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Ισότητα, Στήριξη, Αντιρατσισμός
Equality, Support, Antiracism



Abused no More Project

Legal Capability in Relation to Socially Excluded and Migrant Youth in Cyprus: A Gender Based Analysis



Executive Summary

Key Objective of the Country Report

Research on discrimination faced by young migrant and refugee women in Cyprus is scarce, mainly because migration is falsely viewed as a gender neutral issue (Trimikliniotis & Demetriou, 2014; KISA, 2009a). As women constitute 57% of the migrant population, this report focuses on the intersectional and multiple discrimination that migrant and refugee women face (gender, ethnicity, legal status and racial background) in Cyprus, specifically, GBD (KISA, 2009a).

The objective of this research project is three-fold. Firstly, at national level, it aims to present an innovative stepping stone in the betterment of assessing and implementing community-led schemes advocating for Public Legal Education (PLE) for marginalised youth in Cyprus. Initially, KISA conducted interviews and focus groups in which numerous young migrant and refugee women were given the opportunity to either draft or discuss their reactions to vignettes which illustrate GBD in the institutional, employment, educational and familial contexts. Secondly, the project purported to meaningfully engage young migrant and refugee women and men in the research process so as to make it youth-led. More precisely, KISA recruited young migrant and refugee youth (primarily women) to contribute as either co-researchers and participants. This youth-led approach aims to promote empowerment of young people from vulnerable communities and provide

them with a platform in which they can contribute towards combating the GBD faced by marginalised youth in Cyprus. More specifically, the results will be used to inform the educational and skills development course material aimed towards increasing the legal literacy of young migrants and refugees vulnerable to experiencing gender-based abuse. Thirdly, this project was developed in line with the Action and Erasmus + Programme, which endeavour to contribute towards the Europe 2020 Strategy and the EU Youth Strategy. More precisely, the Europe 2020 strategy aims to concurrently “deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion.. concrete actions at EU and national levels underpin the strategy” (European Commission, 2016). Thus, within the Erasmus Objectives, KISA participates in partnership with [Anziani e Non Solo](#) (Italy), the [Romanian U.S. Alumni Association](#) (Romania) [Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej](#) (Poland), and led by The [IARS International Institute](#) (United Kingdom).

Finally, this partnership collaborates in an effort to bridge, at both EU and national level, the “ gap [that] is identified in the field of training, education and youth ... through the free dissemination of a youth-led programme for service providers and young people with the aim of increasing their legal capability” (Abused no More, 2016) The research findings will also inform the training manuals and courses to be

developed and implemented by the project partners at a later stage.

Methodology

The methodological paradigm was twofold. Firstly, a literature review of key concepts such as public legal education and GBD was conducted from a variety of sources mainly academic research provided by the public sector, grey literature and journalistic outputs of NGOs and the public legal education network website (PLEnet). Key words such as ‘discrimination’ specifically ‘institutional, employment, familial, and educational discrimination’, and ‘migrant and refugee youth’ were conducted. The youth-led research method focused primarily on the Cypriot context as well as GBD within the EU context. The fieldwork that ensued was a mixed methods design. All internet searches were conducted mainly in English and a limited search in Greek.

English is the language most commonly used by all migrant and refugee communities in Cyprus, including the majority of the young people engaged in the project. It is also noted that most research, reports and other materials in Cyprus are also published in English. Migrants and refugees in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus do not usually learn Greek, largely as a result of the restrictions imposed by the rigid and strict migration and asylum policies and the very limited approach to and measures for integration. This leaves migrants and refugees in a position where the only available language of

communication is English.¹ Initially, five co-researchers participated in two vignette based focus groups [two participants per focus group led by two facilitators], and one case study [one participant led by two facilitators], in which all co-researchers drafted a vignette on gender-based discrimination in familial, institutional, educational and employment contexts. Subsequently, ten participants engaged in semi-structured face-to-face interviews, seven of whom consequently participated in focus-groups [three in one focus group and four in another focus group, both of which were led by two facilitators]. As this project is youth-led, marginalised youth (specifically women of migrant backgrounds and refugees) were recruited.

A Participatory Learning Action (PLA) model was adopted in order to facilitate empowerment of marginalised youth by providing the participants with a platform in which their opinions could be expressed through their roles as either co-researchers or interviewees (Appel, Buckingham, Jodoin, & Roth, 2012). The epistemological position of the fieldwork is social constructionism as KISA was interested in

¹ Even though English is known, to varying degrees, by many migrants in Cyprus, especially from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe, there are many others, especially refugees of Arab origin, who have no knowledge of this language. This renders them even more vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and violation of their human, employment and social rights.

investigating the social construction of the phenomena of PLE for marginalised youth in Cyprus. More precisely, the interpretative analysis of the participants' responses to the vignettes was of utmost importance for two reasons. Firstly, it highlights KISA's ontological commitment towards understanding and, consequently, improving the limited knowledge of PLE of marginalised youth regarding GBD (Schwandt, 2000). Secondly, considering the youth-led research approach enabled the participants' empowerment by engaging them within an environment in which their

experiences of GBD and opinions would be used for the development of training materials geared towards increasing young people's legal capability, specifically in regards to GBD.

