serious ideas about setting up reception classes too (the problem for this so far seems to have been mostly financial).

**Academic support**

It seems that, beyond the status of the ‘newcomer’ and the Intensive programme for Greek as a foreign language, there are no other measures specifically taken for the support of NAMS. After NAMS change their status to normal attendance they can benefit from the same measures of support as local students.

The school’s decision for the placement of NAMS in a specific grade is dictated by specific MOEC guidelines and is generally based on the age group of NAMS; the difference being that they are usually placed one or two levels below the level they would normally attend, had they been local students. In the MOEC’s Guide (2010b: 22) the policy on this issue is explained in Box 2.

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**Box 2. Level of knowledge and age of foreign students**

Due to obvious reasons - immigration, adaptation to the new social environment, difference in level and analytical programs, different courses between classes, late arrival and loss of learning time – foreign students face serious problems of integration and adaptation to the new school environment, it is considered as a wise tactic to place them, on their own consent, in at least one class below the one that their age and level of knowledge allow. In this way it is expected that a lot of their knowledge gaps will be covered with relative comfort and they will be given an opportunity to be taught the Greek language, so that the following school year they will integrate smoothly and will keep pace harmoniously with other children of their class.

In cases when serious linguistic gaps are observed or foreign students are very old (over 20 years old) they are encouraged to study at Evening Gymnasia[^1], where conditions are more favourable for them and where they will also be given an opportunity for intensive Greek language learning in the afternoon at the SEI[^1]. However, in order to be enrolled into Evening Gymnasium, prior knowledge of Greek language is required.

Particular attention is needed, when a newcomer foreign student intends to study in the C Form (age 17-18) of Lyceum... Because of the restrictions of the course selection system, students who fall within this category are placed in the B Form or are encouraged to study at the Evening Gymnasia... [D]epending on the level of knowledge of newcomers, students of the age between 16 to 18 years old are admitted in the A Form (age 15-16) of Lyceum, 17 to 19 years old are admitted in the B Form (age 16-17) while in the C Form of Lyceum students up to the age of 21 years old are admitted, but only in exceptional cases, after the approval of the Superintendent Authority.

[^1]: European Commission | Education and Training
Beyond the level of students’ knowledge and skills, the school counsellor said that the school also seeks to place these students in groups where there are other students speaking their language (but also fluent in Greek) who can help them adjust and explain things in the first difficult stages.

The only decision that is up to the school to take has to do with grade retention for academic reasons, in the case that the linguistic and academic abilities of a newcomer NAMS have not been significantly improved during the previous year. As the school’s deputy head and counsellor explained, in this case the school, in agreement with the student and the parents, decides on this taking into account both academic and social criteria (e.g. whether the student has created strong friendships in the class and that would seriously damage his self esteem and sense of belonging in the school, with consequences on his achievement).

In general, what applies for every student is that, in the case they fail in an examined subject, they have to take the exam again in September, and the school takes every possible measure to avoid grade retention. Grade retention is generally the exception to the rule and happens very rarely.

The only case that grade retention is imperative and non-negotiable is the case when a student exceeds the limit of permitted absences from school. This applies to all students regardless of their background.

Last year there was only one case of grade retention, the case of an immigrant girl who had excessive absences from classes (more than 500 teaching periods\(^{48}\)). The girl did not enrol in the school again the next year.

The remaining part of this section outlines the main measures\(^{49}\) for academic support taken in the focus school (which are, nonetheless, decided centrally by the ministry and apply to the whole population of the school).

**Assessment of NAMS**

As noted in the previous section, NAMS with the ‘newcomer’s status’ are not assessed at all. To acquire the status of a normal student NAMS have to take the same exams in the same subjects as the native students (see above). Once they acquire the status of a normal student, NAMS are assessed like all other students, with no differentiations in their evaluation whatsoever.

**The MOEC has designed a special support programme for underachieving students ‘Learning difficulties programme (Gymnasium)’**. In the Annual Report (2010a: 342) this programme is described as follows: “Learning difficulties programme: pupils are offered support, individually or in groups of no more than four children, in Modern Greek, History, Mathematics and Physics. Support is also offered in other subjects according to the pupils’ needs”.

The Learning Difficulties programme is aimed to help students diagnosed with specific learning difficulties to overcome these problems in the subjects stated above. The funding for this programme comes from national funds (MOEC). A deputy head in the

\(^{48}\) Compare with the school average provided in the table below.

\(^{49}\) Beyond the programmes described here, the MOEC runs the following programmes in Greek-Cypriot secondary education, from which NAMS can benefit: Special units programme in Gymnasium and Lyceum (special needs students), Hearing Programme and Sight programme (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010a: 342).
school is in charge of this programme. Teachers in the school explained how the programme operates:

After the identification of the problem (either in the primary school or in the secondary school) and consultation with the students’ parents, an educational psychologist assesses the student. Then, upon examination of this assessment, the Provincial Committee of the Ministry of Education decides for the student’s participation in the programme. Usually the learning difficulties programme is run by the same teacher that teaches the subject in the class, but during the teaching time of other non-examined subjects (Ancient Greek and French). Students in the learning difficulties programme usually receive lessons in the subject(s) they have difficulties with twice a week.

Normally, while in the Intensive programme for Greek as a foreign language, NAMS do not participate in this programme to ensure that they don’t miss too much of regular teaching.

**Another programme to support students is Literacy programme**

started in 1989 and is run under the auspices of the Educational Psychology Service (scientific responsibility) and the Secondary Education Directory (administrative responsibility). It aims at offering equal educational opportunities and preventing social exclusion by fostering basic skills and reinforcing self esteem and offering emotional support.

This programme aims to provide support in the case of diagnosed functional illiteracy. The funding for this programme comes from national funds (MOEC). The same deputy head that is in charge of the Learning Difficulties programme is in charge of the Literacy programme as well. Usually, The Pedagogical Institute sends two diagnostic tests to primary schools, one for Modern Greek and one for Mathematics. All students take these tests and the secondary schools that will receive the students are notified in the case of a student’s functional illiteracy problems. NAMS who come directly to secondary education and have functional illiteracy problems can be identified by the school and participate in the programme without following any further procedures.

