



Booklet 1: Keynote and Europe sessions

**Cypriot Civil Society
Strengthening Programme
International Civil Society Forum
June 2008**



Civil Society – Linking Cyprus to Europe

Civil society can end oppression. Civil society can build bridges between enemies. Civil society can move giant institutions. Civil society can change communities for the better. Civil society on Cyprus does all this, and more – civil society is something we can be proud to be part of.

These were some of the messages that resonated at the International Civil Society Forum and the Civil Society Awards Ceremony, two high-profile, high-energy events held by the Cypriot Civil Society Strengthening Programme on 7 June, 2008. The Cypriot Civil Society Strengthening Programme was run jointly by INTRAC, Management Centre and NGO Support Centre. The Forum demonstrates how well-received the Programme was – over 150 CSO representatives from Cyprus and abroad, policymakers, donors, academics and interested citizens attended and enjoyed the event.

This booklet is the write-up from the first part of the Forum – an overview of the Keynote speaker and the sessions on opportunities for Cypriot Civil Society in Europe. There is a second booklet too about worldwide and Cypriot experiences of CSOs in peace and reconciliation work. You can download both booklets from the websites below.

There was a sense of momentum and optimism at the Forum, fulfilled afterwards at the 2008 Civil Society Organisations Awards Ceremony, where 16 exceptional organisations received awards recognising their work on Cyprus – details on the back page.

Action and inspiration at the forum

Speakers from academia, from conflict zones, from politics, from longstanding bi-communal groups, from the European Union and Council of Europe spoke at the Forum about new opportunities for Cypriot civil society organisations.



The keynote speaker, Roelf Meyer from South Africa, used to be a politician – Minister of Constitutional Affairs in the white-dominated National Party in apartheid South Africa. He was the National Party's chief negotiator in the process of ending apartheid and bringing in democratic rule in 1994. His counterpart from the ANC was Cyril Ramaphosa, and although these two didn't receive the Nobel Peace Prize (it went to presidents de Klerk and Mandela) their negotiations helped create the new South Africa.

Roelf Meyer, former Minister of Constitutional Affairs, South Africa delivering the keynote address

Keynote: How civil society brought democracy to South Africa

Roelf Meyer, former South African Minister of Constitutional Affairs, spoke about how civil society in South Africa had put pressure to end apartheid. Ordinary Black South Africans had been struggling for decades to end the brutal and systematic oppression of apartheid. Now, civil society worked together with the African National Congress (ANC), the international community, and white South Africans' realisation that the system was deeply unjust. These brought about the end of apartheid and brought in democratic elections. The segregation ethos of apartheid had been in place 340 years – changing it was an enormous challenge. Civil society in the shape of religious communities, trade unions, NGOs, academics and even sports organisations all played a part in bringing democracy to South Africa.

Civil society in the downfall of apartheid

The religious community played a major role in giving direction to democratisation events. The most iconic religious leader was Archbishop Desmond Tutu – who also received a well-earned Nobel Peace Prize. The South African trade unions have a tradition of strong activism for workers' rights and justice. Cyril Ramaphosa, Roelf Meyer's counterpart as chief negotiator in 1993-94, was also the leader of the National Union of Miners. In 1986-87 the miners were leading the biggest-ever strike in the goldmines. Roelf Meyer was deputy minister of police at the time and Cyril Ramaphosa 'gave me a hard time every damn day!' Nonetheless, the two worked together constructively in the negotiations.

NGOs in South Africa – some within the white community – were established out of political frustrations. For example, the NGO 'Idasa' was the first organisation of white South Africans to begin contacts with the Anti-Apartheid Movement both at home and abroad.

Academic institutions and universities were especially active at the intellectual level.

Finally, sports are tremendously important to South Africans and the international boycott on South African cricket, rugby and football was a great frustration. The pressure on sports groups was a greater influence on the end of apartheid than many realise.

All these civil society actors started to play a major role through the mid-1980s. They started a process of change so that when there was a window of opportunity in politics – the transition from a hardline leader to a more moderate one – change could happen.

Cypriots now have a similar window of opportunity for change.

