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Europeanization beyond Contested Statehood: The European Union and Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society

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Introduction

In 2004 and after the Greek-Cypriot and Turkish-Cypriot communities failed to agree reunification under a federal state, Cyprus entered the EU as a divided island. *De facto*, the EU member state is represented by the internationally recognized government of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), which is under the control of Greek-Cypriots in the southern part of the island. The northern side, home to the Turkish-Cypriot community and the self-declared state of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), is considered a territory upon which the government of the RoC cannot exercise control and is, thus, exempted from EU law application, pending the reunification of the island. Despite the fact that Turkish-Cypriots are not part of the state that negotiated and succeeded EU accession, European integration has had a revealing impact on their domestic scene. Civil society in particular, is an aspect of domestic affairs that has been affected by European integration. Before accession, EU integration was 'tied' to the prospects of a solution to the Cyprus issue via the United Nations (UN)- proposed 'Annan Plan', which envisaged the reunification of the country and its consequent EU entry. This EU-reunification linkage shaped the interests of the majority of the Turkish-Cypriot civil society, which supported EU accession in order to achieve their long-standing goal of reunifying Cyprus. At the same time, civil society gained domestic influence by leading a wider public pro-EU movement. After accession, the link between reunification and European integration

for the Turkish-Cypriots continues to exist and so does the associated effect of the EU on civil society (albeit mediated). What is more, the post-accession EU effort to promote the development of northern Cyprus has become a new channel of influence upon civil society. This article discusses this multifaceted impact of the EU on the Turkish-Cypriot civil society since 2002, which marks the birth of a strong civil pro-EU movement.

This investigation is linked to the conceptual debate on Europeanization, which seeks to explain the EU's effect on states associated to the EU, such as member or candidate states. With Europeanization studies primarily concerned with conventional states, the Turkish-Cypriot case represents an idiomatic example of *contested state*. Here, we approach *contested state* as the entity that controls a territory (northern Cyprus) and has unilaterally declared state independence (as TRNC in 1983) but lacks full international diplomatic recognition[1] (see also Papadimitriou and Petrov 2012). Although Europeanization scholars have touched upon matters close to contested states (such as the related conflict or the relevance of the EU to the official state, from which the entity attempts secession), their explicit domestic scene and how it is impacted by the EU remains under-researched. This is the gap that the article addresses, by investigating the 'Europeanization' of the Turkish-Cypriot domestic arena, and especially civil society. The argument advanced is that conditions of contested statehood, despite challenging the EU's effectiveness on the ground, reinforce the occurrence of a Europeanization towards a more powerful, professional and EU-affiliated civil society. Subsequently, this research aspires to a two-fold comparative relevance: firstly, the Turkish-Cypriot case

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[1] The self-declaration of TRNC is condemned by UN Security Council Resolution 541(1983).

becomes a blueprint for the examination of the Europeanization of other contested states[2] and the importance of their civil society. Secondly, this study has comparative value also for the broader relevance of the EU to civil society, especially in environments where the engagement with state authorities is challenging (regardless of statehood status *per se*). Indeed, the external relations of the EU often face politically challenging regimes and pay increased attention to civil society. As a result, the article contributes to the wider debate on Europeanization and the *stimuli* or limitations for the EU's international role, especially in reference to dealings with civil society as an alternative to traditional EU-state relations.

Research methodology is based on a single case study, linked to the debate on Europeanization. In the first part of this article, a critical review of the literature provides the conceptual framework for the following investigation of the case study, which is based on qualitative analysis of primary material, such as policy documents from the local and EU level (particularly EU regulations, their proposals and reports on their implementation) and international and local media reports. Research also draws on semi-structured interviews with a representative sample of EU officials (7) and Members of the European Parliament (1), who focus on Turkish-Cypriots and civil society. Also, interviews with local political elites (3) provide background information but, more importantly, analysis draws on interviews with civil society, including: Trade Unions (2), leaders of pro-EU civil platforms (1), representatives of the Turkish-Cypriot Chamber of Commerce (*KTTO)* both at the local (2) and European level (1). The interview questions focused on providing more detailed information on the EU programs and their impact but also unravelling how the EU

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[2] E.g. Kosovo, The Occupied Palestinian Territories, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia, Abkhazia.

has impacted the interests and understanding of civil society, including some of the interviewees.

