Article

Refugees in Cyprus: Local Acceptance in the Past and Present

Alexios Alecou [1,*] and Josefina Mavrou [2]

[1] Department of Social and Political Sciences, University of Cyprus, 2220 Nicosia, Cyprus
[2] Department of Police Studies, Open University of Cyprus, 2220 Nicosia, Cyprus; iosifina.mavrou@ouc.ac.cy
[*] Correspondence: alecou.alexis@ucy.ac.cy

Abstract: This paper seeks to report how Greek-Cypriots view migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Cyprus, compared with their views on the first migratory wave in the late 1940s, taking into account the influence of the media. More specifically, the paper investigates the lack of integration and local acceptance of asylum seekers and migrants in the host countries both in Europe and in Cyprus, giving special emphasis on the role of the media and the language used and how this affects the perception of civil society on refugees. The paper led us to the conclusion that this group of people faced in Cyprus, both previously in the 1940s as well as today, racism, exploitation, and marginalization from Greek-Cypriots due to the language used by the media and the lack of policies towards integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

Keywords: migrants; asylum seekers; integration; Cyprus; Jews

1. Introduction

For many decades, persecution, armed conflict, and political violence have forced people to leave their homeland and seek help and protection in another country (UNHCR 2000, p. 1). At the end of 2016, 65.6 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. That was an increase of 300,000 people over the previous year, and the world's forcibly displaced population remained at a record high (UNHCR 2017). Syrians continued to be the largest forcibly displaced population, with 12 million people at the end of 2016 which includes 5.5 million refugees, 6.3 million internally displaced people (IDP), and nearly 185,000 asylum-seekers (UNHCR 2017, p. 6). This rise also was due to other conflicts in the region such as in Iraq and Yemen, as well as in sub-Saharan Africa including Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and Sudan (UNHCR 2017).

The 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees provides a general definition of the term "refugee," and it acknowledges those people who meet the characteristics of some refugee rights and clarifies that assistance to refugees is not just a question of international charity and political privilege (UNHCR 2000). A convention refugee is defined as "a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail him- or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution" (UNHCR 2011, p. 5).

The Convention imposes obligations on those states that have signed it. The most fundamental requirement is respect for the principle of "non-refoulement", in that states are obliged not to force people to return to territories for which they have a justifiable fear of persecution (UNHCR 2000, p. 2). Responsibility for the protection and relief of refugees is down to the states in which refugees seek protection. The UNHCR plays an important role in the promotion and coordination of

member accession to the 1951 Convention and the effective protection of refugees on their territories (UNHCR 2000, pp. 2–3). The purpose of the organisation also entails the international protection of refugees and the seeking of solutions to their problems. These solutions are divided into three categories: voluntary repatriation, integration into countries of asylum, and relocation from the country of asylum to a third country (UNHCR 2000, pp. 2–3).

Although the Geneva Convention outlines the protection of refugees, in many Western countries refugees are not treated with compassion. In many occasions, they receive refugees with intolerance, distrust, and contempt (Esses et al. 2017). These negative attitudes are more evident with the advent of the Syrian refugee crisis. The last decade has seen the rise of nationalist movements in Europe, with migrants and refugees being among the first victims of this worrying trend. Refugees and asylum seekers face discrimination and racism in their host countries, their human rights are violated, and many of them face several social, political, educational, and professional difficulties. The barriers faced by refugees are related potentially to structures of white privilege that shape the notions of work and workers in Europe and sustain racial hierarchies (Chadderton and Edmonds 2015). Xenophobia and racism are apparent and revealed in several ways in many European countries, and a prevailing narrative that portrays refugees and migrants as a cultural threat or a threat to community cohesion is apparent in many states through articles in the press.

These attitudes serve to reinforce the refugee crisis by providing a rationale for significantly limiting the admittance of refugees to many Western countries (Esses et al. 2017).

The aim of the current paper is to present how Greek-Cypriots view migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees in Cyprus, compared with their views on the first migratory wave in the late 1940s. More specifically, the paper deals with asylum seekers and recognized refugees in Cyprus facing racism, exploitation, and marginalization from Cypriot citizens back in the 1940s until today, based on newspaper articles and literature review both in Cyprus and Europe.

In the first part, we outline the influence of the media in Europe and other countries of the world and determinants of public attitudes toward refugees and factors influencing the acculturation of refugees in host countries. The second part is a throwback to the first wave of migration in Cyprus, back in the late 1940s. The end of WWII did not automatically mean the end of camp life for Jews and other inmates who survived the Holocaust, as approximately 52,000 of them were kept in camps in Cyprus as "displaced persons" on their way back to Palestine. This information shows the marginalization and rejection they faced from Greek-Cypriots and the lack of local integration.

Finally, through information and data taken from various journals and articles including studies conducted both in Cyprus and in other countries, the paper intends to demonstrate the difficulties experienced by this group of people because of the forced abandonment of their country. As a conclusion, we present the ways in which refugees/asylum seekers have been treated by Greek Cypriots the last decades and highlight the negative images created for these people, often considered outsiders, intruders, and challengers of Greek-Cypriot rights, and thus treated with racism and marginalized both socially and professionally.