Change happens when people make it happen

Androulla Kaminara from the European Commission also reflected on her experiences of working in the European Commission's Directorate General Development. In the conflicts she has seen – Angola, Sudan, Burundi – the levels of development are far lower than in Cyprus, and there are no institutionalised civil society partnerships. But despite this, change only happened in these countries when people decided it needed to change, and organised to make it happen. She said: 'I cannot overestimate the role you as citizens and as civil society organisations play even here in Cyprus. We have to be active and ensure that citizens' voices are heard.'



*Androulla Kaminara,
Director of the EC
Representation in Cyprus*

Roelf and Androulla's statements about the window of opportunity were repeated by the other speakers throughout the day. There are opportunities for funding, for influence and for dialogue. There are networks to join, there are offices to visit and official visitors to talk to. We have tried to present the relevant contact persons, ideas and website addresses to make it easier for you to make links and reach beyond the current situation.



CSOs, funders, policymakers and trainers listen at the Forum

Small CSOs – large European institutions

The Greek Cypriot community joined the EU in 2004, but what does this mean for civil society organisations today? We invited speakers from two international European institutions to tell us.



Cypriot civil society representatives discuss the photo exhibition at the Forum

The European Commission and CSOs – listening and funding

Did you know that the EC holds ongoing consultations with people and that citizens can use the online Interactive Policy-Making Initiative to comment on the effects of EU legislation? That there are lots of funding opportunities at the EC, for which both Turkish and Greek Cypriots are eligible? Androulla Kaminara, Director of the EC Representation in Cyprus, told the Forum about opportunities in the European Commission for influencing decisions, funding and joining CSO platforms. See http://ec.europa.eu/cyprus/news/speeches/index_en.htm for a copy of the presentation and useful links.

- Opportunities for comment on EC policies that are being developed: this has been an option for EU citizens since 2002. See http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/index_en.htm for open consultations, discussions and contributing your experience.
- Comments and consultations are normally for Green Papers. EU policies start as a Green Paper – a ‘brainstorming’ document that describes a few policy options and invites comments on which one citizens prefer. One option based on the Green Paper becomes a White Paper – an enforceable policy document.
- Several Greek Cypriot organisations are members of the Platform of European Social NGOs. The Platform is made up of 39 European Social Forums, focusing on themes like disability or youth. You can access these Forums if your organisation is associated with one of these Cypriot Forum member bodies: Pancyprian Organisation Polyteknon, Cyprus Adult Education Association, Pancyprian Organisation for the Blind, Centre for the Study of Childhood and Adolescence, Cyprus Youth Council, The Pan-Cyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council, Cyprus Rehabilitation Counselling Association (CRCA) or Advocacy Group for the Mentally Ill.
- There are funding grants for civil society organisations from the EU:
 - 1) Operating grants
 - 2) Calls for projects
 - 3) Calls for conference proposals
 - 4) Joint actions by the EC and member states and others.
- One current civil society opportunity is in the field of Community Action in Public Health – see the call for applications on http://ec.europa.eu/phea/phea_ami/ or contact Elena Makrigiorgi at emakrigiorgi@moh.gov.cy. All Cypriots can apply. This initiative is ongoing until 30 October 2010.
- The EU’s trade policy is enormously important to businesses and consumers – many things, from food prices to running a business, depend on it. Cypriots can give their views on EU trade policy through the Cyprus Consumers’ Association (CCA) in the Greek Cypriot community, and through the Management Centre (MC) in the Turkish Cypriot community. This initiative works to ensure that all perspectives on EU trade policy are heard.

- The 2004 EU enlargement round showed the importance of civil society's involvement in the process. Now, all Cypriots can take part in the ongoing EC Civil Society dialogue on EU enlargement. There is a new financing facility under this initiative too.

This and more can be explored on the Representation of the European Commission in Cyprus at www.europa.eu.cyprus

The European Union is a good reason to start thinking beyond our own groups and to work towards having a bigger effect through cooperation, partnerships, joining networks and learning from others' experience. Individual CSOs can influence the European Union as part of bigger civil society movements.



