

Bringing Cypriot communities closer together

EU promotes free movement across Cyprus

FOREWORD

Creating dialogue, building trust and bringing people together: this is the key mission of the European Union – not just in Cyprus, but throughout Europe. Since Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, the European Commission has made every effort to bring the two Cypriot communities closer together.

Our goal is lofty and ambitious: to smooth the path to reunification of the island. But our tools are intensely practical. This booklet focuses on the tools deployed by the European Union: the Green Line Regulation and the Aid Regulation. Europe has invested around €519 million in projects ranging from business support to vocational training to cultural heritage and environmental protection.

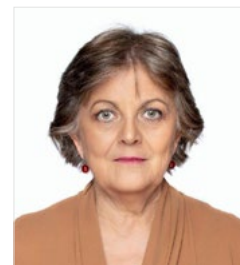
The booklet details significant progress in a wide variety of fields:

- We have supported over 1 000 businesses and over 1 000 farmers.
- Trade across the Green Line has grown fivefold since 2004. Systems have been set in place to enable trade in new products – from fish to the humble potato – and to encourage higher standards for those products.
- The opening of five new Green Line crossing points has enabled increased communication and people-to-people contacts between the two communities.

I am honoured to present these results. It is encouraging to see so many individual Cypriots benefit in so many different ways and to see contacts built between the two communities. I look forward to continuing the work in the years ahead.

Elisa Ferreira

Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms



INTRODUCTION

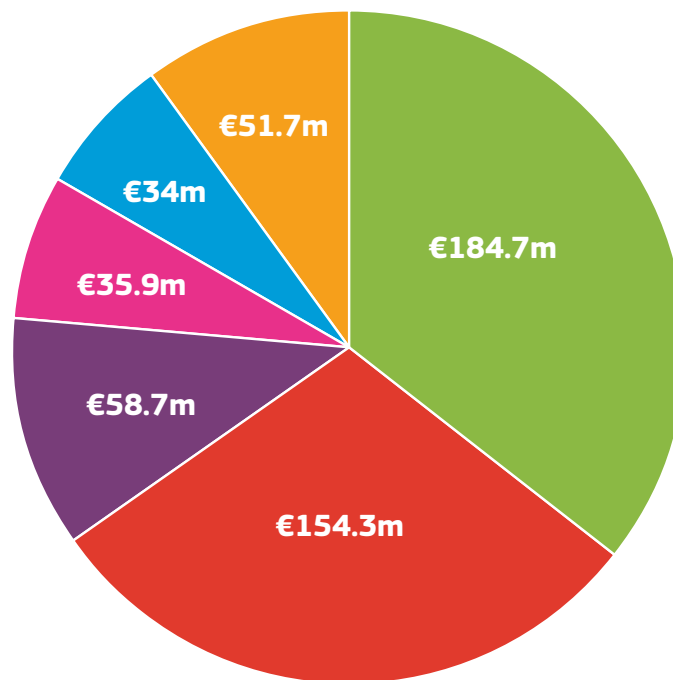
Cyprus joined the European Union 15 years ago. Since then, the EU has been supporting the island's two communities to work towards a final settlement and to end decades of division.

To pave the way for reunification, one of the aims of EU aid has been to bring the two communities more closely together economically.

Much of the EU's support to Cyprus therefore focuses on developing the economy of the island's Turkish Cypriot community. Since its introduction in 2006, the EU's **Aid Programme for the Turkish Cypriot community** has provided over half a billion euros in financial support.

The programme supports projects in areas such as agriculture, environment, infrastructure, civil society, community development, cultural heritage, telecommunications and education, as well as private sector development, labour market, crossings, traffic safety, energy, providing information about EU policy and encouraging alignment with the EU.

Overview of funding 2006-2018 (Total allocated: €519.3 million)



Objective:

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- Infrastructure
 - Bringing Turkish Cypriots closer to the EU
 - Socio-economic development
 - TAIEX Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument
 - Confidence building
 - Reserve (Support and Settlement facility)

KEY SUCCESSES (2006-2018)

Developing and restructuring infrastructure:

263 km of water supply distribution networks renewed

3 wastewater treatment plants constructed

99 km of sewage networks constructed

7 refuse collection trucks supplied

2 incinerators for animal by-products supplied

Promoting social and economic development:

271 rural development and local community development projects supported

138 projects for schools, lifelong learning organisations and the labour market supported

More than **150** grants to SMEs / start-ups

Consultancy services and training provided for **more than 1 000** businesses and entrepreneurs

Training provided for **almost 200** farmers to improve water use efficiency and farm hygiene

Over 800 farmers informed about disease-related risks, disease prevention and the long-term benefits of disease elimination among livestock

Encouraging reconciliation, building confidence, supporting civil society and bringing the Turkish Cypriot community closer to the EU:

1 EU Infopoint established to proactively inform the Turkish Cypriot community about EU policies and the Aid Programme, via events, social media and web-based information activities

60 projects for civil society organisations supported

More than 80 training sessions carried out to strengthen the work of civil society organisations

885 missing persons identified and their remains returned to their families

More than **1 400** Turkish Cypriots given educational opportunities in EU Member States through EU scholarships

75 cultural heritage sites supported island-wide

5 new Green Line crossing points opened

THE GREEN LINE REGULATION

In this booklet, we focus on how EU support is helping to bring together the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities and, in the process, building dialogue, cooperation and trust.

