

Convergences and Divergences:

How a more inclusive process could help unlock the Deadlocks

'Cyprus 2015' Press Release
Nicosia, 22 December 2012
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Recent research by the Cyprus 2015 project has examined the remaining obstacles in the public mind to reaching a comprehensive agreement on the "Cyprus Problem", and highlights the need to address these through a more inclusive peace process.

Diplomatic groundwork for the resumption of the direct talks in Cyprus is underway, seeking means to overcome deadlocks in the process. This will entail retrospective critical assessment by the Good Offices mission and the respective sides of what has worked or not in successive rounds of talks. Cyprus 2015 advocates that any assessment of the negotiations to date cannot be concluded in the absence of feedback from the communities, nor can the peace talks themselves be conducted without ownership by the grassroots.

How to prevent the negative slide – knowledge is not enough

What has not varied since the current round of negotiations commenced in 2008, is the desire to see a settlement in Cyprus. However, based on people's current understanding of what a comprehensive settlement would entail, there is an increasing trend towards a "no" vote: a majority of Greek Cypriot respondents (51%) declared an intention to vote "no" in a future referendum. Meanwhile, "yes" votes (18%) are at the lowest level since tracking began. In the Turkish Cypriot Community, the current trend is also moving more toward "no" (42%).

Traditionally, it has been assumed that more knowledge among citizens would automatically lead to increased acceptance of a potential peace plan. However, the data shows that more information merely works to confirm existing stereotypes and consolidate pre-existing trends. Research by Cyprus 2015 suggests that this paradox is a result of the public not having been meaningfully involved in the actual formulation of settlement propositions. Indeed, the poll reveals a strong desire by the public to be more directly involved in the decision-making process: they want the negotiators to spend more time visiting villages and communities to discuss key elements of the talks, they want the Leadership to set up a system to inform people about new developments and solicit public opinion on key issues, and they want substantial proposals to be submitted to public review and scrutiny (85% of respondents). They also want civil society organisations to play a more meaningful role in the peace process, as long as those organisations themselves become more representative of the wider public (80% of Greek Cypriots, 78% of Turkish Cypriots).

Conclusions and Recommendations

- **The public (and civil society) need to be involved in a designing and reviewing proposals for a settlement, before any plan is submitted to referendum.** This should include, but not be limited to an extensive use of participatory polling, the creation of online platforms to solicit public feedback on critical issues, as well as a generally more inclusive negotiation process, where civil society has a seat at the table, and discussions are open and transparent.
- To this end, Cyprus 2015 advocates for a new approach to peace-making, which provides opportunities for public input and civil society involvement.

Redesigning the peace process must entail a diagnosis of the dynamics of public opinion. Political compromises will be a 'hard sell' to alienated and skeptical publics in the event of a referendum. Instead of neglecting citizens, the peace process must bring people on board in order to enhance the chances of mutual accommodation and understanding.

More information about the 'Cyprus 2015 initiative, its publications and documentaries can be found online at: <http://www.cyprus2015.org/>

-ENDS-



International Peacebuilding Alliance
Alliance internationale pour la consolidation de la paix
Alianza Internacional para la Consolidación de la Paz

Media contact: Ms Meltem Ikinici

Tel: +35799118409, MeltemIkinici@interpeace.org, Website: www.cyprus2015.org
Office: Home for Cooperation, 28 Marcou Dracou Street, Nicosia 1102, Cyprus.