



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Consideration of the reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention

Combined third and fourth periodic reports of States parties
due in 2008

Republic of Cyprus*, **

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** The annex can be consulted in the files of the Secretariat.

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An annex to this report contains statistical data

Introduction

1. Cyprus continues to be committed to the effective implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This report addresses the concluding observations of the Committee (CRC/C/15/Add.205) and outlines developments in Cyprus since its previous report, which was examined by the Committee in 2003. It closely follows the structure specified in the revised General Guidelines (CRC/C/58/Rev.1). The report was prepared by the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance with contributions from Government Ministries and Services,¹ the Law Commissioner, the Supreme Court and non-governmental organisations.²

2. As noted by the Committee (paragraph 5 of its concluding observations), due to the fact that a third of the territory of Cyprus has been under Turkish military occupation since 1974, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is prevented from exercising effective control over the occupied areas and thus cannot ensure application of the Convention in those areas. The Government shares the concern of the Committee that no information on children living in the occupied territories can be provided because of the current political situation.

Chapter I General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6 of the Convention)

Legislation and implementation

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 9

The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures to ensure that its domestic legislation conforms fully with the principles and provisions of the Convention, in particular in the area of juvenile justice. In this regard the inter-ministerial committee should be well resourced and should develop and implement a time-bound plan of action for the incorporation of the Convention into domestic law.

3. A new draft Law for the Welfare, Care and Protection of Children has been prepared by the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, with the involvement of all relevant bodies,³ ministries and government departments,⁴ as well as

¹ Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and Public Order, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Law Office, Planning Bureau, Department of Labour.

² The Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children, The Youth Board, The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council, The Anti-Drug Board, The Committee for the Protection of the Rights of People with a Mental Handicap, The Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Family Violence, The Union of Municipalities.

³ The Law Commissioner, the Family Courts, the Central Committee for the Implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

⁴ The Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice and Public Order, Department of Labour, the Social Insurance Services.

non-governmental organisations,⁵ in accordance with a time-bound plan. The draft Law, which will replace the existing Children's Law (Cap. 352, as amended) conforms fully with the principles and provisions of both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights. It makes explicit reference, in the introductory provisions, to general principles that must be applied in all cases (articles 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 14, 18 of the United Nations Convention). Specific principles which relate to different aspects of child welfare, care and protection are included at the beginning of each relevant Part of the Law. Detailed regulations under the draft Law are currently being prepared. The welfare and best interests of the child are the paramount consideration in the draft Law, which provides for the support of children and families, the care and protection of children, the issuing of court orders when this is unavoidable, the treatment of children who are under the care of the Director of Social Welfare Services (including placement in foster families/institutions), the regulation of children's institutions, private fostering, day-care centres and child-minders, as well as punishments in cases of mistreatment and endangerment of children.

Once the new draft Children's Law is vetted by the Law Department, it will be submitted to the Council of Ministers for approval and then to the House of Representatives, which is expected to pass the Law within 2010.

4. The Law on the Protection of Young Persons at Work (L. 48(I)/2001) is currently in the process of being amended. Furthermore, the preparation of the Regulations prescribed by the Law is now being promoted.

5. The Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings and the Protection of Victims Law [L.87(I)/2007], which was enacted in 2007, contains special provisions for the protection of children and in particular unaccompanied minors. Section 36 (1) of the Law stipulates that the Law is subject to provisions of both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights and stresses that services involved must take into account the best interests of the child in the implementation of the Law and must ensure the full implementation of all the specified procedures, bearing in mind the age and maturity of the child.

6. The Aliens and Immigration Laws were amended in 2007 [L. 8(I)/2007] in order to harmonise them with three European Union Directives, two of which include provisions relating to the rights of children. Specifically, Council Directive 2003/86/EC concerns the right to family reunification and includes provisions for unaccompanied minors, while Council Directive 2002/90/EC on defining the facilitation of unauthorised entry, transit and residence, supplements other instruments adopted in order to combat illegal immigration, illegal employment, trafficking in human beings and the sexual exploitation of children.

7. The Adoption Law of 1995 [L. 19(I)/95, as amended] is currently under review with a view to harmonising it with both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions. A study was undertaken by the International Resource Centre for the Rights of Children Deprived of their Family (IRC) and this was followed by a Round Table discussion on 2 July 2007 for the exchange of views between stakeholders. The IRC has submitted suggestions for the amendment of the relevant legislation, which are being studied.

8. The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Laws of 2000 and 2004 [L. 119(I)/2000, L. 212(I)/2004] are also in the process of being amended. Amendments include, inter alia, the explicit clarification that where acts of violence in the

⁵ The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council, the Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

family are carried out in the presence of a child, the violence is deemed as being carried out against the child, regardless of any form of consent given by the child. Other amendments concern the imposition of increased penalties for acts of sexual and physical violence committed against a child, with a sentence of life imprisonment in cases of incest with a child under the age of 18 years. At the same time, regulations are being prepared for the operation of shelters for the protection of victims of family violence and trafficking.

9. The Refugee Law of 2007 [L. 112(I)/2007], which amends the previous Refugee Laws [L. 6(I)/2000, L. 6(I)/2002, L. 53(I)/2003, L. 67(I)/2003, L. 9(I)/2004, L. 241(I)/2004, L. 154(I)/2005], stipulates that the best interests of the child are the primary consideration in the implementation of the Laws (section 9).

10. As regards juvenile justice, a special administrative procedure aiming at decriminalising offences committed by juvenile offenders (described in our previous report) continues to ensure that children under the age of 16 years who commit minor offences are treated as children in need of care, protection and rehabilitation (i.e. provided with preventive/supportive services and child protection services) and are diverted from prosecution. A new draft Law is being prepared which provides for the treatment of juvenile offenders aged up to 18 years (please see details under paragraph 187).

11. Furthermore, new comprehensive legislation was enacted in 2005 (The Rights of Detainees Law, No. 163(I)/2005), which expands the constitutional provisions safeguarding the rights of persons arrested and detained in custody and contains special provisions for minors under the age of 18 (please see details under paragraphs 104 and 105).

12. In 2004, the Law on the Rehabilitation of Convicted Persons [L. 70/1981] was amended, the main amendments being those which regulate more leniently the conditions under which previous convictions are struck off in the case of young persons up to the age of 21.

13. Another law with a child-rights oriented approach, in the domain of criminal justice, was enacted in 2005, whereby the deprivation of liberty of pregnant women or mothers of children up to 3 years of age, either during the investigation of an offence or after conviction, is limited to very serious offences and under prescribed conditions. [The Protection of Children of Sentenced Women or Women Suspects Law – L. 33(I)/2005.]

Implementation, coordination, evaluation and national plan of action

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 12

The Committee recommends that the State party ensure:

(a) That the Central Committee for the implementation of the Convention adopts a multidisciplinary child rights-based approach and is provided with adequate financial and human resources and an adequate mandate to be able to coordinate effectively national and international activities for the implementation of the Convention;

(b) Harmonization between the Convention, the national plan of action and the outcome document of the special session, and monitor and evaluate effectively the impact of policies adopted with respect to children.

14. Efforts of the Central Committee have culminated in legislation which regulates the institutional framework for protecting and promoting the rights of the child and monitoring the implementation of the Convention – specifically, the Commissioner for the Protection of Children’s Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007], which came into force on 22 June 2007.

15. In accordance with this Law, the Commissioner is responsible, inter alia, for supervising and monitoring the implementation of the Convention. The competences of the Commissioner are the following [section 4(1)]:

- (a) To represent children and their interests at all levels;
- (b) To inform and sensitize society on children’s rights in order to motivate society to safeguard children’s rights in practice, in the family, in school, in the community and in society at large;
- (c) To procure and promote the views of children whenever they cannot be heard;
- (d) To supervise and monitor the implementation of the United Nations Convention and the European Convention on the Exercise of Children’s Rights;
- (e) To examine and monitor legislation and practices and submit proposals aiming at the harmonisation of the legislation with relevant international treaties and the promotion of ratification of such treaties by the Republic of Cyprus;
- (f) To undertake information campaigns in order to change outdated perceptions on the position of children in society;
- (g) To submit applications on behalf of any child for the appointment of a special representative in court proceedings affecting the child, when the law or the court precludes the holders of parental responsibility from representing the child, due to conflicts of interest;
- (h) To represent children and their interests in proceedings affecting the child, when this is provided for in legislation, as well as in court proceedings where the Commissioner may be appointed representative of the child by the court;
- (i) In general, to take any action the Commissioner deems necessary, for the fulfilment of his/her mission, within the framework of the Law.

16. The Commissioner’s Office is funded from the Government budget and staffed by officers seconded from Government departments (section 12). Actions of the Commissioner, as specified in the Law [section 4(2)], include the:

- Organisation of training programmes on children’s rights
- Promotion of research
- Promotion of necessary legislative measures for the protection of children’s rights
- Submission of suggestions and recommendations to all relevant bodies dealing with children’s issues and, where deemed necessary, the publication of suggestions and recommendations
- Coordination of the uniform implementation of provisions concerning the protection of children’s rights
- Support of relevant non-governmental organisations
- Preparation of a National Plan for the Implementation of the Convention and the European Convention on the Exercise of Children’s Rights

- Submission on his/her own initiative, of complaints regarding the violation of children's rights to relevant authorities for investigation
 - Evaluation of the outcome of investigations
 - Cooperation with corresponding bodies and authorities in other countries and in particular with member States of the European Union and the Council of Europe
 - Creation and maintenance of a Data Bank pertaining to the level of protection of children's rights in Cyprus
17. Among the Commissioner's immediate goals are to:
- Assess the national general framework on children (policies and practices) and make suggestions and recommendations for the promotion of amendments that will ensure its harmonisation with the Convention and the outcome document of the Special Session of the General Assembly on Children, as well as its satisfactory response to the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child
 - Review the existing data collection systems and make suggestions and recommendations for the establishment of a centralised comprehensive system for the collection of disaggregated statistics and other information on a regular basis and the development of relevant child rights indicators

Independent monitoring

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 14

The Committee encourages the State party to pursue its efforts to nominate either a commissioner specifically responsible for children's rights, or establish a specific section or division for children's rights within the structure of the National Institution that would be responsible, in particular, for addressing complaints made by children in a child-sensitive manner. In this respect, the Committee refers to its general comment No. 2 on the role of national human rights institutions.

18. A Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights has already been nominated, in accordance with the Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007], described under paragraphs 14–17. Section 8 of the Law stipulates the independent status of the Commissioner who:

- (a) Acts independently and is liable only to the law, to morality and his/her conscience;
- (b) Is bound by confidentiality and continues to be bound by confidentiality after his/her departure from the post, for whatever reason;
- (c) As a witness or expert, submits only information which relates solely to the implementation of the provisions of this Law.

19. Pursuant to section 10 of the Law, a Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights was nominated by decision of the Council of Ministers dated 29 August 2007, which took into account the views of children, through the Pancyprian Committee of Students and the Children's Parliament.⁶ The date of commencement of the Commissioner's duties was

⁶ The Children's Parliament was established in 2001 on the initiative of the Pancyprian Coordinating

set as 6 February 2008 by decision of the Council of Ministers and the Commissioner was sworn in before the President of the Republic on the same day.

Allocation of resources

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 16

The Committee recommends that the State party pay particular attention to the full implementation of article 4 of the Convention by prioritizing budgetary allocations for the implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights of children, in particular those belonging to economically disadvantaged groups, “to the maximum extent of ... available resources”. Furthermore, it recommends that the State party specify the amount and proportion of the State budget spent through public and private institutions or organisations for the implementation of children’s rights in areas like alternative care, health education and special protection, in order to be able to evaluate the impact and effect of the expenditures and also, in view of the costs, the accessibility, the quality and the effectiveness of the services for children in the different sectors.

20. The Government promotes a plethora of measures, to the maximum extent of available resources, for the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights of children, with particular emphasis on children belonging to disadvantaged groups. One of the three priorities contained in the 2006–2008 National Strategy for Social Inclusion is the prevention of social exclusion of children (the other two priorities are the reduction of the risk of poverty in general and especially for the population aged 65 years and over, and the integration of vulnerable groups into the labour market). Measures for children contained in the National Strategy for Social Inclusion include programmes aiming at reducing inequalities among children attending schools in disadvantaged areas, programmes for supportive teaching, support to pupils with special needs, the promotion of “e-literacy”, the implementation of compulsory pre-school education, the introduction of the institution of voluntary all-day kindergartens, the expansion of the institution of voluntary all-day primary schooling and the pilot implementation of compulsory all-day primary schooling. It should be noted that the risk of child poverty in Cyprus, at 12 per cent in 2007 (using a relative poverty measure of 60 per cent of the national median disposable income), is amongst the lowest in Europe, according to the European Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC).

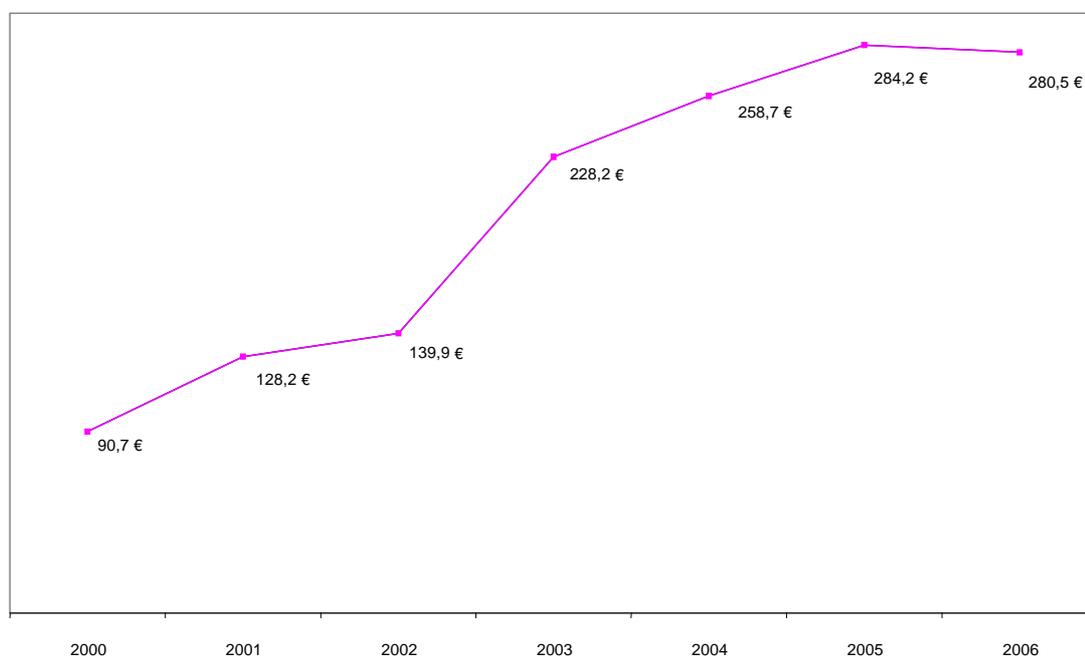
21. Social expenditures for 2006 (encompassing expenditures by Government, semi-government bodies, local authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)) amounted to €6,271.08 million, representing 23.39 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The breakdown per social domain was 7.24 per cent of GDP on education, 3.15 per cent on health, 10.5 per cent on social security and public assistance and 2.5 per cent on housing.

Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children (a children’s rights NGO), with the aim of ensuring children’s active participation in decision-making processes on matters that concern them. It enables 56 children representing children from all districts, to discuss issues derived from a yearly National Conference on matters concerning children and to present their views at a special Session of the House of Representatives. The special Session is presided by the President of the House and is attended by members of parliament and representatives of relevant Government departments and authorities.

22. In response to the Committee's concern that Cyprus could not state specifically the proportion of social expenditures representing children's programmes (para. 15 of the concluding observations), it should be noted that services and programmes benefiting children are often an integral part of programmes and services benefiting families, e.g. public assistance for disadvantaged families. It is not, therefore, possible to provide an exact figure for expenditures earmarked for children alone, as a proportion of the country's GDP.

According to the European System of Integrated Social Protection Statistics (ESSPROS), Cyprus expenditures for families and children, which encompass expenditures by Government, semi-government organisations, local authorities and NGOs, amounted to €280.5 million in 2006, representing 10.8 per cent of social expenditures and 1.9 per cent of GDP. It should be noted that ESSPROS does not include expenditures for education and health (they are mentioned in paragraph 20). The following Graph shows total expenditures in Euros (€ millions) for families and children for the period 2000–2006 and the Table below that, the level of expenditure for child benefit during the period 2003–2007:

Total expenditure for families and children (in € millions) for the period 2000–2006



Source: The Statistical Service of Cyprus.

Child benefit expenditure in Euros € (millions)

Year	€ m	As a percentage of the Ministry of Finance Budget
2003	€118 58	5.0%
2004	€142 50	5.6%
2005	€146 60	5.9%
2006	€147 45	4.9%
2007	€150 87	5.0%

Source: Ministry of Finance.

Note: There is an increasing trend in child benefit expenditure despite the decreasing trend in both the number of children (see Annex, Tables 1–6) and the proportion of children to the total population (Table 7).

Financial assistance abroad

23. The commitment of Cyprus to safeguarding the rights of children is reflected in the choice of projects financed in 2007 through Official Development Assistance, as shown below:

- For the construction of a boarding school for girls for the Sekonyela High-School in Lesotho, Cyprus provided €180,000 (approximately C£105,200). [In 2006, a sum of €171,000 (approximately C£98,300) was contributed for the same project.]
- For the implementation of the World Food Programme (WFP) Project “Early Childhood Education Enhancement”, which included the provision of breakfast for 12,100 children at the Governorate of Al Fayoum in Egypt, Cyprus contributed \$400,000 (approximately €305,000, or C£171,600).
- For the implementation of the WFP “School Feeding Programme for the Governorate of Ammran” in Yemen, Cyprus contributed \$250,000 (approximately €170,400 or C£99,600).

24. As regards external financing targeting children in Cyprus, this is derived from the Cyprus Children’s Fund, which is a non-profit organisation established in the United States of America in 1975 to alleviate the plight of displaced children. The following table shows financing during the period 2003–2007:

<i>Year</i>	<i>C£ m.</i>	<i>As a percentage of the Treasury Budget</i>
2003	35 189 [€60 12]	0.04%
2004	35 802 [€61 17]	0.07%
2005	35 381 [€60 45]	0.22%
2006	36 463 [€62 30]	0.15%
2007	38 200 [€65 27]	0.13%

Source: Ministry of Finance.

Data collection

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 18

The Committee recommends that the State party intensify its efforts to establish a central registry and introduce a comprehensive system for the collection of disaggregated data incorporating all the areas covered by the Convention and using relevant child rights indicators. Such a system should cover all children up to the age of 18 years, with specific emphasis on those who are particularly vulnerable. The State party should in this regard undertake all possible measures to include data on children living in the occupied part of its territory.

25. Although a central registry has yet to be established, efforts continue to be made by individual Ministries and Services to improve their data collection systems and better inform policies. For example, the computerised system of the Social Welfare Services,

which is a wide area network covering information gathered at all District Welfare Offices (DWOs), was upgraded in 2007 to a web enabled system. New requirements are currently being developed concerning the situation of all children receiving social welfare services, in compliance with paragraph 1 of the Annex to the General Guidelines (CRC/C/58/Rev.1) as regards disaggregated data (please refer to paragraph 147 for further details). At the same time, Social Welfare Services are represented on the Indicators' Sub-Group of the European Social Protection Committee, which is working on, inter alia, the development of indicators in the area of child poverty. Statistics of the Social Welfare Services currently available are mentioned in Chapter V and VI.

26. Another example of improved data collection is the electronic database of all incidents categorised as Domestic Violence and Child Abuse, which is maintained by the Police. Such incidents are codified and stored on receipt of and in accordance with Police form "No. 102", which is completed and sent to the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office for further analysis. The database includes disaggregated data, in accordance with paragraph 1 of the Annex to the General Guidelines (CRC/C/58/Rev.1). Police statistics currently available are mentioned in Chapters V and VI.

27. Difficulties and planned actions for improved data collection are discussed under paragraphs 45–46. As regards data on children living in the occupied areas, please refer to the Introduction, paragraph 2.

Training/dissemination of the Convention

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 20

The Committee encourages the State party to continue and strengthen its efforts to provide adequate and systematic training and sensitization on children's rights for professional groups working with and for children, with particular attention to law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges. It urges the State party to continue to develop methods to promote the Convention, in particular at the local level, and to further support such activities carried out by NGOs.

Training

28. Cyprus continues to lay great emphasis on professional training and sensitization on children's rights. Further to the actions described in the previous reports, intensified efforts have been made since 2003, by various government departments.

Police

29. The rights of children are an integral part of police training in the areas of child abuse, domestic violence, sexual exploitation of children, child pornography and juvenile delinquency. The investment in such Police training is significant, as explained below:

I. Child abuse and Domestic Violence

(a) The Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office organises seminars and lectures for training and sensitization purposes, in cooperation with the Cyprus Police Academy. Such training is divided into four different levels as follows:

- Basic Level

New recruits completing the basic training at the Cyprus Police Academy are given three four-hour sessions covering (i) legal, procedural, and other formalised or

structured aspects of Police response, (ii) general awareness and sensitization (Social Sciences perspective), and (iii) child sexual abuse.

- Advanced Level

A five day course attended by police officers working either at police stations or at Criminal Investigations Departments is offered on a continual basis depending on training needs analysis.

- Specialised Level

Further training of police officers on subject matters such as: child physical and sexual abuse, categories of violence, witness and victim testimony and a week-long training session on video recorded statements are organised periodically.

- Refresher Courses

Short-span training sessions are conducted to update and refresh the knowledge of in-service personnel. Such refresher courses may be organised by any police division and can be conducted at the peripheral or central level.

(b) Since 2003, 11 week-long seminars on domestic violence have been conducted. One hundred and eighty-nine (189) members of the Cyprus Police who were stationed either in regional police stations or District Crime Investigation Departments (CID) attended and participated in the seminars. During the same period, day-long lectures were also held for all Police Station Directors and Directors of the regional CIDs. In addition, members of the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office undertook part of the basic training of new recruits;

(c) Furthermore, lectures on domestic violence and child abuse are delivered during specialised police training on specific issues such as human trafficking/exploitation, community policing, sergeants' courses and CID courses etc.;

(d) To date, on a national level, 413 members of the Cyprus Police (approximately 10 per cent of the entire Police personnel) have undergone specialised week-long training on matters pertaining to domestic violence and child abuse. On average, three specially trained police officers serve at each Police Station, and eleven at each Divisional CID;

(e) In addition to training in Cyprus, police personnel also attend specialised educational programmes, training seminars and courses, which take place overseas.

II. Sexual Exploitation

(a) Police training on sexual exploitation and trafficking of human beings is covered in basic police training. Additional specialised lectures are included in Criminal Investigation Courses (lower and advanced levels) as well as in other courses that are related to the issue;

(b) In 2006, four week-long seminars on Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation were organised at the Police Academy. These seminars were attended by 88 members of the police of varying ranks from different Departments, Units and Divisions.

III. Child Pornography

The topic of child pornography is covered in basic police training at a basic level, and it is also incorporated in several other levels of training and in specialised

courses, such as Criminal Investigators' training, Officers' training, Child Abuse training etc.

IV. Juvenile Delinquency

(a) The Police Office for Handling Juvenile Delinquency, which was established in 2007, is in the process of evaluating and further promoting police professional training in the area of juvenile delinquency as well as in reviewing all practical police measures;

(b) A specialised training seminar on Handling Juvenile Delinquency was organised by the police in cooperation with the University of Cyprus. The seminar took place on 26–28 November 2007 and was attended by 30 professionals, i.e. police officers with a background in Social Sciences, judges, social workers of the Social Welfare Services and educational psychologists of the Ministry of Education and Culture, as well as representatives of the Prisons Department, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order and the Law Office. The seminar hosted distinguished expert lecturers from the University of Cyprus, the University of Cambridge and the University of Athens;

(c) Juvenile delinquency is currently covered in both the police training curriculum as such, as well as in various other courses which include this issue among others (e.g. rights of detainees, human rights, international conventions, etc). These courses are based on the legal, policing, procedural approach, and also extend to the Social Sciences approach.

Social Welfare Services

30. Children's rights are stressed in all training programmes organised by the Social Welfare Services. These encompass programmes for welfare officers (social workers), including basic training for new recruits, refresher and specialised in-service training, as well as lectures and sensitization activities targeting other professionals. Recent training activities are described below:

I. Newly Recruited Welfare Officers

Basic training for new recruits is provided in three phases and covers all the services provided by the Social Welfare Services. Safeguarding the rights of the child is a central theme of basic training, which focuses on correct practices for the handling of cases. Eighty (80) welfare officers recruited on 28 February 2005 completed the first phase of their basic training during 2005 and 2006 and will proceed to the second and third phases in 2007 and 2008.

II. All Welfare Officers working with Families and Children

During 2007, a series of "re-engineering" seminars was organised for 18 front-line welfare officers working with crisis intervention cases and 20 working with long-term cases. A central theme of the seminars was the implementation of provisions of the Convention in everyday practice.

III. Welfare Officers working with cases of Adoption, Custody and Children in Care

(a) In 2006, two specialised training seminars and workshops were organised for 44 welfare officers and administrative personnel working with cases of adoption and custody. In 2007 a specialised training seminar was organised for 65 welfare officers working with children in care. A key theme of the seminars was the implementation of the Convention in everyday practice and, in particular, the

concept of “the best interests of the child”, which was the subject of special workshops within each work category;

(b) A seminar on Adoption and Foster Care was organised in 2006, which was attended by 34 welfare officers. The keynote speaker at the seminar was a renowned writer on the subject,⁷ who focused on identity issues and ways of helping adopted and foster children in this regard.

IV. Welfare Officers working with cases of Family Violence

A Seminar on “Violence against Children” was organised in 2005, which was attended by 39 welfare officers working with cases of Family Violence.

V. Institutional Officers

During 2006, a series of four-day seminars were organised for 71 institutional officers who work in child protection institutions run by the Social Welfare Services. The seminars included separate sessions on the rights of the child in general and special sessions on the rights of children living in institutions.

In 2007, a four-day seminar was organised for 45 institutional officers who work in day-care centres run by the Social Welfare Services. The seminar focused on child psychology in relation to children’s rights.

VI. Student Nurses

In 2006, the Social Welfare Services contributed to the training programme of student nurses, organised by the Cyprus Nursing School by leading two workshops for the sensitization of nurses on the rights and best interests of children who are to be adopted. Twenty-two (22) nurses participated in each workshop.

VII. Community Nurses

In 2006, the Social Welfare Services contributed to the training of 30 community nurses working in the field of Child Psychiatry. The workshop included, inter alia, discussion on the rights of the child and in particular the best interests of the child in cases where parents seek custody of the child through court proceedings.

VIII. Cooperation with Family Court Judges/Manual of Operations

Systematic cooperation between family court judges and welfare officers dealing with custody and adoption cases has been strengthened with a view to protecting and promoting the rights of the children involved. Towards this end, provisions of the Convention have been mainstreamed in the amended Manual of Operations of the Social Welfare Services, which is a guidance and training tool used by welfare officers on a daily basis.

Ministry of Education

31. The Ministry of Education and Culture provides opportunities to teachers to attend seminars on children’s rights as part of the training organised by the Pedagogical Institute on subjects such as Intercultural Education, Differentiation in Teaching, Equal Opportunities, Health and Social Education, Special Educational Needs, Communication Skills, Emotional Education. Some seminars are school-based while others take place at the Institute, in collaboration with other specialists, such as educational psychologists. Special emphasis is given to the relationship of these themes with the Convention and materials are

⁷ Dr. John Treseliotis.

being produced for all levels of teachers on Intercultural Education and Democratic Citizenship. Furthermore, the Pedagogical Institute has a coordinating/counselling role in schools where intervention programmes are applied with regard to social and emotional education and prevention/confrontation of bullying behaviour. It should be noted that the in-service training includes a specific course dealing with the promotion of the child's civil rights and freedoms, which educates and sensitizes teachers on the importance of fully accepting the concept of children's rights.

Family Courts

32. The rights of the child are incorporated in training seminars of family court judges on issues concerning children. The following are examples of themes of training seminars and conferences:

- International abduction of children
- The acquis and international conventions in the area of custody and related issues
- International justice of children
- Maintenance obligations
- Judicial cooperation in the European Union on matters of family law and parental relationships

Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council

33. The Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (PVCC), which is an umbrella organisation of non-governmental organisations in the social welfare field, provides systematic training through its Training, Development and Research Centre, to professionals, volunteers and board members on various issues pertaining to the well-being of children. Examples of specialised training topics relating to children's programmes run by the NGO/voluntary sector are development, sustainability and achieving quality. However, the PVCC notes that some organisations working with and/or for children are not fully aware of the content or the stages of implementation of the Convention despite the efforts of the PVCC to disseminate both the Convention and information on its implementation. According to the PVCC, there is a need for the expansion of training opportunities for the NGO/voluntary sector.

Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights

34. As mentioned under paragraph 16, the newly appointed Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights will be organising training programmes on children's rights and this is specified in the relevant Law [section 4(2)].

Making principles and provisions widely known

Publications

35. The 2002 publication of the Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children (NGO), entitled "The Rights of Children", which was widely distributed to Ministries, Services, NGOs and the mass media, is in the process of being re-issued in cooperation with the Services of Social Welfare Services. The new issue will be distributed not only to the bodies mentioned above but also to individuals (e.g. police officers, social workers, family court judges, prosecutors, parliamentarians) attending seminars and events relating to children.

36. Another joint venture of the Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children and the Social Welfare Services, was the preparation of a publication explaining the Convention in simple terms. This publication, which targets children and is written in both Greek and Turkish, was completed in 2006 and has been widely distributed to Ministries, Services, NGOs and the mass media. The Ministry of Education and Culture has ensured that every child in the 4th year of primary school has received his/her own copy, whilst the Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children has disseminated the material to the members of the Children's Parliament, the Children's District Parliamentary Committees and also to the wider public during the annual events of Children's Week and Children's Festival (November and June of each year respectively).

Citizens' Rights Charter for Children

37. Following the electronic and in print publication of the Citizens' Rights Charter by the Cyprus Police (first published in 2005, revised in 2006 and 2007), the Cyprus Police prepared a *Citizen's Charter for Children* in 2007. The Children's Charter targets children aged 9–12 years and covers Articles 16, 19.1, 29.1 (a–d), 32–35 and 40 of the Convention. Both the Citizens' Rights Charter and the Children's Charter, together with a series of educational games aiming at instilling the principles of the Convention in children, may be found on the Police website in Greek at the address below (the English versions are under review): http://www.police.gov.cy/police/police.nsf/dmlrights_gr/dmlrights_gr?OpenDocument. A second part to the Children's Charter, which will target children aged 13–18 years, is being prepared.