Europeanization: Explaining Change beyond the 'State'

In exploring the relevance of the EU to the Turkish-Cypriot community and civil society[3], this research engages with the conceptual discussion of Europeanization that mostly seeks to explain the process via which the EU impacts national scene, particularly of member states (Ladrech 1994, Börzel and Risse 2000, Goetz and Hix 2001, Töller 2010) or candidates for EU membership (Lippert et al. 2001, Grabbe 2001, Seldemeier 2011). Indeed, contested states, like the Turkish-Cypriot, have not been at the heart of this debate that has concentrated on conventional states, especially policy and institutional matters and less politics and civil society (Seldemeier 2011). However, contested statehood represents an increasingly important matter of European affairs, not least due to the EU's involvement in many regions with similar entities (e.g. Balkans, Caucasus). In particular, the troubled diplomatic status of those entities calls for an investigation of their non-state players, like civil society, and their place within European integration. Therefore, the examination of the Turkish-Cypriot example is a contribution to the existing literature and provides a blueprint for the study of the neglected topic of civil society, especially in contested states. Indeed, the few works on regions with contested states have focused on the related conflict (Coppieters 2004, Williams 2004, Nodia 2007, Tocci 2008, Secrieru 2011) or EU-supported state-building (e.g. Kosovo- see Bieber 2011, Börzel 2011). Cyprus too has attracted the attention of scholars but,

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[3] Here, civil society is approached as 'a realm of social life – market exchanges, charitable groups, clubs and voluntary associations, independent churches and publishing houses – institutionally separated from territorial state institutions […] a term that both describes and anticipates a complex and dynamic ensemble of legally protected nongovernmental institutions' (Keane 2009).

again, most studies address the impact of the EU on the conflict (Tocci and Kovziridze 2004, Zervakis 2002) or the RoC, which represents the government that has monopolized EU accession (Featherstone 2000, Sepos 2008).

Since the self-declared TRNC is not recognised and EU law is suspended in northern Cyprus, Turkish-Cypriots represent an idiomatic partner of Brussels but the relations between the two resemble a lot the experience of EU Enlargement: the EU's relevance to the community has been based on a) the prospects for EU accession (through reunification) and b) the assistance towards preparation for future EU integration, through financial and technical aid. Along these lines, the analysis of the Turkish-Cypriot case largely draws on the 'path' of Europeanization literature that is concerned with the impact of EU accession. An important detail here is that Enlargement-driven Europeanization is better conceptualised as a 'top-down' process of change, whereby candidate states cannot affect EU decision-making. This is not so true with EU member states, where governments can 'download' but also 'upload' policies (Connolly 2008). Despite this power asymmetry in terms of policy issues, internal socio-political dynamics during the process of accession can also be studied in reference to 'bottom-up' processes of Europeanization, whereby actors use European integration in order to influence domestic affairs (Dyson and Goetz 2003, 20). Indeed, the focus of this work on civil society and its mobilization in favour of the EU aims to uncover the importance of domestic social actors and their contribution to a 'bottom-up' Europeanization. At the same time, the similarities between EU Enlargement policy and the post-accession strategy of Brussels in northern Cyprus also create expectations for a strong 'top-down' occurrence of Europeanization.

Since Europeanization is approached as a process of change, a lot of the discussion has focused on the mechanisms via which the EU's impact is channelled. Besides *institutional compliance* that relates more to polity and policy matters, Knill and Lehmkuhl (2002) introduce two more mechanisms of Europeanization relevant to socio-political dynamics and the question of civil society: Europeanization via *change of domestic opportunity structures* and *framing of domestic beliefs and expectations.* In cases of change of opportunity structures, the EU is thought to provide players with the opportunity to 'exit' domestic constraints to pursue their interests through European structures. Redistribution of power can also take the form of various 'informational advantages', which relate to a) the influence that actors enjoy due to their relevance to a particular matter, or, b) more opportunities for access to information via participation in EU affairs (Hix and Goetz 2001, 12). Indeed, case studies have looked at the change of opportunity structures in relation to civil society, especially in the context of Enlargement and through assistance or chances for international involvement (Císař and Vráblíková 2010, Göksel and Güneş 2005, Pilat 2007). Besides, the EU is often thought to have empowered civil society by assisting the legitimacy of their agenda and by becoming an 'ally' to their objectives (Göksel and Güneş 2005, Tocci 2005).

On the other hand, framing of domestic beliefs and expectations, what we refer to as 'cognitive Europeanization', relates to changes in the interests of actors but also 'formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, and ways of doing things and shared beliefs and norms' (Radaelli 2000, 4), also via processes of socialization (Schmidt 2001, 12; Börzel and Risse 2000, Pasquier 2005). Indeed, the literature has reflected on the change in the interests of civil society and has

documented the participation of organisations in the debate over European integration (Beer and Flecker 1998, Della Porta and Caiani 2009), especially in candidate countries, where civil society has played a crucial role by advocating EU membership in the public sphere (Císař and Vráblíková 2010, Göksel and Güneş 2005, Tocci 2005) and in a 'bottom-up' fashion of Europeanization. The investigation of Turkish-Cypriot civil society also takes into account how the 'carrot' of EU membership can facilitate strong Europeanization pressures, especially as far as cognitive matters and the public support of EU integration is concerned (Agh 1999). At the same time, the various EU Enlargement programs, which target the assistance of civil society, entail the potential for the communication of new styles and practises for the organisations. Here, analysis also draws on the so-called 'goodness of fit' thesis (Börzel and Risse 2000, Radaelli 2000, Cowles et al. 2001), which discusses how the incompatibility between EU and national level creates opportunities for the EU to impact domestic landscape. As the communist legacy of recently acceded countries (2004/7) presented an interesting example of how the 'misfit' between EU and national level facilitates domestic change, the comparative underdevelopment of the isolated Turkish-Cypriot community is also expected to shape the process of Europeanization.

