

# Cyprus Report

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## 1. Introduction

Cyprus is a small island located in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, 97 km west of Syria and 64 km south of Turkey.<sup>1</sup> Cyprus has a population of 1,2 million inhabitants (Statista 2016a) and a total area of 9,251 km<sup>2</sup> (Statista 2016b), making it the third largest island in the Mediterranean after Sicily and Sardinia.<sup>2</sup> Previously under the rule of Great Britain, the island became independent in 1960, but following a Cypriot coup d'état in 1974 Turkish troops invaded the island. This caused Greek and Turkish Cypriots to flee to separate sides of the island, which resulted in thousands being internally displaced. At present, Turkish forces continue to occupy one third of the island and have established the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), while the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) controls the remaining two thirds, effectively dividing the island (BBC 2016). While both sides have long since ceased fighting and currently live in a state of accord, UN Peacekeepers continue to monitor the division due to the hostility between the two population groups (DOS 2015). In 2004, the RoC joined the European Union (EU), which has since influenced the country's politics and its societal outlook. For the purpose of this chapter, we focus on the situation in the RoC as a member state of the EU. In only a few instances reference to the Turkish part of the island is necessary.

One of the requirements imposed by the EU on its member states is the adoption of a state-run asylum system. Before the RoC joined the EU, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was responsible for all asylum-related procedures in this state, but now the RoC has successfully taken over and implemented their own state-run asylum system and procedures.

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1 <http://www.kypros.org/CyprusPanel/cyprus/geography.html> 2016.

2 <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Cyprus.html> 2016.

Although the Cypriot<sup>3</sup> economy has been slowly recovering since the 2012/13 European financial crisis and the Cypriots being among the most prosperous people in the *Mediterranean* region, with GDP per capita of \$22,903 in 2015, the effects of the crisis continue to be felt within the RoC (Statista 2016c). In 2013, the unemployment rate reached an all-time high of 16,9%. In recent years, it has slowly decreased, and as of July 2016, it has remained at 11,6% (Statista 2016d). However, it becomes apparent that further improvement in the Cypriot economic sector is still required when one compares Cyprus with its fellow EU member state Malta. Similar to Cyprus, Malta is a small island in the periphery of the EU that has an annual GDP growth rate of 5,2% and in 2016 has an unemployment rate of only 4,9% (Trading Economics 2016c). In addition to a moderately high unemployment rate in general, problems within the Cypriot<sup>4</sup> labour market remain, including significantly high youth unemployment that currently stands at 24% and long-term unemployment that has decreased in recent years to 5,8% (Trading Economics 2016a; EC 2016).

Regarding a more recent European development, the European refugee crisis, the RoC received a total of 1,560 applicants for asylum between January and September 2015, according to the *AIDA's Country Report: Cyprus* (ECRE 2015a). The majority of applicants (1,075) received subsidiary protection, while 360 applications were rejected, leaving only 95 persons receiving refugee status (ECRE 2015a: 6). Thus, the rate at which the RoC recognises refugee status is one of the lowest in Europe. For example, in 2015, Germany granted refugee status to 48,5% of its applicants for asylum (BAMF 2016: 7). Many of the asylum seekers arriving in the RoC come from Syria in response to the ongoing conflict that has led many people to flee to Europe. Other countries of origin include Palestine,<sup>5</sup> Vietnam and India (see Tables 1 and 2).

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3 Refers to the TRNC and the RoC.

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5 According to the UN, Palestinian refugees are those who had lived in mandated Palestine from 1946 to 1948 (UNRWA 2016).

*Table 1: Overview of applications and status granted in Cyprus in 2015 (January–September)*

	Total number	Rate (%)
Refugee status	95	6,2
Subsidiary protection	1,075	70,2
Rejection	360	23,6
Total	1,560	100

*Source:* Adapted from ECRE (2015a: 6).

*Table 2: Total numbers of applicants and rejections in Cyprus in 2015 (January–September) by country of origin*

Country of origin	Total number of applicants	Rejection rate (%)
Syria	705	0
Palestine	95	0
Vietnam	95	100
Stateless	65	0
India	65	100
Pakistan	65	100
Egypt	60	77,7
Iraq	55	0
Bangladesh	45	100
Sri Lanka	45	100
Somalia	40	no data

*Source:* Adapted from ECRE (2015a: 6).

Statistics from 2016 show that the main countries of origin remain the same as in 2015 (Eurostat 2016). The number of asylum applications does not vary much either: in the first half of 2016 1,145 people applied for asylum in Cyprus (Eurostat 2016b). In other terms, there were 1,353 asylum applicants per million inhabitants in this period of time (Eurostat 2016c). The total recognition rate currently is the same as in Spain, namely, 71 % (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e). Subsidiary protection was given in Cyprus in 62 % of cases in the same period of time (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e). In total, 1,100 decisions on asylum applications were made there in the first half of 2016, 325 of them were rejected (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016e).

The Cypriot asylum procedure is a single procedure in which the applications submitted by people seeking protection are reviewed and either

refugee or subsidiary protection status is granted or the application is rejected. An asylum application can be lodged at all points of entry, at any police station in the RoC and from detention centres or prisons. The Aliens and Immigration Unit receives and processes all asylum applications. They also register all applications in the common data system managed by the Asylum Service and fingerprint each applicant. The Asylum Service examines these applications, including the Dublin Regulation criteria, and is responsible for all other asylum-related issues, including management of the reception centre Kofinou, which is located 4 km from the nearest residential area and a further 40 km away from Nicosia (KISA 2008). The final decisions that can be made by the Asylum Service include granting an asylum seeker refugee status, subsidiary protection or rejecting their application.