Campaigns and events

38. The Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office of the Police has undertaken a nationwide awareness campaign for 2007–2008 to sensitize the public on issues of domestic violence and child abuse, with the aid of posters, brochures (published in English, Greek and Turkish) and promotional gifts. The campaign includes, inter alia, studies, lectures and presentations to 90 teachers, 60 volunteers of the Association for Prevention and Handling of Domestic Violence and various organised groups, parent associations etc. Since 2005, the office has also participated in the Cyprus National State Fair with its own booth at the Police Centre, as well as in Police functions that are open to the public and are held annually at Police Headquarters and all Police Divisions.

39. On 19 November 2007, the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family⁸ organised a press conference concerning the World Day for Prevention of Child Abuse (19 November) and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (25 November). At the press conference, the President of the Advisory Committee also stressed the importance of the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence and referred to the various activities initiated by the relevant Ministries and NGOs. Television channels and newspapers covered the event with great success. Moreover, the Advisory Committee has distributed informational material to the mailboxes of houses throughout the city of Nicosia.

⁸ The Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family was established and operates in accordance with family violence legislation (Law 119(I)/2000 as amended by Law 212(I)/2004). It consists of persons from the private and public sectors with knowledge and experience on issues of family violence, who are appointed in their personal capacity by the Council of Ministers.

40. Apart from issuing press releases relating to violations of children's rights, the Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children organises an annual press conference just before the opening of Children's Week in November and the Children's Visit with the President of the Republic, which receives wide media coverage. During the Press Conference, people are informed on the progress made in the implementation of children's rights in Cyprus and sensitized on steps to be taken for better recognition of children's rights, especially participatory ones. During the Children's Visit with the President that takes place on 20 November each year (commemorating the ratification of the CRC) the children present a number of issues they feel should be looked into by the Government. It should be noted that one such issue presented by the children three years ago was the creation of the institution of an Ombudsperson on Children's Rights and this suggestion was well received by the President. The Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children considers the 2007 appointment of a Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights to be a direct result of the Children's Visit with the President and plans to continue this practice in order to raise demands that are necessary for the full implementation of children's rights.

Making the report available to the public

41. The second periodic report of Cyprus, together with the concluding observations of the Committee was published in a combined publication in 2005 and distributed to all governmental services, relevant NGOs and the mass media.

42. The Concluding observations of the Committee on the second periodic report of Cyprus were included in the keynote presentation on the Situation of Children in Cyprus at a Seminar on the Prevention of Social Exclusion of Children held on 1 June 2007 (see further details under paragraph 116, bullet point 3). The Seminar was organised by the Social Welfare Services of the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance as a follow-up to the 2006–2008 National Report on Strategies for Social Protection and Social Inclusion, which was submitted to the EU Commission. The Seminar was attended by representatives of 34 bodies (governmental services, local authorities, semi-governmental organisations, social partners, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, professional associations, specialists) and aimed at:

- Providing information on the situation of children in Cyprus
- Addressing the issue of prevention of social exclusion of children
- Providing information on good practices in Cyprus and other member States of the EU
- Providing opportunities for discussion between participants on the future direction of policies and programmes for the prevention of social exclusion of children

Cooperation with non-governmental organisations

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 22

The Committee emphasizes the important role civil society plays as a partner in implementing the provisions of the Convention, including with respect to civil rights and freedoms, and encourages the State party to continue and strengthen its cooperation with NGOs, in particular by involving NGOs, especially rights-based ones, and other sectors of civil society working with and for children more

systematically throughout all stages of the implementation of the Convention.

43. Cyprus continues to lay great emphasis on working in partnership with NGOs for the promotion of children's rights. Further to the information provided in our previous Reports on the cooperation between the Social Welfare Services and non-governmental organisations for the development and operation of family support services, examples of effective cooperation with NGOs are described in several parts of this report, e.g. paragraphs 35–36, 38–40, 59–63, 68–74, 93 and 156.

44. Furthermore, cooperation with NGOs is encouraged and their role is strengthened through new legislation, as outlined below:

(a) The responsibilities and role of the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council (previously the Pancyprian Welfare Council) for the coordination and development of the voluntary sector and volunteerism in general have been broadened by the Pancyprian Volunteerism Coordinative Council Law [L. 61(I)/2006], which was enacted in 2006. Amongst the Council's competences, as stipulated in the Law, are:

- To submit reports, views, suggestions, proposals and action plans to Government services, concerning the formulation, management and implementation of Government policy in the area of volunteerism and social welfare
- To advise the Social Welfare Services or other relevant Government service on the distribution of financial assistance or grants to its member organisations

(b) According to the Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007], the Commissioner supports the work of non-governmental organisations, which defend children's rights or provide services to children, and contributes to the formulation and implementation of guidelines for the effective protection of children's rights (section 4(2)(f));

(c) The Planning Bureau is in the process of preparing a draft Law on Volunteerism, which will include provisions for cooperation with non-governmental organisations.

Factors and difficulties in implementing the cluster of provisions under Chapter I

45. As mentioned under paragraphs 25 and 26, individual Ministries and Services are making efforts to improve their data collection systems in order to better inform policies. However, there is still much to be done. In order to respond effectively to the requirements stipulated in the annex to the revised General Guidelines (CRC/C/58/Rev.1), Cyprus must improve IT infrastructures with regard to data collection, databases and data banks. There is also a need to build knowledge and capacity in the area of indicators as well as policy analysis and evaluation for the improvement and advancement of the national plan of action for children.

46. The implementation of the newly enacted Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007] described under paragraphs 14–17 is expected to overcome many of the difficulties mentioned above (para. 45). Amongst the Commissioner's actions (competences/responsibilities), stipulated in the Law [section 4(2)], is the creation and maintenance of a Data Bank pertaining to the level of protection of children's rights in Cyprus, whilst an immediate goal of the Commissioner's Office is to review existing data collection systems and make recommendations for the establishment of a centralised comprehensive system for the collection of disaggregated statistics and other

information on a regular basis and the development of relevant child rights indicators (para. 17).

Chapter II

Definition of the child (art. 1)

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 24

The Committee recommends that the State party raise the legal age of criminal responsibility to an internationally more acceptable age by amending its legislation in this regard and ensuring that all children below 18 years are accorded the protection of juvenile justice provisions.

Criminal responsibility – juvenile justice

47. The legal age of criminal responsibility was raised to 14 years in 2006, by a further amendment of section 14 of the Criminal Code [the Criminal Code (Amendment) Law no 18(I)/2006]. Children below this age are not criminally responsible for any act or omission.

48. As mentioned under paragraph 10, a new draft Law is being prepared, which provides for the treatment of juvenile offenders aged up to 18 years. Please refer to paragraph 187 for details.

49. Furthermore, an Office for Handling Juvenile Delinquency was established by the Cyprus Police in 2007 (described under paragraph 188).

Definition of the child in legislation

50. Domestic legislation generally defines a Child as a person under the age of 18 years. For example, Law Cap. 352 on Children, Law 216/90 on the Relationships between Parents and Children, Law 19(I)/95 on Adoption, Law 119(I)/2000 as amended by Law 212(I)/2004 on Family Violence, Law 87(I)/2007 on the Protection of Victims of Trafficking and Exploitation, Law 95(I)/2001 on the Protection of Witnesses and Law 163(I)/2005 on the Rights of Detainees, explicitly define a child as any person aged under 18 years.

Statistics

51. Statistics, by age-group and sex, on the number and proportion of children under 18 living in Cyprus during the years 2002–2007 are provided in the Annex, Tables 1–6. A comparison of the number of children to the number of the total population may be seen in Table 7.

Factors and difficulties in implementing the cluster of provisions under Chapter II

52. Disaggregated data are not available with regard to urban/rural residence, membership of minority group, ethnicity, religion and disability. The implementation of the newly enacted Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007] is expected to overcome this difficulty, as described under paragraph 46.

Chapter III

General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 26

The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Appropriately integrate the general principles of the Convention (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12) in all relevant legislation concerning children;**
- (b) Apply them in all political, judicial and administrative decisions, as well as in projects, programmes and services that have an impact on all children; and**
- (c) Apply these principles in planning and policy-making at every level, as well as in actions taken by social and health welfare and educational institutions, courts of law and administrative authorities.**

General principles

53. Further to the information provided in our previous Reports and oral presentations, concerning existing legislation that incorporates the general principles of the Convention, it should be noted that the new draft Law for the Welfare, Care and Protection of Children, described under paragraph 3, makes explicit reference to the general principles and includes provisions that guarantee their application at the level of decision-making (both administrative and judicial) and service design and provision (please refer to paragraphs 56 and 86 for further details).

54. Similarly, the general principles of the Convention are integrated in new legislation enacted in 2007, specifically the Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings and the Protection of Victims Law [L.87/(I)/2007], described under paragraph 5 and the Aliens and Immigration (Amendment) Law [L. 8(I)/2007], described under paragraph 6.

55. Examples of current policies and practices that are based on the general principles of the Convention are outlined below:

- (a) The best interests of the child underpin all work with children carried out by the Social Welfare Services and also court proceedings affecting children;
- (b) The child's race, language and religion are taken into consideration in decisions to place him/her with a foster family. Every effort is made to place the child with a family having a similar background and when this is not possible to select a family that is ready and able to provide opportunities to the child to exercise his/her religion;
- (c) Children under the care of the Director of Social Welfare Services are provided with opportunities to participate, according to their age and level of maturity, in the Review Committee, which takes decisions on the care, protection, placement and rehabilitation of children in care (see paragraph 121);
- (d) In court proceedings affecting children, Welfare Officers assigned to prepare reports for the court ascertain the views and wishes of the children concerned and take them into account, in accordance with their age and maturity, when submitting recommendations to the court.

Non-discrimination

CRC/C/15/Add.205, paras. 28 and 29

28. The Committee recommends that the State party consider reviewing legislation, and amending it where necessary, with a view to ensuring that all children are accorded equal rights without discrimination based on their ethnic origin, sex, or other grounds. Furthermore, it encourages the State party to pursue information campaigns to eliminate stereotyping in terms of traditional roles of men and women in society.

29. The Committee requests that specific information be included in the next periodic report on the measures and programmes relevant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child undertaken by the State party to follow up on the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and taking account of general comment No. 1 on article 29 (1) of the Convention (aims of education).

Legislation

56. The new draft Law for the Welfare, Care and Protection of Children, described under paragraphs 3 and 53, incorporates the principle of non-discrimination as a general principle which must be applied in all cases and in all areas regulated by the Law. Specifically, the draft Law stipulates that in all decisions taken within the framework of the Law, whether through administrative or judicial proceedings, the particular circumstances of the child and the parents or legal guardians of the child must be taken into consideration and the principle of non-discrimination must be applied with regard to their race, colour, sex, language, religion, disability, political or other opinion, and their national, ethnic or social origin.

57. As regards the Committee's concern relating to the lack of legal provisions expressly outlawing discrimination by private persons in education and employment (paragraph 27 of the concluding observations), it should be noted that relevant laws have been enacted since our previous report. Specifically, the Equal Treatment (Racial or Ethnic Origin) Laws of 2004 and 2006 [L.59(I)/2004 and L.147(I)/2006], as well as the Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation Laws of 2004 and 2007 [L.58(I)/2004 and L.50(I)/2007] and the Persons with Disabilities (Amendment) Laws 2004 and 2007 (L. 57(I)/2004, L. 72(I)/2007 and L. 102(I)/2007) prohibit discrimination in the public and private sector concerning occupation, employment, social protection, health treatment, social services, training, education and access to goods and services on grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion, belief, sexual orientation, disability and age.

58. Furthermore, the Combating of Racism and Other Discrimination (Commissioner) Law of 2004, [L. 42(I)/2004] vests the Commissioner for Administration (Ombudsman) — an Independent Officer — with special competences, duties and powers for combating and eliminating direct or indirect discrimination in both the public and private sector, including on grounds of race, community, language, colour, religion, political or other belief, and national or ethnic origin. The Law covers discriminatory provisions/terms/criteria/practices, which may be found in, inter alia, contracts of employment, collective agreements, articles of association of legal persons, societies, bodies, and institutions, contracts for the supply of goods and services, and terms of membership of organisations, including professional ones. In accordance with the Combating of Racism and Other Discrimination (Commissioner) Law of 2004, any person or group may lodge a complaint to the Commissioner for having been subjected to discrimination prohibited by any other law (such as those mentioned

above) and also discrimination in the enjoyment of rights and freedoms safeguarded by the Cyprus Constitution, or one or more of the Conventions ratified by Cyprus and referred to explicitly in the Law, i.e.:

- The Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, (and all its Protocols including Protocol No. 12)
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- The Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Elimination of stereotyping

59. As regards the elimination of stereotyping in terms of traditional roles of men and women in society, the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, as the competent authority for promoting equality of men and women in Cyprus, lays great emphasis on changing role models by promoting a “destereotyping process”. This process is especially targeted at young people through the education system in order to change perceptions of the roles of both men and women. Efforts within this framework included the implementation of the following two Programmes, co-funded with the European Social Fund, which were coordinated by the National Machinery for Women’s Rights (NMWR), under the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, with the involvement of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Cyprus Federation of Business and Professional Women (KOYEE), the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Family Planning Association and youth organisations.

“Women in the business world – Enhancement of female entrepreneurship”

60. This Programme aimed to enhance women’s entrepreneurship (2004–2005). It included inter alia a survey conducted among 15–17 year-old high school students as regards their perceptions of gender equality in the business field and women’s entrepreneurship. Based on the results of the survey it was suggested to the Ministry of Education that courses on entrepreneurship be included in its curricula.

“Gender equality – A responsibility of both sexes”

61. The target groups of this Programme (2005–2006) were men and women of all ages, children in primary schools, high-school students and young people, decision makers, chambers of commerce, employers’ organisations, trade unions and other NGOs including youth boards and councils. The project had the following aims:

- (a) To create and increase awareness among all target groups about the necessity for and benefits from the involvement of men in the promotion of gender equality;
- (b) To positively influence the attitudes of both sexes and especially young people’s attitudes regarding gender-specific roles in work and family life;
- (c) To investigate how primary school and high-school students perceive the role of men and fathers, how they experience the “absence” of the father and other family activities, and to what extent the education system trains children as regards gender equality;

- (d) To motivate men and women to share household and family responsibilities;
- (e) To exchange experiences and transfer good practices between partners of the programme;
- (f) To involve decision makers and NGOs in promoting change of the traditional gender power order in work and private life, in order to promote gender mainstreaming;
- (g) To promote, among all groups involved, the idea of creating a family-friendly work environment.

62. A series of activities were organised with a view to achieving the above objectives:
- In order to reach the public and the target groups, press conferences were organised both in Cyprus and the partner countries (Malta, Greece and Italy), an informative leaflet was published and distributed and a media campaign was launched
 - Activities for sensitizing children and teachers through the education system included the organisation of two competitions, one among 10–12 year-old children in primary schools for writing a storybook, and the other among 13–15 year-old high-school students for writing a scenario (script) for a TV series, the preparation of a questionnaire targeted at high-school students between the age of 16 and 18 and the carrying out of a survey among high-school students in order to identify their attitudes towards gender roles in work and family life, and the participation in seminars and the Cyprus Education Fair
63. To the extent that the outcome of the project was measurable, the results indicated that all of the project's objectives were met and, in some cases, the results obtained exceeded the targets set and the organisers' expectations. The activities targeting children and young people were particularly successful and achieved an unexpectedly high response.

