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## Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

### Replies of Cyprus to the list of issues in relation to its seventh periodic report<sup>\*</sup>, <sup>\*\*</sup>

[Date received: 25 October 2023]

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\* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

\*\* The annexes to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



## Abbreviations

ACTF	Anti-Corruption Task Force
CAPHR	Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights
CCRA	Climate Change Risk Assessment
CDP	Cultural Decentralization Programme
CGE	Commissioner for Gender Equality
CMCDDA	Cyprus Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction
CNRSF	Cyprus National Roma Strategic Framework
CoM	Council of Ministers
DHE	Department of Higher Education
DLR	Department of Labour Relations
DMSW	Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare
DSID	Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
GHG emissions	greenhouse gas emissions
GMI	Guaranteed Minimum Income
HRDA	Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus
IAAC	Independent Authority against Corruption
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICHP	Intangible Cultural Heritage Programme
MARDE	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment
MJPO	Ministry of Justice and Public Order
MLSI	Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance
MOESY	Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth
MoH	Ministry of Health
MS	Member State
NAP	National Action Plan
NAS	National Adaptation Strategy
NECP	National Energy and Climate Plan
NMWR	National Mechanism for Women's Rights
RES	Renewable Energy Sources
RoC	Republic of Cyprus
RRP	Recovery and Resilience Plan
SWS	Social Welfare Services
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

## I. Introduction

1. Following the submission of the Seventh Periodic Report of the Republic in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ('ICESCR' or 'the Covenant'), in November 2021, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights adopted a List of Issues on the Seventh Periodic Report of Cyprus, during its seventy-first session.
2. In response to the above List of Issues, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) submits the following Replies, prepared by the Office of the Law Commissioner of Cyprus, who, pursuant to a Decision of the Council of Ministers (CoM), is entrusted with ensuring compliance by Cyprus with its reporting obligations under international human rights instruments. The replies were compiled based on information and data provided by competent Ministries, Deputy Ministries, Authorities and Services of the RoC.
3. The Government of the RoC regrets that due to the continued occupation is unable to ensure the enjoyment of the rights provided for in the ICESCR on the whole of its territory and that, therefore, it is also deprived of its ability to apply its provisions to those living in the areas not under the effective control of the Government. Therefore, the Government of the RoC is unable to ensure full realization of its policies and to apply its laws, policies and programmes concerning human rights to those living in the occupied areas.
4. Due to the above-described situation, no information and data is available regarding the enjoyment of the relevant rights by the Cypriot population living in the areas not under the effective control of the Government. Therefore, all information and data presented in the present Replies concern the Government controlled areas.

## II. Replies to the list of issues

### A. General information

#### Reply to paragraph 2 of the list of issues (E/C.12/CYP/Q/7)

5. The ICESCR was ratified with the International Covenants (Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Civil and Political Rights) (Ratifying) Law of 1969 (L.14/1969) and is incorporated into Cypriot domestic law. The provisions of the ICESCR are also reflected in many articles of the Constitution, such as the right to a decent existence and social security (article 9), the right to free education (article 20), the right to form and join trade unions (article 21(2)), the right to practice any profession or to carry on business (article 25) and the right to strike (article 27). Additionally, the right to take part in cultural life is safeguarded through provisions such as the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion (article 18), freedom of speech and expression (article 19) and the right to non-discrimination and equality before the law (article 28). Awareness-raising and educational seminars are regularly held for prosecutors and lawyers on human rights, including economic, social, and cultural rights. A brief analysis on the relevant case law is found in Appendix I.

#### Reply to paragraph 3 of the list of issues

6. The Office of the Commissioner for Administration and the Protection of Human Rights (CAPHR) has thorough knowledge and experience with respect to the promotion and protection of the rights enshrined in international and regional human rights documents, including the ICESCR, and regularly cites the Covenant and the rights envisaged therein in their interventions/reports. Indicatively:

- In its Report on the Protocol of Operation adopted by the Cyprus University of Technology to combat the COVID-19 pandemic on campus (December 2021), article 13 of the Covenant was cited on the right of everyone to education, with special reference to paragraph (2)(c);

- In its Systemic Report (July 2021), regarding the overall measures that were taken at the time by Cyprus to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, and their compatibility with human rights law, the CAPHR cited articles 4, 7, 17, 12 and 19 of the Covenant;
- In its own-initiative Report (December 2020), regarding the living conditions of the Roma community in Cyprus, the CAPHR cited articles 6, 11, 12 and 13 of the Covenant.

7. The active and constructive involvement of civil society organizations and other stakeholders in the decision-making processes for the development of new legislation and policies related to economic, social and cultural rights, is realized through written communication, open public dialogue, meetings and discussions at the level of Ministries or Departments/Services, participation in joint working groups for the processing of specific issues, organization of workshops and other learning activities, etc.

8. For instance, the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (DSID) of the Deputy Ministry of Social Welfare (DMSW), acting as the Focal Point in Cyprus for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), has consulted with representative organizations of persons with disabilities for the formulation and monitoring of the implementation of the National Strategy and the National Action Plans on Disability. Moreover, regarding the implementation of article 12 of the UNCRPD, a new pilot programme operates in cooperation with organizations of persons with disabilities and with a grant from the DSID for the detailed study and recording of the required support services and operation of the new legislative and institutional framework that the bill will bring about.

9. In 2021, the Social Welfare Services (SWS) of the DMSW, as the competent coordinating authority, submitted to the European Commission the Cyprus National Roma Strategic Framework (CNRSF) for 2021–2030, prepared in collaboration with all co-competent Ministries/Services and approved by the CoM on 13/12/2021. Within this context, the SWS have established a cooperation with the Cyprus Roma Association for the implementation of the CNRSF.

#### **Reply to paragraph 4 of the list of issues**

10. Cyprus has adopted a series of policy measures for mitigating climate change:

##### **(a) Adoption of the National Adaptation Strategy (NAS) (2017)**

The Department of Environment of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and the Environment (MARDE) coordinates the efforts for the development and the implementation of the NAS to Climate Change.<sup>1</sup> For the implementation of the NAS, a relevant National Action Plan (NAP)<sup>2</sup> was drawn up. Its measures are implemented by the competent Ministries/Authorities through their allocated budgets. The main adaptation measures and policies for slow onset impacts in agriculture, housing and health actions and the institutions responsible for the implementation are provided in Appendix II, Tables 1–3. The NAS and NAP to Climate Change were adopted by the CoM on 18/5/2017. All relevant stakeholders have been involved throughout the process and particularly in the monitoring of the progress on the implementation of adaptation measures. The NAP is expected to be revised by the end of 2024.