The aim of the paper is to demonstrate the importance of local acceptance and integration of asylum seekers and immigrants in the host countries in order to change the integration policy and increase the acceptance of the locals. The hostility of the public is used as a justification for policies that have a negative impact upon the lives of asylum seekers and refugees in Cyprus and subsequently the ability of refugees to integrate.

2. Methodology

Khosravinik (2009) argues that in modern societies power is acquired and accumulated through some form of collective consent, either real or constructed. Consequently, mass media gain a central role in proliferating, topicalizing, de-topicalizing, and creating beliefs. The discursive nature of power in democratic societies and the role of consensus-making practices is emphasized in Van Dijk's work (Van Dijk 1991, pp. 42–43), where he claims that mass media are assigned a 'nearly exclusive

control over the symbolic resources needed to manufacture popular consent, especially in the domain of ethnic relations'. The processes of discriminatory discourse in interpersonal communications is in the centre of Van Dijk's study (Van Dijk 1987), in which he argued that discourses interspersed through the media play a major role in the reproduction and continuity of public conceptualizations of out-groups. This is achieved by the mass media mainly because they are—according to Hartmann and Husband—capable of providing frames of reference or perspective within which people become able to make sense of events and of their experience (Hartmann and Husband 1974, p. 16).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) alleges that discourse does not only carry ideological elements but is also a social action on its own. According to Fairclough and Wodak (1997, p. 258), discourse reflects some views of the ideology at work, but it also—and most importantly—shapes those social cognitions. Thus, the relationship between discourse and ideologies is 'dialectic' (Fairclough 2001).

Most of the critical discourse analysis studies have developed useful methodologies and proposed several analytical categories through which the representations of these groups in discourse are accounted for (Khosravinik 2009). A very important part of this procedure occurs through newspaper articles, which play an important role in rendering certain linguistic parameters more effective (Van Dijk 1991). The topics referring to these groups, their order in the newspaper, and the names these articles use for the participants of these groups are relevant to this study.

In order to understand the current situation in Cyprus and comprehend it in relation with the past and the xenophobia generated towards refugees, this paper utilizes data and information that were collected from Greek-Cypriot newspapers originating from 1946 to 1948. These articles reveal the situation in Cyprus during the immigration of Jews as well as the negative reaction of Greek-Cypriots towards them. The newspapers were retrieved from the Public Information Office (P.I.O.) in Cyprus.

The data mentioned above, combined with the socio-political context of the period, offer a 'contextualization', as Meyer (2001, p. 15) named the accentuation of the role of 'historicity' in the process of production and interpretation of discourse, something that "explicitly includes social-psychological, political and ideological components and thereby postulates an interdisciplinary procedure". Thus, today's behaviour and phenomena can be explained (but not excused) by the continuity of the reflections of the past. Therefore, today's xenophobia in the Greek-Cypriot community has its roots in the first sight of Jewish refugees in Cyprus.

Additionally, we have examined various journal articles, reports, and figures from several organizations in order to compare the way refugees are treated in other European countries and in Cyprus the last decades due to the refugee crisis. Some of the questions we will try to answer are: Why are refugees not accepted by local citizens? What is the role of the media for the exclusion of refugees? What can be done in order to find durable solutions that will enable displaced people to rebuild their lives and live in dignity and peace?

3. The Rejection of Refugees and Migrants by the Media

As stated by many authors, the media play a large role in framing public policy and discourse about immigrants and refugees. In addition to disseminating policy messages, the media also construct and promote particular positions on these issues (Esses et al. 2013).

The importance of suasion and/or the role of policy, terminology, and symbols can combine with media discourses to create a dominant approach to the treatment of an issue. In this way, the discussion of policy that accompanies its implementation is a key factor in how the policy is received (Mulvey 2010).

According to Mulvey (2010, p. 445), the language used by the media and the perception of civil society on refugees is very important. The author argues that

> Language is therefore closely linked to perceptions that the public have as a result of framing, and is of particular relevance to immigration. Despite continually criticizing the operation and management of the system, the media largely accepted the principles underlying policy: that most asylum seekers were bogus, that there were too many of them,

and that therefore numbers had to be restricted. Indeed, within public debates opposition to the construction of asylum seekers as a threat and a problem was marginal.

A report prepared for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (December 2015) in five European countries (Italy, Spain, Germany, Britain, and Sweden) shows that refugees and migrants were discussed as threats to national security in 10.1% of articles in Italy, 9.2% in Spain, 8.5% in Britain, 4.8% in Germany, and 2.3% in Sweden (Berry et al. 2015). There are many ways in which the press in different countries reports on asylum and immigration. Coverage in the United Kingdom, for instance, is for the most part negative, because despite the presence of newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mirror*, both of which are sympathetic to refugees, the right-wing press in the United Kingdom, in the shape of *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Express*, and *The Sun*, has expressed open hostility towards refugees and migrants, which is unique. Whilst newspapers in all countries feature anti-refugee and anti-migrant perspectives, what distinguishes the right-of-centre press in the UK is the degree to which that particular section has campaigned so aggressively against this cohort.