As Table 1 shows, the Cypriot authorities grant subsidiary protection rather than giving asylum applicants a refugee status. A person is considered an asylum seeker from the day his or her application has been lodged until he or she is notified of the final decision. Normally, the procedure, which takes a maximum of six months to complete, consists of an examination of the application, a possible interview with the asylum seeker and a final decision. However, there is the possibility of an accelerated procedure in which specific time limits for issuing the final decision and for submitting an appeal are imposed, which may shorten the waiting time (ECRE 2015b). Although this option is expected to be adopted in national legislation, it is not yet adopted in practice. Most of the time the regular procedure is used, though a fast-tracked regular procedure can be applied to prioritised applications from asylum seekers fleeing unsafe countries of origin or in humanitarian crises. As mentioned above, appeals to final decisions can also be made. One could also appeal against both the ruling of subsidiary protection status and rejection through an administrative appeal before the Refugee Reviewing Authority and a judicial appeal before the Supreme Court. The Refugee Reviewing Authority examines the content of an application and points of law, whereas the Supreme Court decides only in regards to the law and does not examine the content of an asylum claim (ECRE 2015b). Although the applicant is considered an asylum seeker through the above processes, the law does not permit applicants to remain in the country, making them vulnerable to detention and deportation (ECRE 2015b). As can be seen in Table 2, the rejection rate in 2015 according to nationality is mostly either 100 % or 0 %, showing that only asylum seekers from Syria, Palestine and Iraq and those who are consid-

ered stateless have a realistic chance of being granted subsidiary protection or even refugee status.

This chapter presents research results from six expert interviews conducted with a number of asylum-related organisations based in Nicosia, Cyprus. First, the current situation in this field of research will be examined. A short overview of existing studies related to the MAREM research topic will be given in the next section (Current State of Research), followed by an explanation of the research hypotheses. Finally, the data and results will be reviewed and the final conclusions will be presented.

## 2. Current State of Research

In the early stages of research, it was important to obtain an overview of existing studies related to cooperation networks in Cyprus and/or the role of Cypriot asylum-related organisations. It soon became obvious that very little research had been done concerning the cooperation of organisations in Cyprus. Nevertheless, several academic articles were beneficial in the research for the MAREM project.

Cetta Mainwaring (2012) examined the role that the Cypriot and Maltese governments wish to play within the EU in relation to migration, both regular and irregular, since these states joined the EU in 2004. Her article addresses the attempts of Malta and the RoC to influence migration on a European level. Despite their not having much power within the EU, Mainwaring concludes that the two states rely on “*non-material power*” (p. 17) to challenge distalisation and influence the migration policies of the EU. In addition, the article reveals how the EU migration policies place unfair and disproportionate responsibility on the peripheral member states and how this highlights the lack of harmonisation at the European level.

In an earlier article, Mainwaring (2008) outlined the new migration policies that Cyprus and Malta have and continue to experience since obtaining EU membership, which is influenced by a division on an EU level, emphasising the economic, political and other factors of Mediterranean countries. Mainwaring examined how Cyprus and Malta seek short-term rather than long-term control, which has made the response to the issue of integration quite challenging. She further concludes that the negative consequences of certain policies are due to a fight for power between member states, which is justified by the need to protect the security of citizens. In

addition, given the ongoing exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers, she points to the existence of continuous discrimination at all levels, thus making integration a formidable obstacle.

Christalla Yakinthou and Öncel Polili (2010) discussed the rights of both asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus, noting that recent arrivals are a relatively new occurrence on the island – an aspect that can be explained by the current state of division in Cyprus. In addition, they concluded that a *“lack of dialogue and cooperation has had a negative impact on the human rights of the asylum seekers and refugees from third countries”* (Yakinthou and Polili 2010: 5). In this report, the authors proposed policies to improve the asylum process and the daily experiences of refugees and asylum seekers. These include the need for more dialogue between the two parts of the island so that smugglers or human traffickers do not exploit asylum seekers. Also, the Turkish side needs to adopt certain asylum policies of the EU to ensure the protection of asylum seekers, thus addressing the overall structural faults in Northern Cyprus.

An examination of the current state of the research indicates a gap concerning the collaboration of organisations with regard to asylum issues in Cyprus. Furthermore, there was no information on cooperation partners of asylum-related organisations in Cyprus and no visible research had been carried out on organisational networks. The MAREM project was conceived to close this research gap by posing the following questions related to Cyprus:

- What roles do the asylum-related organisations and their cooperation networks play in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus?
- What role do Cypriot<sup>6</sup> organisations and their organisational cooperation networks play in the implementation of a Common European Asylum System (CEAS)?
- Can a gap be found between talk and action when one examines official declarations of the European and/or the Cypriot governments and the actual implementation of decisions and the actions of the national organisations?
- To what extent does the implementation of CEAS affect the work of the asylum-related organisations in Cyprus?

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6 In reference to the RoC.

- Has the recent exacerbation of the refugee crisis resulted in any changes in the arrival, settlement and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus?

This chapter will answer these questions using the data collected in 2016. The results based on the analysis of the cooperation networks of relevant Cypriot organisations will be presented in the sections that follow.

### 3. Hypotheses

When examining Cyprus, the following aspects must be taken into account before a connection can be made between the Cypriot organisational network and the concepts of neo-institutionalism and isomorphism (explained in the first chapter of this book) (see DiMaggio and Powell 1983). First, it is important to bear in mind that Cyprus is a small country, with an area of only 9,250 km<sup>2</sup> – approximately 39 times smaller than Germany (Visit Cyprus 2016). Because of its limited size and its location, one can expect a drastically smaller network when Cyprus is compared with larger inland countries. Second, the lack of large cities or metropolises on the island would suggest that the range or variety of organisations would be small because the space and need for organisations in this field are limited. With Cyprus being a small country, a few organisations might suffice to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees, whereas larger countries might require a larger number of organisations in order to provide the best possible work and service for people in need. On a local level, this might even lead to a closer, better functioning network among organisations. Furthermore, Cyprus received only 1,560 asylum applications from January to September 2015 (ECRE 2015a: 6), rendering a large number of asylum-related organisations redundant. Cyprus may already have been sufficiently equipped for such a low number of arrivals, whereas other European countries may have had an urgent need for such organisation to deal with larger numbers of arrivals. Here, one could also predict an expansion and stabilisation of existing organisations and their cooperation networks rather than the emergence of new organisations. Lastly, the Cypriot government took control of the asylum procedure only after Cyprus had become a member state of the EU in 2004, making its asylum system a relatively new one, which could in turn reflect on the relatively new and perhaps inexperienced Cypriot government organisations and agencies.

Based on these important aspects of Cyprus and thus the expected organisational field of asylum-related issues, the process of mimetic isomorphism was regarded as the most applicable (for further information, see the first chapter of this book). According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 151), when “*goals are ambiguous, or when the environment creates symbolic uncertainty, organisations may model themselves on other organizations*”, leading to mimetic isomorphism (p. 151). A response to this *uncertainty* and key factor of mimetic isomorphism is what theorists call modelling. DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 152) note that organisations model themselves after other organisations that they believe to be more legitimate and successful.