Follow up on the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

64. The Government of the Republic of Cyprus is dedicated to the promotion of human rights for all and gives special importance to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In the light of the conclusions of the European and World Conferences against Racism, the Council of Ministers adopted a report containing an Action Plan of priorities for the amendment of legislation and the promotion of measures and awareness-raising activities. The Council of Ministers appointed a Ministerial Committee consisting of the Ministers of Justice and Public Order, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Labour and Social Insurance and Education and Culture, to monitor the Plan of Action, with a view to assessing its impact and effectiveness.

65. The Attorney-General of the Republic, the Commissioner for Administration, the Presidential Commissioner for Religious Groups and the President of the National Organisation for the Protection of Human Rights (Independent Officers), participate in the Ministerial Committee, as advisors. An ad-hoc Committee consisting of representatives from the Law Office, the Commissioner for Administration, the Presidential Commissioner for Religious Groups and all other Key Actors (Ministries – Governmental Departments and NGOs) assists the work of the Ministerial Committee and prepares progress reports.

66. Actions focusing on enlightenment and sensitization have included the publication of relevant materials (para. 67), the organisation of seminars and campaigns (paras. 68–69) and the mobilisation of civil society, particularly children and young people, through their participation in a series of projects partly financed by the European Social Fund (paras. 70–75). Furthermore, new permanent structures in the area of non-discrimination have been put

in place by both the Ministry of Education and Culture (paras. 76–80) and the Police (paras. 81–85).

Publications

67. The Unit of Legal Matters of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order has edited and published the following publications (accessed on <http://www.mjpo.gov.cy>):

- (a) National Report of the Republic of Cyprus on the Implementation of the Conclusions of the European and World Conferences Against Racism;
- (b) Report of the Republic of Cyprus Against Discrimination in the Fields of the EU Acquis-Policy and Measures Against Discrimination;
- (c) Report to the European Commission according to Article 17 of the Racial Directive (No. 2000/43/EC);
- (d) Information Sheet in relation to the elimination of Discrimination.

Seminars/campaigns/events

68. Seminars organised within the framework of the European Action Programme Against Discrimination (for the period 2001–2006), included, inter alia:

- A seminar entitled “Policy and Measures against Discrimination in the Fields of the European Union Acquis”, organised by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order in June 2003
- A “Multicultural Policing Seminar” organised by the Police in May 2004 at the Cyprus Police Academy
- A seminar entitled “Media and Diversity” organised in October 2005 by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order in cooperation with the Union of Cyprus Journalists

69. An Information Campaign “For Diversity against Discrimination” was launched on 18 September 2004 by the Minister of Justice and Public Order and continued until the end of 2007. Within the framework of this Campaign, a National Team against Discrimination was established, which organised several events, including the following:

- During the 2006 Journalist Awards, a special prize was introduced for young journalists in order to encourage media professionals just beginning their careers to write about discrimination and diversity issues.
- During 2006, a Poster Competition was launched, thereby encouraging art and design students to create poster designs relating to non-discrimination.
- As a follow-up to the very successful “Media and Diversity” seminar held in October 2005, two smaller journalist workshops were organised in June 2006, in cooperation with the Union of Cyprus Journalists. The workshops brought together 33 journalists who discussed the media’s role in promoting diversity and made recommendations on the obligations of journalists.

Projects

“Perspectives”

70. During the past two years (2006–2007) and within the framework of the Community Action Programme to Combat Discrimination (2001–2006), several activities were and continue to be promoted by various stakeholders, under a project entitled “Perspectives”.

The stakeholders joined forces in order to raise awareness among young people on discrimination issues and equal opportunities. The project was undertaken by the Youth Board of Cyprus in collaboration with two NGOs, namely “Neolea Asteras” and the “Cyprus Rehabilitation Counselling Association” (CRCA). Each partner involved other stakeholders in the implementation of activities with a view to achieving a holistic approach.

71. The project’s main aims were:

(a) To raise awareness among young people on issues of discrimination and equal opportunities, to develop close bonds and to encourage experience of diversity, firstly among themselves and then within the community at large;

(b) To develop a network of young people who are interested in and want to become active in combating discrimination;

(c) To address the issue of discrimination from various angles (cultural, educational, research);

(d) To disseminate information and inform the public on the issue of discrimination and EU legislation on equality and non-discrimination;

(e) To establish a core group of people who will develop a network for further exchange of good practices and information on equality and non-discrimination.

72. Several activities were organised with a view to achieving these objectives:

- A day-long festival to launch the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) in Cyprus (organised by the Youth Board of Cyprus in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, which is the National Implementing Body of the Project, and the National Working Group of the European Year 2007).
- Press conference, meetings with the Councils of Youth Centres in the rural area of Pitsilia, panel discussion on the acquis of the European Union on non-discrimination, interviews conducted by members of participating youth clubs, based on a questionnaire prepared by the Aegean University, a four-day seminar at Agros (the central community of the area), a multicultural festival organised by participants in the project, immigrant workers and minorities of the region, and publication of the results and the evaluation of the project (organised in 2006–2007 by “Neolea Asteras” and the “Aegean University”).
- Two-day workshop aiming at combating discrimination, accepting and embracing diversity and promoting equal opportunities, research implemented by participants in the workshop, based on the knowledge they acquired during the workshop, a conference where the young people presented their experiences and the results of their research to teachers, other students, parents, NGOs and public authorities, and publication of results, graphics and printed material and dissemination in schools, the Ministry of Education and Culture, NGOs, web pages, newspapers etc. The target group were young people aged 15–18 years with an equal distribution of males and females (including disabled persons), chosen from different schools in Nicosia (organised in 2007 by the Cyprus Rehabilitation Counselling Association – CRCA).

“Youth as actor against discrimination”

73. During 2006 the Cyprus Gender Equality Observatory, which is a specialised non-governmental organisation aiming to promote equal opportunities and eliminate discrimination, implemented a project entitled “Youth as actor against discrimination”. Pupils of 13 secondary schools in the Republic of Cyprus participated in the project, which

included training, competitions, lectures and the development of training packages. The project made it possible for educators, after having undergone training themselves, to function as researchers and guides to help pupils to accept differences among classmates but also among their fellowmen. The pupils themselves were actively involved in combating discrimination and transmitting the EU principles and values in this field to their peers, friends, family and social environment.

“Network project for children”

74. A network project contained in the National Strategy and Priorities of Cyprus for the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) provided a camping holiday for children from vulnerable social groups, including children of immigrants of different ethnic origins and religions and children with special needs. The project was organised by the Holy Archdiocese of Cyprus and aimed to provide opportunities to children with different backgrounds to communicate and play together, to increase their knowledge about each other’s culture, to learn to respect and accept differences in others and also to appreciate the value of their own culture. The project also included an information campaign for the enhancement of cooperation, which was promoted through the mass media.

“Dialogues”

75. Within the framework of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007), the Social Welfare Services have undertaken the implementation of a national awareness programme in the fields of antidiscrimination, diversity and equality. This twelve-month programme, entitled “Dialogues” is co-funded by the European Social Fund and will launch activities throughout 2008 targeting all four strands of discrimination covered by the anti-discrimination legislation (discrimination based on grounds of: (1) race and ethnic origin, (2) disability, (3) religion or belief, (4) age and sexual orientation). Each strand will be given special attention through specific activities, including seminars and other awareness-raising events, as well as the publication of informative materials. The programme aims at:

- Raising awareness and informing citizens about EU policies and objectives concerning discrimination
- Improving the information provided, enhancing mobilization of all stakeholders in policy making and developing mutual processes of co-operation and learning in this field
- Making people more aware of their rights regarding equality and discrimination and stimulating the participation of groups of people experiencing discrimination and social exclusion.

Permanent structures

Education

76. The Ministry of Education and Culture lays emphasis on promoting respect, tolerance and positive attitudes towards diversity of any kind, irrespective of language, ethnic origin and religion. It should be noted that the number of non-Cypriot children in primary and secondary schools has been gradually increasing (5,696 in 2000–2001, 8,825 in 2005–2006; i.e. 55 per cent increase). In 2003–2004, the Ministry introduced Zones of Educational Priority (ZEPs), as a pilot project, in two school complexes in socially disadvantaged areas with a large proportion of non Greek-speaking students. The aim was to offer equal opportunities in education and combat school failure, functional literacy, educational marginalisation and social exclusion. In 2004–2005, the project was expanded to another school complex. Underpinning the policy of ZEPs is the principle of “positive

discrimination” and the unequal treatment of inequalities. Schools in disadvantaged areas are provided with additional resources and are encouraged to develop new teaching projects. Each ZEP comprises one gymnasium (lower secondary school), primary schools linked to the gymnasium and kindergartens linked to the primary schools. The criteria used to determine ZEPs were the following:

- Schools in impoverished areas
- Student population coming from families of a low socio-economic and educational level
- Large proportion of non-Greek-speaking students
- High rates of school failure and drop-outs
- High incidence of violent and delinquent behaviour

77. The following support measures were taken within the framework of ZEPs, during the pilot period:

- Small number of children per classroom (maximum of 20 students in Grades 1–2 and 24 children in grades 3–9)
- Additional support lessons based on pupils’ needs (speech and language difficulties, learning difficulties, emotional or behavioural problems)
- Free breakfast for all pupils
- Free meals for pupils who attend the all-day school
- Operation of all-day school (07.30–16.00) in pre-primary and primary schools within the ZEPs
- Afternoon programmes and activities of a preventive nature (pupils’ clubs, workshops and groups, programmes of educational, cultural and health promotion activities for both pupils and parents)
- Mother tongue language lessons for non-Greek speaking pupils
- Special Greek-language classes for non-Greek speaking students and parents
- Bilingual teachers for effective communication between teachers, pupils and parents
- Special support and attention from the Service of Educational Psychology and the Social Welfare Services

78. The ZEPs are monitored by four committees consisting of a variety of stakeholders from the governmental and non-governmental sectors. Preliminary results from the pilot operation of ZEPs demonstrate a reduction in school failure (referrals and repetitions) and an increase in enrolment, attendance and performance of non-Greek speaking pupils. It should be noted that the ZEPs were presented as an example of good practice at an in-depth review of child poverty policies organised by the European Social Protection Committee in October 2007.

79. Another indication of promoting tolerance in primary education is the content of school books (Readers) used in the 2nd and 4th grade. The Readers include chapters on being different and accepting each other, which are entitled “The World of Comics”, “Everyone Different Everyone Equal”, while the book “I see Today’s World” also contains relevant texts.

80. Furthermore, the enhancement of tolerance and the acknowledgment of diversity are achieved through several subjects taught in all secondary schools, such as Modern Greek, Classical Greek, Civics, Religious Knowledge and Modern Languages. It should be noted that the key aims set by the Ministry of Education for the current academic year concern “The promotion of International Dialogue” and “The Provision of Equal Opportunities”. It should be noted that three intercultural secondary schools have been established, which promote respect and positive attitudes towards diversity of any nature irrespective of language, ethnic origin and religion.

Police

81. In 2004, the Cyprus Police established the Office for Combating Discrimination which operates under Department C of Police Headquarters. The Office handles all issues that relate to discrimination, racism and xenophobia through Liaison Officers at all Police Divisions (Districts). It is responsible for the implementation of preventative initiatives as well as for monitoring intervention tactics to combat racism, discrimination and xenophobia within police procedures. Alleviating such discriminatory attitudes and perceptions through awareness and sensitization is an additional aim of the Office.

82. The Office registers criminal offences with racist motives as such in a specified manner through the electronic Crime Report Registry. Furthermore, such offences are categorized on the basis of the type of motive (ethnic, religious, colour, etc.). The Office maintains a registry of all such offences, which is normally updated twice a year. Since 2005, no such offences against children have been recorded.

83. A Multi-Cultural Advisory Body, consisting of representatives of various religious and minority communities and the Police, has been set up to advise the Police on issues related to policing religious, ethnic and other minorities.

84. A series of training courses on discrimination, human rights, constitutional rights, multi-culturalism, etc. are taught at the Cyprus Police Academy at various levels (basic police training, Sergeants’ and Inspectors’ Courses). Occasionally, specific to the issue seminars are conducted and police personnel attend international seminars and other events on the issue.

85. Some of the aforementioned measures have been the natural continuation of a European Union multinational project on Discrimination and Policing, in which the Cyprus Police, together with other EU Police Agencies, have participated.

Respect for the views of the child

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 31

In light of articles 12 to 17 of the Convention, the Committee encourages the State party to implement the plans to revise its legislation to expand children’s opportunities to express their views and to be heard, as indicated in the State party’s report. The Committee encourages the State party to support existing NGO initiatives in this respect.

Legislation

86. As mentioned under paragraphs 3 and 53, the new draft Law for the Welfare, Care and Protection of Children incorporates the principle of respect for the child’s opinion as a general principle which must be applied in all cases and in all areas regulated by the Law.

Specifically, the draft Law stipulates that a child who is capable of forming his or her own opinion must be given the opportunity to be heard in any administrative or judicial procedure which concerns him/her and due weight must be given to his/her views, in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

87. Furthermore, the right of children to be heard as witnesses in criminal proceedings is granted by domestic law. Special legal provisions exist to assist and support vulnerable witnesses, such as children, during criminal proceedings and to facilitate the gathering and giving of evidence by such witnesses.

88. Law 119(I)/2000 as amended by Law 212(I)/2004 on Family Violence, Law 87(I)/2007 on the Protection of Victims of Trafficking and Exploitation and Law 95(I)/2001 on the Protection of Witnesses allow for special provisions for vulnerable witnesses including testifying:

- (a) While the case is tried on camera;
- (b) In the absence of the accused;
- (c) Behind a special screen;
- (d) Through closed-circuit television connection (CCTV).

89. The aforementioned Laws also allow the police to video record statements of vulnerable witnesses. Such statements may be presented in court as chief examination.

Interview rooms

90. As of 2003, the Police maintain specially designed, furnished and equipped rooms in all Police Divisions and at Police Headquarters to be used for hosting and handling vulnerable witnesses and for video recording their statements. As of 2006, courts in all districts, with the exception of Famagusta, are also equipped with CCTV systems which allow vulnerable witnesses to testify from a different room outside the courtroom.

91. For the purpose of video-recorded statements, the Police have commissioned experts from the United Kingdom to provide the necessary training to police officers. According to orders of the Chief of Police, which regulate video-recorded statements, such statements may only be taken by officers who have undergone extensive training on the issue. This training includes the topic of developmental psychology, amongst others.

92. The above developments in both legal and practical procedures in the area of victim protection indicate that the criminal justice system in Cyprus is currently able to provide the required protection to vulnerable child witnesses in a holistic way to avoid intimidation.

Support of NGO Initiatives

93. Notable non-governmental initiatives for the expansion of opportunities for children to express their views and be heard have been taken by the Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children (PCCPWC). These include the organisation of Children's Week (described in our previous reports), the Children's Visit with the President of the Republic (see paragraph 40) and the Children's Parliament (described in footnote 6), which have become annual institutions. Initiatives of the PCCPWC are strongly supported by Government services (e.g. Ministry of Education and Culture, Social Welfare Services, the Police), which are represented on the PCCPWC and District Committees for the organisation of events. Moreover, with the support of the President of the House of Representatives, the reports and suggestions of the Children's Parliament from the years 2000 to 2006 were published in a book which was disseminated to school libraries, MPs, Ministries and children themselves. Similarly, the Cyprus Family Planning Association, which advocates for the rights of young people in sexual and

reproductive health services and education, ensures the participation of young people in decision-making (see paragraph 153) and is supported by the Ministry of Health in the planning and promotion of measures (see paragraph 156 for details).