Students who participate in this programme leave their classes whenever they have Modern Greek and/or Mathematics and are taught these subjects in a separate class by a different teacher, so that there are two parallel classes running during Modern Greek and Mathematics, focusing on the same curriculum but following a different pace.

Whereas the learning difficulties programme runs in small groups of maximum 4 students, the groups of the literacy programme can have up to 10 students.

This year the school does not have any NAMS enrolled in the Literacy programme The MOEC and the Pedagogical Institute advises to be careful not to confuse the difficulties arising from functional illiteracy with the difficulties arising from poor knowledge of the language of instruction. The teacher trainer suggested that the best way to academically support NAMS would be through an extension of school hours in the afternoon, so that NAMS can have academic support.

This year the Literacy programme in this school recruits 18 students, 6 from each Grade. None of them is NAMS or of migrant background.

A similar programme runs in Lyceum (ISCED 3), described by a ministry circular (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011d). Schools run reinforcement lessons in Modern Greek and Mathematics for the students of Grade A of Lyceum or Technical Schools. Students are included in this programme based on the results [of the diagnostic test] and upon recommendation from members of the teaching staff. The

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reinforcement teaching is provided by the school’s teaching staff in their non-teaching time or from non-appointed teachers for a limited number of teaching periods. Aim of reinforcement teaching is to help students of grade A of Lyceum or Technical school to cover in a short period of time their identified shortcomings in these subjects, so they can then follow without much difficulty both these and other courses. The funding for this programme also comes from national funds.

Table 5: Students participation in Learning Difficulties programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Group of students</th>
<th>Value for the 2010/2011 school year</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students that benefited from additional hours of teaching in subjects other than the language of instruction.</td>
<td>NAMS</td>
<td>4 students (out of 28) 2 periods weekly</td>
<td>This information relates to the Learning Difficulties programme. The counselling is not individual but in groups of 2-3. This year the focus-school operates two groups of 3 students for each year: <strong>Grade A</strong>: 10 students, 2 NAMS <strong>Grade B</strong>: 11 students, 1 NAMS, 2 of migrant origins <strong>Grade C</strong>: 7 students, 1 NAMS, 1 of migrant origins The Literacy programme is not included here since it did not recruit any NAMS this year The teaching periods referred to here are of 45’ each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other students of migrant origin</td>
<td>3 students (out of 28) 2 periods weekly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native students</td>
<td>21 students (out of 28) 2 periods weekly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: statistics of the focus school.

The school reported that the problem of early school leaving is not considerable in the school. In the year 2010/2011 there was no case of students who ever left and then wanted to re-enrol in the school, but they explained that if the student roughly falls within the age span of ISCED level 2, there is no problem for re-enrolling. As already noted above students who are above the age of 18 are usually encouraged to attend the Evening Schools (which have the same curriculum with the secondary schools running in the morning, the difference being that these are intended for working adults who did not manage to graduate). According to the inspector who inspects these schools, there are young adult NAMS in these schools.

Outreach and cooperation

There is no differentiated policy for NAMS’ parents in Cypriot schools. The focus school has three institutionalized meetings (designated by MOEC guidelines) with students’ parents, for which parent invitations are sent at home through the students:

1. A first cocktail party at the beginning of the school-year, during which the school staff welcomes parents, meets them for the first time and encourages them to get to know and visit the school as often as they feel they need to.
2. Another meeting later in the first semester, during which parents are invited to discuss the progress of their children with the teaching staff.
3. A third and final meeting of the same character at some point in the second (and last) semester.
Beyond these meetings, the deputy head and counsellor affirmed that parents are always welcome to visit the school any time and inquire about their children’s progress and other school-related issues.

In cases of problems or difficulties, the school leadership or the school counsellor might call the parents of the child involved and ask them to visit the school. Other than that, there is no policy targeted specifically for the involvement of the parents of NAMS. The Counsellor of the school seemed to find no reason why the school should do that: “there are parents who never came to school and we never saw them; they come only if they want to come and we contact them only in the case of problems; I don’t see a reason for more collaboration than that”.

Nevertheless, the teacher trainer mentioned that in the training seminars with teachers and school leaders they always stress the importance of building links with the broader community and opening communication avenues with parents and social groups in the community. The MOEC advisor also said that this is up to the school’s initiative, and one would expect that an inspired head-teacher would try to bring parents close to the school.

An initiative mentioned by the counsellor requiring the involvement of NAMS parents was the organization of a feast in the school, where NAMS parents were invited to cook something characteristic of their country and bring it to the school for others to taste. The counsellor observed that although such initiatives sound like a nice idea, they can be potentially problematic since (a) you may force NAMS to prepare something they may not be able to afford (b) as a consequence, you embarrass students who are not able to bring something from home and you invite comparisons between them.

Regarding contact with NAMS parents in the cases that they don’t speak Greek, there did not seem to be a clear policy in place in the school, although the counsellor affirmed that they make all efforts to ensure that the message gets across, and usually they don’t face particular problems. The measures taken are the following:

- use of English as a medium of communication (both written and oral), where applicable.
- make use of members of staff which happen to be bilingual
- call a bilingual student (often their child) to translate in the parents’ spoken language and facilitate communication with the school
- very often parents themselves are aware of this communication problem and bring along a bilingual acquaintance of them for assistance, without the school having to prompt them to do so
- search for a bilingual person in the community who could assume the role of the interpreter
- if none of the above applies and the case is rather extreme, the school may contact the ministry for assistance on how to handle the issue (but, in actual fact, this has never happened)

There are national funds for interpretation services (despite the fact that these are very costly), but most schools are not aware of the existence of this provision. This fund seems to be extensively taken advantage of only in some schools in the Larnaca district 51, which have Arab-speaking students. People in the focus school confirmed that they were not aware of the existence of this service and never made use of it.