In this regard, the lens of Europeanization help unveil the EU's impact on the Turkish-Cypriot civil society, via the mechanisms of change of opportunity structures and cognitive changes. Here, the EU and its role represent the independent variable and the degree of effect on civil society the dependent variable of the case study. Research begins with the hypothesis that the EU has impacted Turkish-Cypriot community by a) a (re) distribution of power in favour of civil society and b) change in

the perceptions of interests and the communication of new styles and practises of organisation and action of civil society. As far as mediating factors are concerned, the focus is on three issues that shape the process of Europeanization as an example of contested state: a. the existing conflict (Cyprus problem), b. the non-recognition of the contested state (TRNC) and c. the consequent international isolation of the entity.

EU and the Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society: Two Stories

The development of Turkish-Cypriot civil society has always been linked to the trajectory of the 'Cyprus problem', the inter-communal dispute over the fate of the divided island: despite the establishment of the bi-communal RoC (1960), ongoing conflict led to the retirement of the Turkish-Cypriots from the state and the division of the island into a Greek-Cypriot (south areas) and a Turkish-Cypriot zone (north). This division was reinforced by the 1974 war and the self-declaration of TRNC (1983), which remains diplomatically and practically isolated, since the RoC (now controlled by the Greek-Cypriots) continues to be the only *de jure* administration in the island. This pending resolution of the island's division introduces a crucial dichotomy in the Turkish-Cypriot community (including civil society): on one side, stand local elites and public opinion that are 'moderate' with regard to the prospects of a solution, support a federal Cyprus and are generally defined by conciliatory tactics towards the Greek-Cypriots. On the other side, the 'hard-line' camp of those that are less flexible about the formula of solution (e.g. co-federation instead of federation) and their views are often characterized by a certain degree of Turkish nationalism and loyalty to the self-declared TRNC. While political competition has

seen a wide range of both moderate and hard-line views (Kyris 2012), civil society has been traditionally dominated by moderate actors.

The eldest segments of Turkish-Cypriot civil society are a number of 'moderate' trade unions, such as the Cyprus Turkish Teachers Trade Union (*KTOS)* or the Cyprus Turkish Civil Servants Trade Union (*KTAMS)*. Ideologically positioned on the political left, those groups have been critical of the right-wing and 'hard-line' governing elites. The dissatisfaction with the normalization of the island's division during the 1970s (Doob 1986, Faustmann 2003) resulted in additional Turkish-Cypriot civil initiatives, such as the 'New Cyprus Association', which aimed at reconciliation with the Greek-Cypriots but enjoyed limited longevity (Loizides 2007, 179). The 1990s witnessed a new trend of civil bi-communal reconciliation, which encompassed a wider range of interests, including the environment, education and the arts (Wolleh 2002, Anastasiou 2007, Loizos 2006). This signalled the emergence of a more diverse Turkish-Cypriot civil society and the establishment of various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which, however, remained enriched with a reconciliation 'flavour'.

As a result, not only over-politicization but also underdevelopment are central characteristics of the Turkish-Cypriot civil society. Civil organizations have been almost exclusively preoccupied with the Cyprus issue, with moderate positions being particularly dominant. This is explained by both the left-leaning ideology of a good part of the organizations[4] and the monopolization of government by hard-line elites, which prompted a civil opposition. All together however, the domination of the socio-

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[4] Left has traditionally supported a compromised solution of the Cyprus issue (see also Kyris 2012).

political scene by governing elites suppressed the development of civil society. In addition, underdevelopment and lack of professionalization was caused by the prematurity of the Turkish-Cypriot socio-political system, the absence of legal framework to protect and promote civil society (Interview, EU official A', Brussels 2009) and the international isolation, which did not allow external narratives of organised civil society to penetrate northern Cyprus.

A 'Common Vision': Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society and the EU before Accession

Coming to the relevance of the EU, direct links between Brussels and Turkish-Cypriot civil society did not exist before *circa* 2006. Nevertheless, the prospects of EU integration became the reason for a unique 'Europeanization' in northern Cyprus. Early in the accession process, the resolution of the inter-communal dispute was dropped as a condition for EU entry. In practise, this meant that Greek-Cypriots, who monopolised the RoC, secured their entry to the EU. On the other hand, Turkish-Cypriots, outsiders to the RoC and under the self-declared TRNC, could only accede to the EU as part of a new, bi-communal state, which will solve the Cyprus problem by reunification and replace the RoC in the accession process. This linkage between resolution of the Cyprus problem and EU integration led to a remarkable 'Europeanization' in the Turkish-Cypriot community, whereby moderate civil society passionately advocated EU accession and led a strong pro-solution/ EU movement.