Independent Student Councils

94. In schools, children have the opportunity to express their views and take part in decision-making processes through their participation in independent student councils, administration boards, the disciplinary board and teachers' staff meetings. It should be noted that all schools of both primary and secondary education have independent, democratically elected student councils, as shown below:

<i>Number of independent student councils in schools</i>	
Primary education	346
Secondary education	113

Source: Ministry of Education and Culture.

Youth organisations

95. The General Advisory Body of the Youth Board of Cyprus, which is a semi-governmental legal entity (established by the Youth Board Law No. 33(I)/94, as amended), consists of 40 member-organisations, including federations of student organisations, youth organisations of political parties, youth sections of trade unions, social organisations and minority groups' organisations. Data is unavailable on the number of members of youth organisations in Cyprus as well as the number of youth organisations with less than 100 members, since they are not eligible to become a member organisation of the Youth Board (please refer to paragraph 97).

Statistics

96. As mentioned in our previous Reports, the death penalty has been abolished in Cyprus. There were, therefore, no deaths of children as a result of capital punishment or extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. Statistics on Deaths of Persons under 18 in the years 2003–2007, by Cause, Age and Sex may be found in the annex. Table 8 shows the total number of deaths caused by illness and Tables 9–23 the number of deaths by specific illnesses. The total number of deaths caused by external cause of injury and poisoning may be seen in Table 24, while Tables 24 (a)–(c) show the number of deaths caused by different types of accidents. The number of victims of crime and other forms of violence may be seen in Table 25, while Table 26 shows that there were two deaths in 2003 due to suicide.

Factors and difficulties in implementing the cluster of provisions under Chapter III

97. As in the case of Chapters I and II, difficulties revolve around the need for a better system of data collection, e.g. there is insufficient statistical data concerning the numbers of youth organisations and their members (para. 95), disaggregated data is unavailable on the number of deaths of persons under the age of 18 (para. 96). The implementation of the newly enacted Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007] is expected to overcome this difficulty, as described under paragraph 46.

Chapter IV

Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, 13–17 and 37 (a))

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 33

The Committee urges the State party to redouble its efforts to educate and sensitize parliamentarians, government officials, members of the judiciary and other professional groups, parents and children on the importance of accepting fully the concept of child rights. It recommends that further measures be undertaken to ensure freedom of religion to children, particularly in light of the child's right to non-discrimination on the grounds of religion.

Education and sensitization

98. Efforts to educate and sensitize adults on the importance of fully accepting the concept of child rights, including civil rights and freedoms, have been described elsewhere in this report and include training of professional groups working with and for children (paras. 28–34), programmes for parents (paras. 114–115), publications (paras. 35 and 41), campaigns and events (paras. 38–40), seminars (paras. 42 and 116, bullet point 3) etc. Furthermore, children's rights underpin all work with children carried out by the Social Welfare Services and their importance is conveyed to parliamentarians whenever Social Welfare Services participate in technical committees of the House of Representatives on issues concerning children.

99. The education and sensitization of children is achieved through activities such as Children's Week (described in our previous Reports), the Children's Parliament (please see footnote 6 and paragraph 40), specific publications (para. 36) and more recently the Citizens' Rights Charter for Children (para. 37).

Freedom of religion

100. Children of different ethnic and religious backgrounds are not obliged to attend mainstream religious gatherings or events organised by or within schools. Furthermore, migrant children or children belonging to minority groups are provided with opportunities and encouraged to participate in school events which enable them to present elements of their own ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including religion, thereby promoting their culture and civilization.

101. As mentioned under paragraph 55, the child's religion is taken into consideration when placing him/her with a foster family. Furthermore, the new draft Law for the Welfare, Care and Protection of Children incorporates the principle of non-discrimination, including with regard to religion, as a general principle which must be applied in all cases and in all areas regulated by the Law (para. 56). It should be noted that draft regulations under this Law concerning the placement of children in foster families or residential institutions, as well as the operation and regulation of children's residential institutions contain specific provisions safeguarding the right of children to freedom of religion and facilitating the exercise of their religion.

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

CRC/C/15/Add.205, paras. 35 and 36

36. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Include in its next periodic report detailed information on measures introduced to ensure implementation of the new legislation, including by providing training on children's rights to those responsible for administering juvenile justice;

(b) Provide further information in its next report on detention conditions of minors and on the length of pre-trial detention; undertake a study of and provide information on abuse and maltreatment of children occurring during arrest and detention, and specifically on procedures for notification of custody of minors and for ensuring the right to immediate access to a lawyer and to a doctor of choice.

102. Details on training relating to family violence may be found under paragraphs 29–30. Other measures introduced to ensure the implementation of the family violence legislation are described under paragraphs 129–138 in response to paragraph 46 of the Committee's concluding observations.

Detention

103. Upon admission to the Detention Centre, all detainees are informed of their rights, in accordance with Police Standing Order 5/3 and Law 163(I)/2005 (described under paragraph 104). A specific document on their rights, which is available in seven languages (Greek, English, Russian, Chinese, Iranian, Arabic, and Turkish), is handed to the detainee, who is asked to sign a declaration that he/she has been informed about his/her rights. Furthermore, the document is posted in a position that is clearly visible to detainees in all Detention Centres. In a similar manner and on the basis of official documents included in the declaration of the detainees' rights, all detainees are informed of their right to call a lawyer or to receive medical treatment and they are asked to sign the specific documents.

104. As mentioned under paragraph 11, new comprehensive legislation was enacted in 2005 (Law 163(I)/2005), which expands the constitutional provisions safeguarding the rights of persons arrested and detained in custody and contains special provisions for minors under the age of 18. Apart from laying down standard rules for the conditions of detention, well-being and decent treatment of arrested persons and detainees, this Law:

- Provides for the right of any arrested person to have immediate communication with a lawyer of his/her choice and with his/her family/relatives/other person of his/her choice, and in the case of a foreign person, with his/her Embassy or Consular Office, or in the absence of such offices, with the Ombudsman or the National Organisation for the protection of Human Rights in Cyprus, and also the right to medical examination and treatment
- Lays down the obligations of the police to inform the arrested person of his/her rights and facilitate their effective exercise before interrogation begins, and penalises the violation of any of these obligations
- Regulates the rights to visits by relatives, meetings with the lawyer and other matters during detention

Rights of detained children (under 18 years of age)

105. It is the policy of the Cyprus Police that the arrest of children under 16 years should be avoided to the extent possible and if necessary the time of detention should be the least possible. Where detention is unavoidable, the above-mentioned Law (para. 104) provides for the following, in addition to the above provisions, in the case of detained children:

- For the obligation of the police to promptly notify the parents or guardians of the arrest or detention, the reasons thereof and the place of detention (notwithstanding the exercise by the minor of his/her rights to communicate) and if need be to also inform the Social Welfare Services of the Republic
- That the interrogation is conducted in the presence of the minor's lawyer
- That the parents or guardians have the right to be present during the communication and meetings of the minor with his/her lawyer, or during medical examination or treatment
- That children are detained in separate cells from adults

Rights of accused children (under 16 years of age) – not detainees

106. According to Police Standing Order 5/18 on the handling of juvenile offenders:

- When a complaint against a minor under 16 is made, his/her parents or guardians and the local Police Divisional Director should be immediately informed.
- The use of handcuffs on children should be avoided.
- The questioning and statement taking from children who are not in detention is done in the presence of the parents/guardians.
- The arrest and questioning of pupils should be avoided within school premises, but if necessary it should be done with the consent and in the presence of the School Principal. In such cases, the visiting police officer should wear civilian clothing and should visit the school with an undercover police vehicle.

Conditions of detention

107. During the years 2005–2006, the Police proceeded with significant improvements in the Police Detention Centres, in line with the standards of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). Furthermore, the construction of new modern detention centres as well as a centre for detaining illegal immigrants is being promoted. As regards, the detention conditions of minors, measures have been taken to ensure that conditions comply with the CPT standards set out in document CPT/Inf/E (2002)1Rev. 2004 and include the following:

- All cells where minors can be detained are of adequate size of at least 7m x 7m and have adequate lighting, heating and suitable equipment for relaxation.
- All detention centres where juveniles are detained have been renovated. Thus, they are well ventilated, sleeping and living areas are properly furnished and they offer appropriate visual stimuli.
- As regards hygiene needs and sanitary facilities, there is ready access to sanitary and washing facilities as well as provision of hygiene items, such as sanitary towels, soaps, shampoos, etc.

- Attention has been given to the quantity and quality of food provided to minors and also to eating arrangements, which are decent.

Number of persons held under 18 and length of pre-trial detention

108. For the years 2003–2007, ninety-four (94) persons under the age of 18 years were held in police stations or pre-trial detention centres after they were charged with committing a crime. The average length of pre-trial detention between the years 2003–2007 ranged from 2 hours to 48 hours.

Maltreatment of children during arrest and detention

109. There were no allegations or reported cases of abuse and maltreatment of persons under 18 years during arrest and detention. In cases of police misconduct, a series of mechanisms for investigating such allegations are in place. Besides internal police disciplinary investigations and criminal proceedings, such allegations may be investigated by independent investigators appointed by the Attorney-General of the Republic, and/or the Authority Against Discrimination (Ombudsman), and/or the Independent Body for Investigating Allegations Against the Police.

Statistics

110. In accordance with the Civil Registry Law of 2002 [L. 141(I)2002, as amended] all births are registered within 15 days from the date of birth. Statistics on the number of births by sex and birth rates during the years 2003–2007 may be found in the Annex, Table 27.

111. Children have access to 293 libraries as shown in the table below:

<i>Types</i>	<i>Number of libraries</i>
Municipality libraries	121
Community libraries	28
School libraries	138
The Cyprus Library [operated by the Ministry of Education and Culture]	1
The Elpinikios Library [operated by the Ministry of Education and Culture]	1
Toy libraries* [operated by the Cyprus Youth Board]	4
Total	293

Source: 1. Cultural Services of the Ministry of Education and Culture.
2. Cyprus Youth Board.

* The very successful toy libraries programme was developed in the last three years by the Cyprus Youth Board. The four larger cities of Cyprus (Nicosia, Limassol, Larnaca, Paphos) now have a library of carefully selected toys. In toy libraries, children between the ages of 4 and 12 as well as young people with disabilities up to the age of 18 spend their time creatively, borrow toys, socialize and learn to respect and tolerate diversity under the supervision of trained professionals.

112. The number of victims of grievous bodily harm and wounding may be seen in Table 28. (Reported cases of child abuse and neglect are discussed under Chapter V).

Factors and difficulties in implementing the cluster of provisions under Chapter IV

113. Fully accepting the concept of child rights presupposes changing outdated societal perceptions of children. This is a major challenge, which is discussed further under paragraph 145.

Chapter V Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9–11, 18 paras. 1 and 2, 19–21, 25, 27 paras. 4 and 39)

Parental guidance

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 38

The Committee urges the State party to further encourage families to provide appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the Convention in a manner consistent with his/her evolving capacities. It further recommends encouraging the perception of the child as a holder of rights through measures at all levels and public campaigns to raise awareness on the Convention.

114. The rights of the child underpin school based seminars for parents on various topics (e.g. health and social education, prevention of bullying, emotional education, communication skills, etc.) that are provided by the Pedagogical Institute of the Ministry of Education and Culture in primary, secondary and high schools throughout the country. At the same time, parents are sensitized through campaigns on specific subjects. For example, the awareness-raising campaign on domestic violence and child abuse, organised by the Police, includes lectures and presentations to parents' associations (see paragraph 38).

115. The Pancyprrian School for Parents (PSP) also plays a key role in the education and sensitization of parents. This is a voluntary organisation composed of representatives of educational organisations, parents' associations and the Ministry of Education and Culture. It organises over 250 seminars a year on and the needs and rights of children that are attended by parents in various towns and villages of Cyprus. The PSP also publishes a monthly magazine entitled "Family and School" and has produced short films on the role of parents, three of which may be found on the website of the Ministry of Education and Culture: <http://www.moec.gov.cy/>. The following is an indicative list of topics covered in seminars for parents organised by the PSP:

- Children's Rights and Obligations
- The Modern Family and the Upbringing of Children
- Psychosocial Needs of Children (affection, acceptance, initiative, approval, freedom)
- Communication with our Children

116. As regards the Committee's concern about the "traditional and rather paternalistic view of the child held by parents, teachers, authorities and society at large", (paragraph 37 of the concluding observations), efforts to cultivate a new view of children include the following:

- Welfare officers of the Social Welfare Services who work with families and children receive training in implementing the Convention in everyday practice (para. 30) and promote all three aspects of the Convention (protection, provision and participation) when counselling families and also in their contacts with other agencies (see, for example, paragraph 98).
- The Educational Psychology Service of the Ministry of Education and Culture cooperates closely with parents, supports them in their parenting roles and involves them in the programmes it provides (see paragraph 149).
- The participation aspect of the Convention is also stressed through activities of the Pancyprian Coordinating Committee for the Protection and Welfare of Children (see paragraph 40), the Pancyprian School for Parents (see paragraph 115), as well as in Seminars concerning children that are organised by the Social Welfare Services and target both the governmental and non-governmental sectors. For example, the keynote speech at the Seminar on the Prevention of Social Exclusion of Children (described under paragraph 42) emphasised the need to change perceptions that view children as mere “objects of protection” and “recipients of services” and to cultivate a view of children as legal subjects with their own rights and capacities to participate in decision-making on matters concerning them.
- In accordance with the newly enacted Commissioner for the Protection of Children’s Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007] described under paragraph 15, the Commissioner will “undertake information campaigns in order to change outdated perceptions on the position of children in society”.

Separation from parents

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 40

The Committee urges the State party to create equal opportunities for all children wishing to pursue education beyond primary school, including by making boarding schools available to both boys and girls and pursuing efforts to reduce periods of separation from parents.

117. Due to restrictions imposed by the Turkish occupation regime, the children of Greek Cypriot enclaved families who live in the Karpassia peninsula were obliged to move to Government control areas in order to receive secondary education. With the relaxation of the Turkish army position on the issue and the establishment and operation, in 2003, of a six-class secondary school in the occupied town of Rizokarpasso, the children of enclaved families are no longer separated from their families in order to receive secondary education. Children wishing to receive technical education (higher secondary education) are provided with free accommodation and social support. The number of these children is very small (1 in 2008, 1 in 2007, 2 in 2006, 2 in 2005). They also received support from their extended families and were, therefore, not placed in institutions or with foster families.

Children deprived of their family environment

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 42

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Continue to take measures to increase and strengthen foster care, family-type foster homes and other family-based alternative care by providing greater financial assistance and increasing the counselling and support mechanisms for foster families;

(b) Ensure that children are placed in institutions only as a measure of last resort and that effective mechanisms are established to receive and address complaints from children in care, to monitor standards of care and, in light of article 25 of the Convention, to undertake regular periodic review of placement.