One of the fundamental principles of the EU project is the free movement of people, goods and services across its Member States. In Cyprus, however, this has been a challenge ever since the country joined the EU in 2004 in a de facto divided state.

Since 1974, the ceasefire line – more commonly known as the ‘Green Line’ – has separated the two communities. To deal with this, the EU introduced the Green Line Regulation when Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, setting out the rules under which people, goods and services can cross the Green Line.

There are currently nine crossing points across Cyprus. The country’s capital, Nicosia, has three crossing points: **Agios Dhometios** (opened in 2003), which serves both pedestrians and cars, and **Ledra Palace** (also 2003) and **Ledra Street** (2008), both of which can only be used by pedestrians.

The other crossing points all serve both pedestrians and cars, from **Kato Pyrgos — Karavostasi** (2010) in the west of the island to **Deryneia** (2018) in the east. Two are located in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area: **Strovia** and **Pergamos**, both of which opened in 2003. The **Astromeritis — Zodhia** crossing point, located in Morphou/Güzelyurt, opened in 2005, and the **Lefka — Apliki** crossing point opened in 2018.

The increased number of crossing points in recent years has in turn helped to increase communication and people-to-people contacts between the two communities, by making it easier for Cypriots to cross the Green Line and come together.

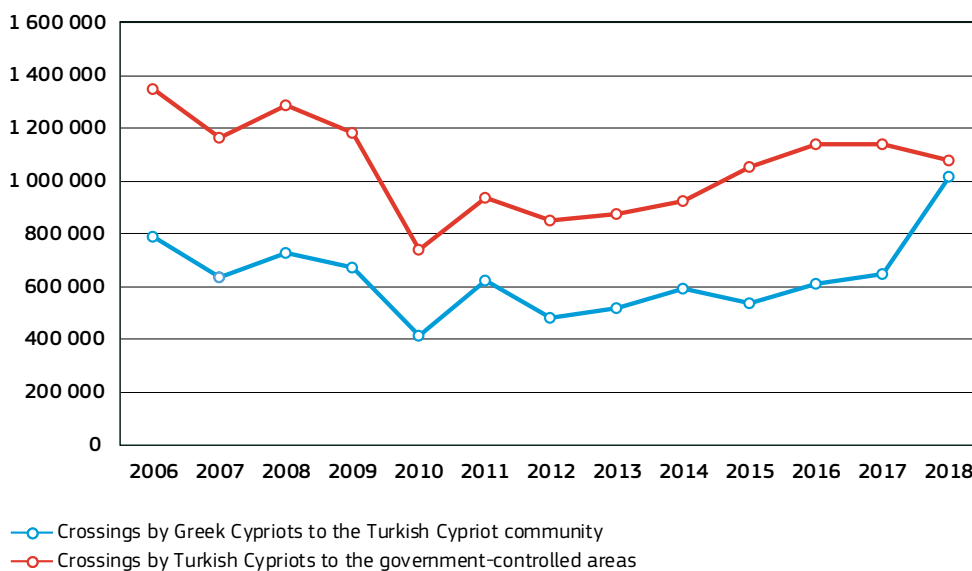
This booklet begins by presenting a number of bi-communal projects and initiatives that are helping to increase these people-to-people contacts across the island, before moving on to the stories of Cypriots who are engaging in Green Line trade.

PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS

Historically, journeys from the Turkish Cypriot community to the Greek Cypriot community across the Green Line have outnumbered those in the opposite direction – in 2011, the ratio was more than three to one – but in recent years, this appears to be changing.

The numbers of crossings by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots were roughly even in 2018, reaching a combined total of over 2 million, and for the first time, crossings from the Greek Cypriot community actually outnumbered those from the Turkish Cypriot community in the first half of 2019.

Comparison of Green Line crossings by Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, 2006-2018*



**The figures included in this graph are based on data from the Republic of Cyprus Police and do not include data on the two crossings under the authority of the UK Eastern Sovereign Base Area (Strovolia and Pergamos).*

Through the Aid Programme, the EU has funded many projects to increase people-to-people contacts and cooperation between Cyprus's two communities. These projects are having both economic and social advantages, including helping to overcome prejudices, encourage collaboration and build confidence.

In this section, we look at several of the bi-communal projects and initiatives that are helping to bring the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities closer together.

LEADING BY EXAMPLE



Tüge, who interned at Reanda as part of the Leading by Example project, with her former manager Charilaos.

As part of the Leading by Example project, 40 Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots took part in three-month-long internships in each other's communities between 2014 and 2017. The project was a joint initiative of the Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KEVE) and the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce (KTTO).

The 40 interns were all young professionals aged 20–35 who were unemployed at the time. The two chambers helped the young people to gain valuable work experience by pairing them with employers that matched their interests and desired skills.

For many participants, the experience did not end there. Some of the host companies found the scheme so beneficial that they decided to extend the internships at their own expense. Two Turkish Cypriot interns were even offered full-time jobs in the Greek Cypriot community.

One was 25-year-old Turkish Cypriot Tüge Dolmacı. She had previously studied accountancy and finance in another EU Member State, before returning to Cyprus to

look for a job. The project arranged for Tüge to undertake an internship in the Greek Cypriot community with the international accounting network Reanda.

After completing her internship, the network offered Tüge a permanent job. 'It was a very big opportunity for me,' she says. 'I met a lot of people. I made friends. I like the way they work here, so I stayed.' Two years later, she moved on to one of the world's biggest accounting firms, again in the Greek Cypriot community.

