

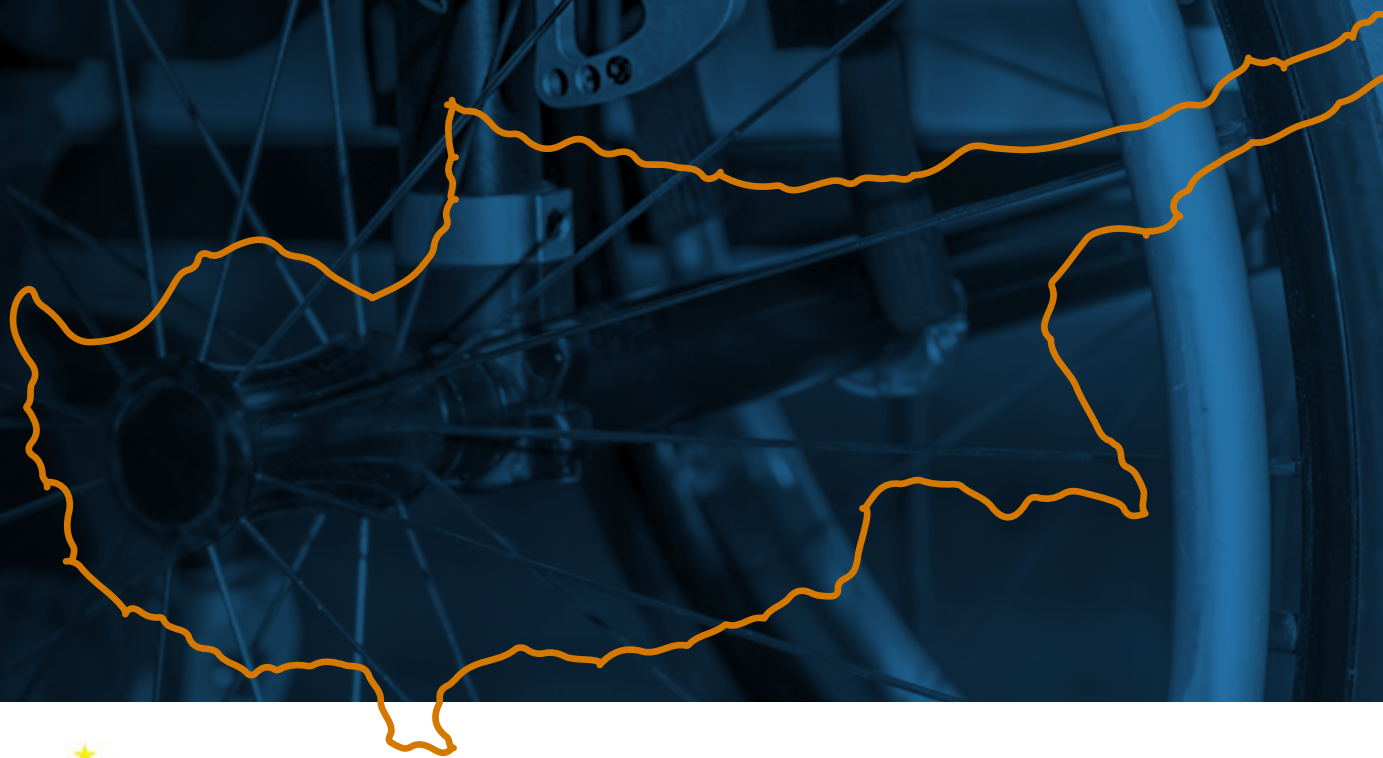


# Cyprus Fact Sheet on Social Care & Support Services Sector for Persons with Disabilities

Part of a series of Country Fact Sheets available on the EASPD website

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## SUBSECTORS OF SOCIAL CARE & SUPPORT SERVICES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS

The Ministry of Labour, Welfare, and Social Insurance is responsible for the social protection system and the administration of most cash and in-kind benefits in Cyprus. Besides the public sector, welfare services for persons with disabilities are also offered throughout the country by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), parents' associations, charities, community volunteer councils<sup>1</sup>, and the private sector. The Social Welfare Services and the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities are the Ministry's departments in charge of the welfare of persons with disabilities. The services provided by the Social Welfare Services are divided into three categories:

- a) Public assistance, services for the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Services aim at ensuring a decent standard of living for vulnerable groups of people (for instance, persons with disabilities, single parent families), and strengthening the relationship between the elderly / disabled people and their families and local community. These objectives are achieved through monetary assistance, employment incentives, and home-care, day-care, and residential-care services for the elderly and disabled persons;
- b) Community work. Services aim at helping local communities meet their social needs and promote social cohesion. Community Welfare Councils and Social Welfare Services run various social welfare programmes, such as day-care nurseries, after-school day care centres, and day care centres for the elderly and people with disabilities; and
- c) Services for families and children. Services aim at helping families to perform their duties effectively and responsibly, resolving family disputes, and protecting family members from delinquent behaviour and domestic violence (Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance, n.d.).