118. Family-type foster homes are considered to be the best type of alternative care for children who are deprived of their own family environment. For this reason, the Social Welfare Services implement a system of specialisation as opposed to a generic one in the area of service provision to foster families and children. The aim is to provide support and guidance to foster families, especially those caring for children presenting behavioural problems, so that they may effectively respond to the everyday difficulties and problems they face. This specialised approach has proved to be successful in significantly reducing the risk of foster families becoming disappointed because of the problems they face and resigning. Support is provided through regular home visits to foster families and easy access of the families to services and their case worker. Furthermore, the Social Welfare Services have established support groups at the Family Guidance Centre for foster families caring for teenaged children. In 2007, financial assistance to foster families was increased by 4.9 per cent by decision of the Council of Ministers and ad hoc grants to foster children were also increased.

119. Priority policy goals of the Social Welfare Services in the area of foster care include the development of group foster homes, the improvement of support services to foster families, the creation of a monitoring system for the provision of high quality services and the development of new forms of care that enable children in residential institutions, as well as those living with their own families but are in need of support for a variety of reasons (e.g. single parent or disadvantaged families) to experience family-type care. The development of new forms of family-type care includes actions to strengthen the involvement of the extended family in the lives of these children and to encourage unrelated families, which are investigated and approved by the Social Welfare Services, to form stable relationships with children and undertake their care on a regular basis.

120. Attracting suitable families willing to foster children has been a long-term challenge for the Social Welfare Services. Recent intensified efforts have included the use of the mass media (interviews on radio and television programmes, newspaper interviews) and the publication of an information leaflet that has been widely distributed. Factors, difficulties and planned actions are discussed under paragraph 146.

121. Throughout their placement (whether with foster families or in institutions) children in care are provided with opportunities to express their views and be heard. This right is safeguarded by the operation of the Review Committee, which is an independent system of monitoring and evaluating the care, protection and rehabilitation services provided to children in care. The Committee's role is to examine and review each child's care plan at least every three months. Children are invited to attend meetings of the Committee, according to their age and level of maturity, and are encouraged to participate in decisions concerning their care plan and to express any complaints they might have.

122. It should be noted that mechanisms, inter alia, for monitoring and evaluating standards of care provided by foster families and residential institutions, for regularly reviewing placements and for receiving and addressing complaints by children in care will be legislated with the enactment of the new draft Children's Law and Regulations

(described under paragraph 3), which contain specific provisions and detailed procedures to this effect.

123. A study on the children's residential institutions operated by the Social Welfare Services (SWS) was commissioned by the SWS in 2006 and was undertaken by an expert from Greece. The results of the study are being used by SWS for the improvement of residential services. An interesting and useful part of the expert's report was a rating of the quality of services in each institution in relation to specific articles of the Convention (articles 3/1, 3/3, 9, 12, 19, 20, 24, 25, 27, 31, 39). The overall average rating was 7 out of 10.

Adoption

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 44

The Committee recommends that the State party introduce the necessary measures to effectively monitor and supervise the system of adoption of children, in the light of article 21 of the Convention. It also recommends that adequate training be provided to professionals involved in the adoption process.

124. The Social Welfare Services (SWS), under the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance, provide adoption services and are committed to promoting the best interests of the child in adoptions at both the national and intercountry levels. The SWS have a supervisory role and do not function as an adoption agency. Adoption services include the following:

- Preparation of a report on the suitability of prospective parents to adopt.
- Duties of a "guardian at litem", according to court orders. The aim is to safeguard the best interests of children, both before the court and in general.
- Preparation of a report for the court indicating whether the adoption is in the best interests of the child.
- Post-adoption counselling.

125. Intercountry adoptions have become the norm since there are hardly any children available for adoption in Cyprus. An increasing number of couples apply to the SWS for a pre-adoption study for adoption purposes abroad. At present, children originate mainly from Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Thailand. Procedures are in place, which aim to protect children to be adopted and safeguard their best interests. In accordance with the Law ratifying the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption [L.26(III)94], the Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance is the Central Authority, which takes measures, through the SWS, for the effective implementation of the Hague Convention. Measures include cooperation with central authorities of other countries, the removal of obstacles to the Convention's application and the prevention of practices that are contrary to the Convention. As mentioned above, Cyprus is a "receiving country" and bilateral arrangements have been made with the "countries of origin".

126. With a view to upgrading the adoption system and harmonising the Adoption Law of 1995 [L. 19(I)/95] with both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoptions, the SWS commissioned a study, which was undertaken by the International Resource Centre for the Rights of Children Deprived of their Family (IRC), as mentioned under paragraph 7. This was followed by a

round-table discussion on 2 July 2007 for the exchange of views between stakeholders. The IRC has submitted suggestions for the amendment of the relevant legislation, which are being studied.

127. As regards training of professionals involved in the adoption process, please refer to paragraph 30.

Abuse and neglect

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 46

The Committee recommends that the State party, in keeping with the findings of the study, adopt adequate measures and policies aimed at changing attitudes, including the prohibition of corporal punishment in the family, supported by well-targeted awareness campaigns on, inter alia, alternative ways of disciplining children. Furthermore, it encourages the State party to adopt measures and ensure sufficient human and financial resources to ensure the implementation of the law for the prevention of domestic violence. The Committee invites the State party to include specific information in its next periodic report on follow-up to cases of abuse reported to the social welfare services, as well as information on the announced second research project on the extent of child abuse in Cyprus.

128. As mentioned under paragraph 116, welfare officers of the Social Welfare Services who work with families and children receive training in implementing the Convention in everyday practice (para. 30) and promote all three aspects of the Convention (protection, provision and participation) when counselling families. Their work with families is instrumental in changing attitudes, through the provision of psycho-social support to parents and raising awareness about positive discipline and the dangers of corporal punishment and every form of family violence. Awareness-raising is also achieved through campaigns organised by the Police Domestic Violence Office and the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (for example paragraphs 38 and 39).

129. Measures adopted to ensure the implementation of the family violence legislation include relevant training (see paragraphs 29–30), investment in specialised personnel and services (see paragraphs 130–138) and the strengthening of interdepartmental cooperation, based on the manual of interdepartmental procedures concerning family violence. This manual, which was prepared by the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family, and approved by decision of the Council of Ministers (no. 55.646, dated 16 May 2002), contains procedures and guidelines on how professionals should work together with the aim of promoting the welfare and protection of children and adults from physical, sexual and psychological violence. It addresses professionals from the Social Welfare Services, the Police Force, the Health Services, the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Law Office and NGOs that operate programmes for the prevention and combating of violence in the family.

Social Welfare Services

130. The Social Welfare Services employ specially trained Family Counsellors, who, in accordance with section 6 of the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Laws of 2000 and 2004 [L.119(I)/2000, L. 212(I)/2004] are appointed by the Minister of Labour and Social Insurance and have the following responsibilities:

- (a) Receive complaints relating to the possible use of violence and carry out the necessary investigations;
- (b) Advise, counsel and mediate for the relief of problems in the family that are likely to have led or to lead to the use of violence;
- (c) Make arrangements for the immediate medical examination of the complainant and where necessary accompany the complainant;
- (d) File reports to the Police for the investigation of possible criminal offences;
- (e) Upon instructions of the court, carry out investigations regarding the financial situation of the family in general and that of the accused in particular, in the event that an exclusion order⁹ might be issued;
- (f) Carry out investigations and make arrangements for the accommodation of the accused or his family in the event that an exclusion order has been issued;
- (g) Where there is reasonable suspicion that a child has been mistreated by a family member, immediately make all the necessary arrangements for the medical or other examination of the child;
- (h) Carry out any other duties assigned to them by the Minister.

131. The handling of family violence cases by Family Counsellors can take up to three months. Follow-up services provided by the Social Welfare Services depend on the nature of the problems experienced by the family and include counselling, provision of information on other available services and referrals where needed, financial assistance, foster care and residential care of children.

The Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office

132. The Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office, which was created by the Police in August 2002 and operates under Department C (Criminal Investigations Department) of the Police Headquarters in Nicosia, handles and oversees all issues related to child abuse and domestic violence and maintains an electronic database of all incidents categorised as such (see paragraph 26). To this end, the Office undertakes and supervises both preventative and combative measures and is in regular contact with Police Officers, as well as Family Counsellors and other professionals within the Social Welfare Services and other related and involved agencies and services.

133. The Office functions in a multifaceted framework and its spherical and supervisory role includes the following activities:

- (a) Police representation and projection of the issue to the public through the mass media, publication and dissemination of informative materials such as brochures, booklets and posters to increase public awareness and sensitization, police initiatives and campaigns (see, for example, paragraph 38);
- (b) Provision of specialised lectures to police officers of varying ranks as well as to other involved professionals such as teachers, medical personnel and NGO volunteers (see paragraph 29);

⁹ An exclusion order prevents the accused from staying in or entering shared residence for such a period and under such conditions that are imposed by the court (section 23 of the Law).

- (c) Review of criminal files and suggestions for further police action or submission of suggestions to the Attorney-General concerning criminal proceedings (see details under paragraphs 134 and 135);
- (d) Contacting parties involved in the process of handling cases or incidents either reported or forwarded to the Office (see paragraph 137);
- (e) Coordination of Police action and initiatives with involved governmental or non-governmental organisations (see details under paragraph 136);
- (f) Maintenance and continual updating of the national police database of incidents (described under paragraph 26);
- (g) Preparation and presentation of studies conducted on the issue.

Supervision of cases and incidents involving domestic violence and child abuse

134. The Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office carefully examines the content of criminal files involving cases of domestic violence and/or child abuse and in accordance with the evidence contained in each file and additional information attained from other sources, makes suggestions to investigating officers for the further investigation of each case, or to the Attorney-General for prosecuting or not in each case. Moreover, the Office cooperates with investigating officers as well as with Family Counsellors and other personnel of the Social Welfare Services in order to provide the most thorough and correct handling of each case.

Briefing of the Attorney General

135. All incidents reported to officers at regional police stations and district Criminal Investigation Departments (C.I.D.) are conveyed to the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office, which prepares a mandatory informative report for the Attorney General. In cases where legislative issues and questions arise, legal advice is sought from the Law Office of the Republic.

Cooperation with involved agencies

136. The Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office cooperates closely with other agencies involved in handling matters pertaining to children's rights and organises regular meetings with such agencies. The aim of the meetings is to keep all concerned agencies appropriately informed on serious cases involving minors and to reach joint conclusions on the best way of handling each individual case, based on a multidisciplinary approach. The agencies with which the Office cooperates for such specific handling of incidents brought to the attention of the Police are: the Social Welfare Services, the Law Office of the Republic, the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre (a Non-Government Organisation) and the Ministry of Health's Department of Child Mental Health Services. In addition, in order to correctly monitor and coordinate matters involving children's rights, the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office also cooperates with the Ministry of Education and Culture's Educational Psychology Service.

Communication with victims and offenders

137. The Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office maintains contact either by phone or on a personal level with victims and offenders or with other involved parties. Such communication is carried out in order to converse with the involved parties and keep them informed on matters pertaining to Police procedures and handling of their specific case. Furthermore, in cooperation with the Domestic Violence Crisis Centre, which maintains a shelter for female victims of domestic violence and their children, and/or with the Social

Welfare Services, the police may arrange for victims to be placed in a shelter for victims of domestic violence or child abuse should this be deemed necessary.

Police Manual

138. The complex and difficult task of police officers when called to respond and handle cases involving domestic violence and/or child abuse is regulated and controlled by the relevant legislation, Police Standing Orders, Circulars of the Chief of Police as well as other official documentation which codify policing procedures and define obligations and responsibilities. Such documentation acts as an important guidance tool for police officers who handle or who will be called upon to handle incidents of domestic violence or child abuse. In order to facilitate training as well as to assist police officers in the handling of such cases, the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office incorporated all such documents into a *Police Manual* which was first published in 2005 and revised in 2006 with funding approved from the National Machinery for Women's Rights under the Ministry of Justice and Public Order.

Study

139. The second study commissioned by the Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family was completed in 2004. Through the use of questionnaires, which were distributed to 913 children (aged 12–18), the Study investigated children's perceptions of family violence as well as the extent, types and effects of violence against children in the Cypriot family. According to the results of the Study, children tend to accept psychological violence and to a lesser extent physical violence as a form of normal behaviour, as opposed to sexual violence, which is rejected. There is lower self-esteem and higher incidence of use of alcohol and other substances, such as drugs, among children who are physically abused or who witness scenes of violence between their parents. There is a clear indication that all kinds of neglect are more prevalent in lower economic classes. The findings of the Study, together with suggestions for the prevention and handling of violence have been distributed to all relevant governmental and non-governmental services and are subject to further discussions by the Advisory Committee.

Statistics

140. Statistics on family support and counselling provided by the Social Welfare Services may be found in Table 29, in the Annex. Tables 30–34 provide statistics on childcare services, Tables 35–39 on children in care, Table 40 on the number of residential institutions and foster families and Table 41 on the number of children living in institutions or placed with foster families. Statistics on adoption may be found in Tables 42 and 43. Please refer to paragraph 147 for a description of current difficulties in data collection by the Social Welfare Services and planned actions to remedy them.

141. Statistics regarding the number of children who entered or left the country for the purpose of family reunification, including the number of unaccompanied refugee and asylum-seeking children are unavailable. Table 44 in the Annex shows the number of persons under the age of 18 years who entered the country as students (primary, secondary or tertiary education) and whose permit continues to be valid. It should be noted that with regards to minors the great majority of entrance permits are given provided that their parent/s also have a permit to enter or are already in the country. The number of victims of kidnapping and abduction in 2004–2006, by age-group and sex may be seen in Table 45 and the number of persons prosecuted in Table 46.

142. The number of domestic violence incidents reported to the Police during the period 2001–2007 may be seen in the Annex categorised by type of violence (Table 47) and the

sex and age of the victims (Table 48) and the offenders (Table 49). It should be noted that incidents of domestic violence often involve more than one victim and all victims are included in Table 48. As shown in the tables, domestic child abuse victims during the period 2001–2007 constitute 11.22 per cent of the domestic violence victim pool (4.86 per cent boys and 6.36 per cent girls), whereas children contribute to the offenders pool only by 1.6 per cent (1.27 per cent boys and 0.34 per cent girls).

143. Statistics on family violence cases reported to the Social Welfare Services from 2000 to 2007 may be seen in the Annex, and include violence within the family in general and violence against children within the family (Table 50). The increase in reporting since 2000 may be partly due to increased awareness of family violence resulting from sensitization campaigns (e.g. paras. 38 and 39) and the measures promoted to ensure the implementation of the relevant legislation (paras. 129–138). It should be noted that each case counted by the Social Welfare Services often involves more than one victim but the number of victims does not appear in current statistics. The Social Welfare Services have recently started to collect detailed statistics on both victims and perpetrators of violence within the family, including sex, age-group, nationality, level of education, district of residence and type of violence. Information will include the direction of the violence, i.e. violence towards children by adults, towards adults by adults, towards adults by children and towards children by children.

144. Table 51 shows the number of cases, by district, of violence against children both within and outside the family that were reported to the Social Welfare Services during the period 2000–2007. Police data for the period 2004–2007 on criminal child abuse cases, both domestic and stranger abuse, may be seen in Table 52, which also includes information on the outcome of cases investigated.

Factors and difficulties in implementing the cluster of provisions under Chapter V

145. Great effort has been put into activities aiming to guide parents (paras. 114–115) and to cultivate a new view of children (para. 116). There is still work to be done, however, in order to cultivate a shift from the perception of children's rights, which assumes that children have a limited capacity to make well-founded decisions and gives high priority to the protection of children by parents and society. The newly enacted Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007] is expected to contribute greatly to this effort, as described under paragraph 116 (last bullet point).