The only other relevant measure (which is nevertheless not school-based, but initiated by the MOEC) for enabling the adaptation of NAMS and their families to the Greek-

51 Both officials assumed that it just happened that one school in Larnaca asked the MOEC for an interpreter and then other schools in the same district were informed about this and asked for the same services.
Cypriot education system has been the preparation of the *Guide to Education in Cyprus*\(^2\) (2010b) in the eight most commonly met languages in Cyprus (English, Turkish, Russian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Georgian, Ukrainian, and Arabic). This guide provides ample and much-needed information about the structure, function and requirements of all levels of Greek-Cypriot education to orientate NAMS and their families to the new context.

NAMS’ parents are also not likely to participate in school decision making process. In the focus school, the only governing body, which is related to the school and includes parents, is the Parents’ Association. The Parents Association of the focus school has been almost exclusively Greek-Cypriot, and, oftentimes, Greek-Cypriot party politics can infiltrate and guide the function of this body. This year there is no immigrant parent in the Association (see Table 6). The school chief administrator volunteered her own interpretation of the phenomenon saying that “in these bodies you offer, you don’t take” implying that immigrants in Cyprus only want to take from the country and give nothing in return.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Group of students</th>
<th>Value for the 2010/2011 school year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of parents in the school governing bodies</td>
<td>Of NAMS</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Parents’ Association</td>
<td>Of other students of migrant origin</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no other school governing body (all appointments of staff are done centrally by the MOEC)</td>
<td>Of native students</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: statistics of the focus school.

Networks or collaborations in place between schools and/or practitioners are not widespread in Cyprus. Teachers mentioned that collaborations happen only on an individual basis (i.e. if a teacher or a head-teacher has a problem (s)he may call a colleague in another school (s)he happens to know to ask for advice) and there is nothing institutionalised, at least not in this school. According to the MOEC advisor interviewed, this issue is left to the jurisdiction of the school to initiate and regulate. Apart from the school leadership, the person in the school that often undertakes the role of the mediator between the school and NAMS home or community is the school counsellor. The only reported exception to this rule, on an institutional level, is the institution of ZEP (Zones of Educational Priority\(^3\)), where the Zone encloses a whole area with a number of schools (nursery, pre-primary, primary, secondary) within which there are links of collaboration and coordination.

**Intercultural education**

At the level of the MOEC, the official policy on intercultural education has been summarized in a small booklet issued recently (Pedagogical Institute 2010: 4-7) (see Box 3).

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\(^3\) See section C in this document “A short not on ZEP schools”.  

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Although the booklet serves the function of announcing the intention for these measures, these measures have recently started being implemented – and this rather marks the beginning of a long journey. From the interviews of various stakeholders in the focus school, it seems that there is no school-specific policy (beyond the MOEC’s policies) for intercultural education in the school. As already mentioned above, there are no school funds for such initiatives and funding arises solely from the MOEC.

Interviewees in both the focus school and the MOEC made reference to year 2008, which was declared by the MOEC as the year for intercultural dialogue and during which there has been various actions both at the level of the MOEC (e.g. optional training courses on intercultural education, conference of the teachers’ association) and of the focus school (e.g. school clubs, school celebrations, student conferences etc.)

**Intercultural education practices**

In their interviews, all informants (both from the focus-school and the MOEC) referred only to optional and extra-curricular intercultural activities, which were presented as exceptional practices rather than as well integrated into the school’s daily routines. As the teachers explained, intercultural education practices during teaching time are up to the teacher (e.g. to adjust the lesson to this direction, to bring additional material, to bring up the issue of immigration in the school). Yet, as the school counsellor observed, time limitations and the pressures of covering the curriculum do not allow for much intercultural practices during lesson-time.

Examples of extra-curricular intercultural practices were the following: an intercultural school club; some intercultural practices during school celebrations (e.g. food from different countries, carols from different countries); and intercultural displays in the school (e.g. a board with “hello” in all the languages spoken in the school, flags of all the countries of the school ordered by the school).

The New Curriculum mentioned above have been prepared in the framework of the Educational Reform, which has been announced and explained in 2004 and the school year 2011-2012 is the first year of their actual implementation in practice. As the inspector and the MOEC’s advisor explained, intercultural education is considered a pillar of the New Curriculum and, therefore, in the coming years things should be expected to change for the best. As the teacher trainer observed ‘we are waiting to see how the New Curriculum will develop in practice, this is a transitional phase and at the level of rhetoric at least the decision has been that intercultural education is seriously taken into account’. Yet, the teacher trainer explained that, even within the existing curriculum, teachers have chances to insert intercultural education practices in their teaching if they want to.

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54 For example, priority axis 4 can explain why the focus school had difficulty in providing information related to the places of birth and native languages of the school’s students.

55 For the new curriculum see the document published by the Committee for the New Curriculum in 2008 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2008). Spyrou (2007) observes for the current (‘old’) curriculum that the curriculum is not designed to accommodate non-Greek speakers and people who do not identify with the Greek nation. Though officials would probably deny it, the curriculum is still fundamentally nationalistic in its outlook.


57 See the report of the Commission for the Educational Reform (2004a). See also a summary of the proposed measures (Commission for Educational Reform 2004b).
The New Curriculum also lends more autonomy both to the teacher and to the school to adjust the curriculum to the needs of their diverse community. A central principle of the New Curriculum is the lack of a single textbook. This leaves the teacher the freedom to choose the educational materials to be used, whereas in the old curriculum the textbook was the common curriculum to be taught and examined for all schools across the country.

Beyond the aforementioned extra-curricular activities, participants in the focus school did not report any other initiatives taken by the school to this direction. The school neither provides nor requires special training for teachers working with NAMS.

Yet, as explained above, the MOEC provides in-service training for teachers teaching in the Intensive programme for Greek language learning. Existing training on these issues, such as postgraduate degrees or diplomas in related subjects are not taken into consideration during teacher allocation (by the MOEC), and the school may take advantage of these qualifications only internally and unofficially.

### Box 3. Booklet on Intercultural education

The philosophy that will inform the policy for the integration of migrant children in the educational system is condensed in the following aims of the educational reform:

- A democratic school which integrates and does not exclude. This means equality of opportunities for access, participation, success and in-school 'treatment', recognizing the multicultural and diverse character of the student population, as well as individual needs.
- Educational system / education which respects diversity and pluralism (cultural, linguistic, religious) and multiple intelligence.