The mission of the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities is the promotion of social protection, social inclusion, and employment of persons with disabilities. This is achieved through five main activities:

- a) provision of assessment and certification of disability and functioning;
- b) provision of social benefits to persons with disabilities;
- c) provision of direct and indirect vocational rehabilitation and other support services;
- d) administrative support of the Pancyprian Alliance for Disability, which is the highest consultative body for the national policy for persons with disabilities; and
- e) coordination of the effective implementation of the UN Convention for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, and the National Disability Action Plan (Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, 2019).

Persons with disabilities (with the exception of paraplegic and quadriplegic persons who receive a care benefit, irrespective of their financial situation) can access the care benefits provided by the Social Welfare Services only if they are entitled to Guaranteed Minimum Income (which is currently EUR 480 per month for an applicant/beneficiary, subject to certain criteria)<sup>2</sup>, as assessed by the Welfare Benefits Management Service. (Independent Authority for the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016)<sup>3</sup> Elderly persons with disabilities may be entitled to disability benefits, if assessed and certified by a Disability Assessment Centre. (European Union, 2018)

<sup>1</sup>Community Volunteer Councils are volunteer organisations that local authorities set up for the purpose of securing funding for the operation of services for the elderly, children, infants, and persons with disabilities. They operate from within local authorities, and are largely funded by the Social Welfare Services (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2018).

<sup>2</sup>The Law on Guaranteed Minimum Income and General Social Benefits (L. 109(I)/2014) reduced many benefits to which persons with disabilities were entitled, including home care services. For example, the financial assistance offered by the Social Welfare Services for home care services provided by carers was reduced to 300 euros maximum. Some care benefits are covered by the Department of Social Inclusion for Persons with Disabilities but only for people with severe or total physical, sensory, intellectual or mental disability and persons with moderate intellectual disability. As a result, many people with disabilities either remain outside the scope of both services (Social Welfare Services, Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities) or receive minimum financial support for care (Pancyprian Alliance for Disability, 2016).

<sup>3</sup>In order to claim subsidisation of care needs – home, residential, or day care – individuals need to submit an application for the Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI). All applications are examined by the Welfare Benefits Management Service (WBMS), which informs Social Welfare Services of whether the applicant and family members fall into the category of beneficiaries of the plan, as well as whether they do not receive care allowance from another state source. Subsequently, Social Welfare Services assess the care needs of the applicants and in turn inform the WBMS of the results of the assessment. If the request is approved, the type, extent and duration of care are decided, and the applicant informed (Regulation 162/2016).



## Early Childhood Intervention

Early childhood intervention focuses on children with disabilities from birth to the age of six. The Ministry of Health is in charge of the identification and diagnosis of children with disabilities until the age of three, after which, the evaluation of the special needs that a child may have is done by the Ministry of Education's District Committees of Special Education and Training of each province, with a multidisciplinary team, in order to place the child in the appropriate setting (United Nations, 2015). There is a lack of provision in the public sector – in the form of therapy or day centres – for children under the age of 3; there are also very few non-governmental organisations and foundations (for example, the 'To Alma' Child Skills Development Centre) that cover the needs of such young children.

The Coordinating Early Childhood Intervention Service (SYEPP) offers early assessment for infants up to six-year-old children with intellectual disability and/or developmental disorders. It falls under the jurisdiction of the Committee for the Protection of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities (ten-member committee, five from the public sector and five from the Pancyprian Association of Parents of Persons with Mental Disabilities), and it receives an annual government grant covering all its expenses. SYEPP does not provide treatments to children but acts as a link between families and services, by providing information regarding services offered in the public and private sector and by voluntary organisations, by organising and monitoring assistance to children and their families, promoting their economic and other rights, arranging meetings with experts for assessment or therapy adjustment, and empowering parents to take a central role in the decision-making for children's benefit. (Pancyprian Alliance for Disability, 2017) All these services are provided free of charge. (Committee for the Protection of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, 2017) The Service employs three early childhood intervention officers with psychology training for the entire country, in Nicosia, Limassol / Paphos, and Larnaca / Ammohostos.

The Department of Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities was at the time of drafting this factsheet at the end 2019 working on the creation of a multidisciplinary autism assessment centre for preschool children, from 0 until when school is mandatory, that is 4 years and 8 months. The centre is funded by the European Social Fund at EUR 450,000 per year, for the 2018-2020 period. It is estimated that 300 preschoolers and their families will benefit annually from early autism assessment, child and family counselling, and the operation of a day care centre. (Department of Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, 2018)<sup>4</sup>

Regarding therapies, the government supports families with monthly contributions in order to cover part of the expenses for the children's treatment sessions, such as speech therapy, under certain eligibility criteria (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018a). At public hospitals, the only therapies available to young children are physiotherapy, speech therapy (there are only four speech therapists for children and adults in the public sector), and occupational therapy (the latter is offered only at the Departments of Mental Health Services for Children and Adolescents); however, due to limited staff and long waiting lists, not all therapies are undertaken, leading parents to seek expensive, private therapy sessions. Also, the public sector does not provide therapies throughout the country; for example, at the Paphos Public Hospital, there is no speech therapy for children, only for adults.