146. Despite the importance assigned to foster care and the efforts made to attract foster families (paras. 118–120), the number of foster families does not meet the identified needs. Measures planned by the Social Welfare Services include the study of successful systems of foster care in other countries and the commissioning of a specialised agency from abroad to advise on the issue.

147. Other difficulties concern the lack of both disaggregated data and a centralised system of data collection. As mentioned under Chapters I, II and III, the implementation of the newly enacted Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007] is expected to overcome this difficulty (see paragraphs 45 and 46). As regards statistics of the Social Welfare Services, the web enabled system introduced in 2007 (described under paragraph 25) is expected to facilitate the routine collection of data that is currently missing, e.g. the number of children without parental care disaggregated by cause, the duration of placements in institutions and foster families, the ratio of caregivers to children in institutions, the number and percentage of children reunited with their parents

after a placement, information on the country of origin of children in intercountry adoption programmes and the direction of family violence (as explained in paragraph 143).

Chapter VI

Basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 para. 3, 23, 24, 26 and 27 paras. 1–3)

Adolescent health

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 48

The Committee encourages the State party to actively pursue its health education initiatives in schools and recommends that it undertake further measures, including the allocation of adequate human and financial resources, to evaluate the effectiveness of training programmes in health education, in particular as regards substance abuse, and to develop youth-sensitive and confidential counselling, care and rehabilitation facilities that are accessible without parental consent when this is in the best interests of the child.

148. The Cyprus Government is committed to promoting health education in schools. Safety and Health in Education was one of the five targets set by the Ministry of Education and Culture for the school year 2006–2007 and continues to apply today. Health initiatives in schools are actively pursued through the services of the Educational Psychology Service of the Ministry of Education and Culture (see paragraph 149), the implementation of health education programmes (see paragraph 150–158), teacher in-service training on health education (see paragraph 31) and multidisciplinary cooperation for the formulation and evaluation of preventive strategies in schools (see paragraph 159–160).

Educational Psychology Service

149. The Educational Psychology Service of the Ministry of Education and Culture provides individual services to children facing learning or adjustment difficulties, conducts research and promotes preventive programmes with emphasis on the prevention of school failure and the acceptance of diversity (see, for example, paragraphs 76–78), the prevention of bullying and conflict behaviours, the promotion of emotional education of pre-school children, the support of parents in their parenting roles, the promotion of health, the inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream schools (see also paragraphs 170–171) and the prevention of juvenile delinquency and substance abuse. In the latter connection, the Service promoted programmes in schools, which were based on the findings of relevant research,¹⁰ and aim to enhance the development of personal and social skills as well as psychological resistance to dangers that threaten health. The programmes address the whole student population, are modified according to the needs of each age group and actively involve teachers and parents. It should be noted that the Service is

¹⁰ Juvenile delinquency (Papadopoulos et al 2000).

The use of legal and illegal substances among the student population in the Lyceum (higher secondary education) and the influence of personal, school and family factors in the use of substances (Papadopoulos et al 2005).

extremely active in training, sensitization and education activities directed at the public in general and parents in particular.

Programmes and services

Promoting health

150. The European Network of Health Promoting in Schools (ENHPS) is a strategic programme for the European Region and is supported by the Council of Europe, the European Commission and the World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Office for Europe. A prerequisite for membership of the Network is the joint support of the initiative by both the Education and Health Ministries. Schools taking part commit themselves to the development of strategies and implementation of programmes of health promotion. Cyprus has been a member of the Network since 1995. During the school year 2006–2007, 141 schools (Primary, Secondary, Technical) participated in the programme (99 schools in 2005–2006, 57 in 2004–2005) and received support from the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Health for the development and implementation of action plans relating to their chosen health-related topics. Examples of chosen topics were: “Strengthening self-respect”, “Accepting differences”, “Interpersonal relationships”, “..... substances”, “Stress in students in the final classes of schools”, Conflict resolution”, “Nutrition”. Support included seminars, the provision of books and the dissemination of information.

Since 1995, the National AIDS Programme, which is administered by the Ministry of Health, in cooperation with the World Health Organisation and the European Union, is implementing peer education (PE) among 16-year-old students, aiming to promote HIV/AIDS awareness and safe sexual behaviours. For the past three years PE has been evaluated through surveys on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour (KAB) and has been shown to be effective in most areas concerning knowledge and attitudes. Based on the KAB results, methodologies are being improved with a view to increasing effectiveness, providing an ongoing evaluation process, and determining behavioural patterns in the long run. PE and KAB were prepared and are reviewed periodically with the cooperation of experts from the WHO.

Healthy nutrition

151. Healthy nutrition programmes organised by the Ministry of Health in schools include the promotion of the Mediterranean diet and the consumption of fruit and vegetables. Specifically, in 2006 the Mediterranean diet programme was implemented in 72 primary schools in Nicosia, Limassol, Paphos and the Famagusta district and provided opportunities to children and their parents to learn about the importance of healthy nutrition. The programme included the provision of lunch based on the Mediterranean diet. The promotion of fruit and vegetable consumption was achieved through the implementation of programmes in primary schools with the catchy title “5 fruits and vegetables a day keep the doctor away”.

Drug prevention

152. The drug prevention programmes of the “MENTOR” Mobile Unit (Life Education Centres) are implemented within the framework of health education in schools and are based on three main strategies: the provision of information, the development and application of social skills and the enhancement of self-esteem and self-worth. The educational programmes take place in a specially designed mobile classroom, which is equipped to provide a stimulating and exciting learning environment. This is combined with the use of highly trained teachers/educators who use a wide range of positive techniques

and strategies designed to enable children to develop the confidence and thinking skills needed to make health choices. The programmes provide material appropriate for each age range and explore a wide range of health-related issues.

153. The Prevention and Enlightenment Branch of the Drug Law Enforcement Unit of the Cyprus Police organises various events and educational programmes and services aiming at the prevention and treatment of child and adolescent health concerns regarding drug use. The following prevention-based educational programmes are implemented on an annual basis:

- Experiential Workshops for Primary School Children (10–12 years)
- “Developing Adolescent Skills” Programme (13–15 years)
- “Informative Specialised Knowledge for Adolescents” Programme (16–18 years)
- Participation in Anti-Narcotic Informative Seminars
- “Parents of Prevention” Programme

154. The majority of preventative initiatives undertaken by the Drug Law Enforcement Unit are directed towards people who have not yet become involved with the use of addictive substances, and special emphasis is placed on children and adolescents. Of the initiatives which specifically addressed children and adolescents, seven such seminars were organised in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture during 2006, in which 350 school students participated. An informative and interactive CD has been created for primary school children by the Drug Law Enforcement Unit and 3000 such CDs have been given out so far.

Sexual education

155. The Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA)¹¹ provides educational services regarding sexual and reproductive health issues, through seminars, workshops (usually experiential) and lectures. Educational workshops and seminars are organised for teachers and pupils in secondary education, college students and members of youth organisations and centres. Informative materials produced by the CFPA are disseminated during educational seminars and other events, e.g. AIDS day. A library consisting of an extensive selection of relevant books, articles, printed and audiovisual materials is maintained at the offices of the CFPA and is accessible to all.

156. The CFPA, which advocates for the rights of young people in sexual and reproductive health services and education through Parliament, the relevant Ministries and in partnership with other interested NGOs and agencies (both locally and internationally), ensures the participation of young people at every level of the decision-making process. A clause in the CFPA Constitution safeguards the participation of young people on the Board of Management and fully supports the Youth Group. CFPA Youth Group is a member of the Cyprus Youth Council and the Youth Board of Cyprus.

157. Sexual education has been the subject of research conducted by the CFPA within the framework of the ASTRA network (Central and Eastern European Women’s Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights) and the European SAFE project.¹² Fifty young

¹¹ The Cyprus Family Planning Association is a voluntary, non-governmental, non-profit organisation. The Association is a member of the European Network of the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF).

¹² The European Commission-funded project, “Sexual Awareness for Europe (SAFE): A European Partnership to promote the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of young people”, was a

people aged 16–24 years participated in the ASTRA research, which was entitled “Knowledge and Needs of Young People in the area of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights”. Twelve young people aged 15–18 years took part in the SAFE research, which was entitled “Evaluation of Sex Education in Cyprus, what knowledge young people receive in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and from whom”. Findings of the research indicate a need for better sexual education. Planned actions in this respect are described under paragraph 160.

Road safety

158. Within the scope of educational programmes and services aiming to promote road consciousness and safety in children, the Traffic Department of the Police undertakes the following initiatives on a continual basis:

(a) Road safety lectures and presentations are given to pre-school children and primary and secondary school students at school premises throughout the country;

(b) Interactive Road Safety presentations and lessons are conducted at the Road Safety Park where children acquire both theoretical and practical experience regarding basic traffic skills. An annual event on the topic of “Children and Road Safety” is also held at the Park;

(c) Two textbooks on road safety, which target Primary School Children in grades 1–4, have been published in cooperation with the Ministry of Communication and Works and the Ministry of Education and Culture. Teaching aids have also been developed to be used within the Primary School curriculum;

(d) A National Essay Competition on the topic of Road Safety for students of the 7th grade is organised annually by the Police Traffic Department in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture. Monetary prizes are awarded by the Police to the three best entries. Selected essays (entries) are periodically published by the Police.

Cooperation

159. In line with its policy to involve relevant agencies in health education and anti-drug education, the Ministry of Education and Culture created the “Health and Citizenship Education Committee” in 2004 with the aim of promoting and evaluating preventive strategies in schools. The Committee consists of representatives of various departments of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Health, as well as representatives of the Cyprus Anti-Drugs Council.¹³ The main activities of the Committee are the following:

partnership between the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF-EN), the Lund University (Sweden), the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA). Its goal was to involve youth advocates and groups in developing new and innovative ways to reach their peers with information and services on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

¹³ The Cyprus Anti-Drugs Council is a public legal entity, established under the Prevention of the Use and Dissemination of Narcotic Drugs and Other Addictive Substances (Establishment of the Anti-Drugs Council and Fund) Law of 2000 [L. 128(I)/2000, Amendments: L. 142(I)/2002, L. 222(I)/2004]. It is the supreme coordinating body in the field of addictive substances on all three levels of prevention, as these are specified by the World Health Organization (WHO). The Council is responsible, inter alia, for the elaboration and the promotion of special training programmes on drugs and other addictive substances for government officers, private individuals or volunteers, in cooperation with Universities and research institutions.

- Dissemination of information regarding school prevention programmes within the school system
- Application of health-education training courses for teachers
- Reinforcement and enrichment of health promotion programmes in the school curriculum
- Provision of support and supervision of the implementation process of school prevention programmes

160. The Ministry of Health has been involved in the SAFE Project (described under paragraph 157), having participated in two SAFE meetings that took place in Copenhagen and Brussels in 2006 and 2007 respectively. Following the closing of the Project in the autumn of 2007, the Ministry undertook to promote the SAFE “Strategy for the Promotion of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Young people in Europe”. Discussions commenced between representatives of the Ministry and the Cyprus Family Planning Association at the beginning of 2008 and it was decided to submit a report to the Minister of Health on the research results that document the need for a plan of action for the sexual education of young people in Cyprus. At a later stage a broad conference will take place with all involved stakeholders for an open discussion in order to exchange views and thoughts on the issue. The overall aim is to secure political commitment for the promotion of the Strategy.

Youth-sensitive counselling, care and rehabilitation services

161. Youth-sensitive, confidential counselling on sexual matters, reproductive sex, family planning, marriage, relationships and other issues concerning young people is provided by the Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA) in the following ways:

- On a personal basis at the Association’s premises
- By young volunteers of the CFPA “Youth for Youth” group, through the hotline 1455 (these young volunteers are well trained and qualified to provide counselling services)
- Through email communication

162. Counselling on substance abuse, as well as care and rehabilitation services are provided by both governmental services and non-governmental organisations, as listed on the website of the Anti-Drugs Council under “services network”: <http://www.ask.org.cy/index2.html>. It should be noted that services include telephone help lines.

Social security and childcare services and facilities

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 50

The Committee encourages the State party to ensure that social benefits for girls and boys are equal so that this is not a factor in their decisions relating to higher education.

163. Paragraph 49 of the concluding observations states: “The Committee notes that social benefits for children are extended beyond the age of 18 years for persons attending full-time education; however, it notes that the age is not the same for males and females”. This differentiation used to be the case in the provision of financial assistance to persons over the age of 18 years who had been under the care of the Director of Social Welfare

Services. The reason for this distinction was that females complete higher education earlier than males because boys must serve in the army for a two year period (compulsory national service). This distinction has been removed from after-care procedures. It should be noted that after-care procedures will be legislated with the enactment of the new draft Children's Law (described under paragraph 3), which stipulates that after-care services and financial assistance may be provided to any person who had been in care at any time after the age of sixteen years. Furthermore, according to public assistance legislation amended in 2006, adult children who are soldiers or students are included as dependants when estimating the allowance to be provided to families that are eligible for public assistance.

Statistics

164. Table 53 in the Annex shows the number of persons with mental disabilities (aged from birth to 20 years) who were registered with the Committee for the Protection of the Rights of People with a Mental Handicap¹⁴ during 2003–2007. Disaggregated data collected through the Committee's Coordinating Service for Early Childhood Intervention, on the number of children with developmental disabilities in the period 2003–2007, may be found in Tables 54–56 (by district and type of disability, by age and district, by sex and district). Table 57 shows the number of children with disabilities who receive public assistance and Table 58 the number of persons (under 20 years) living in institutions. Statistics on the number of children with special needs attending ordinary and special schools may be found in Table 59. Additional information on children with special needs attending mainstream and special schools may be found under paragraph 171.

165. Table 60 in the Annex shows the rates of infant and under-five child mortality rates for the period 2002–2007 and Table 61 the percentage children immunized by type of vaccination. The percentage of children born in hospitals/clinics during 2002–2007 may be seen in Table 62, which contains an urban/rural breakdown. It should be noted that 100 per cent of households have access to hygienic sanitation facilities and safe drinking water and that 100 per cent of pregnant women residing in the Republic of Cyprus have access to and benefit from pre-natal and post-natal health care. A new Survey is being introduced by the Statistical Service for the systematic collection of data on breastfeeding and the weight of newborn babies. The findings of the Survey will be available in 2009.

166. There are currently three children infected by HIV: one girl aged 17 years (diagnosed in 1991), one boy aged 15 years (diagnosed in 1992) and one girl aged 5 years (diagnosed in 2005). All three are living with their families and receive medical treatment, counselling, care and support.

167. Statistics on the number of adolescents affected by early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections are not routinely collected. As regards drug and alcohol use, the findings of the most recent population survey (2006) conducted by the Cyprus Anti-drugs Council may be found in the annex. Graph 1 shows the prevalence of alcohol use and Table 63 the prevalence of drug use amongst young people aged 15–24 years. Police data on the number of persons aged 15–19 years involved in drug-related cases may be found in Table 64.

¹⁴ The Committee for the Protection of the Rights of People with a Mental Handicap consists of 10 members appointed by the Council of Ministers, including representatives of: (a) The Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (Chairman and one member) (b) The Ministry of Education and Culture (Special Education Services) (c) The Mental Health Services (d) The Ministry of Finance. The Committee is responsible, inter alia, for registering persons with mental disabilities and maintaining a database.