Indeed, the support of the EU brought many civil society organizations in collective action. The 'This Country is Ours' scheme (*The Economist,* 20 July 2000) concentrated a range of organizations, especially trade unions, and was the first to

strongly campaign in favour of reunification and EU integration and against the regime of the hard-line leader Rauf Denktaş, who opposed the Annan Plan. The 'Common Vision of the Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society' (*Kibris,* 12 August 2002) was another platform with similar aims that was initiated by the *KTTO* and brought together 86 organizations. The declaration that founded the organisation sheds light on the benefits that EU integration was correlated with:

> 'reaching a […] solution in Cyprus followed by EU membership [...] means investment, production, employment, science and technology, and social security [and] the end of our isolation from the rest of the world' (Cyprus Protests Calendar 2010).

Also indicative of a 'cognitive' Europeanization of the Turkish-Cypriot civil society through the advocacy of EU integration is the open letter that the 'This Country is Ours' group addressed to the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan:

> 'Turkish-Cypriots have been facing […] difficulties owing to international segregation […] it is the common desire of our organizations that a [...] federation [is] established and [...] is a member of the EU' (Cyprus Protests Calendar 2010).

As obvious from the above, the Cyprus problem became a strong facilitating factor in the process of Europeanization: in this era, moderate civil society reconfigured their interests towards more pro-EU attitudes because European integration was seen as the means to achieve resolution of the Cyprus issue by reunification. Indeed, the

then *KTTO* President and leader of 'Common Vision' has explained that NGOs saw the EU as a guarantor of a viable solution to the Cyprus issue, which will bring Turkish-Cypriot prosperity (Interview, Erel, Nicosia 2009). Also, the *KTOEOS* Secretary General explains that the association of EU prospects to the Annan Plan reinforced the European 'feelings' of his organization and other members of civil society (Interview, Ersalan, Nicosia 2009). What is more, this 'cognitive' change often took place in contrast to existing ideological profiles. Many organizations altered their previously eurosceptic agenda in order to accommodate the purpose of the EU. For example, according to the *KTOS* Secretary General (Interview, Elcil, Nicosia 2009), the organization was principally against the EU but they nevertheless embraced the goal of European integration, only because it served their other target of Cyprus' reunification. This profound change offers clear evidence of the extended 'Europeanization' of interests of civil society and resembles previous examples (especially in the context of enlargement), whereby domestic civil society took a clear (often favourable) public stance towards the issue of European integration.

At the same time, civil society gained ample domestic influence by organising the public pro-EU/ solution movement. Firstly, civil society prepared an extensive campaign and went 'door to door' (interview*, KTTO* Official, Brussels 2009) to inform people about the EU and the Annan Plan, which was about to be subject to referendums in both Cypriot communities. Not only the technical details of the UN Plan needed to be explained to the public but the Turkish-Cypriot absence from the accession process (topped with the international isolation) led to an additional lack of EU understanding. This Turkish-Cypriot knowledge gap was opportenly used by many organizations that became the main information source regarding solution and

European integration and tried to communicate the 'good face of the EU' (Interview, Erel, Nicosia 2009) to the locals. A noteworthy example is the 'European Information Centre', which was established under the aegis of the *KTTO* and inaugurated by the then European Commissioner for enlargement Günther Verheugen (European Commission 2002). In addition, civil society also organised rallies *(BBC News*, 14 January 2003) that protested the hard-line regime.

Through this organization of the pro-EU movement, the EU also caused a change in the domestic power *equilibrium* towards a more influential role of civil society. Indeed, the popularity that the rallies enjoyed (some estimates refer to more than a quarter of the community's population-*BBC News*, 14 January 2003) is indicative of the extensive public influence that civil society obtained via the advocacy of EU integration. Moreover, the overturn of the Turkish-Cypriot hard-line parties in favour of pro-solution/EU forces for the first time in history (elections 2003/2005-see Kyris 2012) testifies to the influence that civil society achieved in domestic affairs. This Europeanization-triggered change of opportunity structures is even more remarkable in light of the previously weak role of civil society within a system dominated by governing elites. It is also significant due to the absence of bilateral relations between Brussels and the Turkish-Cypriots, which also suggest a more 'bottom-up' process of Europeanization, widely initiated by social actors instead of domestic governing or EU elites. Indeed, this is not too dissimilar to other Europeanization studies (not least some focusing on Turkey- Göksel and Güneş 2005, Tocci 2005) that have reflected on the way the EU empowers civil society, by becoming a 'partner' in their goals.