Considering the young demographic of the participants, BACP's (2010) ethical considerations of fidelity, beneficence, non-maleficence and self-respect were adopted during all stages of the research process (McLeod, 2003).

Literature Review Findings

The literature review underlined that young migrant and refugee women [aged 17-24] are most at risk to GBD due to intersectional discrimination of racism, sexism, ageism (KISA, 2014b; PRIO & GAT Advisory Team, 2012). The differences between a 'refugee' and 'migrant' are clarified as refugees flee persecution in their countries and migrants relocate to better their lives either through education, or employment opportunities (Edwards, 2015). GBD in institutional, employment, educational and familial contexts in Cyprus is defined as well as the negative psychological impacts of GBD such as internalised disempowerment and hopelessness. The unavailable community-led schemes on PLE and psychological well-being is also elaborated upon. More precisely, PLE is defined to "provide people with awareness, knowledge and understanding of rights and legal issues, together with the confidence and skills they

need to deal with disputes and gain access to justice" (Public Legal Education Taskforce, 2007, p.9).

The highly discriminatory social attitudes on migrant women which are ridden in xenophobia are also described especially in consideration to how these misinformed and distorted social attitudes correlate to the discriminatory treatment and behaviour towards migrant and refugee women (KISA, 2013).

These literature findings are linked to how PLE would provide a stepping stone in attaining social justice by enhancing young people's legal literacy. PLE would also serve to empower marginalised youth living against a backdrop of a society which contributes towards their disempowerment through limited prospects for integration, employment and education (IARS, 2009). Additionally, the 'us' versus 'them' dichotomy which is ever-present within Cypriot

society is also described to contribute towards the inexistence of community-led initiatives and

empowerment schemes for marginalised youth from migrant and refugee backgrounds (KISA, 2013b).

Fieldwork Findings

The fieldwork findings echoed the highlighted reality in the literature review. Participants' responses in the semi-structured interviews and focus groups indicated the limited knowledge, skills and attitudes young migrant and refugee youth have of PLE, especially regarding GBD.

More precisely, the majority of the participants recognised that the protagonists within the vignettes were being subjected to GBD and consequently having their human rights violated. However, whilst the interviewees recognised the unfair treatment towards the protagonists within the vignettes and in many circumstances even identified with them, they disclosed having little comprehension as to what constituted their legal rights in Cyprus. Additionally, all participants were unaware as to which services were available to them to request help in their plight against GBD. Furthermore, language difficulties, specifically their total lack of knowledge of Greek and very rudimentary knowledge of English, tend to dishearten them from seeking help. It is important to note that this research highlights the reality for migrant and refugee youth residing in the areas under the control of the Republic of Cyprus.

This research does not include the experiences of migrant and refugee youth residing in the area not

under the control of the Republic of Cyprus, in which Turkish is the predominant language. This is a regrettable limitation imposed by the de facto division of Cyprus. In brief, the most prevalent findings highlighted that there were five barriers to their knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding their legal literacy:

- language barriers
- internalised disempowerment
- lack of faith in the system
- little knowledge of their rights
- little knowledge of where to access their rights and psycho-social support

The empowerment that was experienced by marginalised youth when sharing their experiences of GBD at the focus group discussions highlights the potential prominence of social cohesion when providing training on legal education. The need for inclusion and integration within the local community was also a prominent talking point amongst the participants when discussing their requirements for combatting GBD.

Next Steps and Key Recommendations

A common theme which arose from the literature review and fieldwork was the importance of national and EU level educational and training practices on legal literacy for marginalised youth on discrimination, specifically in the context of GBD. More precisely, in order for young migrants and refugees to effectively pursue their rights, dissemination of information in the national languages [i.e. Greek and Turkish, as well as in English, Arabic, French, Hindi, Farsi, Russian, Sinhalese and Tagalog] on their legal rights and training on the adequate knowledge, skills and attitudes is absolutely necessary. Cultivating the values of antiracism and the acceptance of cultural, religious and ethnic diversity is also recommended as a tool within the educational contexts to trigger modernisation and to promote multiculturalism within the forthcoming generations. Providing these tools to individuals who work with migrants and refugees, within the public and private fields (e.g. Migration Department, Asylum Service, Social Welfare Services, the Police, NGOs) on the appropriate cultural and social sensitivities that are required when working with this vulnerable population is also highly recommended (KISA, 2009b). As the bulk of the violations of the rights of migrants and refugees, the systemic discrimination against them, their exclusion and marginalisation are embedded in the migration model, policies, structures and administrative practices in place in Cyprus; it is of

critical significance that they are drastically changed (Γρηγορίου, 2008).

Future research which analyses stakeholders' reactions to the four vignettes drafted by migrant and refugee youth is suggested to provide a more in-depth understanding of GBD of the professionals who work with marginalised youth. Finally, providing free online and face to face training on PLE and organising seminars with EU partners to exchange good practices on tackling discrimination and minority youth disempowerment on EU level is also proposed.

Provision of this training is intended to be aligned with the opportunities available in the labour market and also to establish minority ethnic youth with closer links to the business and social community. In brief, the education and training programmes that will be designed based upon the findings of this report as well of the other national reports produced by all partners are intended to promote an institutional and cultural shift, at EU and national level in regards to improving the opportunities provided to marginalised youth.

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