According to Mendoza (2014), as long as discriminatory admission and exclusion policies are off the table, it is possible for one to adopt a restrictionist position on the issue of immigration, without having to worry that this position might entail discriminatory outcomes. He suggests that the way to combat discrimination against and the social exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers is through the defence of and advocacy for immigrant rights.

Media representations of asylum seekers in the Australian press typically fall into a binarized form. On one hand, asylum seekers are portrayed as in genuine need of protection, fleeing their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution. On the other, they are presented as exploiting asylum policies for their own economic and personal gain (McKay et al. 2011).

Gabrielatos and Paul (2008) state that the press can influence the views of the public in general and the public's stance toward minority social/ethnic groups. Reports and comments about asylum seekers and refugees is often hostile, unbalanced, and factually incorrect. The authors (Gabrielatos and Paul 2008) report that newspapers have the greatest impact regarding public attitudes on issues of race and immigration.

In order to integrate and acculturate refugees in their host countries it is necessary to raise the importance of a more balanced discussion of migration from where asylum seekers and refugees are vilified by the state, media, and general population to a point where the reality of the refugee experience is understood, and they are treated with more sympathy and less fear, and provided with appropriate support to settle (Phillimore 2011).

4. Jew Refugees in Cyprus

Population movements and the great migration were not something new in the 20th century, nor was the post-war Jewish search of a safe homeland a new experience for the Jewish people. However, the post-war Jewish population movement did not have the character of accidental dispersion but the structured and orderly movement back to a historical birthplace, namely Palestine. A digression away from this route involved the forced stay of many of them (52,221 refugees), for a while, on the island of Cyprus.

The liberation of the Nazi concentration camps did not automatically mean the end of camp life for Jews and other inmates who survived the Holocaust (Kokkinos 2015). Hundreds of thousands of Jews and many others who, during the war, had found shelter somewhere or been spared their lives in other ways, once identified, were gathered into new camps as "displaced persons" (DPS)[1], i.e., persons for whom the conditions of war had led them away from the country where they lived previously. In these camps, which were operated under the responsibility of the allied forces, malnourished, sick, and mentally and physically tortured Jews were registered and cared for until being dispatched

---

[1]　DPS: Displaced Persons.

home—or wherever else they may choose. Officials from the Jewish community in Palestine, who were operating as part of a broader rescue network, approached many Jewish survivors. The unsettled situation in post-war Europe favoured any network that could effectively utilise every opportunity.

Survivors, unsure about their lives following the destruction of their families and communities, felt attracted to their promising—though still under formation—homeland. Even those who were not devoted Zionists found interesting the prospect of security that a purely Jewish state could offer, so thousands of them chose to leave for Palestine and reside in Cyprus en route. This and the organized methods of the Jews caused irritation in Great Britain, which was still administering the formation of Palestine.

In August 1946, Great Britain's Minister of the Colonies issued a long statement in which he assessed the situation from the viewpoint of his government. Making a brief review of policy towards Jews in the time of war[2], he noted that the British government had shown great compassion and tolerance in relation to what befell them as a people. However, the extent of the migratory movement towards—under British rule—Palestine showed that the current migration was not a spontaneous movement, as initially thought, but it was well-organized and lavishly funded by Zionist circles attempting to force the British towards a future Palestine[3]. The statement also noted that illegal migration was hindering administrative work in Palestine, because it had increased tension between Arabs and Jews and adversely affected the efforts to come to a general agreement on the issue. The Minister of the Colonies also assured through his speech that although Britain would not allow the continuation of Zionist colonization efforts, he was nonetheless deeply aware of the suffering of the Jewish community[4].

Although the 20th century was marked by several refugee movements, the status of refugees was only determined by the UN in 1951. Until then, it was the responsibility of each country to decide on, as appropriate. Thus, on 12 August 1946, the Public Information Office of the colonial Government of Cyprus published the government's decision on the settlement of Jews on the island. Accordingly, laws would soon be introduced to authorize the Governor of Cyprus to host in safe conditions Jewish refugees from Europe who tried to enter Palestine illegally. The governor would also offer them temporary accommodation. The Act would remain in force as long as the circumstances required, and refugees during their stay in Cyprus would be placed under strict and constant military supervision. This Act ended with the reassurance that "Jewish people will not be allowed to become permanent residents of Cyprus"[5].