As well as boosting her career, this experience has given Tüge some valuable insights into the Greek Cypriot community. 'I always knew we were very similar. When I came here and I met them, I saw that we are almost identical,' she says. 'As for the differences, this is also good, because you learn new things for yourself. I was learning their language. They were very excited to teach me Greek words, they were happy when I was speaking in Greek with them, so I think we had a closer relationship.'

The experience was mutually beneficial for Tüge and Reanda. The network also benefited from Tüge's internship, says Director Charilaos Hadjioannou, 'because we didn't previously have any first-hand business experience working with Turkish Cypriots'. Charilaos says the biggest problem in Cyprus is 'the lack of awareness of one side about the other'. 'Programmes like this are very helpful for both communities,' he says.

Projects such as Leading by Example are helping the two communities to understand each other and recognise how working together can be beneficial for all.

“Programmes like this are very helpful for both communities.”

Charilaos Hadjioannou, Director, Reanda

ELECTRICAL FIELD



Greek Cypriot teacher Savvas delivers a training session for electricians in the Turkish Cypriot community.

Another EU-funded project run jointly by organisations in the two communities is the Electrical Field project. Two electrical contractors associations, one Turkish Cypriot and one Greek Cypriot, manage the project, which provides training for electricians. Its aim is to improve the skills of electricians across the island in line with labour market needs.

'We met with our colleagues in the Greek Cypriot community some four to five years ago,' recalls Osman Asilzade, the head of the Turkish Cypriot association and coordinator of the project.

'After we met, we cooperated and did many things together. In terms of cooperation and technical issues, we have a very harmonious relationship. When the EU made this grant call and we read the guidelines, we said we definitely have to do this project together.'

Osman's association receives 'significant technical and logistical support' from its Greek Cypriot partner, notably in the form of teachers, equipment and teaching materials for training sessions.

Savvas is one of the Greek Cypriot teachers delivering training in the Turkish Cypriot community. Speaking about his teaching, he says: 'I share my experience of what we're doing on the other side and I also like to know about what the electricians here are doing, and to see how we can collaborate more in the future.'

As for the trainees taking part in his sessions, Savvas says: 'I see their smiles, I answer their questions, I see their willingness to learn and to discuss... I have made friends here.'

One participant was electrical technician Ali Özhan, who says he gained 'many benefits' from the training. It covered various technical aspects, including information on new professional regulations in line with EU standards.

A Turkish Cypriot living in the Turkish Cypriot community, Ali crosses the Green Line every day on his way to work. 'I've been working on and off in the Greek Cypriot community in different jobs for 10 years now,' he says. 'I learnt Greek by going there every day and working there. I got my present job a year ago.'

Thanks to the training, electrical technicians like Ali are bringing their skills in line with EU standards. This in turn enables them to find jobs in the Greek Cypriot community, helping to meet the demand for skilled workers across the island.

“I share my experience of what we're doing on the other side and I also like to know about what the electricians here are doing, and to see how we can collaborate more in the future.”

Savvas, Greek Cypriot teacher

CULTURAL HERITAGE



Restoration of monuments such as the Archangelos Michael Church has helped to bring together Cypriots from both communities.

Aside from training and skills, a rather different area where EU support is working to build relations between the two communities is in the preservation of cultural heritage.

Cultural heritage acts as a bridge between past and future. By reminding Cypriots of the island's rich cultural heritage and in the process encouraging crossings of the Green Line, EU-funded projects are helping to build trust between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

One example of this is the work of the Technical Committee on Cultural Heritage (TCCH) to restore 75 cultural heritage sites across the island. The Committee's Turkish Cypriot co-chairman, Ali Tuncay, recalls the emotional inauguration of the first church restored by the TCCH:

'A Greek Cypriot man who revisited his former village for the first time for the inauguration came up to me and said, "this is the happiest day of my life".' Ali also remembers the excitement of a Turkish Cypriot who was attending the inauguration of the restored mosque in his

former village: "I was a child. I was sitting here", he kept repeating. "My father would stand there. Here was a nail on which my father used to hang his coat."

In keeping with the rest of the EU's work in Cyprus, the restoration initiative wants to bring people together. The TCCH has always put great emphasis on involving local families in its projects and it organises so-called 'cultural walks' for locals, which involve crossing the Green Line to visit monuments across the island, either on foot or by bicycle. In order to inspire future generations, the TCCH has recently started a Youth Heritage Ambassador scheme to encourage young Cypriots to visit monuments across the Green Line and promote the island's shared heritage.

In addition, the TCCH has recently set itself a new task – one that Ali and the Committee's Greek Cypriot co-chairman Takis Hadjidemetriou think could be their most significant contribution yet to building relations between the island's communities. The TCCH is planning to clean, repair and fence off a number of cemeteries across Cyprus.

'Many Cypriots have roots on both sides of the island', Takis explains. This means they also have loved ones buried on either side. The initiative hopes to encourage displaced Cypriots to visit their ancestors' former towns and villages across the island, where they will be able to learn more about the heritage of their family, the other community and the country as a whole. They may even get into conversation with the present-day inhabitants, helping to build mutual understanding between the communities.

Takis feels community involvement is 'very important'. 'We're an example to other conflict areas of how people can work together to save their monuments, their common heritage, the heritage of humanity,' he says.

“Many Cypriots have roots on both sides of the island.”