Given this theoretical element of mimetic isomorphism under neo-institutionalism and Cyprus’ key characteristics discussed above, the following hypotheses worded by DiMaggio and Powell (1983) can be regarded as relevant to the research in Cyprus and can serve as a basis for analysing the collected data on the Cypriot cooperation networks:

1. “*The more uncertain the relationship between means and ends, the greater the extent to which an organisation will model itself after organisations it perceives to be successful*” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 154). Because Cyprus took over the asylum procedure as recently as 2004, neither the organisations nor the state were fully confident in their work yet and the pressure to achieve legitimacy was strong. Therefore, Cypriot organisations have tended to model themselves after well-established organisations in order to achieve legitimation and work efficiently by emulating best practices.
2. “*The fewer the number of visible alternative organisational models in a field, the faster the rate of isomorphism in that field*” (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 155). Because Cyprus is a small country with a recently established asylum system, not many of the organisations have long-standing experience. This can cohere with to isomorphic processes among the asylum-related organisations and to their becoming more homogeneous in their structure and work.



In the following section, we will examine whether these hypotheses could be verified during the research. An explanation of how the research was carried out and what data<sup>7</sup> were used will now be outlined.

#### 4. Data

In preparation for the excursion to Cyprus and the collection of data, relevant asylum-related organisations were selected for interviewing and website analyses. Because most of these organisations are based in Nicosia, the capital of the RoC, this city was chosen as the place to carry out our research. From among the several organisations contacted, the following agreed to participate: the Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology (CARDET), Hope for Children, Cyprus Stop Trafficking, the German Embassy Nicosia, Caritas Cyprus and the Future Worlds Center (FWC). During their visit to Nicosia (22–26 February 2016), members of the MAREM research group and the authors of this chapter conducted semi-structured expert interviews to answer the research questions listed in Section 2. Table 3 provides a complete list of the organisations interviewed, along with information regarding their spatial reach, type, driving norms, main issues and resources.

Table 3 provides a brief overview of the interviewees of the MAREM research project in Cyprus in 2016. A more detailed description of these organisations and the work they do, along with information about their co-operation networks, will be given in the next section.

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7 For information on data collection and the methods used, the first chapter of this book.

Table 3: Names and relevant characteristics of interviewed asylum-related organisations in Cyprus

Name	Spatial reach	Type	Driving norms	Main issues	Resources
<b>CARDET</b>	International	NGO	Objectivity	Education	Mixed
<b>Hope for Children UNCRC Policy Center</b>	International	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues related to children’s rights	Mixed
<b>Cyprus Stop Trafficking</b>	National	NGO	Human rights	Issues related to victims of trafficking	Mixed
<b>German Embassy Nicosia</b>	International	GO	Political representation of Germany	Multiple issues	Funding by the German government
<b>Caritas Cyprus</b>	National	NGO	Religious values	Humanitarian aid	Mixed
<b>FWC</b>	National	NGO	Human rights	Future orientation	Project-based funding

Source: Adapted from MAREM expert interviews and website analyses conducted in 2016. NGO = non-governmental organisation; GO = governmental organisation.

### 5. Results

In this section, we present the results of the expert interviews conducted with six asylum-related organisations based in Nicosia, Cyprus. First, the analysis of the organisations’ networks will be discussed. Our initial focus will be on two of these groups – Caritas Cyprus and CARDET – which will serve as examples of the Cypriot organisations (5.1.1). Thereafter, we will examine the network of all the Cypriot organisations interviewed by the MAREM research team in 2014, 2015 and 2016 (5.1.2). This is followed by a brief description of the organisations’ projects and tasks and their roles in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus and Europe (5.2). In the final section, we present these organisations’ views on Europe, CEAS and the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) (5.3.) and conclude with a summary of the project’s results (6).

## 5.1 Network analysis

A major focus of the MAREM project is the role that organisations and their networks play in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus. Therefore, it is important at the outset to illustrate the network<sup>8</sup> of asylum-related organisations, starting with those we interviewed. Here, the egocentric networks of two selected organisations – Caritas Cyprus and CARDET – will be analysed (5.2.1). In addition, we will take a closer look at the established networks of asylum-related organisations and at their cooperation partners (5.2.2).

### 5.1.1 Caritas Cyprus and CARDET: Two Examples of Egocentric Network Analysis in Cyprus

#### a) Caritas Cyprus and its cooperation network

*“Because of the characteristics of Caritas, an organisation in the small country of Cyprus, working on a local basis together with the local community is important and serves to be the most effective” (Caritas 2016).*

Since the beginning of its work, Caritas has established a close network that has remained stable throughout the years (Caritas 2016). As a national NGO, it cooperates with other national organisations that provide different services, outsourcing people and workers to satisfy the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Caritas states that although expansion of the network is desirable, it is impossible due to understaffing, overwork and lack of resources. Like many other national NGOs, Caritas depends on donations and volunteers because it does not receive funding from the EU or the Cypriot government. On the one hand, cooperation is very important because Caritas cannot offer help for every need, so assistance from other NGOs is necessary. On the other hand, the organisation is able to provide services and assistance that other NGOs are unable to offer. An overview

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8 The MAREM project does not aim to examine the entire network of asylum-related organisations in Cyprus. Rather, the focus lies on egocentric networks of some of these organisations in Nicosia. (For more information on egocentric networks and the organisational networks, see the first chapter of this book.) Note that in this book, “the network” refers only to specific parts of the network. “Networks” refers to the egocentric networks of the interviewed organisations.

of the cooperation partners of Caritas, their driving norms and their main issues is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Profiles of Caritas and its cooperation partners

Name	Spatial reach	Type	Driving norms and values	Main issues	Resources
<b>Caritas Cyprus (interviewed organisation)</b>	National	NGO	Religious	Humanitarian aid	Mixed, mainly donations
<b>Red Cross Cyprus</b>	National	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues	Mixed
<b>KISA</b>	National	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues related to discrimination in all forms	Mixed
<b>FWC</b>	National	NGO	Human rights	Future orientation, asylum and migration	Project-based funding
<b>Hope for Children UNCRC Policy Center</b>	International	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues related to children's rights	Mixed
<b>Asylum Service</b>	national	GO	National policy	Public service, migration, asylum	Internal

Source: Adapted from MAREM expert interviews and website analyses conducted in 2016.