The first public reactions of local organizations came immediately after publication in the press that Cyprus would indeed act as a docking station for Jews. Almost every reaction referred to concerns about the impact this action would have on Cypriots' quality of life. It should be noted here that reactions ranged from tolerance to a moderately sympathetic and warm understanding, and there was no racial or other prejudice. The Cypriot people had not experienced the sort of lengthy exposure to the rancorous culture of anti-Semitic hostility that was widespread in Europe (Selioti 2016, p. 87). At that time, the British were the common obstacle for the national aspirations of both Jews looking to get home and Greek Cypriots seeking union with Greece. Therefore, besides natural feelings of compassion towards the victims of Nazi atrocities, it was crucial that the local community develop feelings of understanding concerning the plight of Jewish refugees.

Local organizations, however, were concerned about the economic burden the situation would place on the island[6]. In addition, these concerns were strengthened by uncertainty about the residence status of these Jewish refugees (temporary or permanent), which could make it difficult for

---

2 *Eleftheria* newspaper, 14 August 1946.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 *Eleftheria* newspaper, 13 August 1946.
6 *Eleftheria* newspaper, 1 September 1946.

Greek-Cypriots seeking to implement their national aspirations. In a place where the main political goal was unification with Greece (*Enosis*), the existence of a small but not negligible Turkish Cypriot community created complications, and it was felt that the sudden transplanting of another community with different ethnic and religious characteristics would undermine further the move toward *Enosis*.

Right-wing organizations and newspapers took an official position as soon as the first refugees arrived on the island. They protested against them, insisted on Jewish emigration, and requested "a ban on Jews or other foreigners entering Cyprus" (Selioti 2016, p. 93). The political Left, in a letter to the governor, requested that measures should be taken in relation to holding Jews in encampments[7]. In another letter, sent by all leftist organizations, it was noted that, without any hint of anti-Semitism, the government should consider how to stop the unjust detainment of Jews in Cyprus and demand their immediate release and departure from the island[8].

The Jewish issue, especially for the Right, was heightened by the onset of the Cold War era; when the first ships arrived in Cyprus, Churchill was already referring to the "Iron Curtain". In February 1948, Reuters transmitted a statement made by the US Secretary of State, George Marshall, in which he reported that there were numerous communist secret agents among Jewish immigrants arriving in Cyprus. According to Marshall's report, 1000 of them spoke Russian and were members of communist military organizations, while some of them had served in the Soviet forces during the Second World War[9].

It should be noted that, according to descriptions attributed to Jewish inmates, the camps in Cyprus operated in completely different ways to the Nazi camps, the latter of which aimed at the collective extermination and final destruction of the Jewish presence in Europe—both ethically and biologically.

On the other hand, British camps in Cyprus were mostly similar to transitional camps for displaced persons (DPs) that operated in the post-war era until the complete rehabilitation of victims of the conflict. They were founded and operated opportunistically, to facilitate British policy in the Middle East. Their remit was to hold Jewish people temporarily in order to stabilize the situation in the Middle East and to make permanent arrangements for their return to Palestine. In these camps, despite many limitations, efforts were made to meet the basic needs of the Jewish people, while they (the Jewish) had the additional ability to function as social and political subjects[10].

However, despite the fact that the detention conditions were not extreme, the British did not secure a decent standard of habitation, mainly because the number of prisoners being "hosted" in the camps was five times higher than the official forecasts and assurances. Moreover, there was not enough time to either create a complete host infrastructure or apparently draw on experience in managing humanitarian issues. The ardent wish of the detainees to go to Palestine proved so strong that it led the British to take on an authoritarian management style and often apply excessive force to control the situation, thereby causing discomfort to and the wrath of the detained refugees. It is perhaps relevant here to note that at the same time in Palestine, the British authorities were faced with the emerging activity of the extremist Jewish community. The Jewish detainees, however, felt once again victimized while the rest of the world stood by without helping to assuage the suffering experienced during the Second World War. Some, in fact, were now undergoing a third consecutive camp regime, preceded by the Nazi camps and IDP camps.

Despite concerns and the local position on the presence of Jewish refugees on the island, the local community expressed solidarity in their favour. Fears for the future did not prevent the occurrence of spontaneous feelings of sympathy from the people of Cyprus, which often took the form of practical solidarity. In many cases, Jewish immigrants relied on the islanders in order to gain allies in

---

7   *Eleftheria* newspaper, 18 October 1946.
8   *Eleftheria* newspaper, 17 October 1947.
9   *Eleftheria* newspaper, 3 February 1948.
10 For example, read newspapers, elect and be elected to committees, carry out their religious duties, marry.

their struggle for their re-establishment in Palestine, to endure the conditions of forced detention or, very often, to escape from it[11].

5. Refugees and Asylum Seekers: "The Enemy of Greek-Cypriots"

The wave of immigration in Cyprus the last decades, according to Trimikliniotis and Demetriou (2011, p. 4), began as a result of the economic development of the island and because of political situations such as the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the Gulf War, the Pontian migration from the Caucasus region, etc.

As such, the accession process of Cyprus to the European Union turned the island into an attractive destination, especially for asylum seekers and immigrants, because the country is a "waiting room" for those who wish to migrate to northern Europe.