The 1999 Education Law for the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs specifies that all children have the right to attend mainstream school from the age of 3. However, from the age of 3 until the age of 4 years and eight months, early childhood education (ECE) for all children (with or without disabilities) is neither compulsory nor free. Parents with children of this age can take up available places in public kindergartens and pay a fixed amount of EUR 42. Fee reduction and priority is given to children with special educational needs (irrespective of age), and low-income families with four children and more; for other children, selection is made according to families' socio-economic deprivation. (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016)

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<sup>4</sup>The Centre operates via public contract by assigning services to a concessionaire, with the Department of Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities as the assignment authority. The Centre provides assessment and rehabilitation programmes, support and counselling services to children's families, and day care services that caters for up to twenty children (The Andreas Sophocleous Centre for the Provision of Social Services "Kepaky", 2018).



There are three types of kindergartens (from children aged 3 until 5 years and eight months) running in Cyprus:

- a) public kindergartens: they operate under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Culture, working in collaboration with parents' associations and community authorities;<sup>5</sup>
- b) community kindergartens: they are run by parents' associations or community authorities and are registered by the Ministry of Education and Culture; and
- c) private kindergartens are privately established and owned, but are approved by Ministry of Education and Culture.

Early childhood intervention services are also provided by the private sector (for example, private clinics, treatment and rehabilitation centres, or private physicians / therapists), as well as not-for-profit / voluntary organisations (the latter ones are usually co-funded by the state and by parents' associations). For example, the 'To Alma' Child Skills Development Centre in Limassol provides early diagnosis of developmental disorders in infants, offers information and counselling to parents, runs a nursery and kindergarten for children a few months old to 8 years of age, and provides other services, including psychological, speech, and occupational therapy. The Centre receives financing from the Parents' Association and donations (Noesi, 2017). The 'Kivotos' Foundation in Paphos provides intervention programmes, by initially assessing and then proposing individual treatment plans for infant (also for child and adolescent) developmental disorders. Each training session (for example, speech therapy, physiotherapy, occupational therapy) lasts 45 minutes, and costs €18 (2017 price) (Noesi, 2017). The Limassol Adult Centre, managed by the Cyprus Association for Persons with Disabilities, also offers an afternoon programme for children with autism of pre-school and school age, who engage in various education, therapy, and leisure activities (the centre has an additional morning programme for teenagers over 16-years-of-age and adults with autism, who take part in individual and group activities, therapy, and outside-the-centre socialisation activities). In the private sector, the average cost of speech therapy is about €20-25 / session, while for occupational therapy is about €30-35 / session.

## Education Support

Compulsory education in Cyprus lasts from the age of 4 years and 8 months to the age of 15 years. Public education – pre-primary, primary, secondary, and higher (at undergraduate level) – is free for all students; textbooks are also provided for free to students and teachers (Eurydice, 2019). The education of children with disabilities is covered by the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Laws of 1999–2014, and the Education and Training of Children with Special Needs Regulations of 2001-2013, which are responsible for the integration of children with disabilities in mainstream education and in exceptional cases, the education of children in special schools (Pancyprian Alliance for Disability, 2017).

A child with special education needs (SEN) can attend public primary and secondary education for free and with no waiting lists. Free education for all students, including the ones with disabilities, is available only in the public system. There are also private schools for students with disabilities, fully recognised by the Ministry of Education and Culture, such as the New Hope Special School in Nicosia for students with learning difficulties. In the public sector, children with SEN can attend:

- a) a mainstream class of a mainstream school: the District Committee of Special Education and Training chooses the public school and the class, any modifications to the curriculum, the type of support that will be provided, any necessary building and environmental changes at the school, and the Special Education Coordinators who will be directly responsible for the child;
- b) a mainstream school with classrooms for special education: the child is supported by a specialist teacher and is provided with more intensive special education. This education is offered to a small number of learners (usually up to six) while maintaining contact and inclusion with a specific reference class in the school; and
- c) a special school that provides special education only for children with SEN: these schools are staffed with the necessary academic and other professional staff, and are equipped with the necessary equipment. Occupational therapy is offered only at special schools, while speech therapy to all types of schools. Persons with disabilities who attend special schools can study until they reach 21 years of age, if considered necessary (United Nations, 2015).

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<sup>5</sup>Applications for public kindergartens are accepted during two days in January (exact dates are announced by the Ministry of Education), and parents are informed by post in April/May if their child has been accepted. A registration fee is usually required by the Parents Association, which covers the cost of accident insurance for the child. Since each public kindergarten has its own catchment area, if parents wish to apply to a kindergarten outside this area, they need to make a transfer application outlining the reasons for the request.