The NAS provides a holistic framework supporting decision-makers, stakeholders, and citizens to effectively respond to climate change risks, to assess the potential cross-sectional impacts and the vulnerability to climate change and to mitigate the impacts by cost-effective adaptation options. It includes a detailed analysis of observed and potential impacts and their vulnerabilities, adaptation measures to be taken immediately, as well as policies for future actions across different sectors of the economy. The sectors of importance for mitigating climate change selected for Cyprus include water resources management, agriculture, management of coastal zones,

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<sup>1</sup> The National Strategy to Climate Change is available [here](#) (in Greek).

<sup>2</sup> The NAP to Climate Change is available [here](#) (in Greek).

tourism, biodiversity, energy, fisheries and aquaculture, soil, forestry, public health, and infrastructure.

For further measures found in Cyprus' NAP relating to natural disasters, extreme events, and disaster risk, see Appendix III.

**(b) Establishment of the National Governance System for Climate and Energy (2017)**

In order to fulfil the provisions of the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action ((EU) 2018/1999) and the objectives of the Paris Agreement, on 15/11/2017 the CoM approved a new structure for climate and energy governance. The new structure operated under the political guidance of a four-member Ministerial Committee and a corresponding Technical Committee of Permanent Secretaries, while, at a technical level, the thematic areas of decarbonisation, energy efficiency, energy security, internal energy market, research, innovation and competitiveness, renewable energy and transport were examined by seven distinct competent working groups. In 2019, this structure evolved into the National Governance System for the implementation of the Green Deal, also adopted by the CoM.

**(c) Adoption of the National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) (2020)<sup>3</sup>**

The NECP examines the existing structure of the energy sector, the implemented policies, the evolution scenario of the energy system, as well as the measures and policies that will be implemented to achieve the national energy and climate targets by 2030. Through several targeted measures, NECP aims to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 24% by 2030 compared to 2005.

Targeted policy measures include the import and utilisation of natural gas for electricity production, the penetration of renewable energy sources (RES) in energy generation, in heating and cooling and in transportation and the reduction of the quantities of biodegradable waste in solid waste treatment facilities through separate collection for electricity and thermal energy generation and recycling.

Regarding the transport sector, the NECP has set policy measures that promote the use of RES and improve the sector's energy efficiency, including the development of infrastructure for the electrification of the sector and for public transportation, the promotion of alternative transport fuels and biofuels, the promotion of low emission buses and vehicles and the implementation of the sustainable urban mobility plans. Additional measures include the promotion of the purchase and use of vehicles with low or zero emission, the development of old vehicle scrapping schemes, financial incentives for the purchase of electric vehicles, the incorporation of the new public transport contracts terms for the purchase and use of low/zero emission buses, the harmonization/implementation of EU Directives and the incentives for the use of low/zero emission tourist buses.

The revised Common Agricultural Policy introduces specific measures in the context of Green Direct Aid by promoting sustainable food production, sustainable farm management and environmentally and climate-friendly practices and methods. These measures aim at the prevention of desertification, the improvement of water management, the reduction of the intensity of natural resources, the optimisation of use of agricultural land, the reduction of the use of fertilisers and the improvement of animal waste management.

Furthermore, the Rural Development Programme promotes a more intensified implementation of the forestry measure, which will also increase the absorption from the Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry sector. Currently, the contribution of the measure to the country's overall emissions/absorption balance cannot be estimated. The Department of Forests is implementing a scheme directed towards public or

<sup>3</sup> The NECP is available [here](#).

private organizations to increase forest tree production from its nurseries for planting in now non-forested lands. The scheme starts from planting 70,000 trees in 2020 and is planned to reach 300,000 trees planted per year in 2030.

**(d) Adoption of the RoC's long-term low GHG emission development strategy (2022)<sup>4</sup>**

For the fulfilment of RoC's obligations under the Paris Agreement and the relevant EU institutional framework, the Department of Environment prepared the Long-Term Low GHG Emission Development Strategy for 2050, adopted by the CoM in September 2022. The Strategy is a roadmap for Cyprus on Climate and Energy, as part of its participation in the collective European goal of a successful and sustainable transition to a climate-neutral economy by 2050. RoC's strategy is aligned with the Climate Neutrality Strategy, planning the implementation of innovative but realistic technology applications, funding, and research, while ensuring social justice in the context of a fair transition. The 2050 Long-Term Strategy analyses scenarios for the evolution of the energy system and the pattern of consumption in the final sectors, with the goal of transition to a climate-neutral economy by 2050. The trend of the 1990-2020 per capita GHG emissions is presented in Appendix IV.

**(e) Preparation of Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA)**

RoC's first detailed CCRA was prepared in 2016 and provides an overview of potential risks and opportunities of climate change for Cyprus until 2100. Its findings were used by the Government for the development of adaptation plans. The vulnerability assessment focused on 11 priority sectors: water resources, land use, seaside areas, biodiversity, forestry, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, energy, infrastructure, and public health.

The CCRA refers to vulnerable groups who tend to experience disproportionate negative effects from climate impacts, such as those affected by poverty, poor health, and disabilities. The CCRA recognises that social vulnerability to climate change is likely to reflect existing patterns of inequality, whereas under certain demographic scenarios future social vulnerability could increase, as an aging population is more vulnerable to heat stress. Moreover, it refers to outdoor workers, who are more vulnerable to heat related risks, and low-income people who are more likely to be affected by higher food or water prices.

**(f) Water Management Measures and Plans**

Cyprus has implemented policies of sound water management with the aim of increasing water availability and water security, of satisfying water demand to the maximum extent possible for domestic, agricultural, industrial, environmental, and other uses, and of securing the quality and protection of water resources and the environment, through the optimum and sustainable use of conventional and non-conventional water resources. Furthermore, measures for the efficient use of water resources are being implemented, aiming to further improve the good practices of water consumption and reuse, minimise water losses, reduce the risk of depletion of the island's scarce water resources and preserve their quality.

At the same time, emphasis is given towards strengthening the resilience of the aquatic ecosystem, to adapt to climate change and to take intensive and targeted measures for disaster management and response to the impact of extreme events, such as droughts and floods. The Water Development Department of the MARDE has prepared and implemented a Drought Management Plan, which is an integral part of the Cyprus River Basin Management Plan, in accordance with the European Water Framework Directive, as well as Flood Risk Management Plans, in accordance with the European Floods Directive.

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<sup>4</sup> Cyprus' Long-term low GHG emission development strategy is available [here](#).

### **Reply to paragraph 5 of the list of issues**

11. The Cyprus Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) aims at promoting and implementing reforms and investments that will mitigate the economic and social impact of the COVID-19 crisis. It ensures that everyone has the right to equal treatment and opportunities in terms of employment, grants, social protection, education and access to goods and services available to the public. Specifically, the economy should provide equal opportunities to all, and growth should be inclusive and shared between all citizens. The promotion of equal opportunities is a horizontal principle that governs the RRP, and legislative measures are incorporated therein, focusing to further eliminating gender gaps, stereotypes, and social prejudices in society. To speed up the process of elimination and narrowing of the gap, consultations among the various stakeholders took place. The RRP further tackles social exclusion. It provides financial and administrative measures catering for different cases of deprived persons -women and men- who suffer social exclusion to improve their living conditions. For example, grants are available to low-income families/persons (including the elderly and deprived persons). More specifically, the promotion of equal opportunities, non-discrimination, and accessibility, will be ensured through the involvement of the competent bodies during the implementation of the RRP, in accordance with the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan.