The specific aims include:

- The development and application of coordinated “intervention” measures, which promote the smooth integration of foreign students in our educational system.
- The development and integration of those institutions in the education system that will ensure a qualitative and effective education for foreign students.
- The sensitization of teachers, students and parents as to the principles that should guide a multicultural society, as well as the training of teachers and other education officials in issues related to the theoretical and practical dimensions of the intercultural approach in the educational work.
- The development and appropriate utilization of special teaching, audiovisual and educational material, and the application of new teaching approaches that enlarge the potential of the Cypriot education system.
- The development and application of special measures and procedures for the adaptation of newly arrived foreign students.

The policy framework of the Ministry of Education and Culture for the integration of foreign students in the Cypriot society falls within the Priority Axes of priority described below.

### PRIORITY AXISS 4: COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA RELATED TO THE NEEDS OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

The introduction and utilization of systems for the collection and analysis of information related to the needs of various groups of students, so that these can be used for the design and the application of targeted programmes and effective policies for the reinforcement of students with immigrant biographies.

### PRIORITY AXISS 5: INTERCULTURAL APPROACH IN THE NEW CURRICULUM

Intercultural education is not addressed only to foreign students but also to the children of the majority. As a result, the Ministry of Education and Culture recognizes the fact that in order to shape a comprehensive strategy for intercultural education it is necessary to take additional measures, on top of those mentioned above, such as:

- the adoption of intercultural education in the New Curriculum
- the production of appropriate educational and teacher training material
Teacher training on intercultural issues is provided by the Pedagogical Institute on the basis of optional evening training courses, which teachers can choose to take. As the teacher trainer explained, the Pedagogical Institute attempts to undo folklore understandings of intercultural education and invite teachers to take into consideration the socio-cultural context of the school and how to mobilize these resources for the benefit of everybody.

More specifically, the Pedagogical Institute offers the following on the issue of intercultural education:

- optional evening seminars on related issues (two interviewees had attended such seminars)
- in-service training for teachers in the Intensive programme for Greek as a foreign language.
- in-service training for members of the school leadership (heads and deputy heads)
- in-service training for school counsellors on how to work with diversity in their school
- seminars in the form of action research with schools that experience such problems (not the focus school).

As to the existence of teachers with migrant backgrounds, the only ethnic community currently represented with large numbers in Greek-Cypriot schools are teachers from Greece, who do not have the limitation of language and graduate from – largely – the same universities as Greek-Cypriot teachers.

Other than that, teachers with migrant backgrounds would be less than 1% of the teacher population, comprised of a very small number of Turkish-Cypriot teachers (with Cypriot citizenship); teachers coming from mixed marriages mostly; and a very small number of migrant teachers who have recognised degrees and are perfectly fluent Greek speakers. Another participant referred to Greek-Cypriot teachers that have been themselves immigrants in other countries before coming back to Cyprus.

Currently, only ZEP schools have the potential of recruiting bilingual teachers (which fulfil all other necessary criteria) in order to enable communication with migrant students and enhance their learning. Some interviewees referred to these bilingual ZEP teachers (some of which are of non-migrant origins though) in Section 2.1.9. earlier, namely:

a. a bilingual Russian-speaking teacher in the Nicosia ZEP school with high concentration of Russian-speaking students
b. a bilingual Turkish-speaking teacher in the Limassol ZEP where there is high concentration of Turkish-speaking students and
c. a bilingual Arab-speaking teacher in the Larnaca ZEP in a school with high concentration of Arab-speaking students.

The dress code for state schools is centrally defined by the MOEC and involves wearing a uniform, the items and colours of which can be decided by each school separately. Each school chooses from a limited variety of garment designs and colours (black, blue, grey, light blue, white). There is flexibility regarding the use of headscarfs, but the phenomenon is not particularly often in Greek-Cypriot schools, and in cases when it appears, it gradually withers out as students integrate in the school and choose themselves not to stand out through their dress choices.

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58 See the relevant circular (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010c) for the school year 2010-2011.
The measures to ensure religious tolerance mentioned by participants in the focus school (which are approved by the MOEC) were the following:

- students can be exempted from religious education, if the choose to. Also, in the New Curriculum, there is a radical redefinition of the subject of religious education so that it will be more inclusive of other religions.
- students can be exempted from school church-goings and stay outside the church, if they choose to.
- students are not forced to participate in the morning prayer, if they don’t want to (the teacher trainer informed that the morning prayer is soon to be officially abolished).
- students can be exempted from religious school celebrations (e.g. Christmas, Easter) if they want to, although as the teachers explained this was never the case because usually students enjoy these events.

Before exemption from the school’s regular activities:
- the school canteen does not take into consideration possible special dietary requirements.
- the school does not allow the celebration of non-Christian holidays.
- so far, instruction of other religions was done, but strongly coloured by the lens of Christianity.

According to the school counsellor, the school has students of the following religions: orthodox, catholic, Muslim, Jehovah witnesses. For example, although Jehovah witnesses always require to be exempted from the aforementioned religious practices, other students e.g. of Muslim origin usually prefer to participate in these activities normally.

3. Outcomes and Effectiveness of Educational support

The effectiveness of the arrangements discussed above could be assessed by the actual outcomes indicators – performance, participation and access to education of bilingual students comparing to their native peers. The table below provides available statistics in the focus school on the performance and participation of NAMS.

Table 7: Statistics in the performance and participation of NAMS in the focus school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Group of students</th>
<th>Value for the 2010/2011 school year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Performance indicators</td>
<td>NAMS</td>
<td>Grade A: 9/11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

59 With specific reference to the case of the three national minorities in Cyprus, the advisory committee of the Council of Europe (2010: 24) notes the following:

121. The Advisory Committee welcomes the fact that the authorities are continuing to fund religious education for the Armenians, Latins and Maronites. It notes that the schools attended by members of these three groups work closely with their respective churches and that religious instruction and practicing of their own religious beliefs and convictions are an integral part of these schools’ activities.