In order to provide the best service for those in need, these organisations divide their work and specialise in certain areas. The Asylum Service is the initial contact for asylum seekers and regular migrants in Cyprus, so cooperation with this organisation is essential. This is a one-way relationship, in that the Asylum Service transfers asylum seekers and refugees to Caritas, but not the other way around. Cooperation with other Cypriot NGOs such as the Red Cross, the Movement for Equality, Support, Anti-Racism (KISA), FWC and Hope for Children occurs on the national level, because all these groups work directly in the field along with the people they serve. An exchange of knowledge and help takes place on a daily basis, which ensures the best service possible. For example, asylum seekers and refugees with unclear legal status or mental health issues are sent to FWC, where they can be given legal and psychological support. Caritas offers everyday-life support and provides shelter. For these reasons, KISA refers asylum seekers and refugees to Caritas. The Red Cross supplies asylum seekers with food and is able to assist them with basic needs; however, for further assistance they are sent to Caritas. Hope for Children con-

tacts Caritas when the minors they shelter reach the age of 18 and are no longer entitled to the support this organisation provides (Caritas 2016). Each organisation relies on the quality of work of their network partners. According to one staff member of Caritas, each organisation is expected to carry out the services it is set up to provide, adding that “*it is impossible to do a fantastic job for every single person due to the limitations [Caritas and the other organisations] have*”. Therefore, their daily work “*is a learning curve for everyone all the time*”, and they try to investigate and apply the best practices whenever they can (Caritas 2016).

The network of Caritas is homogeneous with respect to actor type and spatial reach insofar as most of the cooperation partners are NGOs operating nationwide but with a focus on individual locales, because direct work with asylum seekers and refugees requires local setups. Caritas, being a global organisation, has different national branches, such as the one in Nicosia where the interviews for the MAREM project took place. However, a certain level of interdependency has clearly been established among these branches, which are similar in their structure and driven by the same norms. Because no single organisation has the capacity to offer all the services needed, the work is divided into different functions, with specialisation in different areas.

## b) CARDET and its cooperation network

*“The nature of this organisation is built on cooperation” (CARDET 2016).*

For CARDET, the cooperation network must be tight and functioning for an organisation to thrive. Because CARDET is a project-based organisation with both Europe-wide and local projects, the development of collaborations with other organisations has proved to be not only useful but a sheer necessity. CARDET claims to be a very inclusive organisation that is always looking for new cooperation partners in order to empower their own position and to learn about new fields. Sotiris Themistokleous, Assistant Director of CARDET, states that the organisation definitely intends to expand its cooperation network. The profiles of CARDET’s current cooperation partners are provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Profiles of CARDET and its cooperation partners

Name	Spatial reach	Type	Driving norms	Main issues	Resources
CARDET	International	NGO	Social science	Education	Mixed
FWC	National	NGO	Human rights	Future orientation, asylum and migration	Project-based funding
KISA	National	NGO	Human rights	Multiple issues related to discrimination in all forms	Mixed
Caritas Cyprus	Local	NGO	Religious	Humanitarian aid	Mixed
NGO Support Center	International	NGO	Development	Development	Mixed
Ministry of Education	National	GO	National policy	Public service	Internal
University of Nicosia	National	Academic	Objectivity	Education, research	Mixed

Source: Adapted from MAREM expert interviews and website analyses conducted in 2016.

Owing to its unique combination of scientific background, implementation skills and policy development, CARDET sees itself as “a link between public services, universities and grassroots organisations” (CARDET 2016). It serves as a platform to coordinate cooperation. In the field of public services, CARDET has established cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of the Interior, whose aim is to help with decision-making, advocacy and the adoption of tools and policy from CARDET and its cooperation partners in the scientific sector. CARDET also works with universities (e.g. the schools of education and the social work departments of Cypriot universities such as the University of Nicosia) to create and develop scientific content. CARDET also collaborates with grassroots organisations that provide services directly to migrants (e.g. FWC, KISA) (CARDET 2016). According to Sotiris Themistokleous, the network is adjustable and changes “depending on the issues that are faced and depending on the needs” (CARDET 2016). For example, CARDET strengthened its collaboration with FWC through workshops and training, whereas direct work with KISA has ebbed due to “a drift in direction” (CARDET 2016). Themistokleous states that CARDET is known for working locally, so those in its surrounding environment expect it to deliver high-quality services. He believes CARDET to be unique, especially in regards to their horizontal structure and lack of a

strict hierarchy. Although he does admit that he is “*jealous of organisations that do less work, but have a higher visibility*” (CARDET 2016), CARDET is actively trying to make its work more visible to the public. CARDET’s network is very heterogeneous; it works not only with other NGOs but also with government organisations and has cooperation partners in academic fields, and while CARDET works on an international level, its partners’ spatial reach ranges from local to international.

Based on the above examination of the networks of Caritas and CARDET, it can be said that the two organisations differ in their objectives and ways of working. Their similarities and differences can be seen within their cooperation network. Both work mainly with national organisations. However, CARDET has a more heterogeneous network, because it works with government organisations and NGOs on an international level but also has partners in the academic field, while Caritas has a more homogeneous network with regard to spatial reach and type of organisation, because it works with Cyprus-based NGOs that provide their services at a grassroots level. Caritas is content with the stable network they have and owing to its limited resources finds it difficult to expand its network, because it needs employees and time to build up new cooperations, neither of which Caritas has. In addition, Caritas fulfils the hypothetical assumptions that organisations will model themselves after other organisations in the same field and that an organisation will model itself after organisations that it perceives to be successful, whereas CARDET does not. Instead, CARDET is more independent than the other organisations we interviewed, and while it strives to achieve a collaborating network, it tries to expand its network beyond the local and national levels. It should also be noted that although CARDET named several Cypriot organisations as network partners, these organisations did not name CARDET as one. One explanation for this discrepancy could be that, compared with CARDET, most of the other organisations more often work hands-on in the field with asylum seekers and refugees. In addition, the interviewees were asked to state their most important cooperation partners, and the contract with CARDET may not be among the most essential ones owing to the differences in the focus of their work.