Children with special needs of primary and secondary education age who cannot attend school on a permanent basis or longer period of time due to health or other reasons, can be educated for free at home or in hospitals, by teachers approved by the Ministry of Education and Culture (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018d). There are also day care centres for children with severe physical and intellectual disabilities who cannot join the school system provided by the Ministry of Education, and do not have any other kind of support. Such a centre is the Agios Georgios – Christakis Hassapis Day Care Centre, which currently runs three programmes for children. These programmes are: a) day care centre for children with disabilities older than 3 years; b) children’s home, where children from 3 to 18 years old are accepted for 24-hour residence, on a permanent basis; and c) adults’ home, where adults over 18 years old are accepted for 24-hour residence, on a permanent basis. At the moment, there are 18 children in all programmes.

Table 1 provides a list with information on the existing special schools in Cyprus. As can be observed, there are nine special schools in Cyprus that cater to the needs of 406 students with disabilities.

*Table 1. Special schools in Cyprus, 2017-2018 school year*

Province	Name of school	Number of students	Target group
<b>Nicosia</b>	Evangelismos	77 students	Students aged 7-21 years, with various disabilities
	Nicosia Special School (Eidiko Scholeio Lefkosias)	49 students	Students aged 6-18/21 years, with psychomotor, learning and emotional-adaptive problems
	School for the Deaf (Scholi Kofon)*	9 students	Students with hearing impairment
	St. Barnabas School for the Blind (Scholi Tuflon Agios Barnabas)*	7 students	Students with visual impairment, from 0 (nursery) until 21 years
<b>Limassol</b>	Apostolos Loukas	70 students	Students aged 6-21 years, with developmental disorders and syndromes such as autism and cerebral palsy, accompanied by mental retardation, emotional difficulties, sensory, and motor problems
	Red Cross Children’s Convalescence School (Paidiko Anarrotirio Erythrou Stavrou)	18 students	Students with multiple disabilities
<b>Larnaca</b>	St. Spyridonas (Agios Spyridonas)	83 students	Students aged 5-21 years, with various disabilities
<b>Ammohostos</b>	Apostolos Varnavas	47 students	Students aged 6-21 years, mostly with cerebral palsy or intellectual disability, but also students with additional emotional, motor and/or mild sensory problems
<b>Paphos</b>	Theoskepasti	46 students	Students with multiple physical and mental disabilities

*\*Most students with visual or hearing impairment attend classes at mainstream schools. There are few students at the School for the Blind, which include students with multiple disabilities, including visual. At the School for the Deaf, the number of students has been constantly decreasing, as students move to mainstream schools. Both schools provide pre-primary, primary, and secondary education to the few students with impairment (visual or hearing) that study there, but they also provide services (such as early identification and intervention, psychological and social support, speech therapy) to learners with impairments who are included in mainstream schools, and to adults requiring specialist assistance or guidance.*

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth (2019a), Ministry of Education and Culture (2019), and individual schools’ website



Table 2 presents the number of students with an official decision of SEN at pre-primary, primary, and secondary education for the 2016-2017 school year.

Table 2. Students with SEN, 2016-2017 school year

	ISCED 02 Pre-primary education			ISCED 1 Primary education			ISCED 2: Lower secondary education			ISCED 3: Upper secondary education		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
<b>Students with SEN in any form of education at:</b>	479	223	702	2,867	1,371	4,238	1,628	801	2,429	1,412	688	2,100
<b>Students with SEN educated in mainstream groups/classes for at least 80% of the time at:</b>	378	184	562	2,446	1,194	3,640	1,256	602	1,858	1,240	562	1,802
<b>Students with SEN educated in separate special groups/units/classes in mainstream educational settings at:</b>	80	25	105	337	134	471	135	81	216	86	81	167
<b>Students with SEN educated in separate special (pre)schools at:</b>	21	14	35	84	43	127	M	M	M	47	11	58

Note 1: 'M' for missing data

Note 2: According to the Statistical Service of Cyprus (2019), for the 2016/2017 school year, there were 415 pupils in special schools, the majority of whom (75%) were students with intellectual disability.

Source: European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2018c).

The State provides most of the funding for special needs education, in the form of all the required equipment and staff, according to the number of pupils, as well as the necessary funding for making school buildings accessible to children with SEN. In case children with SEN cannot attend school in the area where they live (due to, for example, inability of a particular school to cater to a child's particular educational needs), the state provides free transportation to a school outside that area. Local education authorities are financed by the government to pay for school assistants for learners, in special units or mainstream schools, who need this provision. The state also provides special individual equipment for students with SEN (for example, wheelchairs, special seats, assistive technology, etc.), according to students' evaluation. (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018e) Specialist educators are not only provided to school environments but also to non-governmental institutions that offer services (such as speech therapy) to specific groups of students, for instance those with multiple or severe physical disabilities. (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2018b)<sup>6</sup>

With regards to higher education, a number of supernumerary positions in public universities of up to 14% are allocated to students who fall into special categories, assuming that their university entrance grade is at least 80% of the grade of the last student that entered the university. According to Regulation 266/2009, the percentage of positions safeguarded for persons with disabilities (i.e. 'Cypriot candidates with serious health problems or other serious problems') reaches 6%.<sup>7</sup> Concerning

<sup>6</sup>Some essential services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy are provided only in special schools. For this reason, parents prefer that their children with SEN attend special schools instead of regular ones (Pancyprian Alliance for Disability, 2016).