A New Scene?: Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society and the EU After Accession

In April 2004, the Annan Plan, although supported by the Turkish-Cypriots, was rejected by the Greek-Cypriots and Cyprus acceded to the EU as a divided country, with EU law suspended in the north. To address this challenging situation, the EU developed closer ties with the Turkish-Cypriots in order to support socio-economic development and preparation for implementation of EU law in northern Cyprus, in the event of a reunification (European Council 2006). Despite facing significant challenges, the EU's endeavour creates important Europeanization pressures for the local civil society, in addition to the EU's impact related to the ongoing linkage between solution to the Cyprus problem and European integration prospects. In this regard, the post-accession impact of the EU is channelled not only through the 'ticket' of European integration but also through the EU-Turkish-Cypriot relations and this is an important difference to the earlier phase of 'Europeanisation'. The main EU instrument is the 'Financial Aid Regulation (FAR)' which relies heavily on TAIEX and *inter alia* aims to:

> 'benefit [...] representatives of civil society [and] reconciliation, confidence building measures' (European Council 2006).

The above linkage between assistance to civil society and reconciliation is reflective of the EU's rhetoric about its commitment to a compromise between Greek-Cypriots and Turkish-Cypriots. So far, the most important scheme through which the EU has channelled its help has been the 'Cypriot Civil Society in Action' which aims to:

'strengthen the role of civil society [..] as well as to promote the [...] development of trust, dialogue, co-operation and closer relationship between the Turkish-Cypriot and Greek-Cypriot communities as an important step towards a solution to the Cyprus problem' (European Commission 2008e, 2).

More specifically, the scheme has aimed at supporting:

a) reconciliation, by financing civil society projects for the cooperation between the two Cypriot communities,

b) NGOs that promote reconciliation through research and

c) the Turkish-Cypriot civil society in particular, by funding existing or newly established organizations.

It is, therefore, obvious that Turkish-Cypriot civil society attracts increased attention and more than a third of the funds (39 per cent) are designed to exclusively support the Turkish-Cypriots (category c), in addition to their eligibility for bi-communal (category a) or research projects (category b). Moreover, the widening of Turkish-Cypriot civil society becomes a prime EU objective through the support of new organizations (category c). Here, the Commission seems to favour Turkish-Cypriots over Greek-Cypriots also due to the limited opportunities provided to the former as a result of international isolation (Interview, EU Official B', Brussels 2009). In this context, the support of Turkish-Cypriot civil society is prioritised over the assistance in both communities and bi-communal reconciliation. For example, actors with entirely reconciliation-related activities represent only a minority within the group of beneficiaries, a group which is, anyway, dominated by Turkish-Cypriots. Indeed, this

aid 'echoes' other Europeanization studies that reflect on EU-provided opportunities, especially through means of assistance in the context of enlargement.

Particularly important for technical assistance has been the 'Civil Society Support Team'. The Support team was established in 2008 aiming to help the so-called 'capacity-building' of civil society, which represents a central EU priority (European Commission 2009, 5). The Team organised training sessions and several campaigns to raise awareness of the role of civil society and also established the 'Advisory Council' as a discussion forum for NGOs (Civil Society Support Team 2009). In this regard, the EU's role has entailed strong elements of technical help, which is crucial for the Turkish-Cypriots. For example, because previous funding schemes (e.g. UN Development Programme) had been traditionally supervised by externals, the Support Team made an extra effort to increase capacity of the organizations that will allow them 'ownership' of the project (Interview, EU Official C', Nicosia 2009).

In Europeanization terms, this assistance is very important not only for the empowerment of civil society but also the cognitive pressures that withholds. Here, international isolation becomes a mediating factor that intensifies the degree of 'misfit' between domestic civil society, which is underdeveloped and unfamiliar with ideas and practises beyond the Turkish-Cypriot space, and what the EU would like to promote. This misfit has facilitated a process of 'cognitive' Europeanization, through the EU's capacity-building agenda and the communication of new 'ways of doing things' and practises of how to organise and act as civil society. As a result, the post-accession cognitive Europeanization represents a slightly different picture:

the opportunities provided by the EU programmes perpetuate pro-EU interests evident in the pre-accession period (Interview, EU official D', Nicosia 2009). However, now, the cognitive effect has an added 'technical' flavour, since the recipients of the EU aid have been communicated a series of new ideas and practises about civil society and how organisations could set-up and act.

Besides, assistance of civil society lies at the heart of a series of other provisions in the FAR. The objective of the Regulation '[to bring] the community closer to the EU' (European Commission 2006, article 2) has been addressed through the 'Community Scholarships Programmes' and the 'Promotion of Youth Exchanges and other People-to-People Contacts' (European Commission 2009, 42.4). While the first initiative has benefited scholars that want to study across the EU, the latter has principally targeted civil society:

> priority [is] given to participants between twelve and thirty years old as well as to areas where the isolation and lack of awareness of the EU context is the greatest (European Commission 2009b, 1.2.B).

Indeed, Brussels is very vocal about the effort to cultivate an EU understanding among the Turkish-Cypriots that is, admittedly, weak, also due to international isolation:

> the political situation and the relatively low level of prosperity [...] preventing indeed opportunities for contacts abroad, this community has

[…]limited relations with counterparts in the EU […] From this isolation resulted a remarkable deficit of knowledge about the EU […] It is therefore appropriate to enable the Turkish-Cypriots [...] to develop fruitful relations with other EU Member States (European Commission 2009b, 1.1).