When, in 1989, Cyprus first opened its doors to immigrants for work purposes, it was considered by lawmakers that "foreign labour" would be needed for a short time only. Thus, it was necessary to establish an immigration policy or integration plan specifically with immigrants in mind. From its inception immigration policy had been highly problematic: the "model" is based on the same problematic assumptions that labour immigration to Cyprus is a temporary phenomenon to cover labour shortages in specific areas which are unpopular with Cypriots (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2011, p. 2).

There is very little literature reporting on the integration of immigrants and asylum seekers in Cyprus. Several arguments support that they enjoy many privileges and yet are responsible for an increase in crime, road accidents, and disease outbreaks (Trimikliniotis and Demetriou 2011).

According to the "Migrant Integration Policy Index" (MIPEX), Cyprus is in a "slightly unfavourable" situation in relation to the degree of integration of immigrants (Migrant Integration Policy Index 2014). According to the results, Cyprus is below average and ranks second to last among the 37 countries surveyed. Furthermore, it has less favourable policies on mobility in the labour market, so that access is strictly harsh, and migrants wishing to reunite with their families face very restrictive eligibility criteria.

Regarding education, immigrant pupils can generally access compulsory education and general support, although undocumented children may encounter difficulties at individual schools. Moreover, immigrants receive little support to pass the costly and highly discretionary procedure, while their children born or raised in Cyprus are treated like foreigners, without any special entitlement to citizenship. The major weakness is that Cyprus is missing an entitlement to citizenship for the foreign children born or raised in Cyprus, despite mounting international trends (now 18 MIPEX countries, recently Portugal, Czech Republic, and Denmark, debated in Greece and Italy). If, for example, a child is born in Cyprus, they must spend eight years on the island before applying for Cypriot citizenship (Migrant Integration Policy Index 2014).

To improve the living conditions of migrants and asylum seekers, the "Action Plan for Integration of Immigrants legally residing in Cyprus in 2010–2012," adopted in 2010 by the Ministry of Interior, sets some priorities, such as employment—training and syndicalism; Education and learning the Greek language; Health; Housing—improving quality of life, social protection and interaction; Culture—key political and social reality elements; Evaluation—annual and total (Ministry of Interior 2010).

According to the results of a survey conducted by the UNHCR, the action plan did not have the desired results. It turns out that the plan was not well thought out or designed, and, as a consequence, xenophobia and racism became rife.

The survey, conducted in 2012–2013 by the Office of the UNHCR in Cyprus, was related to the needs and integration of refugees (Officer and Taki 2014, p. 1). This group of people is marginalized from society and living in vulnerable and precarious conditions.

---

[11] *Eleftheria* newspaper, 2 December 1946.

Usually, recognized refugees accept the sort of low-paid work that Cypriots reject and for which not many skills are required. Usually these jobs do not offer any kind of advancement, and specialization is not required.

These practices and discriminatory attitudes are widespread, training opportunities are limited, and there is increased competition for jobs in the service and construction sectors. As a result, these constitute the main obstacles to ensuring the financial independence of these people.

It is now well known that many employees, both from the Social Welfare Services and the Department of Labour, see this cohort as being less worthy than Cypriot citizens. The service they do receive tends to be minimal, with access to resources sometimes arbitrarily denied or of a poorer quality. There is little evidence, for example, that the Public Employment Service takes into account the specific needs or skills and abilities of internationally protected people seeking access to social welfare and the labour market.

The Public Employment Service, despite the willingness expressed by these individuals to work in order to improve their living conditions and to assert some of their rights, is the reason why a large number of refugees are now unemployed. Evidence suggests that the Public Employment Service does not tend to deal with that category of people impartially (Officer and Taki 2014, p. 1).

There is little evidence that the "Action Plan for Integration of Immigrants legally residing in Cyprus 2010–2012," actioned by the Ministry of Interior, has had any tangible effect in promoting the social integration of these persons. From a policy perspective, the plan does not seem to be well thought out and is based on a philosophy that takes into account the particularities of Cypriot society (Officer and Taki 2014).

Furthermore, the plan's objectives are clear as far as monitoring and evaluating progress and implementation are concerned. According to a survey conducted on behalf of the delegation of the UNHCR in Cyprus, it is disappointing that the draft does not appear to be based on any prior assessment of refugee needs and how they should be treated, and it also seems apparent that there has been no attempt to consult with interested parties, including the migrants themselves.

Although recognized refugees have stayed in Cyprus for a long time and pay taxes, all of them are almost completely excluded from active participation in the political life of the Republic. They do not have the ability to vote and do not play any role in discussing the allocation of state resources (to which they have contributed) or formulating policy or issues related to implementation (Officer and Taki 2014).

As a result, no positive encouragement is given to refugees to become a self-organized group and play a role in the public life of the country, such as the right of any Greek Cypriot citizen. The feeling that they are treated impartially when attempting to access public assistance has produced a lack of trust in state institutions, which is aggravated by the group of refugees who do not have the same social networks, such as partners, friends and family, through which to bypass blockages in the system—a common practice in the context of the broader Cypriot population, who have the means to achieve this aim, thus leading to greater integration into society (Officer and Taki 2014).