<sup>7</sup>The remaining special categories include Cypriot candidates from families in special circumstances, such as orphans or with family problems (5%), and Cypriot candidates of other special categories, such as members of religious groups (3%) (Regulation 266/2009).



lifelong learning, Adult Education Centres, which function in all non-occupied areas of the country, offer every year free of charge learning activities for persons with disabilities who are 15 years of age and above. These activities, which include teaching of foreign languages, arts and crafts, cultural programmes, health and other issues of general interest, provide learning opportunities for further personal, professional, and social development of persons with disabilities. (European Commission, 2019a)

## Employment Support

The Department for Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities (DSID) is in charge of monitoring the implementation of recruitment of persons with disabilities in the wider public sector. According to Law N. 146(I)/2009, all public services need to assign 10% of their vacant posts to persons with disabilities who fulfil certain criteria (for example, they have the necessary skills for the particular position, or they pass the required oral or written exams); this regulation applies only to the public sector. Many persons with disabilities may be excluded from applying to such a position, particularly in the case when they do not have a state-recognised secondary education graduation degree; graduation from special schools, special units or mainstream schools under the status of observer is not recognised. At the same time, the assessment process uses a conceptual framework informed by a medical approach to functionality, which again limits the number of persons with disabilities than can apply for positions. (ANED, 2019a) In 2017, 30 people with disabilities were recruited in the wider public sector, thus bringing the total number of persons with disabilities recruited in the public sector for the 2010-2017 period to 155. (Department for Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities, 2019b)

The DSID offers various schemes for the vocational training of persons with disabilities. Persons with any type of disability who experience difficulty in finding employment are eligible for these schemes, independent of their level of education; priority is given to individuals with severe disabilities who are unemployed. The main Vocational Rehabilitation Schemes provided by the DSID are the following:

- a) Vocational training scheme: it awards EUR 1,708 to persons with disabilities to undertake training courses at an appropriate training institution and public or private company, monitored by the DSID. From 2012-2016, there were 36 beneficiaries nationally, with a total amount of funding of EUR 53,623 (ANED, 2017). There was only one approved application in 2018 for the sum of €1,500;
- b) Scheme for the creation and operation of small units for self-employment purposes of persons with disabilities: people aged 18-63, with physical, sensory, mental or other disabilities are eligible to apply. There were five beneficiaries in 2018, with a cost of €20,227; and
- c) Supported employment scheme: it offers €13,500 yearly to non-governmental organisations for persons with disabilities (physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disability) for each supported employment programme. Such programmes aim at helping groups of at least five persons with disabilities to get and maintain a job in the labour market. There were 23 such programmes operating nationally in 2018 with 300 persons with disabilities in the open labour market, at an annual cost of €328,375 (Department for Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities, 2019b; Ministry of Labour, Welfare, and Social Insurance, 2018).

Vocational training is also offered by all public special schools and by various foundations for persons with disabilities (founded by parents' associations, and co-funded by the State and donations). These offer either courses for vocational training in the school curriculum (for example, special schools), or vocational training in afternoon sessions outside the official school curriculum (for instance, School for the Blind), or through specific employment and rehabilitation programmes offered at a national level, usually through non-governmental institutions. For instance, the Christos Stelios Ioannou Foundation offers a jewellery workshop and a soap-making workshop, among others, to the trainees of the Foundation, who receive in this way valuable skills that enable them to integrate into the labour market. The amount of funding for vocational training in non-governmental organisations / foundations cannot exceed 70% of the actual implementation costs of the programme, with a ceiling of €5,000 per programme. There is an exception for programmes co-financed by European funds, where there is a €10,000 ceiling. (Department for Social Inclusion for People with Disabilities, 2019b)

Additionally, the Department of Labour of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance implements since October 2016 an employment-incentive scheme co-funded by the European Social Fund, in order to support the employment of people with



disabilities in the private sector. The scheme is disability-specific within the National Strategy of Social Policy 2014-2020. Beneficiaries are unemployed people with disabilities who are employed full-time by a private business; the funding covers 75% of the employee's gross salary for 24 months for a total amount of EUR 20,000 for each organisation. (Pancyprian Alliance for Disability 2017)