## **B. Issues relating to the general provisions of the Covenant (arts. 1-5)**

### **Reply to paragraph 6 of the list of issues**

12. According to the results of the Survey on Income and Living Conditions of EU-SILC (2022), with income reference period the year 2021, the percentage of the population that was at risk of poverty (share of persons with an equivalized disposable income (after social transfers) below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold) was 13.9%, remaining around the same level with that of 2021 (13.8%). In 2022, the at-risk-of-poverty threshold (defined at the 60% of the median total equivalized disposable income of the households), was estimated in 2022 at €10,713 for single person households and at €22,498 for households with 2 adults and 2 dependent children. The respective thresholds for 2021 were €10,011 and €21,024. The highest percentage of population that was at risk of poverty, for the last ten years, was observed in 2015 (16.1%). Since then, it has been gradually decreasing.

13. The available measures of inequality for Cyprus (Gini coefficient and S80/S20 index) are obtained from the Survey on Income and Living Conditions of EU-SILC. Gini coefficient is based on the comparison of cumulative proportions of the population against cumulative proportions of income they receive, and it ranges between 0 in the case of perfect equality and 1 in the case of perfect inequality. The index S80/S20 refers to the ratio of the total equivalent disposable income received by the 20% of the population with the highest equivalent disposable income to the total equivalent disposable income received by the 20% of the population with the lowest equivalent disposable income. The indices did not show significant changes in relation to 2021, indicating that there was no increase in economic inequality, while at the same time it remained at levels lower than those of the EU. Specifically, the Gini coefficient was maintained at 29.4% (EU 29.6%) while the S80/S20 index increased from 4.2 to 4.3 (EU 4.8). During the last ten years, the highest level of inequality was observed between 2013 – and 2016 (34,8% and 5.4 in 2014). Since 2017, inequality has been relative stable hovering around 29.5% (Gini coefficient) and 4.5 (S80/S20 index), although Gini coefficient peaked at 31.1% in 2019.

14. Following a three-year contraction during 2012-2014, after the bail-in and the macroeconomic adjustment programme, Cyprus exited the programme in 2015 and returned to a growth trajectory. The economy was recording significant growth rates for six years until 2019, with an average growth rate of 5.4%. In 2020 though, the economy was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and recorded a contraction (-4.4%). Although Cyprus entered 2020 from a considerably favourable macroeconomic and fiscal position, the economy was highly affected by the pandemic due to its dependence on tourism. During 2021, the restriction measures for the containment of COVID-19 were far less strict, allowing the restart of most of the economic sectors of the economy. The economy recovered strongly

in 2021 (6.6%) and 2022 (5.6%) despite the situation in Ukraine and the sanctions imposed. GDP per capita increased to €29,589 in 2022 from €26,677 in the 2021, the highest the last ten years with an exception in 2020. Public debt, as a percentage of GDP, has declined from 101.2% to 86.5%, the lowest since 2013, however higher than 2012 (80.1%). For statistical data for the years 2012–2022, see Appendix V, Table 1.

15. Further analysis on the proportion of public revenue generated through taxes and as a percentage of GDP, on public expenditure as a percentage of GDP, on public budget allocated to defence and on fiscal policies adopted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, is found in Appendix V, Tables 2–5.

#### **Reply to paragraph 7 of the list of issues**

16. In 2022, three significant laws were enacted by the Parliament, enhancing the existing anti-corruption framework: (a) the Establishment and Functioning of the Independent Authority Against Corruption Law (L.19(I)/2022), (b) the Transparency of Public Decision-Making and Relevant Procedures Law (L.20(I)/2022), and (c) the Law on the Protection of Persons who Report Breaches of Union and National Law (L.6(I)/2022).

17. Additionally, the National Horizontal Action Plan against Corruption, as revised in 2021, is still in force, aiming at enhancing the legal, political, financial, and social environment through 27 specific actions, divided in 3 pillars: (a) prevention, education, and awareness; (b) reinforcement and modernisation of the existing legal framework; (c) supervision, risk assessment and active involvement of the civil society. It further established a mechanism for the rotation of civil servants who are exposed to risk of corruption. With a Circular, dated 31/08/2021, the Public Administration and Personnel Department addressed several recommendations to Ministries/Deputy Ministries/Independent Offices/Departments/Services aiming to combat and minimize the risk of corruption in the public service.

18. The legislation on the protection of whistle-blowers (L.6(I)/2022) entered into effect in 2022 and provides supplementary provisions on the protection of persons reporting criminal behaviour, including acts of corruption, both in the public and the private sectors (persons not involved in the acts). Regarding persons involved in acts of corruption, but voluntarily report them to the police and/or offer cooperation with the authorities resulting in the full investigation and prosecution of the case, L.6(I)/2022 provides that maximum penalty on conviction is reduced by half. Awareness-raising efforts are underway regarding the content of L.6(I)/2022 and the obligations and rights provided therein (e.g., online publication of easily accessible informational guides on the protection of whistle-blowers addressed to employees, employers and competent authorities, publication of list of ‘competent authorities’ on the website to assist reporting of criminal behaviour).

19. The newly established Independent Authority against Corruption (IAAC) is the competent authority for the coordination of actions of the services of the public sector, the wider public sector and the private sector for the prevention and combating of acts of corruption at national level. It consists of the Commissioner for Transparency and four members appointed by the President in accordance with the procedure set out in L.19(I)/2022. IAAC has its own office and staff (public and other government officers and three external contractors for administrative/clerical support). The expenses of the IAAC, including the salary of the members and its staff, is included in the public budget of the Republic, under its own Chapter. The 2023 budget of the IAAC amounts to €1,019,173.

20. Moreover, an Anti-Corruption Task Force (ACTF) was established in March 2022, with the mandate of supervising, guiding, and coordinating the investigation procedures of serious criminal cases of corruption. The ACTF is headed by the Attorney-General or the Deputy Attorney-General and consists of experienced legal counsels of the Law Office of the Republic and representatives from the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Police. The Law Office and the IAAC have entered an agreement to avoid any unnecessary overlap in the investigation of corruption cases.