Lack of trust in state institutions and officials also means that there is uncertainty around the issue of acquiring citizenship or the frequent experience that relates to excessive delays and unnecessary administrative burdens in securing a residence permit (a pink slip).

Regarding the needs of refugees, education and training opportunities remain limited. While language courses are considered sufficiently effective, there is little evidence that they are delivered consistently, and there seems to be no ex ante evaluation of training needs or progress from one educational level to the next (Officer and Taki 2014).

In addition, there is a lack of education on strengthening the skills necessary to allow these people to enter the labour market. It seems that there is very little awareness of refugees and asylum seekers with regard to this matter. The efforts of the Ministry of Education to promote multiculturalism do not seem to yield results, as racism and social marginalization have been perpetuated by education centres. For this reason, we must pay special attention to the education and enlightenment of people from an early age in relation to accepting and respecting diversity.

The UNHCR in Cyprus has made positive steps by organizing events, publishing reports and statistics, and running public information and awareness campaigns on the problems faced by refugees and asylum seekers. The objective is to create a climate of tolerance and solidarity for those who have been forced to leave their homes, take preventive action against social exclusion and marginalization, and to help funnel financial aid to refugees worldwide. The ultimate goal of these events is to promulgate correct information, which will then hopefully contribute to the elimination of xenophobia and racism.

Great efforts to eliminate racism have been made by the Office of the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman), and specifically by the Authority against Discrimination as well as NGOs in Cyprus that deal with refugee issues (e.g., KISA, Future Worlds Center, Cardet, OASIS, CARITAS).

Citing the above, we conclude that special attention should be paid to promoting equality and equal opportunities through education and special courses for both young people and adults, as well as activities that promote dialogue between the two parties (refugees and Cypriots), with a view to ensuring their human rights and their acceptance into Cypriot society. Xenophobia, coupled with the rejection and marginalization of these people, leads to their social exclusion and to the creation of conditions in which exploitation could become rife.

6. Conclusions

Examining these facts in Europe, other countries in the world, and in Cyprus, we conclude that there is racism, social exclusion, and marginalization against people originating from foreign countries—and especially towards refugees and asylum seekers. More precisely, in Cyprus, Greek-Cypriot employers exploit refugees and asylum seekers by paying them lower wages and forcing them to work longer hours, while other times they are not given the opportunity to work and live with dignity and with their families, with the excuse cited that they "steal" the jobs of Greek-Cypriots. All of the above, as a result, lead to the frustration of these people and despair for the way they are treated, which often leads to pain and indignation.

Similarly, if not identically, the views of Greek-Cypriots were the same towards Jewish refugees after WWII. Almost every reaction revolved around impacts on Cypriots' quality of life. Local organizations were concerned mostly about the economic burden on the island, which was already at a critical level. In addition to the bi-communal character of the island, the presence of Jews in Cyprus as a considerably large community would create more complications for their main political goal (*Enosis*).

To improve the situation that currently exists in Cyprus, and to address the phenomenon of racism and the image created of refugees as the "enemy", we propose that the imminent completion of an action plan for integration should be based on a prior analysis of the needs that this group has within the general population. Interested parties should be invited to participate in the formulation of the plan and the implementation process.

Examples from other countries show the successful effort of integrating refugees and asylum seekers. For example, in Latin America, not only are public programs of action successfully addressing the specific needs of the refugees but they are also seeing all types of cultural and educational community projects, which have encouraged the spontaneous coming together of the refugee population and local residents. This is very important if refugees are to take the first steps towards integration in the host country (Varoli 2010). Even though there is an effort, especially in the last decades in Cyprus, to integrate refugees into the community, there is still a lack of policies and effective programs that will help this group of people to be fully incorporated.

Given the budgetary restrictions imposed on certain forms of social welfare, mainly due to the economic crisis, it is vital that public services act proactively to measure the effects of these changes, especially in vulnerable parts of the population. The main priority should be an evaluation of the risk of poverty among the refugee population, with a particular focus on single-parent families, minors, victims of torture, etc.

It is of utmost importance that frontline workers in essential public services are better informed about the rights that a person should enjoy as a recognized refugee. A simple and cost-effective initiative would be the Ministry of Interior issuing a clear letter to all state officials who are likely to come into contact with this group, informing them of rights to employment, education, training, and the general status of refugees. Monitoring this initiative on a regular basis should ensure an impartial public service serving this community.

Additionally, the promotion of measures aimed at the rights of asylum seekers or recognized refugees should be organized better in order to represent their interests and help them participate actively in the socio-political life of the country. Priority should be given to the formulation of a law and the creation of an organisation that will target the active participation of these individuals, offering natural and necessary resources.

