



ParticipACTION

Desk review findings on the level of awareness, gaps in knowledge and barriers to civic participation among young people in **Cyprus**



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Findings from the Desk Review on the level of awareness, gaps in knowledge, and barriers to participation amongst young people in civic democratic life and decision-making processes in Cyprus and Europe. Conducted by Generation For Change CY.



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The ParticipACTION Project

The **ParticipACTION** “*Building Inclusive Civic Engagement and Solidarity Among Diverse Young People in Europe*” project is co-funded by the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Program (CERV-2023-CITIZENS-CIV).

The project’s core aims to enhance youth engagement in European decision-making processes and create opportunities for young people to connect with policymakers at local, national, and European levels through research initiatives, roundtables, workshops, and training sessions on policy and advocacy. The project targets young people aged 16 to 23. It seeks to involve not only European citizens but also young individuals with migratory backgrounds or coming from non-EU countries, with a special focus on women and girls. By bringing together these diverse groups of young people, the project aims to foster mutual understanding of shared experiences and barriers to democratic participation, ultimately promoting solidarity. The goal of the project is to equip young people with the tools to influence EU democratic processes, while promoting a bottom-up approach that ensures their lived realities are at the heart of policy decisions.

The ParticipAction project is implemented in Italy, France, Cyprus and Lithuania by a consortium of five experienced partners. The project runs from October 1, 2024, to September 30, 2026.

Project Partners

IRC Italia – Fondazione International Rescue Committee Italia ETS – Coordinator (Italy)

G.F.C. - Generation For Change CY - (Cyprus)

PLACE - PLACE Network - (France)

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Author's note: In this document, we use the term “Cyprus” to refer to the territories under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC). Unless otherwise stated, all sources have limited their data collection to the country’s southern portion.

1. Introduction

This desk review report (D1.1) has been conducted building on the analysis at the proposal stage by Generation For Change CY on the level of awareness, gaps in knowledge and barriers to participation amongst young people from diverse backgrounds in civic democratic life and decision-making processes in Cyprus and Europe. The present national-level review serves as a foundational analysis of youth engagement in Cyprus concerning EU institutions, policies, and democratic processes. It includes a scan of the EU policies available and any existing solidarity mechanisms in the EU related to the three themes selected by young people in WP2.

By systematically mapping existing knowledge, participation levels, and the barriers encountered by young people, including Third Country Nationals (TCNs hereafter), this desk review establishes the groundwork for the subsequent phases of ParticipACTION. The findings presented herein will be supplemented by primary data gathered from Focus Group Discussions and Surveys (D1.3) and findings from the national roundtables conducted in WP3 and will result in the National Level Assessment reports (D3.1).

2. Knowledge

According to the 2020 FRA Fundamental Rights Survey, awareness of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in Cyprus is the lowest in the EU among all age groups besides people older than 65. In particular, young women were more aware of its existence and contents than their male peers (53% vs. 47%). This pattern repeated across other human rights institutions and safeguards, such as the national gender equality body (74% of female vs. 66% of male youth is not aware), the national racial equality body (74% vs. 66%), and the right to petition to the European Parliament (75% vs. 63%). The possibility of submitting complaints to the European Ombudsman stands as a double exception, as young men scored higher than young women (92% vs. 89%), and young people scored higher in their level of awareness than all other age groups (FRA, 2020). The Youth and Democracy Survey (2024), which examined the political interests of Cypriot youth aged 15–30, reveals that human rights are the most significant concern (46% in Cyprus compared to 34% across the EU). This is followed by climate change (28% in Cyprus vs. 33% in the EU) and equal rights irrespective of gender, race, or sexuality (26% in Cyprus vs. 29% in the EU).

The FRA Survey documents a strong, cross-cutting belief in the importance of human rights and an equally strong perception of the country's shortcomings in upholding them. According to the Youth and Democracy Survey (EC, 2024), 68% of the surveyed youth in Cyprus believe there is a problem with human rights abuses in the country. This percentage point is lower than that of older age groups.

Regarding familiarity with available opportunities, young people residing in Cyprus are reported to have an above-EU-average awareness of EU-funded opportunities for youth mobility (Flash Eurobarometer 502, 2022). However, Cypriot youth scores slightly below the European average for overall knowledge of available EU opportunities (e.g., EYE Events, Petitions to the EU Parliament, Charlemagne Youth Prize, Euroscola). 63% of survey respondents are aware of at least one opportunity, compared to the EU average of 64% (ibid.)