21. Since 2018, all criminal cases involving corruption (either under investigation or before the court) have been collected by Cyprus Police, categorized, and included in a single record which is being updated regularly. Since 2022, the record is reviewed by the ACTF



during its regular meetings. The ACTF has an overview control of those cases, and gives directions regarding their investigation and their handling before the court. In 2021, 12 corruption cases were investigated (some still under investigation) and for one of them a prosecution was carried out. From the beginning of 2022 until March 2023, 30 cases were investigated or are under investigation. In 2020, 10 persons were convicted in 4 cases, in 2021, 8 persons were convicted in 2 cases and in 2022, 16 persons were convicted in 4 cases.

#### **Reply to paragraph 8 of the list of issues**

22. Actions against disability discrimination are included in the First National Disability Strategy (2018–2028) and the NAP for Disability (2021–2023), such as training programmes on the UNCRPD for children in schools and for adult professionals working with persons with disabilities, to change the culture and combat ignorance and prejudice regarding disability. Moreover, the operation of the CAPHR, and its functioning as the Equality Authority, enables persons being discriminated to submit complaints.

#### **Reply to paragraph 9 of the list of issues**

23. The SWS of the DMSW, continue to implement the measures taken in 2019 and 2020 for the reception and integration of asylum seekers in Cyprus. SWS provide material reception conditions (monthly allowances for their basic needs, electricity, water supply, petty cash expenses and rent) to asylum seekers who cannot be accommodated at a Reception Centre. High priority is given to people in vulnerable situations and families with children at risk, including arrangements for housing and accommodation.

24. Applications for material reception conditions have been revised and translated into six languages. The SWS have prepared an information leaflet on material reception conditions, the rights and obligations of applicants, which has been translated into six languages. Interested parties can find all necessary information about the services provided by SWS on their website and at the local District Welfare Offices.

25. As of 01/06/2019, the CoM approved an increase in the monthly allowance for the material reception conditions of applicants for international protection. Specific criteria have been introduced for rental premises, regarding the number of people staying at a property, based on the number of rooms. A rent deposit is also provided. At the same time, SWS respond immediately to cases of asylum seekers that are unable to find accommodation and face issues of homelessness. With a Decision dated 7/10/2020, the CoM approved covering the living expenses of families of applicants for international protection with minor children (regardless of vulnerability) and persons in vulnerable situations, including victims of violence, as defined in article 9KG of the Refugee Laws 2000–2020 (e.g. pregnant women, people with disabilities, victims of violence), in temporary accommodation (hotels and/or other accommodation) only for a period of one to three months, in order to help them, as soon as possible, to find a permanent place of residence in the community. Furthermore, newly arrived individual asylum seekers who are referred to SWS, receive emergency financial assistance from day one, to cover their basic needs and accommodation.

26. Moreover, the Public Employment Services of the Department of Labour offer all job seekers who have access to the labour market, without any discrimination, assistance in finding employment, through registration, job search services and placement services, which include vocational guidance, counselling, and referrals to training programmes and job vacancies. Asylum seekers have access to specific sectors of employment regulated by a ministerial order. The range of these sectors was expanded in 2019 and then again in October 2021.

#### **Reply to paragraph 10 of the list of issues**

27. The NAP on Equality between Women and Men (2019–2023) is currently being evaluated by an independent external expert. The aim of the evaluation is to demonstrate the degree of implementation of the NAP, both quantitatively and qualitatively, as well as the problems and difficulties that hindered its full implementation. As indicated by a preliminary collection of data and information carried out by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (MJPO), a significant number of actions have been implemented under all seven key

priorities of the NAP which are: the prevention and combating of gender-based violence, combating of stereotypes, promoting the balanced participation of women in leadership positions, modernizing the legislative framework, empowering vulnerable groups of women, professional empowerment of women, and training and education of women in communication and information technologies. The results of the evaluation are expected to be submitted to the MJPO in October and will be considered in the formulation of the new National Gender Equality Strategy (2024–2026). The New Strategy is currently being drafted by the Commissioner for Gender Equality, in close collaboration with all relevant stakeholders and is expected to be submitted to the CoM for approval before the end of 2023.

28. The gender pay gap in Cyprus has decreased significantly over the last decade and keeps following a downward trend. It has further decreased by 20% since 2017 (11.2%), and currently stands at 9.7% according to the latest available data for 2021. The gender pay gap in the private sector has also decreased since 2017 (21%) and currently stands at 19.3%.

29. Moreover, the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (MLSI) engages in activities contributing to raising public awareness on gender pay gap and its detrimental consequences on women's economic and social life (e.g. organisation of annual Equal Pay Day events, panel discussions, etc.). The National Certification Body, founded in 2014 for the purpose of certifying businesses that follow policies supporting gender equality in the workplace, has rewarded 67 businesses and institutions for their efforts to ensure equal pay, retain the underrepresented sex, improve gender balance in decision-making positions, adopt gender-neutral job classification systems, and implement policies for work-life balance.

30. As far as inspection of the relevant legislation is concerned, from 2010 until 2021 inspections were carried out based on an annual target of 200-300 inspections per year, which were both preventive and repressive in nature. The inspectorate's role focuses on requesting data aiming at detecting direct discrimination in pay, on providing information to employers and employees on the provisions of the legislation and on practical compliance guidance to employers. In 2022 targeted and more detailed inspections took place, based on a risk assessment that has been conducted.

31. For an indicative list of case law on convictions under L.205(I)/2002, as amended, regarding sexual harassment and harassment in general, see Appendix VI.

#### **Reply to paragraph 11 of the list of issues**

32. In March 2014, via a presidential decision, the Office of the Commissioner for Gender Equality (CGE) was established. The CGE chairs the National Mechanism for Women's Rights (NMWR), based on a decision of the CoM of 23/04/2014. Since 2023, the CGE chairs the Inter-ministerial Committee consisting of the gender focal points appointed in every Ministry and Deputy Ministry.

33. The CGE is directly accountable to the President. On 5/07/2023, the CoM mandated the CGE to draft, coordinate and monitor the implementation of the new Strategy on Gender Equality (2024–2026). The new Strategy is expected to be published by the end of 2023. The Office of the CGE is aiming through the Strategy and in close cooperation with the gender focal points, to horizontally mainstream gender in the Government's policies. In this respect, a large-scale consultation took place on 26/09/2023, where representatives of public authorities, universities, non-governmental organisations, members of the NMWR and other organisations of the public and private sector brainstormed and exchanged views on the new strategy.

34. The CGE is also responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the NAP 'Women, Peace and Security', implementing the UN Resolution 1325. The NAP, prepared with all the competent Ministries, is a comprehensive plan covering the period 2021–2025 and includes four main pillars: (a) Participation and Empowerment, (b) Protection, (c) Prevention and (d) Promotion and Information on the Resolution. A Monitoring and Evaluation Committee was established and held its first meeting, chaired by the CGE, on 3/07/2023.

## C. Issues relating to the specific provisions of the Covenant (arts. 6–15)

### Reply to paragraph 12 of the list of issues

35. Updated data of the Cyprus Statistical Service on the labour force participation rate and employment and unemployment rate are found in Appendix VII, Tables 1–8.