Moreover, it will be necessary to establish a framework of resettlement that bridges the gap between policy and the lived experience of integration, taking distinct cultural considerations into account in the formation of new policies and practices. While creating resettlement policies for each refugee group may be problematic, it is still necessary to take into account the factors that allow refugees to feel integrated in order to serve them effectively (Tyson 2017).

In relation to this, Sweden is a good example. Countries that have tried employment mentoring programmes—long-term traineeships for skilled refugees to fully enter a company or start their own business—have discovered them to be a viable way of reducing unemployment, increasing earnings, and financially empowering refugees. Newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden are not left waiting in camps or parked in social support systems; instead, they are enrolled in a work integration programme. After their residence status is settled, it is the national public employment service, not the migration board or city council, that helps the refugee to gain a foothold in their new environment. Finding a job is at the core of this (Peromingo 2014).

In Latin America, particular attention is given to the inclusion in municipal school programmes of child and adolescent asylum seekers and refugees (especially when unaccompanied or separated from their families). In addition, assistance is given to women considered to be at risk. Continuity, monitoring, and the integrated nature of interventions are promoted through a committee made up of various departments of the municipal government, UNHCR and its operating partners, and other institutions involved in pursuing durable solutions for refugees. These agreements become public policies that remain in force through any changes in public administration (Varoli 2010).

An example to be followed in Cyprus regarding the media coverage of refugees and asylum seekers is the one given by Varoli (2010):

> The importance of these agreements is not limited to refugee access to state social programmes on an equal footing with nationals. The signing of these agreements takes place at public events with media coverage. This provides visibility and has helped to create a more positive and open attitude to refugees. It has also allowed many refugees to establish networks within the community and direct relationships with public officials in the various services. This in turn has enabled refugees to go through the administrative procedures necessary to obtain documentation and apply for subsidies and to take an active role in finding employment or housing.

Furthermore, particular interest should be paid to the difficulties faced by young refugees/asylum seekers in education. It is important to ensure their access to various training centres and that they be treated on merit, in the same way as Cypriot citizens. Education is the main instrument of social mobility and advancement.

Learning the Greek language, for both young and older people, is considered the most important tool for social inclusion. Research conducted in Switzerland has shown that people who do not speak the language of the country received "poorer" medical care than people who spoke the language fluently, most of them women and the elderly (Bischoff and Denhaerynck 2010, p. 248).

Their costs increase, too, since they have to visit medical centres more often or use translators. The non-possession of a language brings many problems, which is one of the reasons why locals consider foreigners unwanted.

In conclusion, Cyprus lags in terms of respect for human rights, especially in relation to promoting respect for diversity. For this reason, the Cypriot population should be given a clear message by the state that all people, regardless of their ethnic origin, colour, race, religion, political opinion, etc., are equal. They have equal rights and equal opportunities, regardless of the country they choose or are forced to live in.

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 (UNHCR 1948), all people are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (Article 1). Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security (Article 3), and education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages, whereby elementary education shall be compulsory. Moreover, technical and professional education shall be ensured for all, and access to higher education should be open to all on equal terms, according to their abilities.

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations and all racial or religious groups, and shall promote the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace (Article 26).

Education plays an important role in this effort. People being educated from an early age and learning to respect the diversity of the "other" are more likely in the future to live together with people from other countries, who are marginalized because of disability, colour, race, education, etc. Stereotyping and discrimination against these people need to be removed and replaced by the acceptance of diversity and pluralism.

Furthermore, it is necessary to create a media observatory body for public speech and creation of a coordinating body for the issue of non-discrimination and media. Also, immigrants must have the right to create an organization which will allow them to have an active role in the public dialogue on upcoming migration policies and integration initiatives, and also to have active participation in migrant related civil society groups. Also, the implementation of non-discrimination policies at the work place need to be improved by creating specialized observatory bodies and providing training to employers.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

Berry, Mike, Iñaki Garcia-Blanco, and Kerry Moore. 2015. Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries. Available online: http://www.unhcr.org/56bb369c9.pdf (accessed on 23 May 2017).

Bischoff, Alexander, and Kris Denhaerynck. 2010. What do language barriers cost? An exploratory study among asylum seekers in Switzerland. *BMC Health Services Research* 10: 248. [CrossRef] [PubMed]

Chadderton, Charlotte, and Casey Edmonds. 2015. Refugees and access to vocational education and training across Europe: A case of protection of white privilege? *Journal of Vocational Education & Training* 67: 136–52. [CrossRef]

Esses, Victoria M., Stelian Medianu, and Andrea S. Lawson. 2013. Uncertainty, Threat, and the Role of the Media in Promoting the Dehumanization of Immigrants and Refugees. *Journal of Social Issues* 69: 518–36. [CrossRef]

Esses, Victoria M., Leah K. Hamilton, and Danielle Gautcher. 2017. The Global Refugee Crisis: Empirical Evidence and Policy Implications for Improving Public Attitudes and Facilitating Refugee Resettlement. *Social Issues and Policy Review* 11: 78–123. [CrossRef]

Fairclough, Norman. 2001. The Dialectics of Discourse. *Textus* 14: 231–42.