2.1 Current Climate of Euroscepticism Among Young People

Young Cypriots have only experienced Cyprus as an EU member. However, according to the 2024 Youth and Democracy Survey, the percentage of young people who believe the EU impacts their daily lives is lower than the EU average (17% CY, 25% EU). As Diez and Tocci (2010) argue, young Cypriots' opinion of the EU is intertwined with the division of the island and their weariness about the current impasse (EC, 2024). The perceived inadequateness of the EU response fosters resentment among young people (ibid.).

Many interpret the recent election of European MEP Fidias Panayiotou, especially voted by young people at ca. 40% of the 18–24 vote (Wong, 2024; Philenews, 2024), as a testimony of this developing disillusionment with traditional political parties and established European institutions (Sotiropoulou, 2024). This interpretation is supported by Panayiotou's "political blank slate" persona: he did not take any position or focus on any particular issue during his campaigning, stating that he would learn everything during his mandate, together with those who voted for him (Politico, 2024). Furthermore, Panayiotou challenged the established political parties in Brussels, criticizing the long-standing rule of "nerds":

"I am 23 years old, and I have never voted in my life, and I said to myself one night that if I never vote and I never take an interest, the same nerds are always going to be in power, and I said 'enough!'" (Politico, 2024)

"Why did I choose to be independent? Because I can't fit into molds. Because I want you to know that I have no party interests to serve." (Politico, 2024)

Panayiotou's critique of European institutions resonates with Eurosceptic notions. He laments his exhaustion with the "seriousness" and "pretentiousness" of established politicians.

It is important to note that Panayiotou originally began campaigning to encourage youth turnout. While the turnout data in Cyprus is not disaggregated by age, overall turnout in EU elections for Cyprus has significantly increased (44.99% in 2019 vs. 58.86% in 2024). However, it is not possible to determine if Panayiotou's campaign has directly influenced this change.

3. Participation

3.1 Youth Voting Behavior

The voting age for the country's institutions (local, legislative, and presidential elections) and the European Parliament is 18 (EC, 2024b). The electoral laws and rules do not include specific provisions for young people, and legislation does not facilitate the exercise of voting rights by young individuals (ibid.).

During the 2024 State of the Union, President of the Republic Nikos Christodoulides announced that the voting age would be lowered to 17 to expand democratic participation (Damaskinos, 2025). This change belongs to a package of amendments to the bills governing the electoral process, proposed with the intention to "modernize" the system of democratic participation to strengthen the engagement of youth and streamline the voting process in time for the 2026 elections (ibid.). The Cabinet has approved this package of bills, and it is now pending approval from the Parliament (ibid.).

Cypriot traditional politics struggles with mobilizing young voters. Although youth turnout is not measured (Ministry of Interior, 2023), the intention to vote was reported to be below average among young people in Cyprus (53% vs. 64% EU average) (EC, 2024). As showed by the Youth and Democracy Survey 2024, the three most popular reasons for young people not intending to vote in Cyprus are the following:

- Not liking any specific party or candidate (24% vs. 15% EU average)
- Not being interested in politics (21% vs. 19% EU average)
- The EU does not take enough into account respondents' problems (20% vs. 16% EU average).

According to the 5th Youth Barometer conducted by the Youth Board of Cyprus, on a scale from 1 to 10, the average level of trust reported by young people in local political parties was only 2.92, dropping from 3.09 in the previous survey (Youth Board of Cyprus, 2023).

3.1.1 Turkish Cypriots Enfranchisement

Turkish Cypriots residing in the Republic of Cyprus have the same right as Greek Cypriots to participate in all national elections (Ministry of Interior, 2024). Turkish Cypriots residing in regions outside the control of the Republic's Government are permitted to participate in European Parliament elections by casting their votes at specially designated polling stations located near the ceasefire line (ibid.). However, those who live farther away from the ceasefire line struggle to access voting infrastructure reliably.

3.2 Youth Representation and Youth Policy

According to the Law on the Election of Members of the House of Representatives, individuals must be at least 21 years old to be eligible to be a candidate in parliamentary elections. There is no youth quota in the House of Representatives of Cyprus, and no existing provisions facilitate the participation of young individuals as political candidates (EC, 2024b).

Following the 2021 Cypriot legislative election, only 19 of the current 56 members are under 45, and none are under 25 (IPU, 2021). Furthermore, only eight members (14.29%) are women. The percentage of female Parliament members is very low compared to the national parliaments of other European countries (EC, 2024c) and the European Parliament, where 38.5% of the members are women (EP, 2024).