Concerning sheltered workshops in Cyprus, these are mostly hosted at the national level by private organisations, charities, and NGOs, which are partially funded by the state. Persons with disabilities, mostly intellectual disabilities, who are employed in sheltered workshops usually receive other services from the institutions (for example, education, physiotherapy, speech therapy, etc.). Such activities are mostly considered as training opportunities, which provide productive occupation and skills to both individuals who cannot or are not yet ready to join the labour market as well as to individuals who are looking for employment. For instance, at the Christos Stelios Ioannou Foundation, the Foundation's workshops work as sheltered workshops for people with intellectual disabilities that cannot join the free market, and who are paid a small symbolic amount. There are no specific policies regarding protection from dismissal, trade unions, or health and safety, and as a result, policy and practice guidelines for sheltered employment do not officially exist in Cyprus. (ANED, 2017)

## Day Care

Day care centres for persons with disabilities provide care for several hours during the day, and operate throughout the country. While there are generally no waiting lists, persons with multiple disabilities or severe disabilities may experience difficulty in finding a day care centre. They are run by NGOs, local government authorities, and private for-profit organisations, which have been approved under the legislation of the Social Welfare Services for day care. Local authorities and NGOs receive state financial support through the State Aid Scheme, provided by Social Welfare Services; however, state support covers only a part of the costs of the operation of institutions, homes, and day care centres, usually in the 30-80% range, with the remaining part covered from donations, annual bazaars and similar events, and Radiomathonios Foundation (foundation that provides funding to NGOs focusing on persons with disabilities). Financial support from the state – in the form of guaranteed minimum income, care benefits – covers part of the costs for such settings, while therapies (for example, speech therapy) are usually covered by the persons with disabilities' families (Independent Authority for the Promotion of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2016).<sup>8</sup>

Table 3 provides a list with adult day care centres for persons with disabilities across Cyprus.

The majority of day centres are open in the mornings until early afternoon, from Monday to Friday. These centres provide a safe environment for persons with disabilities while offering services such as food, laundry, and entertainment, as well as the opportunity to take part in various workshops, for example, music therapy, theatre, pottery, gardening, personal care, computer, housekeeping, etc. The state pays a cash benefit of up to EUR 137 for day care provided by approved physical and/or legal entities; transportation / accompanying costs may also be covered. All benefits, whether in-kind and/or cash, are provided according to individual's care needs, after needs assessment by the Social Welfare Services through the usage of specialised assessment tools (see Footnote 3) (European Commission, 2019b).

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<sup>8</sup>For the 2018-2020 period, the amount of EUR 2.6M has been assigned yearly for the operation of centres and residences providing day or 24-hour care for persons with disabilities (Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, 2018). For example, the Limassol Association of Parents and Friends of Persons with Disabilities received EUR 68,000 in 2018 for the operation of the two day care programmes for adults with disabilities, while EUR 46,000 were assigned for the construction of a new building for the 'Panagia Pandanassa' Day Care Centre (Politis News, 2019).





Table 3. Adult day care centres for persons with disabilities

Province	Name	Organisation in charge	Target group
<b>Nicosia</b>	Nicosia Adult Centre	Cyprus Association for Persons with Autism	Persons with autism
	Strovolos Adult Centre	Association for the Welfare of Persons with Mental Disability	Persons with mental disability
	Fabieros Adult Centre	Association for the Welfare of Persons with Mental Disability	Persons with mental disability
	Eleousa tou Kukkou Adult Centre	Association for the Welfare of Persons with Mental Disability	Persons with mental disability
	Peristeronas Adult Centre	Community Council Partnership of Western Nicosia	Persons with disabilities
	Adult Centre	Skapaneas Union	Persons with disabilities
	Adult Centre	Iliaktida Union	Persons with disabilities
<b>Limassol</b>	Limassol Adult Centre	Cyprus Association for Persons with Autism	Persons with autism
	Adult Centre	Agios Stefanos Foundation	Persons with intellectual disabilities
	Adult Centre	Theotokos Foundation	Persons with mental and physical disabilities
	Adult Centre	Prosbasi Union	Persons with disabilities
	Ikaros Adult Centre	Pelendri Community Council	Persons with disabilities
	Adult Centre	Apostolos Loukas Family and Friends Association for Persons with Disabilities	Persons with disabilities
	'Mario's House' Adult Centre	Limassol Family and Friends Association for Persons with Disabilities	Persons with disabilities
	'Panagia Pandanassa' Adult Centre	Limassol Family and Friends Association for Persons with Disabilities	Persons with disabilities
<b>Larnaca</b>	Adult Centre	Agios Lazaros Foundation	Persons with mild to moderate mental disability
	Adult Centre	Agios Georgios and Hristaki Hasapi Family and Friends Association for Persons with Disabilities	Persons with disabilities
<b>Ammohostos</b>	Adult Centre	Apostolos Loukas Family and Friends Association for Persons with Disabilities	Persons with disabilities
	Paphos Adult Centre	Cyprus Association for Persons with Autism	Persons with autism
<b>Paphos</b>	Adult Centre	Margarita Liasidou Foundation	Persons with disabilities