### Reply to paragraph 13 of the list of issues

36. Since 2014, the Department of Labour implemented 16 employment incentive schemes subsidizing employers to recruit unemployed persons. The schemes targeted long-term unemployed persons, young persons between the ages of 25–29, young persons up to the age of 25, young persons between the ages of 15–29 not in employment nor education or training, persons with disabilities, persons with chronic diseases, disadvantaged persons (such as former detainees and GMI beneficiaries), persons over the age of 50, and persons working specifically in the retail sector. All incentive schemes have reached their target and around 13,500 persons have been employed. The schemes for persons with disabilities, chronic diseases and former detainees are still open and receive applications.

37. Data on the number of participants and programmes approved and subsidized by the Human Resource Development Authority of Cyprus (HRDA), per scheme, in 2021 can be found in the Appendix VIII, Table 1. The legislation, policies and measures relating to the establishment and operation of the HRDA ensure that there is no discrimination regarding vocational training of persons according to their race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin or any other characteristic. No data is available regarding the characteristics of the participants.

38. The HRDA has formed a comprehensive system for evaluating the impact of its activities. Evaluation studies are conducted on a continuous basis regarding the impact of the HRDA's schemes on the participants. In February 2022, a study was published by the HRDA on the Scheme for the Training Programmes for the Unemployed (2018-2019), showing that 24.2% of the participants were employed, approximately 7 months after completing their participation and only 32.8% of those who work, are employed in the occupation for which they were trained. Therefore, the scheme does not seem to have achieved at a satisfactory level of reintegration of the unemployed into employment in the occupations for which they were trained.

39. The HRDA designed and implemented two schemes for overcoming the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, one for the integration of the unemployed and inactive into employment and one for the lifelong learning of the employed (see Appendix VIII, Table 2).

### Reply to paragraph 14 of the list of issues

40. Following extensive communications between social partners, the 2022 Minimum Wage Decree replaced the 2012 Minimum Wage Decree that was applicable only to specific professions. Since 1/01/2023, the national minimum wage is €940. The Decree specifies that for the first six months of employment, the salary is fixed at €885 and thereafter rises to €940. Professions related to agriculture and shipping, domestic workers and persons receiving training or education to obtain a degree or professional qualification are exempt from this Decree.

41. Moreover, the Minimum Wage Decree established a nine-member Committee (consisting of three trade union representatives, three representatives of the employers' organizations and three academics or experts on labour issues) for the adjustment of the national minimum wage. The first adjustment of the national minimum wage will take place on 01/01/2024 and, thereafter, every two years. The Committee conducts research and reports on a possible need for wage adjustment, taking into account the purchasing power of the national minimum wage, trends in employment levels and unemployment rates, variation in economic growth and productivity levels, the variation and trends in wage levels and their distribution, the effects that any change in the minimum wage will have on employment levels, relative and absolute poverty indicators, the cost of living and the competitiveness of

the economy. The Labour Advisory Body advises the MLSI on the Committee's report on the adjustment of the national minimum wage.

**Reply to paragraph 15 of the list of issues**

42. One of the measures taken for the protection of workers not covered by specific legislation or collective agreements is the introduction of the national minimum wage. The Department of Labour Relations (DLR) of the MLSI focuses on the enforcement, monitoring, inspection of the application and proper implementation of the labour legislation and the safeguarding of employees' rights. In this respect, it carries out inspections with emphasis on workplaces where most vulnerable group of workers are employed. In 2023, inspections include the application of the National Minimum Wage Decree. The MLSI also organizes campaigns to inform the public about their labour rights. These campaigns have proven to have an incredibly positive impact in raising public awareness over the years.

43. As regards domestic workers, Cyprus is currently in the process of ratifying ILO Convention 189 and adopting an enacting legislation, in order to incorporate current procedures in relation to examining and resolving labour complaints/disputes for domestic workers, thus ensuring that third-country domestic workers continue to receive equal rights as enjoyed by local and EU nationals, especially in relation to ILO fundamental principles and rights at work. The MLSI safeguards equal treatment of non-EU national workers as regards terms and conditions of employment through written terms of employment. The DLR continuously strives, through complaint resolution procedures, to protect the rights of all workers, including third-country domestic workers.

44. The 2019 CoM decision made the complaint resolution mechanism more effective. In particular, the decision provides for the abolition of the relevant Committee of the Resolution of Complaints by third-country nationals, constituted by representatives of the DLR, the Civil Registry and Migration Department (Ministry of Interior) and the Aliens and Immigration Unit (Cyprus Police). The complaints related to labour matters are now examined directly by the DLR, which informs the Civil Registry and Migration Department. This new procedure has proven to be more efficient as it significantly reduced the examination time (approximately 3 weeks from the date of filing the complaint). Furthermore, in cases where, during the investigation, exploitation or violation of human rights is detected, complaints are forwarded to the CAPHR.

45. Strict recommendations are issued for the protection of wages, to ensure that the employers pay outstanding wages and benefits to their employees. In case they fail to do so, a sanction imposed removes the permission to replace the employee.

46. The Labour Inspectorate, established in 2017, operates with 8 inspectors and 24 co-inspectors and is responsible for the enforcement of 30 different labour laws including minimum wage, terms of employment in construction, hotel/restaurants, working time, etc. The Inspectorate conducted 7,630 inspections in 2019 in the process of which it interviewed more than 15,000 employees. 747 administrative fines for undeclared work were issued.

**Reply to paragraph 16 of the list of issues**

47. The legislative and policy measures introduced to protect the rights of non-unionized workers to just and favourable conditions of work, particularly in fair remuneration, etc., are the same as those mentioned in Reply to paragraph 15, above. Trade union density in 2019 was 44%, with the total number of unionized workforces amassing 184,833 individuals.

48. There were no restrictions during COVID-19 to the exercise of trade union rights, including the right to strike, and 21 new trade unions were registered during that period. During the COVID-19 restrictions, Cyprus introduced measures to facilitate trade union functions to be carried out online, after application and approval from the Trade Unions Registrar's Office, and thus assisted them in continuing their normal operation.

**Reply to paragraph 17 of the list of issues**

49. Cyprus has taken measures to secure the financial sustainability of the Social Insurance Scheme. These measures aimed at addressing the effects of demographic ageing

and at increasing the revenues by gradually increasing contributions as well as by gradually increasing the insurance conditions to entitlement to statutory pension from 3 years (156 weeks) to 15 years (780 weeks). As of 1/01/2017, the minimum insurance requirement for entitlement to statutory pension is 780 weeks of insurance. In case a person does not meet the minimum requirement to a statutory pension but has been insured in any other Member State (MS) of the EU, EEA, or Switzerland or in a third country with which Cyprus has concluded a bilateral agreement, then the periods of insurance completed therein are taken into consideration for entitlement to a pro-rata pension. In case a person does not fulfil the minimum requirement but has completed at least 6 years of insurance (312 weeks of insurance), he/she is entitled to a lump sum benefit.