Regarding gender in politics, the Youth Board of Cyprus's Social Justice and Inclusion Quantitative Survey reported that young people's average comfort level with a woman being elected to a top political position was 9.23 on a scale of 1 to 10. The average reported comfort level regarding a young person elected to a top political position was also high, at 8.63 (Youth Board of Cyprus, 2023b).

To strengthen the role of young people in Cyprus' democratic life, the Youth Board of Cyprus launched the National Youth Strategy 2017–2022, marking Cyprus's first youth policy document (Youth Board of Cyprus, 2020). However, they released only a progress report covering 2017–2019, hindering the transparency of the implemented activities (Youth Board of Cyprus, 2020b). A follow-up policy is now being developed, the Youth Strategy 2030, which was projected to be released in late 2024 (Youth Board of Cyprus, 2024). At the time of writing (February 2025), no updates have been given since June 2024 on its expected publication date¹. This leaves an effective gap for targeted youth policy in Cyprus.

¹ Last known update as of date of writing (28/02/25): <https://youthpolicy.onek.org.cy/en/synechizoume-mazi-ti-diamorfosi-tis-v-ethnikis-stratigikis-gia-ti-neolaia-v-kyklos-diavouleuseon/>

3.3 Participation in Civic Life

Several youth organizations on the island offer young people opportunities for civic participation. These include the [Cyprus Youth Clubs Organization \(KOKEN\)](#), [YEU Cyprus](#), [Hade](#), and the [Cyprus Youth Council](#). However, young people in Cyprus have the lowest participation rate in the EU (31% vs. 48%) in activities aimed at changing European society (Youth & Democracy Survey, 2024). Within this panorama, 24% of young people did not participate in activities because “nobody has ever asked me or invited me to take part” (EU average: 16%). Additionally, young nationals strongly desire to leave the country, reflecting low intentions to engage locally (ibid.). Nevertheless, volunteering is the most popular form of civic engagement after sports clubs, and the volunteering rates are higher than the EU average (Youth and Democracy Survey 2024). All other modes of civic engagement are below the EU average.

3.4 Other Avenues of Political Participation

Youth entities that engage young people in traditional politics exist, although they hold a relatively limited weight in the institutional framework of Cyprus (EC, 2024b). These include:

- The Cyprus Children’s Parliament is an institution that mirrors the national parliament but is composed of members under 18. This body is rarely consulted, and its weight in decision-making is limited.
- Cyprus Youth Council: It is not a party of the country’s constitutional structure but acts nationally. It is a platform of exchange and communication between all youth NGOs in Cyprus and continuously cooperates with the European Youth Forum.
- There are 28 municipal councils and 10 community youth **councils**. These councils support and assist municipalities and local authorities on any action or issue affecting young people. They can be financial, technical, or advisory councils. The Youth Board of Cyprus provides them with their statute and operative framework. The local authorities or the European Solidarity Corps financially support them.
- POFEN (Pancyprian Federation of Student Unions) is a federation of all higher education student unions.
- PSEM (Pancyprian Student Coordination Committee) is the secondary school student union.
- The European Youth Parliament (EYP) Cyprus is a nonpartisan and nongovernmental organization that encourages independent thinking, personal initiative, and intercultural encounters among young people in Cyprus. It is one of the 40 European organizations that operate as part of the pan-European network of EYP International.

4. Barriers

4.1 Legal Barriers for Young Migrants and Refugees

The Long-Term Residents Directive (2003/109/EC) grants migrants fundamental rights at the EU level after 5 years of residence. However, migrants rarely gain voting rights in Cyprus. Naturalization requirements were amended in 2023 and have become more challenging (Cyprus Refugee Council, 2024). These requirements particularly affected beneficiaries of international protection (BIP) who came to Cyprus young, grew up, or were born there. Specifically, the required years of residence for naturalization and for the recognition of long-term residence have been increased from 5 to 8 years, and the years as an applicant for international protection, holder of subsidiary protection, or temporary protection are not counted (*ibid.*). Consequently, individuals who have been in Cyprus for many years – at times even their whole life – are caught in a limbo where they can never leave the BIP status in favor of long-term residence or naturalization.