Takis Hadjidemetriou, TCCH co-chairman

CYCLISTS ACROSS BARRIERS



Bi-communal ride organised by CABS: discovering Nicosia's 11 bastions.

Common heritage is also the focus of Cyclists Across Barriers (CABS). Launched in 2012, this non-profit organisation promotes cycling as a way of overcoming all kinds of barriers. These may be physical barriers or more emotional, psychological ones; in the Green Line's case, it can be both.

'It [the initiative] is about meeting new people and perhaps overcoming the psychological barrier of crossing; to others, it's as simple as finally being able to explore their home town,' explains the organisation's co-founder, Konstantinos Konstantinou. He and his co-founder Aydin Mehmet Ali have taken more than 1 000 people on bike rides around Cyprus, encouraging some of them to cross the Green Line for the first time.

Back in 2003, when it became possible to cross the Green Line thanks to the opening of the first crossing point, Aydin organised an EU-funded ride for 250 cyclists from Famagusta to Deryneia/Derinya. This was the first organised bike ride across the Green Line.

These days, CABS organises a wide range of cycling events. Past events have included a ride for refugee children and another for cyclists with disabilities.

Ultimately, the organisation wants to bring people together in a spirit of inclusion. This includes bringing Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots closer together.

Much of the organisation's work focuses on Nicosia, as the Green Line cuts directly through the Cypriot capital. The city also has a special significance for Aydin and Konstantinos, as the birthplace of both co-founders.

Support from the Grow Civic programme, managed by the EU-funded Civic Space project, has enabled CABS to produce visibility materials and a cycling and accessibility map of Nicosia, which will display the city's facilities for cyclists and people with disabilities.

'We're creating an alternative narrative which is inclusive,' Aydin explains. 'Rather than provoking division, we want to create a unified city.'

'It's a great initiative,' agrees CABS member Ediz Aziz. 'It shows how the city was functioning before the divide. It shows how people were thinking before the divide. It shows how architecture actually unifies us, how the waterways unify us, how even the sewage system unifies us!'

On a related note, the EU is also supporting a project to rehabilitate the Pedieos River, which runs through the capital city, Nicosia, and crosses the Green Line. The project is developing a 5-km-long public park either side of the river. By providing green spaces and recreational areas such as playgrounds and coffee shops, the project aims to improve quality of life and biodiversity. New footpaths and cycle paths will also offer a convenient alternative route for Cypriots from both communities to cross the Green Line.

“ It shows how architecture actually unifies us, how the waterways unify us, how even the sewage system unifies us! ”

Ediz Aziz, CABS member

TOGETHER FOR CLEAN COASTS

One process that knows no boundaries is pollution. Litter has become a major threat to the world's seas and beaches.

In Cyprus, however, something good may come from the problem. Campaigners have recognised that beach clean-ups can help to build cooperation and contact between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

The European Commission has proposed new EU-wide rules to target the 10 single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches and seas, as well as lost and abandoned fishing gear. Together, these make up 70 % of all marine litter items. At the same time, the first-ever European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy is set to transform the way plastic products are designed, used, produced and recycled in the EU.

Since 2014, organisations in the two communities have been working together to tackle the problem in Cyprus through the EU-funded Marine Litter: Together for Clean Coasts! project. As part of the initiative, Cypriots are crossing the Green Line to help with beach clean-ups in each other's communities.

'People are coming together,' explains organiser Xenia Loizidou. 'They're crossing to participate in each other's beach clean-ups. It's something that affects all of us, and it matters to have clean seas around us.' Several times a year, divers from both communities also come together to conduct seabed clean-ups.

The project has grown considerably since its establishment five years ago. The number of volunteers supporting the project has increased from just 30 to over 600, and over 100 beach bars have joined the network too. 'When asked, most of the [bar] owners said they would like to join the island-wide network,' recalls Xenia.

The project has held events in schools, helping to raise awareness of the issue of marine litter among nearly 25 000 students across the island. It has also organised photography and art competitions, one of which brought together Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot students for an award ceremony at the Home for Cooperation, located in the UN buffer zone.

Fishermen, too, have attended awareness-raising events. For several, it was the first time they had crossed the Green Line.

“*People are coming together; they're crossing to participate in each other's beach clean-ups. It's something that affects all of us, and it matters to have clean seas around us.*”

Xenia Loizidou, beach clean-up organiser

During the clean-ups, the project uses the internationally recognised Ocean Conservancy clean-up protocol to register the collected marine litter. However, it has also gone a step further by incorporating this information into an interactive online database.

'The Marine Litter Database is something really bi-communal,' says Serdar Atai, from a cultural association in Famagusta. 'It's possible for any user to get in there, to see at what time, on what beach, what kind of clean-up activity was exercised, and what the composition of the litter was.'

Serdar is keen to emphasise the shared responsibility for protecting the marine environment in Cyprus. 'Once you dispose of something in an unwanted way, it can easily reach the other side. People are aware of this, and people think that we can do something about the protection of our marine wildlife, the protection of our coast,' he says.

Following the success of the project, the two organisations have received further EU funding to expand their activities. Since December 2018, they have been implementing a new joint project, Marine Litter for Synergies, Capacity Building and Peace Building, which will create even stronger links across the communities.

The project aims to involve at least 125 coastal enterprises, 150 fishermen, 11 local communities, and schools.



Divers from both communities after a beach clean-up.

GREEN LINE TRADE

The EU's Green Line Regulation allows goods that are produced, or go through their final processing, in the Turkish Cypriot community to be traded duty free across the Green Line to the Greek Cypriot community.