50. With 780 weeks, a minimum pension is guaranteed corresponding to a pension well above the amount of pension secured with only 780 weeks of payment of contributions. The minimum pension is 85% of the full basic pension. If a person is not entitled to any pension from any source, and provided he/she has spent at least 20 years of residency in Cyprus from the date he/she reached the age of 40 or 35 years from the age of 18 and he/she habitually resides in Cyprus, then he/she may be entitled to a social pension which is equal to 81% of the minimum statutory pension as per the Provision of Social Pension Law of 1995 (L.25(I)/1995), as amended. Periods of residence completed in other EU, EEA MSs or Switzerland are taken into consideration for entitlement.

51. The social security legislation does not make any distinction based on nationality or ethnic origin; thus, all insured persons have the same rights and responsibilities.

#### **Reply to paragraph 18 of the list of issues**

52. In order to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, special schemes were introduced from March 2020 to October 2021 to support the income of employees and the self-employed, to maintain employment, support businesses, and support the unemployed whose right to unemployment benefits have been exhausted (see Appendix IX, Table 1). The schemes were financed out of the general budget and from European financial mechanisms. The period for which persons received special benefits because of COVID-19 was considered as a period of employment or self-employment under the Social Insurance legislation and the insurance records were adjusted accordingly. See Appendix IX, Tables 2 and 3 for the available data on social security for 2021.

53. In respect of adequacy of social security benefits, basic pensions are adjusted yearly in accordance with the percentage increase of the basic insurable earnings. Basic insurable earnings are increased yearly in line with an annual survey of wages and salaries. Supplementary pensions are adjusted the same day, in accordance with the increase of the cost-of-living index (in comparison of the second semesters of the last two years). The increase in supplementary pension cannot exceed the increase of basic pension. Pensions (basic and supplementary) are also adjusted every July by the increase of the cost-of-living index (comparison of the first semester of that year with the second semester of the previous one) if the latter is at least 1%. This increase is considered when determining the increase of the pensions at the beginning of the following year.

#### **Reply to paragraph 19 of the list of issues**

54. A new law (L.216(I)/2022) was enacted in December 2022 according to which, employees who exercise parental responsibilities are allowed parental leave and are granted parental leave allowance, irrespective of their marital or family status.

#### **Reply to paragraph 20 of the list of issues**

55. All persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, given that they satisfy the definition of ‘person with disability’ as stated in the UNCRPD and the specific criteria of social benefits provided by the DSID, can apply, and be granted benefits. They are also entitled to Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI) plus disability allowance (a total of up to €848.38 monthly), irrespective of their family’s income. As of September 2023, a total of 2,233 children with disabilities are recipients of GMI, including disability supplement. For other actions regarding children with disabilities, see Appendix X, Tables 1 and 2.

**Reply to paragraph 21 of the list of issues**

56. The implementation of independent living programmes is assigned through public procurement procedures to contractors (individuals or legal entities) for the operation of the programmes. The contractors are obliged to:

- Design an independent living programme based on the needs, requirements, and capabilities of persons with disabilities;
- Provide safe, decent and comfortable accommodation that meets the needs and requirements of persons with disabilities. (It is noted that 5 residences will be purchased until 2026 financed by the Cyprus RRP. The residences will be used to cover the housing needs of the programmes);
- Recruit the staff required and provide to persons with disabilities accessibility to all support services needed (carers, personal assistants, counsellors, etc.);
- Support and advise persons with disabilities to meet their administrative and financial expenses to cover all their living needs (e.g. supply of food and drinks, clothes, footwear, cleaning and hygiene items) and their operational expenses (operating and fixed costs of their accommodation, e.g. electricity, water, litter, etc., replacement of old equipment and maintenance of accommodation), as well as their entertainment and socializing expenses.

57. It is expected that independent living support service programmes will serve as many people with severe disabilities as possible, mainly those with intellectual disabilities or autism, who are unable to live independently or without adequate supportive environment. The operation of the programmes will:

- Provide upgraded effective and quality support services to persons with maximum autonomy, in accordance with the principles and values of the UNCRPD;
- Maintain the bonds of individuals with their families;
- Include persons with severe disabilities who currently face the risk of isolation, institutionalization, and social exclusion due to their difficulties to live autonomously, in programmes that will support them to live included in the community;
- Raise awareness in the society;
- Promote knowledge and expertise in independent living services for people with disabilities in Cyprus;
- Create jobs in the field of social services and social welfare.

58. To date, 50 persons with disabilities were deinstitutionalized from mental hospitals and/or nursing homes and were supported to prevent institutionalization. A total of 49 individuals with disabilities participate in independent living support service programmes and 16 individuals with disabilities will be integrated into these programmes by the end of 2023. It is estimated that 86 people with disabilities will be enrolled in independent living support service programmes by the end of 2027. The number of people with disabilities making use of rent allowance, as of September 2023, is 997.

**Reply to paragraph 22 of the list of issues**

59. Regarding measures to address poverty and social exclusion in response to and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and measures to prevent poverty among persons with disabilities, the DSID operates several social benefits schemes and services (see Appendix XI) regardless of income criteria, which aim to offset the cost of disability experienced by persons with disabilities and facilitate their participation in the local community and personal assistance.

60. Additionally, about 10,385 beneficiaries of GMI are financially supported by the Welfare Benefits Administration Service, to deal with the additional costs caused by disability in their lives and about 2,732 beneficiaries with disabilities are subsidized, to deal with the care needs. Also, 11,500 single parent families receive the single parent family benefit. The SWS during this period continued their work and enhanced their cooperation

with all other competent authorities and social partners to provide social services to all people in need and especially to families and children.

61. Moreover, the Ministry of Energy, Commerce and Industry promotes measures aiming at reducing the cost of electricity for the beneficiaries with disabilities and the uninterrupted supply of electricity.

**Reply to paragraph 23 a) of the list of issues**  
**General state of health care in Cyprus**

62. Overall, the Cypriot population is among the healthiest in the EU.<sup>5</sup> The population enjoys good health outcomes, despite the prevalence of risk factors such as smoking and obesity. Since 2019, health system reforms introduced universal coverage and improved overall efficiency, despite the pandemic, and changes to health care financing mechanisms have facilitated surge capacity. One important goal of recent reforms is to reduce what was the highest level of out-of-pocket spending in the EU by improving financial protection.

63. Since the implementation of the General Healthcare System on 1/06/2019, surge capacity planning has become much more flexible. Since June 2019, it has provided outpatient care services (family doctors, paediatricians, specialists, laboratory tests and medicines), and since June 2020, it has also provided inpatient care, emergency treatment, ambulance delivery, preventive dental care services, and outpatient care by allied health care professionals.