European Institutions panel: Jutta Gützkow, Council of Europe; Lise Pate, European Commission Taskforce at the Turkish Cypriot Community; Androulla Kaminara, EC Representation in Cyprus

Council of Europe – democracy and human rights

Meanwhile, at the larger (49 member states), older, more democracy-focused institution the Council of Europe (CoE) – called by the BBC ‘the conscience of the continent’ – there are opportunities for CSO networks to participate as full members of the Council. Speaker Jutta Gutzkow, Head of the Division of NGOs and Civil Society at the Council of Europe discussed how NGOs had become active participants in the CoE. International NGOs have participatory status in the CoE – this means organisations with members in at least 10 countries, such as the Girl Guides and International Association of Teachers. CSOs can receive technical assistance support from the CoE – there are initiatives on cooperation, monitoring and assistance.

NGOs have influence in the CoE through presenting good arguments and by creating alliances with officials. NGOs also provide ‘shadow records’ from events – alternative reports. The CoE can also get involved in training political leaders in communications and to gain better understanding of other communities.

There are frequent **visits** from the Council of Europe to Cyprus, and the delegations would be pleased to **meet Cypriot CSOs and hear their views**. July 2008 saw a visit from the Human Rights Commissioner. In November, the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages will visit. You can find out the exact dates on the website (information on social rights and social cohesion), and write to the relevant department, describing your organisation's views and why you consider them important. The delegations are keen to hear first-hand perspectives from civil society to supplement the official information.

See www.coe.int for information on the Council's democratisation, human rights and youth programmes.

There are no funds available from the CoE, except for **funds for international youth organisations**. This is for youth groups from different countries meeting, for example, for human rights dialogue, democratic participation or social cohesion. **The deadline for applications is 1 October 2008** for activities taking place in April-December 2009.

Europe – practical problems for Cypriots

At the end of the large institutions' presentations, some of the problems facing Cyprus were discussed. Joint proposals from GCC and TCC organisations are very welcome to the EC. TCC organisations can apply for some but not all EC funding – it's best to check each time. The group discussed the problems Turkish Cypriot CSOs face in making international contacts. Although the problem was not solved, it brought this complicated issue to the attention of international participants.



Many types of people want to lobby EU officials. From ECAS booklet "Tips for the would-be European Lobbyist", Tony Venables 2007.

Linking CSOs to Europe

If the EU seems too large and complex, the NGO ECAS works as an intermediary between CSOs and the European institutions. **Ewelina Daniel**, Project Manager at ECAS, described how CSOs can lobby the EU and use ECAS's study visits – a chance to have a staff member based in Brussels for a period of time and to make useful contacts in the EU. ECAS also provides training to CSOs on how to apply for EU funds. See www.ecas.org for more information.

In her presentation, Ewelina Daniel mainly discussed tips for lobbying (influencing policy decisions) at the EU. Often lobbying is dominated by commercial organisations driving their own interests. But CSOs can also lobby officials. ECAS' top tips for lobbyists are:

- Become a member of a network and send a representative to Brussels. ECAS' study visits can help with this and give you access to useful contacts. For example, the Balkans Civil Society Programme linked Balkan civil society leaders to contacts in Brussels, and these leaders passed on the information at home. ECAS is happy to set up a similar service for Cypriots.
- Get informed – know what's going on in your sector. It is important to lobby based on sound facts. For example, ECAS' project on labour mobility within the EU was based on their research that showed that despite initial fears, the 'flood' of new member states' citizens seeking work in established EU states never happened. Using their report, ECAS held meetings throughout large and small cities in the EU, worked with the press, and organised a media panel of normal citizens who talked about how the restrictions on movement harmed them. ECAS' report has been influential in the EU thanks to solid facts and widespread communication.
- Use traditional channels of lobbying. People often think about holding big high-profile events and other spectacles to get attention to your cause. However, often the official, boring channels can be very effective: complaints procedures, for example, are open to everyone. You will get an answer to your question and may even change legislation. An official complaint made by ECAS on behalf of the Association of British Pensioners in France forced the French government to change its health insurance so that it conforms with directives – before, this directive had not always been applied.
- Develop a game plan. Lobbying is like a project – you need to set its objectives, define the stakeholders and have a plan.
- Make alliances and coalitions. ECAS successfully managed to change the legislation on NGOs' Structural Funds within the EU to allow CSOs to sit on the consultative board and receive funding. This could not have happened without forming alliances with other civil society bodies.