Source: Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Youth (2019b)



## Living Support

Home care services are provided by the public and private sectors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and local authorities. Home care services aim at supporting persons with disabilities in order to enable them to live at home, develop their personal skills, and provide support to their families. According to the Guaranteed Minimum Income scheme and the Social Benefits Laws of 2014 and 2015 (Law 162/2016), the ceiling for the fees paid for home care is EUR 400 month; in some cases, the state may pay home care provided by a domestic helper.<sup>9</sup> Specially-trained carers (either employed by the Social Welfare Services or from the private sector, whose cost is covered by public assistance) provide various home care services, such as personal hygiene, house cleaning, laundry, hospital escort, outside-the-house chores (for instance, bill payment, shopping, etc.), as well as training for family members in basic household and family work (Social Welfare Services, n.d.). Social assistants can also be provided to persons with severe disabilities, particularly deaf and/or blind people, people with severe autistic spectrum disorders, people with moderate to severe mental or intellectual disabilities, and people with severe motor disabilities. Social assistants accompany persons with disabilities in various services and institutions, help them with transport, with oral / written / electronic communication, and support them when they participate in various programmes and creative activities, among others.<sup>10</sup>

Table 4 provides information regarding supported / independent living services across the country.

Only a small number of persons with disabilities rely on formal arrangements, since the vast majority rely on informal care by spouses/partners, other relatives, neighbours, or migrant domestic helpers. (European Union, 2018)

## Long-term Institutional Care and Respite Care

Institutional care in Cyprus is only provided to people whose needs cannot be met on a 24-hour basis by their family or other services (home care or day care). Social Welfare Services place people in need of residential care in governmental, community or privately-owned institutions. Institutional care needs are covered by a state subsidy ranging from EUR 625-745 per month depending on the individual's situation (for instance, bedridden, with or without mobility difficulties) (Regulation 162/2016).

Data on the number of persons with disabilities living in institutional care are very limited. Concerning persons with intellectual disabilities, in 2019 there were 227 persons living in institutions, i.e. 24-hour residence in institutional care and rehabilitation services (Commission for the Protection of Persons with Intellectual Disabilities, 2018). The number of institutionalised persons with intellectual disabilities has been decreasing in the last few years (there were 259 people in 2014), as efforts are being made towards the promotion of independent and/or assisted living (from 71 persons in 2014 to 96 in 2017) (ANED, 2019b).

Respite care is a short-term provision aimed at providing informal carers with a short break from their caring responsibilities, and is arranged depending on the needs and the preferences of the people themselves and their families as far as possible. Respite care can also be requested by people who live alone and may need occasional help. In Cyprus, respite care can be in the form of home, institutional or day care (see previous sections), but also child care (only through kindergartens and leisure centres) (European Commission, 2019b). For example, respite care is offered at 'Theotokos' Foundation, where persons with disabilities aged 8 to 21 are offered day care services, so that their parents can devote time to the rest of the family. However, official government regulation or policy regarding respite care in Cyprus does not exist.

<sup>9</sup>Domestic helpers – both national and foreign – are usually included in the informal care sector (although they do receive a monthly gross salary of EUR 460), as they provide care similar to the one provided by family members and less comparable to the services provided by qualified professionals (European Union, 2018).

<sup>10</sup>Social assistants are provided through a scheme provided by the Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities. This scheme provides a grant up to EUR 10,000 per year to organisations of persons with severe disabilities for hiring social assistants for their members, and provides a maximum of 70% of the salary costs of the social assistant (the remaining 30% is covered through the organisations' own sources). During 2018, fifteen social assistant programmes were provided by six organisations, which covered the needs of approximately 821 people with severe disabilities. A total amount of EUR 121,079 was spent on these programmes. (Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities, 2019b)



Table 4. Community-living residences for assisted and/or independent living for persons with disabilities

Number of people	Characteristics	Place	Target group
8	-Persons with severe intellectual disabilities, de-institutionalised in April 2016 from Athalassas Mental Health Hospital (state psychiatric hospital)* -Provision of support services for community living to five de-institutionalised people from the former Vocational Rehabilitation Centre	'Ledra' Assisted Living House, Limassol Family-friendly residence, with 24-hour care, with a separate bedroom for each occupant, and special rooms for music therapy, physiotherapy, and occupational therapy	State funding: EUR 300,000 per year (2018-2020)
12	Young male and female adults from Christos Stelios Ioannou Foundation	Integrated residential units, Latsia Village, Nicosia Small apartments fully equipped to facilitate individuals to live autonomously with the support of a supervisor, carers, and cleaners)	Donations from 'Association of Friends', monthly amount paid by tenants
30	Adults with mental disabilities aged 40-60, from various regions	Independent residence of Agios Christophoros, Nicosia Neighbourhood of eight independent houses with a central common area building, supported by carers, nursing staff, cleaners and other professionals, e.g. psychologist and physical exercise instructor	Donations ('Association of Friends'), monthly amount paid by tenants (amount related to individual public assistance provided by Department of Social Welfare)
96	Intellectual disabilities	Various community houses E.g. 32 people in Agios Stefanos Foundation house (four social integration homes)	State funding, donations
45	Adults with disabilities Intellectual disabilities	Eight 'houses in the community' for persons with disabilities, throughout the country 'Irida' Rehabilitation Centre, which will support people with severe disabilities who live in community houses, and will also be residence for a number of persons with disabilities	Social Welfare Services: EUR 3,700,000 per year (2018-2020)
2		Living elsewhere (monasteries)	Benefits from the state