The new requirements are an obstacle for most BIPs, including Syrian nationals, as they constitute the majority of individuals granted the status of subsidiary protection holder. Furthermore, many BIPs have entered through irregular routes, which is considered under the amended law as a contraindication of “good character” (a valid basis for refusal of long-term residence based on the above-mentioned directive). Finally, the majority of BIPs have received at some point financial assistance either as an applicant for international protection or later as a BIP, which is considered an indication that the applicant does not have sufficient financial resources (another basis for refusal of long-term residence status) (Cyprus Refugee Council, 2023).

Access to education, while a right for migrants and asylum seekers, requires documents that may be unobtainable for refugees or migrants (MIPEX 2020). Numerous children who arrive are unaccompanied or separated, with little to no safeguarding procedures to grant them adequate guardianship (Cyprus Refugee Council, 2023). Child applicants for international protection who are of primary school age are usually placed in ordinary school classes based on age, disregarding their previously acquired skills in central school subjects and without preparatory Greek language classes. This is a significant obstacle to their integration and achievements in school settings (*ibid.*).

Ombudsman’s influence and effectiveness have been waning, reducing access to effective remedies for human rights abuses (MIPEX 2020). The Ombudsman Institution, the only equality body in Cyprus, still does not have the competence to initiate or participate in court proceedings on behalf of victims of discrimination or intolerance (ECRI, 2023). Moreover, its staffing and capacity are insufficient (*ibid.*). As for racially motivated hate crimes and hate speech, there is no recognition for ethnic minorities in the Cypriot legal system and, consequently, no support or recognition for abuses against them. Indeed, the Cypriot Constitution only recognizes three

religious groups (the Armenians, the Maronites, and the Latins) and two “communities” (the Greek Cypriots and the Turkish Cypriots). The Roma are deemed to be part of the Turkish Cypriot community.

Access to the labor market is severely limited due to a lack of reliable financial sustenance, which creates a hurdle to engaging in civic life due to the need to prioritize basic survival. For both TCNs and Cypriots, youth unemployment is a consistent issue across the island. The youth unemployment rate stands at 15.8% in 2024, highlighting the priority of survival concerns over civic engagement opportunities (Eurostat, 2025).

4.2 Non-legal Barriers

Language patterns, particularly the prevalence of hate speech in Cyprus, establish intangible cultural obstacles to the inclusion of migrants, refugees, Turkish Cypriots, and women in civic and public life. These linguistic barriers can be categorized into three main areas: intercommunal relations, xenophobia, and gendered expectations.

4.2.1 Intercommunal: Greek Cypriot vs. Turkish Cypriot

The Greek Cypriot vs. Turkish Cypriot narrative is prominent due to the recent history of conflict on the island. It arises from failed peacebuilding efforts and gaps in intercommunal opportunities (Bryant, 2010). While this narrative does not frequently correlate with violent escalation, it has the potential to do so (Dilmaç, et al., 2021).

Within this framework, the Turkish Cypriot community is considered to be Turkey’s extended arm and the subservient mouthpiece of its policies. For this, individual Turkish Cypriots are stereotyped as being unreliable and untrustworthy. The “Turkish side” is grouped with the “Turks” as the “eternal enemy” of the Greek/Greek Cypriots. This narrative relies on a perception of existential threat, as it argues that Turkey’s greater plan is to gradually settle the whole island and wipe out Greek Cypriots (Dilmaç et al., 2021). Additionally, Greek Cypriots who are pro-solution and anti-nationalist and get involved with Turkish Cypriots towards that end are seen as Turkey’s agents, “enemy collaborators,” and “anti-Greeks” facilitating Turkey’s interests in taking over the country (ibid.).

This narrative is perpetuated not only in nationalistic media but also through educational settings. The educational content on both sides of the island perpetuates a victim narrative with emotionally loaded and graphic depictions of suffering (Saville, 2024). Young Greek and Turkish Cypriots report not being taught sufficient information about the “other” group, further hindering efforts at challenging the dominating nationalistic narrative through, for example, bi-communal

engagements (Saville, 2024). Depictions of suffering are also prominent imagery of popular culture and city landscapes, such as the “I will not forget” (Δεν ξεχνώ) symbol.



This nationalism, together with the narrative of an omnipresent threat of violence, fosters animosity and fear among the younger generations — despite not having experienced direct violence firsthand. This phenomenon is also known as negative peace: direct violence is absent, but integration among the conflicting parties is also lacking (Galtung, 2011).

4.2.2 Xenophobia

The absolute prominence of the intercommunal conflict often overshadows other discourses present on the island and intersects with narratives concerning migrants and refugees. Conservative and nationalist media use migrants as scapegoats, primarily for economic problems (Evagorou et al., 2015).