64. Fewer than one in six Cypriots reported having forgone necessary medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic, a rate consistent with the below-average rates of unmet medical needs reported before the pandemic across the EU. To ensure safe access to care during the pandemic, patients were encouraged to access their doctor primarily by telephone.

**Reply to paragraph 23 b) of the list of issues**  
**Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**

65. Emerging evidence from the European Commission suggests that as many as 1 of 8 people who recover from COVID-19 will experience debilitating symptoms lasting much longer than expected, leading to an impaired quality of life. Among people who have been infected with COVID-19, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, estimates that 13.3% have symptoms for a month or longer and 2.5% have symptoms for 3 months or longer. Detection and management of long-standing post-acute disease, requires a high degree of awareness and multifaceted approach, which in turn require specialized professionals and appropriate research and clinical settings. Therefore, public health organizations and national authorities are required to prepare and support initiatives that can appropriately address long term disability due to COVID-19 and should implement surveillance systems for early detection of patients with post-acute disease symptoms. Such initiatives result from close collaboration between health professionals, researchers and patients and span across three pillars: public health, health care systems and research.

**Reply to paragraph 23 c) of the list of issues**  
**Impact of the National Strategy for Addressing Dependence on Illicit Substances and the Harmful use of Alcohol (2013-2020)**

66. As of 2004, the Cyprus Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (CMCDDA) has been providing the Cyprus National Addictions Authority with epidemiological information for the development of the National Drugs Strategy, while at European level, the work of the CMCDDA has been utilised by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction. The latest available data show that from the beginning of January until the end of December 2022, 1,442 persons sought treatment to specialise drug treatment centres in Cyprus. Despite some fluctuations over the years, an overall increasing trend throughout the years is noted. On the number of people in treatment yearly from 2004 to 2022, see Appendix XII.

<sup>5</sup> For the state of health in Cyprus, see country profile [here](#).

**Reply to paragraph 23 d) of the list of issues  
Tests, treatments, and vaccines for COVID-19**

67. A rigorous COVID-19 testing programme was implemented in Cyprus throughout the pandemic. All individuals identified as close contacts or positive cases (for release purposes) or having COVID-19 symptoms (after GP referral) were able to be tested (PCR tests) at dedicated Public Health Clinic Testing Centers in all districts free of charge. As the pandemic evolved, some changes were made to this scheme (positive cases released without test, rapid test for close contacts), albeit free testing has been maintained.

68. A population screening programme was initiated early on, under the coordination of the Ministry of Health (MoH). Specifically:

- Mobile testing units at various locations, in all districts, were created and offered daily, free of charge antigen rapid tests to the population. All individuals, including asylum seekers and refugees (even those unregistered to the health system), could receive free testing (e.g., rapid tests) throughout the pandemic;
- In primary and secondary schools, a testing programme was implemented, and the 'Test to Stay' programme was established for close contacts;
- A screening programme was in place for persons in vulnerable situations and continues to be maintained focusing on nursing home residents (weekly testing) and other facilities (reception centres for asylum seekers), and inpatient visitors;
- At different periods during the pandemic, pharmacies provided free self-tests to the general population. Free self-tests were distributed also in kindergartens and Long-term Care Facilities.

69. Persons legally residing in Cyprus could also take the tests at private laboratories at their own expense. A maximum price for all tests was established by a Decree. Furthermore, pharmacies were allowed to perform COVID-19 antigen rapid tests by exemption.

70. Patients with COVID-19 have access to state hospitals in all districts, where they can receive treatment. In addition, all GPs can prescribe antiviral medications free of charge.

71. Since the beginning of COVID-19, vaccinations have been administered in dedicated vaccination centres in all districts, even in remote areas. The vaccination procedure can either be conducted via a walk-in system or through an appointment portal during certain periods. People can select from different COVID-19 vaccines approved by the European Medicines Agency. A separate programme is also implemented in nursing homes and at homes for bedridden patients, utilizing mobile vaccination units. According to a decision of the CoM, all individuals, including asylum seekers or refugees, not registered with the health system, are entitled to free vaccination against COVID-19. On statistical data on the vaccinated population, see Appendix XIII, Tables 1–3.

**Reply to paragraph 24 of the list of issues**

72. The following measures were implemented to strengthen the public education sector:

**Reply to paragraph 24 a) of the list of issues  
Implementation of a new teacher appointment system**

73. The new teacher appointment system was implemented in 2017, aiming at appointing the most suitable teachers in public schools, based on qualitative and meritorious criteria, such as the candidate's exam results, his/her university degree grade, additional academic qualifications, and teaching experience. The first written examinations for teacher appointment in all levels of education took place in November 2017. In mid-November 2019, the second series of examinations took place. From September 2018 until August 31, 2027, 50% of appointments are made from the existing waiting-list system and 50% according to the new exam-based system. From September 2027, onward all appointments will be made based on merit.



**Reply to paragraph 24 b) of the list of issues**  
**Unified pupils' assessment system**

74. Following a proposal by a scientific committee, and since November 2019, all kindergartens and primary schools begun the implementation of the individual progress report for each pupil for formative purposes and the school progress report, to assist teachers identifying weaknesses, giving direct feedback, and enhancing development and pupils' progress, whilst, at the same time, targeting interventions to improve the quality of teaching and overall pupils' learning outcomes. The school progress report is completed for each child attending pre-primary and primary education, twice a year, at the end of the first semester (mid-January) and towards the end of the second semester (beginning of June). Immediately afterwards, individual communication with parents/guardians regarding the child's progress is arranged, on the basis and content of the school progress report. With regards to secondary education, two new amendments to the Regulations for the Public Secondary School Regulations were enacted (R. 480/2022 and 211/2023), aiming at abolishing the exams at the end of each semester and implementing the final exams at the end of the school year. The number of subjects examined at the end of the first year in lower secondary education is now reduced to two (Greek Language and Mathematics), to facilitate pupils' transition from primary to secondary education level. In addition, the new regulations emphasize the alternative methods of pupils' formative assessment.

**Reply to paragraph 24 c) of the list of issues**  
**Increase of the school starting age**

75. Regarding the gradual increase of the school starting age for pre-primary class from the age of 4 years and 8 months to the age of 5 and for the 1st grade of primary school from the age of 5 years and 8 months to the age of 6, it is noted that these enrolment changes begun to be implemented from the school year of 2020-2021 and were completed at the school year 2021-2022.