Essentially, ECAS is positive about the prospects of lobbying – you can change policy!

Far from Brussels? No problem!

Saso Klekowski from MCMS talked about how he and his civil society colleagues in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia build alliances and networks to make a bigger impact in the EU, even from a country far away from Brussels. His organisation does this by being part of networks at the national, regional (Balkans), European and global levels; by building coalitions, and by professionalisation.



Making alliances is crucial for making an impact. Mustafa Akinci presents an award for Island-Wide Cooperation to Cyprus Dyslexia Association

Saso's presentation began with an introduction about his country. Among two million inhabitants, FYROM has seven ethnic groups and two religious groups: 'if you think Cyprus is complicated, come to FYROM'.

In FYROM, MCMS is one of the leading CSOs, with 30 staff and an annual budget of two million euros, specialising in decentralisation and local development, civil society and strengthening dialogue.

MCMS has worked with good effect through the national Civic Platform – a group of more than 30 organisations – including specialised networks and trades unions (www.gpm.net.mk). This is a good window for external relations. It also increases the capacity available to all the members because they share expertise and costs. Being part of the GPM platform also

improves each member organisation's credibility and legitimacy. GPM has received capacity building funding from the EU; represented civil society at the National Council, and written a 'shadow report' on country progress towards EU membership.

At the regional level, the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (www.balkancsd.net) has given its members access to more EU funding and capacity building through training, study visits, on-the-job training and sharing information. Through the CSD network, MCMS has worked on joint research and advocacy, their weekly email alerts go to 300 subscribers, and they can cooperate with similar EU networks.

MCMS has also been able to lobby (sometimes successfully) for changes to government policy on collective bargaining and on the role of civil society in EU-FYROM relations. MCMS worked with the European Economic and Social Council to ask for stronger collective bargaining and stronger trades unions. The result is that the EU has now made a recommendation of MCMS' opinions to the national government – an especially influential channel since FYROM is currently in negotiations for EU accession.

Concluding, Saso stressed that:

- It is very important to influence the EU – in order to see change at the national level.
- It's central to be able to aggregate the voices of civil society through networks or coalitions.
- Aggregating the message increases CSOs' professionalisation and legitimacy.
- Civil society can have an influence through representation in joint structures and providing expert opinions. But the main message is: If the Macedonian women's organisations and Islamic organisations – who hate each other – can work together to lobby for better civil society conditions, that shows that overcoming your dislike can lead to very positive results.

See www.mcms.org.mk for more details of their work.



Akova Women's Association, recipients of the Youth award



Association for Historical Dialogue and Research receiving one award for Island-wide Cooperation

These organisations received Civil Society Awards for 2008

Education and Culture Awards

HASDER Folk Arts Association
and
KENTHEA Information and Rehabilitation
Centre for Drug addiction

Environment Awards

Biologist Association 'Bio Der'
and
Cyprus Marine Environment Protection
Association-CYMEPA

Gender Awards

Association for the Prevention and Handling of
Domestic Violence
and
Mediterranean Sports Association

Health Awards

The Cyprus Association for Cancer Patients and
Friends
and
Help Those With Cancer Association

Youth Awards

Agros Youth Club
and
AKOVA Women's Association

Social Inclusion Awards

Future Worlds Center
and
Turkish Cypriot Special Education Foundation (ÖZEV)

Island-Wide Cooperation Awards

Cyprus Dyslexia Association
and
Union of Chambers of Cyprus Turkish Engineers and
Architects

The two additional awards in Island-Wide Cooperation

Association for Historical Dialogue and Research
and
PeacePlayers International Cyprus



Kimberly Foukaris, Senior Program Advisor, USAID, giving an award for Health to Raziye Kocaismail, Help Those with Cancer Association



Peter Millett, the High Commissioner of the British High Commission in Cyprus presents one Education and Culture award



Allen Bothorel, Head of the EU Support Office in the Turkish Cypriot Community presents one Environment award to CYMEPA