122. The Advisory Committee has been informed, however, that, at the St Maron school, the majority of whose pupils are Maronites, the educational environment includes elements of the Greek Orthodox religion, as in all public schools in Cyprus. At the same time, the elements of religious education specific to Maronite culture are optional and can only be taught outside the mandatory curriculum. This being so, representatives of the Maronite community have expressed preference for secular instruction, which they feel has the advantage of not imposing an environment influenced by a specific religion where the mandatory curriculum is concerned and leaves parents free to opt for the religious education of their choice as an extracurricular activity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Group of students</th>
<th>Value for the 2010/2011 school year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mathematics by the end of the school year</td>
<td>Other students of migrant origin</td>
<td>Grade A: 0.11 Grade B: 2/12 Grade C: 5/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native students</td>
<td>Grade A: 2/11 Grade B: 4/12 Grade C: 15/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students that failed to reach a minimum standard in the language of instruction by the end of the school year</td>
<td>NAMS</td>
<td>Grade A: 2/2 Grade B: 1/1 Grade C: 5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other students of migrant origin</td>
<td>Grade A: 0/2 Grade B: 0/1 Grade C: 0/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native students</td>
<td>Grade A: 0/2 Grade B: 0/1 Grade C: 1/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students that were left to repeat the same grade</td>
<td>NAMS</td>
<td>1/1&lt;sup&gt;60&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other students of migrant origin</td>
<td>0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native students</td>
<td>0/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participation indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>NAMS</th>
<th>Other students of migrant origin</th>
<th>Native students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of days that students failed to attend classes (since the start of school year or since the arrival - for late arrivals)</td>
<td>35.9 periods per year</td>
<td>35.6 periods per year</td>
<td>26.8 periods per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The figures here correspond to the mean of teaching periods (40-45') failed to be attended per student&lt;sup&gt;61&lt;/sup&gt;.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children who were enrolled later than 30 calendar days after the start of the school year</td>
<td>NAMS 1/1 (enrolled March 2011, he had just arrived from Crete then)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other students of migrant origin</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native students</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who quit without completing the full school year and did not continue in other formal education establishment (early school leavers)</td>
<td>NAMS 1</td>
<td>Other students of migrant origin</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: statistics of the focus school.

<sup>60</sup> As the deputy head explained, the reason that this student was made to repeat the same grade was his excessive absences from school, not his achievement.

<sup>61</sup> To calculate this mean we added students’ absences (registered by teaching period, not school day) in each of the three categories (NAMS, migrant origin, native) and then we divided by the number of students in each of the three categories. Therefore, this mean applies to the whole school population. To calculate the number of days that these students failed to attend school, one has to divide the mean score by 7.4 (3 week-days with 7 teaching periods and 2 week-days with 8 teaching periods).
The interpretations of the above quantitative findings have been developed based mostly on the in-depth interviews and the desk-research conducted at the school, and not so much on academic studies and policy evaluations\textsuperscript{62}. Yet, the analysis of current policies and practices above combined with the quantitative outcome indicators provided in this table enable some interpretations of this data.

From the findings of the report above, it occurs that NAMS in Cyprus do not enjoy the same opportunities to access, fully participate and succeed in quality education as their native peers. This is indicated rather clearly by the quantitative data provided in the table above which show that NAMS are the most disadvantaged from the three groups (NAMS, migrant origins, native) in all respects

(a) minimum standard in mathematics: NAMS fail to reach a minimum standard in mathematics to a much greater extent compared to the other two groups. From the total of students who failed in mathematics (55 students), 47% are NAMS (26 students), compared to 13% migrant origins (7 students) students and 38% native students (21 students). These numbers become even more significant, if we compare them to the total of the population of these groups. In this case, NAMS who failed comprise 26.8% of the NAMS population (26 in 97 students), students with migrant origins who failed comprise 9.3% of the total population (7 in 75 students), while natives who failed comprise 8.3% of the total population.

The divergence is significant enough to indicate that the school fails to provide the same opportunities and support to NAMS to overcome their additional difficulties posed by the lack of knowledge of the language and cultural context of instruction. The lower percentages of NAMS failure in Grade C (35% compared to 81% in Grade A and 50% in Grade B) may indicate a degree of effectiveness of the Intensive programme for Greek as a foreign language.

(b) minimum standard in Modern Greek: the difference is even more telling when it comes to the subject of Modern Greek, the language of instruction. Here, from the total of students who failed (9 students), 89% are NAMS (8 students), compared to 0% students of migrant origins and 11% native students (1 student). These numbers become even more significant, if we compare them to the total of the population of these groups. In this case NAMS who failed comprise 8.2% of the NAMS population (8 in 97 students), while natives who failed comprise 0.03% of the total population.

The divergence is significant enough to indicate that the school fails to provide the same opportunities and support to NAMS to overcome their additional difficulties posed by the lack of knowledge of the language and cultural context of instruction. It could further indicate that (a) the Intensive programme for Greek as a foreign language may not be as effective as it should (b) the lack of differentiation in the way the progress is measured in the cases of native students and NAMS contributes to the creation of this distorted picture.

(c) Absences: Again, the mean scores of students’ absences from the three categories indicates a significant difference between the average native student (26.8 periods per year) and the average NAMS (35.9 periods per year).

\textsuperscript{62} The reason being that I was able to identify very few relevant and up-to-date school-based studies on the issue of immigrants attending Greek-Cypriot schools, while I was not granted access to evaluations of current policies undertaken internally for purposes of self-evaluation by the MOEC, through the Pedagogical Institute.
year) or student of migrant origins (35.6 periods per year). Although the difference is not dramatic and the quantitative information is not enough for us to venture safe conclusions, one could assume that these absences might relate to difficulties both in and outside the school and to a degree of alienation of NAMS larger than that of native students.

(d) Grade retention: In this case, the issue of grade retention is strongly related to the issue of absences, since was not an extensive phenomenon and was only imposed because of excessive absences from school. Again, although the number of instances is too small to allow for generalizations and interpretations, it may not be accidental that this student was NAMS.