Since the Regulation was introduced in 2004, EU support has been helping to prepare the Turkish Cypriot community for the full application of EU rules upon reunification.

The EU's support in the area of trade has helped to improve product quality and health standards, as experts from EU Member States carry out inspections to ensure that products that cross the Green Line, such as potatoes, tomatoes and citrus fruits, comply with the relevant EU legislation.

The Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce (KTTO) also plays a crucial role in Green Line trade. Goods can only cross the line with the necessary documentation, which is issued by the Chamber. İzzet Adiloğlu leads on this aspect of the KTTO's work.

'When producers first apply to us, we inspect them according to the Green Line Regulation,' he explains.

The Chamber conducts on-site checks at the companies to make sure the production is local. Once confirmed that it is 'a local product or local production', the Chamber can issue the necessary document. 'Products that are not local cannot cross,' Adiloğlu adds.

In the first year of the Regulation, from 2004 to 2005, the total value of goods traded over the Green Line came to just over €1 million. By 2018, the figure had increased to almost €5 million.

The types of goods traded are changing, too. In 2004, the most-traded goods were vegetables, stone products, paper goods and furniture. While some of these products, such as vegetables, stone and paper goods, remain heavily traded, demand has also grown for other products, such as fish, since the Green Line Regulation was introduced.

In this section, we delve deeper into the stories of some of the products being traded across the Green Line and the people behind this trade.

POTATOES



Producer Mehmet Yoran with his EU-funded solar panels.

Mehmet Yoran's family-run business is one of the major producers of potatoes and onions in the Turkish Cypriot community.

Mehmet received a grant from the EU that enabled him to build two additional cold storage rooms needed to expand his production. Mehmet needed more space to store his vegetables due to increasing demand from the Greek Cypriot community. 'When they run out of local produce in the Greek Cypriot community, we can sell to them,' he explains. The facilities he built with the EU funding were essential for this: 'If we didn't keep them in cold storage, the products would rot,' Mehmet says.

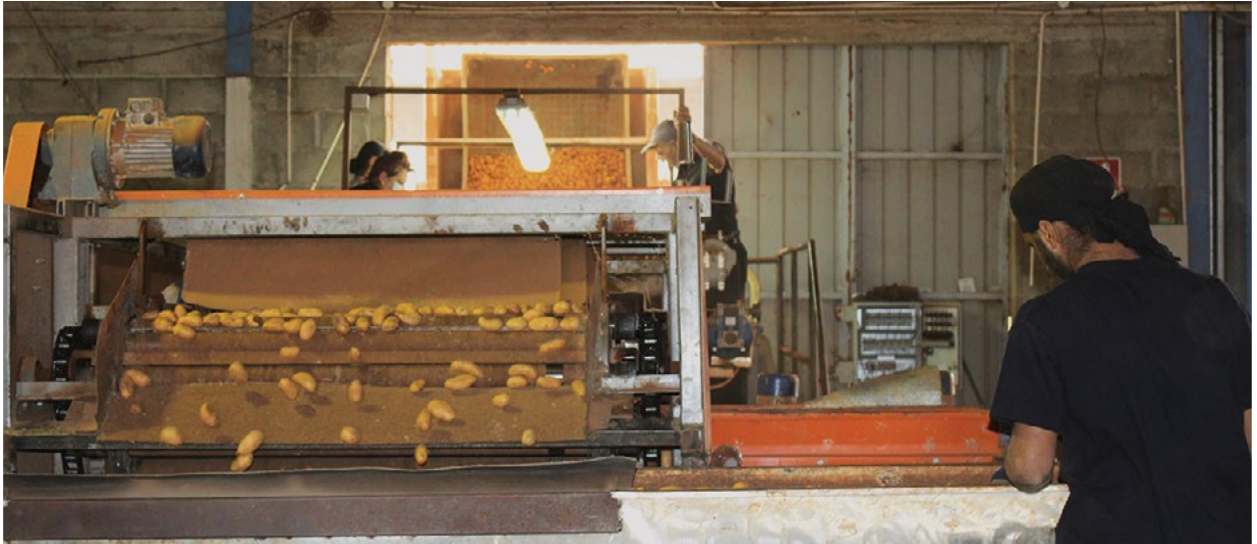
The business also received another EU grant to purchase solar panels. Thanks to this investment, it now produces all its own electricity, reducing maintenance costs and helping to make the business more competitive and sustainable. It has also improved its hygiene standards, gaining four international quality certificates in the process.

Mehmet was the first Turkish Cypriot potato producer to trade across the Green Line, and he says the Regulation has been 'very beneficial' for his business. His sales rose by around 30 % after he began trading across the Green Line, which has in turn allowed him to expand his business. 'I plant more. I have more employees,'

he explains. 'Before the Green Line trade, I had around 12 to 13 employees. Now I have around 40. If it wasn't for the Green Line Regulation, I would be planting much less. It's very important for both sides that Green Line trade continues.'

“If it wasn't for the Green Line Regulation, I would be planting much less. It's very important for both sides that Green Line trade continues.”

**Mehmet Yoran,
Turkish Cypriot potato producer**



Potato company engaged in Green Line trade.

