

**Republic of Cyprus**

**CYPRUS’ INPUT REGARDING HRC 53/7**

**Subject: Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression in Educational Institutions**

Cyprus supports the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to Education, and with regards to the preparation of her forthcoming report to the Human Rights Council regarding the subject in reference has the hoor to forward answers pertaining to the existing framework and practice in Cyprus:

1. **How is academic freedom protected?**

Academic Freedom related to Higher Education (HE) is protected by the laws and the judicial practices of Cyprus.

**2. Are academic staff, teachers, students all entitled to academic freedom? Does this differ by level of education? Please explain**

Academic freedom is a concept that generally refers to the freedom of individuals (teachers, pupils) and can vary based on the level of education and the roles of individuals within the education system. For example, in higher education institutions, academic staff is typically granted a high degree of academic freedom in choosing research topics, engaging in scholarly activities, expressing their views, and participating in the governance of the institution. In primary and secondary education, teachers have a degree of professional autonomy in their teaching methods and limited degree in curriculum choices. Regarding primary education**,** pupilsare guided through a structured curriculum.

1. **What do you consider the main challenges/gaps?**

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**4. Please explain the autonomy and self-governance enjoyed by educational institutions at the different tiers of education. Please explain what autonomy and self-governance entail. are there restrictions on police or military personnel entering educational institutions? If so, please share the rules.**

In Cyprus, autonomy of public schools, primary and secondary, is encouraged in relation to teaching methods and materials that teachers can use in their classrooms based on the lesson objectives. Self-governance is limited in a centralized system, such as the Cyprus educational system. A good example of the autonomy and self-governance enjoyed by educational institutions on all levels of school education is the direct involvement of teaching staff in the exploration and identification of the specific needs of their school unit. The model suggested in the policy, is based on teachers’ individual needs and the requirements of their schools. It was set to better provide for the professional development of teachers, leading to a positive impact on pupils’ learning outcomes and quality in education. The aim of the teachers’ professional learning policy is to create professional learning communities within the school. The professional learning policy was evaluated as dynamic and developmental, focusing on activities that not only have a practical application but also take into consideration the need for time and support in order to implement and to familiarize with the methodologies, so as to instigate a change in the learning process. Schools also have the opportunity to participate in European programmes, based on their needs, they can cooperate with the parents’ association and their local community, they can undertake additional actions to facilitate their work and they have an amount of money that can be used for pupils’ welfare.

HEIs enjoy autonomy in their programs of study and self-governance in their academic administrative procedures, with no restrictions on police or military personnel entering HEIs.

1. **Examples of guidelines**

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**6. How is funding including for research regulated?**

Due to the government funding provided to public HEIs, any potential conflicts of interest are minimized.

**7. Which rules and regulations protect academic freedom?**

The Cyprus Agency of Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Higher Education (CYQAA) provides guidelines as well as codes of conduct, to which HEIs have to comply for accreditation.

**8. Please explain whether and the extent to which academic staff and students, at all levels of education, are subject to surveillance by public authorities, for example through on-site cameras or online scrutiny. Has this led to undue restrictions to academic freedom and freedom of expression in educational institutions?**

The Cypriot authorities do not condone, in any way, shape or form, neither the surveillance nor the online scrutiny of teachers or pupils. These types of actions contradict domestic law and oppose the implementation of the EU GDR regulation, adopted in 2016.

**9. Do teachers and professors, at all levels of education, enjoy freedom of expression in their own teaching? Are there any limitations imposed, such as remaining "neutral" or forwarding a particular perspective, e.g., on religious and political matters?**

Generally, teachers are granted a certain degree of freedom in their teaching but at the same time, there may be limitations or considerations based on the relevant laws, institutional policies, and cultural contexts regarding the curriculum and the discussions of sensitive issues, such as religious and political matters. School education teachers are obliged to follow the curriculum which is centrally prescribed by the Ministry, and during their teaching are expected to adhere to given guidelines and to remain neutral in sensitive issues related to religion, party politics, etc. avoiding to indoctrinate pupils with their personal beliefs. Teachers’ main effort is to present multiple perspectives suitable for the developmental level of pupils, rather than promoting a particular point of view and to create an inclusive and respectful learning environment that encourages critical thinking and diverse perspectives.

**10. Please explain the extent to which teachers and professors at different education levels can choose school manuals and other books/resources for teaching, and the reasons for any restriction in this regard. Have any specific books/material been banned, including from school libraries, and alternatively is some material mandatory? If so, why?**

In Cyprus, the system is centralized and thus, specific textbooks and materials are provided by the Ministry across all schools. Teachers may also use other educational material to achieve the goals included in the curriculum.