(e) Discontinuation of education: this outcome indicator too points to the direction of inefficiency of current structures and measures to provide same opportunities to access to quality education. Although the numbers are very small, indicating that there is no considerable problem of early school leaving (pertains only 0.9% of the student population), still students with migrant origins are generally more disadvantaged (75% of cases) compared to native students (25%).

Again, this might be an indication that the school does not have the necessary mechanisms in place to prevent early school leaving amongst students of migrant origins.

In the previous section the deficiencies in the various support structures have been outlined that have led to these poor results as to NAMS equal opportunities to access, participation and success in Greek-Cypriot secondary education. The following section provides conclusions on the overall support offered in the focus school and in Cyprus in general and possible recommendations on improvement of the situation.

Conclusions and Recommendations

An overall assessment of the inputs and processes in place in Cypriot schools indicates a considerable lack of educational support, which is outlined below for each focus-area of this report. Before moving on to each area specifically, it is important to note that a general problem that affects all four areas below is the fact that, due to the strong centralization of the Greek-Cypriot education system, the school does not have considerable autonomy to take its own decisions, manage its own funds and adjust its practices to its specific local needs. It is important to highlight that the conclusions below are not applicable to ZEP schools mentioned through the report. Annex to this report provides more detailed description of the arrangements available at ZEP schools.

Linguistic support

Although the Intensive programme for Greek as a foreign language was a much needed development (in the absence of any measures in support of NAMS until 2008), it does not seem adequate to provide comprehensive support and many interviewees pointed to a number of shortcomings:

- **Not intensive enough**: the teacher in this programme pointed to the need for a more Intensive programme, observing that with 5 teaching periods of instruction weekly the programme cannot be considered intensive.

  *for me 5 teaching periods per week are not enough, because often some of them are lost because of other school activities, school celebrations for example, It would be more beneficial if teaching took 10 hours the least. It would be even*
more effective if, for the first semester, newly arrived students and only language lessons, in the form of a short inception class, and then enter the mainstream classroom. We are doing whatever we can, but not everything depends on us, decisions come from above

• **Lack of inception classes:** Both the teacher of the Intensive programme, the Deputy heads and the MOEC’s advisor underlined the need for inception classes that will provide intensive and targeted support, both in terms of language and in terms of students’ gradual integration and acculturation to the Greek-Cypriot education system. All stakeholders find problematic the introduction of students who cannot speak the language of instruction in mainstream classes. The Institute’s suggestion in 2008 was the formation of inception classes, while the MOEC rejected it on financial grounds. Now that the programme will not be funded from EU funds, the MOEC will consider again the possibility of inception classes. According to one of the Deputy Heads interviewed, when newly arrived students are introduced in mainstream classes:

> Students sit there as if they are mute and invisible, while the teacher has to go on with covering the curriculum. If the teacher has some sensitivity on the issue, (s)he may smile or ask some things, or talk to the student in person and see how (s)he feels, but cannot help much beyond that. We have to find a more effective mechanism to support these children, both linguistically and emotionally before they are introduced in the unknown and often unwelcoming environment of the mainstream classroom. I see this every day, there are children which in the end become speechless indeed and there are other children which, in their attempt to make their presence felt in the classroom can create problems. Then you have the phenomenon of students from the same country grouping together and speaking their language, which is absolutely normal because they don't know the local language and they need to speak to someone, but creates sort of ghettos in the school. Of course there are students who try very hard to feel part of the whole.

It is hopeful that this seems to be a transitional period and the ministry has already invited the Pedagogical Institute and the University of Cyprus to submit their proposals for reforming the current structures, which could mean that improvements are under way.

• **The programme not well integrated in the school:** according to the teacher, often the programme is not considered an integral part of the school but something external to it and even the teachers often feel that they are not well integrated within the teaching staff.

• **Functional problems:** both teachers and MOEC officials noted that there are various functional problems in the current system e.g. the constant renewal of the team of these teachers does not allow for teachers’ professional development and every year things start from scratch; the course starts late because of late placement of these teachers and the ineffective way of assessment; the current teacher training is not enough (4-5 meetings yearly); in-service training takes up teaching time, while it could take place in the beginning of September, before students come to the school; the teaching materials come from Greece and are not adjusted to the Cypriot context; there is a lack of constant monitoring of students progress etc.

• **Lack of language support after the end of the programme:** The programme provides only the minimum level of competence in the language of instruction and does not involve the teaching of advanced Greek for academic purposes, neither does it provide for the complex academic literacy skills required to do well at school at ISCED levels 2 and 3.
Recommendation

It would be beneficial to introduce a comprehensive and systemic Greek language support, including both initial intensive instruction and continuous support. Introduction of inception classes could be an option in the centralised Cypriot system.

Development of evaluation mechanism assessing progress and perceptions of bilingual students receiving linguistic support would facilitate the assessment of effectiveness of those arrangements.

Academic Support

- **Lack of an effective orientation measures for newcomer NAMS**: For the moment, beyond the much-needed Guide to Education in Cyprus (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010b), there is no other mechanism for orienting the students to the wide variety of issues related to their effective function within the Greek-Cypriot system of secondary education (e.g. what are the requirements for each subject, the exact procedures of assessment, the use of textbooks etc.). Much of this information is very culturally-specific and NAMS need guidance in order to function effectively.

- **Lack of targeted academic support**: There is no academic support specifically intended for NAMS in the Greek-Cypriot education system, to help them adjust to the demands of the Greek-Cypriot curriculum and keep up with the pace of their native peers. According to the teacher trainer, teachers of the Intensive programme often report that oftentimes students themselves ask for help in various school subjects (e.g. mathematics, science) and come to these teachers to find academic support in various school subjects.

- **Lack of bilingual mediators**: The teacher trainer also stresses the need for recruiting bilingual people (both as teachers, teacher assistants and intercultural mediators) to help these students in the first difficult stages.

- **Lack of differentiated assessment**: Furthermore, there are no differentiated methods of evaluation, to reflect the different stage of these students learning compared to natives or speakers of the native language.

Recommendation

For a centralised country like Cyprus, central institutionalised arrangements for academic support will have more effect on NAMS and other beneficiaries.