His last point is a key one. Green Line trade is not only beneficial for producers in the Turkish Cypriot community – it has great advantages for those on the Greek Cypriot side, too, as buyer Polis Papageorgeou confirms. ‘For the last 15 years, I’ve been buying fruit and vegetables from Mehmet. I come here first. Thanks to the Green Line Regulation, I’ve expanded my business. I sell more,’ he says. Despite living on opposite sides of the Green Line, the two have even managed to become good friends. ‘We meet together with our families and we socialise,’ Polis says.

Another Greek Cypriot buyer is Georgia Michail, who purchases potatoes. Georgia’s PROMO trading company exports large quantities of potatoes to Greece. Previously, demand was exceeding the supplies available in the Greek Cypriot community, so she began buying from Turkish Cypriot producers to supplement her potato stocks.

As Greek Cypriot buyers such as Georgia turn to Turkish Cypriot producers, opportunities are opening up for Turkish Cypriots such as Muhammet and Hüseyin Mullaaziz. These two potato producers are newcomers to Green Line trade. They began trading with the Greek Cypriot community when they found they were not able to sell all their potatoes locally. ‘We’ll have a new harvest soon,’ Muhammet explains. ‘So the potatoes we have

at hand need to go.’ Having seen the benefits of Green Line trade, the pair are now keen to start trading other products, too.

EU-provided expertise has helped food producers such as Mehmet, Muhammet and Hüseyin to expand their businesses, supporting the local economy in the community. Meanwhile, it is ensuring that their produce is healthy and safe, in line with EU standards.

FISH

Fish is one of only two animal products, along with honey, that can currently be traded across the Green Line.

Fishing in the Turkish Cypriot community has grown considerably in recent years. The number of authorised fishing vessels has grown from 78, in 2008, to 110 a decade later. According to experts, EU requirements and expert inspections have also led to an improvement in the quality and hygiene of storage facilities and vessels.

In order for fish traders in the community to become registered for Green Line trade, their boats must first be checked by EU experts.

Ersen Cecer is one such fisherman. 'Three or four experts from the EU come on an annual basis,' Ersen explains. 'They check the cleanliness of our boat. They check the oil. They check the discharge of dirty water. Then they give the authorisation.'

Ersen is more than happy to comply with this, as the Green Line Regulation has had 'a positive impact on prices'. He also acknowledges that the EU standards are positive for the industry, as prohibiting the catching and selling of undersized fish helps to conserve stocks.

Ersen initially sells his fish to around 10 different Turkish Cypriot traders. These intermediaries, known as 'consignors', then trade directly with buyers in the Greek Cypriot community.

As consignor Özay Ökün tells us, the Green Line Regulation has allowed fishermen to sell their fish 'at market value', as increased demand from the Greek Cypriot community has enabled them to raise their prices. 'Without that regulation, I believe the sector would have shrunk by half, because the fishermen wouldn't have been able to sell their fish at market value, and the inputs are costly,' Özay explains.

Just as in the potato industry, what is apparent again is that the benefits of this trade are not only financial. Like potato traders Mehmet and Polis, fishing professionals on either side of the Green Line have also begun to develop friendships. 'The Green Line Regulation has provided us with the opportunity to engage in a dialogue with the Greek Cypriots,' Özay says.

Kostagis Kostandinou, a Greek Cypriot buyer, agrees. 'The Green Line Regulation has provided both communities with business opportunities. And thanks to the business, we have become friends.'

'Green Line trade has brought us closer,' says consignor Tosun Altinel. 'So we have this trust established between the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots. In the past, it didn't exist.'

“*The Green Line Regulation has provided both communities with business opportunities. And thanks to the business, we have become friends.*”

Kostagis Kostandinou, Greek Cypriot fish buyer



Fisherman Ersen with his registered boat.



Turkish Cypriot consignor Özay and Greek Cypriot buyer Kostagis have developed a friendship.

CITRUS FRUITS



Oranges stored by the Turkish Cypriot citrus producers.

Citrus fruits have untapped potential for Green Line trade in Cyprus. While the warm, eastern Mediterranean climate of Cyprus is well suited to citrus fruit production, diseases are relatively common, which means it is important that production processes are in line with the EU standards.

Although very little citrus fruit has been traded over the Green Line in recent years, Turkish Cypriot producers – with the EU's support – are taking steps to change this.

EU experts regularly visit the Turkish Cypriot community to carry out pre-harvest inspections of citrus fruits. The purpose of the inspections is to check that they are free from the harmful organisms listed in the relevant EU directive and to improve overall production standards. Over the years, the EU's experts have reported improvements in terms of quality. Thanks to these improved standards, it is hoped that trade will soon start increasing, as Ahmet Hastürk tells us.

Ahmet is the head of the association that brings together Turkish Cypriot citrus producers. He believes

that the main challenge in the industry is to develop trust. To do this, the association has come up with the idea of preparing a container of citrus fruits to trade over the Green Line.

'Once Turkish Cypriot producers see the success [of the first container], trust will increase,' he explains. The association has also received EU grants to improve its storage facilities.

Like the Turkish Cypriot potato and fish traders, Ahmet feels trade is important for building relations between the island's communities. 'It could converge the societies, bring both societies together,' he says.

“Trade could converge the societies, bring both societies together.”

Ahmet Hastürk

VEGETABLE OIL



Hüseyin in the facilities where waste vegetable oil is processed.

Hüseyin Diner's business is also centred around a food product of sorts, although he has managed to find a rather unique gap in the market.

Hüseyin collects waste vegetable oil from local businesses and sells it to clients in the Greek Cypriot community. In doing so, he not only benefits from Green Line trade, but also helps to reduce waste.