### 5.1.2 *The Networks of Asylum-Related Organisations in Cyprus*

Throughout the three MAREM research rounds, which took place in 2014, 2015 and 2016, interviews with eleven asylum-related organisations were conducted in Cyprus. Some of them, such as FWC, Caritas and CARDET, were interviewed two or three times. Based on the interview data, we created network visualisations. The eleven organisations can be found in the centre and the organisations that were mentioned as partners by the interviewees can be found at the periphery. Arrows make the connections between the organisations evident; they point away from the interviewee and in the direction of their partners. The first part of the network analysis focuses on the general cooperations, which were reported in the past, and the second part focuses on the current networks based on the information gathered from the research conducted in 2016.







Regarding their spatial reach, a Cypriot organisation has on average ten cooperation partners,<sup>9</sup> of which five are national organisations, two work on the EU level and three are global organisations. At this point, one can recognise a homogeneity tendency.<sup>10</sup> Considering the hypotheses listed previously, one could say that isomorphic processes are visible with regard to the organisations' spatial reach.

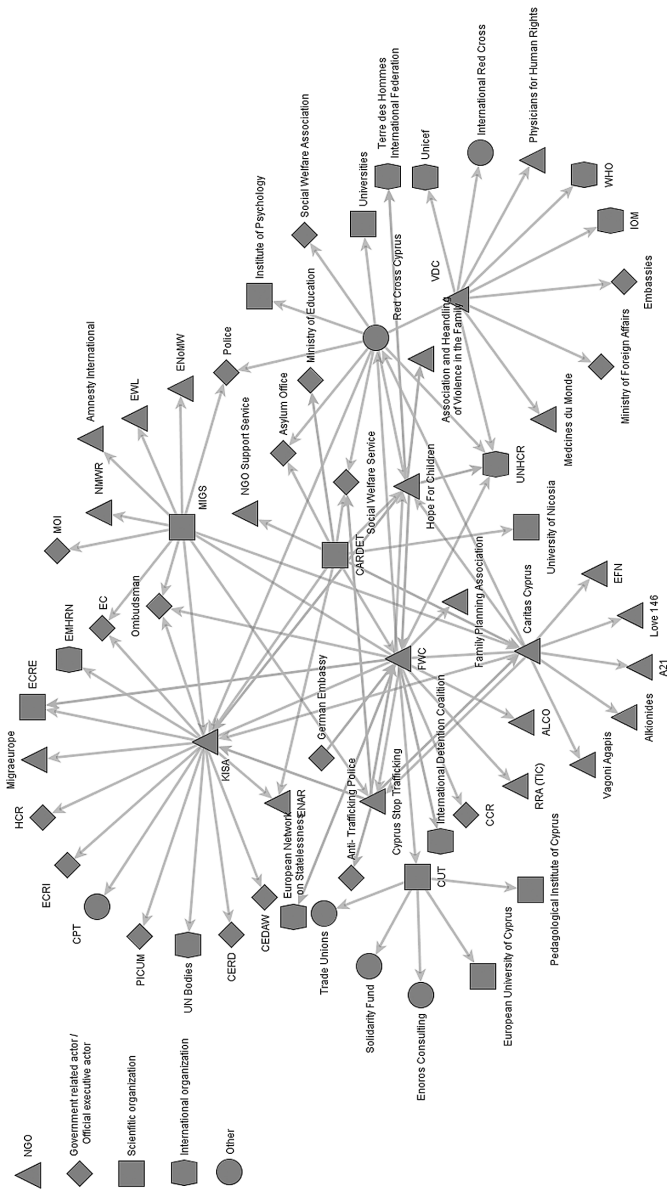
Regarding their values (Figure 2), a Cypriot organisation has again on average ten cooperation partners. In general, six of them work in the field of human rights or humanitarianism. In the other areas of driving norms, there is an average of one organisation in each (political/enforcement of law 1,09, objectivity 0,91, religious 0,64 and other driving norms 0,55). Because most of the organisations claim to share the same norms and values, one can identify isomorphic processes in the field of the driving norms of the Cypriot organisations. Most of the organisations are human rights-oriented. Government organisations claim to act in accordance with political decisions and Cypriot law. Only a few actors remain objective, namely academic research organisations such as CARDET and institutions such as the University of Nicosia. With regard to the driving norms, one can say that there are isomorphic tendencies among the organisations. In particular, organisations of the same type share the same norms and values.

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9 Numbers in this section are rounded up.

10 The interviewed organisations were asked to name up to ten of their most important cooperation partners. Due to this limited information, the networks may be incomplete.

Figure 3: Actor type and cooperation partners of the Cypriot asylum-related organisations



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses conducted in 2014–16 using Visone.

Regarding the type of organisation (Figure 3), a Cypriot organisation has on average ten cooperation partners (five non-governmental organisations, two government-related actors and/or official executive actors, one scientific organisation, one intergovernmental organisation, and one other types of organisation). Again, one can identify an inclination towards homogeneous networks in terms of type of organisation. Although there are only few government actors with whom the NGOs work, the networks of the NGOs mainly consist of cooperation partners of the same type.

The six organisations interviewed in 2016 have an average of five cooperation partners, with a concentration on the local level. This can be explained by the type of work carried out by these organisations. Direct contact and work with asylum seekers and refugees takes place on a local level even though nationwide planning and cooperation are of the essence. The statements above do not pertain to CARDET and the German Embassy Nicosia. As a scientific organisation, CARDET is generally not regarded on the same level as the other organisations interviewed. The German Embassy representing German politics plays only a marginal role in the field of asylum-related issues in Cyprus.

KISA and FWC can be regarded as important actors because they have many cooperation partners working on both a national and an international level. Therefore, they have an important position in the Cypriot organisation network in the field of asylum-related issues.

The network in Cyprus consists mainly of project-based collaboration, thus allowing it to adapt quickly to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Every organisation can provide its unique and specialised services within this field (German Embassy 2016). Furthermore, the Cypriot asylum-related organisations have developed a system of “burden-sharing” regarding their expertise and focus of work, whereby tasks and functions are distributed among the relevant organisations. “*We have the network that we need. Someone always knows someone when they need help or if help is needed*” (Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016).

