



OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL ADVISER TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON CYPRUS

The Bi-communal Technical Committee on Education, which was established after the agreement between the two leaders, Mr Nicos Anastasiades and Mr Mustafa Akinci, in December 2015, continues its efforts to implement confidence building measures in schools of the two educational systems and promote contact and co-operation between students and educators from the two communities.

Educational programme “Imagine” which addresses primary, lower and upper secondary and vocational schools managed to bring together 3665 students and 397 teachers from more than a hundred Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot schools from all areas of Cyprus in the last two academic years.

Also, a new initiative to advance the programme was introduced this academic year that includes island-wide study visits. Study visits are designed in a way to provide students with an opportunity to collaborate with each other and integrate new perspectives with cultural heritage environments to enhance learning initiatives. A total of 150 students from 3 Turkish Cypriot and 3 Greek Cypriot schools joined the pilot phase of the study visit initiative ‘Learning from Nicosia’ that took place in both parts of the Nicosia walled city.

Another new initiative to advance the efforts of the committee, training of teachers, was introduced this academic year. The overall aim of the teacher trainings is to help increase contact and cooperation between teachers of the two communities in Cyprus, based on a holistic understanding of developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes on education for a culture of peace and non-violence. A total of ten mono-communal trainings took place with the participation of 254 teachers from all districts of Cyprus and two bi-communal trainings by international experts took place with the participation of 50 Greek Cypriot and 50 Turkish Cypriot teachers

“Imagine”, taking place under the auspices of the Bi-Communal Technical Committee of Education and implemented by the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) and the Home for Cooperation (H4C) with the support of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany and the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus has just successfully completed the second year on June 21, 2019.

Grounded in a holistic understanding of a culture of peace and non-violence, the programme is being implemented in two stages: in the first stage, experienced trainers visit the schools of participating students and teachers in both communities to facilitate activities that deal with stereotypes, extremism and intolerance, paving the way for voluntary bi-communal contact at the Home for Cooperation (H4C). Then, in the second stage, groups of students from the two communities, who wish to participate, are paired and meet in the buffer zone where they take part in either peace education workshops with the Association for Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) or sports activities with Peace Players International.

All teachers who have participated in “Imagine” were invited for a ceremony and were awarded certificates of participation. The event took place at the Home for Cooperation on June 21, 2019 in the presence of the Co-Chairs of the Bi-communal Technical Committee on Education, Dr. Meltem Onurkan Samani and Dr. Michalinos Zembylas, as well as the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr Franz Josef Kremp and Ms Elizabeth Spehar, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General and Head of UNFICYP in Cyprus.

Efforts of the technical committee on education and particularly the ‘Imagine’ peace education programme has received special praise by the United Nations Secretary-General in his latest Reports on the United Nations operation in Cyprus.