Hüseyin's Greek Cypriot clients have also encouraged him to gain international certification for the oil, which can be used to make biofuel. Once they have purchased the waste cooking oil from Hüseyin, the Greek Cypriot buyers use cutting-edge technology to turn the oil into biodiesel, which can provide carbon savings when used instead of regular fossil fuels.

Hüseyin is helping to reduce waste and pollution by collecting the leftover oil. 'In the past, people or businesses used to pour the waste oil down the drain,' he explains. 'The idea for us to start collecting this was to stop disposing of waste oil in the sea, in the soil, in nature.' By reducing this harmful disposal of waste, Hüseyin is helping to protect birds, fish and other wildlife.

The entrepreneur feels there are other areas such as this where Green Line trade could have benefits for both communities. 'Of course, there are certain restrictions on what you can trade through the Green Line', he says, but Green Line trade has 'huge potential'.

“Green Line trade has huge potential.”

**Hüseyin Diner,
waste vegetable oil seller**

PLASTIC, PAPER AND PAINT



Plastic producer Ali with new machinery.

Food is not the only industry in which Green Line trade is growing. Turkish Cypriot manufacturer Ali Ağaoğlu sells industrial plastic products to Greek Cypriot customers.

‘My father was born and raised in the Greek Cypriot community, and used his connections to establish this close contact,’ Ali explains. ‘We started with a couple of clients, and today we have over twenty.’

‘Thanks to the Green Line Regulation that makes our trade possible, we now have more clients. We also have more dialogue with our clients and their contacts,’ Ali says.

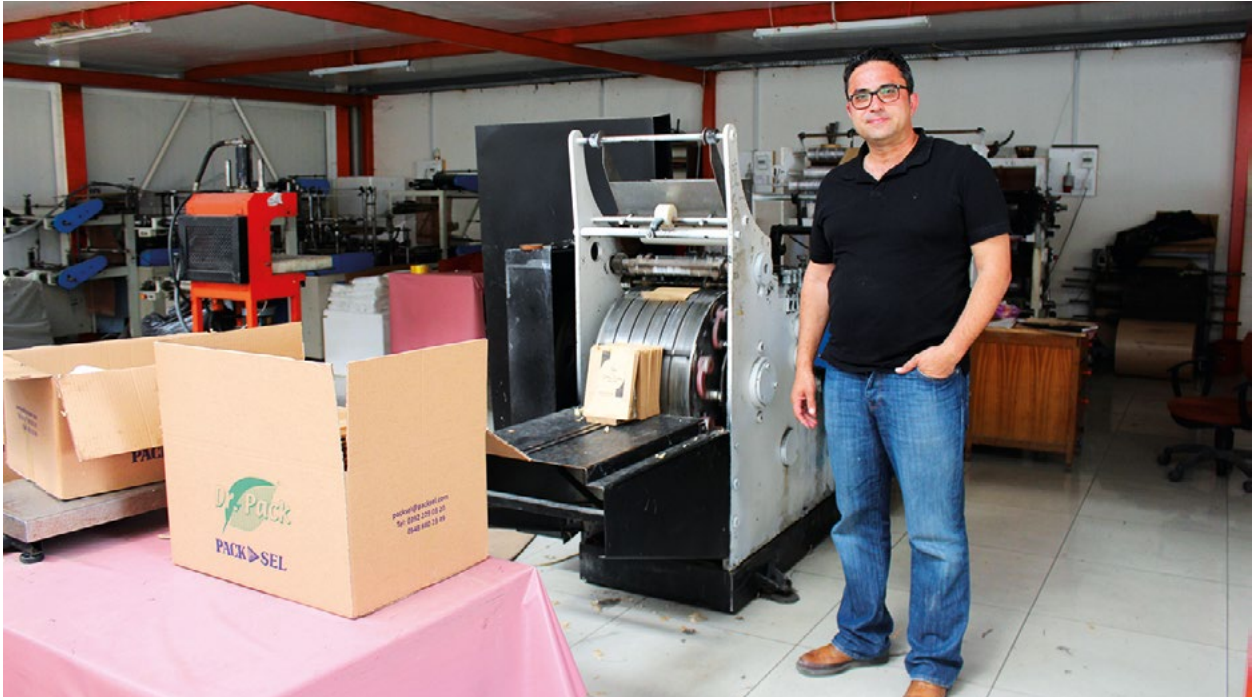
Ali says his manufacturing firm has diversified its product lines ‘to take into account the needs and demands of the Greek Cypriot market’. Now, it mainly sells industrial packaging products, and around 35 % of its output heads to the Greek Cypriot community.

‘The items that we produce are tested in Limassol, in a food laboratory. When the products are delivered, samples are taken and documents are checked before they [the authorities] allow Green Line trade.’

Trade over the Green Line has improved both the quantity and the quality of the firm’s products. It has also helped Ali to reduce the amount of plastic used in production. ‘We used to have small machines. Now we have larger ones and they are more productive,’ Ali says. ‘The quality of the raw material that we use is better now. This lowers the amount of plastic used per item by 10 %.’

“ Thanks to the Green Line Regulation that makes our trade possible, we now have more clients. We also have more dialogue with our clients and their contacts. ”

Ali Ağaoğlu, industrial packaging manufacturer



Necat's company is ready to engage in Green Line trade.