## 5.2 The Organisations’ Roles in the Reception and Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Cyprus and Europe

Our focus will now turn to the role that these organisations play in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. In the following section, the interviewed organisations, along with their projects and tasks,

will be outlined. In addition, we will present the interviewees' opinions concerning the Cypriot asylum system and the role organisations play in this system, as well as the challenges they face.

a) The *Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology (CARDET)* is a project-based Cypriot NGO. Sotiris Themistokleous explains that its primary sectors are social justice, integration and education. CARDET assists Cypriot grassroots organisations by providing support, expertise and funding. Trainings, online tools, created networks and alliances are also currently offered. The tools developed (e.g. computer software) will be sent to other organisations throughout Europe via the Internet. CARDET sees itself as a platform that creates and distributes information and the results of their research and work.

CARDET directly helps asylum seekers and refugees by offering psychological support, providing education and promoting integration. The focus of Cypriot organisations is not only on the integration of refugees but also and even more so on providing legal assistance to asylum seekers who do not want to stay in Cyprus. This is possibly because each organisation working in this field has developed networks with other organisations throughout Europe. Themistokleous further believes that these organisations have contributed considerably to public awareness of refugee-related issues. Unfortunately, organisations face severe challenges in order to improve their work and the situation for asylum seekers and refugees. In Cyprus "*decision making is centralised to the government*" (CARDET 2016). This significantly limits the organisations' influence on political decisions. Even though the government has made efforts to be more inclusive, CARDET complains that there is actually no place in the political decision-making process for its type of organisation and others like it (CARDET 2016). Themistokleous believes that there is a need for collaboration between civil society and public services: the two groups have different priorities that need to be harmonised and reconnected. CARDET and other Cypriot NGOs focus on social progress, social justice and social inclusion, whereas the Cypriot ministries want to promote state policies and try to protect the state and themselves as public servants. Organisations such as CARDET could even help the ministries open doors for European funds (CARDET 2016).

b) The NGO *Hope for Children* focuses on the protection and care of unaccompanied minors. They offer legal support and health care, provide education and help with the integration of these minors. Hope for Children

opened their shelter for unaccompanied minors in 2014, follows the obligations of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN-CRC) and “*subscribes to the framework of the UN*” (Hope for Children 2016). Interviewee Vaggelis Gettos, Policy and Advocacy Officer, states that Hope for Children provides training and courses for the minors to establish skills needed to “*survive alone*” (Hope for Children 2016). This includes English lessons, other language courses and the minors’ enrolment in a local Cypriot school. The minors’ stay at the shelter ends when they reach the age of 18 or after they complete their schooling, but Hope for Children assists them in either finding work or applying for college. Monitoring continues even after the minors have left the shelter.

Hope for Children sets a good example for other organisations and other countries, especially regarding work with unaccompanied minors. Similar organisations that have coordinated many EU projects are slowly starting to play a more active role in intervening on the EU level. Unaccompanied minors are being referred to Hope for Children upon their arrival. Hope for Children has the leading role regarding unaccompanied minors.

Because the number of asylum seekers is limited to just a few hundred, Gettos does not regard the situation in Cyprus as problematic. Hope for Children believes that the country has one of the best asylum systems in Europe, because “*no one lives on the streets, everyone has shelter, a bed to sleep on, a plate of food to eat, the right to education*” (Hope for Children 2016). They describe the Cypriot government as well structured and responding well to humanitarian and social needs.

c) The Cypriot NGO *Cyprus Stop Trafficking* supports victims of both sex and labour trafficking. The organisation offers accommodation and housing to victims of trafficking. Interviewee Catherine Germain, a volunteer with Cyprus Stop Trafficking, describes it as an organisation that is “*on the field working with people*” in order to provide “*everyday life training*” (Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016). Germain criticises the Cypriot asylum system, mainly for the long waiting period from the application and interview to a decision, and sees an urgent need for improvement in that area. Germain urges the Cypriot government to change the system so that it aligns with EU standards and makes life easier and more acceptable for the asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus (Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016).

Cyprus Stop Trafficking is only marginally involved in the asylum system in Cyprus. Because it deals with victims of trafficking and does not see a “*relation between the refugee crisis and trafficking in Cyprus*”

(Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016), the group does not play a prominent role in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus. However, it helps with the integration of victims of trafficking – people who might want to apply for asylum in Cyprus.

d) The *German Embassy Nicosia*, the official representative of the German government in Cyprus, works in the political, legal and cultural sectors. Peter Neven, Deputy Head of Mission in Nicosia, explains that the German Embassy is only marginally involved in the asylum situation in Cyprus. For example, it supported and financed a project led by the FWC from August 2014 through December 2015 (German Embassy 2016), the aim of which was to provide support to asylum seekers in Nicosia. Although the German Embassy mainly sponsored and monitored the project, FWC was the active partner working in the field, visiting the reception centre in Kofinou and conducting interviews with people seeking protection.

Neven explains that the Cypriot asylum services are fairly new as they have only started operating in 2004. Still, the asylum process has improved greatly and has significantly sped up. He sees that “*services are much more professional now*” (The German Embassy 2016).

e) *Caritas Cyprus* is the national branch of the international NGO Caritas. Caritas aims to help people in need in order to preserve and restore human dignity and rights. Interviewee Gosia Chrysanthou explains that Caritas helps with medical needs, accommodation, and food and assists with documents asylum applications and administrative questions (Caritas Cyprus 2016).

NGOs such as Caritas fill a gap when there are one or two weeks between official registration with the Asylum Service and reception at Kofinou. Caritas plays an important role in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus, especially because the Cypriot government itself does not have an integration plan. Language barriers and discrimination threaten and even prevent integration, Chrysanthou explains. Nevertheless, she approvingly recognises that the Cypriot government was able to build a camp very quickly after the first boat with asylum seekers arrived, but at present this has had a positive effect only for those arriving in groups, not individuals. “*We can leave ten people in the streets and nobody will notice, but we cannot leave 350 in the streets and nobody notice*”, Chrysanthou then adds and says that “*it seems like the government wants to look good to show [they] are doing the job when the crisis is visible, but when it’s not [visible] there is very little care and very*



*little support for asylum seekers*” (Caritas 2016). However, she has noticed that the government has become more open to accepting the help of NGOs, which is new in Cyprus. “*People trust us more than they trust authorities, so we are a good bridge between the authorities and people*”, Chrysanthou explains. Caritas has good relationships with some individuals from state authorities but not with the government as a whole. She sees an urgent need for cooperation between NGOs and the Cypriot authorities in order to improve the situation in Cyprus (Caritas 2016).

f) The *Future Worlds Center (FWC)* is an NGO operating on the national level. It has many projects, its main one being “*Strengthening Asylum*”, funded by the UNHCR. In January 2016, the project “*Improving the Situation of Asylum Seekers in Cyprus*”, which was funded by the German Embassy, was completed. Another relevant project is “*Alternatives to Detention*”, which studies practical alternatives to the detainment of migrants. Interviewee Constantinos Constantinou, a researcher for FWC, explains that its proposed alternatives are pitched to the government to be implemented. FWC also organises language classes, which are held at their offices, but resources are limited, so they must rely on volunteer teachers and cannot guarantee a permanent education system. In addition, there is the “*Unit of Rehabilitation for Victims of Torture*”, which specialises in the care of people who have been subjected to torture. FWC also prepares the AIDA country report for Cyprus, a scientific report that many researchers, including those of the MAREM project, work with and benefit from.