168. According to the findings of a Health Study conducted by the Statistical Services in 2003, 77.7 per cent of young people aged 15–19 years feel that their health is very good, 18.1 per cent that it is good, 1.7 per cent that it is medium, 0.3 per cent bad and 2.2 per cent very bad. The following table shows perceptions by sex:

Perceptions of young people on the state of their health

	<i>Very good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Bad</i>	<i>Very bad</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>15–19 years</i>	%	%	%	%	%	%
Total	77.7	18.1	1.7	0.3	2.2	100
Boys	76.1	18.6	2.4	0.6	2.3	100
Girls	79.3	17.6	1.1	0.0	2.0	100

Factors and difficulties in implementing the cluster of provisions under Chapter VI

169. Difficulties revolve around the need for a better system of data collection, e.g. disaggregated health statistics are generally missing; although disaggregated data is collected by the Committee for the Protection of the Rights of People with a Mental Handicap (para. 164), the age categorisation (up to the age of 20 years) does not comply with the definition of the child contained in the Convention; statistics are not routinely collected on the number of adolescents affected by early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (para. 167) nor the proportion of personnel trained in hospital care and delivery. A positive development is the planned Survey for the systematic collection of data on breastfeeding and the weight of newborn babies (para. 165). Nevertheless, there is still much work to be done for the systematic collection of missing health statistics (listed in the Annex to this Report) in order to inform policies. The implementation of the newly enacted Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Law [L. 74(I)/2007] is expected to contribute to this effort, as described under paragraphs 45 and 46.

Chapter VII Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29 and 31)

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 52

The Committee encourages the State party to strengthen its efforts to include children with special needs wherever possible in mainstream schools, in accordance with article 23 (3) of the Convention. In this respect, the Committee draws the attention of the State party to the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

Special needs

170. The Training and Education of Children with Special Needs Law of 1999 (L. 113(I)/99) and relevant Regulations [R. 185/2001 and R. 186/2001] regulate the detection of children with special educational needs; their assessment and the development of an individualized educational programme; their placement in the most appropriate educational setting with provision of both teachers and educational resources to meet their needs; and

the ongoing evaluation of the child's progress. Children for whom special education and training has been determined attend ordinary schools, special units in ordinary schools or special schools with appropriate infrastructure, adapted to their own needs and to their individual programme, which is formulated by the Special Education Coordinators (SENCOs), in cooperation with the teachers and parents of the child. The same officials supervise the child's progress.

171. In 2004, the Ministry of Education and Culture put into action a Mechanism for Identification and Support of Children with learning difficulties, emotional and other problems, which facilitates in-school support for children and families before providing special education. The implementation of the above legislation and the introduction of this Mechanism have meant that the majority of children with special needs attend mainstream schools, while only 7.57 per cent of children with special needs attended special schools in the school year 2006–2007 and 5.36 per cent in the school year 2007–2008, as shown in Table 59 in the Annex.

172. The majority of children attending mainstream schools follow the normal curriculum, which may be adjusted to suit their particular needs. Where a special educator is part of the child's education, they must cooperate and interact with the classroom teacher of the child in the development and delivery of an individualized education programme for the child. During the development of the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP) staff make every effort to ensure that the child is fully involved in all school and class activities. The education team developing the IEP determines the instructional methodology to be implemented for the child. Where a child requires individual assistance outside of his/her classroom, this is arranged so as not to restrict their access to all subjects of the curriculum. It should be noted that policies for children with special needs fully comply with the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities.

Statistics

173. Education statistics may be found in Tables 65–70 in the Annex.

Factors and difficulties in implementing the cluster of provisions under Chapter VII

174. Although education statistics do exist, they are not disaggregated as defined in the Annex to the General Guidelines. This challenge is discussed under paragraphs 45 and 46.

Chapter VIII Special protection measures (arts. 2, 30, 32–36, 37 (b)–(d), 38, 39 and 40)

Refugee and internally displaced children

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 54

The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Promptly adopt the draft law to amend the 2000 and 2002 Refugee Laws;

- (b) **Introduce further amendments to the Refugee Law in order to ensure access to public educational facilities to persons afforded temporary protection;**
- (c) **Ensure that children either of whose parents is an IDP can acquire that status.**

175. In 2007, Law 112(I)/2007 was enacted, which amends the Refugee Laws of 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 [L. 6(I)/2000, L. 6(I)/2002, L. 53(I)/2003, L. 67(I)/2003, L. 9(I)/2004, L. 241(I)/2004 and L. 154(I)/2005]. According to the amendment Law [L. 112(I)/2007] minors who have been granted supplementary protection¹⁵ have the right to full access to public education, with the same conditions that stand for citizens of the Republic. As mentioned in paragraph 9, the amendment Law stipulates that the best interests of the child is the primary consideration in the implementation of the Law (section 9).

176. According to the newly enacted Civil Registry (Amendment) Law of 2007 [L. 123(I)/2007], which replaced the previous laws relevant to such issues, all children whose father or mother is an IDP, can acquire an IDP status.

Sexual exploitation, trafficking

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 56

The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to identify, prevent and combat trafficking in children for sexual purposes in accordance with the Declaration and Agenda for Action and the Global Commitment adopted at the 1996 and 2001 World Congresses against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.

177. Intensified efforts to identify, prevent and combat trafficking and sexual exploitation included the establishment in 2004 of the Office for the Combating of Trafficking in Human Beings, under Department C of Police Headquarters. The Office is staffed by persons who are specialised in both trafficking in persons and domestic violence, having undergone training abroad and in Cyprus. The main duties of the Office are the following:

- (a) To collect, process and evaluate information with regard to trafficking in persons (slavery, prostitution and other relevant offences);
- (b) To coordinate all activities of the District Police Divisions and of other Services;
- (c) To organise and participate in operations;
- (d) To promote professional police training on the issue;
- (e) To keep statistical data and to create and update databases;
- (f) To follow up and monitor cases pending before the Court;
- (g) To prepare reports and public awareness leaflets;

¹⁵ A person entitled to supplementary protection means a person who is not recognised as a refugee but for whom there are grounds to believe that return to his/her country would mean that he/she would be in danger of serious harm (section 19).

- (h) To carry out investigations in relation to the Internet and the circulation of child pornographic material;
- (i) To draw up Action Plans;
- (j) To cooperate with international bodies concerned with the issue.

178. A major development has been the enactment of the Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings and the Protection of Victims Law [L.87/(I)/2007] in 2007, which replaced previous laws relevant to such issues. The purpose of this Law is the penalisation of trafficking, exploitation and child pornography, the promotion of measures for the protection and support of victims of such crimes and the creation of a monitoring system for the implementation of such measures. The new law includes specific provisions concerning the sexual exploitation of children, trafficking of children and child prostitution and specifies strict penalties. The Law provides, inter alia, for a national mechanism of cooperation between governmental services and non-governmental organisations for the identification of victims and the implementation of responsibilities stipulated in the Law for the protection of victims and the safeguarding of their rights. Such responsibilities include mandatory referral of suspected victims to the Social Welfare Services who inform them of their rights and immediately refer them to the Police, which is the competent agency to establish whether or not they are victims.

179. As mentioned under paragraph 5, the new Law contains special provisions for children and makes specific reference to both the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights. It stresses that involved services must take into account the best interests of the child in the implementation of the Law and must ensure the full implementation of all the specified procedures, bearing in mind the age and maturity of the child. Special provisions concerning children place responsibilities on involved services to provide protection and support to child victims and their families and, in the case of children of third countries, access to public education, with the same conditions that exist for citizens of the Republic. The Social Welfare Services are named in the Law as the competent authority for coordinating services for child victims [section 36(5)]. As regards unaccompanied minors, the Law contains special provisions which, inter alia, place them under the care of the Director of Social Welfare Services, specify the actions and decisions that must be taken by the Immigration Officer "bearing in mind the best interests of the child and the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" [section 37] and safeguard their social rights, including access to education and health services [section 38].

New Police mechanisms pertaining to the protection of children

180. In order to ensure the protection of children and safeguard their rights, the Cyprus Police have, in the past five years, established six new specialised offices/branches, namely the Human Rights Office (described under paragraphs 181–183), the Office for Combating Cyber Crime (described under paragraph 184), the Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office (described under paragraphs 132–138), the Office for Combating Trafficking of Human Beings (described under paragraph 177), the Office for Handling Juvenile Delinquency (described under paragraph 188) and the Social Support Section of the Prevention and Enlightenment Branch of the Drugs Law Enforcement Unit (described under paragraph 185).

The Human Rights Office

181. The Human Rights Office, which was established in August 2005, falls under the auspices of the European Union and International Police Cooperation Directorate of Police Headquarters. Its major task is to oversee different policing aspects from a legal and

humanitarian perspective and to ensure that the Cyprus Police are meeting obligations derived from numerous Conventions pertaining to human rights issues, such as the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), etc.

182. Furthermore, the Recommendation of the European Council on Police Ethics has been adopted by the Cyprus Police, which organises relevant lectures at the Police Academy and forwards materials to all members of the Police to enable them to carry out their duties without violating human rights. The Office oversees the conditions of detention of persons under Police custody and makes recommendations on how to improve detention centres in order to meet CPT standards.

183. EU regulations and relevant Conventions on human rights practices, as well as case law that derive from the European Court of Human Rights are reviewed by the Office, and where deemed necessary suggestions are made to the Chief of Police to bring current practices in line with such regulations and laws.

The Office for Combating Cyber Crime

184. The Office for Combating Cyber Crime, which operates under Department “C” (Criminal Investigations Department) of Police Headquarters, was established in 2007, in order to maximize police efforts in combating cyber crime and especially the use, possession, and transmission of child pornography over the Internet. The officers assigned to this Office have received extensive training on the issue both domestically and abroad, and some of them hold degrees in Computer/Information Technology/Science.

Social Support Section of the Prevention and Enlightenment Branch of the Drugs Law Enforcement Unit

185. In January 2007, the Prevention and Enlightenment Branch of the Drugs Law Enforcement Unit established a Social Support Section. This section is staffed with qualified police personnel with academic backgrounds in social work or social sciences (psychology, sociology). The Section is responsible for providing information, guidance, counselling, and support to drug addicts, arrested persons and their families, as well as to anyone else who seeks help through the 1498 Drugs Hot Line. Such support services are provided by the police throughout the county. The target group for this service is persons up to 25 years with a special emphasis on juveniles.

Protection of children affected by armed conflict

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 58

The Committee encourages the State party to clarify the minimum age for voluntary recruitment and take measures to ensure that no one under 18 is deployed as a combatant to armed conflicts.

186. The National Guard Law No. 20 of 1964, as variously amended, most recently in 2006, provides for the voluntary enlistment of citizens under 18 who have attained the age of 17 years. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict has been studied by the Ministry of Defence in cooperation with the Law Commissioner and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and on 3 January 2008 the Council of Ministers decided to promote its ratification.

Juvenile justice

CRC/C/15/Add.205, para. 60

The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the reforms under way provide for the establishment of a juvenile justice system, including juvenile courts, that has adequate human and financial resources, and that fully integrates international juvenile justice standards, in particular articles 37, 39 and 40 of the Convention as well as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines) and the Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System.

187. As mentioned under paragraph 10, a special administrative procedure aiming at decriminalising offences committed by juvenile offenders (described in our previous Report) continues to ensure that children under the age of 16 years who commit minor offences are treated as children in need of care, protection and rehabilitation (i.e. provided with preventive/supportive services and child protection services) and are diverted from prosecution. This procedure complies with the Riyadh Guidelines. A new draft Law is being prepared, which provides for the treatment of juvenile offenders aged up to 18 years. The draft Law provides for the specialisation of courts for cases of juveniles and makes specific reference to the principles and provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights, the Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules) and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

188. Furthermore, an Office for Handling Juvenile Delinquency was established in 2007 by the Cyprus Police. The Office operates under Department C (Criminal Investigations Department) of the Police Headquarters in Nicosia. The main objective of the Office is to combat the phenomenon of juvenile delinquency through the implementation of preventative initiatives as well as intervention tactics. The directives of the Office are outlined below:

- (a) Monitors the investigation of complaints which involve juvenile offenders;
- (b) Cooperates with investigators in the handling of such cases;
- (c) Facilitates cooperation between police investigators and the Social Welfare Services, as well as other governmental and non-governmental organisations in order to provide the most thorough and correct handling of each case;
- (d) Promotes and facilitates the organisation of educational seminars in cooperation with the Cyprus Police Academy;
- (e) Cooperates closely with other agencies involved in handling matters pertaining to children's rights and organises meetings with such agencies in order to cover a wide variety of topics. Such meetings are held in order to keep all involved parties appropriately informed on serious cases involving minors and to jointly reach conclusions on the best method of approach for handling each individual case;
- (f) Carries out follow-up and advisory interaction both with juvenile offenders, their families and the victims and keeps all involved parties updated in relation to Police Procedures;
- (g) Ensures the correct implementation of the Law and Police Standing Orders as well as the orders of the Chief of Police in relation to the matter of Juvenile Offenders;

(h) Takes part in public events and discussions for the projection of the issues of Preventative objectives, clamp-down measures as well as treatment of the social phenomenon of young offenders;

(i) Facilitates and participates in research and applied programmes for young offenders;

(j) Coordinates, oversees and advises whenever the handling of young offenders is a matter of consideration;

(k) Review of criminal files and suggestions for further police action or to the Attorney General concerning criminal proceedings.

189. Within the scope of measures undertaken in order to improve treatment of juveniles by the Police, specialised training shall be administered to staff of the Juvenile Delinquency Office as well as to Police Officers generally in order to ensure that cases involving minors as offenders shall be handled appropriately.

Statistics

190. Statistics are unavailable with regard to the number of asylum-seeking and unaccompanied children. It should be noted, however, that these statistics will be available in the future with the establishment of the new Database of the Asylum Service. The Database has already been designed and will commence operation as soon as the staff has been trained. Table 71 in the Annex shows the number of internally displaced minors, though disaggregated data is unavailable.

191. Table 72 in the Annex shows the number of enlistments in the army, including voluntary enlistments before the age of 18 years.

192. Data provided by the Social Welfare Services on the number of children involved in the special administrative procedure aiming at decriminalising offences committed by juvenile offenders (see paragraph 187) may be found in Table 73 in the Annex. Tables 74–76 contain Police data on juvenile offenders aged 7–16 (categorized into age groups 7–13 and 14–16). The Police data covers the years 2004–2007 and is broken down into serious versus minor cases, sex, urban versus rural areas, type of offence, and district (police division). Table 77 shows the number of juveniles involved in offences for whom the Court has requested socio-economic reports and Table 78 the number of juveniles convicted, by offence and sentence imposed. The number of juveniles for whom the Court has issued probation or supervision orders may be seen in Table 79. Table 80 shows the total number of juveniles convicted for serious and minor offences, as well as the number of cases taken into consideration, previous convictions and previous custodial sentences.

193. The number of persons under 18 years of age detained in the Juvenile Block of the Prison and the average length of sentence imposed by the court may be seen in Table 81. Table 82 shows the number of convicted prisoners and penal offenders by age and sex.

194. Police data on number of persons aged 15–19 years involved in drug-related cases may be found in the Annex, in Table 83. Tables 84 and 85 show the number of child sexual exploitation cases in 2006 and 2007 and child pornography cases during the period 2004–2007.

Factors and difficulties in implementing the cluster of provisions under Chapter VIII

195. The difficulties of missing statistics (listed under Chapter VIII of the Annex to this Report) and the lack of disaggregated data are discussed under paragraphs 45 and 46.

Chapter IX Optional Protocols to the Convention

196. Cyprus ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography in 2006 by Law 6(III)/2006.

197. On 3 January 2008, the Council of Ministers approved the signing and ratification by Cyprus of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.