The introduction of comprehensive assessment system upon arrival and bilingual mediators is needed to support NAMS’ integration.

Outreach and cooperation

There are no considerable efforts for outreach and cooperation, largely due to limited school autonomy. Yet, even in cases in which the focus-school can take initiatives, such as the involvement of parents in the school and its bodies, there seems to be no efforts toward this direction. The absence of migrant parents in the Parents’ Association, despite migrant students comprising 23% of the student population, is particularly telling as to the lack of outreach and cooperation initiatives.
According to the teacher trainer, another proposal to the MOEC that was not implemented was the involvement of the municipalities in the organization of inception classes, taking advantage of the period of 3 months that the law allows to migrants, before they are forced to register their children in a school.

**Recommendation**

*Central level encouragement and policy guidance on parental involvement is needed to enforce these policies in schools.*

### Intercultural education

As noted above, intercultural education, although present in the rhetoric of the MOEC, is not implemented in a comprehensive and integrated way in the focus school. The stakeholders made references only to sporadic extra-curricular practices that create a facade of multiculturalism. These practices usually celebrate difference, but fail to encourage the critical reflection on social issues arising from life in a diverse and multicultural society. This observation is in accordance with the observations of Gregoriou (2008: 42) that intercultural education in Cyprus is limited mostly to a version of “boutique multiculturalism”\(^{63}\). In her third opinion on Cyprus, the advisory committee on the framework convention for the protection of national minorities (Council of Europe 2010) makes similar observations as to the nascent status of intercultural education in Cyprus and the lack of a coherent integration strategy for minorities.

Overall, Cypriot education policy arrangements does not prove to be flexible and responsive towards migrant children needs both at national and school levels (with exception of ZEP schools, which comprise only 2% of schools in Cyprus) and lack policy attention and resources to address the issues of multiculturalism in education.

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\(^{63}\) **With particular reference to the thematic area of intercultural education, this policy review suggests that measures for multicultural education have been used to ontologize “culture” and “cultural difference”, to separate multiculturalism from issues of global justice, and to delineate it within the exceptional space of schools as “intercultural education”. This observation presents us with the challenge of deconstructing the reified understandings and uses of intercultural education as a socio-pedagogical ‘pharmacy’ and an algorithmic mode of action for promoting social integration. A focus on the intercultural interactions that take place in schools would help us identify both normalized forms of racial/gender violence and forms of cultural interaction that promote the agency of students, migrants and non-migrants, as subjects of cultural mediation, translation and hybridization.**
### List of Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Institution/Organisation</th>
<th>Mode of Interview</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Deputy Head&lt;sup&gt;64&lt;/sup&gt; (responsible for the Intensive programme for Greek language learning)</td>
<td>Gymnasium in Nicosia</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>29/09/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>School counsellor</td>
<td>Gymnasium in Nicosia</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>03/10/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Teacher trainer</td>
<td>Cyprus Pedagogical Institute</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>03/10/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Teacher advisor</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>03/10/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Inspector in charge of NAMS linguistic support</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>12/10/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Teacher of Greek as second language for NAMS</td>
<td>Gymnasium in Nicosia</td>
<td>Phone interview</td>
<td>26/10/2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Deputy Head (responsible for the Literacy and Learning Difficulties programmes)</td>
<td>Gymnasium in Nicosia</td>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>26/10/2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>64</sup> I requested an interview from the Head of School but we had a quick chat and then she kindly referred me to her two Deputy Heads because, as she explained, she was newly appointed by the MOEC in this school (last year she was Head in another school) and she did not have yet a clear idea of the details of school history and the programmes running in the school. Conversely, both Deputy Head had more than three years experience in the focus school.
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Annex

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON ZEP SCHOOL PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

The expert did one month of ethnographic research in the ZEP *primary school* in Nicosia in 2009-2010.

In that year, 87% of the primary school’s students were NAMS. In the year 2010-2011 73% of the students of the ZEP *gymnasium* were NAMS.

The focus of the investigation was other than the function and effectiveness of ZEP schools (we were looking at teaching practices related to the interethnic conflict, its consequences and reconciliation in Greek-Cypriot primary schools). Therefore, the information provided derives from the expert’s observations and assessments.

Below is provided a bullet-point description of arrangements in ZEP schools.

- **Number of students in each class**: the number of students was never bigger than 12
- **Small school**: the small number of students in the whole school also helped strengthening student-student and student-teacher relations, so that the atmosphere was very warm and family-like e.g. everybody knew everybody by their names.
- **School autonomy**: the MOEC was less strict with the implementation of its policies and allowed the school much freedom to make vital decisions, according to the needs of its population
- **Curriculum**: following the previous observation, for example: the school had the freedom to adjust the provided curriculum to the needs of the school’s population (e.g. the pace can be much slower; a teacher in the third grade may teach material/knowledge that was already covered in this 1st and 2nd grades, if the students need that)
- **Individual language support**: There were sessions of individual tutoring on Greek language learning for students who needed extra help.
- **Bilingual teacher**: there was a bilingual teacher (Greek – Russian) of Pontian origins, who taught both in the primary and secondary school (these were based in the same building, ground floor and first floor respectively) and taught Greek as a foreign language, employing her knowledge of Russian when necessary. This teacher seemed to help students considerably in making the difficult transition between languages.
- **All-day (extended day) school**: the school hours were extended in the evening (optional) and almost all NAMS students attended, since their parents were working in the evenings and the school provided both help with homework and recreational activities. During the afternoon time, some of the same teachers who worked in the morning were there helping students with their homework and providing extra academic support in subjects where this was needed. The small number of students in the school also helped so that teachers knew exactly the academic needs of students, even if these did not belong to their class (during morning hours)
- **Enlightened teachers**: Most of the teaching personnel, for some reason, *chose* to go to this school (they put this school as their first choice when asked about school/area preferences by the MOEC), for their personal reasons, most of which had to do with their teacher training and their own world-view, which made them see working in such as school as a challenge. The head of the school also happened to be gifted, with a vision on how to make the school
work for the students (but this could be a matter of luck really, because the next year the head was much more conservative\textsuperscript{65}). Thus, in general teachers were rather progressive and open to diversity and loved what they were doing, and poured lots’ of energy and enthusiasm in their teaching. It is also important to note that ZEP schools in other cities might not work as well as this one.