FWC is the implementing partner of UNHCR in Cyprus. When new asylum seekers arrive, FWC goes to the site with a team of lawyers, psychologists and social workers to provide support. They also visit Kofinou regularly. In 2015, when Kofinou management was in the process of being formed, Cypriot authorities asked UNHCR to take control of Kofinou to a certain degree. FWC helped with medical and social care, organising donations, and so on. The situation described above proves that NGOs step in when the Cypriot government cannot provide for the needs of asylum seekers. However, cooperation between NGOs and the government is not constant. In the past few years, not much has changed on a legal level, but on a social level they have seen an increasing awareness of asylum-related issues and have even received various donations and voluntary assistance, Constantinou says. More people are active and have expressed a desire to help, and this increase is quite visible. He believes that this change is due

mostly to the huge influx of asylum seekers and refugees and to publicity in combination with the work of NGOs (Future Worlds Center 2016).

This overview of the work and services these organisations provide shows that the majority of them work hands-on with the asylum seekers and refugees on a daily basis, whereas the German Embassy and CARDET have taken a more indirect approach, assisting with reports and projects, linking other organisations together and providing support for grassroots organisations. In general, every organisation commented on the overall attitude of the Cypriot government and pointed out that asylum procedures have improved, but there are still issues that need attention, such as the large percentage of asylum applicants who receive subsidiary protection, problems related to integration, the lack of resources and the financial difficulties faced by NGOs. The organisations are also concerned that the Cypriot government continues to work with and approach the EU yet remains distant from its own national and local organisations that provide crucial assistance to the arrivals. As stated by the interviewed organisations, there is a gap in the Cypriot government between talk and action, and NGOs must fill this gap through their work. The government does not appreciate the work of the NGOs (Caritas 2016) or allows them to be part of the decision-making process, even though, in the end, the welfare of the asylum seekers and refugees depends on these NGOs.

### 5.3 *The European Level: Europe, CEAS and EASO*

After giving their views on the role that asylum-related organisations play in Cyprus, the interviewees from the six organisations were asked about the European situation: What was their opinion on the asylum situation in Europe? Has the implementation of CEAS and institutions such as EASO affected and/or changed their work? Their answers to these questions will be presented in the following section.

a) Sotiris Themistokleous from CARDET states that the problem faced in Europe is a psychological one. *“We do have the capacities and the resources [to handle the refugee crisis], but still we exaggerate and say we can’t host any more refugees”* (CARDET 2016). He sees a problem in the insecurity that has been transmitted among the people and claims that problem solving *“is not a matter of money but a matter of social pressure”* (CARDET 2016). The implementation of CEAS *“has not affected the work as such, but it has affected the content of the work.”* CEAS has not

changed the philosophical background or the working practices, but it has affected scientific content to a degree, because scientific work has to align with European standards. With regard to the hypotheses on mimetic isomorphism, this statement is very interesting because it shows that there are homogenisation tendencies that affect organisations on the European level. However, standardisation has been taken too far in some aspects, says Themistokleous; the newly merged European fund for “asylum, migration and integration”, which previously consisted of three separate funds, can be regarded as problematic. There is a major social and political debate concerning whether the three groups – asylum seekers, migrants and refugees – have the same needs and whether they should be treated equally. Themistokleous finds this a very conservative approach and reproaches the EU for neglecting the special needs of each group and violating their rights. Nevertheless, Themistokleous believes that a collective approach is generally good, considering that there is more power behind decisions if countries stand together, and it is good for practitioners because they can learn from one another. *“But the challenge of the system is that it is imbalanced and not able to deal with specific problems in each country”*, he warns, emphasising that the European countries do not in fact have the same problems. *“The main challenge for the system is to come up with collective answers for specialised problems. The problem is not common, there is no common problem.”* For example, compared with Greece, Cyprus has not received a large number of asylum seekers. *“We set up a common policy, but I would prefer a common philosophy”*, Themistokleous says (CARDET 2016).

b) Being the implementing partner of UNHCR in Cyprus, Hope for Children is obliged to follow CEAS directives and norms, explains Vaggelis Gettos. However, EASO and its Special Support Plan for Cyprus, which was in effect from June 2014 until February 2016 (EASO 2014), have not influenced Hope for Children and its work in any way. This shows that the attempt to achieve homogenisation among all the organisations in Europe from above is not very successful. From Gettos’ point of view, Europe is currently experiencing a procedural breakdown within the asylum system. Europe was not prepared to receive such a large number of asylum seekers and let the system reach its limits, thus creating an enormous crisis. According to Gettos, the most severe violation facing human rights, on both a legal and a humanitarian level, is the closing of borders, as is currently the case in Macedonia and Greece. *“If this is generalised, we are over”*, he warns (Hope for Children 2016).

c) Cyprus Stop Trafficking operates mainly on a national level, but it does try to establish a network on a broader level in order to attend international seminars for training purposes and to collaborate with other EU countries regarding trafficking. Catherine Germain commented that although it is easier to contact European organisations, it is more difficult to contact organisations in Africa, where most trafficking victims originate. In her opinion, the EU is on its way to handling the situation, but much more still needs to be done. An *“amazing organisation is needed to meet the needs of refugees”* in European countries, she states (Cyprus Stop Trafficking 2016).