\* In 2019 two more persons are expected to be de-institutionalised from the Athalassas Mental Hospital.

Note 1: It should be noted that the above figures are not mutually exclusive and some figures most probably are included in other.

Note 2: The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities is currently working on the creation of ten new community-supported living homes for 48 people with serious disabilities. This initiative is funded by the European Social Fund at a cost of EUR 1,500,000 per year (2018-2020 period).

Source: ANED (2019b), Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2018), and individual foundations' website



## Leisure and Social-Life Support

With regards to accessibility of radio and TV, only the main daily news bulletin is broadcasted by public television with sign language interpretation, and only one TV series is subtitled; there are no programmes with audio description or language audio interpretation in Cyprus. (Pancyprian Alliance for Disability, 2017)

Concerning social sports (that is, sports for persons with disabilities and vulnerable populations), the Cyprus Sports Organisation provides yearly funding to athletic organisations that support sports for paraplegic persons, persons with disabilities, persons with transplants, and deaf and blind persons. The total amount for 2017 amounted to EUR 243,000. Also, an amount of EUR 30,000 is used to cover the expenses of Paralympic athletes abroad. (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2018)

Persons with disabilities in Cyprus can apply for the EU disability card, which entitles them to benefits in the field of culture, tourism, entertainment, sports and transports both in Cyprus and in seven other EU member states participating in the system. The Department for Social Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities – together with collaborating institutions – forms the list of benefits provided by the card to the beneficiaries. Such benefits include discounts on bus fares, and free or discounted entrance to festivals, archaeological sites, galleries, museums, theatres, cinemas, national and international sport games, and swimming pools for persons with disabilities and their personal assistants (Ministry of Labour, Welfare, and Social Insurance, 2017).

## FUTURE TRENDS

The Council of Ministers in December 2017 approved the First National Disability Strategy 2018-2028 and the Second National Disability Action Plan 2018-2020. The Disability Strategy includes priority areas such as early childhood intervention, accessibility, independent living, social inclusion, and employment, and will involve eight ministries in its implementation. The Action Plan contains 86 actions (46 running actions and 40 new ones) and focuses primarily on independent living, employment, education, health and rehabilitation services, and accessibility (ANED, 2019a).

There is a general trend – albeit slow, according to disability organisations – towards de-institutionalisation in Cyprus, which is indicated by efforts on the part of the Department of Social Welfare Service to close down institutions and increase the number of community living residences for assisted and/or independent living (ANED, 2019b). Also, legislation is under way for the creation of social enterprises, that will provide income generation opportunities for persons with disabilities.



## EXPERT COMMENTARY

The 2013 financial crisis in Cyprus – together with the adoption in 2014 of the Law on Guaranteed Minimum Income and General Social Benefits (L. 109(I)/2014) – had an adverse impact on the standard of living of persons with disabilities, since cash and in-kind benefits were significantly reduced. This fact might increase even further the role of NGOs and charities in providing services for persons with disabilities.

While the Disability Strategy and Disability Action Plan move towards the right direction concerning the rights and opportunities for persons with disabilities, the state needs to adopt and/or further expand measures aimed at tackling a) lack of coordinated and established policies regarding early childhood intervention (for example, by introducing streamlined regulations regarding early evaluation in both public and private sector); b) severe lack of specialists, such as speech therapists and occupational therapists, in the public sector (for instance, by increasing funding for the hiring of specialists); c) lack of inclusive educational policies and practices (for instance, by promoting inclusive, and not segregated, educational settings; d) high unemployment amongst persons with disabilities (such as, by introducing a quota system for the private sector); e) high poverty rates (such as, by reviewing disability benefits criteria); and f) low social inclusion (for example, by systematically increasing independent and assisted living in the community).

## CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

- Eleni Dimitriou, Early Intervention Counsellor. Coordinating Early Childhood Intervention Service, Committee for the Protection of People with Intellectual Disabilities, Nicosia.
- Katerina Mavrou, Associate Professor. Inclusive Education & Assistive Technology, European University Cyprus, Nicosia.
- Andreas Theodorou, Director. Christos Stelios Ioannou Foundation, Nicosia.



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