- **Intercultural education**: The school placed strong emphasis on intercultural education and the school was full of relevant intercultural, anti-racist and pro-diversity displays (religious, ethnic, sexual etc.). Additionally, each teacher had to undertake an ‘action’ which aimed at the integration and full participation of students’ in the school (e.g. games, sport activities, art projects, regular school assemblies). Furthermore, the focus in the school celebrations of this school was not national but international, to encompass the experiences of its students e.g. on the day commemorating the entrance of Greece in WWII, the focus was not on the heroism of Greek soldiers and society but on the comprehensiveness of this war (e.g. a map showing the gradual spread of the conflict to different countries) and its implications (e.g. poverty, famine etc.) with an antiwar message

- **Afternoon activities**: also a cultural center opposite the school offered its premises for the children in the evenings and the school made use of the space. It equipped the room with children books, various board games, knitting kits and kits for other creative activities, a snooker, a TV and a projector etc. NAMS students usually enjoyed spending their afternoons/evenings and socializing there, while their parents were still at work.

- **School networks**: there was close collaboration both with the ZEP Gymnasium which was in the same building and with the other ZEP schools (nursery etc. in the Nicosia ZEP zone). There were also regular meetings held, during which experiences and problems were shared and discussed.

- **Close links with parents**: teachers knew most of their students’ parents and had quite frequent contacts with them (more than once a term, which is the case in the mainstream schools)

- **Involvement of the community**: e.g. the local church provides to the school students every now and then free Sunday meals in a local restaurant

Of course, it has to be noted, that it was possible to take all the above measures because of the “specialness” of this school. In an average school with NAMS less than 50% these measures could be judged

A. as disadvantaging the native students (e.g. esp. modifications in curriculum which slowed down then normal flow of lessons) and

B. very costly to be applied to schools all over Cyprus

The possibility of ZEPs leading to segregation was considered as one of the downsides of this system, but teachers tried to limit its impact. I am also aware that proposals to the other two schools in Nicosia with high concentration of NAMS to enter the ZEP programme was met with fierce resistance, both from the school and from parents and the community, who regarded this as a serious debasement of their school and associated it with failure and bad reputation.

\textsuperscript{65} Please don’t make this information public
The following excerpt also describes an intervention led by an academic and the Pedagogical Institute to Promoting closer ties and cooperation between the school, the family and the community in the framework of intercultural education, which led to gradually convincing one of the schools for the necessity and benefits of entering the ZEP programme (year 2006-2007)

In School A [...] suggestions for organising school activities in front of the parents as part of the intervention programme and cooperation with other stakeholders (Municipality, Welfare Services, Church) proved to be a positive step and enabled parents understand the purpose of the school and to become prepared in accepting the policy of zones of educational priority the following year. At the same time, children felt free to express their attitudes that despite the discontinuity (geographical, cultural, lingual) they experienced, they tried to get rid of ethnocentric myths, so that they were not trapped in educational and social exclusion situations. This may explain why children in School A did not show interest in attending free mother-tongue language learning classes as part of the whole-day school activities and the lower percentages in forming attitudes about the other as classmates (61%) or friends from other countries (79%).

- I want to come to school but no certificate-my father didn’t come.

- My mother wants to –she doesn’t speak Greek (School A)

- Yes I liked the “festival”, my father came too, if he doesn’t I’ll shout at him! (School A)

[...]

It is worth mentioning that although the intervention project was completed, the schools continue to organize activities along the lines followed during the intervention while one of the schools was chosen to be included in the zone of educational priority.

(Hadjitheodoulou-Loizidou and Symeou 2007: 68)

Regarding external assessment/opinion of experts/policy makers on ZEP schools policy, I was only able to find the description/evaluation of ZEP schools in Cyprus that follows. Beyond that, from my observations I can say that teachers and students in the particular ZEP school seemed rather happy with the school’s arrangements.

4.4. Zones of Educational Priority

The policy to create Zones of Educational Priority has been a strategic choice of some European states to fight functional illiteracy and school failure. In Cyprus, the innovation of ZEPs was piloted in 2003-4 in two school complexes, Faneromenis (CY88) in Nicosia and Saint Antoniou in Limassol (CY86), and in 2004-2005 it was extended with the operation of a ZEP in Theoskepasti in Paphos (CY87). All these functioned in 2005-6 (Minister of Education and Culture 2006a), and by 2006-7, 6 kindergartens and 7 primary schools participated in the program in the Nicosia, Limassol and Pafos districts. A fourth ZEP school was opened in Larnaca in 2008-9 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2008).

In Educational Priority Zones the selected complex of schools normally consists of the main Elementary Schools, a High school and the main
Kindergartens. The schools are located in poorer areas and the majority of the students come from families with low socio-economic status and a low level of educational attainment. The criteria to determine an area as a ZEP are: 1) a high rate of school failure and functional illiteracy, 2) a high percentage of foreign students, 3) large proportions of drop outs and incidents of violence and delinquent behaviour (Minister of Education and Culture nd, d).

Several actions have been taken to address functional illiteracy and school failure, and the application of Education Priority Zones has been in general regarded as successful. The reduction in levels of school failure and the growth of levels of literacy, through the systematic support for positive attitudes towards reading, books and knowledge, was accomplish in all three ZEPs in Limassol, Paphos and Nicosia. The operation of the ZEPs has been well accepted by parents and the wider community. (Spinthourakis, et al. 2008: 9)

Further information about the ‘actions’ in take in the three of the ZEP schools in Cyprus can be found in the EPASI website (see also (Cederberg, et al. 2009):

- ZEP of Saint Antoniou (Limassol)  http://www.epasi.eu/$-project-study.cfm?PID=086
- ZEP of Panagias Theoskepastis (Paphos)  http://www.epasi.eu/$-project-study.cfm?PID=087
- ZEP Faneromenis (Nicosia)  http://www.epasi.eu/$-project-study.cfm?PID=088