A recurring narrative towards migration in Cyprus corresponds with the infamous “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory (Cleaver, 2024). This conspiracy, often found in alt-right material, suggests the “elites”, which in the Cypriot case are found in the leadership of the Turkish side, use migrants as a Trojan horse to undermine the culture and religion of the nation by demographically (and thus culturally) replacing the native population (Bader & Sini, 2021).

In one incident, Polys Anogyriatis, member of the ELAM³ party, publicly disclosed on social media the names of an entire kindergarten class, including the name and location of the school, to point out how none of the students belonged to the Greek Cypriot community, thus allegedly proving the presence of a systematic replacement (Cleaver, 2024). This grave violation of minors’ privacy is one of many examples that illustrate how the “Great Replacement” narrative systematically targets racialized young people, as they are seen as “living proof” of the theory.

² Source: <https://cyprus-mail.com/2021/05/30/is-it-time-to-forget-do-not-forget-slogan>, Original Design by Nikos Dimou

³ ELAM (Ethniko Laiko Metopo) is a far-right nationalist party in Cyprus, known for its anti-migrant stance, emphasis on Hellenic identity, and opposition to reunification efforts with the Turkish Cypriot community.

4.2.2.1 Religion

In Cypriot public schools, it is customary to begin the school day with an Orthodox Christian prayer. This routine religious ritual in the classroom has been argued to discourage integration by marginalizing students of different religious beliefs (Elerian et al., 2023). Criticism of this practice, even when originating from students themselves, is routinely met with backlash and accusations of anti-Hellenism (Kathimerini, 2020), since religious belief is traditionally tied to Greek/Turkish Cypriot ethnic membership. Thus, critique of religion is often conflated with ethnic hatred (Dilmaç et al., 2021).

The Orthodox Church's public discourse often targets not only Turkish Cypriots, who are deemed "uncivilized" and "intruders", but also repeatedly targets refugees, migrants, asylum seekers, and other minorities, such as the LGBT community (ibid.). In one notable instance in 2017, Archbishop Chrysostomos stated that refugees were "a threat to the nation," stating that (Muslim) refugees are "[...] sent by Turkey [...] to alter [Cyprus'] cultural identity" (Andreou, 2017; Dilmaç et al., 2021).

4.3 Gender

The European Institute for Gender Equality's Gender Equality Index gives Cyprus a score of 60.9 out of 100, considerably lower than the European Union's 71 out of 100 ([EIGE](#), 2024). This data point should be understood within the context of the country's history. Gender roles and war have a documented relationship, and the Cypriot conflict was not an exception. In times of ethnonational conflict, nationalism reinforces the power and privileges of patriarchal institutions, such as traditional family, religious institutions, schools, and political parties (Hadjipavlou, 2004). Within this framework, women are pressured to demonstrate their loyalty to these institutions, sideline the fight for gender equality, and turn themselves into symbols of national collectivities (Hadjipavlou, 2006, 2010; Skjelsbæk & Smith, 2001).

Due to the unresolved ethnic conflict, Cypriot society has come to hold the "Greek Cypriot" and "Turkish Cypriot" labels above all other identity signifiers, including gender (Joannidis, 2012). As a result, the feminist cause is poorly documented in Cyprus, which affects current-day politics. Emerging activists face a scarcity of local resources to work with, leaving Cyprus in a position where it must strive to align with the gender equality progress seen across the rest of Europe. (Hadjipavlou, 2010; ECRI, 2024).

5. Scan of EU Policies

As part of the ParticipACTION project, Generation for Change CY hosted an interactive awareness-raising seminar with university students (aged 18 to 23) in Nicosia (Cyprus). During the session, participants engaged in interactive discussions about the current status in Cyprus and in the EU on the five core themes of the project and were asked to vote on the three themes they deemed most relevant and most interesting to them and young people in Cyprus. The three selected themes were “Education, Culture, Youth & Sport,” “Values, Rights, Rule of Law & Security,” and “Gender Equality.” Scans of existing EU policy and their influence on Cyprus were then conducted by GFC on these three topics.

5.1 Education, Culture, Youth & Sport

The EU has implemented various policies and initiatives to promote education, culture, and sports for youth across its member states, overseen by the Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC).

The European Youth Strategy, based on the Council Resolution of 26 November 2018, is the primary framework for EU youth policy cooperation from 2019 to 2027. It focuses on 11 cross-sectoral European Youth Goals identified during the sixth cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue (2017–2018), with the aim of engaging, connecting, and empowering young people in civic and democratic life.