The first call for proposals for the 'Promotion of Youth Exchanges and other People-to-People Contacts' in 2007 was rather unsuccessful due to lack of capacity and weak applications (European Commission 2009, 42.4). At the same time, many Turkish-Cypriot have been frustrated with the (unknown) processes of EU programmes (Interviews, EU Official E' and *KTTO* Official, Nicosia 2009). As a result, in the second call for the scheme in 2009, the EU assisted locals in preparing their bids (European Commission 2009d) and, indeed, this round was much more successful, with over 85 per cent of the grants claimed (European Commission 2010d). The low quality of applications continues to be a challenge and requires important consultation from the side of the Commission, whose capacity is strained (European Commission 2012, 10). However, this is not to undermine the fact that a potentially important Europeanization does take place via the empowerment of civil society and its gradual familiarization with a series of norms and practises of organisation and ideas about the EU; indeed, awarded projects, such as the 'Study Visit to the European Institutions' or 'Networking with the EU' are indicative of the EU's effort to increase knowledge and socialization of locals in the European sphere. Here again, international isolation comes with a lack of EU understanding, which creates the conditions for a potentially important cognitive Europeanization.

The EP is another EU actor that engages with the Turkish-Cypriot community and has invested in the assistance and empowerment of civil society. The 'High Level Contact Group for the Relations with the Turkish-Cypriots in the Northern Part of the Island' (CYTR) hopes to 'establish contact with the […] representatives of civil society in the broadest sense of the term' (CYTR 2009) and also increase the locals' understanding of the EU. Indeed, MEPs have met with many civil society representatives, most of which happen to also be beneficiaries of the EU programmes. CYTR activities have also seen participation of reconciliation-orientated civil society who, however, does not represent a majority among the whole of the Turkish-Cypriot actors contacted. This further adds to the weakened linkage between support to civil society and promotion of reconciliation. In this regard, partners of the CYTR are offered the chance for greater participation in EU affairs and more information opportunities, via the EP's campaign to raise EU awareness. What is particularly interesting here is that contested statehood facilitates the process of Europeanization and a prioritization of civil society: member of the CYTR (MEP, interview, Brussels 2009) explains that, due to the fear of 'recognition by implication'[5], the EP has engaged more with civil society, rather than with officials of the contested administration. This prioritization of civil society over state agents is a reoccurring and interesting theme of the Turkish-Cypriot example as a contested state (see also below).

Finally, the 'Green Line Regulation ('GLR'- European Council 2005) is another instrument which, although not fundamentally concerned with civil society, offers important insights into the EU's role on the ground. The Regulation aims at

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[5] The term, often cited by EU and local elites, refers to the diplomatic recognition of the authorities of the self-declared state, via interaction with them.

controlling movement of persons and goods between the two Cypriot communities and calls for a series of trade-related tasks to be undertaken by local agents. Because the EU does not recognise the self-declared state (Interview, EU Official F', Brussels 2009), the Commission preferred to avoid interaction with the Turkish-Cypriot administration in fear of 'recognition by implication' (see above) and a series of trade responsibilities were instead delegated to the *KTTO* (European Commission 2004). For that reason, the *KTTO* established a representation office in Brussels, which gradually evolved into an important lobbying centre for the Turkish-Cypriots (Interview, *KTTO* official, Brussels 2009). In addition, the *KTTO* personnel in Cyprus were trained by EU experts on their role in the GLR (TAIEX 2006, 9) and also on the implementation of the FAR and the assistance of beneficiaries (e.g. application for and management of grants etc-Interview, *KTTO* Official, Nicosia 2009).

This interaction with the EU has affected the *KTTO* in terms of power but also cognitive matters. At the domestic level, the EU has provided *KTTO* with 'informational advantages', since the chamber was given an important role in the GLR due to its expertise in trade. At the same time, *KTTO* has contributed to other EU activities, like the FAR, and leading members of the Chamber claim that their role as 'facilitators' of EU-local relations is a source of important empowerment (*KTTO* Official, Nicosia 2009). Besides, the involvement of the *KTTO* in EU matters has provided opportunities to 'exit domestic constraints' and increase the Chamber's participation in the international environment, as exemplified by their activity in Brussels and greater access to information, resources and networking (Interview*, KTTO* Official, Brussels 2009). Here, the absence of recognition of the contested state adds to the empowerment of the organization, which is preferred by the EU as

an alternative partner (Interview, ex *KTTO* Official, Nicosia 2009). Lastly, the EU-provided training of Chamber members and their growing socialization at the EU level is indicative for the 'cognitive' Europeanization pressures towards a better EU understanding and news ideas and practises that exist beyond the Turkish-Cypriot space. Although the *KTTO* represents a unique case, the position of a non-state actor within a traditionally state-dominated environment is very important and offers a blueprint for other cases of Europeanization of contested states and the role of civil society in this regard.