Fairclough, Norman, and Ruth Wodak. 1997. Critical Discourse Analysis: An Overview. In *Discourse and Interaction*. Edited by T. A. van Dijk. London: SAGE, pp. 258–84.

Gabrielatos, Costas, and Baker Paul. 2008. Fleeing, Sneaking, Flooding. A Corpus Analysis of Discursive Constructions of Refugees and Asylum Seekers in the UK Press, 1996–2005. *Journal of English Linguistics* 36: 5–38. [CrossRef]

Hartmann, Paul, and Charles Husband. 1974. *Racism and the Mass Media*. London: Davis-Poynter.

Khosravinik, Majid. 2009. The representation of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in British newspapers during the Balkan conflict (1999) and the British general election (2005). *Discourse & Society* 20: 477–98. [CrossRef]

Kokkinos, Georgios. 2015. *The Holocaust. Managing the Traumatic Memory*. Athens: Gutenberg.

McKay, Fiona H., Samantha L. Thomas, and R. Warwick Blood. 2011. Any one of these boat people could be a terrorist for all we know!' Media representations and public perceptions of 'boat people' arrivals in Australia. *Journalism* 12: 607–26. [CrossRef]

Mendoza, José Jorge. 2014. Discrimination and the Presumptive Rights of Immigrants. *Critical Philosophy of Race* 2: 68–83. [CrossRef]

Meyer, Michael. 2001. Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the Approaches to CDA. In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer. London: SAGE, pp. 14–31.

Migrant Integration Policy Index. 2014. Cyprus. Available online: http://www.mipex.eu/cyprus (accessed on 15 June 2017).

Ministry of Interior. 2010. Action Plan for Integration of Immigrants Legally Residing in Cyprus 2010–2012. Available online: http://www.moi.gov.cy/moi/crmd/crmd.nsf/All/AF2407262CCB28DCC225798B0040A71A/$file/Sxedio%20Drasis%202010-2012%20-3-GR%20D6%20fin%20WEB.pdf (accessed on 13 June 2017).

Mulvey, Gareth. 2010. When Policy Creates Politics: The Problematizing of Immigration and the Consequences for Refugee Integration in the UK. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23: 437–62. [CrossRef]

Officer, David, and Yiouli Taki. 2014. The Needs of Refugees and the Integration Process in Cyprus. Available online: http://www.unhcr.org.cy/fileadmin/user_upload/Images/Protection/The_Needs_of_Refugees_-_26_June_-.pdf (accessed on 12 June 2017).

Peromingo, Miguel. 2014. Work and refugee integration in Sweden. *Forced Migration Review: Faith and Responses to Displacement* 48: 76–77. Available online: http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/faith/peromingo.pdf (accessed on 15 September 2017).

Phillimore, Jenny. 2011. Refugees, Acculturation Strategies, Stress and Integration. *Journal of Social Policy* 40: 575–93. [CrossRef]

Selioti, V. 2016. *British Jewish Refugee Camps in Cyprus (1946–1949)*. Thessaloniki: Epikentro.

Trimikliniotis, Nicos, and Corina Demetriou. 2011. Migrant Workers in Cyprus: A Critical Appraisal. In *Precarious Migrant Labour across Europe*. Edited by M. Pajnik and G. Campani. Ljubljana: Mirovni Inštitut, pp. 73–96. Available online: https://works.bepress.com/nicos_trimikliniotis/32/ (accessed on 24 May 2017).

Tyson, Catherine. 2017. Towards a new framework for integration in the US. *Forced Migration Review: Resettlement* 54: 48–49. Available online: http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/resettlement/tyson.pdf (accessed on 15 September 2017).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 1948. Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Available online: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Pages/Language.aspx?LangID=grk (accessed on 15 June 2017).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2000. The State of The World's Refugees 2000: Fifty Years of Humanitarian Action. Available online: http://www.unhcr.org/publications/sowr/4a4c754a9/state-worlds-refugees-2000-fifty-years-humanitarian-action.html (accessed on 10 May 2017).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). 2011. Handbook on Procedures and Criteria for Determining the Status of Refugees. Under the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. Available online: http://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3d58e13b4/handbook-procedures-criteria-determining-refugee-status-under-1951-convention.html (accessed on 3 May 2017).

UNHCR. 2017. Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2016. Available online: http://www.unhcr.org/5943e8a34 (accessed on 6 September 2017).

Van Dijk, Teun A. 1987. *Communicating Racism: Ethnic Prejudice in Thought and Talk*. Newbury Park: SAGE.

Van Dijk, Teun A. 1991. *Racism and the Press: Critical Studies in Racism and Migration*. London and New York: Routledge.

Varoli, Fabio. 2010. Cities of Solidarity: Local integration in Latin America. *Forced Migration Review: Adapting to Urban Displacement* 34: 44–46. Available online: http://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/urban-displacement/varoli.pdf (accessed on 15 September 2017).