Entrepreneur Necat Yüksel also works with plastics. His company, Packsel, produces paper and polythene bags in the Turkish Cypriot community.

Although he has not yet traded across the Green Line, Necat knows that there is a potential market for his products in the Greek Cypriot community. Our friends started selling there [to the Greek Cypriot community] a couple of years ago. They're very happy with it. It's an ongoing process.'

'We have paper sachets, like bakery bags and greaseproof paper. We could sell those under the Green Line Regulation. Polythene garbage bags too. It's a new market for us.'

Necat applied to trade his products across the Green Line. 'Now that the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce has done its audit and approved our products for Green Line trade, we need to find a customer or a distributor to start selling. That will be our next project in the second half of 2019 and 2020.'

As a producer of polythene products, Necat knows he needs to react to changing international attitudes towards plastic as he begins to trade across the Green Line.

In recent years, the EU has stepped up its efforts to reduce plastic waste, targeting single-use plastics in particular. The European strategy for plastics in a circular economy aims to transform the way plastic products are designed, used, produced and recycled.

The EU's Technical Assistance and Information Exchange (TAIEX) instrument has also helped to prepare a legal text for all waste packaging in the Turkish Cypriot community. The text, which was developed in line with the EU's environmental regulations and adopted in December 2018, aims to prevent the harmful impacts of waste packaging on the environment.

Against this background, Necat and his fellow Turkish Cypriot bag manufacturers have been increasing their investment in paper products, while working hard to ensure that their plastic products meet the relevant EU standards.

This is all part of the wider process that Turkish Cypriot businesses are going through as they seek to bring their products in line with the EU standards and as such, more attractive for Green Line trade.

Mustafa Şefik, a paint manufacturer, obtained EU REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and restriction of Chemicals) certificates of compliance for his products.

Although not required by the Green Line Regulation, Mustafa wanted to do this. By investing in obtaining the certificates, which aim to protect citizens from the risks posed by chemicals, Mustafa has made his products more desirable for Greek Cypriot buyers.

'I invested in EU certificates for three of my products,' he explains. 'We then applied for trade across the Green Line and we were successful. I am now thinking about getting more certificates and engaging in more Green Line trade.'

“ I am now thinking about getting more certificates and engaging in more Green Line trade. ”

Mustafa Şefik, paint manufacturer



Mustafa holding his new REACH certificate.

PROGRESS AND POTENTIAL

The reunification of Cyprus would bring social, economic and political benefits to the island. Until reunification is achieved, the EU will continue to strive to strengthen cooperation and trust, including through the Green Line Regulation.

Many EU-funded, bi-communal projects and initiatives are already helping to build understanding of shared cultural heritage, address prejudices and break down emotional barriers.

Increased trade, meanwhile, has clear economic benefits for both communities. However, trade too involves much more than just business; it builds trust, creates partnerships, and can even lead to friendships.

The stories in this booklet also demonstrate that there is a lot more potential to bring the communities closer together. Having seen the successes of the Green Line Regulation over the past 15 years, the EU is continuing to support projects and initiatives that encourage crossings, trade and inter-communal dialogue.

In the context of people-to-people contacts, a number of new initiatives have been continuing to encourage bi-communal dialogue and collaboration with the EU's support.

As of July 2019, phone calls from Cyprus can be routed through a roaming hub in Switzerland. This means Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots are for the first time able to use their mobile phones throughout the island.

The EU actively supported this confidence-building measure by providing technical and legal advice and assistance. This has had a positive impact on the lives of Cypriots by making it easier and safer to travel across the island, thereby encouraging more people to cross the Green Line.

Interconnectivity is an important EU priority, as previously demonstrated by the abolition of additional roaming charges within the EU in 2017. The support in this area will also play an important role in continuing to increase communication and dialogue between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities. As indicated by the then European Commission Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis: 'This is a symbolic measure as it enables greater interaction between the communities on the island.'

Meanwhile, the Innovative Entrepreneurship project also aims to encourage the two communities to come together and collaborate, by providing a shared space for cooperation in the heart of Nicosia. The bi-communal entrepreneurship hub will provide office space, shared facilities and services, so that entrepreneurs, innovators and researchers from the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities can meet, communicate and work together on joint business ventures.

Another EU-funded project encouraging bi-communal collaboration in Cyprus is Go Social CY. This project offers training, domestic and international observation trips and internship opportunities to young people, students, disadvantaged groups and women who want to become social entrepreneurs. The project aims to create island-wide partnerships between both communities, encouraging cooperation between Cypriots.

These initiatives will build on the success of existing projects such as the EU co-funded Research Centre on Interactive Media, Smart Systems and Emerging Technologies (RISE). This project has become a centre of excellence for academic research, industrial innovation and knowledge and technology transfer between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities.

As for trade, the EU will also carry on with its extensive work to support the trading of goods across the Green Line and speed up economic growth in the community.

Continued EU support will work to increase the capacity of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Turkish Cypriot community.

As part of this support, EU experts will help to raise productivity, quality and health standards in the community. This support will be valuable as increasing numbers of Turkish Cypriots, inspired by the successes of other traders in the community, explore as yet untapped opportunities for trade.

Through its continued efforts to support free movement and trade across the Green Line, the EU is bringing the two communities closer together and raising awareness of the personal and economic benefits of island-wide collaboration.

Of course, upon reunification, the Green Line Regulation will no longer be necessary. To get to this point, the EU will continue to put great emphasis on building trust and relations between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities.

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