Apart from the *KTTO,* the rest of the moderate civil society that participated in the pro-solution/ EU movement (before accession) has displayed minimal interaction with the EU in this period. For example, only five per cent of the beneficiaries of FAR were part of pro-solution/ EU platforms, such as 'This is Our Country'. The EP's activities also see a limited partaking of this group of actors. This is due to a number of reasons. Firstly, the pro-solution/ EU trend among locals has declined and some argue that 'moderate' civil society pays the price of mounting Euroscepticism (Interviews, Denktas and Cakici, Nicosia 2009). Secondly, Brussels have criticised the over-politicization of civil society (Interviews, EU official D' and EU Official G', Nicosia 2009) and tried to support not just 'moderate' organizations but a variety of other causes (Interview, EU Official D', Nicosia 2009). Thirdly, most of the trade unions, which were at the epicentre of the pro-solution/EU trend, have showed limited engagement with Brussels possibly due to their early Euroscepticism that has staged a come-back after the EU accession in spite of the failed reunification (Interview, Ersalan, Nicosia 2009).

Not only has long-established Turkish-Cypriot civil society displayed limited interaction with the EU, but newly emerged organizations seem to have been the protagonists of EU programmes. This is, largely, a result of the EU's assistance to newly-founded NGOs, such as the 'Energy Professional Association' or the 'Cyprus-EU association'. Besides, the power that civil society acquired in the pre-accession era encouraged the appearance of new organizations, who sought the support of the EU towards their development. The 'birth' of new organisations, largely assisted by the EU, can be seen as significant not only for their empowerment but also the EU's cognitive effect on actors that represent a 'blank canvas' for EU-related influences on how they set-up and organize their action.

Consequently, the EU continues to have an important relevance to civil society but, throughout the years, power seems to have changed hands from old to new actors and the post-accession era seems a slightly different 'story' of the Europeanization of civil society. Before, empowerment was evident in civil society's increased influence for domestic politics (as exemplified by their important role in the public debate). In contrast, their more recent empowerment mostly relates to the enhancement of civil society's capacity, through proactive financial and technical assistance from the side of the EU, something which distinguishes the pre-and post-accession eras and gives the later a clearer 'top-down' flavour of Europeanization. Indeed, EU representatives refer to different groups of civil society that have engaged with the programs and they also highlight their internal strengthening (capacity building) and consequent external empowerment (Interview, EU Official C, Nicosia 2009). However, it is still early to test whether this empowerment will lead to an increase of relevance to the overall socio-political landscape. This becomes especially doubtful given continuous

reports on the problematic implementation of the EU assistance, due to the unique politico-economic conditions in northern Cyprus (European Commission 2012, 10). Lastly, the post-accession 'cognitive' Europeanization represents a somehow different picture: although moderate civil society continues to support the scope of the EU (which is however a topic less dominant in the agenda), cognitive change relates more to awareness about the EU but also a series of news ideas and practises on how to organise and act as organisations, which are communicated to the EU beneficiaries. Indeed, civil society elites discuss how the EU assistance has made domestic organisations more professional (Interview, Erel, Nicosia 2009).

Conclusion: The Europeanization of the Turkish-Cypriot Civil Society and Beyond

This study has reflected on the EU's impact on the Turkish-Cypriot civil society and provided a test-case for the Europeanization of contested states. Here, the pre and post-accession periods represent two different phases of Turkish-Cypriot 'Europeanization': until *circa* EU accession, mostly old 'moderate' civil society actors were domestically empowered and also had their interests reconfigured towards pro-EU attitudes. To the contrary, the post-accession period did not see their power enhanced or their interests further impacted by the EU. This was mainly due to their minimal interaction with Brussels and the decline of the pro-solution/EU trend. Instead, EU activities have empowered a slightly different group of civil society, that also become subjects to cognitive pressures, via the communication of new ideas of organization and action and ideas about the EU. Those players are often more neutral against the Cyprus problem, largely 'young' and assisted in their

establishment by the EU. Along these lines, research hypothesis is verified and indeed the EU has impacted both the power and ideational dynamics of domestic civil society, albeit in different ways when the pre and post-accession eras are compared. Furthermore, the ways through which change is induced are different, when the two periods are compared: the pre-accession Europeanization took place due to the reunification /EU-integration association and in what can be seen as a largely 'bottom-up' fashion. In the post-accession era, the EU's effect is also channelled via the bilateral EU-Turkish-Cypriot relations that, although reflecting EU enlargement record and a clearer top-down process of Europeanization, retain their uniqueness due to contested statehood conditions. Below, those conditions are chematically categorised into three broad themes, which contribute to the Europeanization debate:

a. The Conflict

The conflict often related to the contested state, which can divide societies based on the people's stance towards solution, is expected to create additional implications for the EU's effect. Here, the extended Europeanization of interests of the Turkish-Cypriot civil society relates to the linkage between a compromised solution to the Cyprus problem and EU integration prospects, which made 'moderate' actors to embrace the scope of the EU, often despite their initial Euroscepticism. With regard to power distribution, the linkage between EU integration and reunification initially added to the influence of moderate civil society. However, in the post-accession era and with pro-European attitudes diminishing, the civil society that led the pro-solution/EU trend has lost relevance. This varied effect of the EU reconfirm previous observations on the power of European integration to define the influence and

interests of domestic actors, especially if 'tied' to existing socio-political cleavages (here, the form of solution to the Cyprus issue). At the same time, the Turkish-Cypriot example has showed how the support of the EU by domestic elites makes their influence dependant on the dominant attitudes towards Brussels.

b.   *The International non-recognition*

Moreover, the absence of international recognition profoundly shapes the Europeanization of local civil society in conditions of contested statehood. Overall, the diplomatic non-recognition of TRNC on behalf of Brussels has limited the EU's mission on the ground (European Commission 2012, 10). However, it has also magnified the EU's effect on certain civil society actors. For example, in an effort to avoid engagement with the contested administration, the EU found an alternative partner in the face of the *KTTO.* This role has provided the Chamber with many advantages, such as access to the EU environment, information and policy knowledge and opportunities and influence. The comparative prioritization of civil society does not stop in the case of the *KTTO* and, indeed, the EP has also been careful to avoid recognition claims and, naturally, communicated more with civil society representatives. In this regard, highly-ranked *KTTO* official recognises the consequent empowerment of civil society via a 'people's diplomacy'(Interview*,* Brussels 2009). This represents a remarkable feature of the Turkish-Cypriot example and offers important comparative value for the study of the Europeanization of contested states.

c. The International Isolation

The international isolation is the last factor that mediates the domestic manifestation of Europeanization of contested states. Here, years of isolation have contributed to an underdeveloped Turkish-Cypriot civil society, which is also deeply unfamiliar with the EU realities. This has affected the interaction between the EU and civil society in two opposing ways. Firstly, the low familiarity with EU affairs has evoked a certain degree of Euroscepticism among locals, who stood suspicious (Interview, EU Official D', Nicosia 2009) and frustrated (Interview, Nami, Nicosia 2009) towards the time-consuming process of grant application and longed for immediate benefits (Interview, Erel, Nicosia 2009). Secondly, due to this difference in practises, Brussels have launched an imperative capacity-building mission, which offers new channels for the EU's effect. This reconfirms the 'goodness of fit' thesis and suggests that the EU's impact gains where the difference between domestic and EU level is significant, something which should be expected in contested states.

In this context, the Turkish-Cypriot example has a strong comparative potential for the study of European integration, especially in reference to contested states and civil society. The article has argued that, where the EU future is linked to important domestic matters (especially the conflict related to the contested state), a redistribution of power will take place in favour of pro-EU elites (including civil society), where pro-European attitudes prevail, and against them where Euroscepticism exists. The mobilisation of the Turkish-Cypriot society in favour of European integration and the ability to influence domestic socio-political dynamics (e.g. election results) is an interesting example of a bottom-up process of Europeanization in contested states and indeed environments where European integration is seen in a very positive light. This important role of the EU in the public

debate (and, therefore, the conflict *per se*) contradicts many works on the EU's limited aptitude for conflict resolution and is important for the Europeanization discussion in reference to both contested and conventional states. Secondly, the non-recognition of the contested state seems to create additional opportunities for civil society, often at the expense of state authorities. Again, this is a particularly important finding that contributes to the debate on Europeanization, not necessarily restricted to contested statehood: non-state actors are expected to be prioritised by the EU over authorities of either contested states (e.g. TRNC, Kosovo) or governments with which interaction is challenging due to other reasons, including many politically 'awkward' partners of the EU (e.g. a variety of states of the ENP). Thirdly, the isolation and the related international unfamiliarity of the Turkish-Cypriot civil society unveils the increased opportunities for the EU to influence practises, ideas and domestic balance of power. Indeed, this is not too dissimilar to previous enlargement examples (e.g. 2004/2007). It is also relevant to a series of other cases, where the contested legitimacy of the state (and not just contested statehood, see above) prohibits the development of international links. In this regard, more research on the topic is welcome, especially in reference to different contexts of the EU's relations to contested states, such as Enlargement (e.g. Kosovo) or various partners of the European Neighbourhood Policy (e.g. Occupied Palestinian Territories, Transnistria, Nagorno-Karabakh or the disputed territories in Georgia) or the Eastern Partnership, and how these different links shape EU instruments, mechanisms and the outcome of Europeanization. In this context, although particularly relevant to contested states, the study of the Turkish-Cypriot case contributes to the wider discussion on Europeanization and the debate on the EU's external role, especially

in reference to alternative ways of engagement, beyond traditional state-centric interaction.

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