d) While none of the interviewed organisations seemed to know a lot about EASO and its Special Support Plan for Cyprus, Peter Neven from the German Embassy was deeply informed. He explains that the cooperation agreement with EASO was signed in order to transfer expertise more openly throughout Europe. EASO mainly provides technical assistance to Cypriot state authorities, such as the Asylum Service. It makes visits, holds seminars and conducts expert discussions. Overall, the implementation of CEAS has been quite beneficial for Cyprus, states Neven. Even more so, he adds that the EU and CEAS are now able to benefit from Cyprus: *“Things that were criticised two years ago are now being used as a model in the EU’s asylum policy”* (German Embassy 2016).

e) Gosia Chrysanthou from Caritas Cyprus criticises the Cypriot asylum system, saying that in comparison with other EU countries, Cyprus does not do a good job of handling asylum requests. Caritas had a case in which two asylum seekers who were rejected by the Cypriot government were recognised by Belgium and Sweden. In her opinion, the asylum system should be more standardised. However, she is aware of the challenges being faced: countries such as Greece are unable, under every circumstance, to deal with the huge influx of people seeking protection on their own. Like many other countries, Greece has limited resources and simply cannot cope with the problems it must face. On the other hand, Chrysanthou observes a problem with burden-sharing in general. Certain countries, including Germany and Sweden, are more attractive to asylum seekers based on favourable economic factors and the generally better quality of life; therefore, these countries receive more applicants despite their insufficient capacities and resources. Cyprus has the capacity to host more asylum seekers and refugees, but very few actually go to Cyprus (Caritas 2016).

f) Constantinos Constantinou from FWC welcomes the approach to standardise the asylum system, implement a common policy and expand

networks. CEAS makes the work of organisations such as FWC easier, especially in dealing with certain cases, because it is able to follow common guidelines. In the past year, FWC established a closer relationship with international organisations. According to Constantinou, interest in contacting other EU organisations has grown, not only in Cyprus but also in other European countries. Still, he sees a need to improve CEAS. In addition, he believes the Dublin Regulation to be particularly problematic because it shifts the weight of the refugee crisis to peripheral countries on the Mediterranean, such as Greece or Italy. The EU seems to continue shifting this weight, because “*it’s convenient to the rest of the countries*”, he explains. The system has to be a common one, but it does not need to be homogenised. Each country has its own unique needs, implying the need for a firm yet still flexible system (Future Worlds Center 2016).

One can see that with the establishment of CEAS, efforts were made to standardise not only the national asylum systems but also the work of the organisations in the asylum-related sector, which could lead to isomorphic processes. The interviewed organisations have realised certain changes, but they regard the implementation of CEAS as incomplete and insufficient. Given that different EU countries interpret the guidelines of CEAS differently, the asylum systems have in fact not been standardised, or have been standardised only to a certain extent.

## 6. Conclusion

When we looked at the role of organisations in Cyprus, it became obvious that NGOs try to fill the gap left by the government and to play a major role in the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees. The Cypriot NGOs are very well connected in places where they try to distribute their tasks because, unlike the government, they work directly with asylum seekers and refugees in the field, so there is a need for more cooperation between civil society and government. Although the asylum system itself has improved in recent years, there are problems with integrating asylum seekers and refugees into the workforce and society. More needs to be done in terms of providing opportunities for asylum seekers and refugees to take up suitable work and attend language and cultural courses. Moreover, Cypriot citizens must be made more aware of the presence of asylum seekers and refugees so they can assist the government and organisations regarding the issue of integration.

With respect to the European level, one can see that since Cyprus gained control of its asylum system after joining the EU in 2004, the system now aligns with European standards and has improved significantly as a result of EU influence. Overall, the Cypriot organisations consider a common approach to be generally good but believe improvements are still needed within CEAS, because the current system does not meet the desired requirements and needs of each individual country. Cypriot organisations would also like to have greater influence on a European level so that the voices of small countries such as Cyprus can be acknowledged. Governmental changes in Cyprus, such as the implementation of CEAS, did result in some improvements, but overall, they did not influence the situation in Cyprus significantly. Organisations had anticipated changes on a political level, thus facilitating the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees and a trickling down to the societal level. With the situation now confronting Cyprus and the rest of Europe, these changes have yet to occur. Asylum-related organisations have provided details as to why a gap between talk and action exists and endeavour to influence the government at different levels regarding this situation. In keeping with the interviewees' opinions, the European Asylum System is slowly developing on a European level, but signs of it working in Cyprus on an organisational level remain to be seen. Moreover, the talk-and-action gap between the government and these organisations is slowly closing, and more needs to be done in terms of encouraging the government to work with the grass-roots organisations that actually work with and assist asylum seekers and refugees.

In addition, most of the networks in Cyprus are nationally based. The lack of resources and Cyprus' geographical location have stifled their growth, but the situation for asylum seekers and refugees could be improved if each organisation's network would reach a European level or even an international level, expanding to North Africa and the Middle East, regions that were home to the majority of asylum seekers and refugees. Despite not having a large network, all the organisations provide whatever services or advice they can to those who need it.

Considering again DiMaggio and Powell's theory of neo-institutionalism, one can identify specialised occurrences within the asylum-related field in Cyprus. In general, the organisations interviewed orientate themselves towards the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. During the MAREM interviews, various organisations frequently mentioned that the asylum system functions based on a division of work, or burden-sharing.

Because the government is not directly involved with asylum seekers and refugees, organisations use this burden-sharing method to fill the gap between government action and the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Each asylum-related organisation in Cyprus specialises in a certain area of work and delegates' tasks and assignments to others depending on what needs to be achieved. According to the interviewed organisations, this results in an exchange of knowledge and the provision of the best service possible to those in need. Recognising that this method is not a standard form of isomorphism, one still sees it as an adaptation in response to uncertainties. It is also clear that between some organisations, especially those that are similar in structure and are driven by the same norms, a certain level of interdependency has been established. This has resulted from a functional division of labour through specialisation in different areas of work and the fact that none of the organisations has the capacity to offer all the services needed.

Lastly, this examination of the organisations' networks assists us in understanding the current asylum situation not only in Cyprus, but in the rest of Europe as well. More research needs to be conducted in this area to find a solution to the gap between talk and action and other issues concerning the integration of asylum seekers and refugees fleeing to Europe.

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*Conducted Interviews (2016), alphabetically*

Caritas Cyprus

Centre for the Advancement of Research and Development in Educational Technology  
Cyprus Stop Trafficking

Future Worlds Center

German Embassy

Hope For Children