**Reply to paragraph 24 d) of the list of issues**  
**Programme for reducing functional literacy**

76. The functional literacy remedial teaching programme began to be implemented from 2021-2022 on a new basis and is part of the wider policy of the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MOESY), to prevent and deal with functional illiteracy. During the school year 2021-2022, 38 schools participated with increased support time allocated, for the purposes of prevention, early intervention, and differentiated learning, for children in grades 1-6. During the 2022-2023 school year, 50 primary schools participated in the programme and were again chosen based on the existence of consistently high numbers of children at risk of illiteracy, based on the results of the literacy survey of the Centre of Educational Research and Evaluation. The number of schools for the school year 2023-2024 has been increased to 56. The support of children is expected to work both as a preventive and as a repressive measure, to reduce the number of children who face an increased risk of functional illiteracy.

**Reply to paragraph 24 e) of the list of issues**  
**Educational achievement data**

77. Cyprus's 4th grade pupils participated in the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study for the fourth time. The results showed that, both in mathematics and in science, 4th graders had a statistically significant higher achievement than the average. Also, a steady increase in the average achievement is observed since 1995, when Cyprus first took part in the study, in both subjects. Particularly, in 1995, the average achievement of 4th graders was 475 for mathematics and 450 for science, gradually increasing to 532 and 511, respectively, in 2019.

**Reply to paragraph 24 f) of the list of issues**  
**Enrolment of refugee children in public schools**

78. For the reception of pupils from Ukraine in public schools, at all levels, children who come from Ukraine can enrol in public schools, since the school year 2021-2022, where they

will receive the corresponding reception and support. At the same time, the MOESY has made arrangements with the Embassy of Ukraine in Cyprus and, considering the possible desire of several pupils to continue attending the Ukrainian education system remotely, provided facilities, additional to normal schooling in public schools, for these pupils. In order to serve this purpose, the MOESY provided for the allocation of specific spaces to schools in each city.

**Reply to paragraph 24 g) of the list of issues**  
**Irregular attendance rates**

79. Enrolment and attendance in education is compulsory for children from the age of 6 years and in pre-primary education from the age of 4 years and 8 months, up to the age of 15. However, a small percentage of enrolled pupils in primary schools (i.e., 1.07%) did not have regular attendance, during the school year 2021–2022. From this percentage, 181 pupils come from migrant background, which corresponds to 33.8% of the pupils that have not fully attended school during the corresponding school year. Similarly, for pre-primary education, a percentage of 0.84% of enrolled pupils did not have regular attendance, during the school year 2021–2022. From this percentage, 66 pupils come from migrant background, which corresponds to 75.9% of the pupils that have not fully attended pre-primary school during the corresponding school year. Appendix XIV, Table 1 presents the available statistical data for the last two school years.

80. With regards to secondary education:

- Appendix XIV, Tables 2 and 3 present the percentage of dropout pupils of Gymnasia and Lycea, by grade, gender, and age group (under 15 and 15 and over) for the school years 2020–2021 and 2021–2022;
- Appendix XIV, Tables 4 and 5 present the percentage of Gymnasia and Lycea pupils, by grade and gender, who had insufficient attendance, who remained stagnant due to absences (irregular attendance), for the school years 2020–2021 and 2021–2022;
- Appendix XIV, Tables 6 and 7 present the percentage of Gymnasia and Lycea, by grade and gender, who remained stagnant due to achievement, for the school years 2020–2021 and 2021–2022.

**Reply to paragraph 24 h) of the list of issues**  
**Measures for enhancing tertiary education**

81. The measures by the Department of Higher Education (DHE) to enhance the availability, accessibility, and quality of higher education are presented in Appendix XIV, Table 8.

**Reply to paragraph 25 of the list of issues**

82. Following a research on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children, carried out by a Scientific Committee appointed by the MoH, the MOESY took a series of actions.

83. As part of the established policy of empowering teachers and supporting pupils of all levels in times of crisis, many training activities for teachers, education officials, parents/guardians and pupils were offered by the Pedagogical Institute, in collaboration with the MoH. In addition, the Educational Psychology Service of the MOESY has offered educational activities and educational material to support pupils and teachers. The MOESY has further implemented actions that aimed on responsible dealing of crisis during the school year 2022–2023, and included additional training, intervention programmes in schools and the preparation of educational and supporting materials.

84. Furthermore, the MOESY incorporated measures as these were also suggested in the assessment of the impact of the restrictive measures on the rights of the child carried out by the Commissioner for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (see Appendix XV).

85. The MOESY strived to address any negative impact of COVID-19 on the pupils' economic, social, and cultural rights, by providing substantial teacher training and pupil support. Particularly, the MOESY supported and equipped vulnerable pupils (e.g., those from

less advantaged socio-economic backgrounds) with the necessary equipment (e.g., laptops/computers/tablets) and ensured their internet access. In addition, it developed educational material and provided access to educational technologies to all teachers, pupils, and their parents/guardians. School counsellors were in a continuous communication with all secondary education pupils, especially when pupils were attending online courses. Additionally, in many cases educational psychologists provided services in the form of individualized help to pupils who faced learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties or in the form of more generalised preventive interventions and programmes.

86. During the pandemic, the DHE, in collaboration with the MoH, developed protocols to help Higher Education Institutions provide face to face courses, while ensuring safe hygienic conditions for students. Furthermore, the DHE, in collaboration with other competent authorities, provided guidelines to the Higher Education Institutions to handle blended and online participation in courses, ensuring at the same time the quality and recognition of the education provided.

**Reply to paragraph 26 of the list of issues**

87. The Cultural Decentralization Programme (CDP), launched in 2016, is implemented by the Department of Modern and Contemporary Culture of the Deputy Ministry of Culture with activities aimed at: promoting, cultivating and disseminating culture and providing opportunities for acquaintance, understanding, participation and creation in the widest possible strata of rural communities; encouraging mobility of artists and other culture professionals as well as their artistic work; enabling both artists and audience to formulate artistic perceptions and stimuli. The CDP covers annually around 30-35 communities (6% of the total number of communities) with a population of 43,500 inhabitants (4% of the total population of the island). To ensure that access to cultural life is affordable for all segments of the population and to eliminate any kind of barrier preventing older and/or people with disabilities to fully participate in cultural life, all cultural activities in the context of the CDP are free of charge.

88. The Intangible Cultural Heritage Programme (IHP) provides grants to carry out activities which promote, and safeguard elements included or to-be included in the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, thus preserving, and developing local, traditional culture related to specific villages, communities, and areas of Cyprus. The purpose of the IHP is to form the basis for the targeted public support offered to bodies and groups of natural persons (as well as to Local Government Authorities, which have registered elements in the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage) which are active in areas and sectors related to the National List as well as Traditional Cultural Expressions.

89. The IHP finances categories of activities that contribute to the recording, display, training and transfer of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Traditional Cultural Expressions, the strengthening of creativity, the encouragement of public participation and the mobility and international collaboration of creators/researchers. Under the IHP, around 35 organizations, groups of natural persons and natural persons are supported annually. Funding has also been granted for activities of Occupied Municipalities that promote the preservation and safeguarding of traditional techniques registered in the National Inventory of Intangible Culture Heritage.