Erasmus+, established in 1987, is the EU’s primary program supporting education, training, youth, and sport. It provides mobility opportunities for students, volunteers, trainees, and professionals while funding transnational projects and research through its network of national Erasmus+ agencies. In education, EU policy works toward the creation of the European Education Area (EEA) to coordinate member states’ efforts in education and training. Cyprus aims to reach the EU targets by implementing the Lifelong Learning Strategy 2021–2027 (Ministry of Education, Sports, and Youth, 2022).

The Creative Europe initiative fosters cultural diversity and promotes artistic expression across the EU. A key part of this is the EU Capital of Culture program, which designates two to three cities annually to showcase their cultural heritage. Paphos held this title in 2017, and in 2030, either Limassol or Larnaca will share the designation with one Belgian and one non-EU city (EC, 2025).

In sports, the EU launched the European Week of Sport in 2015, an annual week-long initiative promoting physical activity across member states. The EU Sport Forum is a key event for shaping EU sports policy, bringing together institutions, national and international sports federations,

Olympic committees, ministries, and grassroots organizations. The upcoming forum is scheduled for April 10–11, 2025, in Poland (EC, 2025b).

5.2 Values, Rights, Rule of Law & Security

European values and rights are enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which has been legally binding since the Lisbon Treaty (2009). This document defines the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals within the EU. The core EU values are human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights. EU citizens are entitled to freedom of movement and residence across Schengen states and the right to vote and run for office in European Parliament elections.

Each year, the EU Commission publishes a Rule of Law Report, which examines developments across all Member States, both positive and negative, in four key areas for the rule of law: the justice system, the anti-corruption framework, media pluralism and freedom, and other institutional issues related to checks and balances. It includes 27 chapters, zooming in on the panorama of each member state and providing recommendations. The 2023 report recommended that Cyprus enhance prosecution independence, strengthen its anti-corruption authority, and improve transparency in State advertising expenditures.

EU security centers around the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). This strategic framework aims to respond to external and internal security threats, to build capacity in partner countries, to foster disarmament and peacebuilding, and to stabilize Member States. Regarding external borders, the recent new Pact on Migration and Asylum has been established to implement “firm but fair” rules concerning asylum seekers, refugees, and border management and protection (EC, 2024d).

5.3 Gender Equality

Achieving Gender Equality is one of the main areas of focus of EU policy and action. The Istanbul Convention is the central treaty on combatting gender-based violence against women and domestic violence. It promotes comprehensive measures to prevent violence, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators. In 2023, the EU formally acceded to the Convention, reinforcing its commitment to addressing gender-based violence as a human rights issue and aligning member states on shared standards for prevention and protection. Cyprus signed the Istanbul Convention in June 2015 and ratified it in November 2017.

The Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 outlines key priorities, including closing the gender pay gap, combating gender-based violence, and increasing women's representation in decision-making.

The Annual Report on Gender Equality complements this by highlighting successes and areas for improvement among EU nations (EC, 2025c).

The European Institute on Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU agency for gender equality. It produces independent research and shares best practices to promote gender equality and eliminate discrimination based on gender. The Gender Equality Index, developed by EIGE, tracks progress across the EU. In 2023, Cyprus scored 60.9 out of 100, ranking below the EU average, with a notable gap in the field of political, economic, and social power (“power” in the index) (EIGE, 2024).

6. Conclusion

The panorama of youth participation in civic and democratic life in Cyprus lies at a crossroads between the island’s history of conflict and the continuous path toward European integration. While young people demonstrate a strong belief in human rights and above-average awareness of EU-funded opportunities, their engagement with traditional political structures remains limited. At the same time, euroscepticism is growing, particularly among younger generations fueled by disillusionment with the EU’s perceived inaction on the ongoing division of the island. National politics struggles to mobilize youth voters, with many citing dissatisfaction with political parties and a lack of interest in their concerns. Structural barriers, including legal obstacles for migrants and refugees, as well as deeply entrenched narratives related to intercommunal conflict, xenophobia, and gender roles, further hinder inclusive participation. While there are positive trends, such as increasing turnout rates and the potential lowering of the voting age to 17, gaps remain in representation and policy implementation. Improving youth participation in Cyprus will involve addressing the legal barriers for TCNs and people with migratory backgrounds, creating more opportunities for meaningful youth representation, and challenging dominant discriminatory narratives against ethnic minorities and women.

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